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The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan  
Universities: Methods and Models

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Education  
College of Social Sciences  
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July 2016

## **DEDICATION**

To my dear wife and lovely children Kamla, Eman, Tasneem and Sfyaldeem

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the learning and teaching of Reading in English as a Foreign Language (REFL), in Libya. The study draws on an action research process in which I sought to look critically at students and teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Libya as they learned and taught REFL in four Libyan research sites.

The Libyan EFL educational system is influenced by two main factors: the method of teaching the Holy-Quran and the long-time ban on teaching EFL by the former Libyan regime under Muammar Gaddafi. Both of these factors have affected the learning and teaching of REFL and I outline these contextual factors in the first chapter of the thesis. This investigation, and the exploration of the challenges that Libyan university students encounter in their REFL, is supported by attention to reading models. These models helped to provide an analytical framework and starting point for understanding the many processes involved in reading for meaning and in reading to satisfy teacher instructions. The theoretical framework I adopted was based, mainly and initially, on top-down, bottom-up, interactive and compensatory interactive models. I drew on these models with a view to understanding whether and how the processes of reading described in the models could be applied to the reading of EFL students and whether these models could help me to better understand what was going on in REFL.

The diagnosis stage of the study provided initial data collected from four Libyan research sites with research tools including video-recorded classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers before and after lesson observation, and think-aloud protocols (TAPs) with 24 students (six from each university) in which I examined their REFL reading behaviours and strategies. This stage indicated that the majority of students shared behaviours such as reading aloud, reading each word in the text, articulating the phonemes and syllables of words, or skipping words if they could not pronounce them. Overall this first stage indicated that alternative methods of teaching REFL were needed in order to encourage 'reading for meaning' that might be based on strategies related to eventual interactive reading models adapted for REFL.

The second phase of this research project was an Intervention Phase involving two team-teaching sessions in one of the four stage one universities. In each session, I worked with the teacher of one group to introduce an alternative method of REFL. This method was based on teaching different reading strategies to encourage the students to work towards an eventual interactive way of reading for meaning. A focus group discussion and TAPs followed the lessons with six students in order to discuss the 'new' method. Next were two video-recorded classroom observations which were followed by an audio-recorded discussion with the teacher about these methods. Finally, I conducted a Skype interview with the class teacher at the end of the semester to discuss any changes he had made in his teaching or had observed in his students' reading with respect to reading behaviour strategies, and reactions and performance of the students as he continued to use the 'new' method.

The results of the intervention stage indicate that the teacher, perhaps not surprisingly, can play an important role in adding to students' knowledge and confidence and in improving their REFL strategies. For example, after the intervention stage, students began to think about the title, and to use their own background knowledge to comprehend the text. The

students employed, also, linguistic strategies such as decoding and, above all, the students abandoned the behaviour of reading for pronunciation in favour of reading for meaning.

Despite the apparent efficacy of the alternative method, there are, inevitably, limitations related to the small-scale nature of the study and the time I had available to conduct the research. There are challenges, too, related to the students' first language, the idiosyncrasies of the English language, the teacher training and continuing professional development of teachers, and the continuing political instability of Libya. The students' lack of vocabulary and their difficulties with grammatical functions such as phrasal and prepositional verbs, forms which do not exist in Arabic, mean that REFL will always be challenging. Given such constraints, the 'new' methods I trialled and propose for adoption can only go so far in addressing students' difficulties in REFL.

Overall, the study indicates that the Libyan educational system is underdeveloped and under resourced with respect to REFL. My data indicates that the teacher participants have received little to no professional developmental that could help them improve their teaching in REFL and skills in teaching EFL. These circumstances, along with the perennial problem of large but varying class sizes; student, teacher and assessment expectations; and limited and often poor quality resources, affect the way EFL students learn to read in English. Against this background, the thesis concludes by offering tentative conclusions; reflections on the study, including a discussion of its limitations, and possible recommendations designed to improve REFL learning and teaching in Libyan universities.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the work of those who made this research possible: my father Mr. Hamed Abosnan who trusted my ability to achieve the highest academic degree, and my mother Kamla Alrgbee, who gave me moral support and prayed for me to successfully complete this thesis. Words alone cannot express the thanks I owe to my wife for her patience, encouragement, and assistance.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to those without whose support and guidance this work would have been impossible, my supervisors Professor Nicki Hedge and Dr Alison MacKenzie. I would like to thank them for their motivational comments, which provided me with encouragement, supervision, and support, from the preliminary level all the way to the concluding level. I have been very lucky to have worked with Prof Nicki at the University of Glasgow and Dr Alison at the University of Belfast. Their support taught me how to work and be patient with my students. Their generosity in giving me their time and effort helped me to attain a deep understanding of the subject. I owe them my thanks and my admiration.

I must also extend my gratitude to the staff and students from the four Libyan research sites that were included at the field work of this research because they, more than anyone else, support and appreciate what this study is all about. All of them expressed their willingness to assist by offering helpful commentary and participating in interviews and think-aloud protocols.

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

A SQ	A Scots Quair
A-LM	Audio-Lingual Method
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DM	Direct Method
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EL	English Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
FL	Foreign Language
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LCGU	Language Centre Glasgow University
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
REFL	Reading in as a Foreign Language
RFL	Reading in Foreign Language
S	Student
SVO	Subject Verb Object
T	Teacher
TBLT	Task Based Language Teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TAP	Think Aloud Protocol
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
VSO	Verb Subject Object

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

International demand for learning English has dramatically increased during the last three decades (Alsagoff, McKay and Renandya, 2012). The main reason is that English is the world's most widely used foreign or second language (L2). According to a statistical report, issued by Ethnologue Languages of the World (2012), the total world population is 6 billion, of which 505,000,000 use the English language as a Foreign Language (FL), and one in four can communicate in English. Further, English is the language of international commerce, science, and technology, with people from different linguistic backgrounds using English to communicate with each other.

Users of English as a first language (L1) are not, of course, restricted to countries where English is the L1 but range across all continents of the world. The colonial history of the United Kingdom played an important role in the widespread worldwide use of English. English became the global language not simply because of the large number of native people, but because of the politics of British imperialism, its dominant position in the world's industry and trade in the nineteenth century, and because the United States of America had the most productive and fastest growing economy worldwide in the latter half of the twentieth century (Crystal, 2003). The English language is, also, the language of education, according to Verghese (2007), and is the medium of instruction in many universities worldwide. In my own country, Libya, after the Second World War English language courses were obligatory because most of the country was governed by a British administration. As Elabbar (2011) notes, English courses in all disciplines in Libyan state universities are core courses because the world's knowledge is preserved in English. English has the status of a *lingua franca*, or world language.

Due to the importance of the English language, it follows that teaching and learning English is important and, I would argue, that it requires well qualified, good teachers. By 'qualified' I mean teachers who have knowledge of and skills in teaching methods and approaches by which they can teach, explain and organise classroom activities. Teachers also need academic credentials that signify they can teach and understand the language.

However, in Libya, the acquisition of teaching and learning skills has been hindered by political, economic, and social contextual factors. The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has been impeded by an out-dated educational system (Elabbar, 2011), a state of affairs precipitated by Gaddafi, president from 1969-2011, during which time he banned the teaching and learning of EFL (see Section 1.4). The situation today is exacerbated by civil unrest that has dominated parts of the country since Gaddafi was deposed. Challenges arise from a lack of initial and continuing teacher education, and teachers are often unable to improve their TEFL skills and, of relevance to this study, Reading English as a Foreign Language (REFL) in particular. There are, also, problems in universities associated with large class sizes (up to 80 in number), very limited resources, an outdated curriculum and limited teaching methods.

Against this background, which I shall extend in Chapter Six, this study aims to understand why Libyan University students seem to struggle in REFL. I sought to investigate the challenges of TEFL with particular reference to models of reading developed by Goodman (1967), Gough (1972), Rumelhart (1977), whose work on how we read in a L1 has influenced this study, and Bernhardt (1991) who developed an integrated compensatory reading model for students of FL. This introductory chapter focuses on the challenges in teaching EFL, and REFL strategies in particular. The rationale, issues investigated and significance and organization of this research study are also presented.

## **1.1 Rationale for this research**

As Chilisa and Preece (2005) observe, research questions are guided by the researcher's particular interest in the field of study, or through personal involvement in educational research. My personal experience, first as an EFL student, and then as a university teacher of EFL, motivated me to conduct this study. When I completed my BA at the University of Benghazi in 2005, I decided to study in the UK. My MEd course was conditional on a score of 6.5 in the IELTS exam. In that test, I did not achieve the required grade in reading skills. Consequently, I joined the Language Centre of Glasgow University (LCGU) to improve my reading skills, and I was introduced to new strategies in reading such as skimming and scanning. However, even when I achieved the IELTS score necessary for joining the Master's course, I still had reading problems, and it seemed clear that I had not mastered many reading-for-meaning strategies, or acquired adequate proficiency in



English. For example, I still could not understand specialised texts written in English such as those written about Agricultural Science or philosophy of the emotions. These texts had specialist content about which I lacked knowledge and understanding, and much of the vocabulary was unknown to me (for example, ‘soil degradation’, ‘nematodes’, or ‘nitrogen fixing plants’). Certain types of texts, including those that might be labelled ‘literary’ texts, were also difficult to access because I lacked experience of reading these texts in my own language, Arabic.

Though I had been studying English for many years, including at an advanced level, when I came to Glasgow I struggled to read the language with fluency. I became aware that I had not been exposed to different types of text, and had been taught to pronounce well, rather than to understand what I was reading. I also came to realise that I had been taught grammar and pronunciation at the expense of overall text comprehension, and that the methods of teaching EFL which I outline in Chapter Four, were limited in Libya. For example, I had never been involved in pre-reading, during-reading or post-reading actions in which I discussed the text with my classmates and the teacher. I had not experienced reading silently, then reading the text aloud, and finally discussing the text again with my classmates and teachers to assess the extent to which my comprehension and lexical retention had improved after several readings.

A typical undergraduate REFL lesson in my university consisted of the following. The teacher gave us the text, s/he read it aloud, we repeated it after him/her, and s/he corrected our pronunciation. Or, depending on what year we were in, we might be asked to spend the lesson skimming and scanning the text for the main idea (year 2) or working on phonetics (year 1) and using the Grammar Translation Method or Direct Method (years 1 and 2. See Chapter Four). My primary aims in REFL were near-perfect, word-by-word pronunciation, and passing exams, with a focus on some knowledge of vocabulary and grammar which I understood to be the ‘building blocks’ of language and, primarily, to understand what the exams ‘tested’. Teachers did not use texts that stimulated interest but texts that would help us pass our exams. Use of Arabic-English dictionary was largely ignored or discouraged. In the University of X1 I had been also observing classes of up to 80 students. Given the class size, a lack of resources such as books and English language newspapers, limited teaching and learning methods, and the dominant role of the teacher who, in Libya, is accorded respect, authority and seen as the expert, the student is a passive learner, discouraged from being active in his/her own learning. I discuss this further in Chapter Six.

After working as a university teacher assistant for two years in Libya, in 2009 I decided to carry out my Masters of Education (MEd) research on reading strategies at the University of Glasgow. For the MEd, I investigated the difficulties Libyan students face in learning REFL. In order to find answers to the MEd research questions, I asked the following:

1. What do Libyan students perceive as being their main difficulties with reading?
  - Are the teaching methods and techniques used by EFL teachers at Glasgow University too challenging for Libyan students?
  - Do Libyan EFL students attribute their difficulties to the way they were taught reading in Libya?
2. What are the views of EFL teachers and learners about reading aloud as a teaching strategy?
3. From the perspective of EFL teachers, what are the main reasons for EFL learners' reluctance in using reading strategies?
4. How do EFL teachers at the Language Centre of Glasgow University suggest for improving the teaching of reading strategies in Libya?

I studied methods and approaches of teaching FL, and found that a number of them, such as the Direct Method, suggested using only the target language in the classroom. I interviewed eight EFL Libyan students studying EFL at LCGU and they informed me that the teaching of reading in Libya was inadequate because teachers only read and explained the text to them, consigning students to a passive role in the classroom.

On the basis of that small study, I arrived at some tentative conclusions. My data, though limited, suggested that many teachers in Libya instruct their students to focus on every single word in a passage, and that teachers did all the work of explaining meaning and content. I concluded that the best way to approach TEFL was that there should be no translation in the classroom and the EFL student should predict or guess the meaning of words while reading. This method is, at least partly, derived from a top-down model of reading (see Chapter Two). Though this method was not used in Libya, I was advised to do this by the LCGU. However, when I returned to Libya and started teaching REFL, the students were not interested in guessing the meaning of words or skimming and scanning. They wanted only to do what was necessary to pass the exam. Moreover, they frequently did not understand the texts because they had little or no background knowledge on the topics selected for reading. How, for example, could I ask them to make predictions about

a text based on a theme such as 'Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping' before the reading exercise? First, they would need to know what 'Gaelic' and 'Bagpiping' are and to know that these words are particular to Scotland. This is just the beginning of reading for meaning. The students had little or no background knowledge of Scotland, and perhaps had never seen or heard bagpipes. Giving students texts to read that would not appear in the exams caused them distress, and they pleaded with me to use established texts. The students were trained to have reading texts before the exams so they could memorise unfamiliar words and understand the context. They were not taught how to read new texts.

When I returned to the UK to do my PhD, I told my supervisors that FL readers 'must not' translate while reading English, but should only predict or guess word meanings. The response was, 'Do you really think so?' Without hesitation I replied 'Yes'. To teach me a lesson in reading for meaning and to try and help me see that my assertions were flawed, I was given a book entitled 'A Scots Quair' by the Scottish writer Lewis Gibbon. My supervisors asked me to read twenty pages of the book in two weeks, making use of my preferred reading strategies and previous knowledge. I had to apply my 'rule' that FL students must not translate while reading and that I should predict and guess the meanings of words I did not understand.

Reading that book was a nightmare. Though I attempted to use my background knowledge, I had no idea what was going on. I tried to predict and guess the meaning of the words, but no meaning filtered through. I resorted to translating every single word in the first two pages, but still could not make sense of the text. I spent one week analysing the meaning of the words and in further translation. Every reading strategy I employed failed to open the text's meaning. After two weeks, I was defeated. I did not know that the novel often used a synthetic Scots language to capture the local dialect of the fictional town 'Kinraddie'. But this was only a small, yet significant, part of my problem. Here is an extract from the first section:

### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE* lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats. In the Den of Kinraddie one such beast had its lair and by day it lay about the woods and the stench of it was awful to smell all over the countryside, and at gloaming a shepherd would see it, with its great wings half-folded across the great belly of it and its head, like the head of meikle cock, but with the ears of a lion, poked over a fir tree, watching.

I faced problems in reading this passage at the word level, then with regard to the structure of sentences and paragraphs. For example, I found difficulty with words such as *Den*, *meikle cock*, and *gryphons*. Because I could not work out what kind of creature this wolf-beast was, I could make no sense of the creature whose head *poked over a fir tree*, *watching* or that *lair* signified something dreadful or vile. Each sentence in the opening passage contained more than one word that was new and seemingly impossible to translate, such as *meikle cock*. The meaning of words such as *Kinraddie* and *gloaming* cannot be found in the dictionary and there were no contextual clues to assist me. Even recognising that *Kinraddie* was a proper noun was difficult since I had nothing in my background knowledge to suggest it was a place name, despite knowing that place names begin with a capital letter (my supervisors had to explain what *Kinraddie* was). I felt so confused that I failed to use the strategy of interpreting a capitalised word. Rather, it just added to my confusion and I started to understand how my students in Libya might have felt.

I did not know that many place names in the Highlands and Islands begin with *Kin*, from the Gaelic ‘Cean’ meaning ‘head’ of something as in *Kinloch*, the ‘head of the loch’. Using my knowledge of word parts, I initially thought that the word *Norman* meant *a man from Norway*, until I asked my supervisor and she told me that it referred to the Norman people of Normandy, Northern France, who invaded England in 1066. Further, because I have no knowledge of French, I was unable to recognise that *Cospatric de Gondeshil* was the name of a person, or that it could be a French name, signified by *de* meaning ‘of’. However, even if I had recognised that the possessive particle ‘de’ was French, *Cospatric de Gondeshil* would have made no sense to me, since the words were outside my experience of French names and because the context yielded no meaning. The book did have a glossary but some words were absent, and many have no cognate form in my L1. For instance, *childe*, I

discovered later, is an old spelling of the word child. Perhaps I should have been able to guess what it meant, but I could not. I seemed to have reached a threshold beyond which I could not go, and that threshold was low. Because I was struggling to make an 'intelligent guess' (Goodman, 1967, see below) of *childe*, I felt defeated and unable to make sense of anything. Again, this made me ask if my students in Libya had felt like and it made me ask myself if my REFL strategies, both as a teacher and as a reader, were impossible.

Some words such as *fir* (خشب التوب) 'a type of wood', have different meanings when translated into my L1. In addition, the sentences of the text are very long, and formed using complicated grammar, as if the author is engaged in a stream of consciousness or narrating the story in dialect (which he is). My language threshold was exhausted in the first sentence, which is why I judged the text's grammar too complicated to decode. Further, I had no knowledge of the text type or genre. A *Scots Quair* is a genre of literature and, arguably, a text type because of its internal linguistic features as I discuss in Chapter Three. I had no L1 resources or personal experience to use to help me understand this short extract. I did not know that the text was written in a synthetic Scots language to capture the dialect of the fictional town 'Kinraddie' located in the North East of Scotland. Not only could I not decode at the level of words, clauses or sentences to make meaning, I could not draw on background or text-type experience. I lacked linguistic, cultural, literary, geographical, mythical, and historical knowledge. In addition, without these kinds of background knowledges, it was going to be impossible, for a while at least, to make progress with this book, a classic of Scottish literature, but alien to my culture and personal experience. I had also no effective relationship with the book because its inaccessibility was demotivating. All of these factors highlighted considerations that I realised I had not thought about adequately with respect to my own reading in English or to my teaching of REFL.

What trying to read taught me was that my attitude to reading was simplistic and unhelpful. It also taught me how complex reading is, that we take many of the skills, processes and strategies we normally use to read a book in our L1, for granted because they are usually automatic, rapid, efficient and unconscious. It is when we encounter challenging texts that our automaticity is interrupted and we begin to consciously draw on strategies and skills to make sense of the text, such as using Arabic-English dictionary or looking up some fact in a book, or drawing on what we already know. As noted, I also began to understand why my EFL students and I found REFL challenging. And so new questions about REFL

emerged: What is reading? How do we read? And how do we teach reading in a FL? It was for these reasons, too, that I decided to focus on the early reading models of Goodman (1967), Gough (1972), Rumelhart (1977) and Bernhardt (1991), as I will explain shortly.

## **1.2 Issues to investigate**

Harris and Hodges (1995, p.39) refer to reading as the ‘reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message’. This definition suggests that reading is an activity of communication between the writer and the reader where they exchange information. In other words, reading is a receptive skill in the written mode in which readers should use their background knowledge about the topic and the text itself to ‘read for meaning’. Reading may be considered as one of the most sophisticated aspects of learning a FL, necessitating effort from the student, and specialised training and instruction from the teacher, as Morrow and Shanahan (2013) suggest. Reading is a complicated skill because it involves not only decoding what is written on the page, but implies that the reader infers and makes inferences and judgements about what the writer is writing and what s/he might mean. Researching reading is also a sophisticated skill because we are investigating a mental process we cannot observe, unless we use think aloud protocols and, even then, the full process is not available to us, and this is discussed further in Chapter Six.

In order to understand reading and the reading comprehension process, I decided that it would be useful to draw on models of reading in order to interpret the processes. Hence, I draw here, particularly, but not exclusively, on three well-known models of reading: top-down, bottom-up, and interactive, each of which describes how reading comprehension occurs at different cognitive levels. For example, Goodman’s (1967) top-down model describes reading as ‘a psycholinguistic guessing game’ involving ‘... an interaction between thought and language’ (p.108), and I outline this model in Chapter Two. Goodman (1967), in other words, views efficient reading as the process of selecting productive cues from the text to use in ‘a psycholinguistic guessing game’. For example, in order to read, I tried to use my cultural background knowledge to access the text but failed because I had none. While Goodman’s model is orientated to a top-down reading process, reading at this level seems to omit the importance of grammatical and phonological knowledge and decoding to understand the text (see Chapter Two for more examples). It is

also important to note that models such as those by Goodman (1967), Gough (1972), and Rumelhart (1977), were developed from research on L1 users. Here, I use these models to aid my understanding of reading by FL speakers. Bottom-up, top-down and interactive reading models provide helpful heuristics in understanding how to read in English (de Beaugrande, 1981).

Gough's (1972) bottom-up model, on the other hand, suggests that the reader is a decoder who 'converts characters into systematic phonemes' (p.310). In contrast to Goodman's reading model, Gough (1972) states that 'the good reader does need not to guess' (p.317), but focuses on grammatical and phonological knowledge to understand the text (see Chapter Two). Following bottom-up strategies, I would derive meaning from the information in the text without resorting to my background knowledge. So, I would focus on the structure and phonemes of the sentence to build meaning word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence. This is not an entirely accurate or representative view of how reading occurs, at least not for the fluent reader (Koda, 2004). For a learner of another language, who lacks fluency, reading word-by-word is one method by which meaning is derived. However, as explained above, this strategy failed me.

Rumelhart's (1977) interactive reading model suggests that reading is neither top-down nor bottom-up, but interactive. In other words, this interactive reading model suggests that reading combines, for example, both word recognition and background knowledge. Therefore, while reading, using an interactive reading strategy following an interactive model, I would use my background knowledge of the topic and language knowledge such as grammar and phonetics (see Chapter Two). Developing Rumelhart's model to include features of reading in another language, Bernhardt (1991) introduced a compensatory interactive reading model which focuses on how FL readers approach a text from their L1 framework, and combines social perspectives and cognitive processes. The model encompasses what Bernhardt calls 'micro-level features' and 'macro-level features' (see Chapter Two). The micro-level features represent knowledge such as grammar, word recognition and sentence structure. Errors are to be expected:

... word recognition, represented as an exponential curve, posits that in the early stages of proficiency errors that can be attributed to vocabulary difficulties are fairly common. (Bernhardt, 1991, p.170)

Macro-level aspects include background knowledge; here, 'the rate of errors due to content knowledge and knowledge constructed during comprehension decreases as proficiency increases' (Bernhardt, 1991, p.170).

As noted, the models above, with the exception of Bernhardt's model, were developed from research on L1 users. My question became focussed on their possible uses in helping me to understand how EFL learners read. EFL students have to learn linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, content, and sentence structure, which are different from those in their L1, in order to successfully interact with the text. FL students are also, mainly, already able to read in their L1. Could they and do they, I asked, inevitably transfer their reading skills from L1 to FL? It seemed obvious that decoding which is automatic in the L1 would become a conscious activity in the FL. REFL is supported by two language processing systems, first and foreign language as, according to Grabe and Stoller (2002), the L1 is never completely turned off. REFL is not only a matter of acquiring syntactic and semantic knowledge, but of training readers to use their background knowledge to make sense of what they read (see Chapter Three). Aware of limits to their use, I decided to use the models summarised here to help explore the processes and strategies Libyan readers of EFL use. Based on my research data findings (see Chapters Two and Eight) and my understanding of Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model, REFL cannot rely on bottom-up or top-down reading strategies or expect an automatic immediate interactive way of reading because reading is a complex process and requires different strategies for different types of texts. I am suggesting that if learners are to read for meaning in FL then an 'eventual interactive' process is required. This means using top-down and bottom-up type strategies to lead to, and as part of, eventual interactive reading strategies and eventual interactive reading for meaning. This process, as I will explain in further detail in Chapter Two, occurs at different levels such as the level of the word, sentence, paragraph and the whole text.

I have noted that teaching and learning REFL strategies in the Libyan classroom are affected by a number of constraints (see Chapter Six), including target language vocabulary knowledge and linguistic, structural, and cultural differences between the L1 and FL which, in turn, affect comprehension reading strategies in the target language. These differences need to be taken into account to explain why students encounter difficulties learning and reading in English. For example, both the orthographic system and sentence structure are completely different in Arabic and English. In Arabic, the written



system is from right to left, while in English one writes and reads from left to right. Inevitably, the different orthographies and eye coordination reduces reading speed because Arabic students are used to moving their eyes from right to left while reading (Naghdipour, 2015). Moreover, the Arabic spelling system is entirely different from English spelling (Watson, 2004). For example, Arabic letters such as ح-خ-ض-ع (*haa-kaa-daa-aaa*) do not exist in English, while English letters such as 'p' and 'v' do not exist in Arabic. Another difference is that there are no capital letters in Arabic. If Libyan EFL students do not understand these variations, they might think a word written with a capital letter has a different meaning from the same word written in the lower case. There are also, of course, differences in grammar between the two languages. Arabic, for example, employs one basic past tense, while English has four forms of the past and present tenses: past/present simple, past/present continuous, past/present perfect and past/present perfect continuous. So, for example, where English speakers can say 'I was smoking', 'I smoked', 'I had smoked' and 'I had been smoking', Arabic speakers can say only 'I smoked'. Further, Arabic does not contain the verb 'to be'. To say 'I am a teacher' in Arabic is to say 'I teacher' *Li/استاذ*. Examples of these are many, and I will refer to them, briefly, again in Chapter Three, but Libyan EFL students have to understand these language variations to be able to read for meaning. In addition, any difficulties brought about by teaching methods and lack of resources need consideration.

### **1.3 Methods of teaching English in the Libyan EFL classroom**

In exploring the development of any language skill, Richards and Nunan (1990) suggest that we begin with the teacher's education, since teaching is seen as a mediation between the language and the student in the context of the classroom. From my point of view, it is crucial to understand how teachers use their knowledge and methods of teaching to develop students' reading strategies, so, this thesis will briefly explore methods of teaching REFL in Libya. I suggest that the main purpose of teaching reading is to help EFL students interact with the reading texts, and the role of the teacher's knowledge and experience is to improve the students' reading strategies. To investigate these issues, this research features the term 'methods' which Gray, Griffin and Nasta (2000) describe as 'processes which comprise the adoption of a general technique that determines the type of interaction between teachers and learners' (p.93). In my context, this includes reading aloud and pronunciation practice or pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading methods.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined the word 'method' as the level 'at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about particular skills to be taught' (p.19). In other words, 'method' ideally helps understand how teachers teach and transfer theory into practice. On this account, it is important to consider Libyan EFL teachers' knowledge of language teaching methods and to ask how these methods may influence the way they teach REFL. I develop this in Chapter Six but, in summary here, Suwaed (2011) argues that EFL teacher training courses in Libya are based on theory rather than practice, and that universities do not provide pre-service or in-service training courses for language teachers. I may want to question the distinction between theory and practice but language teachers tend to gain a theoretical knowledge of English and EFL and yet are unable to practise their acquired knowledge in classroom situations. For example, even if teachers learned about bottom-up and top-down type reading strategies, they might still be unable to put these into practice in the classrooms because their current training and development might not consider the bridge between theory and practice and help them with practical implementations of reading model understanding. On this point, however, Farrell (2009) argues that even in English native speaking countries there are no courses that train the teacher to teach reading English because most English native speakers learn to read before they enter school, and once they are in school, the teacher's task is to develop the students' reading strategies. In Libyan universities, EFL teachers are usually free to choose their own methods of teaching because the authorities consider them to be qualified by holding either a PhD or MA in language or language teaching (Suwaed, 2011). For the most part, the operation of teacher education and training systems in Libyan universities combines the Quranic method (see Section 1.4), and teacher-centred teaching methods (see Chapter Six).

The methods of teaching English reading in the Libyan EFL classroom, are predominantly derived from the way the Holy-Quran is taught (see Section 1.4). The Quranic method of teaching reading is relatively similar to the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). For example, all activities in the Quranic method depend on the teacher (the Sheikh, religious teacher), and there is little opportunity for students to practise their own skills and develop their reading abilities. Here, as explained above, the teacher reads and explains the text to students who repeat what they hear (see Section 1.4). This way of reading the Holy-Quran is similar to features of the Audio-Lingual Method (A-LM) in which students imitate the teacher and read to obtain feedback on their pronunciation (see Chapter Four). The

political system has also affected the educational systems, and I shall now provide a brief summary of their impacts on teaching and learning REFL.

## **1.4 Brief historical overview and Quranic method**

Historically, the Turkish Ottoman Empire colonised Libya for four centuries (1551-1912) (Suwaed, 2011). The educational system during this era was based on religious practice. Kshir (1999), who evaluated the role of managing educational innovation in Libyan schools, claims that the first teacher training school was established only in 1910-1911, when 60 trainees were enrolled. The Turkish authorities employed religious teachers to train the student-teachers in the traditional methods of teaching the Holy-Quran.

In teaching the Holy-Quran, as explained above, the Sheikh reads out to the students, whose task is to repeat aloud after him/her. The instructor's aim is to improve students' pronunciation. Alsadik and Abdulkarim (2012, p.9) state that the Sheikh in the Libyan Quranic schools:

... read aloud to everyone, without any hesitation or confusion in pronouncing the words, then the students read aloud what they hear from the Sheikh several times until the Sheikh was assured that the students have pronounced the words perfectly. (Translated from the original)

**Picture 1:** From Aljazeera (2009) a Holy-Quran school



(Source: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/miscellaneous/2009/11/26>)

The above image illustrates how students sit in the Holy-Quran schools and this method of teaching is widely used in Libya. Libyan society is based on a tribal system that respects Islamic religious values. The Holy-Quran contains the holy law. The first word revealed in the Holy-Quran is an order from God to Mohammed to ‘Ekra’ meaning to read and seek knowledge from cradle to grave. The importance of seeking education is mentioned in many verses. For instance, the Holy-Quran says, ‘are those who have knowledge equal to those who do not have knowledge’ (Chapter 39, verse 9). This clearly shows that Islam influences thinking about education and motivates parents to send their children to Quranic schools to learn how to read from childhood, even before enrolling them in public schools. According to Aljazeera (2009), 20 percent of Libyan population memorize the Holy-Quran. The book contains 115 Sorah (chapters) divided into 6236 ayat (verses). The report also states that 3741 schools teach the book around the country. The Holy-Quran memorizer is treated as a University graduate, even if s/he is under 16 years of age. This method of teaching the Holy-Quran has been influential in teaching EFL. The Libyan EFL students read aloud for the teacher in order to correct their English pronunciation rather than reading for meaning (see Chapters Six and Seven).

### **Gaddafi’s regime**

Gaddafi ruled the country according to his own philosophy and ideology (1969-2011), ‘The Third International Theory’ (Heartfield, 2013) based on the idea that people, rather than one person, exercise power. The coup saw the country return to military power and from then, the country struggled to achieve political stability, which, of course affected educational progress. Gaddafi entered into unsuccessful wars with border countries such as Egypt in 1973 and Chad in 1982, and supported insurgencies all over the world (DeRouen and Heo, 2007).

From the outset, the regime hampered educational progress and that continued for 42 years (Abushafa, 2014). For example, there was a continuation of teachers’ educational practice in which they followed Quranic methods of instruction with students learning verses by rote, aiming for perfect pronunciation of the holy words, and in which understanding of what the scripture or words meant was regarded as relatively unimportant. Shortly after Gaddafi’s coup, schools and universities found it increasingly difficult to teach English (and French) or to access English language resources such as newspapers. In the mid-80s, when Libya’s relationship with the USA and UK deteriorated, Gaddafi’s regime engaged

in a campaign against English which was seen as the language of ‘obnoxious colonialism’ (Mohamed, 2014), with the result that, in the 1980s and 1990s, English language teaching was banned by the Ministry of Higher Education. English was removed from the curriculum and university English Language departments and faculties were closed.

English did not return to the curriculum until the late 1990s, and the restoration of relations with the west after resolving the Lockerbie case (Mohamed, 2014). Until then, English language publications, such as newspapers and magazines, were banned, and importing English books was prohibited (Assed, 2013). Foreign language teachers’ contracts were revoked, and they were replaced by Arabic speakers. Unsurprisingly, many teachers were not trained to teach EFL or REFL. They had no access to English publications or L1 speakers, so that many who now teach English do not have a qualification to teach a FL. Libya is still struggling to overcome the consequences of banning English for so long, a situation made worse by current political turmoil and civil unrest. It is not, then, surprising that my data reveals that students are concerned about how to learn REFL strategies effectively. Now, the following section summarises the research questions of this study.

## **1.5 Research questions**

This study investigates the teaching of REFL in Libyan universities, with particular reference to methods and models of reading. My research is based on qualitative research methods (discussed in Chapter Five) which aim to discover, explore and describe social experiences, the how, what and why of REFL. Taking into consideration the significance and context of the research, the original research questions posed were as follows:

1. Are the teaching methods that are currently used in Libyan Universities' EFL classrooms appropriate to teach reading English?
2. Are the current models used in reading applicable to REFL readers? How does the EFL reader understand the text:
  - Does s/he decode (breaking the words and sentences)?
  - Is decoding, using syntactic, phonological, and vocabulary knowledge, appropriate to understand the context of the passage?
  - Does s/he use his/her background knowledge of the world?

3. Can we use reading models/theories to understand how reading works and can therefore enable better reading (and teaching of reading) in REFL?
4. What roles can Libyan EFL teachers play in helping REFL and EFL students become better readers?

I used these research questions to design my data collection. Hays and Singh (2012) remind us that qualitative research is a:

... nonlinear and emerging process – and data collection and analysis occur simultaneously – findings may suggest that the original research question be modified. (Hays and Singh, 2012, p.129)

Following Hays and Singh (2012) and Card (2012), who propose that research questions can be modified after beginning collecting data, while working in Libya and investigating what was happening with readers and teachers in REFL, I changed some of the questions. These adjustments were further refined according to my data. So, the research questions were designed to allow changes as the data was collected and analysed.

From this viewpoint, and to be more specific about the models of reading I was investigating, I added to the second research question the names of models I used such as Goodman's 1967 top-down model; Gough's 1972 bottom-up model; Rumelhart's 1977 interactive model and Bernhardt's 1991 compensatory interactive model. I removed the word 'role' from the fourth research question because I was investigating much more than the teachers' role, focussing, instead, on ways in which Libyan EFL University teachers might teach better, and be supported to teach REFL. The following are the rephrased research questions:

1. Are the teaching methods that are currently used in Libyan Universities EFL classrooms appropriate to teach REFL?
2. Are the models available to describe reading (Goodman's 1967 top-down model; Gough's 1972 bottom-up model; Rumelhart's 1977 interactive model; and Bernhardt's 1991 compensatory interactive model) useful in understanding how EFL students learn to REFL? Are these models useful in investigating the role of:

- Decoding in understanding the reading text (breaking-up words and sentences)?
  - Using syntactic, phonological, and vocabulary knowledge to understand the context of the passage?
  - Using background knowledge of the world/topic/texts-type to understand the reading text?
3. Can we use reading models/theories to help understand how reading works and can therefore enable better reading (and teaching of reading) in REFL?
  4. How can Libyan EFL teachers help EFL students become better readers when reading is understood as ‘reading for meaning’?

## **1.6 Previous research and the significance of this study**

A number of researchers, such as Orafi (2008) and Elabbar (2011) have investigated different aspects of teaching and learning EFL in Libya, but few have focused on a specific language skill such as REFL in Libyan universities. Further, although REFL has been investigated by many researchers in different FL settings, such as Hull (2000) who worked with Hong Kong EFL students on mental behaviours while reading academic articles; Gardiner-Hyland (2010) who researched United Arab Emirate EFL students who teach REFL in secondary schools; and Lu (2002) who researched the readability of EFL Chinese reading materials and course book at university level, relatively few (see, for example, Omar 2014) studies have explored in depth how EFL Libyan-Arabic students interact with the text, and how the EFL teacher can improve students’ reading strategies.

This study derives its importance and originality from the fact that it is unusual in attempting to investigate the methods and models of teaching and learning REFL in the Libyan context using the methods of data collection I deployed. Rather than relying only on classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, data was collected to diagnose the situation with a view to improving REFL and suggesting appropriate action. Beside classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, this study included think aloud protocols (TAPs) in the first stage, referred to as the Reconnaissance Phase, to investigate in depth students’ reported and observed behaviours while reading (see Chapter Five).

Students' participation in the TAPs and follow-up interviews in the first and second phases of the research may contribute to the development of their EFL reading strategies, and those attending lessons had a further opportunity to develop more effective reading strategies and skills. By using video-taped observations and semi-structured interviews to investigate the teaching methods, I sought to fulfil the following aims:

1. To connect theory with practice in teaching reading by investigating the advantages and limitations of theoretical reading models and associated empirical studies.
2. To observe in a small scale study the teaching methods used to teach REFL.
3. To examine the extent to which the theories and models could be usefully applied.
4. To suggest changes to the ways in which REFL is learnt in Libya.
5. To eventually make suggestions to the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education to improve the way that reading English is taught in the Libyan university classroom.

This chapter has introduced the research context, the research problem, the rationale of the research, and the research aims and questions. The following chapter presents the theoretical foundation of the thesis.



# CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical foundations of this research. As noted in Chapter One, my adopted theoretical framework was based, mainly and initially, on the reading models of Goodman and his top-down model (1967), Gough's (1972) bottom-up model, Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model, and Bernhardt's (1991) compensatory interactive model (see below). I drew on these models with a view to understand whether and how the processes of reading described in the models could be applied to the Reading of English as a Foreign Language (REFL), and whether these models could help me to better understand what was going on in REFL from both teachers' and students' perspectives. This chapter begins by briefly stating the development of the theory and models of reading, and then describes the most significant reading models utilised in reading a L1 to explore their applicability to REFL.

Reading models can provide researchers with a tool to explore what is going on in a reader's mind while attempting to comprehend the meaning of a text (de Beaugrande, 1981). Singer and Ruddell (1985) described a reading model as a graphic attempt 'to depict how an individual perceives a word, processes a clause, and comprehends a text' (p.65). Manzo, Manzo, and Estes (2001) argue that the majority of reading models can be categorised as one of three kinds: bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. Each of these models implies a formalised set of strategies on how reading occurs. According to Manzo and Manzo (1990, p.22), bottom-up models start from details such as letters, phonemic elements, words and sentences and work towards a 'global concept' in which the reader builds his/her meaning. By contrast, top-down models begin with a global concept and use the text to illustrate specifics and details, for instance, starting with background knowledge of the topic such as predicting using readers' experience and knowledge about the topic (see Section 2.4). The interactive model describes the reading process as partly top-down and partly bottom-up.

This study employs a theoretical framework based on strategies derived from the reading models to help me understand how students REFL. These models are, mainly, Goodman's (1967) top-down model, Gough's (1972) bottom-up model, Rumelhart's (1977) interactive

model and Bernhardt's (1991) compensatory interactive model. As noted in Chapter One, it is important to recognise that models such as Goodman's (1967), Gough's (1972), and Rumelhart's (1977) were developed from research on L1 users. I use these models to understand their efficacy with FL readers. Reading models provide helpful heuristics (de Beaugrande, 1981) in understanding how to read in English. I believed they could be effective in helping me to understand how EFL readers read.

Historically, there have been a number of studies, (such as Huey, 1908, cited in Hull, 2000), which investigated reading in the L1 in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although research in reading in FL is comparatively new (such as, for example, Bernhardt's 1991-2005 compensatory interactive model which I discuss in Section 2.7.1). However, interest in investigating the mental processes that occur while reading in FL has increased during the last four decades and includes research by Hosenfeld (1977), Block (1986) and Bernhardt (1991), to which I refer in Section 2.7.1. I will explore the potential of these reading models and previous research to better understand REFL from teachers and students, while taking into account the differences between a first and foreign language research context.

With caution about using models for L1 and reading in FL, I can say that reading models such as Gough's (1972) bottom-up model (converting characters into systematic phonemes to understand the text) and Goodman's (1967) top-down model (a psycholinguistic guessing game and described in this chapter) might give useful descriptions of how one reads in EFL. However, an early question I asked was if using such models could help to understand EFL readers, especially those in Libya (where the L1 is Arabic) and if they could serve a useful purpose in helping EFL readers to comprehend different types of English texts. This question led me to review the models of reading in first and foreign languages in terms of strategies and behaviours in reading and I discuss such behaviours and strategies in Chapter Three. In the next section, I outline aspects of models and theories of reading because, in education, there is disagreement on whether the terms 'theory' and 'models' should be used interchangeably (Tracy and Mandel, 2006).

## **2.1 Reading models and theory**

Many scholars, such as Harries and Sipay (1985) and Manzo and Manzo (1990), do not differentiate between 'model' and 'theory' with respect to their use in reading. Cohen,

Manion and Morrison (2011, p.11) state that both terms are sometimes used interchangeably as ‘explanatory devices or schemes having a broadly conceptual framework’. Rosenblatt (1994, cited in Tracey and Mandel, 2012, p.11) also uses the term ‘model’ interchangeably with ‘theory’, suggesting that models ‘pursue explanations that account for a host of variables and the variables’ relationships to one another’. Rosenblatt (1994) defines a model as an abstract pattern devised in order to think about a subject, such as reading. Following the accounts of these writers, the distinction between theory and model does not seem obvious. However, Ruddell, Ruddell and Singer (1994) state a clear distinction between models and theories, arguing as follows:

... a theory is an explanation of a phenomenon (such as the reading process), while a model serves as a metaphor to explain and represent a theory. This representation often takes the form of a depiction of the interrelationship among a theory’s variables and may even make provisions for connecting the theory to observations. The theory is thus more dynamic in nature than the model but describes the way the model operates; the model is frequently static and represents a snapshot of a dynamic process. (Ruddell, Ruddell and Singer, 1994, p.812)

Here, I follow Ruddell, Ruddell and Singer (1994) and use their characterisation of a model as a metaphor to represent or describe a particular theory. In other words, the model is a bridge that connects theory to its experiential field and I do not use the terms ‘model and theory’ interchangeably. This study focuses on using models because, as Goodman (1998) states, a model in itself is not a theory of reading comprehension, but must include learning theories of instruction, and illustrate whether or not these actions help people to read efficiently. Davies (1995) refers to the term ‘model’ as a formalised set of strategies which represent a theory of what actually occurs in the eye and the mind as the reader reads a passage, described through various observable behaviours such as reading aloud (see Section 3.1 for more examples). Davies (1995, p.57) also describes a model as ‘a systematic set of guesses or predictions about a hidden process, which are then subjected to “testing” through experimental studies’ (see below).

Samuels and Kamil (1988) alert researchers to two main problems with respect to their use in reading. The first is the impact of philosophies or theories that direct the development of the model. For instance, reading models invented at the beginning of the 1960s were influenced by behaviourism (see Section 4.1.1), which states that learning is achieved by following controlled procedures set by the instructor, where students, in turn, provide set

responses based on the stimuli (Leonard, 2002). The focus of these models was based on external reading behaviours, such as pronunciation skills, and ignored cognitive actions of predicting, and self-correction. Secondly, according to Samuels and Kamil (1988), researchers were influenced by information gathered solely during experiments, ignoring four main factors which influence reading: age, skills of the participants, materials used, and the context of the study, such as, culture, classroom and type of educational establishment that contextualises the research.

In writing on FL reading literature, Grabe (2009) follows Samuel's and Kamil's (1988) suggestions about the problems of evaluating reading models, but adds that practitioners should evaluate the models that are based on abstract generalizations which might be influenced by the authors' backgrounds, as well as their characters and training. Grabe (2009, p.83) adds that models 'represent synthesis statements' and 'if the synthesis is not based on empirical evidence and reasonable implications' they might not be useful. He also adds that, unlike L1 reading, L2 reading involves two languages where each imposes its own demands, such as lexical, syntactical, phonological, and semantic cross-linguistic variations. Therefore, it is appropriate to recognise that reading in a FL is distinct from reading in a L1. It is also important to trace the history of FL reading and its links to L1 reading models because in contrast to L1 reading research, investigation on FL reading has a more limited history, only starting in the early 1970s (Grabe, 2011). It is also important to note that until recently, reading a FL was viewed as a decoding, bottom-up process, in which the readers built their understanding of the text from the smaller units of the language ('letters') to the larger units ('phrases and clauses') (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988).

## **2.2 Development of theory and models in FL reading**

Until the 1970's, the procedure of reading in a FL, like reading in the L1, was understood primarily in behaviourist terms (see Chapter Four), in which the reader was viewed as a passive recipient of knowledge (Dole, Duffy and Pearson, 1991). According to Fries (1972), until the 1970s, RFL was viewed as an adjunct to oral language skills. Despite the fact that sociocultural factors, such as culture, customs and habits that readers might not be familiar with, were recognised as playing a role in reading in a L1 in the 1960s, they were not considered to play any role in RFL, and the focus remained on bottom-up reading

strategies to improve oral skills (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988). It was not until the 1970s that theories about reading began to change, when Goodman's (1967) top-down 'psycholinguistic guessing game' model gained prominence. This model posited that the reader uses prediction skills and language knowledge to comprehend the meaning of the text, and this model began to have an impact on reading in a FL. In the following section, I begin by discussing the bottom-up model from the L1 viewpoint before relating it to FL reading.

### 2.3 The bottom-up model

Bottom-up models of reading are considered to be data or 'text driven' (Manzo and Manzo, 1995) with readers grasping the meaning from the text itself, how the text is organised and from each word in the sentence. Gough (1972) argued that the good reader focuses on every single letter in the text, and reads word-by-word in order to understand the text. For instance, if the reader wants to read the extract below from A Scots Quair, s/he should theoretically read each word in the sentence to comprehend the context, no matter their linguistic level but, as I will demonstrate, this method does not result in meaning. For Farrell (2009), further, reading is based on extracting propositions:

When we read, one thing we do is extract the propositions from the text. How? By breaking sentences into their constituent parts and constructing the propositions from there. Comprehension then depends on the proposition we have extracted, which serve as the basis of what we understand and recall.  
(Farrell, 2009, p.18)

From Farrell's viewpoint, reading and understanding any text relies on the reader's knowledge of words and grammatical patterns in the sentence, then making inferences and the propositions.

*In the Den of Kinraddie one such beast had its lair and by day it lay about the woods and the stench of it was awful to smell all over the countryside, and at gloaming a shepherd would see it, with its great wings half-folded across the great belly of it and its head, like the head of meikle cock, but with the ears of a lion, poked over a fir tree, watching.*

Following the sort of reading suggested in Gough's model, I read each word in the extract and broke sentences into their constituent parts, but I still had difficulties in understanding the text because the grammatical pattern of the sentences was complicated, and there were a number of unfamiliar words. Further, because of my unfamiliarity with the topic, vocabulary or dialect, I struggled to extract propositions about the text (Farrell, 2009). The basic grammatical structure in English is subject-verb-object, with the subject often representing the noun for place or person, and the verb which identifies the action or being of the sentence (Schmitt, 2000). However, the grammatical structure in the extract is complex. In this clause, for example, '*with its great wings half-folded across the great belly of it*', the naïve reader may have forgotten already the subject of the sentence, *beast*, or have not quite grasped that the author is describing what a shepherd would have once seen at dusk (gloaming) in Kinraddie's mythical past. Additionally, the sentence contains 74 words, which is a long sentence even for a L1 user, has one subject *beast*, different types of verbs *lay about*, with a number of aspects in the past tense such as *poked*, and follows an oral, rather than traditional narrative form. Further, the syntactical and grammatical basis of the text is to be found in Scots Gaelic and archaic English (childe).

I found it difficult to identify the meaning of 'lay', in '*In the Den of Kinraddie one such beast had its lair and by day it lay about the woods*'. I was unsure if it was a transitive verb that requires a direct subject and object as in '*lay about the woods*', or an adjective having the meaning of 'secular' (as in 'lay person', the meaning I know). The verb comes after a number of words that have different functions in the sentence, and that also confused me. Had I followed the bottom-up model, I might have started with the graphics in order to comprehend the text. However, when I tried to break the sentences into their constituent parts I still could not derive meaning from the words alone or together. Moreover, I was unable to grasp the writer's intended meaning by combining words and linguistic structures because the grammatical and lexical patterns were above my linguistic level. So far, the model is unable to account for the difficulties foreign language will encounter reading texts such as these.

The following section discusses in more detail the bottom-up model from Gough's (1972) original view as his 1972 model was considered as the most important bottom-up reading model.

### 2.3.1 Gough's (1972) bottom-up model

The most influential bottom-up model was introduced by Gough (1972), and became known as the 'bottom-up' information-processing model focused on 'one second of reading'. What made this model interesting when it appeared was its contrast to Goodman's top-down model discussed in Section 2.4.1. Instead of regarding a good reader as an 'intelligent guesser', Gough characterised the good reader as a passive decoder who makes little use of the text's context. Following Gough's model, a reader would focus on analysing and breaking the words into segments, and 'plod through the sentence, letter by letter, word by word' (Gough, 1972, p.354). From Gough's point of view, learning to read is learning to decode, namely, changing graphic characters into phonemes. As a result, the printed form can be changed into a spoken form while reading:

The reader converts characters into systematic phonemes... The reader knows the rules that relate one set of abstract entities to another... The Reader is a decoder... (Gough, 1972, p.310)

Gough's (1972) linear model of reading states that the reader follows a number of stages when processing a text: 1) eye fixation, 2) letter identification, 3) phonological representation, 4) understanding of words serially from left to right, and 5) absorption of visual stimulus. In other words, reading, according to Gough (1972), begins by capturing each letter to examine and identify an image from the text. After the image is identified, the decoding process starts. According to Williams (2006, p.355), the central feature of Gough's model is that the processing moves in one direction, from the *bottom*, which is the perception of letters on the page, to the *top*, which is the cognitive process that constructs meaning. Now, I apply Gough's model to my reading of the following extract:

#### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondesnil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

When I began reading the text using Gough's model to guide me, I started with the first word 'Kinraddie' which contains three syllables: Kin-rad-die. At first, I thought the syllable 'Kin-' was related to the word 'kill' because the last syllable is 'die'. Then I read the whole sentence, but found that the meaning did not make sense because of the verb 'won' which follows and bears no relation to 'kill'. I then took each word in the sentence, decoded it, and to that extent I followed the bottom-up model. However, this failed to yield meaning. I did not know the meaning of the words, even when separating them into syllables to try to understand each word individually. As I explained in the introduction, the word 'Kinraddie' has no linguistic correlation in my L1. I sought help from my supervisors, who explained that 'Kin' is from Scottish Gaelic, 'cean' means 'head', while 'raddie', the place name, is fictional though the 'aidh' (anglicised as 'ie' here) is adjectival but in this instance 'raddaidh' has no place name meaning in Gaelic. I learned that the word 'childe' was an old spelling of 'child' and 'Norman' was a northern French national identity (see Chapter One). By then, I began to understand some of the context, and knew that I was missing knowledge of the language, culture, history, and place in which the novel was set. The importance of this kind of knowledge is missing from Gough's model because he is interested in the relation of decoding to *linguistics* rather than to *reading* comprehension (Balota and Chumbley, 1990).

In this model, Gough (1972) states that the reader is not a guesser since he observes:

A guess may be a good thing... But rather than being a sign of normal reading, it indicates the child did not decode the word in question rapidly enough to read normally. The good reader need not guess; the bad should not. (Gough, 1972, p.317)

As an, arguably, 'poor' reader, I found myself trying to guess the meaning of the text, since bottom-up type strategies were failing me. According to Gough's (1972) analysis of reading, Goodman's (1967) guessing, as I discuss in Section 2.4.1, may be used when reading has broken down, and decoding is difficult or impossible in application. Guessing, however, did not help me here. Guessing may work for fluent or skilled L1 readers with a threshold level of understanding, but even a L1 speaker might struggle with words such as 'Kinraddie', 'meikle', or 'gryphon' unless they come from, or know people from, that region of Scotland, or have encountered these words elsewhere. It seems clear that applying a strict decoding process as suggested by Gough's model cannot help either. I could identify letters, break words into graphemes and phonemes to pronounce whole



words like 'Kinraddie', but I still did not understand the text. While I would decode the words, I could not comprehend them because decoding, while necessary, is not sufficient for reading comprehension, as Gough and Tunmer (1986) later acknowledge. The five linear processes that Gough (1972) suggests are involved in processing text failed once more to yield meaning. Based on this discussion, the following section discusses the problems of Gough's bottom-up model.

### **2.3.2 Some problems with Gough's (1972) model**

According to Birch (2007), bottom-up models, such as Gough's might help the reader 'read faster and with better comprehension, because more efficient bottom-up reading leaves more attention for higher level processing' (p. 114). However, Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) state that Gough's model suffers from several weaknesses:

... including its equation of reading with speech, its narrow focus on "sentences" (rather than propositions or texts), and its reliance on ill-defined (and untestable) processing mechanisms. (Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p.19)

These processing mechanisms, according to Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), include graphemic, phonological and syntactical processes. Rumelhart (1977) criticized the bottom-up model for its neglect of the role of the reader's background knowledge, and I referred to this in my attempts to read A Scots Quair text above. Because it is a linear model in which comprehension goes in one direction from the bottom-up, Rumelhart (1977) argues that it cannot account for higher levels of reading interaction (see below). Moreover, the bottom-up model of reading was not used to understand REFL processes until 1973, when Eskey stated that the bottom-up model undervalued the contribution of the reader because it failed to identify how the reader might use his/her background knowledge to comprehend the text. In other words, reader schemata or background knowledge, which I discuss in Chapter Three, were not recognised as having any role in comprehending the text.

As an EFL reader, I felt I lacked any skill in reading this text. I had no adequate background knowledge about the topic and I was only using the information on the page. Even when I succeeded in analysing the grammatical context of A Scots Quair, which took a long time, I was unable to understand the text because the semantic process that includes understanding the meaning of vocabulary was absent. I had the grammar but I did not have

the meaning or understanding of the orthography. Decoding and analysing the grammatical units in context is only part of the reading process. Even in the L1, in order to be a good reader, it is not enough to understand the structure and syntactical units. For reasons such as these, Williams (2006) criticises bottom-up models, stating that ‘they cannot account for context effects’ (p.365). For instance, readers reading in their L1 often miscue, for example, correcting the reading mistakes immediately without waiting until the end of the sentence.

Later, Gough and Tunmer (1986), in a work known as ‘a simple view of reading’, stated that the reader could decode anything, but not necessarily understand everything s/he decoded. Gough and Tunmer (1986) stated that decoding is not sufficient for comprehension but it is necessary for reading. They described reading, ‘*R*’ (reading comprehension), as an equal product of decoding, ‘*D*’ (decoding), and ‘*C*’ (comprehension). If ‘*D*’, that is, if the reader’s decoding skills, are *zero* then the comprehension skill is *zero*:  $R = D \times C$ . In other words, the ability to decode is at the core of reading ability, so that learning to decode is tantamount to learning to read (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). The reading process according to Gough’s and Tunmer’s (1986) viewpoint is a product of listening and decoding. For example, according to a simple view of reading, if I cannot read any of the words from the above Scots Quair extract that means my overall reading ability is zero (see Chapter Seven).

Despite these criticisms, I cannot ignore the bottom-up model in REFL because aspects of it are often used by learner-readers who depend on local strategies such as decoding to understand the text, and I used it in reading A Scots Quair. Gough’s bottom-up model appears to fit the audio-lingual method of teaching a foreign language that I discuss in Section 4.2.3, which views reading, according to Swaffar (1988, p.129), as a habitual matter, a stimulus-response reaction to the written symbol, as ‘verbal mechanics’. The audio-lingual method considers the decoding of the sound representation relationship as the main characteristic of learning the target language. Moreover, the bottom-up model involves processes that work in the opposite direction to the top-down model. While the reader in the bottom-up model is working from text to meaning (from the particular to the global), the top-down reader is working from meaning to the text (from the global to the particular). The following section discusses the top-down model processes in more detail.

## 2.4 The top-down model

In contrast to bottom-up models, which are data driven, top-down models of reading processes tend to be 'meaning-driven' in which the reader is said to start with their background knowledge about the text, 'and actively compare what is read to what is already understood' (Manzo and Manzo, 1995, p.16). In other words, reading in a top-down model is 'primarily directed by readers' goals and expectations' (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p.32). In this case, the reader according to Grabe (2009) is characterised as someone who has information about the text and samples information to reject or accept this data. Reading in the top-down model is also used to interpret texts that call for conceptually driven processing (Donnelly, 1994), whereby concepts and schemas from personal experience are used to help the reader understand the significance of the new information. Reading in the top-down model is seen as:

... active processes where the reader builds and creates new meaning from the text, but not a collection of ideas, organized to make sense. (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p.32)

In other words, any new information that readers come across in the text is made meaningful by their existing knowledge of the topic (Brozo, 1995). The model pays less attention to the decoding processes discussed earlier, and focuses on the reader's general world knowledge to understand any text. I apply these considerations to the following extract and explain how I read it using aspects of the top-down model:

### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

As with bottom-up processes, I was unable to understand the text but, trying to follow the top-down model, this was because the context was completely new to me. As I explained, I had no experience or background knowledge to help me access it because it is from a different culture, uses dialect, geographical place names, and mythical and historical references that are unknown to me. The top-down model might be useful in

comprehending sentences that contain one unfamiliar word, but in texts such this in which most of the words, concepts and references (*gryphon*, *William the Lyon*) are unfamiliar, the case is more complicated. I could not generate reading goals or expectations. Because of the chapter heading, *The Unfurrowed Field*, I was expecting the text to be about agriculture, which features in the novel, but not in this extract. I was unable to focus on the meaning of the text, or minimize the linguistic and visual details, which, I thought, could open the path to understanding.

According to Treiman (2003), theories that stress top-down processing, such as those of Goodman (1967) and Smith (1978):

... hold that readers form hypotheses about which words they will come across, and take in just enough visual data to test their hypotheses. (Treiman, 2003, p.665)

Top-down processing assists students to determine any ambiguities they have toward the information. Here, too, I was faced with a difficulty because I was unable to form any hypotheses once I realised that the text was not about agriculture. This indicates that using one direction of reading strategies such as top-down might not be enough to read for meaning in a FL. The next section represents Goodman's and Smith's views on the top-down reading model.

#### **2.4.1 Goodman and Smith's top-down model**

Goodman (1967) wanted to refute that reading is a precise process involving 'exact, detailed, sequential perception, and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and larger word units' (p.126) as suggested by bottom-up models. He advocates the top-down model of reading, and refers to reading as 'a psycholinguistic guessing game' which:

Involves an interaction between thought and language ... selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. (Goodman, 1967, p.127)

In Goodman's model, readers use their background knowledge to make sense of what they are going to read. In other words, the reader uses a general knowledge of the world to guess what might come next, which will either confirm or contradict that guess, and consequently impact on whether s/he rejects or accepts these guesses.

### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

In my case, applying Goodman's procedures to reading the above text also failed. I was unable to comprehend the sentences because I could not use the graphic meaning such as word and sentence structure. Furthermore, I was unable to access the meaning of the passage using my background knowledge because there was nothing in the text that corresponded to my experience and so to that background knowledge. Even when my supervisors explained the text to me, I was unable to continue because of my inability to understand the words in the sentences that came later. However, and as the bottom-up model suggests, I should have been able to do this. I demonstrated word-reading ability but had no comprehension ability. I was able to pronounce words but I could not understand their meaning. I read the text almost correctly, despite not knowing what the words meant. Goodman calls this, adapting the idea from Chomsky (1966), a 'recoding operation' in which 'the reader recodes the graphic input as phonological or oral output. Meaning is not normally involved to any extent ...' (cited in Goodman, 1967, p.131).

According to Konza (2006), decoding each word in Goodman's model is less important than the reader's expectations and understanding of semantics in order to guess what might be ahead. For Goodman (1976), decoding is not reading the precise word in the text but the meaning should be correct if 'the basic decoding is directly from print to meaning' (p.482). Goodman (1988) stated that, although his model was built on the study of English reading, it might 'be applicable to reading in all languages and all orthographies' (p. 20). For EFL readers who attempt to read it might be ineffective, even impossible, to be an intelligent guesser but, following Goodman, they might reduce their dependence on the text and focus on sampling (looking through the text seeking familiar information).

Goodman (1968) argues that decoding any text could entail three sequential components (cited in Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009), which are phonological or phonemic:

GRAPHEMES → PHONEMES → MEANING

Decoding from Goodman's point of view is either direct 'graphemes to meaning' or mediated 'graphemes to phonemes to meaning' (cited in Samuels and Kamil, 1988, p.23). To know whether reading requires decoding or phonological encoding, Goodman (1968) argues that reading 'is exceedingly complex' (p. 15), and to understand this we should know how written and oral language interact to make communication possible:

We must consider the special characters of written language and special uses of written language. We must consider the characteristics and abilities of the reader [that] are prerequisite to effective reading. (Goodman, 1968, p.15)

Goodman (1976) views reading as a process which depends on 'partial use of ... minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation' and that readers process partial information from a text so that 'tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected, or refined as reading progress' (p.498). A L1 reader may execute these processes efficiently, but it is unlikely that a person from Libya studying EFL would be able to read and understand a text about the fictional town of Kinraddie based on his/her expectations, or by breaking the text into graphemes and phonemes. Meaning at all levels would be elusive. A similar view of reading as a psycholinguistic, top-down process is suggested by Smith (1978) who states that:

Readers do not normally attend to print with their minds blank, with no prior purpose and with no expectation of what they might find in the text. Readers normally look for meaning rather than strive to identify letters or words. The way readers look for meaning is not to consider all possibilities nor to make reckless guesses about just one, but rather they predict within the most likely range of alternatives. (Smith, 1978, p.163)

Smith suggests that readers understand the meaning by predicting in order to identify new words. I consider how this works by applying Smith's (1978) theory to the following extract.

*The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE* lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.

I started by reading the topic 'The Unfurrowed Field' to think ahead and anticipate the content of the text. I tried to read the topic and link the information that I had to the new information. For example, from the title, I expected that the text would be about agriculture because of words such as 'field' and 'unfurrowed', though I had to look up 'unfurrowed' in my dictionary. As I continued reading, I found it speaking about 'beasts' and 'ghosts', which disrupted my comprehension. As it had no relation to agriculture, I was unable to guess or make hypotheses. Contrary to Smith's (1978) ideas, my mind was a blank. I was looking for meaning and trying to identify letters or words. I had no 'possibilities' to choose from a 'range of alternatives' and 'reckless guesses' were possible since I had no clues or cues with which to work. For me anything or nothing seemed equally possible. People learn by exploring new information by reading new things but the reader's knowledge of any topic is often based on some knowledge of, for example, their cultural, linguistic, and historical background. The reader usually uses prediction skills with topics s/he already knows to some degree. For instance, EFL readers from Scotland might know about gryphons and lairs, and readers from the North East of the country will understand what 'miekle' means. Students from Arabic countries are unlikely to know these words.

Smith (1978) refers to the primary role of 'prediction' rather than to what Goodman calls 'psychological guessing' but the concept is similar. From Smith's point of view:

The good reader can confirm the identity of a word from the upcoming words or by sampling just a few words in the visual display of new words. (cited in Stanovich, 2000, p.25)

I agree with Samuels and Kamil (1988), who consider that Smith's proposal is not really a model but a 'description of the linguistic and cognitive processes that any decent model of reading will need to take into account' (p.24). Smith's contribution, according to Samuels and Kamil (1988), is to explain how the redundancy that occurs at all levels of language (letters, words, and sentences) provides the reader with the flexibility to create meaning. Later, Smith (1988) differentiated between information and meaning, stating that reading is receiving information from the text and decoding what the writer encodes (and see Chapter Three). He argued that 'information becomes understanding when it gets into the brain...or it remains an isolated fact' (p.247). Smith no longer believes that reading is the acquisition of information from the text, but is the brain dealing with meaning and understanding, 'how the brain resolves uncertainty is related to visual input from the eyes' (p.62).

## 2.4.2 Some problems with the top-down model

Davies (1995) states that, while Goodman offers ‘a reasonable “truthful” representation ... of beginning first language readers’ (p. 62), he does not offer a clear explanation for the behaviour of fluent readers. Eskey (1988), similarly, criticised the top-down model, arguing that the model offers neither an explanation for, nor a representation of the behaviour of efficient readers. As I have started to indicate, Goodman’s model is not designed for reading in a FL. While his model might be accurate for beginning L1 readers in an eventual interactive manner (see below), as Davies argues, it does not provide a true picture of the problems that might be encountered by less proficient readers. Relating this issue to FL reading, Eskey, commenting on Goodman’s model, stated that:

[it] has resulted in many useful insights, but lack of attention to decoding problems has, I think, produced a somewhat distorted picture of the true range of problems second language readers face. (Eskey, 1988, p.94)

Guessing and predicting techniques suggested by the top-down model might not be sufficient to help the EFL student read and understand. My own experience accords with Eskey's diagnosis, and Samuel and Kamil (1998) who state that one of the main problems of the top-down model is that, for many texts, the reader may have a limited knowledge of the topic. As a result, s/he may be unable to predict the upcoming text, as I found with *A Scots Quair*. Even if the reader is proficient or skilled, the time needed to generate prediction may take longer than the time needed to recognise the words. For example, any EFL student who wants to read and understand may have a problem predicting meaning from the text. It is not as easy as the top-down model proposes at the word, structure or sentence level. For instance, EFL students, such as those I describe in Chapters Six and Seven, would struggle to predict words like *Den*, *Norman* and *stench*. As Randal (2007) states, the psychology of readers while reading in FL means that the reader needs to have an established knowledge of word recognition and syntactical structure of the target language in order to make sensible predictions. Because of top-down difficulties discussed in this section, bottom-up supporters, such as Gough (1972) and Stanovich (1980), dismissed the guessing game theory, and argued that the skilful reader does not often engage in guessing. While their assertions may not be relevant to EFL students because these claims are more relevant to L1 speakers, it is interesting and worthwhile to consider what bottom-up and top-down models propose in order to explain how EFL readers read and, perhaps, to consider ways in which they might become efficient readers.



Rumelhart (1977), in his reviews of reading models, stated that both the bottom-up and top-down model had serious deficiencies, as they failed to account for a number of processes known to take place in reading. He developed a reading model entitled ‘an interactive reading model’, which might be helpful in understanding REFL and I consider this model next.

## **2.5 Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model**

During the early 1980s, top-down and bottom-up models were challenged by proponents of interactive model of reading (Hinkel, 2005, p.36). Rumelhart (1977, p.573) stated that reading is ‘at once a “perceptual” and “cognitive” process’ in which the reader employs ‘codes’ and background knowledge of the text to produce meaning. This model differs from top-down models in that its proponents acknowledge the importance of attending explicitly to the skills of decoding and word recognition that bottom-up models treat as integral to comprehension (Israel and Duffy, 2009). According to Rumelhart (1977, p.574), these processes start with ‘a flutter of patterns on the retina’ and end with ‘a definite idea about the writer’s intended message’. Rumelhart introduced the concept of *pattern synthesis* in which all semantic, lexical, and syntactic knowledge interacts to produce correct explanations for the graphemic input (see below). Rumelhart’s model draws from more than one source of information. Davies (1995, p.64) states that the reader in the interactive model ‘is seen to draw simultaneously but selectively, on a variety of sources of data’ such as orthographic, lexical and semantic structures. To clarify, Rumelhart (1977) argues that letter recognition is facilitated when it appears at word level (‘K’ ‘i’ ‘n’ ‘r’ ‘a’ ‘d’ ‘d’ ‘i’ ‘e’), that word recognition is facilitated when it appears at sentence level (Kinraddie), and that all of these patterns depend on the semantic structure on which syntactic parsing relies (*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe*), with meaning depending on the overall context. In other words, the model allows for local processes such as orthographic knowledge and general processes, such as background knowledge, to understand the text.

Rumelhart (1977, p.588) views reading as ‘the product of simultaneous joint application of all knowledge sources’. In other words, the basic notion of Rumelhart’s interactive model is the message centre, where all knowledge sources (semantic, syntax, lexical and orthography) convey the meaning of the graphemes’ input. Rumelhart’s model is a

nonlinear model that combines elements of top-down and bottom-up models, where the information comes from different directions to help the reader interact with the text. For instance, in reading the following extract from A Scots Quair I started reading by utilizing my graphemic (k/i/n/r/a/d/d/i/e), and sensory information to produce the appropriate interpretation for the text.

*The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

I did not understand the context or content, but when I received some background information about it from my supervisors I began to understand. I then simultaneously used my syntactic information to understand the sentence structure, lexical knowledge, semantic information and orthographic visual input to read the text. Moreover, while reading I underlined words I was unable to identify, while applying the above procedures, and then translated them using the Arabic-English dictionary to try and build a more complete understanding of the text. However, there were some words I could not find in the dictionary, so I used the glossary in the book. These activities closely matched Rumelhart's (1977) description of reading as involving flexible processing and several information sources, depending upon contextual conditions. However, these strategies did not fully help me and I still could not really understand the text. I was unable to automatically interact with the text because, as I noted in Chapter One, reading is a complex process and requires different strategies for reading different types of texts. I am suggesting, using my data and my understanding of Rumelhart's (1977) reading model and REFL, that if learners are to read for meaning then an 'eventual' interactive process is required. This means using top-down and bottom-up type strategies to lead to and as part of eventual interactive reading strategies and eventual interactive reading for meaning. Eventual interaction might occur at different levels while reading: at the level of the word, sentence, and the whole text. At the level of word, the reader can use the dictionary, glossary or word structure. At the level of the sentence, the reader can use the sentence structure. At the level of the whole text, the reader can use the text structure such as an understanding of a narrative structure (see Section 2.8), or background knowledge. I was able to use my

general experience, gained from discussion with my supervisors, combined with local reading strategies such as semantic, syntactic, orthographic and lexical knowledge.

### **Some strengths and weaknesses of Rumelhart's interactive model**

Like any reading model, the interactive model has its weaknesses and strengths. As Davies (1995, p.65) observed, Rumelhart's (1977) model has several strengths. It does not, for example, prescribe a single direction for comprehension, but allows for different predictions during various stages in second and first language reading development. In addition, the model also provides an alternative to the top-down and bottom-up model, allowing the reader to depend on more than one source of information for linguistic and textual comprehension. However, Rayner and Pollatsek (1989, p.467) state that there are problems with Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model including that it does not account for eye movements, phonological direction in word recognition, and backup strategies such as prediction in reading comprehension, which are beyond the level of the sentence. I do not agree with this because, while reading *A Scots Quair*, I was able to use all the reading strategies such as confirming and planning as I discuss in Chapter Three. Rumelhart's model is based on 'synthesizing of patterns' (Zwaan, 1993) allowing for different directions and strategies while reading.

Later, Rumelhart and McClelland (1981) modified Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model, suggesting that it is:

A form of cooperative processing in which knowledge at all levels of abstraction can come into play in the process of reading and comprehension.  
(Rumelhart and McClelland, 1981, p.37)

According to Rumelhart and McClelland this modified model takes into account different directions for reading comprehension and so I believe it might be more useful in understanding the differences in language skills of first and foreign language students. Rumelhart and McClelland (1981, cited in Zwaan, 1993) stated that it is not possible to simulate all reading processes and so they focused on word perception. They compared it to a computer program in which they ran the reading program, and then compared the results to experimental data of human reading output (Grabe, 2009). Rumelhart (1980) used a 'schema-theoretic' view of background knowledge, paying attention to the role of the semantic level of processing. He described schemata (see Section 3.2.2) as the

‘fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends’ (1980, p.33). The focus is on higher levels of processing rather than on lower-level processing of visual information. Rumelhart added that:

Readers are said to have understood the text when they are able to find a configuration of hypotheses (schemata) that offers a coherent account for various aspects of the text. To the degree to which a particular reader fails to find such a configuration, the text will appear disjointed and incomprehensible. (Rumelhart, 1980, p.38)

This claim fits with my experience. A Scots Quair seemed disjointed and incomprehensible. When I received explanations from my supervisor about the text and its background (eventual interactive strategy), I began to develop some understanding. Stanovich (1980) studied the Rumelhart interactive model and argued that the reader with weak reading skills in vocabulary recognition becomes dependent on the context. However, readers with strong word recognition would not need the context. Based on this argument, Stanovich (1980) suggested developing the interactive activation model, which will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.6 The compensatory interactive reading model**

Stanovich (1980) reviewed interactive models of reading and developed them by explaining the differences in the ways in which good and poor readers use context (see Section 3.0). Stanovich (1980) proposed the ‘interactive compensatory model’ for reading in L1, indicating that:

A deficit in any knowledge source results in heavier reliance on other knowledge sources, regardless of their level in the processing hierarchy. Thus, according to the interactive compensatory model, the poor reader who has deficient word analysis skills might possibly show greater reliance on contextual factors. (Stanovich, 1980, p. 63)

Stanovich means that if one processor is not working well, or there is insufficient data, other processors compensate for it (Tracy and Mandel, 2012). For example, poor readers, according to Stanovich (1980), may rely on contextual clues, examine pictures, and predict words when their decoding processor is not effective. In this case, according to Konza (2006, p.9) ‘they are compensating for the fact that they cannot decode’ the words. These procedures might be helpful in understanding reading in EFL because if there is a

deficiency at any particular stage (higher or lower levels) the reader might compensate (Stanovich, 1980). However, reading in a FL might not simply be a matter of general weaknesses, an inability to employ local processes or relying only on contextual clues, but a reader in an FL might experience global difficulties in processing and understanding language and meaning. For example, in reading the following extract, I could not employ general and local processes (see the following Chapter) while reading A Scots Quair.

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

Here, I needed further compensatory options, such as translating from the first to the FL, which is accounted for in Rumelhart's interactive model. However, I was unable to find a translation for words such as *Kinraddie* or *meikle* because these words do not have correlations in Arabic, and they were not in the glossary, so this compensatory action also failed. Again, I stopped reading the text and asked for help from my supervisors.

Skilled readers compensate when the visual features are not clear (Stanovich, 1980). For instance, when good readers are reading medical or scientific journals they read in the same way as unskilled readers (Konza, 2006). Their rate of reading is slower and they need to decode words using phonological strategies. They may not have access to unfamiliar words so cannot read with confidence. Skilled readers, according to Stanovich (1986), use prediction strategies when they do not have automatic word recognition strategies, while poor readers use compensatory strategies when they have decoding difficulties with words. Stanovich (1980) did not mention FL readers, but it is possible to say that using strong strategies to compensate for another weak strategy might encourage FL readers to use 'visualisation as a compensation for weakness in linguistic knowledge, as well as an aid to connection, inferencing, retention and recall' (Tomlinson, 2011, p.367). Similarly, Davies (1995) notes that 'when syntactic knowledge is poor, a greater reliance may be placed on orthographic or lexical information' (p.65). She adds that this model is testable, because it provides a basis for investigations of reading in different groups in either a first or a foreign language.

The process of Stanovich's (1980) compensatory interactive model inspired REFL researchers, such as Bernhardt (1991), to suggest models of reading in FL. The following section discusses the compensatory interactive model for REFL.

## **2.7 Second language reading research on the interactive model**

The majority of foreign language reading models have been adapted or borrowed from L1 reading models (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). There are a number of models that deal with the FL reading process, but Bernhardt's (1991) model was the first to capture bottom-up and top-down processing in FL with attention to interactive reading models.

### **2.7.1 Bernhardt's (1991) interactive compensatory model**

Bernhardt's (1991) reading model is based on 'an interactive, multidimensional dynamic of literacy' which she calls 'a multifactor theory of second-language literacy' (p.169), based on three main components: language, literacy and world knowledge. Bernhardt (1991) states that in her model, language refers to grammar, morphology and vocabulary meaning 'linguistic variables entail the *seen* elements in a text, including word structure, word meaning, syntax, and morphology' (p.32). By literacy Bernhardt refers to learning how to approach the text, and literacy variables include 'interpersonal variables such as purpose of reading, intention, and comprehension monitoring' (Bernhardt, 1991, p.32). Along with language and literacy skills, Bernhardt (1991) suggests that 'world knowledge' refers to the reader's background knowledge and plays an important role in interpreting a text.

Bernhardt (1991) states that:

Knowledge entails the background information that a reader already possesses and may or may not use in order to fill in gaps in the explicit linguistic elements in a text. (Bernhardt, 1991, p.33)

The model is built on the idea that FL readers can develop their literacy and reading proficiency over time, and that there are commonalities in text processing between literate students and language students. For example, word recognition errors occur relatively frequently in reading any text the first time, but the errors decrease as the student becomes more proficient (Bernhardt, 1991). The model encompasses what Bernhardt (1991) calls 'micro-level features' and 'macro-level features'. The micro-level features represent

knowledge such as grammar, word recognition and sentence structure. Errors are to be expected:

... word recognition, represented as an exponential curve, posits that in the early stages of proficiency errors that can be attributed to vocabulary difficulties are fairly common. (Bernhardt, 1991, p.170)

In addition, phonemic/graphemic confusions, and syntactic features errors will quickly be reduced as proficiency increases, and the reader becomes familiar with the language and its structure. In order to clarify the knowledge-driven operation, Bernhardt (1991) states that '... the rate of errors due to both content knowledge and knowledge constructed during comprehension decreases as proficiency increases' (p.170). Davies (1995) (cited in Hull 2000) considers 'error rates' as too negative for a model, and suggests instead using 'success rates', which would be more effective in investigating reading models. Yet, even applying Bernhardt's compensatory model while reading *A Scots Quair*, I found it difficult to continue reading, because the more I read, the more difficulty I experienced at the linguistic, literacy and grammatical levels. Therefore, I had to return to the beginning and find the meaning of lexical items I had translated.

Bernhardt (1991) attempted to develop a compensatory interactive model of FL reading, in which the reader can benefit from knowledge sources by compensating his/her deficits in other knowledge sources. The model, importantly, does not disregard the fact that FL readers approach a text from their L1 framework. From Bernhardt's point of view, if the reader has a strong foundation in his/her L1, such as an interest in reading, motivation and knowledge of the topic, s/he will find it easier to acquire FL reading strategies than readers who do not. Bernhardt (1991) grouped these reading factors into three categories (variances): L1 literacy, foreign language knowledge, and factors such as motivation (Bernhardt, 1991, cited in Shrum and Glisan, 2015). Bernhardt's compensatory FL reading model hypothesises that L1 literacy in reading accounts for 20% of the variance in FL performance, that vocabulary and grammar of the foreign language accounts for 30% of variance, and that the remaining variance relies on the reader's motivation, comprehension strategies and reader's knowledge (Bernhardt, 1991). From Bernhardt's point of view, FL readers can compensate from one knowledge area to another. Bernhardt (1991, p.140) described this process as 'switching process', in which the reader can 'assist to take over for other knowledge sources that are inadequate or nonexistent'. Though Bernhardt's model seems to be more realistic than the top-down and bottom-up models, it is important to note

that the model was examined with 300 German, Spanish and French EFL students, who were familiar with the English alphabetical system. The model was not tested on readers whose languages are based on different orthographies, such as Arabic, which might be caused by these cross-linguistic differences such as grammar and word structure (see Chapter Seven).

Later, Bernhardt (2000) stated that there are advantages and disadvantages of her reading model. She argued that ‘general literacy ability (about 20% of any given score), grammar (about an additional 30% of any given score, 27% of which is word knowledge, and 3% syntax), and 50% of any given score at any particular point in time is unexplained’ (p.804), which are comparative contributions made to comprehension scores. Further, her model does not investigate or illustrate the cognitive processes that reading entails. In 2005, Bernhardt introduced the compensatory model of second-language reading to analyse the contribution of L1 literacy (vocabulary, text structure and alphabetic, etc.) and language knowledge (grammar knowledge, vocabulary and linguistics, etc.) to read in FL (see Chapter Eight). Bernhardt (2005) found that L1 literacy in reading in second language is 20% and L2 proficiency is 30% while 50% are unexpected variance (such as motivation).

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I described the progress of reading models over the last four decades, during which reading models developed from bottom-up or top-down views of reading to bottom-up and top-down interactive processes. The model, which might best explain the ideal or ultimate reading process in REFL, is Rumelhart’s (1977) interactive model. Rumelhart’s model suggests representing multiple processors such as bottom-up, top-down type strategies while reading simultaneously in an interactive process, rather than in a linear manner of reading in the FL. However, as I noted earlier, I could not expect an automatic interactive way of reading because reading requires different strategies for reading different types of texts. Basing my ideas on Rumelhart’s (1977) and Bernhardt’s compensatory interactive models, I suggest that there will, ideally, be an eventual interactive process if the reader is reading for meaning. Again, this means using top-down and bottom-up type strategies to lead to and as part of eventual interactive reading strategies and eventual interactive reading for meaning. Eventual interactive might occur at different levels while reading: at the level of the word, sentence, and the whole text. At the



level of word, the reader can use the dictionary, glossary or word structure. At the level of the sentence, the reader can use the sentence structure. At the level of the whole text, the reader can use the text structure such as an understanding of a narrative structure.

Yet, this tentative conclusion requires further support from research and literature before we can assume that we are in a position to understand a model of REFL, if such a thing is possible. For this reason, Rumelhart and McClelland (1982) themselves were careful in their proposal their own model, stating ‘several recent findings that seem to challenge the model are considered and a number of extensions are proposed’ (p.60). Similarly, Heap (1991) stated that reading models differ with respect to how people ‘can read, do read, and should read’ (p. 111). All models claim that they capture how people actually read, though they do not, as I will demonstrate. This shows the difficulties in selecting a particular model for FL, as the more we learn about reading models and what actually occurs during reading, the more their limitations become apparent: reading is a highly complex process that models cannot capture in its entirety.

In order to offer a clear picture of REFL, I clarify next the distinction between reading models, strategies and behaviours in the following chapter which outlines, also, some relevant previous studies that investigated reading models.

# **CHAPTER THREE: STRATEGIES AND READING IN EFL**

## **3.0 Introduction**

As illustrated in Chapter One, reading models can only provide us with metaphorical representations of the cognitive processes which occur in the reader's mind (Davies, 1995; Grabe and Stoller, 2002). My study aimed to expand my knowledge and understanding about reading behaviours and so I looked to reading strategies to help understand, if possible, at least some of the mental processes and decision-making that occur in readers' minds. It became important to clarify what is meant, by others and by me in this study, by 'strategies' and 'behaviours' employed and exhibited by readers, although, as will be seen, there is little agreement on the meaning of 'strategies' and how they can be distinguished from other terms, such as reading behaviours (Kusiak, 2013). Since finding an appropriate definition for reading strategies is problematic, this chapter is organised into two sections. In Section One, I investigate the strategies of Reading in English as a Foreign Language (REFL) that might be used within the different reading models outlined in Chapter Two. I briefly illustrate distinctions between reading behaviours and strategies and then, in Section Two, I will review the main difficulties that Arabic speakers might have in adopting reading strategies.

Before further discussing the two sections, it is important to illustrate briefly the differences between two terms that occur in the following sections: 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' readers because teaching reading strategies to students with low proficiency may be a key point towards helping unsuccessful readers to read for meaning and to become successful readers.

### **Successful and unsuccessful readers**

In the literature, the terms successful and unsuccessful are viewed by different scholars from their own point of view. For instance, Samuels and Kamil (1988) describe the skilled reader as the reader who can quickly generate predictions (top-down reading strategies) about the reading passage in a limited time to comprehend a text. However, Stanovich (1980), as stated in Chapter Two, describes the skilled reader as the reader who can

compensate for a lack of reading comprehension by employing higher-level (top-down) processing strategies to lower-level processing, such as using morphological knowledge, while reading, whereas unskilled readers cannot. The poor reader, from Stanovich's (1980) point of view, is the reader who relies on decoding each word to understand unknown words, whereas the skilled reader might not need to draw on the context because s/he has an extensive vocabulary. For Bakken (2009, p.120) the skilled reader uses the text to relate his/her background knowledge (top-down and bottom-up reading strategies) to the text, developing this idea to set a clear distinction between successful and unsuccessful readers. The distinctions are summarised in the following table.

successful readers:	unsuccessful readers:
have the ability to interact and predict what will happen in the text using clues presented in the text which they relate to their background knowledge.	read the text but do not interact with it.
at lower-level cognitive processes automatically recognise letters and words when they read.	are not automatic and focus on each sound, letters and words to comprehend.
at higher-level cognitive processes, successful readers are able to relate what they read to what they already know and to make a bridge between what is written to what they experienced.	are unable to use and link their background knowledge and link it to what they read.

**Table 1:** Successful and unsuccessful readers (Bakken, 2009, p.120)

Whether a reader is successful or unsuccessful is influenced by factors such as the reader's motivation, knowledge of the text's content, genre, and type of text s/he is reading (Bakken, 2009). For instance, a good EFL reader, who specialises in education, might be judged a poor reader when reading a medical text because s/he is not familiar with the medical procedures and terminology. Hedge (1991) argues that success in the reading processes is related to the reader's purpose for reading, including whether s/he is reading for comprehension or language learning. Hedge (1991) also adds a category to her description of reading purposes which she calls 'drive': namely, reading for meaning, gist, language acquisition, or a combination of both meaning and language acquisition. She adds this because purposes are not only important for reading, but also for controlling it (cited in

Davies, 1995). Further discussions about these issues are discussed in Section Two of this chapter.

As seen in Chapter Two and this chapter, both first and second language reading research often focuses on reading strategies because strategies help to understand how the reader (successful or unsuccessful) interacts with the text (see below). Keeping this in mind, in Section One of this chapter I briefly discuss the history of reading research in terms of successful and unsuccessful reading strategies. I discuss, also, the difficulties in highlighting a clear definition of reading strategies. In Section Two of this chapter, I will briefly discuss those factors that affect REFL.

### **3.1 Section One: learning strategies**

#### **3.1.1 The problem of definition**

This section begins by arguing that there is no precise definition for the term ‘learning strategy’. Researchers such as Hosenfeld (1977), Block, (1986) and Sarig (1987) have suggested various concepts to explain what strategies represent, and whether they are automatic, conscious or unconscious (see below). Providing a definitive definition for the term strategy is complicated because it is often confused and used interchangeably with terms such as skills and behaviours. This section highlights the distinctions between these terms and how I utilized them with respect to reading and reading models in this study.

Griffiths (2013) defines the term 'strategy' in FL learning as ‘activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning’ (p.87). This definition suggests that there are different choices of strategies which a reader can select. However, while this definition identifies what learners may do, it does not show whether these consciously chosen activities are effective, namely, how successful or unsuccessful the strategy might be. This is because the effectiveness of the strategies cannot be judged by stating their usefulness to the student. Another definition is presented by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) who define learning strategies as ‘the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information’ (p.1). In this definition, strategies are not clearly categorised because they include both unobservable cognitive ‘thoughts’, and behaviours that can be observed and evaluated. Ellis (1994) suggests that we define learning strategies as ‘problem-solving’ activities, teaching

students 'how' to learn rather than mastering the content materials in which students deploy a strategy to conquer a learning problem. Similarly, Lorsch (1991) describes a strategy as:

... a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual comes across when translating a text segment from one language into another. (Lorsch, 1991, P.76)

Lorsch's (1991) definition focuses on translation as a mental process and not reading as a whole. By contrast, Holec (1996) did not include problem-orientation in his analysis of learning strategy, preferring a neutral sense of an 'operation employed by the students to aid acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information' (p.42). Oxford (1990, p.8) views Holec's definition as helpful but suggests it 'does not fully convey the excitement or richness of learning strategies'. She states that this definition requires further development to show which strategies can be 'successfully' incorporated into the concept of learning strategies. Accordingly, Oxford (1990, p.8, cited in Holec, 1996) defines learning strategies as specific actions taken by 'the student to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations'. Additionally, she claims that learning and teaching strategies can help students to become independent and learn new aspects of the language (see below). However, another obstacle in defining the meaning of learning strategies is that they are often confused with other related terminologies such as 'skills' and 'behaviours', which I address in the following section.

### 3.1.2 Reading strategies: the problem of overlapping terminologies

According to Casnave (1988), there is 'no research yet that has definitively identified what reading strategies are' (p. 285). However, there have been recently a number of attempts to separate the term 'reading strategy' from other terminologies. For example, Grabe and Stoller (2002, p.15) define reading skills and strategies as follows.

**Table 2:** Definitions of reading skills and strategies

Reading skills	Include linguistic processing abilities that are relatively automatic in their use and combination. For example, word recognition.
Reading strategies	Abilities that readers have conscious control over but are also automatic, such as skipping a word we may not know when reading.

By reviewing the above definitions (Table 2), it seems that the relationships between the two terms are closely connected in that a skill could quickly become a strategy. For instance, tracking words on the page using a pencil while reading might be considered a 'reading strategy' if it is consciously chosen from a group of options, and a 'reading skill' if it is chosen unconsciously. This explanation raises another problem because there is no clear-cut definition that delineates a strategy as a conscious or subconscious action. Grabe and Stoller (2002) state that skipping a word while reading is a reading strategy applied as a mental process. On the other hand, other scholars such as O'Malley and Chamot (1990) describe strategies as external behaviours. Given their complexity, I agree with Davies (1995) that 'the kinds of behaviour classified as strategies, at least initially, appear to be almost unlimited' (p. 49).

The next area of complexity, implied above, is whether these behaviours are conscious or unconscious strategies. According to Pritchard (1990), the term 'conscious behaviours' refers to reading strategies, but for Barnett (1988a), it refers to both conscious and unconscious behaviours. According to Freud (1905, cited in Jones-Smith 2012, p.37) conscious behaviour 'includes everything that we are aware of. This is the aspect of our mental processing that we can think and talk about rationally'. Freud (1905) adds that unconscious behaviours are 'a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that are outside of our conscious awareness' (cited in Jones-Smith 2012, p.37) (see below for examples). It might be argued that researchers who view strategies as conscious are searching from a mentalistic view. Davies (1995) defines reading strategies as 'a physical or mental action used consciously or unconsciously with the intention of facilitating text comprehension and/or learning' (p.50). Her distinction between actions while reading are based on two main categories: 'reported behaviour' that is physically observable, and 'behaviour' which is mental and so non-observable, such as the use of background knowledge. From these distinctions, Davies introduced five types of reading strategy:

- Control reading process (observable: conscious or unconscious such as regressing and pausing).
- Monitor reading process (conscious).
- Interact with the text (for example, question the text and translate it).
- Utilise source information (textual, linguistic features such as grammar).
- Utilise source information (external, background knowledge). (Davies, 1995, p.51)

Davies (1995) includes both conscious and unconscious behaviours because, she maintains, we cannot know which are being used. For Grabe and Stoller (2013) and Dorn and Soffos (2005), strategies are internal and unobservable while behaviours are external and observable. They describe reading strategies as cognitive reactions that require readers to use their background knowledge and different sources of information like predicting and reflecting to think about the text, while reading behaviours are the outcomes of the strategies used. Grabe and Stoller (2013) state that reading strategies cannot be observed, but they can be inferred by studying reading behaviours. Dorn and Soffos (2005) concluded their work by stating that together strategies and behaviours work to produce 'strategic behaviours' which are observable and indicate the cognitive processing. For example, we can study observable reading behaviours that might indicate the reading strategies used by the reader. As seen below, there are strategic behaviours that describe both bottom-up and top-down strategic behaviours. For example, the reader might stop reading in order to think about how to decode a particular word 'feeling': I call this a bottom-up type strategy. Alternatively, a reader might pause to think about how the topic or context can bring meaning to a word such as 'feeling'; I refer to this as a top-down type strategy. Such strategic behaviours from my study, for example, re-reading the sentence to confirm which selection was appropriate for the context: 'manner' or 'the way' is discussed in Chapter Seven.

From working with my data and the literature, I came to the decision that strategic behaviours, the term I am going to use in this thesis, are methods that readers use to overcome difficulties in reading. Readers need to understand when and how to use these strategic behaviours for text comprehension. For example, according to Klingner, Sharon and Boardman (2015), top-down reading strategic behaviours represent setting a purpose for reading. By using background knowledge, the reader can use the title to enhance reading comprehension (for instance, predicting the context from the title and previewing the context). Further, top-down reading strategic behaviours might aid comprehension of the text by recognising its structure by, for instance, skimming, to have a general idea of the passage and to identify the author's point of view, and scanning for specific information such as places and characters.

Bottom-up reading strategies, according to Nunan (1989, p.33), aid the use of linguistic background knowledge by working from small units (individual letters) to large units

(words and sentences) during reading comprehension. Namely, readers use linguistic information such as:

1. Grammatical knowledge and word types (for example, subject, verb, and object) and sentence structure (for instance, simple and complex sentences).
2. Lexical knowledge to deduce the meaning of lexical items from morphology (such as morphemes, synonyms, and connectives) and context (Urquhart and Weir, 1998).
3. Phonological knowledge, such as morphemes and word syllables.

As noted in this section, reading strategies and behaviours are closely related to each other. In this study, I use the term 'strategic behaviour' to identify strategies and behaviours. The next section discusses another overlap between reading strategies, namely, global/local strategies and top-down/bottom-up reading strategies.

### **Reading strategies: global and local knowledge**

Another important distinction should be made in clarifying the relationship between global and local strategic behaviours on the one hand, and top-down and bottom-up strategies on the other. Fitzgerald (1999) introduced a way of reading titled 'a balanced reading programme' which contains two categories of knowledge (local and global) that L1 children need to use and have in order to read:

- Local knowledge about reading includes: areas such as phonological awareness; a sight word repertoire; knowledge of sound-symbol relationships; knowledge of some basic orthographic patterns; a variety of word identification strategies (e.g., how to use phonics); and word meanings.
- Global knowledge about reading includes: areas such as understanding, interpretation, and response to reading; strategies for enabling understanding and response; and an awareness of strategies used. (Fitzgerald, 1999, p.102)

This distinction between the two types of reading knowledge may have some bearing on, and indicate the relationship to, bottom-up, local and top-down, global reading strategies. For example, Barnett (1988b) suggests that local knowledge represents bottom-up reading types, while global knowledge about reading refers to top-down strategic behaviours.



Abbott (2006, p.633) argues that bottom-up, local, language-based reading strategies, which focus primarily on word meaning, sentence syntax, or text details are associated with attending to lower level cues such as:

1. Breaking words into smaller parts.
2. Using knowledge of syntactic structures or punctuation.
3. Scanning for specific details.
4. Paraphrasing or rewording the original text.
5. Looking for key vocabulary or phrases (Abbott, 2006, p.633).

Abbott (2006) adds that some top-down, global, knowledge-based reading strategies that focus primarily on text gist, background knowledge, discourse organisation or that are associated with higher level cues include:

1. Recognising the main idea.
2. Integrating scattered information.
3. Drawing an inference.
4. Predicting what might happen in a related scenario.
5. Recognising text structure. (Abbott, 2006, p.633)

It seems to me that 'local' is most synonymous with 'bottom-up' strategies, while 'global' is more synonymous with 'top-down' strategies. In order not to confuse the reader, I use the terms bottom-up and top-down reading strategies. The discussion about top-down and bottom-up reading strategic behaviours highlights the importance of distinguishing between two types of knowledge, 'prior' and 'background' knowledge, and I shall discuss these in the following section.

### **Background Knowledge**

Exploring the role of prior knowledge in reading comprehension, Yin (1985) states that world knowledge in reading refers to the knowledge that 'people have in general of things, events, actions: that is, the frame of reference against which interpretations takes place' (p.376). This, according to Yin (1985), includes domain and culture-specific knowledge and these types of knowledge are referred to as 'prior knowledge'. Similarly, Kujawa and

Huske (1995, cited in Macceca, 2007, p.66) argue that 'prior knowledge' is a combination of the student's established attitudes, experiences, and knowledge. By 'attitude' Kujawa and Huske mean beliefs about themselves as readers, awareness of their individual interests and strengths and motivation. By 'experience' Kujawa and Huske (1995) mean:

- Everyday activities that relate to reading.
- Events in their lives that provide background understanding.

By 'knowledge', Kujawa and Huske (1995) mean knowledge:

- of the reading process itself.
- of content (for example, literature, science).
- of topics (for example, fractions, fables).
- of concept (for example, main idea, theory).
- of different types of style and form (for example, fiction and non-fiction).
- of text structure (for example, narrative or expository).
- of academic and personal goals. (Kujawa and Huske, 1995, cited in Macceca, 2007, p.66)

The effect of attitudes, experience, and knowledge in reading are discussed in the following section but discussion about 'prior knowledge' is not too different from the meaning of the term 'background knowledge'. Grabe (2009) points to 'background knowledge' as a major factor in reading comprehension because it is a:

... way to describe the information stored in our memory system, and reading comprehension is basically a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes and the information that we already know. (Grabe, 2009, p.74)

Earlier, Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe (2002) had suggested two types of background knowledge:

1. World knowledge, which includes: the information that students accumulate through life experiences and through books and other media contribute to a store of knowledge that influences what we bring to the printed page.
2. What students know about the texts and how they are constructed. (Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe, 2002, p.144)

In this research, I use the term ‘background knowledge’ because it consists of different types of information (such as top-down knowledge) that readers need to read for meaning. Another strategic behaviour, that might help support reading in a foreign language, is the dictionary and I turn now to the use of dictionaries.

### **The use of dictionaries**

Strategic behaviours include using reference materials, such as dictionaries, to confirm the reader's guesses and check spelling, both of which could be classified further as supporting strategic behaviours in an eventual interactive reading process, which, following either bottom-up and top-down reading models, might aid better understanding of the text (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). The dictionary can be bilingual (to seek information for definition in L1), monolingual or bilingual (providing L1 and FL definitions). According to Schmitt (2013), dictionary use while reading can assist reading strategies such as knowledge of phonemic transcription, interpreting grammatical information and guessing from the context to help choose from alternative meanings. However, researchers such as Knight (1994) and Prichard (2008) indicate that many EFL students do not use the dictionary effectively and I provide examples in Chapters Six and Seven of good and poor use. Schmitt (2013) suggests that teachers should plan a programme to help students use their dictionaries effectively, and to be aware of a range of applications to benefit from dictionary use as a supporting strategic behaviour.

The use of the bilingual dictionary as an eventual supporting strategic behaviour is a way of using the L1 to support reading for meaning in an eventual interactive reading process. Research on the use of L1 in learning FL indicates that using L1 does not affect comprehension in the target language (August and Shanahan, 2006). Cummins (1989) argued that even if all languages have different systems (for example, the alphabetical system), users would share common academic and cognitive proficiencies. In other words, cognitive and academic skills are transferable from one language to another. August and Shanahan (2006), investigating the effect of L1 on learning to speak in English, concluded that students are able to use cognate relationships between the L1 and FL to understand English words and so to facilitate comprehension. In this case, dictionary use does not impede the acquisition of FL, but rather enhances it. However, as we will see in Section 3.2, Arabic and English are not cognate in all aspects. For instance, both languages have

different spellings, structures, and pronunciation. The following section highlights EFL research that investigated the use of reading strategies in a foreign language context.

### **3.1.3 Reading strategies of EFL students**

This section focuses on the reading strategies that lead to successful reader outcomes. FL reading investigators interested in finding successful reading strategic behaviours have tended to focus on key or combination reading strategies that non-proficient readers might be unable to apply (Duffy 2009, Grabe and Stoller, 2013). It could be argued that understanding and teaching successful reading strategies might help less skilled readers improve their reading in the target language (McNamara 2007).

As discussed earlier, since the 1970s there have been a number of researchers who have focused on classifying and categorising the characteristics of successful readers. Among these was Hosenfeld (1977) who conducted a study of 20 French EFL students to examine their success in using cognitive processes to comprehend a written sentence. Hosenfeld (1977) argued that students' reading skills could be viewed as a comparison of strategies (successful and defective strategies) whereby they can replace ineffective with effective strategies. In her study, Hosenfeld (1977, p.111) classified reading strategies into 'main-meaning lines' (keep the text meaning in mind while assigning meaning to sentences) and 'word-solving strategies'. The findings demonstrated that successful strategies include skipping unimportant, unfamiliar words, and keeping the meaning of the passage in mind while reading. Poor or less proficient readers were classified as readers who did not skip unknown words, and translated all the sentences, resulting in a loss of the overall meaning of the text. In this case, the reader focused only on bottom-up strategies to understand the context. The readers had difficulty in identifying which words to ignore. The extent to which they did depended on their levels of fluency.

A decade later, Block (1986) conducted a study on nine non-proficient university ESL readers to examine the comprehension strategies they used to understand English reading texts, comparing the findings with L1 readers who read the same texts. Block followed Hosenfeld (1977) and classified readers into successful and poor readers. The successful ESL reader, from Block's (1986) point of view, is one who can focus on general strategies such as questioning, integrating information and using prior knowledge (top-down type strategies) and local strategies (or bottom-up type strategies) such as paraphrasing,

rereading and solving vocabulary problems. Poor readers were rarely able to practise these strategies. Block (1986) added that learning to read in L1 is different from reading in FL. In the L1, students learn how to read in their language and employ appropriate reading strategies but learning to read in a FL requires students to learn specific features of the target language. Here, I agree with Block. As I discussed in Section 3.2, each language has its own features such as structure and style, and, therefore, FL learners have to know these differences to be able to understand and read in the target language.

In contrast, Sarig (1987), who investigated the relationship between reading strategies in L1 and FL, found that FL readers could transfer reading strategies and behaviours from L1. Sarig (1987) stated that candidates using the same types of strategy ‘accounted for success and failure in both languages to almost the same extent’ (p. 118). We might not be able to generalize Sarig’s findings to all languages because, as we see in Section 3.2, not all languages have the same language features. For example, Arabic readers read from right to left but English readers read from left to right. Transferring reading strategies and behaviours from L1 can be difficult.

As can be intuited from the research findings demonstrated so far, a reader’s language proficiency may affect which strategies they use (Hosenfeld, 1977; Block, 1986; and Sarig, 1987). Successful readers use a variety of strategies in comparison to unsuccessful readers. For instance, Block (1986) states that proficient readers tend to use their general and local information to comprehend the text, reading type behaviours of the interactive reading model (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, using a variety of reading strategies can help to increase the reader’s comprehension of the text. From this viewpoint, Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) state that readers need to know which strategies to use while reading. This section has shown the importance of reading strategies that may help to interact with the written text. In considering the training of reading strategies, it is also important to distinguish between two types of reading activity: reading silently and reading aloud and so I shall discuss them in the following section.

### **Silent reading and reading aloud**

Doff (1988) states that reading silently does not include saying words out loud while reading. The reader in silent reading might not vocalise, but s/he is making sounds in the brain’s ‘inner voice’, linking the sensory system (for example, vision and auditory) to what

is written, to form a mental picture about what is written (Day and Fernyhough, 2015). Silent reading might help develop reading for purpose because the focus is on reading for understanding rather than pronunciation and reading each word carefully. This is because reading silently involves looking at the sentences using various strategies (such as top-down type strategies), comprehending the message and making sense of what was been written (Doff, 1988). It is not important to focus on every letter and word in the passage because the reader can guess the content while reading. Eskey (1987) and Rumelhart (1977) view reading for meaning as a central aim of reading comprehension, which is why the reader utilises various reading strategies (such as bottom-up and top-down types) to understand the text. Reading silently might help the reader concentrate on the meaning, resulting in the ultimate goal of greater assimilation of information (Pennington, 2009).

Reading aloud is the process of reading and speaking out the words. Smith, Vasquez and Hansen (2013) state that reading aloud allows EFL teachers to model effective reading lessons that improve listening comprehension and create interest in reading. However, Dwyer (1983) criticised this type of reading activity by arguing that reading aloud:

- Reinforces the idea that reading and pronunciation are related, thereby strengthening the tendency to sub-vocalise when reading silently.
- Slows down reading by forcing the student to focus on each word. Therefore, according to Hosenfeld (1977) focusing on every word while reading might cause reduction in the overall meaning of the text.
- Means a student may lose all sense of the meaning of what he/she is reading, a fact that defeats the purpose of reading; and
- Further slows down reading when students mispronounce and misread words, the teacher interrupts the reading to correct mistakes, thereby further impeding the flow of meaning extraction. (Dwyer, 1983, cited in Kailani 1998, p.283)

Silent reading focuses on the interpretive process of comprehending the message sent by the writer to the reader (Morris, 2015), and, arguably, is what is meant by reading for meaning. While reading aloud, readers insert certain words into the text; this means that students inspect and decode words faster than they can pronounce them. For example, as discussed in Chapter One, the aim of reading the Holy-Quran aloud by Arabic readers is to

improve their pronunciation while reading, while the aim of reading in FL is to understand any type of text in the target language. This requires linking the sensory system to what is written to form a mental picture about what is written.

Researchers use different methods to investigate the processes of reading strategies in FL. The participants performed various methods in reading, and each study provides us with important information about reading in FL. However, many researchers do not evaluate the suitability of texts used in their research, which might affect the success of reading strategies. Further, each researcher used his/her own criteria to introduce successful and unsuccessful strategies used by readers. In this brief survey of the literature, there were no references to the term 'reading strategies'. For instance, researchers such as Hosenfeld (1977), Barnett (1988b) and Block (1986) refer to what I call top-down reading model strategies as main-meaning, general, global, and text level strategies, while referring to what I call bottom-up strategies as local and word-solving strategies.

#### **3.1.4 Summary of Section One**

This section discussed the main conceptions of the term 'strategy'. It also investigated the strategies that successful readers might use, and which might help 'unsuccessful' students become better readers. I stated at the beginning of this section that finding one definition for reading strategies was not easy, and the meanings offered were diverse. One of the main reasons for this diversity is that each researcher seems to use the term according to his/her research purpose. Some researchers avoid using the term 'strategy' and use their own terms to avoid this complication.

The multiplicity of definitions also affects the terms that might be used to identify the strategies. For instance, it confused me while analysing the TAPs data (Chapter Six) to state whether an action could be considered as a behaviour or strategy, because some researchers consider strategies as 'observable behaviours', where others classified strategies as 'unobservable actions'. For my research, the most useful working definition is that suggested by Davies (1995), Grabe and Stoller (2013) and Dorn and Soffos (2005), who classified reading strategies as unobservable actions that happen in the mind of the reader to obtain meaning; and 'behaviours' as observable actions to achieve that goal. These are the strategies I used to evaluate my comprehension of *A Scots Quair*. In order to add more knowledge about REFL generally and reading strategies in particular, the

following section expands on the knowledge about the linguistic variations that might create obstacles to using reading strategies.

## **3.2 Section Two: factors that affect reading in EFL**

From a psycholinguistic perspective, reading is a problem-solving activity in which the reader is relying on contextual information and strategies to interpret the content (Goodman, 1967 and Smith, 2004). These activities should be based on bottom-up, top-down and eventual interactive reading strategies (see Chapter Two). According to Castello (2008) FL reading requires the reader's knowledge of two main factors: (1) text structure variables (semantic and syntactic) in the target language; and (2) reader variables (readers' ability and motivation). According to Aslanian (1985), the text offers a possible meaning, and the reader brings his/her own 'particularisation of that potential meaning' (p. 20). Consequently, if the reader relies on his/her background knowledge to understand the meaning, and ignores text variables, he/she might be unable to understand the writer's intended meaning. Therefore, a central focus here is to investigate the text structure in first and FL, and observe differences and similarities between the L1 and FL. In the following section, I review types of English texts and variables that may affect the EFL reader.

### **3.2.1 Text variables**

Text type is one of the main reading variables which may influence both the motivation and approach to reading. Brown and Yule (1983, p.6) define text as a 'verbal record of a communicative act' which may be a transcription or written form of speech. Halliday and Hasan (1985) describe text as a functional language that is 'doing some job' (p.10) covering a variety of topics, for instance, conveying New Year's greetings or persuading someone to buy a product. 'Successful' readers should be able to contend with various types of text and the information. This includes orthographic, lexical, sentence level and discourse level variables. This section provides more information about text and genre. Further, each of these elements and its challenges to Libyan EFL readers such as orthography, lexical words, grammar, and genre are discussed in the next sections.



## **Text type and genre**

There are several rhetorical structures of text type. Paltridge (1996) refers to the ‘text type’ as grouping the text in its similar linguistic forms. For example, Halliday (2005) argues that a text can be described according to its rhetorical function such as being ‘persuasive’, ‘descriptive’ or ‘expository’, depending on the goal of the writer. A text description from the writer’s goal is established in the field of rhetoric and seems to have a psychological reality (Pique and Viera, 1997). Meyer (1975) introduces four types of texts: comparative, time order, collections, and cause and effect. Crombie (1985) adds two more types of text: problem/solution and topic-illustration. It might be important for the FL reader to have knowledge of these rhetorical forms to decode the message that the writer wants to convey to the reader (Meyer, 1975). Paltridge (1996) states that various genres may share the same text type. For instance, a single genre such as a formal letter may have more than one text type, such as problem-solution and exposition.

There are different kinds of written text and each has its own rules to describe its content to the reader. Thomas and Farrell (2009) state that there are two main types of texts that EFL readers should identify by genre: fiction (poetry, short stories, novels and plays) and non-fiction (reports, articles and essays). However, a number of researchers (Paltridge, 1996; Davies, 1995) emphasised the importance of differentiating between genre and text type when this distinction could be useful for reading. According to Paltridge (1996), the term ‘genre’ refers to activities that occur in society; for example, poems, songs and prayers. Davies (1995) also describes genre as:

A class of (written) texts which reflect a particular set of social processes and goals and which derive from an identifiable and public source/environment, and which are directly or indirectly controlled by an editor. (Davies, 1995, p.92)

Thomas and Farrell (2009) add that EFL readers should develop their awareness of the different features of genres by providing a preview ‘of the text and topic rather than only providing background knowledge or just asking students to read the text’ (p.50). The reader’s ability to preview knowledge of the text (contrast, compare, and cause and effect) may help them comprehend the content (use top-down strategies) because they understand the purpose of the text. The following sections provide further details about each part of the text.

## Orthography

Orthographic knowledge in the written mode could be described as ‘the knowledge of the spelling of a language’ (Taylor and MacKenney, 2008, p.20). Human visual information processing might be affected by the orthographical variations between languages (Hung and Tzeng, 1981). A number of studies have argued that orthographic difficulty and word familiarity, such as frequency and number of syllables, have a strong influence on a text’s readability (Bormuth 1966). The focus of this research is on Libyan EFL readers and, therefore, the Arabic language is the main concern. Japanese and Chinese languages are logographic (using a whole character to represent a single word), while Arabic and English are alphabetic, though each has its own type of symbols. Arabic has 28 consonants and short vowels are not important. English, on the other hand, has 24 consonants with a complex number of vowel sounds. Schmitt (2000) argues that Arabic is ‘based on triconsonantal roots, with vowels being of lesser importance’ than English; when Arabic readers read in English, ‘there can be an “indifference to vowels” that often results in misrecognised words’ (p.50). For example, the word 'moments' may be confused with 'monuments'.

Ryan and Meara (1991) investigated the problems that Arabic speakers face in REFL. In their research, Ryan and Meara (1991) compared Arabic EFL students with non-Arabic speaker groups in reading the same English text; they found that Arab EFL students were slower and made more errors than other EFL groups. They concluded their study by stating that the main reason was that most words in the Arabic language had relatively stable roots, and consisted of three consonants that could be combined with other vowels to produce words. For instance, the stem *ك ت ب* *k-t-b* is combined with different vowels to produce *كتاب* *ketab*- book; *مكتبة* *maktaba* - library; and *كاتب* *kateb* - writer. I discuss this further in Chapter Six but missing the vowels and depending on the same root to produce words, which are in the same context, may affect Arabic students' decoding and processing in reading English.

It is also important to note that not all alphabetical systems are written in the same direction, from left to right. Arabic, for instance, is written from right to left. Hung and Tzeng (1981) argued that the habit of reading directions (left-to-right versus right-to-left) might affect the pattern of visual lateralisation, so that the change of reading route from one side to another may affect 'eye movement, namely, the nature and degree of control of

individual movement' (p.130). In addition, as noted in Chapter One, Arabic does not have variations between lower and upper case letters in proper names or words at the beginning of sentences and so Arabic speakers may have difficulty recognising proper nouns.

The main concern of teaching the orthographical system in the target language is to help EFL students decode by focusing on sounds and letters. Therefore, the question is: does decoding (bottom-up strategy) the structure of words without analysing and comprehending their meaning really mean reading for understanding? The next section discusses the combination of letters to form a word.

### **Lexical items**

The word is considered the main unit of any written context that builds up the sentence, paragraphs and text. As Koda (2004) states, 'individual words are the critical building blocks in text-meaning construction' (p.29). In analysing the English word system, vocabulary might represent a number of challenges for the FL reader. For instance, researchers such as Koda (2004) have demonstrated that a successful EFL reader has a great number of words in his/her memory, which helps him/her to break down the words into segments and morphemes to comprehend text meaning. However, the number of words that the individual has in his/her memory may not be enough because English is a language rich in words that have several meanings (synonyms) and multiple meanings (polysemic). Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) add that FL readers must not only have a good knowledge of the direct meaning of the words, but also have knowledge about connotation and denotation meanings in vocabulary. The denotative meaning in the dictionary is usually the same, but the connotative meaning is usually different. For example, the word 'owl', whose denotation is 'a nocturnal bird with large forward-facing eyes' also has the connotation of 'wisdom' in English (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). However, in Arabic 'owl' has a negative connotation of 'bad luck'. Furthermore, not all words' meanings can be found in the dictionary. For example, a word like *Kinraddie* will not have a denotative meaning in the dictionary because it is a fictional reference.

### **Word recognition**

Koda (2004) refers to the term word recognition as the process of extracting lexical information from a graphic display of words. In other words, word recognition is the

reader's ability to apply phonics and word analysis of the printed version and to express its oral equivalent (Morrow and Wixson, 2013). Research has, of course, been conducted to identify what the reader can do to recognise the word meaning in the text. For example, the top-down model, describes reading as a 'guessing game' (Goodman, 1967) in which readers look through the text seeking familiar information. From Clarke and Silberstein's (1977) point of view, this process is a 'sampled process', in which, according to Grabe (2009, p.89), the reader has expectations about the data in the text, and 'samples enough information in order to confirm these expectations'. However, some research on reading, for example that conducted by Birch (2007) and Koda (2004), has disputed such top-down claims and, instead, emphasises that the model does not describe how sampling is directed in the mind of the reader. In terms of comprehension, it is unclear what the reader will learn from a text about which s/he has previous knowledge.

Birch (2007) demonstrates that with EFL readers, things may be mistaken at any point in this process because students tend to fixate more on the meaning of the word than on its function, as I did with the word *Kinraddie*. This requires extensive FL knowledge and EFL readers may not have enough knowledge about the English alphabetic system used in the text. Even if they know all the Roman letters, they might be unable to 'identify graphs quickly and effortlessly as they are reading' (Birch, 2007, p.83). It is crucial in establishing the benefits of word recognition in understanding English texts to provide students with enough practice of letter-to-sound relationships through word recognition exercises. So, word recognition is a very useful bottom-up type strategy. Word meaning is another reading factor that may affect reading comprehension when vocabulary in one language could be understood in more than one way in the target language. The following section discusses lexical meaning.

### **Lexical meaning**

English is a rich language of semantic variations such as homonymy, synonyms, polysemy connotations and denotations, and the EFL reader must select the appropriate interpretation to understand the text (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). Homonymy or lexical ambiguity, describes words that have multiple meanings. Lexical ambiguity may also affect comprehending meaning at the level of the sentence. For instance, it may be easy to read on the surface: 'French silk underwear' (Cruse, 1986, p.67). However, according to Cruse, the sentence may be interpreted in two different ways. One meaning is that it might be

underwear made with French silk ('French silk' underwear), and the other meaning is that it is French underwear made of silk (French 'silk underwear').

Selecting the appropriate meaning for the word from the text is a complex task that is related to a number of factors. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) demonstrate that word knowledge is important for the EFL reader, in that they should sort vocabulary through a variety of syntactic information, such as transitivity, in which verbs takes direct objects, and intransitivity in which verbs take no objects; and idiomatic collocations and noun forms. However, some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. For example, 'to tell' as in 'to tell a story' is transitive, while 'tell me about yourself' is intransitive. The following example from Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p.83) illustrates grammatical complexity: the word 'tell' could be used as a noun form as in 'a tell in poker, as viewers of a 2006 James Bond film'. This and other types of syntactic structure are discussed in the next section.

### **Cross-linguistic in word recognition**

FL readers often have a large vocabulary in their L1, which may be helpful in reading in the target language. However, its existence alters communication between the text and the reader (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). First language linguistic knowledge can be helpful when the student uses his/her L1 knowledge to improve their ability to understand the target language. However, transferring lexical patterns from one language to another may cause confusion and affect the students' abilities to comprehend FL texts. For example, English has two interpretations for the Arabic word *Salaam*. *Salaam* refers both to 'greeting someone' and 'peace'. Hence, the Arabic EFL reader might be confused in choosing the appropriate interpretation from the context. Koda (2004) demonstrates that FL readers will always be affected by their L1 word knowledge, even if their skills in the target language are high because activation of the L1 is automatic. So, FL readers cannot do anything to stop the L1 from affecting their reading in the target language. However, it is important to know that it is not only the complexity of FL words that may prevent the comprehension of the text, but also L1 lexical knowledge. The next section presents the syntactic structure and how words are joined together to produce a sentence.

## Grammar

Syntactical structure is another variable that may affect FL reading. Odin (1989) argues that most languages have distinct grammatical structures. For instance, as noted in Chapter One, the basic word order in English is Subject Verb Object (SVO), while in Arabic the verb always precedes the subject, VSO. In addition, the use of verbs in Arabic is not like the use of verbs in English. The Arabic language has no use for the 'verb to be' (for example, 'am', 'is' and 'are'). For instance, the Arabic EFL reader may read the following sentence: 'this (is) a book' as 'this a book'. Therefore, the sentence may be understood in a different way because of the generalisation from L1 to FL.

In addition, there is no distinction in Arabic between the simple (I leave), continuous (I am leaving) and present perfect aspects (I have left) as there is in English. Mourssi (2013) conducted an empirical study with 74 Arab students acquiring grammatical items of FL (English). He noted that the Arabic language used only the simple tense in the past, present and future to signify an action completed at the time of speaking. Therefore, Arabic EFL students use the simple past forms to express the present perfect, present continuous, past continuous and gerund because 'they think that the alternative forms can give the same meaning as the simple past in English grammar' (p.401). Consequently, Arabic EFL readers find difficulty with these present and past tense aspects when decoding English sentences.

By testing these cross-linguistic variables on *A Scots Quair*, I recorded a number of difficulties. Most of the new words could not be found in the Arabic-English dictionary and, if found, their meaning were different from the context of the sentences such as 'lay'. In addition, the grammatical structure of the sentences was complex and above my linguistic knowledge (see Chapter One). I tried to apply Bernhardt's (1991) reading model, discussed in Section 2.7.1 and to use my L1 strategies to understand the novel, but my L1 alphabetic system, tense and genre are different from the FL. These language variations affected my motivation to continue reading the extract. Based on these difficulties, the following sections discuss briefly the reader's variables in comprehending reading texts.

### 3.2.2 Reader variables

Beside the text variables that may affect REFL, there are reader variables such as motivation, attitude, purpose, background knowledge and experience. These aspects of reader variables are discussed in the following sections.

#### Motivation

Motivation is important in learning any language skill generally, and REFL in particular, because readers with a high interest or particular purpose in reading are likely be more engaged in reading tasks. Reading in FL researchers (for example, Grabe, 2009; Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009) discuss reader motivation by subdividing it into two categories: *integrative* versus *instrumental*, and *intrinsic* versus *extrinsic*. The distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation is indistinct. For instance, Gardner (1985) defines integrative motivation ‘as a composite construct made up of three main components’:

1. Integrative orientation, interest in foreign language.
  2. Attitudes toward the teacher and the course.
  3. Desire and effort to learn. Instrumental motivation is the desire to study the FL.
- (Gardner, 1985, cited in Nakata, 2006, p.58)

Ryan, Kuhl, and Deci, (1997) introduce Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which is based on an innate need for competence in which the individual chooses the sources that interest him/her and which s/he enjoys, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to engaging the individual in reading activities to gain social rewards. For instance, intrinsic motivation views reading as a source of enjoyment in which the reader engages during their free time. Meanwhile, extrinsic reading motivation describes reading as based on external demands, such as those made by a teacher.

Many FL learning scholars, for example, Brown, (2007) and Deci and Ryan, (1985), argue that intrinsic motivation, which can be presented as integrative and instrumental motivation, is the more positive motivation for EFL learning. However, Dhanapala (2008) investigated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in FL reading among 247 Japanese and Sri Lanka EFL students using a motivation for reading questionnaire, a background questionnaire and reading comprehension test. He found that ‘intrinsic motivation was

highly correlated with extrinsic motivation' (p.6), and there were no variations in L1 and FL reading because readers in both languages might be reading either for personal enjoyment or external rewards. Motivation is important in reading and relevant while I was attempting to read *A Scots Quair*. Text level and genre affected my motivation to read. Further, my difficulties with, and interest in, the text content did not motivate me to read and understand the content when I could not understand so many terms. The background knowledge and content knowledge might help to increase readers' motivation, as the next section discusses.

## **Schemata**

Schema refers to background knowledge such as the reader's knowledge and experience. Rumelhart (1980, cited in Dechant, 1991, p.113) define schema as 'organized knowledge structures that aid the reader in comprehending text; they are the building block of cognition'. Researchers such as Brummer and Macceca (2004, p.64) state that readers 'build a schema, or a mental representation, of what they learn to organise their prior knowledge on a topic'. Schema theorists argue that the text offers directions to the readers which allow them to build their own meanings based on their background knowledge (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Wilson and Anderson, 1986). Readers organise and store knowledge in units of schema based on their experiences of a situation or event. EFL readers have different socio-cultural schema and may have problems processing knowledge from the target language. In addition, they may or may not be fluent readers in their L1. The main question is whether their background knowledge in L1 always balances their lack of knowledge in FL. I review three types of schema knowledge: content, rhetorical and linguistic, which are relatively related to top-down and interactive reading models.

## **Content schemata**

According to Kusiak (2013), content schemata refer to the reader's use of background knowledge to comprehend a text and he claims that the more knowledge the reader has about the topic, the more easily s/he will comprehend the text. It would seem, that EFL readers benefit from using their previous experience in understanding a text. However, Carrell (1983) states that content schemata should be approached carefully because of cross-cultural variations in texts. Some cultural information may be problematic for EFL



readers because of their lack of familiarity with culture-specific context presumed by the text. Also, English L1 speakers from the same 'cultural group', reading the same text, may vary in their content schemata. A reader from London may have difficulties reading *A Scots Quair* that a reader from Edinburgh might not. Understandably, readers of EFL might find it impossible to activate their content schemata for this text.

Jalilifar and Assi (2008) looked at a particular aspect of content schemata, the role of cultural differences in comprehending EFL reading context, with 60 Iranian students majoring in teaching EFL. Using three short American stories, Jalilifar and Assi (2008) found the participants were challenged in identifying the content and characters because 'these stories take for granted the cultural assumptions of the native speakers of English' (p.73). Cultural differences are surely likely to have a significant impact in comprehending reading texts because culture represents the beliefs, values and standards that direct individuals' behaviours and thoughts. Yokota and Teale (2002) state that the boundaries by which cultures are defined are sometimes based on geographical areas, ethnicity, religion, philosophy and other common ground. For instance, one of the major factors that affected my comprehension in reading *A Scots Quair* was my lack of cultural schemata, such as geographical and ethnic background knowledge of a particular region of Scotland, so I was unable to predict the meaning of the context using schemata. The following section discusses the rhetorical or formal schema which refer to the knowledge of various texts organisational structures (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988).

### **Rhetorical schemata**

Rhetorical schemata might be described as the communicative samples that writers utilize to represent circumstances in discourse (Rouet, 2012), such as the writer's knowledge and how s/he might communicate his/her knowledge. According to Rouet (2012, p.43), rhetorical schemata reflect the 'situations conveyed by language and communication conventions'. As discussed above, Davies (1995) demonstrated three main types of texts that should be considered: cause-effect, comparison-contrast, and argument-exemplification. Several researchers investigated the effect of the FL reader's knowledge of the rhetorical schema of text type. For instance, Zhang (2008) carried out a study of 45 university students to explore the effects of rhetorical patterns on EFL reading comprehension. He selected three groups of EFL students, and each group was asked to recall a passage containing identical content, but using different rhetorical schemata:

description schema, comparison and contrast schema, and problem-solution schema (Zhang, 2008, p.176). He found that rhetorical schema has a crucial effect on written communication because the subjects did better on highly structured schema than on loosely controlled schema.

Rhetorical schemata knowledge could be helpful for all readers, but some FL readers may have gaps in the text type's knowledge. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) identified two primary sources of FL reading problems. First, the FL reader has limited experience of the target language's different genre and text types and, second, some formal schemata may not transfer from the L1 to the FL. Working with Arab EFL students, Stapa and Irtaimah (2012) investigated the transfer of rhetorical features from Arabic to English. The study looked for differences in the transfer of two rhetorical features in relation to gender, as well as the effectiveness of raising students' awareness of rhetoric in writing. They found that Arab EFL students transfer Arabic rhetorical structures such as culture to English. The results also showed that raising the students' awareness of the importance of rhetoric in FL writing and of the cultural, rhetorical, and linguistic differences between Arabic and English, significantly reduced the transfer of rhetorical features (Stapa and Irtaimah, 2012, p.160). Comprehension of the context is reduced because the two languages have completely different text structures so the reader might need interactive reading strategies to understand the text.

### **3.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the main strategic behaviours (bottom-up, top-down and eventual interactive reading strategies) that successful EFL readers might utilize to comprehend the reading text. Discussions about reading strategies highlighted various difficulties in defining what was meant by strategies and how they could be classified from reading behaviours. The literature showed no clear-cut distinction between the terms 'behaviour' and 'strategy' because strategies might sometimes be defined as conscious or subconscious. For example, tracing words while reading might be considered a reading strategy and, simultaneously, a reading behaviour to indicate a strategy. From this perspective and to overcome these difficulties I decided to use the term 'strategic behaviour' that included both terms.

Reviewing the literature about reading strategic behaviours also showed that successful EFL readers were those who used both top-down and bottom-up to interactive reading strategic behaviours. This supported my selection of the eventual interactive reading type strategies discussed in the previous chapter. The eventual interactive reading model is a nonlinear model that combines elements of top-down and bottom-up type strategies, where the information comes from different directions to help the reader interact with the text. However, obstacles such as text and reader variables should be considered while investigating reading strategies, for the reason that reader motivation and linguistic knowledge might affect reading competence. The following chapter discusses the perspectives on teaching methods to reading English as FL.

# **CHAPTER FOUR: PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING METHODS FOR READING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

## **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will explore the main theories and methods of teaching in a foreign language (FL) to understand, ultimately, which methods of teaching eventual interactive reading strategic behaviours might be most appropriate in my work. Studying the methods of teaching in a FL could help me to understand how to use the reading models which I discussed in Chapter Two: Goodman's top-down model (1967), Gough's (1972) bottom-up model, Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model and Bernhardt's (1991) compensatory interactive model in teaching Reading in English as a Foreign Language (REFL). Adopting various techniques selected from different language teaching methods and reading models could, I thought, be helpful because certain parts of each teaching method might 'fire' an eventual interactive model of reading for meaning. In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss methods of teaching REFL by providing an overview of teaching and learning methods of, for example, the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method, as these offer insights into how EFL is taught. Further, these methods will, I suggest, affect ways in which REFL is both regarded and taught. I will briefly discuss different methods in terms of their general characteristics, and outline how these methods conceive of teaching and learning REFL in particular. Finally, I will provide a brief outline of the advantages and disadvantages of each method in practice by analysing them with respect to my own reading of A Scots Quair.

## **4.1 Section One: theories relevant to language learning**

Investigating psychological theories, especially behaviourism and constructivism that are applicable to language teaching and learning is relevant to this research because they represent the principal methods of language teaching and teaching in Libya (Elabbar, 2011). For example, as discussed in Section 4.1.1, behaviourism has influenced the theoretical principles of the Audio-Lingual method, while constructivism has influenced

Communicative Language Teaching. In this section, these theories are briefly discussed in terms of pedagogy, and I consider how teaching REFL occurs in these methods.

#### 4.1.1 Behaviourist theories and foreign language learning (a Skinnerian Approach)

Behaviourist theory was applied to FL learning and teaching in the 1950s and 1960s (Littlewood, 1984; Ellis, 2003). Behaviourist theory is based on conditioning behaviour, in which learning is the result of an association between a stimulus and a response (Brown, 2007; Quinn, 2000). Behaviourist theory was, of course, introduced by B. F. Skinner (1957) in his ‘programmed instruction’ in which the student was viewed as an imitator who imitates the teacher and is rewarded for his/her correct response. Following Skinner, learning in the FL is like learning in the L1, whereby the student repeatedly practises skills, reinforced by positive reinforcements such as rewards and praise (Johnson, 2013). So, for example, in order to teach the following extract from A Scots Quair to EFL students, the following might occur:

*The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de  
Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like  
beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their  
beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come  
through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

Typically, the teacher would read aloud the first sentence ‘*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe*’. Then the student would repeat the sentence aloud and if s/he makes a mistake, the teacher would correct the pronunciation. The student would be asked to repeat the sentence again until s/he pronounces it correctly. This is more than behaviourism, this about the role of REFL method. However, it is questionable whether teaching for understanding can occur because the focus is on memorising the text, then fixing what goes wrong with pronunciation through repetition rather than on understanding and solving comprehension problems (Brown, 2007). If students correctly pronounce the text, the teacher reinforces that good behaviour by praising them. Skinner (1986) strongly advocates the use of reinforcement in, stating that:

... by carefully constructing certain “contingencies of reinforcement”, it is possible to change behaviour quickly and to maintain it in strength for long periods of time. (Skinner, 1986, p.106)

Skinner believes that the ability of individuals to learn the rules will greatly improve by taking advice from the teacher.

From the behaviourist perspective, transferring habits from the L1, such as grammatical and phonological structures to the FL, is helpful (Littlewood, 1984) because learning the FL is about understanding the overall differences and similarities of language systems such as differences in linguistics, grammar and related language methods (see below). Mistakes and errors produced by students in the FL are the result of interference from the L1 and should be corrected immediately (Fasold and Connor-Linton, 2006). Therefore, in order to teach this extract, EFL students should be able to transfer their reading behaviours, such as sentence and word structure knowledge, from their L1 to the FL. However, as noted in Chapter Three, not all languages share the same linguistic organisation. For example, as discussed reading in Arabic is different from REFL because of language variations at word and sentence structure and grammatical features in English that do not appear in Arabic, such as phrasal verbs (see Chapter Seven).

Behaviourist theory focuses on improving observable behaviour, such as grammar and phonology, at the neglect of other components such as cognitive and background knowledge. Arguably, behaviourist theory procedures might produce some aspects of bottom-up type reading strategies because, according to Samuels and Kamil (1988), behaviourist psychology treats reading as a word-recognition response to the printed words, whereby the reader makes little attempt:

... to explain what went on within the recesses of the mind that allow[s] the human to make sense of the printed page. (Samuels and Kamil, 1988, p.25)

In other words, the behaviourist approach ignores top-down and eventual interactive reading type strategies to focus on visual stimuli from the printed page, and so may be more in keeping with aspects of bottom-up type strategies.

The Skinnerian framework also suggests that it is the teacher’s responsibility to arrange learning outcomes and set the learning environment for individuals (Tauber, 2007). The teacher is viewed as a knowledge transmitter and controller and the student is a passive

recipient having little or no interaction with the learning itself. According to Staples (2007), the teacher controls the learning freedom of the student and uses their knowledge to improve individuals' skills in language learning. This model of learning, as shown in Chapters Six and Seven, fits with what generally happens today in Libyan classrooms.

Behaviourism, like other language teaching and learning theories, has its strengths and weaknesses. Supporters of behaviourism argue that the approach is efficient in developing students' fundamental learning strategies because students, from the behaviourists' standpoint, should practise skills until they master them and have their behaviours continually reinforced (Ryan, Cooper and Tauer, 2013). However, one criticism is that behaviourism treats students as passive objects who have little freedom to learn independently or engage with the text in constructive ways (Farrell and Jacobs, 2010). Students, Farrell and Jacobs (2010) argue, should be able to investigate their knowledge individually or in cooperative groups. Another significant criticism comes from the Constructivist theorists who call for student-centred approaches because knowledge and meaning are constructed entities made by each student through their learning processes (Buzzetto-More, 2007). Constructivist language learning theory has its own views of learning and teaching strategies, which I discuss next.

#### **4.1.2 Constructivist theories and foreign language learning**

Over the last few decades, there has been a shift in pedagogy from teacher transmission product-oriented approaches, concerned with imitation and with correcting students' errors, to constructivist, process-oriented approaches, in which the teacher and students actively participate in the learning process (Widdowson, 1997; Crandall, 2000). The constructivist approach was developed as a reaction to the behaviourist approach, which, as discussed above, focused on conditioning responses to stimuli (Sutton, 2003).

Constructivism in language teaching education is considered a natural and productive process for teaching language skills (Harriet, 2013). Knowledge and understanding is obtained through working with content in the construction of meaning rather than simply transferring it to the student (Richardson, 1997). Constructivism, in contrast to behaviourism, views learning as a process that is established through the investigation of how knowledge and thinking develop over time. Learning occurs by involving students in active learning, in which they use their background knowledge to solve learning problems. This process of the constructivist approach might help in teaching the EFL reader the top-

down type strategies. As discussed in Section 2.4, the top-down model suggests that reading begins with a global concept and uses the text to illustrate specifics and details, for instance, starting with readers' experience and knowledge about the topic. One of the main approaches to language classroom practice is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of 'social-constructivism', which stresses the importance of 'knowing how to teach over knowing disciplinary knowledge' (Gallagher, 2007, p.79) to which I turn next.

### **Social constructivism (Vygotsky's Approach)**

Social constructivism focuses on learning language through dialogue which occurs as a result of the interaction between individuals and their environment. Thus, rather than directing students to pronounce the text correctly as a behaviourist might, Vygotsky (1978) demonstrated that acquiring language is interpersonal, between students and the external world, gradually involving 'internal dialogue, in what appears to be individual thinking' (Linell, 2009, p.135). Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory combines the teacher-centred approach with the student-centred approach (Staples, 2007) in social learning activities (which, as noted below, might improve the way of teaching top-down type strategies), motivating students to learn through group work and discussion activities to solve language problems and obtain new meanings after s/he adopts the strategy.

From a Vygotskian perspective, learning precedes the development of the process (internalizing the strategies needed to work independently). Interaction between the student and teacher is important for improving the individual's skills. Thus, the teacher's role becomes essential for improving the strategies of language learning. Neo-Vygotskians, such as Mercer (1994) and Rogoff (2003), view learning as a process of sharing knowledge between teacher and students through social collaboration. For instance, in teaching REFL, the teacher would be able to participate with students in the lesson activities.

#### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*



If a teacher were working with an advanced EFL group on *A Scots Quair*, s/he might share their knowledge about the topic with students, *The Unfurrowed Field*, explaining what *unfurrowed field* means, when and where the novel was set, the language used, and the major themes. The teacher would also provide language strategies to solve linguistic problems such as the past tense or subjective aspect. For example, as noted in Chapter One, when I was reading *A Scots Quair* for the first time, I initially thought the word *Norman* meant *a man from Norway*, until my supervisor told me that it referred to the Norman people of Normandy who invaded England in 1066. This highlights the role that the teacher can play in assisting the student to understand the text and find the meaning of words that could not be found in the dictionary. Meaning can also be constructed from engaging students' experiences, if they have them, to the words *unfurrowed fields*, in a discussion, for instance, about whether that phrase is strictly agricultural or a reference to untried or unsought opportunities. This way of teaching activating student's experience is related to top-down type reading strategies in which, as discussed in Section 2.4, concepts and schemas from personal experience are used to help the reader understand the significance of the new information.

To put this theory into practice, Vygotsky (1978) introduced two levels of performance: lower and higher level of performances. The lower level, or unassisted performance, represents tasks the student can do independently, while the higher level, or assisted performance, represents tasks in which the individual requires assistance from the teacher (Moll, 1990). The difference between the higher and the lower level performance is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is described by Vygotsky as follows:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)

Assisted and unassisted performances can be practised in teaching REFL. For example, in teaching for EFL students, the teacher would be able to provide his/her students with appropriate reading strategies, such as decoding and discussing knowledge about the topic until s/he knows that students can do the task by themselves. As noted in Chapters One and Two, in reading *A Scots Quair*, my supervisors helped me to gain knowledge of reading strategies and how and when to use the dictionary so that I could read independently. Vygotsky's unassisted performance approach might represent the top-down type strategies

because the reader is using his/her own knowledge to understand a particular text. Knowing what *Norman* was, I could understand that the novel was set in a historical context. With knowledge of what *gryphons* were, I could see that myths might play a role in this part of the novel. Finally, knowing that a *hide window* was a window covered by animal skin to protect the inhabitants from the elements, I understood these people were poor. Vygotsky suggests that students' competence and experience can be expanded through guidance and explanations from teachers. Cognitive and social factors such as what students know already should be developed through interacting with others (Moll, 1990), supported by the guiding role of the teacher.

Teaching a foreign language, following the ZPD, is not just a transmission of knowledge, but is, rather, about scaffolding knowledge, a 'metaphor for the kind of support that teachers provide to enable students to reach for higher level of performance' (Coelho, 2012, p.102). Scaffolding represents the idea that the teacher attempts to build a bridge between the individuals' existing knowledge and their needs for a task. Safadi and Rababah (2012) conducted an experimental study to test the effect of scaffolding instruction on Arab EFL reading comprehension skills. They tested two groups; the first was provided with scaffolding instructions during reading English, while the second read the same units without scaffolding. The results showed that there were significant differences in the subjects' achievement in reading comprehension skills, in favour of the experimental group. The researchers recommend integrating scaffolding techniques while teaching reading because they improve students' comprehension scores. For instance, the teacher provides students with tasks that the student can only solve following the guidance of the teacher question, 'What is a gryphon?'. Gibbons (2002) adds that as students develop language skills, the teacher's role should gradually recede, until they encounter a more complex text than the one they have just read. Similarly, Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) characterised scaffolding in teaching as the act of recruiting a students' interest, highlighting the task's relevant features, and demonstrating models to be performed in the task. This means that responsibility is passed to the student to practise language skills and application after having been given the required assistance. In the context of reading *A Scots Quair*, without the support of my supervisors, I could not have continued reading the text and its meaning would have remained elusive.

In terms of teaching REFL, Clark and Graves (2005) state that for scaffolding to be successful, the teacher should create a temporary supportive plan to assist students in

accomplishing a task they might not complete alone. They recommended that teachers should consider students' weaknesses and strengths by creating pre-, during and post-reading tasks that are designed to illustrate the purpose of reading. I apply this plan to A Scots Quair:

*The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

In the pre-reading stage, students could discuss with the teacher and each other the cultural background of the text (top-down type strategic behaviours). Then students may use their bottom-up type reading strategic behaviours to decode words and sentences, and if they are unable to, the teacher can explain their meaning. During the reading, the students can read the entire text alone, then discuss it in pairs, and finally discuss it as a class to ask: 'What is happening in this extract?', 'What is the significance of the beast?', 'What does "meikle cock" mean?', 'What is the author's intended meaning?' Post task activities could extend these questions or direct the students to read further.

Though there are advantages to scaffolding, there are some drawbacks. Barnard (2002) argues that scaffolding lessons, to meet each student's needs, is time-consuming, especially in large classes in which there are limited communication possibilities with students. This is the case in Libya, in which classes contain a large number of students and teaching is based on traditional, over-behaviourist type methods (Orafi 2008 and Aldabbus, 2008) with students relying on the teacher to read and explain the reading texts. To benefit from scaffolding, teachers should give students the opportunity to practise their language knowledge individually, in pairs and in groups (see Chapter Seven).

## **4.2 Section Two: language teaching methods**

It has been argued that theories of language teaching can provide us with insights into teaching and learning contexts (Wright and Beaumont, 2015). Teaching and learning in the classroom is guided by methods based on learning theories. This section outlines five

methods of language teaching and learning, namely: the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, the Communicative Method, and the Task-based Learning Method. I analyse these methods because they are widely used and known in Libya (Elabbar, 2011; Suwaed, 2011). Discussion of these methods will briefly address the methods of learning in FL, teacher-student interaction and implications for REFL.

#### **4.2.1 The Grammar Translation Method: brief background**

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is a traditional method of teaching. The essential concern is to teach students the target language through reading and then translating texts into the L1, and there are few opportunities for speaking and listening exercises (Brown, 2000). Users of this method assume that FL students are able to speak the target language if they can translate from their L1 to the FL. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), the fundamental aim of the GTM is to help students master the target language by training them to learn FL grammar rules. This view of learning supports the behaviourist claims of transferring habits between first and foreign language (see Section 4.1.1). Students study grammar in depth then undertake exercises to translate into the L1 or FL (Ellis and Shintani 2013). Learning grammar might help EFL students improve their thinking in FL because they gain a deep understanding of the grammatical and syntactical structure of the target language. For example, to teach REFL using the GTM, Baron (2006, p.4) states that the method consists of a ‘sequence of classroom activities’ in which the grammar rules are explained, studied, learned and used. The student is given a bilingual list of vocabulary which s/he will learn by heart. As its name suggests, this method of teaching involves translating the text from the target language into the L1 by the teacher or student, with an explanation of unfamiliar words and grammatical rules. If I wanted to apply these procedures to teaching the extract from A Scots Quair to EFL students I would do the following.

##### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de  
Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like  
beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their  
beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come  
through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

I would provide students with a grammatical analysis of the text such as describing the function of the subject, the use of the conditional and subjective tenses, and the exact meaning of words such as *Kinraddie* and *Den* in the students' mother tongue. I would follow this by asking the students to read and translate the whole text into the L1. Using these procedures, I would assume that the GTM method employs and improves bottom-up type reading strategies, such as the use of grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, through translation to L1. However, teaching reading by translating the whole text might not help students to understand the overall meaning of the text because the bilingual dictionary might provide the literal meaning of the words, but not help with contextual meaning such as '*... with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats*'. As Allan (2009) argues, reading does not always rely on translating every word as this may miss the actual meaning of the sentence and of words in context. For instance, 'tearing' in the above text might mean 'violent' if it is an adjective and 'rip to pieces with force' if it is a verb. The student has to work out which of these meanings are accurate, given the context - if s/he can access the text's meaning at this stage. Further, the meaning of the words might vary from one language to another because, as noted in Chapter Three, not all languages have equivalent words in the L1. So, using words such as *Kinraddie* and *den* will not be found in the bilingual dictionary because they are culturally and geographically specific, or derive from local dialect, Mid-Scots, or are inventions by the author. *Kinraddie*, as I have discussed, is a place name invention, though 'kin' means 'head of' in Gaelic and signifies a place name. *Den* is from Old English and can mean an animal's lair, a pit or cave, or, informally, a favourite private room or place. In this text, *den* denotes the lair of the wolf-beast. Students will need the teacher's assistance here because *lair* will not be known to Arabic students. The word also carries a specific meaning to mean something awful, a meaning that would almost certainly be lost on the students I usually teach.

Students using the GTM are unlikely to think, initially at least, about the meaning of the text or to use cognitive strategies such as top-down type reading strategies to understand the text. The student in the GTM procedures is viewed from the behaviourist perspective as a 'recipient of knowledge' (Lin, 2015), and the teacher's role is either to translate, read and explain the text, or to have the students do the same. However, the GTM should be considered an important preparatory method to enable the student to acquire grammar comprehension skills as an important part of reading for meaning (using bottom-up type reading strategies as a starting point). The GTM is based on the hypothesis that students

learn the target language simply by following the teaching method (Takac, 2008). The teacher's role is to control classroom activities, making it a teacher-centred environment in which s/he is viewed as the main source of knowledge and power. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that classroom interaction in the GTM is based on teacher-student interaction, and 'there is little student-student or text-student interaction and initiation' (p.18).

Accurate knowledge of the target language is an important aspect of the GTM (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, getting the correct answers from the student is crucial, and the teacher is expected to immediately correct the student's errors and help them understand their mistakes (Fazili, 2007). These GTM procedures support behaviourist claims about immediate error correction to improve learner performance (see Section 4.1.1). However, correcting students' mistakes immediately might reduce students' confidence in developing their language skills (Natsir and Sanjaya, 2014) by making the student anxious and hesitant to speak out in class. Byram (2000) adds that the GTM 'has less strict requirements for qualifications and competencies to enable them [teachers] to teach the foreign language' (p.251), which might explain why the GTM method is still used today in many countries, and I develop an account of this method in Chapter Six. However, while the GTM has drawbacks, like all EFL methods, there are advantages. For example, Rao (2010) states that the GTM is successful in classes containing large numbers of students because teachers using the GTM do not need to interact with each student. The teacher provides students with a list of words which they memorise and use to read the text. So, the number of words that EFL student learn from each lesson might increase the student's word knowledge and help them in REFL. In addition, translating words into the mother tongue can help students understand the text, so is less time consuming than preventing them from using their L1 in REFL (see Chapter Six and Seven). Teaching a particular language skill, such as translating the grammar rules from L1 to FL, might not help in understanding reading because to read for meaning requires eventual interactive strategies (top-down and bottom-up type reading strategies) which the GTM does not encourage.

Elabbar (2011) argues that the GTM method is still considered the best way of teaching EFL in Libya and is widespread in all educational institutions. Many Libyan EFL teachers have themselves been taught using aspects of GTM, such as the traditional approaches to learning the Holy-Quran, old Arabic poems and some national sayings. In Libya, the GTM also suits students' learning experiences, which are influenced by minimal interaction with teachers. The GTM was also strongly criticised by advocates of Direct Method procedures

and my own concerns are noted above. These critiques are based on the use of L1 and the students' role in the classroom. The following section discusses briefly the aspects of the Direct Method in teaching a FL.

#### 4.2.2 The Direct Method: brief background

The Direct Method (DM) of language teaching was developed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France and Germany as a reaction to the GTM (Coady and Huckin 1997; Richards and Rodgers 2014). The method was known as a 'reform movement' (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.11), and its main philosophy was to enable students to learn the FL in the same way as they learnt their mother tongue. Its basic rule is: 'no translation is allowed' (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.23) and the language must be used in context. Therefore, in order to teach A Scots Quair extract using DM procedures, the teacher will not allow students to use their L1 or bilingual dictionary because the method's main assumption is to convey meaning of the target language directly by the use of visual aids, such as pictures, and charts (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The student in this case, is not trained to use the dictionary with reading strategies.

Falsold and Connor-Linton (2006) argue that foreign language students acquire the target language naturally and directly if the teacher presents all information using actions and pictures when required. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000, p.26-27), if I want to apply DM procedures in teaching the extract below, reading aloud (discussed in Section 3.1) would be the main technique in teaching reading lessons:

##### *The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

1. I read aloud to the students and encourage them to seek direct comprehension by inferring meaning from the context of the unknown vocabulary. The student's role is to repeat aloud after me. The L1 is not used in the classroom, and I draw on the

blackboard or use visual materials such as charts if the students have any problems with the target language.

2. While students are reading aloud, I work on students' pronunciation of words, on which they will later get feedback.
3. I provide questions and answer exercises in which I ask students questions, whom I expect to answer in full sentences in the FL so that they practise new words and grammatical structures. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.26-27)

The first question that arises when I consider these stages is how students could know the meaning of words such as *den*, *Kinraddie* or *gloaming* by inferring the meaning from a context in which most of the words are new to the student. This procedure of teaching reading is in line with Goodman top-down model (see Section 2.4.1) in which readers use their background knowledge to make sense of what they are going to read. Moreover, how can the teacher draw on the board such words if they do not represent any kind of symbol? How do I represent *gloaming*, for example, which is a Scottish and Old English word for dusk or twilight? Teachers may spend a long time explaining these items in the target language, using a dictionary which may not yield meaning or even list the word. A brief explanation in the L1 would be more efficient and effective. For these kinds of reasons, Rao (2010) argues that in DM procedures 'there is over emphasis on oral work. Reading and writing processes of the language get less attention' (p. 56). Reading is used to hear and correct students' pronunciation through repetition, while developing reading strategies is not the main goal. Here, as Blanton (2004, p.121) states, the DM was based 'upon the behaviourist theoretical argument that language represented a finite set of symbols mastered through repetition'. As I discuss in Chapter Six, these procedures of learning the FL are similar to Quranic method in which the teacher reads aloud and correct the student's mistakes.

Mukalel (2005) states that communication in DM is considered a solid basis for learning the foreign language while there are no explanations for the formal grammar of the target language. Instead, students should be encouraged to think and speak in the L1 because the method views the teaching of any FL skills as being achieved only through the FL. The teacher asks questions to direct the students for the main purpose of the lesson. This procedure might help in activating top-down type reading strategies such as activating schemata. Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that students can be involved in activities such as interviews or can be asked to speak about something that they had already read. In this



process, students use new vocabulary in full sentences and phrases. For example, in texts such as students might be asked questions such as ‘Why are children screaming?’ to which the students answer in full sentences using the new vocabulary, while the teacher listens and corrects the students’ pronunciation.

Like any other language method, DM language teaching has positive points. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), who observed classes that use the DM in language teaching and learning, state that:

- The teacher directs the class activities; the student’s role is less passive than the GTM. The teacher and the students are more likely to be partners in teaching/learning processes.
- Students in the direct method learn to think in the target language.
- Initiation of the interaction goes both ways, from teacher to students and from students to teacher, although the latter is often teacher-directed. (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.30)

There are drawbacks, as might be expected. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the DM largely depends on teachers who have fluent target language skills rather than on textbooks and not all teachers are fluent in the FL. Arguably, it would take a teacher with very good language skills to teach *A Scots Quair* (a novel that is not likely to be chosen for an EFL class). I should add that preventing students from using their L1 and bilingual dictionaries, as the DM suggests, might reduce the students’ performance in reading (see Chapters Six and Seven). As stated in the GTM section, translating the whole text might not help in understanding texts such as *A Scots Quair* but, of course, translating words and reading them in the context might improve reading for meaning. The Audio-lingual Method shares some features with the DM, such as both are oral-based approaches and both neglect reading skills and this method is discussed in more detail in the following section.

#### **4.2.3 The Audio-Lingual Method: brief background**

The main maxim of the Audio-Lingual Method (A-LM) of teaching a foreign language is that the fluent ‘use of a language is essentially a set of “habits” that can be developed by a lot of practice’ (Yule, 2010, p.190). The A-LM shares some features with the DM such as

that both focus on how to use the language in listening and speaking but, according to Doughty (2003), the A-LM focuses on using the FL as much as possible without reducing the use of the L1. The A-LM in FL teaching is influenced by the behaviourist psychology of learning (Corbett, 2003). The A-LM views language learning as habit formation improved through drills and repetition. The assumptions of the A-LM are essentially based on the behaviourist approach of stimulus, which serves to elicit behaviour, a response triggered by a stimulus, and reinforcement which encourages the repetition of the response (Skinner, 1957). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), teaching procedures in A-LM contain various processes such as memorising the text and reading aloud. If I want to apply these procedures in teaching the extract below from A Scots Quair, then I should do the following:

*The Unfurrowed Field*

*KINRADDIE lands had been won by a Norman childe, Cospatric de Gondeshil, in the days of William the Lyon, when gryphons and such-like beasts still roamed the Scots countryside and folk would waken in their beds to hear the children screaming, with a great wolf-beast, come through the hide window, tearing at their throats.*

I would provide the students with a model dialogue containing the key structures that focus on the lesson, in which students should repeat each line of dialogue, individually and in groups. The dialogue might go as follows:

1. Memorise the text gradually, line by line. A line broken down into several phrases if necessary.
2. Read aloud in chorus, one half of the students reading, and the other half responding. The students do not consult their book throughout this phase.
3. Adapt to the students' interest or situation.
4. Key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the base pattern drills of different kinds.
5. The students may refer to the textbook, and follow-up reading based on the dialogue introduced.
6. Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, in which further dialogue and drill work is carried out. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.64-65)

The students' role in the reading stages is limited. They do not have the opportunity to read and think for themselves. Students repeat what they hear while reading, which is not the main target of teaching reading for meaning so that, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue, 'learners were seen as a stimulus-response mechanisms whose learning was a direct result of repetitive practice' (p.28). Because the A-LM is influenced by the behaviourist approach, the method ignores top-down and interactive reading type strategies to focus on visual stimuli from the printed page, and so may be more in keeping with aspects of bottom-up type models. The A-LM main assumption is to develop listening and speaking skills through mimicking and memorising sections of language. Though, as Nagaraj (1996) states, reading and writing are not neglected, the focus remains on listening and speaking, avoiding the use of the L1.

Language errors in A-LM are viewed as a 'bad habit' (Corbett, 2003) that should be prevented by repetition, reinforcement, and praise of success. The teacher concentrates on pronunciation and fluency, and corrects the student's mistakes immediately (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In A-LM, the teacher is responsible for providing students with appropriate situations in which to practise language structures. The A-LM, is a teacher-dominated method in which the teacher controls, directs, and assesses the student's performance through dialogues and drills, in which students interact with each other, while the teacher directs this interaction (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Therefore, the A-LM has some advantages, such as those described by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011):

- There is student-student interaction when students take different roles in the dialogues, but this interaction is teacher-directed, because the teacher has to control the class, otherwise the class will become noisy.
- Each student does their task individually, then the teacher gives his/her feedback on their performance.

However, Chomsky (1966) rejected the behaviourist theory of language learning by arguing that:

... language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy. (Chomsky, 1966, p.153)

Chomsky (1966) suggested that communicative competence was a more appropriate approach to learning language, the main philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching, as I will discuss.

#### **4.2.4 Communicative Language Teaching: brief background**

The use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in language teaching began in 1972 (Coady and Huckin, 1997) with the British linguist David Wilkins in reaction to the GTM and A-LM. This method aimed to increase FL students' 'communicative competence', Chomsky's notion (1957) drawn from theoretical linguistics. Communicative competence in language teaching is defined by Savignon (1983) as the ability 'to function in a truly communicative setting; that is, in a spontaneous transaction involving one or more other persons' (p.12), which is achieved by using language rather than just usage, and fluency rather than accuracy (Brown, 2007). Littlewood (1981) states that the CLT's main characteristic is 'that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language' (p.1). Thus, CLT is not like GTM or A-LM, as it emphasises language learning for and in real life situations such as shopping, asking for directions, or describing the weather in the past tense. This socio-collaborative learning has its roots in the work of Vygotsky's social constructivism in which learning occurs through socializing with more competent others (see below). Jesa (2008) adds that the CLT approach 'proved to be the scenes of excitement with dialogue, debate, reporting and many such techniques (p.70)' in small groups. For example, in order to teach an extract from A Scots Quair using the CLT, students would discuss the text together to exchange the main ideas because, according to Lems, Miller and Soro (2010), reading in CLT is:

... a means to greater communicative competence; academic language is not a focus. Students use authentic texts for speaking and reading activities, and those may come from a wide variety of genres, such as menus, newspapers articles or even a medicine bottle. (Lems, Miller and Soro, 2010, p.12)

The method's main aim is to provide opportunities to learn the FL naturally by interacting with others. However, students may not have any knowledge about the text, such as would be the case if A Scots Quair were presented to Libyan students. Further, A Scots Quair might not be a suitable text for CLT because it is derived from literature, rather than a real-life situation such as shopping. Richards and Rodgers (1986) criticised CLT by pointing out that it neglects academic reading, in that CLT is organised around language function (for

example, locations, greetings and frequency) which are needed for interactive communication, and focused on authentic reading, such as magazines, articles, and newspapers because its activities are based on real life actions. Savignon (1983) justified these procedures by arguing that CLT has three useful features: it fills the information gap, provides choice and feedback. The information gap process exists when one student knows something that the other does not. This suggests using the top-down type strategies of using background knowledge to understand the topic. For instance, 'Where is Kinraddie?' The other replies 'I don't know', then 'filling the gap' communication begins: the student can ask another student or the teacher; or s/he could look up the name online. Choice means that the speaker has the choice to say how or what to say, 'it means a place in Scotland' or 'it's a town'. If the listener does not provide the speaker with feedback, communication fails.

Learning activities in the CLT tend to be linked to the constructivist theory of learning, which suggests that:

... individuals create their own new understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas they come into contact. (Richardson, 1997, p.3)

In other words, EFL students construct their own knowledge based upon their background knowledge. The method calls for student-centred solutions in solving problems because, as Hadjerrouit (2008, p.237) suggests, 'students are assumed to learn better when they are forced to explore and discover things by themselves'. The teacher's role, according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), is as a communication facilitator where:

- Students communicate in groups and are responsible for their own learning.
- The teacher's role is less dominant than in teacher-centred methods.
- The L1 is permitted in CLT. (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.25)

The main purpose of CLT approaches is to prepare EFL students for 'meaningful communication, where errors are tolerated' (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, P.72). The method views students' errors as part of FL learning, unlike the behaviourist approach procedures, and so, in CLT, error correction should be avoided until the end of the task.

Researchers such as Bernhardt (1991) often consider reading as a cognitive rather than as a social process. Using both processes (cognitive and social) in the reading process seems

essential, yet the CLT ignores the cognitive, bottom-up type processes. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.172) argue that CLT is best considered 'as an approach rather than a method' because 'it refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language learning' that can be used to support a method of teaching. Larsen-Freeman (2011) considers Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as a 'strong version' of the communicative approach. The TBLT method of teaching is not used in Libya but some of its procedures could help improve teaching REFL. TBLT is discussed briefly in the following section.

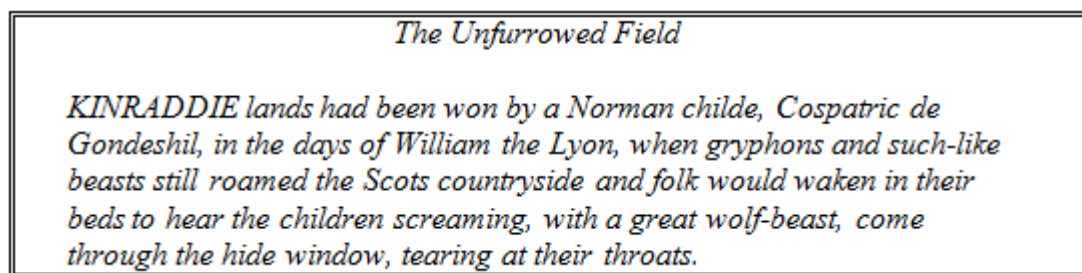
#### **4.2.5 Task-Based Language Teaching: brief background**

The idea of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is to help students to acquire a FL through performing tasks, was developed in India by N. S. Prabhu in the 1980s. His methodological syllabus consists not of language items, but of tasks requiring the attainment of increasingly complex language. Prabhu's approach relies on classroom tasks performed in groups, designed to engage the students using the English they already know (Davies and Pearse, 2000). The term 'task' refers to teaching the target language through real world activities in the classroom. Prabhu (1987) defines communicational tasks as activities which require students to arrive at an 'outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allow teachers to control and regulate that process' (p.24). For Prabhu (cited in Ellis, 2003, p.7) tasks should ideally involve 'reasoning', making connections between pieces of information', by deducing and evaluating them.

There are various claims made for the relevance of task research for pedagogy. A major proponent of task based learning is Willis (1996), who proposes a method in which tasks are used as the main focus of the lesson based on the principles of CLT. She envisaged a 'task cycle' consisting of three main phases: pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus (Ellis, 2003). In the pre-task phase, one option is for the teacher to highlight useful words and phrases. In this stage, students might activate their schemata and use top-down type strategies (see below). The task phase ends with a 'report' in which the students comment on their performance. In the language focus, students perform consciousness-raising and practice activities directed at specific linguistic features (learn bottom-up type reading strategies), and/or in transcripts of fluent speakers engaged with the task (Willis, 1996, p.52).

- Pre-task: introduce topic and task.
- Task cycle: task, planning and report.
- Language focus: analysis and practise.

In order to apply the above procedures to teaching the extract from using TBLT, Nunan (1989, p.10) explained how tasks such as pre-reading, reading and post reading stages could be used in teaching a FL (see below).



- Pre-reading stage. This is considered a preparation stage in which the reader activates his/her knowledge to setup a purpose for the reader to read. In this stage the teacher introduces the title '*The Unfurrowed Field*' followed by discussions. Students are able to activate their schemata through discussion (see top-down type strategies and Chapter Seven) and get instructions on how to perform the task. Willis called this stage a 'sharing personal experience'.
- Reading stage. The reading task aims to make students read using activities such as skimming and scanning, then discussing their findings in groups. In Willis's classification, this task is called 'ordering, to motivate students to read for a particular purpose'.
- Post-reading stage. This phase represents the 'communicative output' of the students, in which the students can communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and get feedback from the teacher.

TBLT includes applying schemata theory (see Chapter Three) in the pre-task cycle, and utilises strategies and skills of reading in the task cycle. 'The conceptual nature of the content is reflected in that new knowledge is always related to existing knowledge' (Errey and Schollaert, 2003, p.22). In this respect, according to Errey and Schollaert (2003) the task-based approach is indebted to schemata theory and to the concept of knowledge. The teacher's role in Willis's methodology is to react to whatever language emerges as

important, and to help students address the gap. The planning of the task follows rather than precedes the task.

In contrast to the role of the teacher in GTM and DM, the TBLT teacher should be an adviser, facilitator, language guide and monitor. Christison and Murray (2014) state that TBLT is a student-centred method in which the student has the freedom to control the language in a natural context (to enrich the background knowledge and use top-down type strategies), according to their needs. The method also focuses on what is known about the target language, such as grammar (using bottom-up type strategies), in order to improve communication skills. However, as Smith, Vasquez, and Hansen (2013) argue, the method is unsuitable for lower-level language students, and lacks focus on form in language teaching. Learning might be lost if there is no clear planning. In other words, the TBLT focuses too much on tasks for communicative purposes.

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed important aspects of language teaching. It began by describing the concepts of language theories and how they might guide teachers' aims, and influence their classroom practice. Next, I explored teaching methods as a representation of language, and how to put theory into practice to teach a particular skill, such as REFL. By reviewing the language teaching methods, it became clear that each method had its own theoretical strategies and activities to fulfil specific learning outcomes. Next, I summarise the main procedures of each teaching method then state how they could 'fire' the eventual interactive reading model. I begin by summarising the main procedures of each teaching method:

- GTM instructions are based on teaching grammar rules and translation into the L1 and FL in order to instruct students to put words together to form a sentence. There is little attention to text content because the activities are based on surface structure and grammar analysis.
- The DM attempts to focus on improving the target language through dialogue, providing students with conversation activities based on the FL. The students' culture and background knowledge are important aspects in the DM, which are employed to generate discussion.



- The A-LM is greatly influenced by aspects of behaviourist theory in which successful responses are praised to prevent students from making errors. Teaching from an A-LM perspective is based on contrasting analysis between the target and L1, in which students are discouraged from using the L1 while teachers are permitted to use it.
- CLT is based on strategies to improve students' communicative competence.
- TBLT is a student-centred method based on improving students' authentic language by providing them with meaningful communication tasks and problem solving activities. However, students might need guidance and explanations, as they will in all approaches.

We might combine the useful parts of these existing methods to come up with an appropriate method in teaching and learning REFL strategies. Rivers (1981) states that teachers might help students learn the new language strategies by trying:

... to absorb the best techniques of all well-known language teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate. (Rivers, 1981, p.55)

Adopting various techniques selected from different reading strategies and language teaching methods and philosophies might be helpful because I believe certain parts of each teaching method might 'fire' an eventual interactive type of reading strategies. For example, as discussed earlier:

- GTM might facilitate the learning of FL because it allows the students to use their mother tongue. Furthermore, studying grammatical rules might help develop bottom-up type reading strategies in students.
- Students in the DM are active participants who share their knowledge with the teacher. The method gives them the chance to think and express their ideas about what they read, and what kind of reading strategies such as background knowledge (top-down type reading strategies) help students learn to read for meaning.
- A-LM acknowledges the importance of motivation in improving students' learning strategies.
- CLT is a student-centred approach. The teacher is an observer who takes notes to provide students with feedback on their performance.

- Teachers in TBLT design activities that promote students' language needs (see Chapter Seven). The method offers approximate natural learning inside the classroom, following stages such as pre-task which might promote top-down type strategies, task-cycle and language focus, which might improve students bottom-up type reading strategies.

Each method's characteristics of reading would be combined to design reading strategies and methods that might help in teaching REFL using eventual interactive reading type strategies, leading to 'reading for meaning'. These procedures were tested in the Intervention Phase which I discuss in Chapter Seven to suggest a different way of teaching. The following chapter describes the methods used to collect data in the processes of this research.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY**

## **5.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the approach and methods used to collect and to analyse data in this research. The chapter is divided into five sections. In Section One, I will introduce the method and research questions. In Section Two, I will discuss the rationale for the research methodology choice and present different aspects of the action research framework used, outlining how these met the aims of this study. Section Three outlines the research design, in which the two phases of the action research (Reconnaissance and Intervention) are presented. Then in Section Four, I will discuss the data collection tools and finally, in Section Five, I will discuss participants, ethical considerations, validation and data analysis.

## **5.1 A qualitative approach to research**

This study focuses on the learning and teaching of Reading in English as a Foreign Language (REFL) in Libya. The study draws on, as noted in Chapter One, and as I discuss in further detail here, qualitative research methods using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, think-aloud protocols, focus group and Skype interviews to look critically at Libyan students and teachers of EFL as they learned and taught REFL in four Libyan research sites. Arsenault and Anderson (1998) define qualitative research as ‘a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them’. Bradley (1997, p.31) adds that qualitative research is one of the best methods ‘for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data on phenomena that are not easily reduced to numbers’. One aim of this study was to investigate how the EFL reader interacted with an English reading text. I preferred to use the qualitative research methods such as TAPs and semi-structured interviews because it allowed me to have a personal engagement with the subject, to identify the strategies used while reading.

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) summarised the characteristics of qualitative research as the method of collecting data in the natural world through using multiple tools. These characteristics help us understand the researcher role in qualitative research. The method

places the researcher 'at the centre of data-gathering phase' in which s/he 'is the instrument by which information is collected' (Lavrake and Roller, 2015, p.5). For example, as I briefly discuss in Section 5.4.1, the classroom observation requires the researcher to collect data from the classroom (the natural world) in order to observe behaviour and understand how the social events of the language classroom are enacted.

Wiebel (1990, p.5) describes the qualitative research method as 'often the only appropriate means available for gathering sensitive and valid data'. This meant, for example, direct interaction between me and the participants (in TAPs and interviews) to establish trust and to enable me to collect appropriate data. Flick (2002, cited in Elabbar, 2011, p.97) argues that qualitative research 'is useful for exploring "why" rather than how many'. This means that one of the aims of qualitative research is to investigate reasons rather than merely stating the problem. Bryman (2012, p.108) adds that qualitative research 'involves in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reason behind various aspects of behaviour'. For example, as I will explain later, I used TAPs to understand students' behaviours while REFL and interviews to gain in-depth understanding of the reasons behind these behaviours. I used the qualitative method to answer the following research questions.

### **Research questions**

As I noted in Chapter One, this study investigates the teaching of REFL in Libyan universities, with particular reference to methods and models of reading. My research is based on qualitative research methods which aim to discover, explore and describe social experiences, the how, what and why of REFL (see Chapter One). Thus, the literature and the study's context suggested the following research questions:

1. Are the teaching methods that are currently used in Libyan Universities EFL classrooms appropriate to teach REFL?
2. Are the models available to describe reading (Goodman's 1967 top-down model; Gough's 1972 bottom-up model; Rumelhart's 1977 interactive model; and Bernhardt's 1991 compensatory interactive model) useful in understanding how EFL students learn to REFL? Are these models useful in investigating the role of:
  - Decoding in understanding the reading text (breaking-up words and sentences)?

- Using syntactic, phonological, and vocabulary knowledge to understand the context of the passage?
  - Using background knowledge of the world/topic/text-type to understand the reading text?
3. Can we use reading models/theories to help understand how reading works and can therefore enable better reading (and teaching of reading) in REFL?
  4. How can Libyan EFL teachers help EFL students become better readers when reading is understood as ‘reading for meaning’?

I discussed these research questions in Section 1.5. The following sections will further explain how I went about seeking answers to my research questions.

## **5.2 Section Two**

Section Two contains two parts: Part One discusses the research processes and Part Two describes the implementation of action research.

### **5.2.1 The research processes**

This research project aimed to identify the main problems Libyan students and their teachers encounter in learning REFL by observing teaching methods used to teach EFL and to use theories and models to help understand what readers were doing. The study also aimed to understand and apply changes, as appropriate, to the pedagogical context, by shaping an Intervention Phase to implement some changes in teaching and learning REFL in Libyan universities. In order to attain these research aims, I split the research goals into three main steps:

- To connect theory with practice in teaching reading by investigating theoretical reading models and associated empirical studies, observing REFL and teaching methods and REFL to models of reading. This was the Reconnaissance Phase (see Section 5.3.1).
- To design a REFL Intervention Phase (see Section 5.3.2) based on data collected in the Reconnaissance Phase and apply appropriate alternative pedagogies in the REFL classroom.

- Monitoring and evaluating the intervention action, and modifying it for following classes (see below).

Fulfilling these aims required applying many changes during the research procedures. These changes were due to the EFL students' and teachers' 'practices, knowledge, experience, views and desires' (McTaggart, 1997, cited in Burns, 2010, p.155). In summary, this research was based on investigating educational practice and analysing existing methods and models of REFL used in the Libyan context and then implementing action that might improve REFL via alternative teaching methods. I selected an 'action research' approach as a suitable process. Greenwood (1999) describes action research as the process of transformation of practice in particular settings, based on personal involvement. He characterised action research as a process in which 'external researchers are actively involved and able to contribute to the conditions for organizational change and its development process' (p.199). I was not entirely 'external' as I knew the context and had taught REFL in a Libyan university for a few years. However, I was not working with my own classes and I was collecting data from four research sites (see Section 5.5).

By implementing an action research approach, I hoped to plan an Intervention Phase based on diagnosing the situation, and, ultimately, to provide a new direction for REFL teaching and learning in the Libyan context. Burns (2010, p.2) also describes action research as a methodology that involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring teaching circumstances. By 'critical', Burns does not mean being negative about the way teachers teach, or to imply that the methods used in teaching are unproductive, but to identify an area that the researcher feels 'could be done better, subjecting it to questioning, and then developing new ideas and alternatives' (p.2). This argument summed up the main aims of my research.

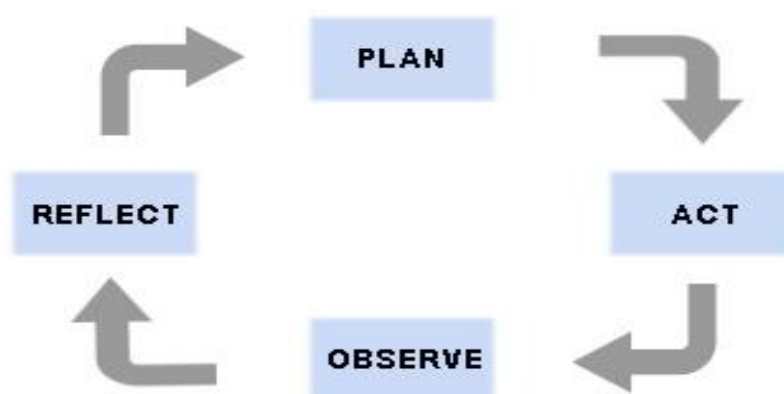
According to Schmuck (2009, p.89), the purpose of conducting action research in the educational processes is to improve a particular situation, unlike traditional research that reports others' findings. Carr and Kemmis (1986) also believe that action research is an exploratory method that enables the researcher to collaborate in classroom activities, and therefore identify and analyse in depth aspects of teaching and learning, suggesting an action as appropriate. By implementing an action research approach, I hoped to suggest an improvement in the methods and models of REFL, based on the actual practice of acting and reflecting. The practice of fieldwork and preparing the Intervention Phase would, I

hoped, help me as well as other Libyan EFL university teachers and students to better understand REFL and to put different ideas and teaching and learning activity into practice. In turn, the research would inform my own teaching and, ultimately, staff development with colleagues, coping with the large numbers of students in EFL classrooms. For all of these reasons, action research was deemed an appropriate research methodology for this study. To discuss these issues further, the next section outlines the general framework of action research and how I utilized it to guide the process of this study.

### 5.2.2 Implementation of action research

There are different patterns suggested to implement action research, which reflect the concept of gathering, interpreting and taking action to improve practice (Nolan and Hoover, 2011). Lewin (1946) introduced action research as a spiral cycle that includes stages such as analysis, fact finding, planning, implementation and evaluation (cited in Burns, 2010, p.27). According to Lewin (1946), the process of action research begins with examining the general idea (identifying the area) in its own practical environment and ‘fact finding’ for change and improvement. Subsequently, implementing an action for a particular development is achieved through overall planning and investigating the situation, which provides new data to then evaluate the action. Then researchers implement action and, through reflection, further modification and replanning should take place, to formulate the next cycle with similar phases (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Reflection Cycle.**



(Source: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/resource/evaluation/tools/action/>)

I will discuss how this model applies to my own work below. Though Lewin's model of action research was developed for social psychological problems caused by industrialisation, it was later used as a basis for thinking about what educational research might include (Schwalbach, 2003). Elliott (1991, p.70) modified Lewin's action research model by stating that completion of the first cycle might shift by explicitly revising the original purpose of the work. Reconnaissance could be simply fact finding, and implementation is a straightforward procedure in which each action step is monitored and subject to evaluation. Elliott (1991) suggested the following phases:

- The general idea should be allowed to shift.
- Reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact finding, and should constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than only at the beginning.
- Implementation of an action step is not always easy, and one should not proceed to evaluate the effects of an action until one has monitored the extent to which it has been implemented. (Elliott, 1991, p.70)

Considering the framework of Lewin's and Elliott's models of action research, I would say that Elliott offers a better outline for my research methodology. My Reconnaissance Phase was not only a matter of fact finding and gaining a general idea of REFL, but included an analysis of REFL using think-aloud protocols, interviewing and observing the four classes to form the basis for a later intervention. Further, in my research, the action was not implemented strictly through straightforward procedures, but through monitoring and reflection on the extent to, and ways in which it could be implemented (see below).

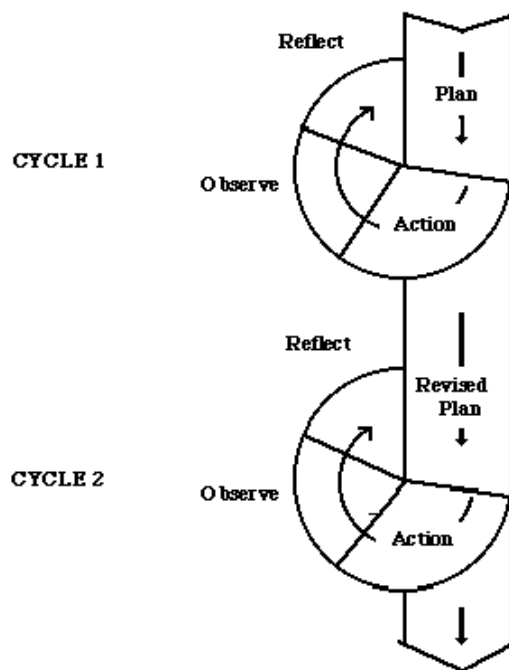
Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, cited in Burns, 2010) introduced an action research design framework based on Lewin's model (discussed earlier). However, they criticised Lewin's model as not sufficiently flexible for modifications in the plan, in which researchers might need to make their own interpretations of what would be suitable (Burns, 2010). They introduced action research as educational investigation rather than as observing and recording class activities. Kemmis and McTaggart coined their model (see Figure 2 below) collective self-reflective enquiry consisting of four aspects forming a cycle: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Finally, there is revising the plan for a new spiral phase to provide for improvement with each of their aspects essential steps in the process.

- Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.



- Act to implement the plan.
- Observe the effects of critically informed action in context in which it occurs.
- Reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of cycles. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p.10)

**Figure 2: Action Research Spiral**



Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p.25)

I discuss below how this model applies to my own work below. In addition to Kemmis and McTaggart's work, the notion of spiralling through the process of planning, action and reflection has been elaborated by other action research theorists (Elliott, 1991; Burns, 2010). McNiff (2013) sets out the following basic process for implementing action research:

- Review current practice.
- Identify an aspect to investigate.
- Ask focus questions about how we can investigate it.
- Imagine a way forward.
- Try it out, and take stock of what happens.

- Modify our plan in light of what we have found, and continue with the action.
  - Evaluate the modified action; reconsider what we are doing in light of evaluation.
- This can then lead to a new action-reflection cycle. (McNiff, 2013, p.90)

McNiff states that the procedures of action research are changeable, and can be modified according to the nature of the study. She emphasizes that researchers might think about a particular situation that is problematic. The notion of what to improve is itself a complex stage (see below). According to McNiff (2002), the researcher remains unsure of what is required, and why, to improve a particular situation. Consequently, implementing one process of action research that might be appropriate for my study was relatively difficult because of the unexpected nature of the action. My research project was influenced by different models of action research, yet was more directed by Kemmis and McTaggart's, and McNiff's models because of their flexibility. My study takes the form of a diagnosis of a situation, an examination of REFL behaviours and methods of learning and teaching, reflection on analysis and, finally, suggestions of appropriate action to improve REFL in Libyan universities. The diagnosis stage, hereafter called the Reconnaissance Phase, provided initial data collected from the four Libyan research sites, and included tools such as video-recorded classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and TAPs. The second phase of my research project, the Intervention Phase, involved two team-teaching sessions, a focus group discussion, TAPs and Skype interview with the class teacher. The following sections discuss each tool of data collection and how they are designed to collect data for my research.

### **5.3 Section Three: research design**

This section provides details of how the action was organised, the site of the study, the researcher's role, and the purpose of particular research tools to gather data for my research.

I followed two phases that were based on the procedures discussed earlier: the Reconnaissance Phase, which represents diagnosing the situation, and the Intervention Phase, which is the implementation stage based on the findings of the Reconnaissance Phase. The action research spiral model of planning, acting, observing and reflecting will be followed through various types of data collection instruments, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

### 5.3.1 Phase One: data collection ‘Reconnaissance’

After deciding on the locations of the study, the next step was the Reconnaissance Phase, which represents gathering information about the context, in order to decide what improvements or changes were desirable in teaching REFL. Andrew (2013) argues that the Reconnaissance Phase is the:

... link between the formulation of focus, or the identification of a general idea, with the development of a plan to take action on that focus. (Andrew, 2013, p.73)

The main aim of the Reconnaissance Phase in my research was to obtain understanding of the teaching and learning of English REFL strategies, by engaging with EFL teachers and students in real time (see below for the number of participants). In order to have specific information about the context of the study, I tried to find answers to the above research questions One and Two. I used four main instruments for gathering data in the Reconnaissance Phase: i) think aloud protocols (TAPs); ii) video-taped classroom observation; iii/iv) semi-structured interviews with teachers/students.

The following table illustrates the tools used in the Reconnaissance Phase, the aims of each instrument and the number of participants.

	Instrument	No. of subjects	Texts	Aims and objectives
1	Non-participant observations	Four REFL classes (approx. 165 students)		To understand the process of teaching reading in order to shape the intervention based on the teaching methods used.
2	Semi-structured interviews	Four teachers		To record and observe the actions and methods used in the lesson and explore their own views of reading and teaching reading in EFL.
3	Think-aloud protocol	24 students	1. Attitudes to Language (cloze text) 2. Bakelite, the birth of modern plastics	To examine the use of processes from reading models such as top-down, bottom-up type and eventual interactive models and their applicability to REFL.
4	Follow-up interviews	24 students		To discuss the response types that are used by the subject in the think aloud procedure.

**Table 3:** Summary of Reconnaissance Phase Instruments

### **First stage processes: The Reconnaissance Phase**

The research's first phase began by observing four classes at four research sites and interviewing the four teachers in the classes observed. Teachers' interviews were also used as a follow-up process to clarify and better understand certain teaching techniques they had used. I also collected data by conducting Think Aloud Protocols (TAPs) with 24 EFL students (six students from each site) to examine the reading English strategies they used and to consider their 'fit' to the reading models discussed in Chapter Two. Such students were nominated by the teachers using the following criteria: two very good, two average and two weak students (see Section 5.5), in terms of their ability to use vocabulary, grammar, content, structure and reading English skills. The TAPs were followed by semi-structured interviews with the same students, to discuss their responses while reading the texts. The main aim of using these instruments in this phase was to gain in-depth knowledge about teaching and learning English reading strategies and to help me devise the Intervention Phase. The following sections will discuss the aims and use of each instrument.

### **Organizing the Intervention based on information collected in Phase One.**

After collecting and analysing data from the first phase, I prepared an intervention strategy to trial what I thought might be an improvement to REFL teaching methods. The main objective of conducting the Intervention Phase was to teach and learn REFL strategies, using methods based on an interactive reading model rather than the current methods of teaching REFL (see Chapters Two and Three). The next stage provides discussion of the aims and objectives of the second phase.

#### **5.3.2 Phase Two: The Intervention Phase**

After collecting and analysing data from the Reconnaissance Phase, I revised the design and made changes to the Intervention Phase (see below), based on findings. The main aim of this phase was to find answers to the above research questions Three and Four.

## **Intervention Phase procedures**

I planned the second phase in the second part of the academic year that began in January 2014 and ended in June 2014 at the University of X1 (to anonymise the university). In this stage, I taught two team-teaching sessions for 55-65 minutes, each using a carefully planned intervention. In the lessons, which are discussed in Chapter Seven, I introduced a new way of teaching reading that was based on an interactive model of reading (see Chapter Two). Then, I worked with a teacher-collaborator to practise the new lesson plan. The collaborator attended the lessons I taught to familiarise himself with the new procedures of teaching REFL, discussing in detail the timetables and course content to develop the lesson plan (see Chapter Seven).

I also conducted a focus group interview, TAPs and semi-structured interviews with six students who participated in the first phase of the research, to assess the outcomes of the new method and gain additional information to prepare for the next phase. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, the lesson was subject to changes and modifications as a result of evaluation and this work. When I evaluated the success of the lesson, I asked the teacher-collaborator to teach two lessons using the new method, but I did not participate in this cycle myself. I sat at the end of the class and observed the class to gauge changes in his teaching and their effectiveness. His lesson was based on the first lesson plan I used (see Chapter Seven and Appendix 6). Finally, I conducted a Skype interview with the teacher at the end of the academic year to talk about changes, if any, and performance of the students' reading strategies. Table 4 below includes a summary of the instruments used in the second phase, the number of participants and the aims and objectives of using each tool.

S.	Instrument	No. of subjects	Texts	Aims and objectives
1	Teaching Group	Two Classes of 30-50 students. (approx. 60 min.)		To introduce new methodology of teaching reading based on eventual interactive model strategies of reading.
2	Focus Group interviews	6 students		To evaluate the success and assess if any changes have occurred following the new method of teaching reading.
	Think-aloud protocols		1. Attitudes to Language	
	Semi-structured interviews		2. Playing is a Serious Business	
3		<b>Teacher-collaborator sessions</b>		
	Observation	2 classes		To record classroom activities and evaluate the new methods of teaching reading.
4	Skype interview	1 teacher		At the end of the academic year to discuss any changes with respect to reading behaviours, strategies, reactions and performance of students and teacher.

**Table 4:** Summary of Intervention Phase Instruments

## 5.4 Section Four: data collection instruments

Many forms of data were obtained through several types of instruments and I tried to ensure that each data collection tool was appropriate for the information necessary to answer the research questions. This study required different types of data and required various types of instruments. The following sections attempt to describe each instrument and data source.

### 5.4.1 Classroom observation

Nunan (1992, p.93) describes ‘observation’ in language research as a method of watching behaviour and understanding how the social events of the language classroom are enacted. In this research, classroom observation was utilised to explore the methods of teaching REFL in four Libyan research sites. This instrument was also selected for the following reasons: first, it allows the researcher to ‘look at what is taking place *in situ* rather than

relying on a second-hand account' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.396). Second, some people might find it difficult to articulate their knowledge, so the instrument 'enables the researcher to see some things that students and teachers may not be able to report on themselves' (Mertler, 2012, p.121).

Paltridge and Phakiti (2010) state that classroom observation is classified as participant and non-participant observations. In participant observation, the researcher contributes to activities, and takes notes while participating. However, participant observation may be limited because bias is possible and the researcher's involvement in the activities might be an unnatural situation for students; as a result, they may behave differently (Brain, 2002). In non-participant observation, the observer does not participate in class activities. S/he sits in the class watching and taking notes on what is happening. Non-participant observation may have drawbacks. The teacher might be uncomfortable, believing that the researcher might be evaluating his/her teaching performance. To avoid this drawback, observations were combined with pre- and post- semi-structured interviews (see Section 5.4.3) in which a pre-interview provided me with information about the purpose of the observation and inform the teacher about the aims of the observation. Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2009, p.219) adds that we are unable 'to ask subjects [while being observed] what they do or what they think; we have a record of their actions'. To try to counteract this limitation, I conducted follow-up teacher interview (see Section 5.4.3) after the classroom observations to discuss the actions I observed.

In this research, I used a non-participant observation schedule to observe English reading classes. Using the following themes, I observed the teacher role, student role and use of textbook to decide on the overall teaching methods used to teach reading. In addition, a video camera was used to collect data.

1. The teacher's role.
2. The learner's role.
3. The type of interaction: T-L / L-L / L - Txt.
4. The classroom control and management, for example, how teacher-centred is this?
5. How reading is taught, for example – activities, texts and help for students.
6. Teacher feedback on learners' performance.
7. The use of L1 in the class.

The video recording was utilised to allow good visual and sound recording to be replayed several times (Wragg, 2012, p.16). It also captured non-verbal actions and information missed during the observation. The following section outlines the TAPs data collection tool.

#### **5.4.2 Think Aloud Protocols (TAPs)**

In research, a TAP is described as ‘a measurement instrument, to assess the students’ text comprehension while they read’ (Bowles, 2010, p.6). The method is based on encouraging the student to verbalise what they are thinking while reading, allowing the researcher to identify reading strategies used by the reader. TAPs were selected to examine English reading strategies and, following analysis, to consider their ‘fit’ to reading models, by asking what strategies readers deployed and linking those to models of reading (bottom-up, top-down and interactive). In other words, TAPs aimed to answer the second research question, which investigates the applicability of decoding, syntactic, phonological knowledge, and background knowledge in comprehending reading text in a FL.

Ward and Traweek (1993) note that the think aloud approach consists of a concurrent TAPs and a reconstruction procedure. In the concurrent approach, verbalisation is obtained immediately while the participant is interacting with the text and the researcher. In reconstruction, the task is video-taped and the subject asked to review the task and comment on their reading. In this research, I used the concurrent TAPs because it allowed me to directly interact with the subject and obtain specific information during the task.

Rankin (1988, p.122) stated that the first step in adopting a TAP as a data collection tool is to select appropriate texts. Rankin identified two important selections to be considered: text and subject. In text selection, factors such as length, structure, and difficulty of the passage should be considered. For instance, text length should be long enough to allow the subjects to become involved in reading, but not so long that they become exhausted by the demands of thinking aloud. Rankin (1988, p.123) suggests texts between 300 to 1000 words as an appropriate length. In addition, the level of difficulty should suit subjects’ cognitive load: not too long, to prevent their thinking aloud ability, nor below the students’ ability, so that they read automatically.

Besides the merits of the TAP, there were limitations that need to be noted. For example,



the amount of cognitive processing while engaging in TAP is extensive, and asking the subject to read and verbalise any thoughts that occur to them adds to the load (Almasi and Fullerton, 2012, p.88). This load may upset or hold up the reading progress. In the concurrent think aloud techniques, while the researcher can interrupt the task periodically and ask specific questions, the ‘interruption may interfere with task performance’ (Shapiro and Kratochwill, 2000, p.155). To reduce these limitations, Hosenfeld (1977, p.112) suggests strategies that may overcome TAP drawbacks: first, the subject should be trained to practise the task several times before the real experiment. Second, the researcher should ask indirect rather than direct questions, because indirect questions help the subject to feel confident, and the information may better reflect their perceptions. An example of a direct question might be: ‘Did you translate the word?’ An example of an indirect question might be: ‘Do you usually translate as you read?’ The student answers ‘yes’; the interviewer encourages him/her to ‘Do what you usually do’. Additionally, Rankin (1988) argues that if the subject fails to verbalise enough about the strategies s/he is using, the researcher should interrupt and clarify the task as necessary. While conducting the TAPs some students had difficulties guessing the meaning of some words, which forced them to stop reading and thinking aloud. As discussed in Chapter Six, in my TAPS, the students asked if they could use a dictionary and I asked them to do what they usually did while reading EFL, which is reading without resort to a dictionary. This allows the participants to naturally think and read as they usually did.

In the Reconnaissance and Intervention Phases, students read four texts (see below), and think aloud while reading for 30 minutes (15 minutes each). The protocols were conducted in Arabic to gather as much information about thinking during reading as possible without imposing the need to think-aloud in English, which could have inhibited participants from talking as fully or clearly as possible about their thinking and reading strategies. I chose four texts adopted from ‘level one’ IELTS test books series 4, 5, 6 and 9. The reason for using texts from IELTS books was that the texts were designed for international EFL students and suited all levels of proficiency. For instance, among the three levels of reading tests, level one is the easiest for EFL students.

The first passage, ‘Advantages of Public Transport’ (see Appendix 3), from the Cambridge IELTS series 6 (2007, p.41), contains 418 words. I intentionally omitted words to establish how the reader dealt with unfamiliar words and how s/he utilized their grammar, word knowledge, content and sentence structure to work out what the omitted words were (see

Chapter Six). The second text was derived from Cambridge IELTS series 5 (2006, p.38) and contained 325 words. The passage, 'Bakelite, The Birth of Modern Plastic' (see Appendix 4) did not include any omitted words. The TAP aimed to identify how the student comprehended the text and dealt with unknown words, using different strategies such as phonological knowledge, for instance, as discussed in Chapter Two, to decode words by utilising the reader's knowledge of word structure and breaking it into syllables. In addition, the TAP was used to understand how the readers used bottom-up reading strategies.

In assessing readability, two techniques were used to measure the passages' difficulty. First, the Flesch Formula Software Program (reading ease readability formula) of assessing word and sentence difficulties in English was used. This readability formula is used in education in the USA to score texts from the upper elementary to college level (Mesmer, 2008) by counting the total number of words, syllables, and sentences in a text. Flesch (1943, cited in Wu, 2014, p.47) states that by making the following calculation on the reading text, Reading Ease (RE) =  $206.835 - (1.015 * \text{total words} \times \text{total sentences}) - (84.6 * \text{total syllables} \times \text{total words})$ , the level of reading ease can be ascertained. The higher the number on the readability scale score, the easier the text. Flesch (1943) argues that reading ease is the number ranging between 0-100. Scores between 90-100 suggest that the text is very easy to understand; scores between 60-70 that the text is easy to understand; and that scores between 0-30 are suitable for college graduates. After calculating the two passages, the graded score for the cloze text was 44.1 and the second text was 24.1, suggesting that both texts might be appropriate for EFL students at university level. The cloze text might be easier because some words were omitted. However, the formula might not consider factors such as text content, type and reader knowledge. Before finalising the text, I asked three Libyan EFL students at LCGU who were not my research participants, to trial the texts to assess text comprehension, and their performance was good. Testing this tool helped me to be more specific with what I was searching for and so, for example, I provided the participants with instructions before they started reading in order not to stop them while reading.

Hosenfeld (1977) states that to complement the TAPs, the researcher should use a follow up process to confirm the findings. In this study, the follow-up procedure was semi-structured interviews which I discuss in the following section.

### 5.4.3 Interviews

The term ‘interview’ is defined by Kvale (1996) as the ‘interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest’ (p.14). Interviews provide an opportunity for the researcher to obtain an immediate clarification about an action or response from the subject. For this reason, interviews were used in this research because they enabled me to obtain knowledge about the reasons for using a certain method of teaching and learning reading. Further, interviews support the TAPs as a follow up technique to investigate reading strategies used by the reader. Yin (1984, p.18) states that interviews are also an essential source for research that involves a small number of participants. In addition, interviewing enabled me to build a relationship with the interviewee and to obtain data that might not be obtained by other instruments such as questionnaires.

Burns (2010, p.75) states that in educational research there are three types of interviews: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In structured interviews, the researcher has a set of the same control questions for all participants. Unstructured interviews use unplanned flexible questions. Combining this, semi-structured interviews include a list of less controlled questions which the researcher can add to, omit and change, according to the interview. There are drawbacks with semi-structured interviews. They are time consuming with respect to analysing data. Despite these drawbacks, semi-structured interviews were used for the following reasons: first, they provide greater flexibility than structured interviews to focus on each reading strategy used by the reader as each reader may have his/her own way of reading. Second, semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore teaching methods and to obtain teachers’ differing perceptions about the way they taught REFL, and how to improve teaching REFL in Libyan universities. Third, as Shull, Singer and Sjoberg (2008, p.14) state, semi-structured interview data tend to be highly reliable, and researchers can clarify questions with respondents and probe unexpected responses. Further, the tool was appropriate in interviewing EFL students because I could rephrase and present the questions in several ways, based on the language level of the participants. I spoke with students in their L1 (Arabic) and with the teachers in English.

During the semi-structured interviews, I used a scheduled list of themes (see below), which were used as a guide to add and change questions and seek further details. As illustrated below, there were two theme guides, one for teachers and another for students. Teacher

interviews were divided into two sections: before and after observations.

#### 1) Before observation

The before observation interviews aimed to ascertain information about the lesson objectives and the materials used. In addition, the questions aimed to obtain information about difficulties, such as cultural background, that the teacher might face in fulfilling these aims (teacher's lesson aims). For example, the before observation themes include:

1. The main aims of the lesson.
2. Difficulties, if any, that the teacher may face in teaching the lesson.
3. Types of materials used in the lesson.
4. Teaching methods used in the reading lesson.

#### 2) After observations interviews.

In the second section of the interview, the questions were designed to record and assess the actions and methods used in the lesson observed, and to explore the teachers' own views of learning and teaching REFL strategies. They also aimed to gain data about the teachers' previous experience of teaching, self-development and knowledge of teaching REFL. The questions were intended to investigate the role that the teacher could play in improving the students' reading strategies. For example, the after observation interview guide themes were as follows:

1. The use of the L1 in the lesson.
2. The reasons for using some techniques in the lesson.
3. Teacher's education, such as previous learning experience and self-development.
4. The type of classroom interaction.
5. The student-student interaction in the classroom.
6. The way reading is usually taught.
7. The teacher's experience of reading strategies and models.
8. Teachers' feedback on students' reading mistakes.

EFL Teacher views:

1. The applicability of English reading strategies used to help Libyan FL students to comprehend the text.
2. The applicability of teaching methods used in the Libyan FL classroom to help the student comprehend the text.
3. Anything else you want to add.

### **Students' interview guide themes**

In this Phase, students' semi-structured interviews were considered as a follow-up activity to complement the TAPs. The main aims of the questions were to discuss the response types that students gave in the TAPs. The questions also aimed to investigate how the student understood the text and the strategies s/he used. Furthermore, the questions aimed to collect data about the role the teacher could play in increasing students' reading comprehension strategies. Students in these interviews were free to use their L1 when preferred. The students' interview guides themes are listed below:

#### Text themes

1. The text – level and difficulty.
2. The difficulty of particular words, sentences and structure in the text.
3. Overall comprehension (reading for meaning) of the text.
4. Details of the strategies used by the student to comprehend the text/parts of the text.

#### Reading strategies used

1. Description of the reading strategies used to (and that could be used to) understand the text.
2. The use of background knowledge such as grammar, word segments, vocabulary knowledge, content and sentence structure to comprehend the text.
3. The advantages/disadvantages of using a dictionary/translating to understand the text.

#### Teaching reading methods

1. The teacher's role in helping the student to understand these types of texts.

2. The applicability/helpfulness of the teaching methods – activities and strategies suggested - that the teacher uses to help students understand these types of texts.

### **Skype semi-structured interview themes**

At the end of the session, I conducted a Skype semi-structured interview with the teacher collaborator to discuss the introduced method of teaching REFL.

1. The success or failure of the teaching method to help learners understand the text.
2. The positive and negative points of the teaching method.
3. The learners' performance in the lesson.
4. The learners' achievement at the end of the course.
5. The advantages and disadvantages of the teacher role in the suggested method.
6. The benefits and drawbacks of using L1 in the lessons.
7. Advantages and disadvantages of the new method.
8. Comparing the introduced method with traditional teaching methods.

### **5.4.4 Focus groups**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe the focus group as a contrived setting in which a small number of selected people are brought together to discuss a specific given topic within a group, leading to data and outcomes. Ideally, participants can freely discuss their opinions about the topic. Focus groups are also helpful in investigating issues 'on which people may not yet have formulated a clear individual opinion' (Wray and Bloomer, 2013, p.165), so that by talking with others the participants will be able to think and overcome any problems such as shyness.

I conducted the focus group interview after I led the reading lessons in the Intervention Phase. The audio-recorded focus group interview lasted 60 minutes with the six students with whom I had worked in the TAPs and interviews in the first phase. Each student had ten minutes to share his/her reactions to the different methods, then participated in a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the lesson. I set themes for the focus group based on students' knowledge of the REFL strategies which they learnt in the sessions. For example:

1. Students' experience of reading strategies/activities used in the lesson.
2. Advantages and disadvantages of the reading strategies/activities used in the lesson.
3. The main difficulties in comprehending the text.
4. Comparison of the usefulness of the three reading strategies/activities used in the lesson: top-down, bottom-up and the eventual interactive types.
5. Difficulties of using the reading strategies when comprehending the text.
6. The differences between traditional and the 'new' method of reading.
7. The different methods a teacher can use in the reading lesson.
8. Procedures in the lesson that worked or did not work and suggestions for change.
9. Any other reactions to the 'new' method.

The themes helped to keep the students focussed on the topic in discussing the main difficulties in learning reading strategies, and the role that the teacher might play to overcome these difficulties. They also had the chance to speak and compare current methods and the method used in this lesson, and to point out what needed to be changed to improve the introduced method.

The focus group gave me the chance to explore the students' knowledge and needs. However, some participants did not seem to voice their real opinion and, instead, followed what other participants said. Nevertheless, as a moderator, I tried to encourage each participant to state his/her own thoughts and express his/her opinion on a particular issue (see Chapter Seven).

## **5.5 Section Five: research settings and data analysis**

In order to collect the data, I selected two Libyan universities situated in the east of the country where I live and to which I had easy access. The University of X1 was established on December 15, 1955 and has a main campus in Benghazi and six satellite campuses in a number of cities: Kufra (my hometown), Ajdabia, Al Marj, Al Abyar, Al Wahat, Gamenes, Soluq and Toukra. I conducted my research on the main site of X1, and in two of the campuses of X1. Each campus is officially recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education as a separate entity in its own right, having independent regulations and management structures. The main site university, however, retains financial responsibility for the entire institution. Each site has an English Language department that educates language teachers for four academic years to teach EFL in the secondary school sector. The University of X2,

also located in the east of Libya, was founded in the 1980s. This makes a total of four research sites in which I collected data for my research and I next explain how data was collected from these sites.

### **5.5.1 Ethical considerations and gaining access**

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) describe ethics as the branch of philosophy in educational research concerned with human behavioural rules, principles and their choices. According to Fisher (2013), three ethical issues should be considered: informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. First, the term ‘informed consent’ emphasises the decision of the participant to participate after informing them about the facts that might influence their decision (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.52). I provided the participants with Plain Language Statements (PLS) (see Appendices 11-15) to inform them about the nature of my research, to emphasise that their participation would be voluntary, and that they would be free to withdraw at any time. Once they accepted the invitation to participate, I sent teachers and students consent forms (see Appendices 1 and 2, and 16-18). Second, ‘confidentiality’ refers to the promise of keeping information obtained from the participant secure (Gregory, 2003, p.49). I informed the participants in the PLS (see Appendix 11) that ‘All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it’. While analysing and presenting my data I refer to the teacher as ‘T’ and the student as ‘S’ so that they will not be recognised. Finally, with respect to the third term, ‘voluntary consent’, Fisher (2013, p.73) states that this term is a reminder that participating is not obligatory, and that the individual is free to withdraw at any time.

With regard to Libyan universities, in which knowledge of research tools such as TAPs, interviews and classroom observations is still limited, I acted on the following moral obligations to protect participants from any mistreatment which might result from participating in the study. Firstly, the research data collection instruments were sent to the Ethics Committee of the College of Social Sciences, Glasgow University to be checked and approved. Secondly, I sought written permission from the Centre of Research and Consultancy on each site. Then, I contacted each university’s English Language department to provide them with information on the nature and objectives of the study. I also sought information about the timetables of English reading classes. Finally, before



collecting the data, and as shown in Appendix 11, I explained to participants that they would be anonymous, and that the information obtained would be kept confidential and secure in locked filing cabinets, with access by the researcher only. I reminded them, as noted in the PLS, that I would shred the data collected in the hard copies and delete all data from computer files after completion of the research.

### 5.5.2 Participants and field of study

As noted earlier, the study was conducted in two Libyan Universities, X1 and X2, and two satellite campuses of the University of X1 – four research sites in total. I contacted the Head of the EFL department at each site, and provided them with full details of my study. I supplied each Head of Department with a Plain Language Statement (see Appendices 11-15), which contained full information about the research project. I asked the heads of the EFL departments to provide me with information about the timetables for reading English classes, and the teachers who taught reading English in the final year. The reason for choosing the final year was because students at that level should have a good knowledge of EFL skills such as grammar and phonology. I sent the EFL teachers my research PLS to provide them with my research details, and an indication of what would happen if they accepted the invitation to take part. In the PLS, teachers were informed that participating in this research was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time. I asked teachers who agreed to participate to sign the research project consent form (see Appendix 2). The table below provides detailed profiles of teachers' qualifications and experience.

<b>Coded name</b>	<b>Degree &amp; Place</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Date of the Interview</b>
<b>T1</b>	Masters in TESOL, USA	4 Years	26/12/2013
<b>T2</b>	Masters in Translation and Linguistics, Libya	7 Years	30/12/2013
<b>T3</b>	Masters in Translation, Libya	13 Years	04/12/2013
<b>T4</b>	PhD in Developmental Education, Philippines	18 Years	29/12/2013

**Table 5:** Teachers' Profiles

Observing the classes was a useful tool for my research. The observation sheet (see Appendix 5) was beneficial and manageable because it allowed me to take notes and descriptions of the lesson steps. After observing the classes and interviewing teachers in the Reconnaissance Phase, I asked each teacher to nominate six students from their classes to be involved in TAPs, and the follow-up semi-structured interviews. Teachers were asked to consider the following criteria in selecting the candidates: two very good, two good, and two weak students in their ability to use their vocabulary knowledge, grammar, content, structure of the sentences and language skills. Then, I sent the students my research PLS. I informed the students who decided to take part that they were free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and that their decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study would not affect them in any way or jeopardise their relationship with me or any member of staff with whom they worked. I also asked the students who decided to take part, to sign the consent form (see Appendix 1).

### **5.5.3 Validity, reliability and ‘goodness’**

Producing validity and reliability of research instruments is a significant concern in all educational research. However, I am aware that these concepts may require adjustment and that they are contested in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). For instance, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) describe validity as a condition in qualitative and quantitative research concerned with ‘a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure’ (p.133). Brown and Rodgers (2002) define reliability as the ‘degree to which the results of a study (such as interview or other measurement test) are consistent’ (p.241). The validity and reliability of the research tools might be attained through emphasising the methods used to gather, interpret, and analyse data.

In this research, I used various approaches to set up validity and reliability, following best practice in qualitative research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). My first technique was a form of ‘triangulation’, the use of two or more methods of data collection such as TAPs, classroom observations and follow-up interviews, to allow the researcher to be confident of research results (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). As an additional part of triangulation, I collected data from different Universities and different EFL teachers and students from various locations in Libya.

The second strategy utilised to establish validity and reliability was 'reflexivity', the 'process by which the researcher comes to understand how they are positioned in relation to the knowledge they are producing' (Scott and Morrison, 2005, p.201). According to Willig (2013), there are two types of reflexivity, personal and epistemological. Personal reflexivity requires awareness of the researcher's role and how they might influence the research procedures by their knowledge, experience, and what the research will add to the context. It also includes understanding of the cultural and political environment in which the research will take place. Willig (2013) states that epistemological reflexivity helps the researcher think about their research findings by encouraging them to reflect on the used assumptions. For instance, Nightingale and Cromby (1999) suggest a number of questions that could be used to establish epistemological reflexivity: how does the design of the study and the method of analysis 'construct' the findings? How has the research question defined and limited what can be found?

In terms of external validity, this research is not 'designed to allow systematic generalisations to other individuals' (Ronald et al. 2013, p.319). This study aims to provide detailed, in depth and clear descriptions of how REFL strategies are used and taught in the selected context. Consequently, any reader can decide the extent to which results and findings from this research are applicable to their situation (Cohen, 2011). This does not mean that qualitative research findings cannot be generalised, although some scholars (for example, Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007) suggest replacing the concept of transferability or trustworthiness in application to different contexts. Credibility is another issue that should be considered in qualitative research because, according to Rothe (2000, p.134), it 'hinges how completely the researcher can convince the community of readers and critics that the work is worthy of attention'. This might be done by assessing the truthfulness of the research findings. In this study, Appendix 10 provides a sample of data analysis from the transcripts so the reader can judge the accuracy of the claims and, again, Section 8.3 develops these processes and considers the 'goodness' of my research.

#### **5.5.4 Data analysis processes**

As noted earlier, I collected and analysed my data through qualitative research methods. My data collection was guided by themes from the literature and my research questions. There were also themes which are from the data itself because, as I discuss in Chapter Six,

participants engaged in different strategic behaviours. For example, while they were reading silently, I could not determine which strategic behaviour students were using until they reported what they were doing. In this case, themes such as reading silently came up from the data and these issues prompted me, as explained in Chapters Six and Seven, to look for new themes from the data. In this section, I discuss how I looked for new themes from my data and how I analysed them.

After collecting the data, the researcher should find an appropriate approach to analyse the findings. Hine and Carson (2007) state that there are two steps to analysing qualitative research: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. I began with within-case analysis, which calls for dealing with each participant individually, using content analysis to identify themes, and to find a meaning for each pattern. This stage's goal is to become familiar with each pattern before moving to cross-analysis. Then, cross-analysis was conducted to determine common patterns across cases, in order to assess the basics to generalise the evidence (Merriam, 2009). I provide details of the results in the following chapters.

These processes of analysing cases were practised using the following steps: preparation and familiarity with the data, interpreting the data (developing codes, categories and concepts), and verifying and representing the data (Denscombe, 2007). The next sections explain each category in depth.

### **Preparation and familiarity with the data**

Once the data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, and think-aloud protocols, I started transcribing the audio and video tapes to make the data easier to analyse. To be familiar with the information provided, I read the transcripts and listened to the tapes more than once. In this stage, I quickly browsed through transcripts as a whole, took notes and read carefully, line by line. I treated each participant individually in order to find the individual code for each case. Then, I used cross-analysis techniques to generalise how each EFL reader dealt with the reading task, and the methods of teaching reading English used in the classrooms. During this process, I took notes about the main difficulties of teaching and reading English.

Preparation of the TAP data for analysis took more time because I had to carefully analyse each case individually, to record each strategy used. For example, in order to analyse the

observed strategic behaviour while reading the cloze text data, I gave a symbol for each behaviour: reading aloud (\*\*\*\*\*), pausing while reading (++++), reading silently (-----), and re-reading the sentence (∩) (see Appendix 10). These signs allowed me to accurately follow the reader while s/he was reading. When I finished recording the behaviours, I put the data I observed in a special box (see Table 6), which I prepared to record the expected and actual actions during the TAPs.

### Participant name: S7

Deleted word (2)	Line	Expected action of the reader	Observable Strategic Behaviour
went	8	'Went' is deleted to see if the learner can guess the sense of the word by using his/her syntactic knowledge. A possible answer might be 'goes'. However, a good reader might wait to give a decision about the tense of the word till s/he read the next sentence in which the word 'spent' is in the past tense.	The reader thinks that there is a mistake in the structure of the sentence; therefore, <i>I don't think there is anything missed here. There is no word to guess</i> '. She read the sentence more than once then she made her decision.

**Table 6:** Expected action of the reader

Then I combined all boxes together to determine the common patterns across cases and the overlapped behaviours, to prepare them for analysis.

### Analysing the data

Analysing the data is, of course, an important part of the research. It allowed me to use the collected data and find answers to the research questions, and come to some tentative conclusions about the problem under study. In order to achieve in-depth understanding of the data collected in this research, I used three stages: coding, categorising, and verifying.

### Coding the data

Merriam (2009, p.173) defines the term 'coding' as the process of assigning some form of shorthand designation to various aspects of the data so that the researcher can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.478), coding the qualitative data after defining the content is important because of the large amount of descriptive information that might be included. I used this study's research questions as a reference to guide coding the data from interviews, observations and TAPs. I

began by labelling the relevant pieces such as sentences, phrases or words in the transcripts. These elements might be actions, opinions, similarities or concepts that were relevant because they were repeated several times, things that surprised me, or the participant stated were important. For example, the majority of participants repeated the same behaviour while reading in the Reconnaissance Phase 'reading for correct pronunciation' and so during the interviews, I asked and noted down the reason for this behaviour.

In analysing my data, I looked for the strategies that Libyan EFL students used to read, and the role that the EFL teacher could play to improve their REFL strategies. These were the two main broad headings used to code data. Then, I used sub-headings such as: how does the reader deal with unfamiliar words, does s/he decode the words, does s/he use his/her background knowledge of the world, are they decoding and using syntactic, phonological and vocabulary knowledge appropriate to understand the context of the passage? In addition, the sub-heading codes also included the type of method used in teaching reading and factors that might affect teaching reading. Then, I decided which codes were the most important to create themes/categories, by bringing several codes together. For example, if the teacher translated the text for the students, I noted this as a technique from the GTM.

### **Categories and concepts**

Once all the data was coded, themes were identified and named to build categories which would be named and given a label (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). The categories were expanded, modified, and developed by grouping codes together, by taking notes and making comments in the margins about the new concepts and ideas that were relevant to my study. Then, I described and labelled the themes to decide which were most relevant and how they were connected to each other. Finally, I decided if there was a hierarchy among the themes to combine them in one theme. For example, this study's main themes were: the teacher's role in teaching reading, types of classroom interaction in reading classes, teacher knowledge of teaching reading models, the applicability of reading models such as top-down and bottom-up in REFL and methods, students' difficulties, and reading strategies used to read English. After reviewing the whole text and categories, I went back and grouped these comments together to derive a scheme of themes or findings.

## **Verifying and representing the data**

Once the data was prepared, coded and categorised, I was familiar with the data collected. The final stage of the data analysis was based on interpreting and looking for meaning in the data that could be related to my research's theoretical framework. I analysed each student data individually, then I presented the data thematically. The data collected from teachers' interviews and classroom observations were discussed individually rather than thematically because teachers used different texts and had different aims and views about REFL (see Chapter Six).

## **5.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described the research methodology, design and locations. Based on the literature, I selected the appropriate research instruments for data collection, namely teachers' interviews, classroom observations, students' interviews; think-aloud protocols and focus group, to collect data in two phases - Reconnaissance and Intervention. This chapter also described the procedures of selecting the settings, participants, and data analysis processes. As a researcher, this chapter helped me to improve my research skills and reflect on my data. In the data collection procedures, the Reconnaissance Phase helped me to diagnose the situation and plan an action, then create an intervention and reflect on it. In the following three chapters, I present and discuss the data.

## **CHAPTER SIX: RECONNAISSANCE PHASE**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the data analysis of the Reconnaissance Phase. As discussed in the research methodology (Chapter Five), the Reconnaissance Phase aims to clarify and define the methods and models of REFL in the Libyan context. This chapter contains two sections: Section One presents the data gathered from English reading teachers in four Libyan research sites from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Section Two analyses the data gathered from EFL students through Think-Aloud Protocols (TAPs) and semi-structured interviews. The data I gathered here helped me with the subsequent design of the Intervention Phase, which I discuss in the following chapter.

### **6.1 Section One: EFL teachers' views about teaching REFL**

In this section, I describe what I saw in the classrooms and the teachers' views about the actions that they performed while teaching REFL. The teachers in the interviews spoke to me in English, and I am here quoting them verbatim. The section will also discuss the main problems that REFL teachers face in teaching reading, and how they deal with these difficulties.

As noted in the methodology chapter, I interviewed and observed four EFL teachers at four different Libyan research sites to learn what the teachers taught rather than evaluate how they taught REFL. To analyse the data from the teachers' interviews and classroom observations in the Reconnaissance Phase, I organised the data around the main research themes such as teachers' views of teaching REFL, the use of the L1, and the activities, methods and materials used.

The number of students in each classroom ranged from 15 to 80 students, with a total of 165 students observed. The students were in their final year in the EFL department and on successful completion of this final year would be awarded a Bachelor of Arts in teaching EFL qualifying the students to teach in secondary schools. The duration of the lessons observed was from between 40-60 minutes. It is worth noting that after teachers'



discussions, I noticed that each teacher was, inevitably, influenced by their own views of what constitutes ‘good teaching’. When I started to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation transcripts, I was confused about how to usefully and clearly sort out data and the process of the teaching practices used because, it seemed to me, that each teacher had the same problem in teaching REFL strategies, such as the students’ lack of vocabulary and the number of students in the classes (see below). However, on analysis of the data, I found that there was a difference in the teachers’ views of how to teach and learn REFL. There were also differences in their perceptions of how to achieve their lesson aims. But, as will be seen below, and in these lessons at least, all four teachers seem to teach reading to improve pronunciation rather than comprehension, which influenced their selection of materials (usually prescribed by the EFL department), activities and role in the classroom. Because the teachers used different texts and had different aims and views about REFL, I will discuss the class observations and teachers’ interviews data individually rather than thematically. This section is followed by a brief discussion highlighting the main issues found.

### **6.1.1 Teacher One’s views about teaching REFL**

Teacher One (T1) is a Libyan EFL teacher who has a Masters in TESOL and has been teaching EFL at the University of X2 for four years. In the class I observed (26/12/2013), there were 15 students, 11 girls, four boys and, according to the attendance list, 35 absentees. The age of the students ranged from 21-25 years, and the duration of the lesson was 55 minutes.

Observing the materials used in the class, T1 used a photocopied reading passage from a book titled ‘Selected Reading’. The text titled ‘The Man in the Moon Has Company’ describes the face of a familiar man in the moon with weepy eyes, accompanied by a picture of a moon. T1 read the text to the class, stopping to ask if they understood the text. It became apparent (see below) that both the context and ideas of the text were new to the students, introducing them to many new words such as ‘tranquillities’, ‘gigantic’, ‘Numbium’ and ‘lopsided’, the meanings of which the teacher wrote on the board in the target language. In the footnotes to ‘The Man in the Moon Has Company’, the author provided an explanation of some of the vocabulary. ‘Lopsided’, for example, was defined as ‘crooked’, and ‘lava’ as ‘fluid from a volcano’. However, while the teacher provided further explanations, the students ignored both the text definitions and teacher

explanations, and referred instead to their electronic dictionaries. They wrote the definitions in their L1 because, perhaps, the definitions themselves did not fully help them understand what the words meant. For example, ‘crooked’ is not an obvious alternative to ‘lopsided’. I have studied English in the UK for a number of years but in the context of the text, I too could not understand the alternatives the author provided and had to use the dictionary because even the alternative was difficult to understand. Further, this example highlights the importance of the role of background knowledge in understanding the text. The students might have guessed or understood the meaning of ‘lava’ if they had a background in geography or geology, or even knew the word ‘volcano’. Neither ‘volcano’ nor ‘lava’ has a direct correlate in Arabic ( *أحمام البركانية: alhimam alburkania* ), but could be readily understood by, for example, German (vulkan) or French (volcan) speakers (see the following section for further examples).

There were three exercises to test students’ understanding of the text. Exercise One was based on ‘finding the main idea’ of the text. Exercise Two asked the students to ‘scan for details’ to fill the gap (finding appropriate word from the text), and Exercise Three instructed students to ‘scan for details’ to help them discern the main themes of the text. After the teacher read the text, he read the exercises questions asking the students to select the appropriate answer. T1 read the text aloud while the students followed him on their photocopied sheets. As I explained above, the teacher defined unknown words in the students’ FL. The students were not allowed to use their L1 or consult their dictionaries. T1 did not have a lesson plan to guide him in teaching the text. The reason he gave for using these methods of teaching REFL, namely reading aloud and speaking in FL, will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

After the lesson, I conducted a semi-structured interview with T1. He said that the text was ‘*from western culture*’, which, he said, may have affected the students’ comprehension of the passage: ‘*there is a difference in culture and things to be understood by people, there are not the same to understand by people, you know, cultural differences*’. T1 seems to be suggesting that if the context of the text is from a culture different from that of the students then this will affect the fluency of REFL: ‘*you will find some information about things in the western world that you know students they could not understand*’. Cultural differences may add to the complexity of reading in FL because, as seen with my readings of A Scots Quair, cultural schema is a fundamental element in reading comprehension. In other words, when the reader’s cultural knowledge (content schemata as discussed in Section 3.2.2) is

connected to the reader's cultural environment that knowledge may help the reader interact more readily with the text. This would be in keeping with Yang's (2010) research who reviewed the influence of linguistic, formal and cultural schema on L1 and L2 reading. The value of Yang's work is that it provides a defence of the importance of cultural schema on reading for comprehension, demonstrating that linguistic skills alone are not enough to learn to read proficiently, or teach reading effectively. Yang (2010) concluded that 'it is inevitable that the cultural difference has an impact on language comprehension' (p.176). Cultural knowledge, according to Yang, was more influential than semantics and syntax in terms of reading comprehension. Schema plays an important role in reading for meaning because, as Rumelhart (1980, p.34) suggests, schema describes 'how knowledge is presented and about how that representation facilitates the use of background knowledge in particular ways'.

Although T1 knew that the text might be challenging, he nevertheless used it because, as he said, the EFL department asked him to do so as part of the prescribed curricula: *'it is a book selected for reading, and I am not sure it is the right one for the right people [the student]'*. The teacher was not free to select what he regarded as appropriate texts for his students given their levels of proficiency, interests, needs, and background knowledge, all of which, as I have argued, are important aspects in reading for meaning (see Chapter Two). As discussed above, by examining the text exercises that the T1 gave the students, it was apparent that the exercises were based on finding the main ideas of each paragraph and scanning for clues to understand the overall meaning of the text.

According to T1, the lesson's main aim was to help the students enhance their reading comprehension: *'the most important thing for me I guess is to enhance reading comprehension'*. Namely, by asking the students to read the text, he would then ask them questions about their comprehension of the passage: *'asking them about the meaning of some words, vocabularies, other structures things'*. From T1's point of view, the best way to do so was through a CLT: *'I like the most and I found very useful is the communicative approach'* in which students would be able: *'to respond actively. I think things like that make them try to understand and then you know communicate in a way that, you know, satisfies my goals, aims in this lesson'*. Here, it seems that T1 is describing CLT as a method to teach speaking rather than reading. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, the CLT approach 'aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching' (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.115). The teacher used this method to

teach REFL because, as he said, it helped students to respond and be creative, and to come up with their own answers on what the reading passages were all about. T1 learned to teach English in the USA where he gained his Masters in TESOL, which may explain why he is influenced by the methods of this approach. The main assumption of the CLT is that meaning is paramount and FL students should relate their linguistic knowledge to everyday situations (Elwell, 2011). In other words, the approach is concerned not only with how to learn linguistic forms, but also with how EFL students can practice these forms when they communicate with each other. For example, in order to teach the text ‘The Man in the Moon Has Company’ the students could look at the picture of the moon and discuss what it represented or depicts, and how it conveyed the text’s meaning (but this did not occur in this lesson).

In CLT, students are actively engaged in discussion even if their FL is incomplete. However, and as seen from the TAPs data in the intervention phase (see the following chapter), methods that call for involving students in real life activities such as going shopping or visiting a museum, are unlikely throw up low frequency words like ‘gigantic’, ‘Numbium’ or ‘lopsided’. The CLT lacks closely prescribed techniques which can make the approach seem ‘fuzzy’ in teachers’ understanding (Klapper, 2003, cited in Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). This fuzziness, according to Klapper (2003), means that CLT is a flexible approach to teaching FL and teaching practices may differ widely. In the observed class, the students were not asked to read the whole text. In the first stage of the lesson, T1 read the text aloud to the students, pronounced the unknown words, and gave definitions. Then T1 selected some students to read aloud in order to give them feedback on their pronunciation. The students were given no opportunity to complete the exercises because the teacher did the entire task. As discussed in Chapter One, these methods of teaching reading are similar to the methods of teaching the Holy-Quran. The ‘Sheikh’, the religious leader, selects students in order to hear their articulation of the words with the aim of perfecting pronunciation of the holy words.

In terms of teaching reading strategies, T1 stated that students should ‘*read aloud*’ for him so that he could correct their pronunciation and grammar mistakes. By these means, students would have an opportunity to ‘*read each paragraph for each one* [each student], *so they can all have the chance to read*’. Asking T1 if he thought that reading aloud was a helpful method of teaching REFL, he replied that he could not assess the effectiveness of reading aloud and how it might help the students read for meaning because he did not

appear to know how to evaluate the students' understanding. As he explained, *'I do not know what will happen to them after the class [the lesson]. So, there must be some kind of statistics or things like that but I'm not sure'*. This way of teaching reading seems to improve speaking skills through reading rather than reading for comprehension, the aim of T1's lesson. In the observed classroom, the teacher controlled the reading activities by choosing the students who would read sentences from the text. T1 was the centre of all activities, and the student's role was to follow his instructions. As he, himself, explained:

*I read the lesson myself. I go cross the words and the lesson. I find out if there are strange words. Like the one today [stitch tomorrow], there are so many words and Latin. So, I try to get them out and find out if they mean anything in particular. So, names and kinds of scientists and things like that. So, generally I take the strange words out, find out their meanings then I read the whole text and find meaning of it.* (T1)

In this extract, we can see that the teacher took sole responsibility for doing the entire task: he read the text, found words he thought the students would not know and looked up their meaning in the target language, leaving no role, for the active involvement of students in their own learning. The students' role, as explained above, was to look at the text and follow what the teacher was reading, contradicting T1's stated lesson aims 'to help the students read for meaning'.

Asking, T1 what he believed a 'good reader' to be, he replied that a good reader is one who could employ three strategies:

*I think they need to focus more and more on maybe two things: vocabulary, because most of those people do not have the right amount of vocabulary, and then phonetics, they can't pronounce this vocabulary right, and the third thing is comprehension. Linking together these words with the grammatical structure. So these three things, when they come together smoothly, then I think people will be good readers. But if one of them is missing then problems occur.* (T1)

The successful reader from T1's point of view is one who grasps meaning from the text itself and how it is organised because s/he understands the vocabulary, can correctly articulate words, and understands the grammar. This view of reading seems to follow Gough's (1972) theory whereby the reader is a decoder who 'converts characters into systematic phonemes ...' The reader knows the rules that relates on set of abstract' (p.310). Bearing in mind that Gough's theory is not for REFL, T1 seems to be describing the successful reader as one who employs a linear bottom-up model, which, as discussed in the

intervention phase below, on its own might not lead for reading for meaning in the FL. Here, T1 seems to overlook important aspects of reading, namely, top-down reading strategies, such as background knowledge of the topic (for example, predicting) to make sense of what they are about to read.

There was virtually no use of L1 except when students used their L1 to translate the occasional word, which the teacher ignored because he preferred them to use the target language. In responding to a question about using such teaching techniques, T1 insisted on using the target language because *'that is was the language is all about, using the second language'*. T1 explained the meaning of the words in English. If the students still did not understand his explanations, he used the board to provide an explanation in the target language. Further, T1 stated that using the dictionary was time consuming because *'every word they came across they go and open the dictionary, even the electronic ones'*, a belief which is not supported by the TAPs data from the intervention phase discussed below, which highlights the importance of the dictionary use in REFL. In terms of reverting to and using L1 in reading a foreign language, it is my view that L1 and the dictionary should be used to enable the reader to restate or paraphrase the sentence in their L1 in order to derive to understand what is happening in the FL.

Instead of using the L1, T1 stated that he taught the students to know the meaning of words by giving expanded examples and practising in FL, *'I tried to give an example that they can understand'*. This view seems to accord with one of the assumptions of the DM, which is based on involving the students to speak as much as possible in the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). The DM aims at teaching FL in the same way in which L1 is taught. The observed classroom procedures are similar to the principles that Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p.28) state about the DM. Namely:

- Reading skill will be developed through practice with speaking.
- The L1 should not be used in the classroom.
- The teacher should demonstrate, not explain or translate.
- Students should think in the target language.
- The purpose of the language learning is communication.
- Pronunciation should be worked out from the beginning.

Here, the main aim of teaching REFL from the DM perspective is to develop speaking skills in a natural situation without assistance from the students' L1. However, as seen, speaking in FL did not help students to understand 'lopsided' by giving the alternative 'crooked'. This word too is a low frequency word which may not be obvious from the text or from the teacher's explanations, and which might explain why the students used the electronic bilingual dictionary at the beginning of the lesson.

T1 explained that he interacts with his students by asking questions and discussing the text. For example, saying, *'funny things to make the idea go across and be understood. So interaction should be there'*. Asking T1 whether he allows his students' interact with each other as the CLT approach suggests he should, he replied that he did not know whether his students interacted with each other or not *'if they make interaction, it would be something outside the class. But if they talk about something outside the class, like outside the lesson, anything personal'*. In the observed classroom, there was very little interaction. This aspect of teaching is likely related to the behaviourist approach of teaching where students are seen as a stimulus response of repetitive practice (Skinner, 1986). The teacher read the text aloud, the students repeated what he read, he asked them questions about the text, and explained in English what words meant.

Though T1 said he was going to teach students how to read for meaning, in practice he taught them how to articulate the words correctly.

The next section presents the data from interviewing and observing Teacher Two, who had similar views to T1 about teaching and learning REFL.

### **6.1.2 Teacher Two views about teaching REFL**

Teacher Two (T2) is a female Libyan EFL teacher who has a Masters in translation and linguistics from the University of X1 where she has been teaching for seven years. She was teaching Reading C, which is the final reading course for the students at the university. The interview and the classroom observation with T2 took place on 30/12/2013, where 80 students were observed, 67 of them girls and 13 boys, aged between 21-25 years. The lesson lasted 50 minutes.

T2 used three texts from a book titled 'Shades of Meaning'. Like T1, T2 used photocopies, presumably because there were not enough books for such a large class. The texts' topics were: 'Hermit', 'Tunguska' and 'Magnetism and Life'. The 'Hermit' text describes a story about a cave with neither window nor door, and in which a priest has been walled up. The text had running questions in the left margin to help the reader understand the text. It seemed to me that the aim of the text was to teach students how to summarise while reading because beside each paragraph in the right margin there were instructions to the reader on how to summarise each paragraph. The 'Hermit' text contained no exercises. The second text 'Tunguska' had two pictures of dinosaurs' and described life on the Earth sixty-five million years ago when a change in temperature destroyed nearly 70% of life on earth. The text instructions advised the reader that unfamiliar words were marked with an asterisk and their meaning could be found in the glossary at the end of the passage. The photocopies lacked the glossary. T2 may not have copied it in order to encourage her students use their reading strategies to guess the words, or she may not have noticed that the glossary was missing.

The text 'Magnetism and Life' was about the earth's magnetism and what people knew about this science. The next text, as organised in two parts - A and B – was followed by questions to help the reader understand and summarise the text. Section A was an introduction to the topic and Section B discussed some literature on studying magnetism. The exercises of the third text were designed to evaluate the readers' comprehension by asking, for example, true or false questions, and testing vocabulary knowledge. Unlike the previous text, this one came with the glossary, perhaps because it was a scientific topic, and the students may have lacked scientific vocabulary. The glossary was written in the target language and came with the advice that *'if the reader cannot understand the words after reading the passage and the gloss, then use the dictionary'*. However, as we will see below, T2, like T1, did not allow the students to use the dictionary or their L1.

The teacher followed a similar pattern to T1. She read each text aloud and wrote the meaning of new vocabulary on the board in the target language. When the students were unable to guess the meaning or pronounce words such as 'surface', T2 immediately gave them the meaning in Arabic without allowing the students to use their linguistic and background knowledge, or the dictionary.



After observing the lesson, I conducted semi-structured interview with T2 to explore why she used these methods. The reason she gave was the high number of students (80 students): *'the classrooms cannot contain and sustain 80 students in the class. It's too narrow, it's too tight'*. The observed classroom students could not hear what T2 said and frequently asked her to repeat what she was saying. Consequently, T2 suggested that she use a microphone because she would not, she explained, *'yell when I teach, I do not scream when I talk. So sometimes students at the back cannot really hear me, so you will see me going around and walking'*. This data seems to indicate the lack of support and resources that the educational institutions provide to create the right conditions in which to teach REFL. There are large numbers of students because there are few universities in Libya and because of the existence of specialized secondary schools (see Chapter One). Under Gaddafi's regime, Libyan secondary schools were specialized to develop the student's interest at an early age in a particular field such as EFL. These schools graduate many students each year. Students can only study and graduate in the subjects s/he studied at secondary school.

Asking T2 about the materials she was using to teach REFL and why she used three texts, T2 stated that she was obliged by the English language department to complete the course book within a limited time: *'...my coordinator is imposing a specific book which is 'Shades of Meaning'.. It contains 10 units. Sense the term is already short so we cover a couple of lessons sometimes, a couple of units'*. T2, like T1, was not involved in selecting the materials that might fit her students' needs and so keep them motivated.

Because of class sizes, T2 created a method of teaching she called *'my method'* to fulfil her lesson aims, saying, *'I do not think I do traditionalist. I do a lot of translation, functional translation, and discourse analysis'*. According to T2, the main steps of her method involved walking around the class and motivating students to participate by asking them questions about grammar and reading comprehension, and by providing them with feedback:

*I walk around in the class in circles, and I motivate students and I keep asking questions and do some grammar questions, reading, logic, general knowledge questions and provide them a feedback. (T2)*

Here, T2 seems to be using some aspects of GTM. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, this basic method is to study the language by learning the grammar, and by translating sentences into

and from the FL. The GTM views language learning as ‘consisting of little more than memorising rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language’ (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.6), where the L1 is used as reference for FL. This data seems to indicate that the teacher had little knowledge about REFL teaching methods because, understandably, she was an interpreter and so she focused on translation and grammatical forms. As T2, herself, stated, she did not have enough skills to teach REFL because *‘we learn these methods not extensively. I was a translation major’*. T2, further, had not undertaken training courses to teach REFL because, *‘I think I was born to teach. There is something inside of me’*. There is the deeper and more pervasive problem of teacher education in Libya. Suwaed (2011), for example, in a study of English teachers’ beliefs and classroom teaching practice in three Libyan universities, concluded that her participants, ‘Libyan and non-Libyan, do not receive university provided in-service training and are required to design their courses’ (p.94). This is because of a lack of recourses and teachers in Libyan universities largely depend on their own self-development and informal learning to deal with challenges such as inconsistent syllabus, students’ mixed levels of language proficiency and large class sizes.

The teacher in the classroom observed provided students with immediate feedback on their answers. In her view, students should be immediately corrected on their reading mistakes, *‘it is not letting them in any shape of work that I do direct correction, so they never repeat those mistakes again’*. Feedback is valuable, of course. Doughty (2001) argues that immediate feedback on students’ performance enables them to compare their incorrect response to the correct response, so helping them learn from the mistake and decreasing the likelihood of repeating it. However, making mistakes and training the students to find solutions by themselves is also important to improving their language skills. Orafi (2008), for example, investigated teachers’ practices and beliefs in relation to Libyan curriculum innovation in ELT. The study examined five teachers’ implementation of the English language curriculum in Libyan secondary schools and compared the process of implementation to the curriculum innovators’ recommendations. Orafi (2008) concluded that although the curriculum designer recognised that making errors was a normal part of the language learning process, teachers should not, nevertheless, correct in order to encourage fluency and confidence. In other words, the curriculum designer’s view that mistakes should not be corrected. Yet Orafi’s (2008) observations in EFL Libyan classroom ‘showed that teachers spent considerable time on correcting students’

grammatical and pronunciation mistakes' (p.209) because, his teachers explained, if they did not, the students would keep making the same mistakes. Once again, this belief may be related to Holy-Quranic methods of instructions where the Sheikh immediately corrects the students' mistakes to ensure perfect pronunciation of the verses.

T2 stated that students should be corrected in the target language. Her reason was that *'learning English in original authentic setting in England, the US or Canada, you know. Nobody can be there giving you Arabic translation word to word'*. As a result, the use of the L1 in the classroom observed was very limited. The students gave explanations in the L1 which T2 ignored preferring instead to use the target language. T2's beliefs and practices may be related to the behaviourist theory and AL-M discussed in Chapter Four, which holds that mistakes and errors produced by students in the FL are the result of interference from the L1 and should be immediately corrected.

Asking how she interacted with her students, T2 replied that she did so through questions *'I pose questions and so that is how it is'*. Questions, of course, can serve as a device for initiating teacher-student interaction, which assists in evaluating students' progress and attention in acquiring a FL (Ellis, 1994). Further, T2 explained that she had a special relationship with students because she was treating them as friends, *'I also have some social relations with them. They are not only my students'*. Students were allowed to interact with each other only if they use the target language to exchange ideas. However, in the observed classroom, there was no student-student interaction. As with the students in T1's class described above, the students' role was to follow the text while the teacher was reading. At the end of the lesson, again, like T1, she chose a number of students to read one or two sentences and corrected their mistakes in pronunciation.

The following section presents the data collected from observing and interviewing Teacher Three.

### **6.1.3 Teacher Three views about Teaching REFL**

Teacher Three (T3) is a Sudanese teacher who has a Masters in Translation from the University of X1. T3 has been teaching EFL for 13 years. The teacher was interviewed and observed at the University of X on the 04/12/2013 where he had taught REFL for two years. The classroom attendance list showed that the class contained 50 students but on

that day there were only 35 present, 31 of them girls and four boys, aged between 21-25 years. The duration of the lesson was 53 minutes.

T3 used a text from an English language newspaper titled 'Tripoli News' and the topic of the article was 'The Russian Woman'. The article was about a Russian woman called Ekaterina Uztyuzhaninova, one of the mercenaries who served in Gaddafi's regime to kill a Libyan colonel Al-Sussi in 2013. The text did not contain any exercises or activities, and the teacher did not have a lesson plan. Parts of the sentences were missing and the quality of the photocopying was poor. The teacher did not notice the problem until 21 minutes into the lesson when he came to explain the meaning of the word 'mercenary'. He apologised explaining that he had not photocopied the article properly: *'sorry, I did not copy the newspaper clearly'*. He continued to explaining the text without changing the copies. Students were able to discuss the context of the text easily with T3 because the story of the Russian murder was well known at that time, and widely reported on the media. Strong background knowledge greatly assisted students in understanding the text.

After the classroom observation, I conducted a semi-structured interview with T3. He explained that the main aim of the lesson was to help the reader read and gain more sense of the text through skimming and scanning because, in his view, *'students are getting more sense this is my aim Ok. This is the general aim. People read to get more sense I mean the text'*. Namely, by making reading interesting *'the students could use their phonetics knowledge and dictionary'*. Asking T3 about the main difficulties that faced in fulfilling these aims, he explained that obstacles such as lack of vocabulary and teaching to the exam were significant problems: *'students themselves just focus on how can I pass the exam. That is the very big problem'*. In T3's view, the reason for the students' lack of comprehension was because *'they are not reading very well. Maybe the phonetics course is not taught well, because it is very important'*. As a result, he suggested that EFL students should study:

*...phonetics, in the first year here I found no phonetics. I have been told that this course is only in the second year. This course should be taught in the first year and the second year to help the students become good readers... grammar should be in the first and second year, the third year advanced grammar and the fourth year syntax. (T3)*

Based on the methods of teaching reading T3, like T1 and T2, primarily focused on what we might describe as linear strategies of reading such as bottom-up reading strategies to understand the texts. The teacher suggested focusing on the text structure such as using the grammatical knowledge to understand the passage. He further introduced the phonetics, which it seems to me, T3 meant ‘the scientific study of speech’ (Ball and Lowry, 2001, p.1), which includes sound used to articulate every letter such as vowels, consonants and rhythm produced by the speaker. As seen previously (Chapter Two and above), this approach fits with Gough’s (1972) theory, which proposes that ‘the reader recognise the bars, slits, edges, and breaks in a letter ... the reader continues this process for all letters in the specific word on which he or she is focusing’ (p.337) to search in her memory for a word that makes sense. Again, we are looking at the pronunciation of words rather than comprehension of the text. However, as will be seen in the intervention phase, using a limited number of reading strategies (for example, bottom-up or top-down) might not be enough read competently in a FL and I discuss this further in Chapter Seven.

T3 is strongly of the view that the GTM is the best method of teaching REFL, ‘*I use Grammar Translation Method*’. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued that in the GTM, grammar is ‘presented and illustrated, a list of vocabulary items is presented with their translation equivalents and translation exercises are prescribed’ (p.6). Based on this data, the reason that T3 used the GTM to teach REFL is that the method allows the teacher to teach words through bilingual word lists and the dictionary to overcome problems of low vocabulary. T3 suggested to his students that if they ‘*find any word strange and you see it for the first time, please do not read it [unfamiliar word] immediately, that is wrong. So please make sure the dictionary is in your bag*’, because he said, ‘*the dictionary will make them perfect readers*’. So, the successful reader, according to T3, is the reader who uses the English-English dictionary as a reading strategy to find out the exact articulation of the word: ‘*the most common [the main] pronunciation or symbols are British they are more common*’. For example, the article ‘*the*’ if I do not know this word before I will say ‘*tahee*’ ... ‘*It’s not ‘tahee’ it’s ‘the’*. So that symbol is like this (ð). So, it’s [the dictionary] very important’. This is further evidence, perhaps, that the teacher is allowing the students to use the dictionary in order to pronounce words rather than reading for meaning, and that pronunciation is more important than the GTM. However, using the dictionary alone without top-down and bottom-up strategies may not be helpful in REFL. As described in the TAPs results (see Section 6.2), resorting to the dictionary may not overcome the

complexities of translating, for example, (see Section 6.2 and Chapter Seven), phrasal verbs which do not exist in the student's L1. Phrasal verbs can subtly change in meaning depending on the context and are polysemous, and particle placement can change the meaning of the sentence, complexities and subtleties a standard dictionary may not explain. However, as seen in the intervention phase, using the dictionary at the end of the reading session is a useful supporting strategic behaviour.

T3, too, thought that the best way of teaching REFL was reading aloud. He stated that he read the text and then selected a number of students to read *'because reading aloud is very important. To enrich the information'*. Here, it seems to me that T3 views reading aloud as a recurrence of skills, ideas and knowledge of the text in the form of voice (the teacher states that reading aloud is helpful for EFL students). Kowsary (2013) investigated the relationship between reading aloud strategies and comprehension among 70 EFL Iranian students in pre-intermediate levels. Kowsary (2013) attempted to find out whether reading aloud to students of EFL led to a higher level of comprehension than when the students read silently on their own. Kowsary (2013) did his experiment in two sessions: in the first session, the students were asked to read by themselves silently and answer multiple-choice questions. In the second session, the teacher read another text aloud and asked the students to answer the questions. 'No discussion of the general meaning of the passage or vocabulary explanation was conducted in either session' (p.76). The results of Kowsary's (2013) study showed there was 'a positive effect of the reading aloud technique on the learners reading comprehension' (p.74) because reading aloud helps 'you to associate sound with symbol ... to recognise the pronunciation of certain words, and the stress and intonation of sentences' (p.76). This indicates that the main aim of reading aloud is to improve articulation rather than reading for meaning. However, though T3 said he believed that reading aloud was the best way to encourage reading skills, in the observed class, the students read silently for 10 minutes. When they finished reading, they were asked to describe the general purpose of the text. As noted earlier, the students did not have any difficulty discussing the text because they were familiar with the story.

In contrast to T1 and T2, T3 strongly recommended the use of L1 as the best method of teaching REFL *'because students love their mother tongue'*. If I *'see something deserves to be used I will use it'*. In the observed class with T3, the students did not use the dictionary. The use of L1 was very limited by the teacher to provide students' with examples and Arabic translations of words such as 'condom'.

Also like T1 and T2, T3 believed that students' REFL errors should be corrected immediately: *'they might pronounce it wrong and I will correct them immediately'*. The principle purpose in reading aloud was, once more, on improving students' pronunciation skills rather than reading for meaning.

T3 believed that teacher-student interaction was best done through smiles and jokes in order to attract the student's attention *'I am telling them a joke you know, I am acting for them and like that. I am not taking a long time from the lecture in order not to make the student feel bored'*. Students are encouraged to interact with each other from time to time to discuss the meaning of new words. T3 stated that the number of students in the class was not an obstacle:

*In Sudan, I taught 400 students in a big hall like that. Yes, the English educational part. Because in first year they study education and Art together, and in second year, everybody will go. It is OK for me because these students have the background or motivation, and if you are a true teacher, you can teach them the message. (T3)*

Teachers, in T3's opinion do not need to have a major role as students can come to the teacher's office if they require further discussion about the text: *'you speak very little and give them a sheet, and if they have any consultation, they will come to you in your office. It is very easy to study like that, something like reading'*. The teacher does not, apparently, see the class as a place for transferring knowledge; rather students should acquire language strategies themselves.

In terms of training or professional development to teach REFL T3 explained that he was reading and asked his colleagues about their experiences *'I am reading. And ask my colleagues also'*. From his point of view, teaching is a *'gift just like football. If you are a very good footballer then you need very little knowledge and practice'*. Therefore, if the teacher is born to be a teacher, then s/he will be a successful EFL teacher. Again, these issues are related to the preparation courses and the lack of EFL teacher-training services in Libya, discussed in Chapter One and above. This is in keeping with Elabbar's (2011) research of Libyan training and professional development in Libyan Higher Education. Elabbar (2011) found that 95% of the EFL teachers did not receive any development or training programs to improve their teaching skills.

The next section presents the perceptions of Teacher Four who is also a foreign teacher with similar views to teachers 1-3 about teaching/learning REFL practice in the classroom.

#### **6.1.4 Teacher Four views about teaching REFL**

Teacher Four (T4) was from the Philippines, and has a PhD in Development Education with EFL and teaching experience of 18 years. He has been teaching REFL at the University of X1 for 3 years. I observed and interviewed the classroom on 29/12/2013. There were 20 students, 14 girls, and six boys aged between 21-25 years. The teacher was teaching 'Reading 4' which is the last course for REFL in year four, the final year. The duration of the lesson was 57 minutes, which he began by explaining the reasons and the purposes of REFL.

T4 used a photocopied text titled 'A Free Flight to Dubai'. The text consisted of four paragraphs, each accompanied by a picture that captured what the text was about. The text was about a twenty-three-year-old Dutch business student who had taken a part-time job as a baggage handler. Because he fell asleep in the hold of the plane the student had an unexpected holiday to Dubai. T4, like the three previous teachers, did not use a lesson plan. On reviewing the text, I thought the language of the text would be suitable for the students' level of English. The text contained three exercises, which followed top-down reading strategies, such as predicting the content by looking at the title and pictures. New words were highlighted in bold to alert students to guess the meaning of the word using contextual clues. In the instructions to the exercises students were asked to compare their guesses with their partners, then check the meaning in the dictionary. However, T4 did not allow the students to use the dictionary because, as he said, *'I do not want my students to be dependent on the dictionary because as a reading teacher we should have to motivate our students to apply their skills, like using the context clues'*. T4 began by asking the students questions about the text. The students answered the teacher's questions, and began to try to predict the context from the topic and the picture in the text.

According to T4, the main aim of the lesson was to help students apply the reading strategies that they had learned in their first and second years, particularly skimming and scanning. Reading strategies such as skimming and scanning are very complex strategies. For example, skimming a text requires the skill of reading fast with skilled judgement because the reader is not reading each sentence. According to Cramer (1998), the ability to skim requires a high degree of word recognition to assist the reader in recognising the



general idea of the context. A strategy, which the Libyan EFL students lack (see Section 6.2). T4 developed his aims based on his expectations of what the students had learned in the previous years. *'I expected them. It is an expectation that now I am teaching reading comprehension four [reading in the final year]'*. After the interview, I went to the English language department to ask about the curriculum of the four academic years and I was told that they did not have formal materials to give to teachers. Each teacher had his/her own way of teaching. This data supports the studies of Elabbar (2011) and Suwaed (2011) described above, both of whom stated that Libyan EFL departments often do not provide their teachers with a formal curriculum, relying on teachers to develop their own course materials.

T4 explained that there were some difficulties in teaching EFL, such as students having limited vocabulary, not being interested in REFL, and not having a good command of the English language. These were obstacles similar to those described by the other three teachers. Students *'still need to look at the meaning of the words in the dictionary'*. To overcome these difficulties, T4 encourages his students to derive the meaning of new words by using context clues rather than dictionaries: *'I advise them to practice the skills of unlocking the difficulties by using the context clues. Because this is very important and it gives me happiness'*. This approach was in contrast to T3 who stated that students should use the dictionary immediately without deploying reading strategies.

T4 stated that he used a teaching method called *'deductive method, where first I have to give them the definition of the terms, like the reading skill of predicting content, and then giving the meaning of these terminologies'*. The term 'deductive' refers to an approach that calls for teacher-centred techniques to introduce new content (Lynch, 1996). For example, the teacher following a deductive pedagogical approach first explains the grammar rules which the students then practise using grammar related exercises (Ellis and Shintani, 2013). Students are passive participants in their own learning. The teacher explained that students found this method interesting because this is how they were taught and they *'like the teacher to define the following terms, give the meanings, definitions following words'*. Based on T4's method, there is no role for the students. The teacher reads, translates, and explains the content of the text to the students.

REFL in the observed class was taught through discussion and by activating what T4 said was the students' content schema: *'I make the point of activating the schema of the*

*students because they are activating the students'* because it will give students the opportunity to focus on the subject matter. T4 started the lesson by asking the students about what they knew about this particular topic 'A Free Flight to Dubai'.

*I started my lesson by asking them what they know about this particular topic. Then after knowing the previous knowledge, I ask them what they what to know about this particular topic or concept so I will know the expectations of my students and of course in the end of the lecture it's very important for me to know the learning of my students. (T4)*

T4 considered the successful reader as one who related his/her background knowledge to the information in the text. This data matches Goodman's (1967) views who described reading, using background knowledge, as a selective process that is based on the reader's expectations that might 'be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progress' (p.127). T4 also explained that students should employ their '*predicting skills to understand the surrounding words*'. T4's teaching methods seem to follow top-down reading strategies. However, as T4 described at the beginning, and illustrated in the intervention phase below, lack of vocabulary would be an obstacle in utilizing top-down reading strategies. T4 stated that if the students did not find the text interesting he would '*then have to give them reinforcement or follow up activities*'. Students in the observed class had an opportunity to read the text and find out its specific and general ideas. The text was simple and based on students' cultural background. The text, as I explained above, also contained pictures, which made the text easier to read and understand.

In order to correct the students' reading mistakes, T4 explained that he used TAPs where the students interact actively with the text and tried to predict of what the text was about, '*I use the thinking aloud which is very important*'. In the classroom I observed, T4 did not use the TAPs as a feedback mechanism. His main reason for using the TAPs was to correct the students' pronunciation, not to assess the students' comprehension of the text '*I will be able to listen to how students are able to pronounce the words and see if they have problems with the correct pronunciation*'. At the end of the lesson, T4 asked the students about their comprehension of the text. Then he checked how the students deal with the new information.

In terms of using L1, T4 shared similar views to T1 and T2 in believing that L1 should be completely avoided in the FL classroom and that the '*medium of instruction should be in*

*the English language*'. By doing so, he thought the students would be able to develop mastery and proficiency of the target language. Further, he explained that he allowed students *'to use the dictionary to verify and confirm if their guesses are correct'*. However, the students in the observed class were not allowed to use their dictionaries or their L1. As with the other teachers discussed here, the methods T4 claimed he uses in REFL were not observed in this lesson.

T4 asserted that he interacted with his students by asking questions and sharing opinions, *'I keep asking questions to find out their experiences and the knowledge of my students'*, and in order to compare their predictions. In the observed classroom, however, the class activities were teacher directed. The students answered the teacher's questions, and began to predict the context from the topic and the picture in the text. Next, the students started reading the text.

The following section discusses and compares the four teachers' beliefs and classroom practices and relates them to the overall views of teaching and learning reading English as a foreign language.

#### **6.1.5 Discussion of Section One**

It is important to point out that, while the teachers were articulating their views, they did not speak about their qualifications or their teaching training development (see Suwaed, 2011). This may be for two main reasons. The first concerns cultural issues such as Libyan EFL teachers find it difficult to admit or recognise that their skills in teaching REFL are limited, or that they need continuing professional development courses. The second reason is that foreign teachers may have thought that the interviews and classroom observations were in fact evaluations of their work rather than what I stated (in the plain language statement). This was data collection for this PhD and, so, they were very cautious about speaking fully or frankly to me.

The teachers described two main difficulties in teaching REFL. First, difficulties in higher education in general; second, problems in teaching and learning English in particular. For instance, T1 and T2 pointed out that class sizes were one of the main factors affecting the Libyan educational system, impacting on teacher-student interactions. The main reason for the large number of students is that there are only two universities in the east of the country

and universities are over capacity (Tamtam, Gallagher, and Naher, 2011). To compensate for the larger class sizes, teachers felt they had to resort to traditional methods.

Further difficulties arise from the scarce teaching materials, poor building infrastructure such as poor air conditioning and academic resources, as we learned from T2. Internet access, books and electronic resources should be provided by the universities to create appropriate situations for students to improve their learning skills but these are scarce or absent (Brown, 2000). Further, many Libyan universities do not have libraries with up-to-date materials such as books, journals and internet links to help students research. Tamtam, Gallagher, and Naher, (2011) examined Libya's educational policy (in their article they did not explain which policy) and quality assurance policies and noted that 'the institutions of higher learning lack material resources to support them. This hinders maintenance of educational programs and services leading to subsequent severance of their running' (p.747).

With regard to the difficulties in teaching REFL, all four teachers consider students' lack of English vocabulary to be one of the main obstacles in comprehending texts. However, how teachers overcome this difficulty varied from one to the other. For instance, T3 suggested using the dictionary while the other three suggested that students should only use it outside the lesson. Of course, as Eskey (1970) states, vocabulary knowledge is only part of the problem because EFL students read word-by-word possibly because they do not have enough reading strategies to comprehend the text or have not mastered the structure of written English to a sufficient degree. In the observed classes, the students were only trained to read each word, a very limited reading strategy, which may inhibit students' acquisition of language proficiency.

Difficulties in teaching REFL also arise because EFL university departments often prescribe the materials, many of which may not suit the students' learning needs. In the teachers' views, Heads of English Language Departments do not consult them in selecting the materials and in many cases prescribe the methods they are to use. This seems to suggest that EFL departments do not consider the importance of teacher motivation and collaboration, even though, as Woods (2011) argues, rewarding and motivating the teacher is one of the most important processes in creating a successful educational context. However, given the circumstances, it may not be possible to effectively and meaningfully consult university teachers since there is a lack of resources. T3 and T4, however, used

non-prescribed materials because their EFL departments did not have set curricula. Therefore, as they stated, they had the freedom to select their reading texts from newspapers, magazines, and books according to their students' needs.

In order to know how they decided which method the teachers used to teach REFL, I asked them about their lesson plans. None of the teachers I observed used a formal or even informal lesson plan. Though the teachers claimed they used different EFL methods, such as CLT, GTM, and the Deductive Method, I did not see much evidence of this in the observed lessons, though they may, of course, employ these methods at other times. As Tamtam, Gallagher, and Naher (2011) noted, and as I know from experience, most Libyan University EFL teachers tend to use traditional methods such as grammar and vocabulary translation to teach REFL. It was more apparent that T1, T2 and T3 used the same procedures of the Quranic Method of learning, a method which aims at perfect pronunciation. This method is similar to the DM of teaching FL, which, according to Richards and Rogers (2001) and Larsen-Freeman, (2000) focuses attention on correcting students' pronunciation while reading.

In summary, and based on the observation lessons, the teachers followed these steps:

- The teacher read the text to the students.
- The teacher provided background and specific explanations of the texts, pronounced and explained the meaning of words.
- Then, the students read aloud for the teacher to obtain feedback on their pronunciation mistakes.
- Teachers explained and interpreted the meaning of the new words on the board, while the students' role was to take notes of the new vocabulary meaning.
- Then, the teacher chose a number of students to read some parts of the text aloud, and this stage continued until the end of the lesson.

These methods appear to confirm Eskey's (1973) argument that traditional teaching reading methods focus mainly on bottom-up reading strategies to improve the students' spoken skills.

In terms of using L1, T1, T2, and T4 did not allow the students to use their L1. Sometimes the students used L1 to translate some words while the teacher ignored this, wanting them

to use the target language. The teachers provided the meaning of the words in English. If their explanations failed to convey the word's meaning, the teachers used the board. More often, however, the strategy, which most often and most quickly helped the students understand the vocabulary, was the dictionary (the Intervention Phase demonstrates the importance to students using a dictionary).

The teachers' had different views about what successful FL readers looked like or did. T1, T2, and T3 stated that they view the successful reader as one who could use what we understand as bottom-up reading strategies. T4, from the observed lesson, tended to lead his English students to use top-down reading strategies to understand new words by using context clues. This leads me to discuss in the following section the suitability of these models (top-down and bottom-up) to understand how REFL occurs in TAPs semi-structured interviews.

## **6.2 Section Two: EFL students and REFL**

Having completed the reconnaissance of teachers' views of REFL, I turn to the next phase of the reconnaissance in which I present and analyse data collected from EFL students' TAPs and semi-structured interviews. Part One discusses the data collected by TAPs. Part Two was the data collected from students' semi-structured interviews. I will briefly discuss the Reconnaissance Phase findings before moving to the Interventions Phase (see Chapter Seven). The main purpose of the research here was to explore the extent to which top-down and bottom-up models of reading could be meaningfully applied to students REFL.

### **6.2.1 Part One: data from the Think-aloud Protocols (TAPs)**

This section presents the results of data collected through TAPs with 24 EFL students, 5 males and 19 females at four Libyan research sites. As noted in Chapter Five, the students were aged between 20-25 and were in their final year of studying English. The TAPs were used to examine the English reading strategies used by students in reading two texts in order to consider their 'fit' to REFL models. During the TAPs, the readers were asked to discuss strategies in order to assess how those linked to models of reading (bottom-up, top-down and eventual interactive). As noted in Section 5.4.2, this was done through a concurrent thinking aloud approach, in which strategic behaviours were directly observed while the reader was interacting with the texts and me (the researcher). This process

allowed me to directly interact with the subject and obtain specific information, such as reading strategies during the task.

As noted earlier, reading is a complex cognitive process: we cannot see how comprehension works in the reader's mind. Following Grabe and Stoller (2013) and Dorn and Soffos (2005) observable reading behaviours can indicate the reading strategies used by the reader (see Section 7.3). Such strategic behaviours are summarised in Table 7 below.

<b>top-down reading strategies</b>	
Grabe and Stoller (2013)	Dorn and Soffos (2005)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying the purpose</li> <li>predicting</li> <li>connecting information presented in different sentences</li> <li>guessing meaning from the context</li> <li>making inferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reading the title</li> <li>activating background knowledge</li> <li>looking at pictures</li> <li>previewing</li> <li>self-correction</li> </ul>
<b>monitoring reading strategies</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying difficulties</li> <li>taking steps to repair faulty comprehension</li> <li>pausing or stopping while reading</li> <li>underline unfamiliar words</li> <li>reflecting on what has been learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>re-reading</li> <li>reading aloud</li> <li>reading silently</li> <li>tracing the text</li> <li>marking text</li> <li>recording notes</li> <li>analyzing</li> </ul>
<b>supporting reading strategies</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using the dictionary</li> <li>translating</li> <li>paraphrasing</li> <li>taking notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>summarising</li> <li>synthesising</li> </ul>
<b>bottom-up reading strategies</b>	
Other strategic behaviours	Dorn and Soffos (2005)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>articulating phonemes/ syllables</li> <li>activating grammatical knowledge</li> <li>activating lexical knowledge</li> <li>activating phonological knowledge</li> <li>using local clues to understand a particular word</li> <li>word-by-word translation</li> <li>reading word-by-word</li> <li>checking their guesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using context of words to infer meaning</li> <li>using parts of words to infer meaning</li> </ul>

**Table 7:** Reading Strategic Behaviours

In analysing my TAPs data, the students did not obviously use all of the above strategic behaviours. They did, however, employ the following observable and reported actions:

- reading the title
- reading aloud
- reading silently
- word-by-word translation
- reading word-by-word
- articulating phonemes/ syllables
- stopping or pausing while reading
- using local clues to understand a particular word
- skipping unknown words
- connecting information presented on different sentences
- using grammatical knowledge
- using lexical knowledge
- using phonological knowledge
- using background knowledge
- checking their guesses
- using a dictionary/ translating

Next, I categorised these strategic behaviours in relation to top-down, bottom-up and eventual interactive strategic behaviours (see Chapter Three) to see how these strategic behaviours ‘fit’ REFL. For instance, while thinking aloud student 7 (S7) said, *‘the deleted word is close to transport but I do not have the word’* (this example will be discussed in further detail below). This action was categorised under ‘using the lexical rules to understand the reading text (bottom-up strategic behaviour)’. However, the reader was unable to comprehend the omitted (unknown) word, because of her lack of vocabulary knowledge.

On reviewing the TAPs, despite the fact that all 24 students were from different locations and institutions, the majority of them shared many common observable and reported behaviours such as reading each word in the text, reading aloud and articulating the phonemes and syllables of words. They stopped or paused while reading in order to articulate the unfamiliar words or skipped them if they could not pronounce the words.



Their reason was because the majority of students view reading as a technique for improving pronunciation, an attitude encouraged by Libyan teachers of EFL (see below).

Until otherwise stated, the data under discussion in the following sections refers to TAPs. The texts the students are reading are:

1. Advantages of Public Transport (cloze text; see Appendix 3)
2. Bakelite, the Birth of Modern Plastics (see Appendix 4)

For ease of comprehension, either extracts of the texts, or the sentences under discussion are repeated at the head of each section along with a brief synopsis of the text.

#### **6.2.1.1 Data obtained from reading Text One - cloze text: ‘Advantages of Public transport’**

The first set of data I will discuss in this section was obtained from a text in which words had been intentionally omitted to establish how the reader deals with unfamiliar words, and how s/he utilises grammar, word knowledge, content and sentence structure to comprehend the passage (see Appendix 3). In summary, the text was about a study conducted for the World Bank by Murdoch University, Australia. The study found that public transport was more efficient than cars and compared the proportion of wealth poured into transport by thirty-seven cities worldwide. This included both the public and private costs of building, maintaining and using a transport system. The cloze text allows the reader to read the sentences, think, and guess appropriate words. As noted in Section 5.4.2, this was done in Arabic rather than in English in order to allow the student to fluently discuss their thinking processes and the strategies they employed. The direct quotations from L1 are presented below.

It is worth noting before presenting the TAPs data that, according to their observable and reported behaviours, students 5, 6, 8, 20, and 24, were unable to guess any of the omitted words, as I will discuss shortly. Table, 8 below reports the direct behaviours of these readers, and the justifications and explanations they recorded during and after reading the text.

Student	Thinking while reading	Translation
S5	قريت الجمل بالكامل ولكنني لم استطع معرفة الكلمات الجديدة	I read the entire text but I could not understand the new vocabulary.
S6	اذا كنت تريد فهم القطعة عليك بفهم المعنى العام. وانا لا املك هذه المهارة. لانني لست متدرب عليها.	If you want to understand the text, you have to understand the general idea of the text. I do not have this strategy. I am not trained to use it [comprehending strategies].
S8	ممکن هذا اسلوب جديد في القراءة وقد يحتاج وقت اضافي للقراء. انا لا استطيع الفهم.	Maybe this is a new way of reading. It might need more time to read. I could not understand the text.
S20	انا مش عارفة لكن هذا اول مرة اتشوف هذه الكلمات. ليس كلهم ولكن بعضهم.	I do not know but this is the first time I have seen these new words. Not all of them but some.

**Table 8:** TAPs of students 5, 6, 8, 20, and 24

As shown in Table 8, the main obstacle to reading the text and utilising their reading strategic behaviours was the students' inability to understand new vocabulary. This seems to indicate that lexical knowledge is a basic predictor of text difficulty and how well the reader comprehends the text (McNamara, 2014). Therefore, there is a strong relationship between text comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as the comments from these students indicate. Indeed, students 6 and 8 stated that for them this way of reading was a new way of REFL which they had not been trained to use, despite being in the final year of studying English. These obstacles demonstrate the importance of the teacher's role in increasing the students' abilities to REFL. The students also indicate that the teaching methods (such as DM and GTM) discussed in Section 4.2 were inappropriate for helping students REFL.

In the following sections, I discuss how EFL readers utilise top-down strategic behaviours to comprehend the text.

### Top-down strategic behaviours

As recorded from the TAPs, 8 of the 24 students did not read the title, and only S7 out of the 24 participants used the title to predict the context of the passage from the topic. S7, while reading the text, commented that: *'It is clear from the topic 'advantages of public transport', that it will be about the benefits of using public transport rather than the private transport such as cars'*. The student began her reading of the text by predicting what would come next. This strategy might help her think ahead because comprehending the text is not only a matter of understanding the words and sentences, but is also about the

reader's ability to make inferences about the text from, for example, the title or opening sentences. The title also provides clues about the topic about which the reader could expect to read (Booth, 1998), yet only one student, as I noted earlier, deployed this strategic behaviour, an omission that might, and did, decrease text comprehension. However, there were some students who used other top-down strategic behaviours, such as background knowledge and using information from the surrounding text to guess the deleted word. I will return to these strategies later.

### **Connecting textual information**

To examine the ability of the EFL students to comprehend a REFL text by relating and connecting the information in the passage, the word 'bicycle' in line 22 was deleted (see Appendix 3). One might expect the reader to guess the missing word by noting which form of transport was missing from the list given in the previous paragraph, by reading ahead to '*... two most 'bicycle friendly' cities...*' and by using the title which is on the theme of transport. However, as the observable behaviours in TAPs recorded, only two of the 24 participants, S2 and S19, were able to connect the information from different sentences to guess the missing word. The sentence in question is:

Bicycle use was not included in the study but Newman noted that the two most 'bicycle friendly' cities considered - Amsterdam and Copenhagen - were very efficient, even though their public transport systems were 'reasonable but not special' (Text 1, appendix 3).

In order to infer the author's purpose, the reader should be able to link, synthesise, and interpret the logical and linguistic connections across the text. As can be seen in Table 9, two students out of the 24 were able to connect the ideas in the text to realise that there was one kind of transport that is not included.

Student	Observed behaviours	Thinking while reading	Translation
S2	The reader read the whole text and guessed the deleted word as 'bicycle'. She used her vocabulary knowledge and her understanding of the surrounding text to derive the word meaning from the whole text. She knows the theme is transport so makes a logical guess.	هي دراسة عن وسائل النقل والكاتب قال بان هناك وسيلة نقل غير مذكورة. ذكر جميع وسائل النقل ولذلك من المفترض ان تكون دراجة لانها غير مذكورة في القطعة.	It is a study on transport, and here the author said the thing that it is not included. They mentioned public transport, so the missed word here might be bicycle, motorcycle etc.
S19	She read the whole sentence then guesses the deleted word as 'bicycle' because she knew 'bicycle' is not mentioned in the text.	الدراجة هي وسيلة النقل الوحيدة الغير موجودة في القطعة.	Bicycle is the only transport that is not mentioned in the text.

**Table 9:** Students' 2 and 19 observable behaviours

S2 and S19 read forward and backward to diagnose which type of transportation was not mentioned. However, S12 guessed the unknown word as 'bicycle' because he employed his knowledge of the world by reasoning that: *'I have an idea that foreigners always use bicycles to go to their work'*. In this case, the reader seemed to make a personal-text connection using his background knowledge. He connected what he read to what he knew. However, while the student guessed the appropriate word he did not appear to understand the context because the text was not about foreigners and how they went to work but about the advantages of public transport in European cities. The reader seemed to reason that since people from Western countries use bicycles to go to work, and because the text referred to Amsterdam and Copenhagen, the missing word was 'bicycle'. It was a good guess.

Other students, such as S3, S9 and S16, were unable to guess the omitted word because they did not know the meaning of words such as 'inefficient', 'inadequate', 'proportion', and 'correlation' from the previous paragraph, obstructing their ability to link the various pieces of information together. For example, S16 commented that: *'I could not understand many words. I have to translate them from the dictionary first'*. In this case, S16 had to utilize another reading strategic behaviour, such as the dictionary, to help her comprehend the passage because background knowledge alone is not enough. The following section will discuss the content experience in further detail.

## Content knowledge

To see how the readers might use background knowledge (top-down reading strategy), in this case, his or her geographical knowledge, and to assess their ability to comprehend a particular text the word ‘city’ in line 6 was omitted. The sentence in question is:

The study found that the Western Australian city of Perth is a good example of a city with minimal public transport. (Text 1, Appendix 3).

As observed in the TAPs, 3 out of 24 readers used this technique to guess the unknown word.

Student	Observed behaviours	Thinking while reading	Translation
S4	She read the whole sentence then returned to guess it as ‘a city’. She used her grammatical knowledge to guess the word.	الاسماء دائماً في الانجليزية يسبقها حروف الجر كـ"ال".	Because in English names are usually preceded by articles such as ‘a’.
S11	Without reading the whole sentence, the reader guessed the deleted word as ‘city’ because the reader used his geographical knowledge to guess the deleted word.	انه مكان في الدولة. بيرث اسم مدينة	It was the place in the country. Perth is the name of the city.
S19	She used a dictionary to comprehend the meaning of ‘Western’ that preceded the omitted word and therefore helped her guess the deleted word.	اريد ترجمة الكلمة التي قبلها	I want to use the dictionary to translate ‘Western’ that precedes the deleted word.

**Table 10:** Students' 3, 11, and 19 observable behaviours

As illustrated in Table 10, the three EFL students used different strategic behaviours to guess the deleted word. S11 was able to connect his text to personal knowledge of the world and guess the deleted word as ‘city’. This type of strategic behaviour might set a purpose for reading and allow the reader to be focused on the context. S19, on the other hand, used a dictionary to translate the unknown word that preceded the unfamiliar word.

By contrast, rather than resorting to the dictionary, the majority of students focused on reading and understanding every word, a strategic behaviour that could create unnecessary difficulties and slow the pace of reading. For example, S9 stated he was unable to guess the deleted word because *'I could not understand the sentence because there are many difficult words'* while S6 was unable to guess the deleted word because *'I do not have these skills and abilities. I am not trained to do so'* (for example, use a dictionary). Most of the students who attempted to guess the word skipped it and continued reading because there were too many unfamiliar words, and because, as they explained, they were not trained to use a dictionary. A skill deficit that might be related to their teachers' belief that students REFL should not use the dictionaries (confirmed by the teachers, see Section 6.1).

Other participants such as S1 and 15 knew that the event took place in a particular country but were unable to guess the word 'city' because of a lack of both lexical and geographical knowledge. Background knowledge alone may not help them guess unfamiliar words. S4 employed bottom-up strategies, utilizing her grammatical knowledge to guess the deleted word because, as she explained, articles usually preceded the name of cities *'there is an article 'a' because it is a noun. I feel they are speaking about the same topic'*, even though there is no article preceding the deleted word, but this was an intelligent guess. This action might be described as a behaviour learned from the teaching context discussed in Section 6.1, where EFL teachers in Libyan REFL lessons focus on what we might describe as linear bottom-up strategic behaviours such as reading every single word to improve students' pronunciation, therefore neglecting in the process top-down reading strategic behaviours.

### **Bottom-up reading strategic behaviours**

Bottom-up models of reading (see Chapter Two) focus on sentence level clues, lexical, grammatical and phonological knowledge to comprehend a particular text. To see whether these strategies 'fit' the REFL, various activities were practised and tested as I now discuss.

### **Using local clues as a strategic behaviour**

To find out how the reader uses his/her local clues strategies to understand a particular word, I omitted the word 'same' from line 14 (Appendix 3), in order to see if the reader

would read the whole sentence and guess the unknown word. The sentence from which word is omitted is:

Melbourne's large tram network has made car use in the inner city much lower, but the outer suburbs have the same car-based structure as most other Australian cities (Text 1, Appendix 3).

The TAPs data reveal that only four of the 24 students read the whole sentence to guess the omitted word; however, the four participants did not choose the expected phrase. Table 11 below reports the behaviours of the readers while thinking aloud.

Student	Observed behaviours
S10	The reader tried to articulate the word 'suburbs' to guess the deleted word. She was unable to guess the meaning of 'suburbs'. Instead, she guessed it as 'dependent', linking it to the word 'dependent' mentioned at the beginning of the previous sentence - ' <i>A European city surrounded by a car-dependent one</i> '.
S11	The reader guessed the deleted word as 'new'. He read the whole sentence but found difficulty in working out the meaning of 'suburbs', which seemed to obstruct his understanding of the sentence.
S12	The word 'suburbs', was an obstruction preventing the reader from guessing the deleted word. He articulated the deleted word but was unable to understand its meaning.
S16	The reader read the whole sentence then returned to think about 'suburbs'. She was unable to guess its meaning, then she decided to use the dictionary later.

**Table 11:** Students' 10, 11, 12, and 16 observable behaviours

As Table 11 demonstrates, all four readers read the entire sentence more than once, but the meaning of the word 'suburbs', a low frequency word with no cognate in Arabic, continued to elude them. The four students believed that understanding the surrounding lexical items were important for guessing the unknown word, providing the readers with helpful context clues about the meaning of the unfamiliar word. The students employed different observable behaviours. For instance, students 10 and 12 attempted to use their phonological knowledge by articulating the word 'suburbs', but, unsurprisingly, they were unable to guess the word. S16 misunderstood many unknown words in the text - for instance she confused 'accommodation' for 'competition', 'wealth' for 'weather', and 'common' for 'comment' because they seemed to be similar in pronunciation. S16 decided

to underline ‘suburbs’ then return to it later, and to use the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour, *‘I’ll see it in the dictionary’* but she did not in the end use the dictionary, even though consulting a dictionary might have helped her find the correct definition and so guess the missing word (Fraser, 1999).

S11 read the whole sentence then said, *‘when I came to ‘car’ and ‘have’, I thought it was ‘new’, which means ‘have the new car’*. The student attempted to use his grammatical knowledge to guess the unknown word. Taking the verb ‘have’ to mean possession, and connecting it to the subject ‘car’, he sought for the closest grammatical term that might fit the object to the verb, the adjective ‘new’, as in ‘have a new car’. The student did not use the overall meaning of the whole paragraph. In other words, he focused on the grammatical structure of the sentence at the expense of the overall context. In any case, had the student good grammatical understanding he would have understood that ‘...have *the* ‘new’ car-based structure *as...*’ (but the outer suburbs have the *same* car-based structure as most other Australian cities) is not good English. Using the definite article ‘the’ with ‘same’...as’ is not appropriate, though, to be fair to the student, the grammar of the sentence is complex. I discuss next the use of grammatical knowledge.

### **Grammatical knowledge**

I wanted to see how EFL readers used their grammatical knowledge to comprehend the text. I omitted words such as ‘went’ in line 7, forcing the participant to read the entire sentence in order to guess the missing verb and tense. I also deleted the verb ‘were’ in line 9 to observe how participants used grammatical knowledge of the plural and past tense to guess the unknown word. Finally, I deleted ‘either’ in line 28 to observe how the reader used his/her grammar to understand comparison.

As can be seen from the TAPs, the majority of the students were unable to use their grammatical knowledge because of their lack of lexical information and grammatical knowledge. The sentence from which the word ‘went’ is omitted is:

As a result, 17% of its wealth went into transport costs. (Text 1, Appendix 3).



Only six students were able to use their grammatical knowledge to guess the unknown words and verbs though not all did so accurately. The following table illustrates the observable behaviours of the readers while guessing the unknown word ‘went’:

St.	Observed behaviours	Thinking while reading	Translation
S1	The reader read the whole sentence then she returned to guess the deleted word as 'put' into.	في العادة هي هذي الكلمة التي "تسبق"into	This is usually the word, which comes before 'into', so I guess it as 'put' into.
S2	The reader thought that there was a mistake in the structure of the sentence. Did not understand that the sentence needed a verb.	لا اعتقد ان فيه كلمة ناقصة هنا	I do not think there is anything missing here. There is no word to guess.
S7	She read the whole paragraph, then returned to guess it as 'goes'. She linked the sentences to get the correct verb. The reader did not seem to focus on the tense of the sentence.	حا نقرا البرقراف وبعدها حا نرجعلها	I will re-read the paragraph then return to it.
S17	The reader read the whole sentence, then guessed the deleted word as 'spent' because of the word 'into' that follows. The logical inference, as far as the student is concerned, is that money/wealth equates with spending. She seems to ignored/not to understand the function of the preposition 'into', relying on the cause-and-effect adverbial phrase 'as a result of...' to derive meaning. This is reasonable guess in the circumstances.	لأننا نحن نتكلم علي الكلمة "كانتيجة". لهذا السبب نحن نتحدث عن عملة.	Because we are speaking about 'as a result' of its wealth. Therefore, we are talking about finance.
S14	The reader read the whole sentence to guess the deleted word. He guessed the deleted word as 'poured' because it was mentioned after wealth in the previous paragraph. Here is the previous sentence: <i>'the proportion of wealth poured into transport by thirty-seven cities around the world'</i> .	انا ما نعرفش كلمة "ويلث". الكلمة هذي لخبطتتي.	I don't know the meaning of the word 'wealth'. The word 'wealth' confused me because I do not know its meaning.
S19	She read the sentence then used the dictionary to translate the word 'wealth', then guessed the deleted word as went.	انا قرريت الجملة بالكامل وعرفت ان هناك بعض الدول الاوربية دخلت في حين البعض لا.	I read the entire sentence and I understand that the text mentioned some European countries while some were not.

**Table 12:** Students' 1, 2, 7, 17, 14, and 19 observable behaviours

We can see from Table 12 that, as expected, all six students read the whole sentence and the sentences that followed. However, each student used different strategic behaviours to guess the unknown word. S1 had enough knowledge of phrasal verbs to know that the verb ‘put’ could be used with the preposition ‘into’ and relied on ‘into’ to derive, incorrectly, the verb ‘put’ rather than ‘went’. S7 did not focus on the tense of the verb and guessed the omitted word as ‘goes’. The reader’s L1 may have affected the selection of the verb because the Arabic language contains one aspect of the past tense which is produced with a system of suffixes. For example, go ذهب and went ذهبت. Therefore, she adds the suffix ‘-es’ to ‘go’.

Students 14, 16 and 11 had problems in guessing the word ‘wealth’ that preceded the deleted word ‘went’ causing further difficulty in guessing the omitted word. S19 overcame this difficulty by using the dictionary and with her grammatical knowledge translated the word ‘wealth’, which, along with the context, enabled her to guess the required item. As discussed previously, this data seems to indicate that lexical knowledge can strongly affect the capacity to use grammatical knowledge in reading. This is in keeping with Moghadam and Sadri’s (2013) work on the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension performance, which suggests that the lexical knowledge is important in comprehending the text. The reader might seek another strategic behaviour, such as employing the dictionary, if s/he finds difficulty in understanding words.

In order to guess the omitted word ‘were’ in line 9, eight of the 24 students attempted to use their grammatical knowledge to guess the word. The sentence in question is:

Professor Peter Newman, ISTP Director, pointed out that these more efficient cities were able to put the difference into attracting industry and jobs or creating a better place to live (Text 1, Appendix 3).

As illustrated in Table 13 below, the participants used various grammatical techniques to guess the unknown word.

Student	Observed behaviours	Thinking while reading	Translation
S1	The participant seems to use her grammatical knowledge to link it with the word 'able' that follows. She also linked the tense to the word 'pointed out' which precedes it in the sentence.	انه يتحدث عن "بوينتد اوت"	He is speaking about the past "pointed out".
S2	The reader used her grammatical knowledge to guess the deleted word. However, she guessed it as 'be' because of the word 'able'.	كلمة "ايفيشينت" اللي ما فهمتهاش	There is the word 'efficient', which I could not understand.
S3	She did not read the whole sentence to know the tense of the word, but she guessed it as 'are' as she continued.	انا ما نعرفش انا خمنتها هكذا. اشعر انها تحتاج "ار"	I don't know I just guess it. I just feel it needs 'are'.
S7	The reader guessed this word as 'are', but she did not guess the appropriate tense by looking at the word, which precedes it plural: cities'.	نظرت لها من منضور القواعد. اذا حلت الجملة ستجد جمع كلمة مدينة وكذلك الفعل "ار"	I looked for it from the grammatical side. If you analyse the sentence grammatically, you'll find cities 'subject' and 'are' is the verb.
S10	The reader guessed the deleted word as 'are' because of the plural 'cities' that preceded it and 'able' that followed it.	اشعر ان الجملة تحتاج الي فعل مساعد	I feel that there is a verb missing, an 'auxiliary verb'.
S17	The reader guessed the deleted word as 'are' because of the plural 'cities'. The reader used her grammatical knowledge to guess the word.	علي اساس الكلام الذي سبقها. اذلك اعتقد انها تحتاج الي فعل مساعد	Because I am able to do something, so it needs an auxiliary here.
S19	After using the dictionary to translate the word 'efficient' the reader guessed the deleted word as 'are'.		
S21	After translating the word 'efficient', she guessed the deleted word as 'were'.		

**Table 13:** Students' 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 17, 19 and 21 observable behaviours

As we can see in Table 13, all eight students used their grammatical knowledge to guess the unknown word 'were'. S7 guessed 'are' which was the correct verb but the wrong tense because she looked at the word which preceded it in the sentence 'pointed out'. However,

S2 was unable to guess the omitted word because she did not know the meaning of words such as 'efficient'. Again, poor lexical knowledge was an obstacle.

On the other hand, as illustrated in Table 13, students 19 and 21 used the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour to overcome this obstacle and could therefore comprehend the context of the sentence to guess the deleted word. This data also seems to indicate that lexical knowledge influences the usage of syntactical knowledge in comprehending the text. If the reader is unable to know the meaning of the words, s/he will be unable to use the grammatical knowledge. However, by utilizing a further reading strategic behaviour, such as consulting the dictionary, the reader was able to comprehend the unfamiliar word.

The next stage of the exercise was to omit the word 'either'. The word in this type of structure should represent a strict choice between 'hot' or 'cold'. The sentence in question is:

Some people say their city could not make more use of public transport because it is either too hot or too cold (Text 1, Appendix 3).

As the TAPs data reveals, only S7 was able to use this strategic behaviour. She was able to guess the omitted word because she continued reading the entire sentence. She said '*either is with 'or', and neither is with 'nor'*', which is correct. However, the majority of the participants guessed the unknown word as 'weather' because of the words 'hot' and 'cold' that followed, indicating that they did not understanding the grammatical construction and function of 'either...or'. In this case, they utilized their lexical knowledge to connect terms in the sentence rather than focusing on the grammatical structure, the subject 'it is...'. This data encouraged me to conduct further investigations on the role that vocabulary knowledge could play in comprehending the reading texts. I discuss this next.

### **Lexical knowledge**

In order to identify how EFL readers utilise their lexical knowledge, such as formulating synonyms and using retrospective skills like reading backwards to help to understand the context, the word 'suburbs' in line 15 was deleted. The sentence from which word is omitted is:

Melbourne's large tram network has made car use in the inner city much lower, but the outer suburbs have the same car-based structure as most other Australian cities.

The explosion in demand for accommodation in the inner *suburbs* of Melbourne suggests a recent change in many people's preferences as to where they live. (Text 1, Appendix 3).

As the TAPs data reveal of the 24 participants, seven referred to the previous sentence to find a synonym for the unknown word. The word 'inner city' was mentioned in the preceding sentence leading the readers to guess the deleted word as 'city' rather than 'inner suburbs'. The other 17 students were unable to guess the omitted word because they lacked knowledge of the accompanying words. For instance, student 16 stated that *'there are many difficult words which I can know only by using the dictionary'*. This data seems to show that the main obstruction to comprehending the reading text relates to the level of vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, a number of the students used the dictionary to overcome any lack of lexical knowledge and possibly, to the theme of the text (see the intervention phase below). This data supports Tahririan and Sadri's (2013) research of dictionary consultation as a lexical strategy with Persian EFL university students which suggested that students who consulted the dictionary could thereafter usually understand the context.

Students 17 and 19 used the dictionary to translate unfamiliar words in order to guess the deleted words. For instance, S19 did not skip unknown words vocabulary but underlined them and continued reading. She returned to the words and used the dictionary to help her confirm the omitted words. While the student generally understood the text, she spent a long time consulting the dictionary because she sought the meaning of each word in the text.

The majority of the 22 students who did not use the dictionary stated that they would have liked to have used it but they were not trained to do so. For example, S9 stated that *'the majority of teachers do not allow us to use the dictionary and we are not trained to open and find the meaning of words'*. As seen from the preceding discussion (see Section 6.1), three of the four EFL teachers did not encourage their students to use dictionaries.

However, as can be seen from preceding discussion students who use the dictionary can then generally understand the context. I would encourage use of the dictionary but the reader should be selective, using the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour. These

data agree with Prichard's (2008) findings who conducted a study on 34 FL readers to evaluate their vocabulary strategies and dictionary use. He concluded that students benefit from training in selective dictionary use.

### **Phonological awareness**

When it came to using their phonological awareness to REFL, all 24 students tried to use their phonological knowledge to guess unknown words. Namely, by reading aloud the unknown words and separating them into syllables, students articulated their phonemes and syllables.

It quickly became clear, however, that this strategic behaviour alone did not help the students guess the meaning of words. This is perhaps not surprising because the over-use of this strategic behaviour might be linked to the bottom-up methods, discussed in Section 6.1. It is a method popular with teachers who focus on teaching students to pronounce by reading aloud, rather than on understanding the text: on using eventual interactive techniques, in other words. The next section discusses in more detail the use of phonological knowledge to comprehend REFL.

#### **6.2.1.2 Data obtained from reading Text Two: 'BAKELITE, the Birth of Modern Plastics'**

The second text concerned a Belgian scientist, Leo Hendrick who, in 1907, discovered and patented a revolutionary, new synthetic material called Bakelite (see Appendix 4). Hendricks's discovery was of enormous technological significance and effectively launched the modern plastics industry. This text did not contain omitted words. The main aim of using this text was to identify how EFL readers understood the text and dealt with unfamiliar vocabulary using his/her existing vocabulary, background knowledge, content and phonological knowledge, such as decoding words using their knowledge of word structure, and breaking it into segments. In other words, how they used eventual interactive reading strategies.

The same participants, involved in reading the cloze text discussed earlier, were engaged in reading the second text. The overall findings in reading text two illustrate that 15 of the 24 participants read the title of the text. However, the majority of the readers stated that the

text's title and theme 'Bakelite, the birth of modern plastics' was new to them, and they did not understand words like 'Bakelite' and 'plastics'. For instance, S9 stated that *'this is the first time I have come across the word! I have no idea what it [Bakelite] means'*. The reason for the difficulty seemed to be unfamiliarity with scientific terms which were remote from the reader's interest and contextual knowledge.

The majority of students had difficulty in understanding the meaning of the word 'Bakelite'. For instance, S3, who spent some time articulating the phonemes and syllables of the word /bak-el-ite/, misunderstood the text because she did not have access to the meaning of these rather, arguably, abstract words. The capital letters in the word 'BAKELITE' seemed to indicate that it was a proper noun, here a name; *'I saw the name Bakelite, I know that this is the person who invented plastic'*. The reader went on to interpret the text on the basis that the focus was on a scientist called 'Bakelite'. Because Arabic does not distinguish between upper and lower case letters, students might tend to over generalize this issue or simply get confused. Many of the students appeared to skip the title and instead continued to read for context.

Despite the fact that scientific words such as 'plastic', 'resin' and 'carbolic acid' have identical pronunciation and meaning in Arabic, many students found the text difficult. For example, S10 stated that *'my main problem with this text is that there is a lot of new vocabulary that I do not know'*. The majority of the participants found difficulty in comprehending new words such as 'revolutionary', 'synthetic', 'thermoplastic', 'dwindling', 'tortoiseshell', and 'thermosetting', thereby affecting their overall comprehension ability. In this example, the students reached a threshold at which, according to Hedge (1991), the reader might be unable to continue because of the number of unfamiliar words.

In order to comprehend the unknown words, the students attempted to use different reading strategies. For instance, S1 found difficulty in comprehending the word 'phenolic', line 19. The sentence from which the word 'phenolic' is taken, is:

Baekeland's interest in plastics began in 1885 when, as a young chemistry student in Belgium, he embarked on research into *phenolic* resins, the group of sticky substances produced when phenol (carbolic acid) combines with an aldehyde (a

The student stated that *'it might be a substance, because of the word 'into', so it might be inside a place or substance'*. The reader attempted to use her lexical knowledge to understand the word. She guessed it as a substance because of the word 'into' that precedes it. On the other hand, she was unable to guess other unknown words because of her lack of knowledge of the surrounding words in other sentences. Moreover, the context of the text was completely new for her: she had never studied Chemistry. S2, similarly, was unable to comprehend the meaning of the word 'synthetic', in line 2. The sentence from which word 'synthetic' is taken is:

Discovered and patented a revolutionary, new *synthetic* material. (Text 2, Appendix 4).

Because *'there are three words [patented, revolutionary and synthetic] in this sentence which are new for me'*, S13 was also unable to understand the words *'because all of the words in the sentence are new'*. These TAPs data seem to show that unfamiliar words can be the main obstacle for EFL readers in understanding the content, even when the student has good reading strategies.

The data analysed from text two shows that the majority of students tried to comprehend the new vocabulary by articulating the words aloud, breaking them into segments and by articulating the phonemes and syllables. For instance, in order to understand the word 'revolutionary' in line 2 (see above extract sentence) S2 decided to break it into segments and then stated that *'I think there is a spelling mistake here'*. The student split the word into segments to make it easier for her to pronounce the word but without understanding its meaning. S4 while reading stated that, *'I tried to divide the long words into two so they would be easy to pronounce'*. This reading strategy did not help the student understand the text because they do not know the meaning of the entire word. Breaking English words into their parts might help L1 English speakers understand a word like 'revolutionary' but only if the student has a good command of Greek and Latin, the mainspring of scientific and technical vocabulary, and related Romance Languages, or has very good vocabulary generally. Breaking 'revolution' into syllables will not work in Arabic because Arabic has a different cognate "ثورة" *'thora'* which is a different word structure. For instance, S3 thought 'thermosetting' line 9 was one of the most difficult words to understand. She broke the term into segments and stated that *'I know what /-setting/ is, but I don't know what*



*/thermo-/ means'*. The word 'thermos' is a Greek term meaning 'heat' which is not used in Arabic. Instead, we use تسخين *tskeen*. This indicates that using the bottom-up strategic behaviours alone such as phonological knowledge may not help the reader understand the text, because of their lack of knowledge of the word's morphemes, structures and etymology.

S14 tried to comprehend the word 'revolutionary', line 2, (see above extract sentence) guessed it in a different way, confusing 'revolution' for 'voluntary' when he separated the word into parts. Here is the observable behaviour that he performed while reading the word: *'Voluntary تعرفها متطوع: I know 'voluntary' as unpaid work so revolutionary means a volunteer or something like that'*. This may be an example of 'deceptive morphological structure' in which the word seems familiar to the reader but is, in fact, unknown (Coady and Huckin, 1997), resulting in misinterpretation and mistranslation of the sentence. This problem also might be related to the Arabic word structure (discussed in Section 3.2), where Arabic words are based on tri-consonantal roots جذر ثلاثي (Bettini and Lancioni, 2011). For example, the root *b-t-k* is the base for many Arabic words related to books: *maktaba* (مكتبة) library; *katib* (كاتب) writer, and *ketab* (كتاب) book. Therefore, the reader transferred her knowledge of L1 to FL and confused 'voluntary', which does not have Arabic cognate, for 'revolutionary'. Some students underlined the new words with the intention of returning and translating them later, whereas most of them ignored the new words (skipping unknown words) because they did not have the skills or knowledge to derive the words' meaning from the context. For example, S12, who tried to guess 'constituents' in line 8 stated that *'I read this word in the text and will not bother with it because it is a difficult word'*.

In terms of using synonyms to understand the text, students' lexical knowledge was not helpful either because there were too many unfamiliar words in the passage. For instance, S12 while reading stated that *'I was using synonyms but it does not work'*, because he did not have enough knowledge of the surrounding words.

In terms of using grammatical knowledge, the majority of the participants stated that they did not know how to apply grammatical knowledge to understand the reading text. S1 and 2, however, did use their grammatical knowledge to understand the tense of the text:

*Because it [grammar] shows whether the research was done in the past or present, it is a group or only one person. It also shows whether this study is still in progress or completed. (S1)*

*If I don't have the vocabulary and grammatical knowledge I'll not be able to understand the structure of each sentence. If you look at this text, you'll find that there are past and present tenses. If I don't have the knowledge I'll not be able to read and understand. (S2)*

However, other students, such as S13, stated that they did not know how to use their grammatical knowledge to understand the text.

The students prefer to use the dictionary because it helps them understand the meaning of new words. However, the dictionary might not help in all cases if the dictionary does not, for example, provide verb declensions or grammatical explanations. For example, S19 used the dictionary to translate the word 'launched', line 3. Here is the sentence containing the word 'launched':

His invention, which he named 'Bakelite', was of enormous technological importance, and effectively- *launched* the modern plastics industry (Text 2, Appendix 4).

She stated that *'I translated it [launched] but I do not think the translation is correct. The dictionary might give me an inappropriate meaning'*. This seems to indicate that using the dictionary alone without understanding the overall context of the sentence or without recognising the past participle '-ed', might not help the student. The dictionary should be a support that is used after using other reading strategic behaviours.

### **Think-aloud Protocols Summary**

The data from Text 2 are relatively similar to the data from Text 1. EFL readers in reading both texts were reading aloud in order to improve their pronunciation skills. They were also not using prediction skills to get the gist of the text from the topic. This might be explained by the kinds of teaching methods discussed in Section 6.1, where the teacher was either not practising a range of teaching techniques, or was inadequately trained to teach REFL.

In addition, the majority of the students were unable to utilise sentence clues strategies to guess the meaning of unknown words, or use bottom-up and top-down reading strategic behaviours to understand the main idea of the text. The principle difficulty was the difficulty of the texts which was above the students' level of English. However, some students used reading strategic behaviours such as grammar or phonological knowledge but were unable to guess the omitted words because there were too many unfamiliar words in the sentence. This issue might be related to using a single set of reading strategies 'bottom-up', which is mostly used by the readers. It is also important to note that EFL readers will be conscious of the reading process because automaticity is interrupted by unfamiliarity and loss of cultural, linguistic, and formal schema. The text's difficulty means that even when students try to relate the text to what they might know generally, their fluency is still impeded because the context and content have no meaning.

For further discussion about the reasons for using such reading strategic behaviours used by the participants in text one and two, I concluded semi-structured interviews discussed in the following section.

### **6.2.2 Part Two: interviews with students**

As a further source of data collection on students' attitudes toward REFL, TAPs with the 24 students were followed by semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to discuss primarily the responses and suitability of the methods of teaching reading in the Libyan context.

The data obtained from the interviews, indicates that the majority of participants had difficulty in comprehending the text because of the high number of unfamiliar words which affected their reading comprehension. For instance, S11 stated that *'there are many new words which did not allow me to concentrate and comprehend the context. I could not fully understand the passage and I am unable to understand the words'*. The students classified the difficulties in comprehending the new words into two categories: firstly, difficulty in pronunciation because most of them viewed the REFL as a matter of improving pronunciation; secondly, difficulty in guessing the unknown words.

To overcome these issues, the students reported that they had to read every single word in the reading passage because most did not have the skills to use strategies such as grammar,

word segments, vocabulary knowledge, content and sentence structure in order to comprehend the text. For example, S24 stated that *'first I read it [the text], if I cannot understand it, I use the dictionary. If I cannot understand the word, I leave it'*, because the only reading strategic behaviour that they know is *'to read clearly for the teacher so he can hear our pronunciation'* (S1). Students know that this method of REFL does not help them understand the text: for example, *'I did not learn anything that will benefit my reading strategies'* (S16). Pursuing good pronunciation rather comprehension, however, is a habit, and the only REFL strategy that the students were trained to use. With so few strategies at their disposal, it is not easy to set aside reading for pronunciation.

In terms of using the dictionary to translate unknown vocabulary, the majority of participants stated that using the dictionary would be helpful in reading and comprehending the text. For example, S14 said *'there are words that I know and with the dictionary, it will help me more'*. The students suggest using the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour.

*I will be able to understand the text and will be able to easily guess the new words because I have grammar and I know the rules. My problem is in vocabulary.* (S10)

*When you find the word from the dictionary, comprehension will be easy.* (S11)

On the other hand, S12 argued that if *'the words are very difficult, you might not find them in the dictionary'*, or using the dictionary might be time consuming because it would take a lot of time to get the meaning of each word. This is because EFL students *'are not trained to open and find the meaning in the dictionary'* (S9). This might be because of the teachers beliefs discussed in Section One, where most of them stated that EFL students should not be allowed to use the dictionary to translate the unfamiliar words while reading.

In terms of teaching REFL in the Libyan context, all the applicants stated that the teacher's role was to read the passage and translate unknown words. Their role as a student was to listen and take notes, where sometimes they have the chance to read some parts of the text.

*The teacher starts reading and translating for us at the same time. We find everything ready for us. For example, the word 'efficient' is a difficult word for me but the teacher will not let me think about it.* (S14)

*The teacher first reads it very slowly, then he answers the questions, and that is all. If he likes he might ask one of the students to read one or two sentences from the text.*  
(S3)

The participants stated that teachers usually did not give them the chance to practise their reading skills to guess the unfamiliar words. S9, for example, stated that, *'our teachers do not care whether we read or not. This is reading C [reading 3, final REFL course], the last reading course and I have read only one time from A, B and C. I read only one time in all the lectures I attended'*. This finding fits with what I saw while observing the classes (see Section 6.1), in which the teacher read aloud for the students and then a number of students were selected to read some sentences.

In terms of the applicability/helpfulness of the teaching methods, activities and strategies suggested that the teacher uses to help students understand the reading texts, the participants suggest that these methods of teaching REFL neither improves nor develops their reading skills. This is because *'as students, we did not gain anything. The text is ready and we did not make any effort in order to improve our reading strategies'* (S6). Other students, such as S2, stated that these methods of teaching reading *'will help me get marks and pass the exams, but not the skills of reading'*. This might be linked to the views of teachers 1 and 2 discussed in Section 6.1, where they stated that students are only interested in passing the exams. It might be that the classroom method of teaching reading makes the students think only about passing their exams, and not on improving their reading strategies.

### **6.3 Summary of Section Two**

The data from the TAPs and students' interviews indicated that most Libyan EFL university students face the same challenges in REFL. These challenges are related to the lack of vocabulary knowledge that affects their reading comprehension as stated by teacher three and four, discussed in Section 6.1. As I noted in the TAPs, a great number of the participants gave up reading the text because they were unfamiliar with the new words in the passage. It seems to me that they did not have reading strategies such as connecting information or using the sentence clues to comprehend the new vocabulary, or use their cultural knowledge to gain a deep understanding of the text. Essentially, they might not be trained to read by themselves.

The students view reading English as a technique for developing their speaking skills, which is related to how the reading of the Holy-Quran (see Chapter One) is taught. The present finding is in line with Aldabbus (2008) research who investigated the interaction in Libyan EFL primary classrooms and found the way of REFL is inherited from the Holy-Quran whereby ‘teachers used to model each word several times while students repeated it in chorus to guarantee that they had learnt the correct pronunciation’ (p.177).

On the other hand, participants who possessed the knowledge to use other reading strategies face difficulties in trying to get the appropriate contextual meaning because of the number of unknown words in the sentence. The majority of students use bottom up strategies to comprehend a particular phrase in the text reducing their ability to understand the passage. In this case, they require further support, and most of them stated that the dictionary would be helpful. The process of the eventual interactive strategies of reading (see Chapter Two) might be more suitable to EFL readers.

This study contradicts Abbott’s (2010) research in which she investigated the REFL comprehension strategies used by immigrant Arabic-speakers to Canada from seven Arabic countries. At the time of research, they had lived in Canada between seven and 24 months. The mean length of time spent studying English was five years and four months in their home countries, and nine months in Canada. She stated that ‘results of this study suggest that Arabic-speakers use more of a top-down approach to reading’ (p.18), because ‘their personal experiences may cause them to choose distracters that may reflect differences in their sociocultural knowledge and experiences’ (p.33). However, my study found that the Libyan Arabic-speakers, who studied EFL in the university for four years tend to use bottom-up strategic behaviours while REFL, focusing on every word. The majority used grammatical and phonological knowledge, rarely using top-down strategic behaviours. For instance, they did not predict the content of the text by using the topic’s title.

## **6.4 Chapter Discussion**

The data, analysed from the Reconnaissance Phase indicates that the manner of teaching and learning REFL in the Libyan universities is a problem of limited teaching skills which seems to be common in developing states. This might be due to the lack of infrastructure of the organised educational system, such as teacher’s lack of knowledge of teaching EFL and reading models, which in turn affects the students’ knowledge of REFL. In addition, direct

observation by the educational institutions of teaching and learning REFL, and of connecting them with modern techniques of teaching, is rare. This is in line with the findings of Elabbar (2014) who investigated the Libyan EFL teachers' knowledge in using action research in developing their teaching performance. Elabbar found the 'lack of knowledge and skill development within the school which caused very poor and frustrated teachers' (p.79). On the other hand, there are universities that have made some improvements, but teachers still lack motivation to implement these theories in the language classrooms because of a lack of training courses. Therefore, the traditional way of teaching FL continues even where there are (limited) attempts to change teacher education methods.

The Reconnaissance Phase seems to show that there is no pedagogical system in the Libyan context that improves teachers' teaching REFL techniques. Most teachers develop their abilities to teach a particular course by self-improvement and by relying on their judgements: *'nobody did [teach me]. I think there is a special case with me here. I think I was born to teach'* (T2). Suwaed (2011) concluded her study EFL teachers' cognition and classroom practice at Libyan universities by stating that teachers at Libyan universities:

Largely depend on their own self development and informal learning to deal with challenges such as inconsistent syllabus, students' mixed level and large class sizes. (Suwaed, 2011, p.3)

They view the current educational system as a matter of getting a certificate to work rather than one of educating. This, in turn, reflects on the students who learn in order to pass the exams.

The teaching and learning environment also affects REFL because teachers view teaching a FL as a matter of transferring knowledge rather than of sharing or developing it. This means that teachers view themselves as the main source of information. As a result, they might select a particular method of teaching according to their beliefs. The teachers also consider that changing the students' behaviours of REFL is difficult because of the students' traditional behaviours and orientation in the language classrooms is to be passive.

In terms of reading models, the Reconnaissance Phase categorised the EFL participants in two. First, the majority do not have the knowledge of many REFL strategies even though they are in the final year in university. Second, students who have some REFL skills rely

on bottom-up type behaviours to comprehend the reading texts, or, in a few cases, top-down. As a result, they were unable to understand the texts. This finding fits with Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model (see Chapter Two) which states that readers need to use both bottom-up and top-down reading strategies, as shown by S7 who used these strategies to comprehend and guess the meaning of the texts.

EFL teachers and students show strong ambition and willingness to develop methods of teaching and learning REFL, such as the need for training programmes for teachers to develop their teaching qualification skills. However, they are aware that change will be slow because of present political difficulties and uncertainties in Libya. Moreover, high number of students in classrooms affects teacher-student interaction.

The Reconnaissance Phase informs us that language teaching is not only affected by physical circumstances, but also by teachers' views of teaching REFL, which in turn affects the way EFL students read in EFL. For example, the students view the dictionary as an important tool that will support them in comprehending reading texts. Teachers, on the other hand, take the view that dictionary and the student's L1 will not help the students and therefore should be avoided. EFL students show more flexibility and willingness to learn and apply new patterns and strategies than the teachers. This finding is in line with Rashidi's (2014) research on the effects of teachers' beliefs on Iranian EFL students. Rashidi concluded that teachers' perceptions and judgements about classroom activities and methods were inconsistent with students' perceptions, and thus did not satisfy them.

The Reconnaissance Phase also seems to show that the current situation requires substantial changes to make teaching and learning REFL more effective. One necessary change is to increase students' classroom role so that they learn to be active students in learning to read. Further, this stage shows the need for motivating the teachers to take responsibility and improve their teaching skills, bearing in mind the sociocultural conditions that might influence their learning and teaching practice. It aims, also, to understand what their students do, want to do, and are 'made' to do. The next chapter will discuss the actions required to bring about effective changes to REFL.



## 6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the exploration phase of data collected from classroom observations, TAPs, and teacher/students interviews. The data revealed that there was a problem in the way of teaching REFL, which, in turn, affected the way students read in the target language. These difficulties can be summarized in two points: firstly, teachers lack of knowledge about teaching REFL. Secondly, students' lack of REFL strategies. As a result, in the next chapter, I attempt to suggest changes to improve the way of teaching and learning REFL strategies in the Libyan context. The proposed change aims to introduce a different way of teaching reading leading to 'reading for meaning' using, ultimately, eventual interactive type strategies of REFL. In the next chapter, I will discuss the students' performance during the academic year to evaluate any changes with respect to reading behaviour strategies, and students' reactions by conducting a Skype interview with the teacher at the end of the intervention.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: REPORT ON ACTION STAGE**

### **7.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I report on the second stage of data collection. The data is taken from lessons designed to effect change in the methods of teaching and learning of Reading English in a Foreign Language (REFL). These lessons were based on findings from the Reconnaissance Phase discussed in the previous chapter and are summarised in the first of the four sections below. Section One describes the rationale and preparation phases of the sessions for the interventions and summarises the aims of each stage. Section Two outlines the first intervention, namely lessons 1 and 2. Here, I describe the main procedures and activities used in the lessons. In Section Three I report on and consider the students' evaluations of the lessons in data gathered in focus group interviews and TAPs. In this section, I consider changes in students' REFL observable behaviours. Section Four discusses the lessons presented by the teacher-collaborator, using the 'new' method of teaching REFL. Finally, I discuss the feedback on and teacher's opinions of the new method, and how he evaluated changes in students' behaviours in REFL at the end of the academic year, three months after the second intervention.

### **7.1 Section One: rationale for the Action Phase**

The Reconnaissance Phase, as I reported in Chapter Six, helped to provide a picture of the complex nature of teaching and learning REFL in the teaching and learning environments of four Libyan research sites EFL classrooms. The data demonstrated that the studied teachers relied on traditional language teaching methods such as the DM which places emphasis on listening and speaking, rather than on developing students' knowledge of reading. The DM aims to focus on correcting students' pronunciation while reading (see Chapter Four). As a result, and as indicated in the TAPs findings discussed in Chapter Six, the majority of students shared many common observable behaviours such as reading aloud, reading each word in the text, articulating the phonemes and syllables of words, or skipping words if they could not pronounce them.

Such teaching methods are widely used in Libya for a number of reasons. As described in Chapter One, teachers' educational practice is based on Quranic methods of instruction

where students simply learn verse by rote, aiming for perfect pronunciation of the holy words; understanding what the scripture or words mean is less important. The country's political situation is another explanation (see Section 1.4). It is not surprising that the Reconnaissance Phase revealed that students were concerned about how to learn REFL strategies effectively.

After exploring REFL teaching and learning circumstances and practices in the 4 participating Universities, I designed an intervention to explore whether teaching REFL differently could make a difference to how one teacher taught and one group of students learned REFL. Namely, by providing students with opportunities to cooperate in a variety of language learning activities, such as reading the title of the text, I wanted to explore if the students' confidence to become independent readers reading for meaning increased (see below for the intervention aims). The intervention was based on the concept of a single teacher-collaborator participating in discussions about lesson plans and in team-teaching with me in order to introduce different approaches to teaching reading. The overall aim of the intervention was to bring about 'reading for meaning' using eventual interactive strategies. As discussed earlier, the usual approach to reading was to have the students read aloud, to concentrate on the pronunciation of each word rather than read for overall meaning. Consequently, students rarely have a role in analysing and contextualizing the text. Instead, the usual practice is for the teacher to read aloud while the students passively follow the text, while on occasion they might be asked to read one or two sentences.

In the intervention lessons, I aimed to:

- Provide students with an opportunity to practise reading English strategies. These strategies included explaining to students when and how to use the dictionary, how to read actively and predict text content. For example, by asking questions such as 'based on the title: what do you think this text is about?' students were encouraged to make predictions about the text (see the following section).
- Improve students' reading strategies to deal with unfamiliar words in the text by showing, for example, students how to use sentence cues such as syntactic, semantic and phonological knowledge to read for comprehension, and by explaining how to decode words by 'breaking words into segments'.

Based on these lessons' aims, I hoped that students might be better able to:

- Read for meaning.
- Use their background knowledge, deriving from, for example lexical, scientific, cultural, or geographical knowledge, along with content and sentence structure in order to comprehend the reading text.
- Understand how to read and decode, where possible, unfamiliar words from the text's context. Arabic is not as influenced by Greek and Latin to the extent that English and the Romance languages are. The meaning of words like 'thermo' (Gr. heat) and 'synthetic' (Gr. *syn*, with or together, *thesis*, placing) from the Bakelite text discussed in the previous chapter, may not be readily understood by Arabic speakers as the language usually relies on its own lexicon (heat حرارة and synthetic اصطناعي) for denoting heat or artificially produced products.
- Know when and how to use the dictionary. Lexical Arabic-English dictionaries are not widely used in EFL classrooms, despite their great usefulness. Pronunciation, as I have discussed, is more important than meaning.

These are difficult aims to accomplish in only one intervention. However, if the proposed process of teaching were to continue over a period of time it might be possible to see positive changes in students' learning of REFL. In order to realise these aims and introduce better lesson plans for the reading classes, I followed the six principles suggested by Farrell (2009, p.74-76), who researched and wrote about the area of reading in FL, and reflective practice and EFL teacher education, to design improved reading lessons for Libyan EFL students. Namely:

1. 'Use reading materials that are interesting'. That is, select appropriate texts for students' language levels, experience and background as opposed to the usual method of selecting a text at random. For example, the first text I selected for my intervention was 'Attitudes to Language' (see Appendix 7). The text was about people's opinions and beliefs about language usage, and their attitudes to the use of linguistic education such as how to speak and write correctly. Since these students are learning to speak English, and will have experienced difficulties in speaking and writing correctly, I reasonably assumed that the students would readily connect to the text. The second text was entitled: 'Playing is a Serious Business' (see

Appendix 9). This text was about the importance of play to children's brain development, intelligence and social skills. Every student in the class will have experienced play as a child (and will continue to play), and many, no doubt, have children of their own or young nieces and nephews.

2. 'Make reading the major part of the reading lesson' in which the reader should have a sustainable period of time to practise actual reading and to interact with the text. As illustrated in the following section, in the 'during reading stage' students were given the opportunity to practise their linguistic skills and apply background knowledge or knowledge.
3. 'Have a specific objective for each lesson'. For example, and as noted earlier, the main aim of my intervention was to help students read for meaning using eventual interactive reading strategies such as top-down strategies in the pre-reading stage (see below).
4. 'Use activities that allow students to bring their own experiences to the reading'. These activities might include questioning to activate students' schemata knowledge (see below).
5. 'Focus your instruction on teaching, not testing' because, as noted earlier, the main aim of my teaching lessons is to show readers how to read for comprehension.
6. 'Divide the lessons into pre-, during and post-reading stages'. For example, engaging in a pre-reading stage might help the reader learn how to activate his/her background knowledge to understand the text. During-reading might help in building knowledge of reading strategies, and post-reading activities might help instruct the students reflect on his/her readings (see below).

These principles might help the reader to interact with both the text and the teacher to a greater degree than normal. Using eventual interactive reading strategies in order to comprehend the reading passage (see Chapter Two) involves the interaction of bottom-up and top-down reading strategies. Eventual interactive strategies should enable the teacher to help students connect language knowledge, such as grammar and phonology, to their world knowledge (cultural, scientific, and literary) to comprehend the text. Further, and as discussed in Chapter Four, I incorporated into the intervention approaches well-known FL teaching methods such as the GTM, DM, and TBLT. I believed that certain components from each teaching method could 'fire' an eventual interactive model of reading which might help students develop their reading abilities and comprehension, and to discern the

meaning of unfamiliar words from the text's context. For example, the essential concern of the GTM is to learn to read the target language by learning the rules of grammar, and then to apply those rules in translating sentences between the target and first languages. Based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter, translating words into the mother tongue might help students understand the overall meaning of the text but they should not be aiming to translate the whole text into the L1, because, as suggested by A-LM, language families have their unique systems of linguistic organisation. Arabic, for example, is different from English in its alphabetic system (see Chapter Three). Further, unlike English, Arabic, does not usually create words by the addition of prefixes or suffixes, as in *thermo-dynamic* or *move-ment*. Instead, words are formed according to a finite, but reasonably large, number of templates applied to roots. A given root such as 'ج ل س' (G L S) can construct different verbs such as - sit *جلس* (*glsa*), companion *جليس* (*glees*), gathering *جلسة* (*glsa*), council *مجلس* (*mglis*). The students' classroom role in which the DM is used is less passive because interaction is both ways, i.e. teacher-student and student-teacher, to improve the student's language strategies. TBLT is based on the idea of helping students to acquire FL by performing tasks such as pre-task, task cycle and language focus (see Chapter Four). These tasks and activities might help the student to think and read independently.

The next section will explain in detail how these procedures were practised and related to reading behaviours in the classroom.

### **7.1.1 Intervention lesson plans**

The intervention took the form of a series of lesson plans for final year students at the University of X1 in Libya. I realise that I could not effect lasting change in a single intervention: lasting change would require deep, systematic, reflective and continuous application of different activities from various methods over a sustained period of time. This was, therefore, a limited study, based on a limited number of strategies, with limited numbers of students and teachers over a very short period of time. The application of these procedures in the Libyan context was further limited by a number of significant constraints such as:

1. Time constraints. It is challenging to suggest practical improvements in a limited period of time.

2. Students' lack of knowledge of reading strategies.
3. Students' lack of vocabulary knowledge.
4. Students' previous reading behaviours such as reading aloud in order to improve speaking.
5. Large numbers of students in the classrooms.

I will attempt to suggest improvements to help overcome some of these limitations. For example, switching to L1 might help overcome constraints caused by students' lack of vocabulary knowledge; students will be allowed to borrow what they need from their L1 in order to discuss the topic. Providing students with a vocabulary list to help them translate the text is another useful strategy. The following sections will discuss the lessons procedures and the aims of each of the three stages of the lessons in detail.

### **Stage 1: pre-reading activity**

The first stage is the pre-reading activity which is a warm-up activity to help students become interested in the text, and to activate schemata explained previously by using top-down reading strategies such as employing background knowledge of the topic. A question-and-answer session could help elicit information about the students' background knowledge of the content and structure of the text. In this step, I discuss the text using examples and explain to students how to read the topic/title in order to help them gain general knowledge about the issue.

According to Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), designing questions about the topic is an active technique that can be used in pre-reading activity to activate students' schemata knowledge and prepare them to read the text. The aim in framing questions in this stage was to stimulate students' curiosity and maintain concentration. To assess the importance of the pre-reading stage, Rasheed (2014) tested the effectiveness of pre-questioning and pre-teaching vocabulary with 46 university EFL students in Saudi Arabia using a quasi-experimental design. Rasheed assessed the effectiveness of these strategies by asking the participants to answer the questions after the reading sessions. The results indicated that pre-reading strategies improved students' comprehension of texts because they activate the students' background knowledge.

This activity functions as a bridge between the reader and the text (Tierney and Cunningham, 1984) from which students might be better able to make predictions and guesses about the passage. They can then confirm the accuracy of their guesses after reading the text. In order to practise this activity in the first session, I prepared the following questions based on the text content and title from Text 1: ‘Attitudes to Language’ (see Appendix 7). The questions were:

- To what extent do you worry about the correctness of your own use of language?
- Have you ever felt that other people make judgements about you because of your language skills?
- Do you think that grammar rules should be fixed like laws? Or, as suggested by the author of the text, should people be encouraged to interpret grammar rules more flexibly?
- If you think rules should be fixed, who should decide what those rules are and how?

Using the title ‘Attitudes to Language’ as a trigger, the activities in this stage are based on top-down reading strategies where the students discuss, predict and interact with me and each other, sharing their knowledge and understanding of language. As I became aware of the students’ needs, I could then suggest other reading strategies to the students.

## **Stage 2: during reading**

The reading phase aimed mainly to help EFL readers comprehend the text and guess the meaning of unknown vocabulary. Anderson and Pearson (1984) states that the ‘during-reading’ stage helps students monitor their text understanding and remediate any comprehension failures as they occur. In this stage, students might use different reading strategies such as decoding and word identifications, to link them with the global strategy of understanding the text. In my lessons, this stage was practiced using the following four tasks:

Task one: the aim of this task is to help EFL students guess the sense of the word/sentence structure by using their syntactic knowledge. To practice this activity:



1. Students read two sentences from the first paragraph (see Appendix 7). The sentences appear below:

It is not easy to be systematic and objective about language study. Popular.... debate regularly deteriorates into interactive and polemic. Language belongs to everyone, so... (Text 3, Appendix 7)

2. The students discuss/predict what kind of information they expected to find in the blank spaces.
3. Then, the students are asked to read the remainder of the first paragraph to check whether their predictions are accurate. Below is the whole paragraph:

It is not easy to be systematic and objective about language study. Popular linguistic debate regularly deteriorates into interactive and polemic. Language belongs to everyone, so most people feel they have a right to hold an opinion about it. And when opinions differ, emotions can run high. Arguments can start as easily over minor points of usage as over major policies of linguistic education. (Text 3, Appendix 7)

*Task two* is called ‘first reading’ of the whole text to confirm the predictions of the pre-reading stage, and to get a general overview of the main ideas, but not to analyse every sentence. Students during this activity were asked to read the paragraphs quickly and to underline unknown words.

The aim of *task 3* is to teach EFL students how to use eventual interactive reading strategies (top-down, bottom-up strategies) to comprehend the text. This stage involves two activities: in the first activity, the teacher writes up words unfamiliar to the students from task 2 and explains how to decode some of these words, i.e., ‘breaking words into segments’ (see activity 1 Appendix 6). In the second activity, the teacher explains how to guess the meaning of unknown words by bolding the words in their sentences, then giving the students two options from which to choose the correct one (see activity 2 Appendix 6). The teacher asks the students to read the passage again, this time using the dictionary to confirm their predictions and to summarise in a sentence each paragraph in order to provide a basic meaning of the text. In this way, Wigfield (2004) stated that readers with good comprehension skills were likely to summarise as they read because summarising helps the reader identify the main ideas and supporting facts to build a mental representation of the text.

In *task 4*, the teacher asks the students to read the text once more, and to summarise the whole text in order to get a general idea of the text's meaning. The summarising stage might involve writing one sentence that requires comprehension of the main ideas of the text. Research supporting the efficiency of this strategy comes from Huang (2014) who tested the effects of summary writing on 105 Taiwanese EFL university students' reading comprehension over a two-month period asking students to write a summary and pre- and post- reading tests. Huang concluded his study by arguing that 'summary writing had significant positive effects on students' reading performance' (p.136). Further details about summarising strategies are discussed in the following section. The summary stage lasted 10 minutes to judge how well the students recall the main ideas of the text. By reading and writing several times, the reader should learn new word meanings, idioms, and phrases that they may not so easily forget.

### **Stage 3: post reading**

According to Cohen and Cowan (2008), the 'post reading' stage should provide opportunities for students to exchange information with their teacher and colleagues, in the process of synthesising and analysing the content to build his/her personal comprehension of the text. In this study, I also followed this practice and so the third stage aimed to check and evaluate the students' understanding. This stage should also help students connect with and think critically about what they have read. The students interacted with each other, read statements, and concluded on reading the text whether their selections were true, false, or not given (see activity 3 Appendix 6).

My role as a teacher in this activity was to observe and take notes, give feedback on their performance, and provide them with the correct answers for the activities. The feedback session aimed to:

- Give students a sense of conclusion to the lesson.
- Focus on how well students completed the task, and to offer further suggestions on how to improve their language.

After discussing the main stages of the lesson plan with my supervisors, I started the action stage discussed in the next section.

## **7.2 Section Two: starting the action:**

The action of the research took place in two interventions: I conducted the first intervention (the first two sessions), the teacher-collaborator carried out the second part (two sessions).

### **7.2.1 First sessions**

After preparing the lesson plans, I went to the University of X1 in February 2014 to conduct the second phase of my fieldwork. As I reported in Chapter Five, I discussed the aims of the lessons with the head of the EFL department and T4 who participated in the first phase of the research. I taught two lectures of REFL to one of the four classes I observed in the Reconnaissance Phase. The class contained 20 students, including the 6 students (19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24) who participated in the first phase. These same students also participated in the action phase to monitor their improvement in REFL.

After obtaining consent from the EFL department to teach the introduced method, I discussed the lesson timetables with the teacher-collaborator. The teacher team-taught with me in the two team-teaching lessons to introduce a different way of teaching reading (leading to 'reading for meaning', ultimately using eventual interactive strategies of REFL). The following section will now describe the first lesson I presented.

#### **Lesson One (05-02-2014)**

The first lesson was an introductory lesson. As planned, the lesson lasted for 60 minutes, and 20 students were present. The lesson focused on improving the students' REFL strategies using the first lesson plan (see Appendix 6). The procedure of the lesson was discussed in the previous section using the text entitled: 'Attitudes to Language'. The lesson was taught using different classroom tasks, and employing the following REFL strategies:

- Reading and predicting the context from the title.
- Using background knowledge.
- Activating grammatical, lexical and phonological knowledge to understand a text.
- Connecting information presented in different sentences or parts in the text.

- Using a dictionary.
- Checking their guesses.

I knew that the activities were new to the students and, therefore, they were not expecting that they would actively participate first time. For example, I faced internal classroom challenges in teaching the text. As discussed in Chapter Six, Libyan students are accustomed to being passive in the class, relying on their teachers to read, translate and explain the text to them. Here, I was trying to get students to read and think independently, but these students were, unsurprisingly, expecting me to do the work. In addition, because they knew that I was doing my PhD in the United Kingdom, they were expecting me to use FL as their teacher did. Getting the students to use the dictionary was also a challenge because, as I discussed in the previous chapter, they were not trained to do that by themselves. The external challenges were concerned with the noise from students in the corridor, and from students who came late resulting in my having to stop the lesson several times.

However, when I began to discuss the title of the text in the students' L1, and used examples related to the topic from their everyday life, the students started to enjoy and interact with the lesson activities.

**Picture 2:** While discussing the title with the students.



The students gradually began reading the text by themselves and using their language knowledge such as separating the words into syllables to comprehend the content, encouraged by making accurate predictions based on the title about the text content. For example, in order to understand the meaning of the expression ‘unfeelingly attacked’ in the second paragraph. The sentences appear below:

As a result, it is easy to hurt, and to be hurt, when language use is *unfeelingly attacked*.  
(Text 3, Appendix 7)

The students learned how to break down the word ‘unfeelingly’ into parts:

- The prefix ‘un-’ meaning opposite.
- The main part ‘feels’ meaning the sense.
- The suffixes ‘-ing’ and ‘-ly’ provide grammatical information. *-ing* is suffix and *-ly* is verb adverb suffix.

The expression ‘unfeelingly attacked’ thus means ‘attacked without sensitivity or concern for the other’. The students showed a very positive attitude in learning new REFL strategies. They read the text by themselves and strictly followed my instructions, especially when they noticed that the role of the teacher in this session was different from the role of the traditional teacher. My role was as a facilitator who arranged and discussed activities with the students.

**Picture 3:** While taking notes of the unknown words on the board



At the end of the lesson, I was confident that the next lesson would be more effective because students had some understanding of the new method.

### **Improvement required for the next session**

After reflecting on my own teaching, I found that there were some improvements needed for the next lesson.

1. Speaking to the EFL department to reduce the number of the students in the corridor.
2. Asking the students to come to the class on time so they would not miss any activity.
3. Making the lesson instructions clearer.

### **Lesson Two (12-02-2014)**

The second lesson was planned to teach students how to read for meaning using, ultimately, an eventual interactive type of reading strategies in a FL. I used the same themes of the first lesson (see Appendix 6). The lesson lasted 50 minutes and 16 students were present. In order to make the activities more effective, I provided the students with clear instructions, and further explanations of how to decode the words and use their

language knowledge to comprehend the text 'Playing is a Serious Business'. For example, as shown in Appendix 8, students were asked about the sort of information in the blank spaces in order to instruct them how to guess the sense of the word/sentence structure by using his/her syntactic knowledge (see below). As noted earlier, the text was about the importance of playing for children and how play develops neural networks and brain plasticity, intelligence and developing their social skills. The following section will discuss all the stages of the lesson, then provide some analysis and interpretation.

### **Report of recorded lesson**

I videotaped the class in order to describe the lesson stages. I numbered the actions in a sequential order as they happened in the class.

1. I revised with the students the first step that they should take when they wanted to read any text (linking this lesson to the previous lesson).
2. I read the title.
3. I discussed the title with the students in order to predict the information in the text. I used the following questions: A. when you were a small boy/girl did you like playing? B. Which activity did you like to play? C. Did you enjoy playing with other children? D. What benefits did you gain from playing? Did it help build your muscles or develop a better brain? E. Do you think that animals play like human beings? How?
4. I discussed how children play in our society.
5. I gave the students a warm-up activity that included missing information, and asked the students about their expectations of the blank spaces (see Appendix 8).

Playing is a serious business. Children engrossed in ... Play may look like a carefree and exuberant way to... (Text 4, Appendix 9)
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6. I taught them how to use their language knowledge to guess the meaning of the rest of the sentence.
7. I asked the students to read the first paragraph to check the accuracy of their guesses.

Playing is a serious business. Children engrossed in a make-believe world, fox cubs play-fighting or kittens teasing a ball of string aren't just having fun. Play may look like a carefree and exuberant way to pass the time before the hard work of adulthood comes along, but there's much more to it than that. (Text 4, Appendix 9)

8. I revised the sentences with the students.
9. I asked the students to read the text and underline the unknown words.
10. Before reading the text, I asked the students to connect our discussion to what they were going to read now.
11. While the students were reading, I wrote on the board the words I expected they might have difficulty with.
12. After reading for 10 minutes, I asked the students about the level of difficulty of the text.
13. I asked them about the main idea of the text.
14. I explained how to take notes to remember the general idea of the text.
15. I asked the students about the techniques that they used to understand the words.
16. Using the board, I taught them how to comprehend the unknown words using their phonological and grammar knowledge.
17. I taught them how to understand the words using sentence clues.
18. Then I gave them activity 1 (see Appendix 8) which instructed the student how to find the meaning of unfamiliar words by analysing prefixes, suffixes and infixes.
19. After doing the task, I asked the students about their guesses.
20. Then I discussed the guesses with the students.
21. I asked them to use the dictionary to confirm their guesses.
22. After decoding the words, I taught the students how to guess the words from the overall context (see activity 2, Appendix 8) in order to teach the student how to guess the meaning of the words from the overall sentence. For example, the students were asked to read a sentence and guess the word written in bold from two options. The latest idea suggests that play has evolved to build big brains ('a' team 'b' developed).
23. After thinking for 5 minutes, I discussed the answers to the task with the students.
24. I asked the students to use the dictionary to confirm their guesses.
25. After translating, I asked the students to make a summary of the text and told them that they could use the dictionary.
26. After reading for 10 minutes, I discussed their comprehension of the text.



27. I then asked the students to work in pairs on activity 3 (Appendix 8) to discuss the main idea of each paragraph. For example, the students were asked to discuss four statements and ask them to discuss in pairs which paragraph represents each statement.
28. While students were discussing the activity, I was working with them and taking notes.
29. Finally, I gave students feedback on their performance.

The teaching strategies used in these lessons were based on Vygotsky ZPD scaffolding strategies discussed in Chapter Four, in which the teacher provides a guiding role for the student by making suggestions and offering strategies but it is the student who completes the tasks. The following section will discuss the lesson in further detail.

### **Analysis of Lesson Two**

Students' participation in the second session was very active. The lesson began with teacher-student interaction by asking questions about the title to generate interest in the lesson. The type of interaction was asking questions and using L1 and FL in the discussion. This type of interaction in FL classroom follows the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model which demonstrates that there are three steps that should be followed in the classroom: initiation, response and feedback (IRF). In this IRF, the teacher opens a discourse (initiation), a student replies (response) and then the teacher gives a feedback. According to Candlin and Mercer (2001) in the IRF model, the teacher can check the students' performance and give immediate feedback which will help the student improve his/her language skills. During this activity, the students were sharing their knowledge about the title. I tried to encourage all students to participate in this activity by walking around and asking each student a question.

In the second stage, the students began reading the text by looking for key information that help the students get the gist of the text's topic. I tried to engage students in different activities to train them in using eventual interactive reading strategies to comprehend the text. Sometimes, however, the students overused the dictionary, which consumed a lot of time. I took a note about this stage to provide them with feedback at the end of the lesson.

In the last stage of the session, I asked the students to work in pairs to practice the third activity in which each student discussed with his/her partner which of the three paragraphs in the text contained the following information:

1. The way play causes unusual connections in the brain which are beneficial.
2. A description of the physical hazards that can accompany play.
3. A description of the mental activities which are exercised and developed during play.
4. The classes of animals for which play is important.

My role at this point was to facilitate the students if they required any assistance (see Picture 4).

Finally, I gave the students feedback. The first feedback was about the students' performance and overuse of the dictionary. As noted earlier, while the students were reading they translated most of the words, so that reading each paragraph took a long time. I instructed them to use their reading interactive strategies first, then use the dictionary to translate the words that they thought were difficult and important.

The second feedback was about how to take notes while reading. While I was giving the students feedback, I was generally speaking without focusing on a particular student, to avoid embarrassing them because negative feedback from the teacher on student's performance may affect the student's academic improvement and social outcomes (Curzon and Tummons, 2013). As Aldabbus (2008) observed, criticism and overt correction of errors are very common in the Libyan classrooms with the result that students remain passive until the end of the lesson in order to avoid the teacher's negative comments.

**Picture 4:** Helping the students while they are working in pairs



In order to evaluate the success of the new method of teaching REFL, I conducted a focus group interview with the six students who participated in stage 1, to find out what needed to be changed to improve the new method. I next carried out TAPs with the same six students to observe the change in the students' reading behaviours.

The next section will describe the students' behaviours in the TAPs and focus group interview to discuss the reactions of the students to the new method, and improvements that could be made.

### **7.3 Section Three: Evaluating the Intervention**

After completing the intervention lessons, I conducted think-aloud protocols (TAPs) and focus interviews with the six students (19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24) who had participated in the reconnaissance phase from the University of X1. I wanted to observe and discuss their reactions to the new method of teaching REFL and to ask them how the intervention could be improved. As noted in Chapter Six, the six students were Libyan EFL students (5 female and 1 male) at the University of X. The students were in their final year in the EFL department and, on successful completion of this final year, would be qualified to gain Bachelor of Arts in teaching EFL in secondary schools.

In the TAPs, I used two texts: ‘Attitudes to Language’ (see Appendix 7) and ‘Playing is a Serious Business’ (see Appendix 9). As discussed in Section 7.1, the first text was about people’s opinions and beliefs about language usage, and their attitudes to the use of language education such as how to speak and write correctly. Since these students were learning to speak English and would have experienced difficulties in speaking and writing, I assumed that they would readily connect to the text and, perhaps, be able to draw on their content knowledge (content knowledge following Yin, 1985) and interest to help them to read for meaning. The second text ‘Playing is a Serious Business’ was about the importance of play to children’s brain development, intelligence and social skills. Every student in the class will have experienced play as a child (and will continue to play), some may have children of their own, and many will have young children in the family or amongst their friends. Again, the topic may therefore be one to which the students could readily relate. These texts were chosen because they were appropriate to the students’ level of language (as noted in Chapter Five, the level of difficulty was assessed by recruiting EFL students from Glasgow University to read the text) and so that too might play an important role in increasing their ability to comprehend the text. The TAPs were followed by semi-structured interviews to probe any changes in students’ perceptions of their reading behaviours after attending the intervention reading lessons.

I analysed each student’s reading on a case by case basis, comparing the reading behaviours in the Intervention Phase with the actions each participant performed in reading the texts in the Reconnaissance Phase. Then, I presented and discussed the data thematically (see Chapter Five). The data indicated that all six students shared common observed and reported behaviours such as reading silently, tracing words using a pen/pencil, analysing the sentence and word structure, separating words into syllables and using the dictionary at the end of the session to confirm word comprehension. Obviously, the participants also engaged in unobservable behaviours. While they were reading silently, I could not determine which strategic behaviour students were using until they made an observed behaviour or reported what they were doing (see Tables below). Even then, there will be, as previously noted, limitation to what I can know, as it is impossible to discern exactly what is going on in the reader’s heads as they read, and, as noted by Harvey and Goudvis (2007), the readers themselves may not have access to their processing or be able to describe what they are doing.

The readers also vocalised their thoughts (thinking aloud) to try and solve comprehension problems. It was a complex task to separate out each strategy because reading is a complex and fast moving process, and readers would use one or more strategies or skills to fulfil another, and so there is a degree of overlap across categories. Therefore, as noted above, any such analysis would be partial and limited. For example, S20 reported that she underlined words both to decode and as a marker to use the dictionary (translate) later.

As noted in the Reconnaissance Phase, reading is a cognitive process which does not allow us to see how comprehension works in the reader's mind. However, as suggested by Grabe and Stoller (2013) and Dorn and Soffos (2005), we can study observed reading behaviours that might indicate some of the reader's internal reading behaviours, processes and strategies. For example, underlining words is observable behaviour but I do not know why the reader did this behaviour until s/he reports the reason. After the intervention, to make it possible to describe the observed behaviours I attempted to categorise the behaviours used by the students in relation to top-down, bottom-up and eventual interactive reading strategic behaviours to see how they 'fit' the REFL model, and to observe changes, if any, in the students' reading behaviours (see Table below). For example, I begin analysing the Intervention Phase data with top-down reading strategic behaviours described by Goodman (1967) as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' where the graphic information on the page is less important than the guessing work involved in making sense of the text to confirm or reject these guesses. The basic premise of the top-down reading model is that reading is directed by readers' goals and expectations (Grabe and Stoller, 2013). The reader starts with a universal concept such as the title, headings and the basic idea of each paragraph, and uses reading to illustrate specifics and details. The reader in the top-down model utilises strategies such as background knowledge of the topic (for example, predicting) to make sense of what they are about to read. Table 14 below indicates such strategic behaviours used in this section.

top-down (t/d) strategic behaviours	
reported behaviours	observed behaviours
<u>reading the title</u> <u>Smith (1978) – purpose in reading,</u> <u>predicting content of the text,</u> <u>connecting text to background</u> <u>knowledge</u> <i>'I read the title to get an idea about the text' (S22).</i>	<u>reading the title</u>  traced the title pointed to title
<u>predicting contents of the text</u> <i>'I read the topic to predict the text'. (S23).</i>	
<u>using background knowledge 'world knowledge' (Yin, 1985). Making inferences about the text</u> <i>'now we learn how to use our background knowledge by asking ourselves questions' (S20).</i>	
<u>connecting information presented in different sentences or paragraphs (also might be eventual interactive type)</u> <i>'there are some questions in the text where I think the answer is at the end of the second paragraph' (S21).</i>	
<u>cultural schema</u> <i>'I think giving the topic and asking the students about their knowledge of it is a very effective way of teaching reading' (S21).</i>	

**Table 14:** Top-down strategic behaviours

As discussed in Chapter Three, the term background knowledge consists of different types of information, such as top-down, bottom-up and world knowledge, that the readers needs to understand the reading text. (Yin, 1985; Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe, 2002; Macceca, 2007; Grabe 2009). For example, Grabe (2009) describe the term ‘background knowledge’ as a major factor in reading comprehension process. It is a:

...way to describe the information stored in our memory system, and reading comprehension is basically a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes and the information that we already know. (Grabe, 2009, p.74)

The term background knowledge is used mainly in Table 14 to refer to top-down strategic behaviours. Table 15 below describes the bottom-up reading strategic behaviours used by the readers in the Intervention Phase. As summarised in Chapter Two, the bottom-up reading model is known as the information-processing model (Gough, 1972). The reading

procedure in the bottom-up model begins from details such as letters, words and sentences to build meaning from the text, with little interference from the reader's own background knowledge (Grabe and Stoller, 2013, p.25). Gough (1972) characterised the good reader as a passive decoder who makes little use of the text's context. The reader's task is to decode, namely, to convert 'characters into systematic phonemes' (p.310). In other words, the bottom-up model suggests that the reader grasps the meaning from the text itself and how it is organised (from actual words – employing linguistic skills and knowledge rather than text discourse). In the case of EFL, the students' level of linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary knowledge and grammatical structure might limit their use of bottom-up reading strategies because they do not have the resources of their L1 on which they can draw on thousands of stored words and tacit grammar. Table 15 below indicates some examples used in this intervention, therefore, and discussed in further detail.

<b>bottom-up (b/u) strategic behaviours</b>	
reported behaviours	observed behaviours
<u>decoding using grammatical knowledge</u>  <i>'I have a problem with phrasal verbs. I think they are different from the original verb [point out]'</i> (S19).	
<u>decoding using lexical knowledge</u>  <i>'I try to read and understand using my word knowledge at the same time'</i> . (S24)	<u>decoding using lexical knowledge</u>  focusing on understanding unfamiliar words by repeating the word
<u>decoding using phonological knowledge</u>  <i>'if I want to read the word 'feeling' it might be easier to read the word in segments suffix, infix and prefixes'</i> (S22).	<u>decoding using phonological knowledge</u>  <u>using a pencil to segregate words</u> The reader tried to segregate the word 'thermosetting' in line 19 into syllables /es-pec-i-al-ly/.
<u>skipping unknown words</u>  <i>'I will return to it [the unknown word: suburbs] later'</i> (S24).	<u>skipping unknown words</u>  S24 drew a star (*) against the word with the intention of later using the dictionary.
<u>using bilingual the dictionary</u>  <i>'I read and decode the words but I still need the dictionary'</i> . (S23)	<u>using bilingual the dictionary</u>  S19 used a bilingual dictionary with unfamiliar phrasal verb 'point out'.
	<u>tracing words</u> using a pen/pencil

**Table 15:** Bottom-up strategic behaviours

As seen below, there are strategic behaviours that could be used to describe both bottom-up and top-down strategic behaviours. For example, the reader might stop reading in order to think about how to decode a particular word ‘feeling’ (bottom-up strategy) or pause to think how the topic or context can bring meaning to a word such as ‘feeling’ (top-down strategy). Of course, I am unable to know for certain what the reader is doing until the reader reports the behaviour to me. Table 16 below gives further details.

eventual interactive strategies, both b/u and t/d	
reported behaviours	observed behaviours
<u>re-reading</u> she read each ‘ <i>paragraph more than once to see what I could understand from it</i> ’ (S21)	<u>re-reading</u> S19 re-read the sentence to confirm which selection was appropriate for the context: ‘manner’ or ‘the way’ (tracing the words using a pen).
<u>reading silently</u> <u>Rayner and Pollatsek, (1989)</u> <u>Goodman (1967) - sounding the word mentally</u> <i>‘I think it is better to read it [the text] silently’</i> (S24).	<u>reading silently</u> moving eyes on the text without producing sounds. Also the readers may move their lips without sounds which might not be entirely reading silently (sub-vocalization)
<u>reading aloud</u> <i>‘reading aloud confused me. I read aloud only in the class for the teacher’</i> (S21)	
	<u>pausing or stopping while reading</u> S19 paused her reading when she found the unknown word and sat silently. <u>underline unfamiliar words</u>
<u>underline unfamiliar words</u> <i>‘I underlined the words that I do not understand’</i> (S20)	<u>underline unfamiliar words</u> All of the students use a pen/pencil to underline some words in order as they said to translate later or decode their meaning.
<u>using the L1</u> <i>‘English is not our language, so we have to use Arabic. Maybe when we understand in our L1 we can read in the L2’.</i> (S20)	<u>using the (L1)</u> S19 read aloud in the target language then returned to read and think aloud in her L1.
<u>summarising</u> <i>‘my problem is to gather the general idea to make a summary’</i> (S23).	<u>summarising</u> where does language threshold come in, when students exhaust many or all of their reading resources

**Table 16:** Eventual interactive strategies

The following sections analyse in further detail the strategic behaviours presented in the above Tables.



### 7.3.1 Silent reading

As noted earlier, I presented and discussed the data thematically rather than on a case by case basis because the students' shared many common observable behaviours. For example, all six students began by reading the entire text silently. While they read the text, I observed readers moving their lips, moving eyes on the text without producing sounds, and tracing words using a pen/pencil. Each student reported that reading silently helped him or her to concentrate on the text. For instance, S19 stated that *'I think it is better to read it [the text] silently'*, and S20 said, *'I like to read silently because it helps me focus'*. Though the silent reader is obviously not producing vocal sounds s/he does have an 'internal voice' (Rayner and Pollatsek, 1989). The reader may be linking the sensory system (for example, vision and auditory) to the written word to construct auditory attention to help to form mental pictures from the written words. In sounding the word or words, the reader may be forming what Goodman (1967) calls a 'perceptual image' in which s/he picks up graphic cues, guided by 'language knowledge, her cognitive styles and knowledge learned' to form a picture about what she 'sees and partly what she expects to see' (p.135). This might have meant that, in reading the text 'Playing is a Serious Business', therefore, it was highly likely that students (for example, S21 discussed below) were able to actively imagine either themselves or other children playing, and to link their experiences to the text using top-down reading strategies such as background knowledge of, here, play. In the case of Libyan EFL students, silent reading might help to develop reading for meaning because the focus is on reading for understanding, rather than on reading each word carefully for perfect pronunciation.

The TAPs data show that the readers changed their views about the value of reading aloud between the two research phases. In the Reconnaissance Phase, S20, for example, had commented that she preferred to read aloud because it helped her improve her pronunciation skills, whereas in this phase she read silently for understanding. This data seems to indicate that the intervention accomplished one of the main aims discussed in Section 7.1, namely, 'reading for meaning', rather than pronunciation. Further, and as discussed in Chapter Three, the student's attention in reading aloud is divided between reading and speaking correctly because one of the purposes of reading aloud is to improve pronunciation (Doff, 1988) and, as seen in the Reconnaissance Phase, to convey information to someone else (the teacher). S23 stated that *'if you read aloud that means you pronounce it properly for the person who is hearing you. I think about using different*

*strategies when I read silently*'. This TAPs data is an indication that reading silently might allow the reader to make better sense of what is written, reflecting Goodman's (1967) theory which states that, initially at least, reading silently is more efficient than reading aloud for two main reasons. Firstly, because the reader's attention is not divided between decoding and recoding or encoding as oral output and, secondly because 'the reader's speed is not limited to the speed of speech production' (p.132). However, I should also acknowledge the possibility that the EFL reader might also read silently and slowly in order to decode and understand the text because REFL is not automatic unless the reader is familiar with the context and has a good linguistic and vocabulary knowledge.

### **7.3.2 Top-down type reading strategies**

From the beginning of observing the TAPs, the readers seemed to be using top-down reading strategic behaviours to comprehend the texts. All six students started by reading the title to predict the context. For instance, S22 began by tracing the title 'Attitudes to Language' to think about what was going to be in the text, *'I read the title to get an idea about the text. I will predict from the title what the text will be about'* (S22). The title should provide the reader with clues about the context to help him or her anticipate what they are about to read and to make connections between their background knowledge (top-down reading strategy) and the passage, rather than relying only on the actual sounds and words. This data shows that the students learned the strategy I introduced in the Intervention Phase, supporting the idea that 'reading the title might increase curiosity' to read further and confirm predictions (see Section 7.1, pre-reading activities). Further, Smith (1978) argues that predicting the context might help give readers a purpose for reading by, for example, reading for meaning, strengthening their comprehension, and so lead to better problem solving. S23 seemed to be using such a strategic behaviour *'I read the topic to predict the text. Then I built up an idea about what the text will be about'*. The reader appears to be using a strategy that might enable her to bring the sum total of her experience, language knowledge and thought development (Goodman, 1967) to the text. The reader might be able to combine what s/he knows (background knowledge) with the information in the text (local knowledge) so helping her to remain interested and active in reading.

This TAPs data seems to demonstrate further that the students in the intervention lessons came to understand how to use/activate their schemata (see Chapter Three) to understand

the text. In other words, the students were attempting to combine contextual knowledge that surrounds the text from using such clues, as sub-headings along with background knowledge triggered by the text's title and content. The reader might not know the meaning of every word but she may be able to employ schemata to help her get the gist of the text, at least to begin with. Reading the title, an elementary reading strategy, was a new strategy for these students: it was not observed in the Reconnaissance Phase. As S24 reported, this is *'new for us. If I am reading at home, I will not think about the topic, I will immediately go to translate and read the body of the text'*. This observation also highlights the importance of pre-reading activities discussed in Section 7.1 because they seem to encourage students to read not only for the sake of reading, but also for the sake of discovering, and being able to draw upon, their own ideas about the title. As S21 explains: *'I think brainstorming at the beginning of the lesson will encourage students to read and think for themselves. I think giving the topic and asking the students about their knowledge of it is a very effective way of teaching reading'* (S21). Utilizing top-down reading strategies, in which readers use their background knowledge to make sense of what they are going to read (Yin, 1985; Strickland, Ganske, and Monroe, 2002), might provide students with the opportunity to think reflectively, employing, for example, inferential comprehension questions about the text as in *'now we learn how to use our background knowledge by asking ourselves questions'* (S20). Strategies such as predicting the content from the title using the same questions discussed in Section One, which aims to stimulate students' curiosity and maintain concentration, might help the reader form a picture in his/her mind about what the author is trying to describe or explain. These reading strategies might also encourage reading for meaning such as including unknown vocabulary and intelligent guessing games.

Vocabulary knowledge was an obstacle in utilizing Goodman's (1967) top-down reading strategies because the vocabulary in the title/text was above the language level of some readers. As described in Chapter Two, Goodman's (1967) model is based on interaction between thought and language where readers select 'the fewest and most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right first time' (p.127). This seems to apply to L1 readers who have the linguistic and background resources to read so efficiently and rapidly. FL readers might encounter significant difficulties if the text is above their reading proficiency. The numerous unfamiliar words of the text 'Attitudes to Language' defeated the students which meant they could not make any kind of guesses about the text. The

unknown words prevented the readers from making ‘selective, tentative, or anticipatory’ guesses (Goodman, 1967, p.129-30). For example, S19 started with the title ‘Attitudes to Language’ which she read aloud, tracing the words from left to right (see Chapter Three). For the word ‘attitudes’ she used what appeared to be a bottom-up strategy to guess its meaning, saying, ‘*attitude*’ means ‘*manner*’ but here it [in this sentence] *might mean* ‘*the way*’ or *how to deal with language*’ (S19). She re-read the sentence to confirm which selection was appropriate for the context: ‘manner’ or ‘the way’, here attempting to use her lexical knowledge (bottom-up reading strategy) to select the appropriate meaning based on the linguistic context of the sentence. However, because the reader was unsure about the applicability of her guess ‘manner’, she employed a top-down reading strategy and decided to move on to the main text, hoping the text would tell her what ‘attitude’ meant in this particular context. The reader’s strategies reflect Rumelhart’s (1977) interactive reading model which recognizes the interaction between bottom-up (linguistic knowledge) with strong top-down (background knowledge) concurrent reading strategies while reading, certainly for FL students. In modified interactive reading strategies, integrating background knowledge and inferences with text content play greater roles in developing text comprehension (Grabe and Stoller, 2013, p.27). As seen in the following sections, S19, for example, succeeded in understanding the unknown words by using a supporting strategic behaviour, the dictionary, to understand words such as ‘attitude’. Examples such as this eventual interactive reading strategy are many and are presented in the following sections.

### 7.3.3 Bottom-up type reading strategies

As illustrated in the previous section, reading is a complex, multi-faceted process requiring a range of skills, strategies, processes, purposes, experiences, knowledge and attitudes (Yin, 1985; Fitzgerald, 1999). While observing the TAPs, I observed that vocabulary knowledge was the main obstruction to students’ in reading comprehension even when they use their background knowledge. For example, while reading ‘Playing is a Serious Business’ S21 tried to understand words using the textual context she was unable to guess, for example, the word ‘rapidly’ in line 22.

But Byers points out that the benefits of increased exercise disappear *rapidly* after training stops, so any improvement in endurance resulting from juvenile play would be lost by adulthood. (Text 4, Appendix 9)

She guessed the word ‘rapidly’ to mean ‘surprisingly’ because, as she claimed, *‘the words ‘disappear’ and ‘after’ gave me an indication of the word’s meaning’*. Using semantic clues derived from the sentence context to unlock the unknown word, she looked carefully at the words that preceded (‘disappear’) and followed (‘after’), and concluded that ‘surprisingly’ might fit. Her strategies match Gough’s (1972) theory which states that a good reader ‘plods through the sentence, letter by letter, word by word’ (p.354). However, there were no observable behaviours that indicated such plodding, such as tracing or underlining words. Neither did she read to the end of the sentence to confirm her guess and whether or not it made sense. The reader could have used different reading strategic behaviours such as consulting the dictionary to check her guesses, but did not. I also think that grammatical clues might have helped the reader understand whether the unknown word was a verb, subject, or adverb. Her guesswork seems to indicate that she utilized only one reading strategy, namely vocabulary knowledge. However, if she had used other strategies, such as confirming her guesses and reading and re-reading the whole sentence, supported by using the dictionary, or connecting the idea of ‘exercise’ to the ‘benefits of exercise’, she may have more easily guessed the meaning of the word.

Another example of vocabulary knowledge obstacle occurs when S21 is reading and thinking aloud the title, ‘Playing is a Serious Business’. She found difficulty in understanding the word ‘juvenile’ line 5.

Eighty per cent of deaths among *juvenile* fur seals occur because playing pups fail to spot predators approaching. (Text 4, Appendix 9)

The reader said *‘I am wondering about the word ‘juvenile’. I do not think it is originally an English word’*. The word ‘juvenile’ is originally a Latin word ‘Juvenis’ means ‘young’ but is a long established word widely used by English speakers. ‘Juvenile’ has no orthographic or semantic correlate in Arabic, the student’s L1. For example, the meaning of *juvenile* in Arabic is *‘الحدث’* articulated in Arabic as *‘alhadath’*, which does not associate with the word ‘juvenile’ in pronunciation or orthographic scripts. This means that the student could not transfer knowledge from her L1, so impacting on her comprehension of the text. This data from the TAPs highlights the complexities of Bernhardt’s (1991) reading in a FL model (see Chapter Two) which is built on the notion that FL readers can develop their literacy and reading proficiency over time, and that there are commonalities in text

processing between literate L1 students and FL, at least for, in this case, speakers of European languages. Bernhardt's model was developed using German, Spanish and French EFL students, who are familiar with the English alphabetical system, but not on readers using Arabic as an L1 who have a completely different orthography. There is increasing evidence, according to Koda (2004) and Grabe and Stoller (2013), that the orthography of a student's L1 influences FL reading development, even among advanced FL readers. As Koda (2004) suggests, understanding more about an L1's literacy skills and orthography may help explain possible FL difficulties in word recognition, fluency and reading rate (and see also Grabe and Stoller, 2013, p. 42). As a reasonably competent language speaker of English, I have difficulty in understanding new words which derive from Latin or Greek. A French or Italian EFL student might more easily understand 'juvenile' than I or S21 would because it exists in common usage in those languages, or can at least be readily recognised. In German 'juvenile' is '*jugendlich*', '*juvénile*' in French and '*juvenil*' in Spanish. In Arabic, as I explained above, 'juvenile' is '*alhadath*'. There is no similarity. If the only difficulty is guessing the meaning of the word itself, the student either has to use the context to guess the meaning, for example, 'playing pups', or use the dictionary to learn a new word, 'juvenile'. If the student's language threshold (Grabe and Stoller, 2013), which includes vocabulary, structure and topic knowledge, has been reached because she does not know 'seal', 'pup', 'to spot', or 'predators', then guessing alone will be insufficient to aid fluent reading of the text. S21 underlined the word and decided to use the dictionary when she finished the TAP (eventual strategy to the end of the reading session).

Words and lexical items which do not exist in the readers' L1, may limit the possibility of using Gough's bottom-up reading strategies such as employing grammatical knowledge. For example, S19 found difficulty with phrasal verbs such as 'point out', saying, '*I have a problem with phrasal verbs. I think they are different from the original verb*', which they can be, but here, 'to point out' contains the action of pointing. She decided to use the dictionary. Her unfamiliarity with phrasal verbs in the text caused some difficulties (as they do for students of English generally) which is unsurprising since the Arabic language does not contain phrasal verbs (Tengler, et al, 2009) which may obviously affect the students' understanding of these grammatical forms. Further, phrasal verbs, being polysemous, can have several meanings, and their meaning cannot always be guessed from their component parts. For example, the phrasal verb 'put down' might have different

meanings depending on what the speaker wants to convey. Notice the changes in meaning of the phrasal verb ‘put down’ in the following sentences:

- I put down the dog. (on the floor or kill)
- I put the dog down. (kill)
- I put my wife down. (insulted)
- I put down my gun. (lay it aside)

As can be seen, the same phrasal verb has a different meaning in each sentence and each has a different process and result. The invariant verb ‘put’ becomes variant in meaning with particles. Where the particle placed can also be also critical. Phrasal verbs with three components are even more complicated for the EFL students (polysemic). The student may know each word in ‘put down to’ but may have no idea what the collective phrase ‘I put my bad temper down to tiredness’ means. Phrasal verbs are a perennial source of confusion and frustration for EFL students, which requires, at the very least, a good dictionary. They are clearly important to learn and understand because they are so prevalent in the English language (Hart, 2009). In such cases, utilizing reading strategies such as Gough’s bottom-up or Goodman’s top-down models in linear, sequential process is ineffective. We are dealing with a peculiarity of the language for which non-English speakers, such as Arabic students may not be equipped to deal because they have no linguistic references to make sense of phrasal verbs. Therefore, the reader has to seek a supporting strategic behaviour, such as the dictionary or teacher, to solve this comprehension problem, assuming the dictionary is comprehensive enough to list the varieties of phrasal verbs connected to the invariant verb ‘put’ (see below for good dictionary use). So, while general models of reading, such top down and bottom up reading models, are useful for providing metaphorical interpretations of the many processes involved in reading comprehension, they are, understandably, limited. The eventual interactive reading strategies derived from Rumelhart’s (1977) model (see Chapter Two) in which the reader engages in multiple processes (bottom-up and top-down strategies), rather than in a chronological linear process, seems to better capture the complexities of REFL than relying on a discrete model which does not take into account supporting strategic behaviours such as dictionary or the combined multiple processes involved in reading.

### 7.3.4 Decoding words

As illustrated in Chapter Two, decoding is an important reading strategy in Gough's (1972) linear bottom-up model in which the reader starts from the smallest units such as the alphabetical system, and gradually interprets the content utilizing vocabulary, phonological and grammatical information to understand the reading text. Gough's (1972) model describes decoding as the heart of reading, such that learning to decode is equivalent to learning to read. Gough and Tunmer's (1986) later work indicates that the skilled decoder is the reader who can read isolated words quickly and accurately. However, it is obvious from the TAPs results that the students articulated the words and read the text almost correctly despite not knowing what the words meant. The more the reader comes across unfamiliar words (threshold level) the more they rely on complicated linear reading strategies such as decoding. For example, as seen earlier, the lack of knowledge of phrasal verbs in English leads the reader to use more bottom-up strategies to decode the word in the target language. If this linear strategy cannot work then the reader reaches the threshold level and cannot continue reading. Hedge (1991) called this the 'short-circuit' process, by which she means the level that makes the reader stop reading because of unfamiliar words. For example, target language deficiency might lead the reader to use more bottom-up strategies in FL because of unfamiliar words (see below for more examples).

As described so far, the main obstacle in utilizing reading strategic behaviours was to understand unknown words. All six students focused on how to comprehend the meaning of the text using language knowledge such as decoding and linguistic experience to analyse the word syllables and sentence structures. For example, S24 explained that, *'I try to read and understand using my word knowledge at the same time'*. In this case, decoding words demonstrates understanding of the alphabetic system such as the way in which letters, phonemes, and affixes work together to aid reading and comprehension of unfamiliar multisyllabic words. Decoding words is critical to becoming a successful reader (Gough, 1972) because it allows the reader to connect phonological and grammatical knowledge to what is written and so, ultimately, aid reading comprehension. Many of the students tried to analyse the new words to check if they contained affixes. The majority of the students in the focus group discussion stated that the decoding strategy was an important strategy for them, as exemplified below:



*I think the reading strategies are good. For example, I do not know what 'chaos' means. When I translated the word, it gave me 'disorder': so dis- as a prefix means 'not' and 'order' means 'tidy'. If I see this word as one whole word, I might not know its meaning. Now I have the skill of reading the word before using the dictionary. (S19)*

*I think the reading strategies will help us in reading English. For example, if I want to read the word 'feeling' it might be easier to read the word in segments suffix, infix and prefixes. (S22)*

As discussed in Chapter Two, decoding words can improve word recognition. The more words the reader recognises, the more automatic and fluent the reading becomes. Since the reader is not struggling to decode words s/he will be able to read for meaning because decoding becomes automatic and it is an important process in eventually utilizing interactive reading strategies to understand the unknown words. However, if the reader restricts herself to decoding words s/he might have comprehension difficulties.

In practice, while S19 was reading the second paragraph of 'Attitudes to Language' text, she found the word 'unfeelingly' line 10. The sentence from which the word 'unfeelingly' is to be found is:

As a result, it is easy to hurt, and to be hurt, when language use is *unfeelingly* attacked. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

She did not immediately use the dictionary as she did in the Reconnaissance Phase: *'I was not using these techniques. I immediately used the dictionary without first trying to understand the words from their context'*. The observable behaviour was that she segregated the word into syllables /un-feel-ing-ly/, and during her thinking aloud she said, *'it means 'without feeling' (S19)*, and wrote the meaning in Arabic. Here she appeared to be using her FL grammatical and lexical knowledge (bottom-up strategy) because she knew that the prefix 'un-' can mean 'without', while she already knew the meaning of 'feel'. In order to confirm her selection she read the entire sentence in her L1 then reasoned what each word and word part meant. She decoded the unknown word by using bottom-up reading strategies such as structural analysis (grammar) and associating sounds with their specific spelling to understand the unfamiliar word 'unfeeling'. She succeeded in understanding the meaning of the word by using an important aspect of eventual interactive reading strategies (bottom-up and L1 reading strategies then combined).

Another example of using the decoding strategy is from S23 who attempted to understand the word ‘regular’ in the ‘Attitudes to Language’ text, as in the following sentence:

Popular linguistic debate *regularly* deteriorates into interactive and polemic. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

Using bottom-up grammatical and phonological knowledge, she segregated the new word into syllables /reg-u-lar-ly/: *‘I am trying to see the prefix and suffix’*. The reader knew the noun ‘regular’, and the suffix ‘-ly’ gave the noun an adverbial function. Using these strategies helped her decode and understand this and other words in the text because she already knew the root meaning. It seems that the reader in this TAPs data had learned that bottom-up strategies such as letters, sounds and grammar can work together to help decode words, resulting in understanding of unfamiliar words. However, applying the same strategic behaviour to the word ‘aptitude’ as in line 8 did not work:

Linguistic factors influence how judge personality, intelligence, social status, educational standards, job *aptitude*, and many other areas of identity and social survival. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

S23 was unable to guess the meaning because she could not, as she said, understand the word. *‘I could not segregate it because it does not contain segments. If I divide it [the word], I will not be able to understand it’*. This data of the TAP shows the limitations in decoding words as a reading strategy because not all words contain various syllables that might help in decoding the word. The reader found the same difficulty in understanding other words such as ‘survival’ line 9, ‘frequently’ line 14, and ‘prescribed’ line 25. As was now common practice with the students, she underlined these words and continued reading. She utilized an eventual strategy. This TAP data seems to demonstrate that reading comprehension is not simply a matter of using a single type of language knowledge (bottom-up reading strategies), but it requires a unity of knowledge, such as language and background knowledge.

Lack of vocabulary knowledge was also an obstacle to S23 and so she tended to use the dictionary, saying: *‘there are difficult words, but when I translated them, I understood the text’* (S23). S23 agreed with the other students who had participated in the Intervention Phase that eventual interactive strategies, rather than reading in a linear process (bottom-up

or top-down reading strategies), could be an effective way of reading in a FL because they allowed the reader, with the dictionary, to use his/her language background knowledge.

*Firstly, you should read the sentence and if you find a new word, you should first try to decode it. If that does not succeed then use your background knowledge, and then finally you can use the dictionary to translate it [the word]. (S22)*

*I think we should use all the reading strategies together as the best way of reading. (S21)*

The students' behaviours and TAPs seem to show that they believe that using eventual interactive reading strategies (together bottom-up and top-down strategies) with the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour helps with REFL. Another example is from S24 who stated that, *'I will first check if it contains any prefixes'*. For instance, in the following sentence:

All the main languages have been studied prescriptively, *especially* in the 18th century approach to the writing of grammars and dictionaries. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

The reader tried to segregate the word 'especially' in line 19 into syllables /es-pec-i-al-ly/. She pronounced the word and read it in the sentence several times, thinking aloud: *'I cannot understand the meaning of this word. I segregated it into syllables to understand it'* (S24). The student tried using her phonological and grammatical knowledge to understand the word's meaning but could not comprehend it, *'I pronounce the word to see its affixations. Then I read it in the context; if I do not know it then I will use the dictionary'* (S24). A possible reason might be her lack of vocabulary knowledge of the root 'especial'. She drew a star (\*) against the word with the intention of later using the dictionary.

Decoding strategies also indicate that using one aspect of reading such as Gough's (1972) bottom-up linear reading strategies might not be enough to help students understand unfamiliar words so that the reader has to look for a supporting strategic behaviour, *'I read and decode the words but I still need the dictionary. There are words that are completely new for me'* (S24). I agree with Gough and Tunmer (1986) who wrote about 'reading disabilities' and viewed decoding as a necessary aspect of reading, 'for if print cannot be translated into language, then it cannot be understood' (p.7). S19 was also unable to guess words such as 'inherently' line 12 even after articulating it as /in-her-ent-ly/. The sentence from which the word 'inherently' is taken is:

In its most general sense, prescriptivism is the view that one variety of language has an *inherently* higher value than others, and that this ought to be imposed on the whole of the speech community. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

Using a pen, she segregated the word into syllables but was unable to work out its meaning. As she explained, *'I understand the word structure, but only for the words that I know'* (S19). Using her grammatical knowledge, she stated that the suffix '-ly' indicates that the word is an 'adverb', but she did not know the meaning of the noun 'inherent'. She also commented, *'I do not know whether the 'in-' could be separated and give a meaning or not. I could not understand this word'* (S19). The 'in-' is integral to the word 'inherent' and cannot be broken into parts to gain its meaning. In this case, the strategy obviously could not work because the difficulty in decoding words such as 'inherently' was not only related to using grammatical knowledge, but also to the frequency with which these are used in the written language. Usually FL readers can decode high frequency words such as function words (for example, yet, over, and) and words which foreign language students learn in the early stages of learning the language. However, words such as 'inherently' might be considered a 'low frequency' word which is not regularly used by EFL students. In other words, EFL students might face difficulty in understanding words that are usually only used in texts. This TAP data seems to match Goodman's (1967) theory who argued that the reader could not identify a word she has not heard unless the context sufficiently delimited the word's meaning because s/he was unable to get meaning from the words.

The only way around this difficulty is to encourage students to engage in incidental and general reading (reading for pleasure) (Shen, 2013), rather than on targeted reading of the kind that schools and universities provide, and of which this research study is a good example. This data also suggests that using a single method of teaching reading, such as the 'Communicative Language Teaching' approach, which is based on involving EFL students in real life activities (see Chapter Four) is unlikely to throw up low frequency words like 'inherently' or 'threefold' or 'thermodynamic'. Consequently, the student decided to underline 'inherently', and use the dictionary later to *'find the base-word in the dictionary'* (S19). Once more, poor lexical knowledge inhibited immediate comprehension of the text. It is also seems evident that eventual interactive reading strategies helped the reader use different strategic behaviours such as consulting a dictionary to overcome her lack of lexical knowledge.

Using a single strategy such as separating the word into syllables might also mislead the reader in understanding the actual meaning of the words. For example, S22 attempted to comprehend the word ‘threefold’ - line 21.

The aims of these early grammarians were *threefold*. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

The observable behaviour shows that the student divided the term into two syllables, ‘three- and -fold’ but he misunderstood its actual meaning because he interpreted the syllables ‘three-’ as a number and ‘-fold’ as ‘wrinkle’. After checking and re-reading the sentence, S22 found that it did not make sense, so he then underlined it to confirm its meaning by later consulting the dictionary (eventual strategy), *‘I try to divide it into segments. If I did not understand it, then I will use the dictionary’* (S22). Breaking words into its parts may mislead the reader, unless, like this student, he understands the context well enough to know that the derived meaning is in fact incorrect. My EFL students could not access parts of the Cambridge texts, not only because they did not know this or that word, or could or could not produce correct grammatical sentences, or derive meaning from the internal constitution of the text, but because reading comprehension also relies on experiences and social-cultural knowledge. By socio-cultural knowledge, I mean, for example, levels of literacy, types of literature students are exposed to, levels of incidental and targeted reading and expectations about reading.

### 7.3.5 Re-reading strategic behaviour

One of the common observable behaviours the students utilized while reading after the Intervention Phase was tracing words and re-reading the sentences. They seemed to use this strategic behaviour for several reasons such as thinking, checking or linking ideas. Re-reading behaviour is like watching a video. When the viewer misses something, s/he might ‘pause’ then ‘rewind’. Here, the reader stops and re-reads until it make sense, and when the sentences do not give up their meaning, the reader underlines the sentence and seeks a supporting strategy (Grant, 2001). Cornis-Pope and Woodlief (2002) reviewing the purpose of re-reading concluded that this process ‘allows us to retrace and analyze our first reading responses, relating them back to the text’s generic and cultural features’ (p.157). Re-reading is also an imaginative experience which engages reading ‘into’ the work for discovery and interactive recreation.

Re-reading can be understood as an aspect of eventual interactive strategy which helps the reader to think and use a variety of reading strategies when s/he faces any technical language difficulty. For example, S20 who in the Reconnaissance Phase gave up reading from the beginning without making any effort to understand the text, read to the end in the Intervention Phase. The student sought to confirm her guesses of the unknown words by re-reading the sentences or using the dictionary. She told me that she read each *'paragraph more than once to see what I could understand from it'* (S20). S19 also appeared to read sentences more than once in order to understand unknown words. When she thought she had guessed the meaning, she read the sentence once again to check if she was correct. However, she found difficulties with words that have several meanings. For example, in order to understand the word 'policies', line 4 in 'Attitudes to language' text:

*Arguments can start as easily over minor points of usage as over major policies of linguistic education. (Text 3 Appendix 7)*

She thought policies *'means plans and policy. In my head, this word means 'insurance'. When I saw it here, I said my meaning is not appropriate here, and I decided to return to using the dictionary'*. In reading this sentence, S19 paused her reading when she found the unknown word and sat silently. She re-read the sentence aloud and guessed its meaning as 'insurance'. On re-reading once more and using structural clues, she determined that the selected word did not fit. She used her vocabulary knowledge (bottom-up strategy) to see if the word fitted with the overall meaning of the sentence. In this TAPs data, as Cornis-Pope and Woodlief (2002) suggested, she attempted to retrace and analyze her first reading reactions. When this strategy did not work, she looked for a supporting strategic behaviour (consulting a dictionary).

S21 also read the sentences more than once to comprehend the new vocabulary, she said, *'if I find new word I continue reading the whole sentence then return to guess the word meaning. I tried to read it several times to understand its meaning'*. It seems that the re-reading strategic behaviour I taught them in the Intervention Phase could help the reader analyse and interpret the context, and identify the linguistic patterns using bottom-up strategies such as an application of grammar knowledge to assist in solving comprehension problems. Re-reading strategic behaviour may also engage the reader in top-down reading strategies such as understanding the author's messages, which might not be noticed from

the first reading of the sentence. Any text, as Barker and Moorcroft (2003) suggest, is a clustering of linked ideas which is structured to meet the interest of the reader. As S21 next explained, she understood the text by re-reading sentences and linking the content of the paragraphs together; *'there are some questions in the text where I think the answer is at the end of the second paragraph'*. Usually the main obstacle for most students in linking information in the text was unfamiliar words. They utilized different reading strategic behaviours such as decoding or consulting the dictionary.

### **7.3.6 Underlining strategic behaviours**

One of the common observable behaviours the students used while reading was highlighting key information by underlining words. Karbalaee (2011) investigated the effectiveness of teaching underlining as a reading strategy to EFL and ESL students from Iran and India. Karbalaee found that underling strategies helped in selecting a text's most important ideas as long as they could discern the main ideas rather than focusing on difficult parts of the text. Underlining also helped students monitor their understanding of the text while preparing the text for later review. Underlining words or text, further, helped to motivate students to focus on identifying ideas of high structural importance. In my study, the students frequently underlined unfamiliar words to guess or translate their meaning. For example, S20 said, while reading, *'I underlined the words that I do not understand'*. In this case, the reader might underline words for several reasons: in order to return to it later to translate or because s/he thinks it is not an important word. For instance, S24 began reading using top-down reading strategies such as reading the topic and using it to guess what was coming up in the text. She also used bottom-up reading strategies, such as her phonological and grammatical knowledge, to comprehend the text. When, despite using these strategies, she was unable to understand the text by using these two reading strategic behaviours she used the dictionary for further clarity and understanding, explaining, *'if I find words that, I do not know I underline them, then I use the dictionary. I separate the words that I do not know into syllables, as I did here, more than once'* (S24). S24 also used her language knowledge to understand unfamiliar words. As S20 described it, *'first, I read the context of the sentence. If I understand the other words, I might understand what the required word is'*. While observing the student, she read each sentence more than once, tracing each word in order to understand unfamiliar words from the context. For instance, she underlined the word 'imposed' in line 12, then segregated it into parts. The sentence from which word 'imposed' is taken appears below.



In its most general sense, prescriptivism is the view that one variety of language has an inherently higher value than others, and that this ought to be *imposed* on the whole of the speech community. (Text 3 Appendix 7)

However, she was unable to understand the word because the sentence contained too many unfamiliar words. Again, as discussed above and in the Reconnaissance Phase, the unknown words were an obstacle to using reading strategies effectively. As she noted, *'sometimes I might not be able to understand the whole context. Sometimes I found words that when I saw them for the first time I realised I might not be able to use these strategies'* (S20). The student underlined other words and continued reading. Later, she used the dictionary to translate the unfamiliar words, saying: *'I think first I have to read it deeply. Then, I have to use the reading strategies you taught us. If I cannot use the strategies, I might understand it from the context and will use the dictionary'* (S20). As discussed in the previous section, it appears that students learned how to utilise a combination of their bottom-up and top-down reading strategic behaviours to understand the text. In this case, the student used the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour to help her understand the text more fully. S19 also underlined words she could not understand. When she finished reading, she used the dictionary and explained, *'I use my word knowledge with the words that I know. I underline the words I do not know to look them up in the dictionary later'*. In this case, the successful reader is the reader who focuses on underlining words from whose meaning s/he will benefit if another supporting strategy (eventual strategy) is employed to understand the overall content.

### **7.3.7 Dictionary use while reading**

In terms of using the dictionary to read for meaning, data from this study reflects similar results to Shen's (2013) research which investigated the effects of vocabulary knowledge on Chinese University EFL students' reading performance. Shen argued that vocabulary knowledge is the most significant predictor of reading difficulty, data which is in conformity with the results of this study. One unfamiliar word in a sentence may render meaningless the whole sentence, which may, in turn, slow down understanding of the meaning of a subsequent sentence in the same passage. To observe how the Chinese EFL students solve the unfamiliar word difficulty while reading, Shen provided the students with a 'Translation Test' attached to the reading comprehension which was intended to test the specific vocabulary knowledge in a given text. Shen found that, because of the



students' limited English vocabulary, the bilingual electronic dictionary the students used had a significant effect on the reading performance of her participants because it enables quick searching, which, she suggested, may enhance rather than disturb reading. Shen (2013, p.83) also found that high proficiency students referred to the dictionary for verification to confirm that their interpretation of the selected words fitted the overall meaning of the sentence, while low proficiency EFL students sought the meaning of words because vocabulary knowledge was positively and highly correlated with the reading comprehension.

As discussed throughout the two phases of my research (Reconnaissance and Intervention phases), students used the dictionary (electronic bilingual dictionary) at the end of the reading session to confirm their guesses and translate the words they underlined. For example, S22, who used an electronic bilingual dictionary, said *'if I find a new word, I underline it ... then I will use the dictionary'*. While observing S22, I noticed that he did not immediately accept the definitions but read the whole sentence (tracing words) to see if his translation fitted the context: *'I read the sentence with the translated word. Then, I found that the context of the sentence was not related to the word'* (S22). The student was not only using the dictionary to translate the unknown word, but also relating it to the overall meaning of the sentence. This behaviour suggests that using the dictionary can increase the student's reading proficiency level by focusing on understanding the word meaning and how it fits with the sentence meaning. This data is in line with Shen's (2013) results which found that high proficiency students look to verify and confirm their selection by relating the meaning selected from the dictionary to the overall meaning of the text.

However, utilizing the dictionary has its limitations as S22 noted: the lexicon sometimes *'gave me the meaning of words that were not appropriate for the sentence'*. This data highlights the limitation of some electronic bilingual dictionaries which may not provide the reader with a third or even fourth meaning of words, leaving the reader to select only one or two basic meanings which might not fit with the overall meaning of the text. I, for example, looked up 'incidental' to understand what Shen (2013) meant by 'incidental reading' and how it differed from 'targeted reading'. My electronic dictionary gave me a total of seven meanings, none of which helped me to decipher the meaning of 'incidental reading', partly because I was so focused on decoding the word, rather than extracting meaning from the text. However, even when I was encouraged to re-read the sentence in

which the word was embedded, I was still uncertain what Shen meant. This was because the concept of ‘incidental reading’ was unfamiliar to me; it is not how I would describe reading for pleasure.

Further, checking the fitness of the word to context can be considered as a reading strategy, because for every word we learn, we learn how it fits into the overall text in which the word occurs. This TAPs data fits with what the students stated in the focus group discussions and what I experienced with ‘incidental reading’.

*Sometimes I translate every word but I did not understand the context. The word might be different from the context. (S20)*

*The meaning might not be the same as in the text. You should understand the entire sentence then understand the word. Also you might find more than one meaning in the dictionary. (S23)*

*In the past ... I used the dictionary to understand the word without referring to the context. Now I have learned to read first, then see the word in context. If I did not understand it, then, I will use the dictionary. (S24)*

Despite the limited resources, the students demonstrated sophisticated reading skills. The readers learned to check the suitability of words in text by re-reading the sentence (a strategy discussed earlier) using the meaning provided by the dictionary to check whether it fits the overall meaning of the sentence or paragraph, an eventual reading strategy, to understand the overall meaning of the text.

S20 also found the dictionary a helpful supporting strategic behaviour, saying, ‘*I underlined the words that I do not understand and when I used the dictionary later I understood them*’ (S20). However, in places she referred to the dictionary without first using her reading strategies, ‘*something inside me made me use the dictionary immediately*’ (S20). This behaviour might change as the student becomes familiar with eventual interactive reading strategies.

Despite the fact that using the dictionary was a helpful strategic behaviour because it ‘*will expand my vocabulary knowledge. This language is not our language; most of the words we do not know*’ (S19, quotation from the focus group), the current methods of teaching REFL in Libya (see Chapter Six) do not allow the reader to use supporting strategic

behaviours such as dictionaries even though it helps the reader to comprehend the text. As we learnt from S24, *'we are not allowed to use the dictionary. I think that is a big mistake. I think we must use it [the dictionary] in reading'*. This data is in contrast with the views of T2 who suggested that students should avoid using the dictionary in reading FL because she wanted her students to feel as if they are *'in an original authentic setting in England, US or Canada, you know. Nobody can be there giving you word-to-word Arabic translation'* (quotation from the Reconnaissance Phase). A further benefit of the dictionary is that students are more likely to acquire and retain new vocabulary. Students can benefit from the examples and explanations they provide, so allowing them to visualise the words which they are more likely remember (Schmitt, 2013). Resorting to the dictionary is not a panacea, however, and it is a strategy that requires practice if it is to be used as an effective support which leads to reading for meaning. This data also shows the importance of using different stages of reading strategies (top-down, bottom-up then dictionary or vice versa) as suggested by Rumelhart's interactive model rather than using linear, sequential fashion either bottom-up or top-down reading strategies.

### **7.3.8 First Language use**

Foreign language acquisition not only requires adequate linguistic knowledge but also cognitive foundations from the L1. This data is supported by Nation (2003) who reviewed the role of L1 in FL learning, concluding that in all aspects of language instruction, the L1 plays an important role because of low proficiency in the FL. Translations to 'L1 are usually clear, short and familiar, qualities which are very important in effective definitions' (Nation, 2003, p.4). The L1 should be seen as a useful tool to acquire the target language. In other words, success in reading in a FL relies on previously obtained L1 literacy competence. (See below for how it relates to practices and teachers' attitudes in Libya).

Utilizing the L1 or thinking aloud in L1 was a frequently observed behaviour that all the students used while reading. For instance, during the TAPs, S19 read in the target language then returned to read and think in her L1. Using the 'first language' might be considered as a reading strategic behaviour. She accessed her L1, using it as a strategy to help her comprehend the text. It seems likely that the reader used this strategy to overcome the limitation of reading comprehension such as word recognition bearing in mind the linguistic variations between the two languages, some of which was solved by using the

dictionary at the end of the reading session. The need for L1 in learning to read in FL also fits students with the views of S20 and S23 who stated in the focus group discussions that:

*English is not our language, so we have to use Arabic. Maybe when we understand in our L1 we can read in the L2. (S20)*

*We cannot learn without our L1. It is important, this is our mother tongue, and we should use it as a reference. (S23)*

It appears that FL readers switch to their L1 when they come across an unfamiliar word to guess its meaning. In this case, it might be easier for the reader to restate or paraphrase the sentence into their L1 to transfer its meaning to the FL. We can interpret the use of L1 reading as an aspect of the eventual interactive reading model, which interacts with linguistic and (top-down) background knowledge to understand the text in the target language.

In contrast to the teachers' former views (reported in the Reconnaissance Phase), T1, for example, stated '*using only their [the students] L1 is not something acceptable now*'. The use of L1 was required in explaining reading strategies to help improve the students' language performance and increase their confidence and motivation. This data seems to match with Nation's (2003) views who stated that the L1 should be seen as an indispensable tool in acquiring the target language, but should not be over-used (see Section 7.1). However, S22 in the focus group discussion said that '*I am against using the Arabic language in the class*' because he regarded himself as an advanced speaker of English, and stated that the teacher should not use the L1 in the classroom. L1 would not help students to improve their communication skills. In this case, the student might be affected by the traditional beliefs (no use of the L1) but in practice, the student gains a benefit from using the bilingual dictionary in understanding the text.

### **7.3.9 Text variables**

As seen so far, connecting the reader's background knowledge such as cultural knowledge and background experience to the text is an important factor in reading for meaning. Therefore, selecting the appropriate text that considers the reader's level of language and background information plays a significant role in reading comprehension. Arias (2007) analysed criteria of selecting texts for the development of reading comprehension in FL because one of the most complex tasks for EFL teachers was selecting appropriate reading

texts. Arias found that the text selection process should consider the students' level, interest, needs, and background knowledge. The factors also related to the text content and relevance in order to lead the students to understand that 'the reading process will contribute to their knowledge, and that they can actually learn something new from the texts' (p.143).

In my study, appropriate text selection is important in helping readers avoid complex reading strategies and in keeping them motivated. Selecting texts such as 'Attitudes to Language' and 'Play Is a Serious Business' for the EFL students appeared to motivate them to read and think about understanding the content rather than simply focusing on reading aloud and correcting pronunciation. As S21 commented, *'reading aloud confused me. I read aloud only in the class for the teacher'*. She added that, the text *'appeals to me! It was speaking about motivating to learn'*, a topic in which she was interested. The text genre meant that she did not need to use too many reading strategies such as the dictionary because she said that *'many words are familiar to me and I think I know them'* (S21). Here, the topic of the text appeared to motivate the student to read and to help her comprehend the context because she could connect her background knowledge of the text. The criteria for selecting texts for reading in a FL should include conveying meaning rather than only conveying language strategies. This data is in line with (Arias, 2007) who stated that inappropriate text selection might limit students' success in utilizing reading strategies because the text context did not suit the student's interest, so influencing their motivation to read. T1 also stated in the Reconnaissance Phase that texts from another culture might be difficult for Libyan EFL students because *'you will find some information about things in the western world that you know students see they could not understand'* (quotation from the reconnaissance phase). The TAP data show that S21 did not use the dictionary too much because she was able to understand the text by using eventual interactive strategies (bottom-up and top-down). This data of the TAP indicate that the principles suggested by Farrell (2009) discussed in Section 7.1 'use reading materials that are interesting' were helpful, especially in selecting interesting materials that suit the students' language level and background knowledge so increasing their ability to comprehend the text.

#### **7.3.10 Summarising**

As discussed in Section 7.1, writing a summary while reading might help the reader to diagnose places where the writer shifts to new points and helps to identify the text's

structure and understand the main idea (Bauman, 2013). In the introduced sessions, I used this strategy because I learnt in the LCGU that this strategy might be useful because it helped the student to unite his/her ideas of the text and, so, I thought it would be useful to use this strategy with Libyan EFL students. However, I discovered, after introducing this strategy, that summarising the main ideas of the text was one of the hardest strategies that students might apply in reading FL because of the students' low language. Summarising texts requires a good understanding of the language to be able to explain the key points in their own words.

Although readers used different reading strategies to understand the text, they had difficulties in connecting the themes to each other because they did not have enough language strategies and vocabulary knowledge to summarise the texts in FL. As S19 said, *'my problem is to gather the general idea to make a summary'*. S20 was also unable to express the general idea of the text because she lacked summarising and synthesizing strategies. As described by Riley and Lee (1996), summarising and connecting ideas in the text are important strategies in testing overall meaning of the reading text, but it demands proficiency.

S20 explained that because there were few opportunities to read for comprehension, they were unable to summarise the text, *'we do not learn these strategies in our reading classes'* (S20). Because students learnt few reading strategies, the students' reading strategies in the target language such as summarising skills were affected. This data concurs with the students' statements in the focus group discussion:

*For me it will not be easy to give you a summary of the text, even though I understand it! I do not know. Maybe it is a new thing!* (S22)

*Maybe we could do it for each paragraph but not the whole text.* (S23)

*I could not understand the general idea of the text. Maybe because I do not have enough vocabulary.* (S24)

Summarising any text in L1 is, of course, a complicated task for most students, and more so in the target language where the student has to be consciously engaged in translating words, grammar and figurative or technical language. Using strategies such as lexical knowledge alone cannot give meaning or enable the students to summarise. Students need,

in addition, to understand grammatical forms, understand concepts and figures of speech, and to employ general and/or contextual knowledge.

## **Discussion**

The first two sessions indicated that the teacher could play an important role in developing students' knowledge and confidence to improve their REFL strategies. This was revealed in the significant change in the readers' reading behaviours between the first and second stages. For example, as described in Section 7.1, one of the Intervention Phase main aims was to provide students with opportunities to practise their REFL strategies. After attending the sessions, students began to think about the title, and to use their background knowledge such as world knowledge to comprehend the text. The students employed linguistic knowledge such as decoding, read silently and used the dictionary to confirm their text comprehension. Above all, the students abandoned the behaviour of reading for pronunciation in favour of comprehension.

These data also illustrated how teachers' views on student performance can influence performance, motivation and progress. For example, and as discussed in the previous chapter, the standard belief about EFL learning was to teach students reading through speaking activities – repetition to achieve perfect pronunciation as if the students were learning to read the Holy-Quran. The main aim of the second intervention was to help readers use eventual interactive reading strategies to improve comprehension by using background knowledge and language knowledge to understand the passages. This data highlights the importance of principle 3 'having a specific objective for each lesson' suggested by Farrell (2009) (see Section 7.1) because it provides the teacher with a clear picture of what, how and why s/he is undertaking the task. In other words, teachers' views influence what they say and do in classroom, which, in turn, shapes their way of teaching. The intervention also provided the student with achievable challenges as suggested by Vygotsky's ZPD (see next section) in order to keep the student interested.

As noted earlier, students' reading behaviours changed quite rapidly and significantly. For example, the students who participated in the Intervention Phase tended to read silently, an observable behaviour which was uncommon in the Reconnaissance Phase. A possible reason in reading silently is that the students might be using strategies that make them think about solving a comprehension problem. The meaning of the text is more important

than pronunciation. Silent reading seems to help in improving the ease and fluency of reading because the focus is not on pronouncing each word correctly. This data is in line with Lin and Choo's (2012) investigation of EFL Malaysian undergraduate students' perceptions of sustained silent reading practices in tertiary classrooms. Lin and Choo found that silent reading programmes helped students develop their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills because this approach of reading motivated the reader to enjoy learning the language and use cognitive reading strategies.

However, and as seen, students' vocabulary knowledge and confusion over grammatical functions such as phrasal and prepositional verbs were among the main obstacles to understanding the texts. The reasons for the difficulties are due to the language variations between L1 and FL since the Arabic language does not contain phrasal verbs. Relying on single reading strategies, such as bottom-up lexical knowledge strategies would clearly not be enough to comprehend the context. Though using the dictionary to translate unfamiliar words at the end of the reading session was a useful eventual supporting strategic behaviour, even this method may not overcome the complexities of translating phrasal verbs, or accurately translating words that can subtly change in meaning depending on the context. As seen earlier, phrasal verbs are polysemous and particle placement can alter the meaning of the sentence. To 'put down' as I noted above can mean to kill (put the dog down) or to place something elsewhere (put the dog down from her lap). 'Unfeeling' can mean without sensation or describe a person who is insensitive or callous. The textual context has to supply the meaning where linguistic competency is lacking. In other words, top-down and bottom-up reading strategies are required for successful language acquisition and understanding. The teacher in future interventions may have to employ supporting strategic behaviours, such as simple rote learning, to teach phrasal verbs as bottom-up, top-down or interactive strategies alone are unlikely to help the student decode this complex function.

Most of the students had difficulties connecting various pieces of information. However, given that the students had not been encouraged to use the kinds of reading strategies I used here, being taught to pronounce rather than to read, and being accustomed to passive learning, it is not surprising the students encountered such difficulties. Further, these kinds of strategies require more time than one intervention I could offer here. Summarising a text can be a complex affair for any student, let alone students of FL. Teachers can move forward in this area, as Farrell (2009) notes, by supporting readers to make connections by



selecting topics to which readers will easily connect such as: feelings, family and school experience. These kinds of topics make sense when we connect them to something we already know and understand. This happened with S21 who read the text 'Playing is a Serious Business' and connected it to her childhood experience. The reader succeeded in comprehending the text without using the dictionary. This data also fits with McLaughlin's (2012) argument that 'students who read materials on topics of interest tend to read more, can read more difficult materials, and are more motivated to read' (p. 81). From this, it seems clear that the teacher should select the appropriate text for the students. This also indicates that Farrell's principle 1 (see Section 7.1) which suggests the text selection should be interesting and appropriate for the students' experience and level of English is useful in helping the readers read in EFL.

The pre-reading stage is another important aspect in which the reader was able to learn how to activate background experience and interest to read for meaning. This stage helps the student to begin to question the text and build directions about what they know. The main obstacle might be the limited vocabulary knowledge because reading is not only a matter of activating background knowledge.

### **Improvement required for the next sessions**

After discussing the first two sessions, the students stated that the eventual interactive strategies of reading were effective methods of REFL, helping them to be more independent readers who could use their own reading strategies. As described in Chapter Six, the current methods used to teach reading in Libyan context were based on teaching reading to pass exams and correcting pronunciation. This might not be useful to train students to read for meaning.

*We are only trained to pass the exams. Therefore, I was not learning to use the English language. (S19)*

*'Training will help us very much. Because we are trained differently and these are new methods of reading. (S24)*

*'Yes, maybe in time it will. It is a new method. (S22)*

*'Now, in the class you saw who participated and who did not. In the exam, we memorise and get good marks, but in reality, we know nothing. (S23)*

These focus group comments support the data discussed in the Reconnaissance Phase, which showed that students' abilities to read and comprehend the text were affected by being taught to the exam: they read to pass the exam (see Chapter Six), not to understand the text. Students' beliefs about learning the language can play an important role in the success of language learning. Future sessions should continue to focus on helping students shift away from reading aloud and reading to pass the exam, to reading for comprehension using eventual interactive reading strategies. This data shows the importance of motivating students to love reading (affective knowledge) includes 'feelings, positive attitude, and desire to read' (Fitzgerald, 1999).

In terms of teaching REFL strategies, it appeared that the students' views on the teacher's role in teaching REFL changed after attending the intervention lessons. Before the sessions, they stated that the teacher should listen and correct their pronunciation mistakes during reading because this was the only way they could learn to read. However, after attending the intervention S20 came to view the teacher as a guide and motivator, saying, *'I think the role of the teacher is as a guide, which is very important. Because it is not our language, the teacher should be there to help us and clarify things'*. This data matches with students' claim in the focus group interview (see below) and indicates that teachers' expertise can help the student become a proficient reader in the target language provided s/he has a range of strategies and skills that will enable the students to be more proficient.

*Most of the effort is from the student, but the teacher should give the instructions and directions. He should explain the skills and how to use them. (S19)*

*The teacher should have a role. The teacher is the leader for the student. The teacher should give us the skills and practise them with us until we become good readers. (S22)*

*As a teacher, you give us a result and we begin to understand REFL strategies. (S23)*

Following Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and scaffolding theory, my role as a teacher in the intervention was to show the students how to use reading strategies and provide them with explanations where needed. As discussed in Section 4.1.2, Vygotsky states that individuals require assistance with 'scaffolding' until such time that the students can practise the task independently. In the previous chapter, I discussed how students were viewed as passive recipients who gain knowledge from the teacher while reading, translating, and explaining. As this is a completely new approach, it will take time for the students to become familiar

with, and confident about using these methods. It is perhaps inevitable that students will want a high degree of involvement from the teacher in the early stages.

The observed behaviours while observing the TAPs after the Intervention Phase show that the students read the whole text to the end, using eventual interactive reading strategies such as reading the topic, using it to predict the context, employing language knowledge, and using the dictionary to understand the text: *'now I know that there are techniques I should use first. The dictionary will be the last thing I use'* (S22). This data shows the importance of learning strategies and contradicts the teachers' views (Reconnaissance Phase) who stated that it was not easy to change the students' reading behaviours. This data also fits with what the students' stated in the focus group discussions where they agreed that the new method increased their capacity to read for meaning:

*When I attended the lesson today and compared it to the methods I learned, I found the way of teaching reading you used today is better.* (S21)

*In the past, when I found new vocabulary in the text, I immediately went to the dictionary to translate without even reading [the rest of the text]. I used the dictionary to understand the word without referring to the context. Now I have learned to read first, then see the word in context. If I do not understand it [the word], then, I will use the dictionary.* (S24)

The students are providing reasons for thinking the new method might be better because the method focuses on eventual interactive reading strategies. Learning to read using the introduced eventual interactive reading strategies seems to encourage students to use the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour, a different behaviour from that used by the students in the Reconnaissance Phase. The result of the TAPs also seems to show that it might be possible to change students' REFL behaviours because they compare their previous methods with the new methods to work out which is more effective.

Based on what I learned from the first two lessons, the following might be useful strategies for the teacher-collaborator to employ.

- The teacher should consider the students' language level in selecting the appropriate language activities. For example, summarising the main ideas of the text is one of the hardest strategies that students might apply in reading FL because it requires a good understanding of the text and good vocabulary knowledge to be

able to explain the key points in their own words. This does not mean that the teacher should avoid the summarising strategy, but s/he should work gradually on improving students' skills until the students become familiar with how to summarise the key points of the text using his/her own words. For those reasons, I suggest that the teacher-collaborator should gradually provide students' with activities that would show them how to take notes while reading, and to read the topic sentences of each paragraph because these usually summarise the idea of the entire paragraph. For instance, by following two general steps suggested by Seidenberg (1991, p.338), students might ask themselves:

1. What was each paragraph about? What did the writer say? Try to decide what the general topic of the paragraph is and then decide on the specific main idea.
2. Then look back. Re-read the paragraph to make sure you have the correct specific main idea. Also to make sure that you understand which the important ideas or points of the paragraph are.

Following these strategies might help the reader to begin thinking deeply about the general topic and specific information of each paragraph. This also might help the teacher to think about an appropriate way of selecting activities that might help students summarise their ideas.

- The teacher should motivate students to read by giving them the opportunities to discuss their predictions about the reading text.
- The teacher should show the students how to practise reading strategies, and give students ample opportunity to practise these strategies.
- Allow students to use the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour.
- Allow students to use the L1 if required but it should not be over-used (see Section 7.1) because in contrast to the teachers' views stated in the Reconnaissance Phase, the use of L1 was required in explaining reading strategies to help improve the students' language performance and increase their confidence and motivation.
- Introduce strategies of identifying paragraph topic sentences and themes.

The following section will discuss the teacher-collaborator lessons.

## **7.4 Section Four: Teacher-collaborator sessions**

After evaluating the students' performances, I discussed the main data of the first two sessions with the teacher-collaborator, such as using eventual interactive reading strategies, using the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour, and how we might teach the students these strategies in the second part of the intervention. I suggested that the teacher-collaborator, in this case T4, use the same methods, but using activities he viewed as suitable, to teach the students two sessions. On this occasion, I would videotape and observe the classes' activities.

This section contains two parts. Part One includes two lessons presented by the teacher, followed by discussion. Part Two discusses the teacher's reflection on the method at the end of the term to assess the changes, if any, in the teacher's/students' performance in REFL.

### **7.4.1 Teacher-collaborator: Lesson One (18-02-2014)**

The teacher-collaborator's first lesson took place on Tuesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2014. Sixteen students attended the session, 13 girls and 3 boys. The lesson lasted 62 minutes, and my role in this class was as an observer who sat at the back of the class and took notes about the lesson activities, using the same observation tool that I used in the Reconnaissance Phase (see Appendix 5).

The text used in the first lesson was 'Advantages of public transport' (Appendix 3). The main phases of the reading session were built around three stages. *First*, the pre-reading stage, where the teacher:

1. Introduced the topic 'advantages of public transport' and asked the students some questions related to the title to activate the students' schemata. The teacher attempted to ask each student a question to encourage all of them participate in the discussion. He asked, for example, how many cars the students had at home and whether they had experienced travelling on public transport. What are the advantages of having a private car?
2. The teacher provided examples from students' everyday life.

3. Gave the students two sentences from the first paragraph to show them how to use their grammatical knowledge to guess the unknown words. The teacher asked the students about their grammatical expectations of the sort of information that should be in the blanks. The two sentences from the first paragraph:

A new study conducted for the World Bank by Murdoch University's Institute for Science and Technology Policy (ISTP) has demonstrated... The study compared... (Text 1, Appendix 3)

4. Then, he asked the students to read the paragraph and check their guesses.
5. He discussed the students' guesses.

*Second*, during the reading stage, the teacher:

1. Provided the students with the reading text 'Advantages of public transport'.
2. Asked the students to read quickly through the paragraphs to scan for unfamiliar words.
3. Wrote the unknown words on the board, and showed the students how to analyse the vocabulary using their syntactic and phonological knowledge to guess their meaning. For example, one of the students suggested the word 'demonstrated'. The teacher copied the word on the board then showed them how to guess the word from its context.
4. Provided the students with the first and second activities that would help the students employ their bottom-up reading strategies, such as, breaking down the word 'accommodation' which consists the main word 'accommodate' and the suffix '-ion' which is noun-forming suffix which denotes 'action or condition'.
5. Discussed with the students' the structure of the words such as 'unusual', 'preference' and 'economic'.
6. Asked the students to use the dictionary to confirm their guesses.
7. Showed the students how to analyse unfamiliar words from their context. For example, guessing the meaning of words such as 'broader' by selecting the right answer from the options:

Newman says this is a new, **broader** way of considering public transport issues.  
A. better B. wider

8. Then, the teacher asked the students to check their guesses using the dictionary.

*Third*, the post-reading stage where the teacher:

1. Showed the students how they could summarise the ideas by asking the students to read the text again and summarise the main idea of each paragraph in one sentence, then connect the sentences to understand the overall meaning.
2. Asked the students to verbally provide him with a summary of the passage to check their understanding.
3. Asked the students to work in pairs and discuss what they understood. For example, the teacher provided the students with statements and asked them to check whether these statements were true, false or not given based on rereading the text in pairs.
4. Asked the students to use the dictionary if they wished.

Finally, the teacher provided the students with feedback on their performances.

In terms of classroom interaction, the teacher interacted with the students through a question and answer session on the title to activate the students' schemata for reading (see Chapter Three). These types of procedures might help the student feel confident about his/her ideas and engage in classroom interaction. In addition, the teacher allowed the students to interact with each other in parts of the lesson to discuss their comprehension of the text. Students might not realize how much they know about the topic and so working in pairs would enable them to improve their knowledge. The teacher worked as a facilitator, guiding the class activities to motivate the students to read actively in the target language.

The teacher was unable to use the students' L1 in the class because it was not his language (he was from Philippines). However, he allowed the students to use their dictionaries to confirm the accuracy of their guesses of unfamiliar words.

#### **7.4.2 Teacher-collaborator: Lesson Two (24-02-2014)**

The second lesson was conducted by the teacher-collaborator on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2014. The number of students who attended the lesson was 12, 10 girls and 2 boys. The lesson aimed mainly to teach the students how to read and use their REFL strategies. This lesson

was similar to the first session presented by the teacher-collaborator, but contained different activities and texts. The lesson lasted 66 minutes and consisted of three stages: pre-reading, during reading and post-reading.

In the pre-reading stage, the teacher:

1. Introduced the topic 'Bakelite: the birth of modern plastic' (Appendix 4) which he discussed with the students, to activate their schemata.
2. To activate the students' schemata the teacher used questions such as which popular inventors did the students know; whether they knew the man behind the invention of modern plastic; and what the students thought were the main advantages/disadvantages of modern plastics in today's world.
- 3 Gave the students a quick task that helped them guess the sense of word/sentence structure by using their grammatical knowledge. Below are the sentences used:

In 1907, Leo Hendrick Baekeland, a Belgian scientist working in New York, discovered and patented a..... His invention, which he named 'Bakelite', was of enormous.....  
(Text 2, Appendix 4)

- 4 Discussed the students' guesses.
- 5 Provided students with the text to read the first paragraph and check their guesses.
- 6 Showed the students how close were their predictions to the actual text and encouraged them to continue using the same strategy.

In the reading task, the teacher:

1. Asked the students to read the entire text and underline unfamiliar words.
2. Wrote the unfamiliar words on the board to provide the students with bottom-up strategies to comprehend them. For example, the students suggested 'engineering'. The teacher show the students that it contain 'engineer' and '-ing'. Then gave them definitions about the word in the FL.
3. Gave the students activities 1 and 2, these activities include decoding words and guessing their meaning from the overall meaning of the sentence. Then discussed their answers. These activities include activities such as analysing words (decoding) and guessing their meaning from the overall sentence.



4. Asked the students to read the text again, and summarise it using the dictionary.

Then, in the third stage, the teacher:

1. In pairs, asked the students to practise activity number 3. The activity included discussing the paragraph and finding which paragraph fits the idea of each statement.
2. While the students were practising this activity, the teacher was taking notes to provide them with feedback on their performance.

The students in this lesson were able to read the text and analyse its context by themselves. They were able to use eventual interactive reading strategies that seemed to help them understand the text. They also learned when to use the dictionary to understand unfamiliar words and learned how to use sentence clues to understand the overall meaning of the text, using their background knowledge, and to summarise the main ideas. Finally, the students received feedback based on their performance in the classroom, focusing on some issues such using decoding skills on which they had to improve.

In terms of classroom management, there were two types of classroom interaction that I saw in this session. Firstly, teacher-student interaction where the teacher was activating the student's background knowledge about the topic by asking questions and teaching them how to analyse unknown words using their language knowledge. Secondly, there was student-student interaction, where the students were able to discuss in pairs their comprehension of the text and share ideas. The teacher controlled most of the class activities in order to organise the time, and gave each student a place to represent his/her thoughts. The following section presents the teacher's perceptions after presenting the new method.

#### **7.4.3 Teacher-collaborator feedback**

After completing the sessions, I discussed some issues which I noticed in the classroom with the teacher. For instance, according to the attendance list, 30 students were supposed to attend the session the actual number who attended was 12. The teacher explained that absences were a common problem because the students *'just come to the class if there is an examination. So, this is common among students'*. The teacher added that the students were

not attending the lessons because most of them were not thinking about learning, but of getting a certificate in order to have a good *'job when they finish the course'*. To resolve this issue, the teacher suggested that, *'teachers should choose a topic that is interesting to the students'*, and *'keep on motivating my students'* to attend class by interacting with them and explaining the main aims of EFL. The teacher's explanations fitted with the results discussed at the Reconnaissance Phase and the focus group data, which indicated that students were learning to pass the exam. However, if they knew that the methods of learning to read aloud had changed to reading for comprehension the students might be more willing to attend the classes.

The teacher believed that even if student numbers were higher than the students who participated, the students would enjoy the new sessions. This is because, as he explained, the teacher *'was able to activate their schema and the background knowledge of the world'* and by making reading *'easier for them by bringing the words into segments'*. Consequently, *'the interests of the students begin to come part of the lecture'*. This data indicates that eventual interactive reading strategies can provide the teacher-collaborator with a positive indication that it will be interesting, and motivate the EFL readers to comprehend the text in the target language. Wigfield (2004) stated that reading strategically is a constituent of engaged reading, which is influenced by the kinds of classroom environments created by the teacher to enhance reading comprehension.

In terms of comparing the introduced method with the current methods of teaching REFL in Libya, the teacher stated that the traditional methods depended too much on the dictionary: if *'you [the student] do not know the meaning of the word, you can immediately look at its meaning in the dictionary'*. This technique of REFL might not need a teacher to teach them reading. The teacher noted that the students had to have knowledge of analysing *'the word based on its composition. The main word and their prefixes and suffixes. So they will be able to arrive at the meaning of the word'*. The teacher implied that there was something wrong with current methods of teaching reading because the teachers' role in the traditional lessons was just giving the students the sheet without teaching them reading strategies. This data was in line with what the students stated in the focus group conducted after the first intervention where they argued that the teacher in the traditional methods read and translated for the students without any role for them as readers.

The teacher described the introduced intervention as an effective method because it was *'combining different methods in teaching reading'*. According to the teacher, the method would help him make the students active participants, able to use their knowledge of the world and *'analyse the words, which are unfamiliar for them'* in order to arrive at the meaning of the text without relying too much on the dictionaries. Further, the teacher argued that encouraging students to interact with each other in pairs allowed him to have a deeper understanding of the students' comprehension of the text, and also encourages the *'students to become critical and analytical thinkers'*. These comments seem to indicate that the teacher's view of the teacher's role had changed. The teacher gave the students a chance to read on their own and think about the text. He also gave the students a chance to discuss their comprehension of the text with each other to compare their findings.

The teacher stated that the introduced method might change the way of learning REFL, and the *'students will really appreciate reading as a course'* if the new method is practised in EFL departments.

#### **7.4.4 Changes in teacher views**

To assess the change in teacher views between the first and second phases of the study, it is crucial to highlight the teacher's thoughts and actions in the two phases (Reconnaissance and Intervention Phases). The main change in the teacher's view was in using the eventual interactive reading strategies (top-down and bottom-up) in teaching reading, while, in the first stage of the research, it appeared that he only utilised the top-down reading strategies of unlocking new words by using context clues *'they will be able to unlock the meaning of the words by nearly analysing the surrounding words'* (quotation from Reconnaissance Phase). As described in the Intervention Phase, using a single way of reading such as bottom-up or top-down strategies in a linear process may not, as has been demonstrated in this study, aid comprehension. After attending the sessions, the teacher in the Intervention Phase organised his lessons based on three stages: pre-, during and post-reading stages, to teach the students how to apply eventual interactive reading strategies. Moreover, the teacher changed his views from selecting a single method of teaching such as CLT *'where first I have to give them the definition of the terms'* (quotation from Reconnaissance Phase) to various activities from different methods, *'based on my observation on using this eclectic method, I believe this very effective'*.

After the sessions, the teacher's views about using the dictionary in REFL and the use of L1 seem to have changed. In the Reconnaissance Phase, the teacher was hesitant to allow the students use the dictionary *'because as reading teacher we should have to motivate our students to apply the skill like using the context clues'*. Further, he discouraged his students from using L1 because *'students will have the mixing and the whole switching of the language and they will not develop a mastery and proficiency of the target language'* (quotations from Reconnaissance Phase). However, after attending the sessions and viewing the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour, he allowed the students to use the bilingual dictionary.

In the class observed in the Reconnaissance Phase, the teacher was the centre of all lesson activities, while there was no student-student interaction. However, in this intervention, students participated in all activities, and discussed in pairs their opinions about the text at the post-reading stage. The teacher appeared to learn how to engage students in class activities. Further, in the Reconnaissance Phase the teacher immediately corrected the students' mistakes, while in the intervention sessions, the teacher took notes to correct the students' errors at the end of the lesson. The next section discusses the data of the Skype interview at the end of the intervention phase.

#### **7.4.5 Evaluating the teacher collaborator sessions: Teacher 4 (01-06-2014)**

The Skype interview with the collaborator teacher was conducted at the end of the academic year, on the 01<sup>st</sup> June 2014. The interview lasted 31 minutes, during which we discussed changes with respect to observable reading behaviour, and reactions and performance of the students as he continued to use the 'new' method with this class.

The teacher-collaborator stated that the 'introduced' method of teaching reading was interesting, exciting and *'entirely different from the methods used by reading teachers in the previous years'* because it helps the students to become active and interactive participants in the classroom. The teacher stated that after attending lessons employing the new method, the students began to comprehend the text using eventual interactive reading strategies. Namely, *'by activating the schema [the background knowledge] of the students, you will make the students have the focus and interested with the text'*. Further, the students were able to unlock the meaning of unfamiliar words, *'by applying their knowledge of the sentence clues and their knowledge of the word elements, by analysing*

*the prefixes and suffixes*'. Moreover, the students felt that they were important in the classroom, because *'the teacher made them feel important and valued enough'* to share their opinions and ideas about the topics of the texts. This data fitted with what the students said in the focus group where they stated that the method helped them feel confident in using different strategies. This data also indicated that if it is possible to continue using the introduced reading sessions in the language classroom, the students' abilities to read for comprehension will change. Further, this data also shows the importance of the teacher's role in creating the appropriate environment for the students to feel comfortable in using their reading strategies. The teacher argued that the students made great progress in improving their performance in using REFL strategies, especially strategies to unlock the meaning of new vocabulary from the context. The students *'learn how to unlock and guess the meaning of the words'* and *'they do not rely on the dictionary most of the time'*.

Richards and Lockhart (1996) described the teacher as a facilitator who helps students work independently to discover their own way of learning, and create a classroom environment to help motivate them to learn. In terms of the teacher's role, the teacher worked as *'a motivator and facilitator of the lesson. That is something interesting'*. He viewed himself, not as a teacher who would talk for a long time while the students listened, but as a person who made *'an active interaction between the teacher and the students'*.

The teacher stated that he was unable to use L1 in the sessions because it was not his language. Further, he did not encourage the students to use the dictionary too much because *'I don't want my students to be dependent on the dictionary'*. He would prefer them to use the REFL strategies first, then use the dictionary if they were unable to comprehend the words. This was the aim of the introduced sessions discussed in Section 7.1: *'know when and how to use the dictionary'* as a supporting strategic behaviour rather than relying on it to the neglect of other reading strategies.

In terms of advantages and disadvantages of the new method of teaching REFL, the teacher-collaborator stated that there were many benefits of the method introduced. For example, firstly, the sessions helped the students to become independent readers who *'are not dependent only on the use of the dictionary to guess or to know the meaning of the words'*. Secondly, the method motivated the students to use their communicative competence to help them *'share their opinions about the text'*. Thirdly, the method helped the students develop their critical thinking because they were encouraged to make

inferences and predictions about the text. These results seem to show that the sessions fulfilled one of the main aims of the intervention: ‘providing students with an opportunity to practise reading English strategies’. These strategies included showing students when and how to use the dictionary, how to read actively, and predict text content.

On the other hand, the teacher stated that the method had some drawbacks, especially in *‘reading texts which are longer, so maybe it will have a problem in time management’* because most students do not have the correct strategies to read. As a result, the teacher suggested using this method of teaching reading from the beginning, *‘in the first and second academic years of the EFL departments’*.

In terms of making changes to readers’ strategic behaviours, the teacher recommended using this method in teaching REFL in Libyan EFL classes because it helps *‘students’ enjoy this method and they participated actively in the discussion’* about the texts’ topics. The teacher also reported that students were able to comprehend the text without overusing the dictionary. Further, the students found that this method not only aided their vocabulary development, but also gave students the chance to interact with each other. Finally, the teacher recommended avoiding *‘using the traditional methods of just giving the sheets to the students and then asking questions about the sheet’* because the students found this way of reading very boring.

## **Chapter Summary**

The Intervention Phase aimed to suggest new reading strategies based on eventual interactive reading strategies by showing a group of students how to predict, decode the text content and use the dictionary as supporting strategic behaviours to help understand the text, rather than learning reading through traditional methods. In these ways, students can clarify the purpose of reading, promote frequent and sustained reading, and bring closure for pre- and during reading strategies by reflecting on what they read (see Section 7.1).

Changing how students read might not be possible in a short period. However, the results from applying the introduced lessons indicate that motivating students to adopt reading strategies through engaging them in activities played an important role in motivating them to learn. The sessions provided students with strategies on how to use the dictionary to

support reading to help overcome the students' lack of vocabulary. The described reading strategies, if practised frequently, might help students read for meaning rather than merely improving pronunciation and passing the exams. Here, the teacher plays a crucial role in showing the students how to use and apply reading strategies and in understanding the students' needs in order to motivate them to complete the task.

The students did not come to the intervention with no knowledge of reading strategies but were already using some aspects of bottom-up type reading strategies. I sought to model what they knew and to introduce them to other strategies, explaining and demonstrating how to use them for better understanding of what they read. The students began to use top-down background knowledge and linguistic background knowledge to comprehend the reading text, though vocabulary knowledge and grammatical variations were still among the main challenges of REFL. To overcome these challenges requires sustained education and sustained REFL eventual interactive reading strategies of the kind used and discussed here to help EFL students read any text for any purpose.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

## 8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will draw together the ‘threads’ of this thesis. I shall review the potential importance of the research for other researchers, teachers, and EFL students. I will also discuss the strengths and limitations of the study for the teaching and learning of Reading in English as a Foreign Language (REFL) and consider how this study might be improved and extended. I will begin by providing an overview of the research by reviewing the main findings and discussing their potential implications using the framework of my research questions.

## 8.1 Review of theoretical framework and use of reading models

This study employed a theoretical framework derived from reading models, mainly Goodman's (1967) top-down model, Gough's (1972) bottom-up model, Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model and Bernhardt's (1991) compensatory interactive reading model. As I noted in Chapter One, there has been relatively little research using models of reading to better understand REFL because, as Bernhardt (2003, p.112) reported, these models almost always use L1 research that is English language based. With the exception of Bernhardt's model, these are models of readers of a L1 and not models developed to understand or to explain REFL. As discussed in Chapter One, the continuing growth of English as a global *lingua franca* has increased the number of global speakers of English. The influence of English language knowledge has driven education policy and academic publishing (Bernhardt, 2003, p.112), and has clearly played a role in the dominance of English language-based reading models. Further, according to Bernhardt (2003, p.113), there are few reading researchers who know a language other than English. Hence, she claims that reading researchers:

... are imprisoned in an English-language mindset ... Equally important to add is that those who investigate second languages are also notoriously monolingual. (Bernhardt, 2003, p.113)

There is, in addition, an assumption that first and foreign language (FL) reading processes are the same (Bernhardt, 2003). As already discussed (Chapters Three, Six, and Seven), the



Arabic language is, unsurprisingly, different in many respects from English, and the processes of learning to read are also different in terms of learning a new orthography and different grammatical functions. Reading in the L1 is different from learning to read in the foreign language, as in the FL, the reader will have to consider the variations between languages and the assumption that one might learn to read in a FL in the same way as in the L1. Children learning to read in their L1 learn reading differently from the way adults learn to read in a FL, but both may use reading strategies in an almost similar way for different purposes. For example, children learning to read in their L1 might need to decode a word (using bottom-up type strategies) and then to check that their decoding makes sense in the sentence.

Different L1 readers would have been exposed to varying amounts and types of reading texts which could affect their ability to connect to the text in the foreign language.

Bernhardt (1991) suggested a reading model for a FL which is based on ‘an interactive, multidimensional dynamic of literacy’ which she calls ‘a multifactor theory of second-language literacy’ (p.169). The model is based on three main components: language, literacy and world knowledge (see Chapter Two). Bernhardt states that language refers to grammar, morphology and vocabulary meaning while literacy refers to learning how to approach the text and world knowledge refers to the reader’s background knowledge. Bernhardt’s view is that if the reader has a strong foundation in his/her L1, such as interest, motivation, linguistics, and knowledge of the topic, s/he would find it easier to acquire FL reading strategies than readers who do not. I do not entirely agree with Bernhardt's assumptions about reading in a FL. I have a good command of Arabic language (my L1) but it did not help me in reading *A Scots Quair*. As I noted earlier, my first and foreign languages have different alphabetical systems, which could not transfer from one language to another. I also have a good knowledge of English language but was still unable to understand *A Scots Quair* and one reason for this was that I learned to REFL through reading aloud to improve my pronunciation rather than reading for meaning. As I will further explain, learning reading strategies such as top-down, bottom-up types and other strategies such as the use of dictionaries used before an eventual interactive process are often essential to reading for meaning in a FL.

To further understand the process of REFL, I will summarise ways in which my study addressed my main research questions. In the following section, I have changed the order of the research questions (3, 1, 2 and 4) to logically summarise the research findings with

the theoretical framework and I shall explain what I call ‘eventual interactive type strategies’ that, I believe and that my data indicates, can lead to reading for meaning.

## **8.2 Review of research questions and findings**

**Research Question Three:** Can we use reading models/theories to help understand how reading works and can therefore enable better reading (and teaching of reading) in REFL?

The direct answer for this research question is ‘yes’. In terms of using reading models and theories to enable better reading, an intervention action was designed which aimed at finding out whether teaching REFL differently made any difference to one group of students’ reading skills, to ‘read for meaning’ using eventual interactive reading type strategies. Rumelhart’s (1977) interactive reading model describes the reading process as partly combining the bottom-up type surface structure (linguistic patterns) with top-down model deep structure (thinking) to form meaning (see Chapter Two). In Rumelhart’s interactive reading model, the reader integrates his/her background knowledge such as world knowledge with linguistic knowledge to comprehend the text. For instance, in comprehending unfamiliar words such as ‘gloaming’ the reader might decode the word using bottom-up type strategies such as letters and sound knowledge, or top-down type reading strategies such as prior language experience to understand the word. If s/he is unable to comprehend the word using the above strategies then s/he utilizes another strategic behaviour such as translating the word. However, in this case, because the word is Scottish dialect, it is unlikely to appear in the dictionaries Libyan students use. As described so far, the model describes a reader who has opportunities for using different strategies in an eventual interactive way rather than settling on one reading strategy (bottom-up or top-down types).

The intervention combined a number of methods from different approaches of teaching EFL, as discussed in the Chapter Seven, in order to provide students with increased opportunities to employ a range of strategies in REFL. The evaluation process discussed in Chapter Seven indicated a change in the students’ reading behaviours because they began to think about, for example, the title and to use their background knowledge to work with the text. The students used their limited linguistic knowledge, read silently, and used the bilingual dictionary, as a supporting strategic behaviour to confirm their text comprehension, practices which they had not engaged in prior to the intervention.

With respect to bottom-up type strategies and their use in an eventual interactive reading process, bilingual dictionaries are often essential to REFL. However, dictionaries that provide synonyms, glosses, grammatical explanations might be far better than dictionaries that give the most common meanings because they would help develop the students' lexical and grammatical knowledge. The students also used their L1 as a support to working in the target language. A further, important change was that the students were beginning to read for comprehension, not just for developing their pronunciation skills. However, readers still had difficulties in reading the texts because they encountered new vocabulary that decreased their ability for text comprehension (see below). Decoding strategies and breaking words into segments did not in many cases help the reader understand the context and so the reader had to use other strategies because comprehension is a unity of knowledge and strategies needing an eventual interactive process, such as linguistics and prior experience.

These findings led me to think about my impressions when I first met my supervisors and I was given the book titled *A Scots Quair*. Reading that book, as I noted in Chapter One, saw me spending two weeks trying to read and understand twenty pages using my background knowledge (top-down type strategies). I tried to read following the advice I gave to my students. However, the meaning remained elusive because none of my reading strategies, including bottom-up type strategies, could work because I had no resources on which to draw, no knowledge of the topic or the language used in the text, no knowledge of ancient French-Scotland relations (the 'Auld Alliance' as it is known), or knowledge of the country's languages and dialects. Having completed this study, I realized that using top-down or bottom-up type strategies might be useful in comprehending sentences that contain one or two unfamiliar words, but reading texts such as *A Scots Quair* challenged every assumption and belief I had about REFL. Most of the words, concepts and references were unfamiliar and it very quickly became clear that reading is far more complicated and demands far more than the application of a small range of reading strategies. I had been taught to use a limited range of reading strategies which were primarily aimed at perfect pronunciation and grammar and I tried to pass these on to my students. I also taught, and believed reading should be taught, by using strategies such as top-down strategies. I began to understand some of the frustrations and difficulties of my students because, like them perhaps, I could not, for example, generate reading goals or expectations. The genre and language of *A Scots Quair* was completely new.

Reflecting back on my experience at the start of this research, I could not use what I call top-down type strategies to get to meaning because, as discussed in Chapter One, I seemed to have reached a threshold beyond which I could not go, and that threshold was low. Because I was struggling to make ‘intelligent guesses’ (Goodman, 1967) at new words, I felt defeated and unable to make sense of anything. Again, this made me ask if my students in Libya had felt like this and it made me ask myself if my REFL strategies, both as a teacher and as a reader, were impossible with some texts. I now believe that REFL teachers should consider that the reading process might stop if the content of text is beyond the reader’s knowledge. Also, I could not use bottom-up type strategies to get to meaning because, while I could identify letters, break words into graphemes and phonemes to pronounce whole words like ‘Kinraddie’, still I could not understand the text and, again, I reached a threshold beyond which I could not go. Another basic reading strategy had failed me. On the advice of my supervisors, I looked more carefully at the letters in the word ‘Kinraddie’ and saw the capital letter ‘K’. I used my language knowledge to understand that it might be a name or proper noun. I returned to the text and read the sentence again to see if it made any difference, but it did not. From this, I learned that there was a limit to the ways in which I had previously taught REFL. There was a limit to the use of bottom-up type and top-down strategies and it would be essential to combine multiple processes (which also have a limit, see below) such as bottom-up, top-down and other strategies such as the use of dictionaries while reading eventually in an interactive process.

However, I realised that the reading process might need to be linear in the early stages of trying to read for meaning and that teachers need to probe more deeply what students know and understand. Decoding and grammar translation as strategies for REFL alone were not enough, I came to understand, to unlock a text’s meaning. Even asking students to read the title would be insufficient unless I checked they understood what key words meant (decoding and a bottom-up type strategy or behaviour) and whether that word had a cultural, scientific, or geographical meaning (using background knowledge and a top-down type strategy or behaviour). For example, and as I discussed in Chapter Seven, the majority of my participants had difficulty making sense of the title ‘Bakelite, the birth of modern plastics’ because, being streamed into languages early in secondary school, they had not studied chemistry, had no knowledge of plastics, and did not understand words like ‘Bakelite’ and ‘plastics’. Employing top-down or bottom-up type strategies would not be enough to help in REFL if readers were to read for meaning.

Further, translating the whole text while reading did not provide me with in-depth meaning of the text because many of the words such as 'Kinraddie' could not be found in the dictionary, and I had no idea what it meant because this word had no cultural or linguistic correlation in my L1. Students who used the dictionary in the first stage of this study, the Reconnaissance Phase, were not helped by the dictionary either because it took a lot of time to use it or because some words had different meanings when translated into their L1. The subject of the text the students in my study were given to read was also unfamiliar (science). I cannot imagine the difficulties I caused to my EFL students when I prevented them from using the dictionary before conducting this study. Now, I learned that the use of the bilingual dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour is a way of using the L1 to support reading for meaning and I suggest that Libyan EFL teachers should plan courses to help students use their dictionaries effectively, and to be aware of a range of applications to benefit from dictionary use as a supporting strategic behaviour. Therefore, at the Intervention Phase, in which I introduced eventual interactive reading strategies, the students switched to giving priority to using their reading knowledge: what is 'plastic?', 'what is "Bakelite"?''. They began to use top-down type reading strategies such as schemata and background knowledge, and then bottom-up type reading strategies such as linguistic background strategies. If the students still could not understand words, they used the dictionary as a final, 'last resort', supporting strategic behaviour to overcome the reading challenge. In these ways, and with the support of the teacher, the students began to learn to read for meaning. This means that we cannot rely on bottom-up or top-down reading strategies or expect an automatic immediate interactive way of reading because, as I noted in Chapter One, reading is a complex process and requires different strategies for different types of texts.

I am suggesting, using my data and my understanding of reading models and REFL, that if learners are to read for meaning then an 'eventual' interactive process is required. This means using top-down and bottom-up type strategies to lead to and as part of eventual interactive reading strategies and eventual interactive reading for meaning. Eventual interactive might occur at different levels while reading: at the level of the word, sentence, and the whole text. At the level of word, the reader can use the dictionary, glossary or word structure. At the level of the sentence, the reader can use the sentence structure. At the level of the whole text, the reader can use the text structure such as an understanding of a narrative structure. Here, I will say that understanding the complex processes involved in

reading has implications for teacher education and methods. Unless teachers have been taught about reading and reading models, they are unlikely to know anything about how eventual interactive strategies work to produce meaning. So, we need to improve REFL by including courses on reading models and their associated strategic type behaviours. The following question will discuss the methods of teaching REFL in Libyan universities.

**Research Question One:** Are the teaching methods that are currently used in Libyan Universities EFL classrooms appropriate to teach REFL?

The direct answer is 'no' because, as shown in this study, the teaching of REFL in the four Libyan research sites observed was affected by several factors such as the Quranic method of teaching, political instability and the, arguably, out-dated educational structure (see Ellabar, 2011, and Chapter Six) which developed under the former regime in Libya. Libyan EFL teachers participated in this study overwhelmingly tend to teach REFL using Quranic learning methods. The Quranic approach shapes attitudes, expectations of, and resources developments by L1 teachers and educational structures, all of which have implications for how L1 students learn in FL. In this approach, the teacher reads aloud to students with the aim of perfecting their pronunciation of the verses, and clearly, this method is inadequate for REFL. If students rely primarily on this method, they will very quickly reach a threshold beyond which they cannot read further. There is no use of reading strategies such as bottom-up, top-down and eventual interactive reading strategies, which, as shown in this study and later in this chapter, might help for 'reading for meaning'. In this, I am not judging the way of reading Holy-Quran as an inadequate method of reading the Holy-Quran itself, but I am saying here that it is not appropriate or always effective to transfer Quranic reading strategies to REFL because the purpose of reading is different. In addition, and as stated above, each language has its own system and structure.

Other constraints experienced by EFL teachers in their educational settings, such as teacher training, national exams, national curricula, class sizes, teacher behaviour, and pedagogy, also inevitably influence REFL. These constraints, such as a lack of preparation courses for teachers to improve their skills of teaching FL in general, and REFL in particular, affect teaching and learning practices. Initial teacher education and language teaching in Libya urgently needs to be updated and a variety of pedagogical methods should be adopted in order to end the reliance on a very narrow range to teaching approaches. My own reading

of A Scots Quair demonstrated to me that pronouncing words, using a dictionary, and translating the grammar, was necessary but insufficient to access the meaning of the text. My threshold was very quickly reached and I could not get over that threshold, even after several readings of the same page, until my supervisors (teachers) provide me with an overview of the cultural context of the text.

The teachers in my study appeared to rely on a single method in teaching REFL. For example, in practice T1 employed what seemed to me to be aspects of the Direct Method (see Chapter Four). T2, used a method that consisted in her walking around the class and asking students questions about grammar. As I discussed in Chapter Six, there are no training courses available for Libyan EFL university teachers to improve their teaching skills because it is assumed that having an MA or PhD are enough to become qualified EFL teachers (see Suwaed, 2011, and Chapter Six). Consequently, and understandably, teachers were using the same methods which they themselves were socialised and trained to use. Further, and as I had done before conducting this study, the teachers here relied on their beliefs such as that the use of the L1 would not help students in acquiring the FL, a principle of the DM. Further, not only is the use of the L1 not allowed, dictionaries are not encouraged, another principle of the DM. My belief about using the dictionary has now changed. I remember when I first been asked to read A Scots Quair and I told my supervisors that EFL students should not use the dictionary and the class should be purely conducted in the English language. This study shows that using the dictionary, as part of an eventual interactive strategy, is important in reading for meaning. The idea of a dictionary is not only important in translating unfamiliar words but also in relating word meanings to the overall meaning of the sentence. This behaviour suggests that using the dictionary can increase the student's reading proficiency level by focusing on understanding the word meaning and then by asking how it fits with the sentence meaning. This led me to think about combining different reading strategies and techniques from different methods to design a method that might help in teaching REFL using eventual interactive reading type strategies, in order to lead to reading for meaning.

Observation of classroom teaching and teachers' interviews demonstrated that there were variations in teachers' views about how to help EFL students to become successful readers. For example, the teachers seem to use bottom-up reading strategies such as improving phonological skills and reading aloud word by word to comprehend the text. Yet, the successful reader for T4, for example, is the reader who uses what turned out to be top-

down reading strategies, such as sentence cues, to understand the text. In the light of this research, it seems apparent that Libyan teachers can help their students by designing modules combining different reading strategies and methods of teaching that might help in teaching REFL using eventual interactive reading type strategies, leading to ‘reading for meaning’. These findings relate to how I can now start to answer the second research question below.

**Research Question Two:** Are the models available to describe reading (Goodman’s 1967 top-down model; Gough’s 1972 bottom-up model; Rumelhart’s 1977 interactive model; and Bernhardt’s 1991 compensatory interactive reading model) useful in understanding how EFL students learn to REFL? Are these models useful in investigating the role of:

- Decoding in understanding the reading text (breaking-up words and sentences)?
- Using syntactic, phonological, and vocabulary knowledge to understand the context of the passage?
- Using background knowledge of the world/topic/text-type to understand the reading text?

The findings from the TAPs conducted in the Reconnaissance Phase (Chapter Six) show that students rely on a limited range of reading strategies, which I have described as bottom-up reading strategies, or, in a few cases, top-down reading strategies to comprehend the text. For example, students who relied on bottom-up reading strategies such as sentence clues were unable to understand the text for the following possible reasons.

1. Variations between L1 and FL affected the reader’s comprehension. If the text contains a complex linguistic structure, an alien or unfamiliar discourse, and many difficult words to translate, such as was the case with *A Scots Quair*, the FL reader would have difficulties in decoding sentences (see Chapter Two) using this strategy alone.
2. Vocabulary knowledge might affect the capacity to uptake the use of grammatical and phonological knowledge (bottom-up type strategies) to understand the text. For example, as discussed in Chapter Seven, the Arabic language does not contain



phrasal verbs, so there can be no L1 to FL transfer since this feature does not exist in the L1.

3. Limited vocabulary was the main obstacle in comprehending the text with the result that the reader tended to look for supporting strategies such as a dictionary.
4. Connecting background knowledge (connecting what you read to what you know) as a strategy in understanding a text's context may also not be enough because of constraints resulting from a limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. For example, a Libyan EFL reader might have difficulties in understanding texts such as *A Scots Quair* because it is highly unlikely s/he would know or be able to work out words such as 'Kinraddie' and 'gloaming' because they are from a different culture.
5. As EFL reader, I could not access *A Scots Quair* (see Chapter One) because I had never encountered this kind of literature and so was not accustomed to, or socialised into this kind of literature (see below).

I used the reading models described above to understand how readers used elements of them and to help me to devise an alternative way of teaching REFL in Libyan university classes. For example, the bottom-up model characterised the good reader as a passive decoder who makes little use of the text's context, at least not in these metaphorical initial stages (fluent readers' processes would not operate in such a schematic way). In other words, the bottom-up model suggests that the reader grasps the meaning from the text itself and from how it is organised. For students of EFL, if the students' level of linguistic knowledge such as word and grammatical structure is low or below the language threshold for comprehension, their bottom-up reading type strategies would quickly be exhausted but it would be understandable that they tried to use bottom-up strategies. For instance, while reading *A Scots Quair*, I was unable to continue reading because the sentence structure and word level was above my language knowledge. This might answer the first part of the second research question that decoding and using syntactical knowledge as the only strategies to understand the reading texts might not be enough. Relying only on the bottom-up model or bottom-up type strategies to understand the reading process would clearly be inadequate. So, too, the model itself cannot account for the contribution of the reader's background knowledge to understanding the text. Decoding is necessary, but it is not sufficient, just as bottom-up type reading strategies may be necessary but not sufficient. As Gough, Hoover and Peterson (1996) state:

Skilled reading clearly requires skill in both decoding and comprehension... A child who cannot decode cannot read; a child who cannot comprehend cannot read either. Literacy – reading ability – can be found only in the presence of both decoding and comprehension. Both skills are necessary; neither is sufficient. (Gough, Hoover and Peterson, 1996, p.3)

In terms of using background knowledge of the world/topic/text-type to understand the reading text then top-down type reading strategies are also necessary, but they are not, again, sufficient. In EFL settings, the reader may well be consciously looking for inferences and support from background knowledge to make sense of the text. But once the reader has become familiar with a text, reading processes are likely to become automatic and unconscious and integrated once more. In reading *A Scots Quair* I lacked cultural, literary, geographical, mythical, and historical knowledge. In addition, without these kinds of background knowledges, it was going to be impossible to read for meaning and I quickly reached a threshold level, for a while at least, in order to make progress with this book.

Top-down and bottom-up type reading strategies are useful if I have a good linguistic knowledge and if I come across an unfamiliar word, decoding might help. If that does not work, the text might help, especially if the student can apply background knowledge. However, if a student reads a difficult text, like *A Scots Quair*, these strategies may quickly fail. So, while breaking reading into lower and upper processing strategies derived from models is helpful, a more appropriate approach is to combine bottom-up and top-down reading strategies to form what I have called eventual interactive reading strategies modified from Rumelhart's interactive reading model that might help understand how a reader can read for meaning and this leads to Research Question Four.

**Research Question Four:** How can Libyan EFL teachers help EFL students become better readers when reading is understood as 'reading for meaning'?

As described in the Reconnaissance Phase, students in the Libyan universities I investigated were viewed as passive recipients who gain knowledge from the teacher while reading, translating, and explaining. This way of teaching REFL would change because the students are the target in improving their learning strategies and they require assistance with 'scaffolding' until such time that they can practise the task independently. Scaffolding theory, following Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, aims to show students how to use reading

strategies and provide them with explanations where needed (see Chapter Four). Of course, it is a new approach and it would take time for the teachers and the students to become familiar with this approach, and confident about using these methods but it is time to change because REFL is a completely different activity from reading the Holy-Quran.

The Interventions Phase indicated a notable change in the teacher-collaborator views about TEFL. Instead of teaching the students only top-down type reading strategies such as predicting the content and translating words for students in the target language, the teacher used eventual interactive reading strategies. The teacher's views about using the dictionary also seemed to change after participating in the Action Phase (Chapter Seven). He allowed the students to use the dictionary as a supporting strategic behaviour because he noticed that it helped students comprehend the text. Further, the teacher provided students with a variety of activities while he took notes to correct the students' errors at the end of the lesson. These methods, if continuously used in Libyan REFL classrooms, could help students improve their reading strategies, a view shared by the teacher-collaborator because the introduced method appeared to help the students become active and interactive participants in the classroom.

Reading models such as bottom-up and top-down types might give useful descriptions of how one reads in English if they are used in eventual interactive events. They might be effective for EFL if we as teachers consider the following implications:

1. Students' disposition such as motivation, positive attitudes, and a desire to read would help students enjoy reading for meaning rather than simply to pass the exams. Reading would need to be valued differently and to have intrinsic worth (it is valued in its own right). These early reading models (such as Goodman's 1967 top-down model; Gough's 1972 bottom-up model type; and Rumelhart's 1977 interactive model) do not mention these aspects of reading, unsurprisingly, because this is an area of applied linguistics which did not take into account the social bases of learning or the role of the social (class, gender, race, topics which are not relevant to my research) in language acquisition and attitudes to language (see Hedge, 1991, and Chapter Three). The models were not designed to be used in classrooms but understanding them and using them to help understand REFL can be useful.

2. Students' linguistics skills in the target language. At the early stages of teaching reading strategies, the focus should be on improving language skills such as grammar, phonology, learning vocabulary and developing semantic skills to understand the general idea of any given text and to improve the bottom-up strategies which are an important aspect of an eventual interactive process.
3. Focus on improving students' vocabulary knowledge because the findings of this research indicate that there is a strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (see Hedge, 1991). Learning vocabulary is a long-term process and so there is a need to practise activities which promote vocabulary acquisition such as learning synonyms thoroughly over time to develop vocabulary knowledge.
4. Selecting texts that are appropriate for students' experience, language levels and background information so that they would be able to activate their formal, linguistic and cultural schemata. Selecting a variety of authentic texts such as newspapers, magazine articles, poems, polemic, which are written for L1 speakers and which use 'real' language.
5. Using eventual interactive reading strategies, such as predicting the text content and knowing when and how to use the dictionary. Learning how to use sentence cues such as syntactic, semantic, and phonological knowledge to read for comprehension and then using a final and very important eventual interactive strategy to bring all strategies together.
6. Consider the variations between L1 and FL such as cultural references, grammar, phonology, word and sentence structure differences, and vary the kinds of texts used by students to expose them to different genres.

The findings of this research provide a snap-shot of the way of REFL and teaching circumstances in Libyan universities which is mainly based on teachers' views on current methods of teaching the Holy-Quran and personal experience, rather than having clear educational goals to fulfil the students' learning needs in REFL. Again, I do not wish to suggest that the way of teaching the Holy-Quran is inadequate for learning the Holy-Quran itself, but learning to REFL is completely different from learning to read the holy book, which aims for perfect pronunciations of the verses. Based on this review of my research questions and findings, I will now discuss the limitations of my study.

### 8.3 Limitations of the study and measures of goodness and rigour

There are a number of limitations in this study that should be identified and acknowledged. The first limitation was related to the complexity of assessing the 'rigour' of this qualitative research. As I discussed in Chapter Five, this research is based on a qualitative approach in which naturalistic approaches were used to understand phenomena in a 'real world setting', and in which the researcher 'does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest' (Patton, 2002, p.39). The real world setting in this study was students of English in four classrooms in four Libyan research sites trying to learn English and in which, for a brief period of time, I observed, then intervened, to understand those reading processes more clearly and to improve, in very small ways, the strategies the students were using to REFL. The real world is subject to change, of course, and I had to be present before and after the changes to record the events my research sought to understand and shape. Because of the personal stakes involved in the research, my own hopes and expectations could have potentially influenced the interpretation of the data, shaping it to fit with what I wanted to find. That is why I chose to diagnose the situation, an examination of REFL behaviours and methods of learning and teaching, reflection on analysis and, finally, suggestions of appropriate action to improve REFL in Libyan universities based on the findings. The 'credibility' in qualitative research is:

... established if participants agree with the constructions and interpretations of the researcher, that is, that the description of the case is accurate based on the understanding of those studied. (Conrad and Serlin, 2004, p.413)

This means that I had to describe and report very carefully the interactions of the participants who participated in this study in a way that accurately represents what they said, including the translations of the students' protocols to English. The teacher interviews were conducted in English while students' interviews and TAPs were conducted in their L1 (see below). The credibility of the research is also about establishing how congruent my results are with reality in Libya. This was a small-scale study, carried out in only four research sites with a very small cohort from hundreds, if not thousands of EFL students. I did not have prolonged engagement in any site and was unable to carry out prolonged research. Neither was I able to teach using the 'new' methods successively over time to assess the extent to which these teaching methods really could have a lasting impact on students' REFL or teaching methods since I worked with only one teacher to develop

alternative teaching methods. These limitations naturally affect the strength of this study's credibility. However, there seemed to be strong congruency across REFL methods and difficulties that I observed in the four research sites. Further, although it is not possible to establish with a high degree of certainty that my research would confirm REFL and EFL experiences of teachers and students across Libya, anecdotally, experientially and professionally, and from the research available on Libyan EFL and REFL, it is likely that what I observed and reported is fairly typical.

Conrad and Serlin (2004) state that 'credibility is the strength of qualitative work' (p.413). Creswell (2003) argued that reliability, following Lincoln and Guba (1989), is 'dependability' in qualitative research. Generalization has limited applicability in qualitative research. Instead, 'trustworthiness', of which credibility is an important criteria, is more appropriate to qualitative research in which trustworthiness is taken to mean 'the degree of confidence that the researcher has that their qualitative data and findings are credible, transferable and dependable' (Andrew and Halcomb 2009, p. xvii. See also Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). As I discussed in Chapter Five, this research, as with any qualitative research, is not 'usually designed to allow systematic generalisations to other individuals' (Ronald, et al. 2013, p.319). The main aim of this study was to provide detailed, in depth and clear description of how REFL strategies are used and taught in a particular context. To meet the transferability criteria, if only to a limited extent, requires me as the researcher to provide sufficient data and context to enable the reader to judge whether the findings can be applied to other situations and contexts. The reader, I hope, can decide the extent to which the results and findings from this research are applicable to their own situation (Cohen, 2011) and the methods I used in this study and my use of reading models could be taken up by other researchers, and used in other Further and Higher Education settings, classrooms, and, indeed, used as the bases of REFL research by teachers of EFL. The limitations I will describe here should help other researchers to develop the methods and adapt or select alternative uses and selection of A Scots Quair reading models, depending on his or her particular area and context of research.

Two other criteria I should consider in order to assess the 'goodness' of my research are dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Dependability, in preference to reliability, refers to having enough details and documentation of the methods employed so that the study can be scrutinised and replicated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.206). Here, I

detailed how I organised the Reconnaissance and Intervention Phases and the methods I used to obtain the data in both phases. An example of the raw data can be found in Appendix 10. Confirmability, in preference to objectivity in such qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.206), is about ensuring that the study's findings are the result of the experiences of the informants rather than the preferences of the researcher, which can be achieved through an audit trail of, for example, the raw data, notes, journals, interview transcripts, and so on (p.318-19). To be as confident as I could be about my findings I read the transcripts and listened to tape-recorders many times in order to analyse, present and discuss my data as fairly and as accurately as possible. I also carefully considered whether the data fitted with the themes of my research and overall research findings (see Chapter Five).

Another limitation was related to the use of Goodman's 1967 top-down model, Gough's 1972 bottom-up model and Rumelhart's 1977 interactive model which are models of reading in L1. Students have different lexical, syntactical, phonological, grammatical and discourse knowledge in FL than they do in L1, so the flow and efficiency of reading would be interrupted, slow, or faltering. The orthographic script is also different which would have an impact on the fluency of reading, and the reader, further, may have to pronounce individual letters in English before the word as an entity can be grasped in English before being processed in Arabic. In other words, the long term visual or working, phonological or semantic memory of an Arabic speaker may not readily match the input from an English text (Bernhardt, 2003, p.113).

In this study, I used a number of tools for data collection: classroom observation, teacher interviews, students TAPs, students' interviews, team-teaching, focus group, teacher discussions and Skype interview which, though increasing the potential dependability of the study, required a lot of time in analysing and presenting the data. Studying models of reading and methods of teaching in a limited time was difficult. However, the teaching context in Libya obligated me to investigate the contextual situation, first, because when I went to Libya to collect data, I found that the majority of students were reading for correcting pronunciation rather than for meaning. I sought to intervene to change this approach, then to investigate the fitness of using bottom-up, top-down and eventual interactive reading strategies in REFL.

A further limitation was related to evaluating the intervention stage using TAPs and interviews with students at the end of the course rather than relying on a Skype interview with the teacher to assess which changes, if any, had occurred. While conducting the intervention I realised that it might have been useful to have returned to Libya at the end of the course to evaluate the changes in students' reading skills after the second sessions. However, because political instability in Libya resulted in the closure of the country's airports, I could not return to continue with this part of the research. I do not think this impacted on the overall trustworthiness of the research, but the political situation clearly prevented me from ensuring that the research was as trustworthy as I could make it. On a personal level, the political instability and the financial crisis in the country affected my progress to complete this work. I lived under the threat of losing funding because of the political conflict.

Another limitation is related to participant selection. I relied on the teachers' judgement in selecting the students since I did not, obviously, know the students, and the teacher, presumably, selected those students based on test results and overall class performance in reading and language skills proficiency. However, as can be seen in the analyses chapters (Six and Seven), it turned out that all the participants faced the same kinds of difficulties in reading comprehension. The 'good' readers responded in the same way to the same difficulties as the 'weak' readers such as ignoring using the dictionary. Based on what I have researched and discussed to date, it is possible to suggest that the teachers may have classified the 'good' readers as those who have 'good pronunciation' rather than using reading strategies to 'read for meaning' (see Chapter Seven).

Another related limitation was related to the way of requiring EFL students to participate in this study. Because teachers may have judged 'good' readers to be those who could pronounce well rather than those who use a number of reading strategies to 'read for meaning', it might have been helpful if I had administered a reading test to the students the teachers had nominated to take part in my research so I could objectively assess their language proficiency before they participated in my study. Relying on teachers' assessment does not necessarily mean that the study thereby lacks credibility or transferability – it was surely appropriate to trust the teachers' experience and professional judgement as congruent with the reality of teaching EFL in those settings – only that future and similar research would strengthen this aspect of the research by conducting additional tests.



Translating the students' interviews and TAPs was another potential limitation. The interviews and TAPs were conducted in the students' L1 (Arabic), then translated to English. Translating from one language to another can have many shortcomings, which require precise attention in order not to lose any of the students' thoughts processes. The TAPs process is time consuming especially if conducted in the L1 because they require a lot of time to translate, transcribe and analyse. Translation requires prolonged and varied exposure to the language to acquire the skills of translation because language is complex at all levels in terms of vocabulary, sounds, semantics, colloquialisms, and grammar. Further, language is 'largely culture oriented and therefore, translators face the problem of translating certain culture based words into another language with a different culture' (Ray, 2008, p.48). However, I did my best to include all expressions or actions stated by the students and I presented them as faithfully as I could in this study.

My personal views about how I was taught to read and understand the general idea of the text affected my selection of appropriate activities for the students' level. For instance, while I was learning to REFL I had been taught to understand the text through summarising the main ideas. However, as illustrated in the previous chapter, summarising the main ideas of the text was one of the hardest strategies that the students and I could apply in reading in the FL because it requires a good understanding of the text content, good vocabulary knowledge, a degree of fluency and confidence to be able to explain the key points in the student's own words. In future, I would want to consider my students' level of language proficiency in designing the lesson tasks that are appropriate for them. Bearing these limitations in mind, the next section will suggest future research in REFL.

## 8.4 Further research

Think-aloud protocols can be a useful instrument to help understand what is going on in the readers' mind. The findings of this research indicated that students, while thinking aloud, started to think and evaluate the reading strategies they were using. Therefore, it might be useful to use the same instrument with teachers to discover their knowledge, skills and evaluate the reading strategies they are using to teach reading. For example, asking Libyan EFL teachers who teach REFL to work on a text such as *A Scots Quair* might help them understand the limitations of their way of teaching reading. Reading texts such as *A Scots Quair* could help the teacher understand the advantages of using the linguistic knowledge along with background knowledge, and also help them empathise with the reading difficulties their students encounter.

Libyan researchers should more extensively investigate EFL classroom interactions such as student-student and teacher-student interaction because providing opportunities for students to interact with the teacher and each other might help students effectively construct their reading strategies knowledge to interact with the text. This should include teachers' knowledge of materials used so that his/her knowledge of the materials might help him/her to make an effective plan for how to teach the course. This type of research should focus on improving CPD, resources and variety of teaching methods used in the Libyan EFL classrooms, all of which might see the student interacting more often with the teacher. There is also a need to develop the curriculum using new approaches to EFL. Here, for example, by looking to modern approaches to teaching EFL such as Cooperative Language Learning, or Text-based learning, which, if used effectively, could help EFL learners to REFL more efficiently, quickly and enjoyably. Some of these approaches, because they are so varied, would naturally employ interactive methods. Current methods of teaching REFL in Libya, such as the DM, are popular in TEFL language schools but they are now, arguably, outdated. I suggest looking for the best of these methods, but task- and text- based learning, along with the lexical approach (see below) are developments and advances on those approaches.

Related to methods and understandings of learning a FL, another issue for future research is related to the importance of using the L1 in teaching EFL and the teachers' views on this issue. In other words, searching the use of the L1 to support FL learning has long been

recognised as being useful to FL students. Skinner (1986, cited in Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain, 2009) states that some L1 use could facilitate connections between the FL and background knowledge and information already developed in the L1. This means that when the EFL teacher feels that the task is beyond the students' language abilities s/he might allow for a small amount of the L1 to overcome these obstacles. The process of using limited L1 in the EFL classroom (codeswitching) is also suggested by Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) who state that switching to L1 might help overcome constraints caused by students' lack of vocabulary knowledge; students would be allowed to borrow what they need from their L1 in order to discuss the topic. In my study, I interviewed and observed only four teachers, which is a small number. Future research might increase the number of participants in order to have a fuller picture of the teaching context in Libyan classrooms. My research shows that using the L1 may increase students' motivation to learn the target language.

### **8.5 Recommendations for Libyan Universities and REFL teachers support**

Based on my experience as a language EFL teacher and from the findings of the present action research, I would like to propose the following steps in order to help EFL teachers and students at Libyan universities to develop better ways of REFL.

The universities should provide training courses to help EFL Libyan university teachers improve their teaching skills, available to all EFL teachers who have an MA or PhD to introduce them to the basic approaches and methods of teaching REFL. The courses should provide the teacher with background knowledge about English language teaching profession and practical ideas for planning lessons based on provisional goals to fulfil the students' needs. The teachers should be educated about the methods of teaching, such as GTM and DM in order to select the effective parts of each method to fulfil his/her lesson aims. This might be done by involving teachers in activities such as watching DVDs of EFL teachers teaching REFL to reflect on their lesson procedures. The course activities might also include activities such as evaluating materials designed to teach REFL, sharing knowledge about good practice ideas and how the language works with colleagues.

Universities might also conduct short training activities to help EFL teachers improve their teaching skills, and highlighting that teaching REFL is different from teaching to read the Holy-Quran. As I suggested earlier, it is important to provide CPD - but this cannot be

offered at present. Perhaps, looking to the future when the country eventually stabilises, the universities could plan to introduce teachers to several experts in the teaching field by conducting international seminars and conferences. Inviting visiting lecturers, creating an international dialogue between the Libyan universities and world universities to exchange programmes, which are routine in Europe, North America and elsewhere, would be helpful. I would also suggest that Libyan Universities should be sending EFL teachers abroad for intensive summer language training courses to improve their teaching skills. Moreover, the universities could encourage teachers to conduct their own action research by providing them with resources and involving them in selecting the materials needed. Achieving these goals is not difficult because of the high financial resources in Libya and the appetite for change.

In terms of improving teachers' professional development in teaching REFL, I would encourage EFL Libyan teachers to use a variety of activities derived from different language teaching methods and reading models to accomplish the students' learning needs. For example, using the dictionary is helpful in understanding the text. However, restricting teaching to a single method as the DM, which prevents using the L1 in the classrooms, might limit or curtail dictionary use. Lack of vocabulary is a hindrance to effective reading and so using some aspects of the 'Lexical Approach' might help improve the vocabulary knowledge. In this approach, the building block of learning a FL is not only about learning the 'grammar, functions, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching, but lexis' (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.215). In other words, the language teaching in the EFL classroom is based on lexical units rather than only on traditional grammar. Again, learning one aspect of a language, such as vocabulary, cannot produce reading for meaning. Libyan REFL teachers should surely be helped to change their views about reading in a FL because reading in a FL is not a matter of reading to improve pronunciation, but reading for meaning which includes using the entire range of reading strategies available such as bottom-up and top-down type strategies to form eventual interactive strategies. REFL should be viewed as a process of combining all strategies together. A variety of approaches to REFL is key to reader fluency and comprehension.

## 8.6 Personal reflections

I will use the following quotation from Tierney and Pearson (1994) to conclude my research and to summarise my final thoughts:

If teachers understand the nature of reading comprehension and learning from a text, they will have the basis for evaluating and improving learning environments. (Tierney and Pearson, 1994, p.496)

Reading A Scots Quair radically changed how I understood and subsequently approached REFL. My naive assumptions about the processes involved in reading well were undermined, to be replaced with comprehension about how complex reading is. Reading about, and then using reading models gave me further insight into the complexities of reading, and, concomitantly, the need to support my teaching with up-to-date resources. This study helped me improve my research and teaching skills through investigating the theories of teaching and models of reading and by putting them into practice. I also learned how to use qualitative research tools in action research procedures to investigate the environment, build an action based on the findings, and then generate my data to suggest changes in teaching approaches. This will help me investigate future problems in my country and suggest further strategies for improvement.

I also learned that conducting educational research is a complicated process that requires careful planning such as identifying the problem, reviewing prior research, recognizing the purpose of the research, and considering the implications of the data. Now, I have concluded this study, I realize how teaching, reading and researching in REFL is difficult. However, I continued this research to show Libyan EFL teachers and researchers that it is possible to conduct a REFL study that might improve the way of reading in English. Linking my data to the overall literature used in this research forced me to understand the difficulties that EFL teachers face in teaching REFL in the Libyan context and the difficulties that EFL readers face in trying to read for meaning in the Libyan context. This research has also informed my own teaching practices and raised questions about how I might contribute to continuing professional development of colleagues coping with the large number of learners in the EFL classrooms in a currently outdated educational system. Finally, it is important to say that while reading and researching REFL is a difficult process, we should not ignore it because we need to find out what is meant by ‘reading for meaning’ to help EFL teachers and students understand the reading process.

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## APPENDICES



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### Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form for Students Participating in Stages One and Two

**Name of Researcher:** Salem Hamed Abosnan

**Title of Project:** The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models

Please initial/check box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree to participate in an audio-recorded think-aloud protocol.

☐

I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.

☐

I accept that I can contribute to team-teaching lessons.

☐

I agree to participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview.

☐

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Salem Hamed Abosnan Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form for Teacher Participant in Stages One and Two**

**Name of Researcher:** Salem Hamed Abosnan

**Title of Project:** The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models

Please initial/check box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree to the interviews being audio-recorded.

☐

I accept that you can observe and video-tape my reading EFL lesson.

☐

I accept that I can contribute to team-teaching lessons.

☐

I agree to the Skype interview being audio-recorded

☐

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Salem Hamed Abosnan Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Think-aloud protocol text (1) first stage

### Texts for Think-aloud Protocols (cloze text)

Student name: .....

Predicted time: 15 minutes

#### Advantages of public transport

A new study conducted for the World Bank by Murdoch University's Institute for Science and Technology Policy (ISTP) has demonstrated that public transport is more efficient than cars. The study compared the proportion of wealth poured into transport by thirty-seven cities around the world. This included both the public and private costs of building, maintaining and using a transport system.

The study found that the Western Australian<sup>1</sup> ..... of Perth is a good example of a city with minimal public transport. As a result, 17% of its wealth<sup>2</sup> ..... into transport costs. Some European and Asian cities, on the other hand, spent as little as 50%. Professor Peter Newman, ISTP Director, pointed out that these more efficient cities<sup>3</sup> ..... able to put the difference into attracting industry and jobs or creating a better place to live.

According to Professor Newman, the larger Australian city of Melbourne is a rather unusual city in this sort of comparison. He describes it as two cities: 'A European city surrounded by a car-dependent one'. Melbourne's large tram network has made car use in the inner city much lower, but the outer suburbs have the<sup>4</sup> ..... car-based structure as most other Australian cities. The explosion in demand for accommodation in the inner<sup>5</sup> ..... of Melbourne suggests a recent change in many people's preferences as to where they live.

Newman says this is a new, broader way of considering public transport issues. In the past, the case for public transport has been made on the basis of<sup>6</sup> ..... and social justice considerations rather than economics. Newman, however, believes the study demonstrates that 'the auto-dependent city model is inefficient and grossly inadequate in economic as well as environmental terms'.

.....<sup>7</sup> use was not included in the study but Newman noted that the two most 'bicycle friendly' cities considered - Amsterdam and Copenhagen - were very efficient, even though their public transport systems were 'reasonable but not special'.

It is common for supporters of road networks to<sup>8</sup> ..... the models of cities with good public transport by arguing that such systems would not work in their particular city. One objection is climate. Some people say their city could not make more use of public transport because it is<sup>9</sup> ..... too hot or too cold. Newman rejects this, pointing out that public transport has been successful in both Toronto and Singapore and, in fact, he has checked the use of cars against climate and found 'zero correlation'.

*Adapted from: Cambridge IELTS 6: 2007*

## Appendix 4: Think-aloud protocol text (2) first stage

Student name: .....

Predicted time: 15 minutes

### **BAKELITE** The birth of modern plastics

In 1907, Leo Hendrick Baekeland, a Belgian scientist working in New York, discovered and patented a revolutionary, new synthetic material. His invention, which he named 'Bakelite', was of enormous technological importance, and effectively- launched the modern plastics industry.

The term 'plastic' comes from the Greek *plassein*, meaning 'to mould'. Some plastics are derived from natural sources, some are semi-synthetic (the result of chemical action on a natural substance), and some are entirely synthetic, that is, chemically engineered from the constituents of coal or oil. Some are 'thermoplastic', which means that, like candlewax, they melt when heated and can then be reshaped. Others are 'thermosetting': like eggs, they cannot revert to their original viscous state, and their shape is thus fixed for ever. Bakelite had the distinction of being the first totally synthetic thermosetting plastic.

The history of today's plastics begins with the discovery of a series of semi-synthetic thermoplastic materials in the mid-nineteenth century. The impetus behind the development of these early plastics was generated by a number of factors - immense technological progress in the domain of chemistry, coupled with wider cultural changes, and the pragmatic need to find acceptable substitutes for dwindling supplies of 'luxury' materials such as tortoiseshell and ivory.

Baekeland's interest in plastics began in 1885 when, as a young chemistry student in Belgium, he embarked on research into phenolic resins, the group of sticky substances produced when phenol (carbolic acid) combines with an aldehyde (a volatile fluid similar to alcohol). He soon abandoned the subject, however, only returning to it some years later. By 1905 he was a wealthy New Yorker, having recently made his fortune with the invention of a new photographic paper. While Baekeland had been busily amassing dollars, some advances had been made in the development of plastics. The years 1899 and 1900 had seen the patenting of the first semi-synthetic thermosetting material that could be manufactured on an industrial scale.

*Adapted from: Cambridge IELTS 7: 2006:38*

## Appendix 5: Classroom observation Tool

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### Section I: General information

Observation date.....  
 Name of the University.....  
 No. of students in the University.....  
**Section II: Classroom/ Grade.....**  
 No. of students.....  
 No. of girls.....  
 No. of boys.....  
 Age.....  
 Time of start observation.....  
 Time of end observation.....  
 Text topic.....  
 Teacher qualification.....  
 Teacher experience.....  
 Classroom layout.....  
 Facilities in the classroom.....  
 Other.....

*Adapted from Smith (2004)*



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**Researcher's Observation Sheet for Reading Lesson**

Teacher's name ..... Time .....  
Class/level ..... Type of lesson .....  
No. of students ..... Materials.....

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I will make notes on the following key themes:

1. The teacher's role.
2. The learner's role.
3. The type of interaction: T-L / L-L / L - Txt.
4. The classroom control and management, for example, how teacher-centred is this?
5. How reading is taught, for example – activities, texts and help for students
6. Teacher feedback on learners' performance
7. The use of L1 in the class.

## Appendix 6: First Team-teaching Lesson Plan

Course text: Attitude to Language (P.6)  
Student number: .....

Tutor's name: Salem Hamed Abosnan  
Date & length: .....

### Reading Lesson Plan:

Stage, timing & interaction	Action	Procedure	Aims
<b>Stage 1:</b>  <b>Brain storming.</b> Approx. 5 min. T = Sts'	To discuss the topic 'Attitude to Language' in order to have a general knowledge about the topic.	Teacher discusses with learners the title and elicit their knowledge and ideas by asking the following questions about the passage: Do you worry a lot or only a little about the correctness of your own use of language? Have you ever felt that other people have made judgements about you because of your use of language? Do you think grammar rules should be fixed like laws? Or should people be encouraged to interpret grammar rules more flexibly? If you think rules should be fixed, who should decide what those rules are, and how?	This stage is a warming up step to help learners be interested, activate schemata, and use their prior knowledge about the topic. In addition, learners will make predictions about the text.  The aim of framing questions in this stage is to stimulate learners' curiosity and maintain concentration.
<b>Stage 2:</b> <b>During reading, Task 1.</b> Approx. 5 min. T = S & S = S	Learners read the following two sentences from the first paragraph: It is not easy to be systematic and objective about language study. Popular.....debate regularly deteriorates into interactive and polemic. Language belongs to everyone, so.....	The teacher asks the students about their expectations of the sort of information which should be in the blank spaces. For example, is it possible to guess the word in the first example without reading the previous sentence? How can the learner guess the adjective? Then asks the students to read the first paragraph and check their answers.	Warming up activity, to help the learner guess the sense of the word/sentence structure by using his/her syntactic knowledge.
<b>Task 2:</b> 5 min. Sts' = Text	Read quickly through the first paragraph.	Teacher asks the student to underline the unknown words in the 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph. The teacher asks the learners to underline the words which they think they are important.	To scan for unfamiliar words and understand the context.
<b>Task 3:</b> Approx: 15 min. T = Sts'	Students listen to the teacher and follow the instructions.	The teacher writes the unfamiliar words suggested by learners on the board: Explain for learners how to decode words 'breaking words into segments' (see activity 1 below). The teacher explains for the learners how to guess the meaning of unknown words. That is by bolding the words in their context, then giving two options for the learner to choose the correct one (see activity 2 below).	To gain knowledge of how to use the interactive reading model (top-down, bottom-up strategies) to comprehend the text.
<b>Task 3:</b> 10 min. Sts' = Text	Read the text again and use the dictionary.	Teacher asks the students to read again and use the dictionary, and summarise each paragraph in one sentence.	In order to provide a basic meaning of text.
<b>Task 4:</b> 10 min. Sts' = Text	Read it again and summarise the whole text.	Teacher asks the learners to give a general idea of the whole context.	By reading several times, the reader will learn new word meanings, idioms and phrases that s/he will not forget.
<b>Stage 3:</b> <b>Post reading, 5 min.</b>	With your partner read the following statements and decide by reading the text whether they are true, false or not given (see activity 3 below).	The teacher observes and takes notes.	To check if the learner comprehend the text.
<b>Task 2:</b> Feed back T = Sts'	Learners listen and take notes.	Teacher provides learners with feedback on their performance, and provides learners with the correct answers for the activities.	To give Students a sense of conclusion to the lesson. To focus on how successful learners completed the task, and further improvement in their language

- T = Teacher - Sts' = Students'

#### Hand Outs

1) Try to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words by analysing prefixes (word beginning), suffixes (word ending) and infixes (main part) of the word.

For example, the expression 'unfeelingly attacked' in the second paragraph. If we break down the word 'unfeelingly' into parts, you'll see that it consists of:

- The prefix 'un-' meaning opposite.
- The main part 'feels' meaning the sense.
- The suffixes '-ing' and '-ly' provide grammatical information. *-ing* is verb suffix and *-ly* is verb adverb suffix.

The expression 'unfeelingly attacked' thus means: attacked with no sensation.

Now try the following words:

1. Encountered
2. disputes
3. Prescriptively

Look again at the words you underlined in Task 1 and try to guess their meaning. Use your dictionary to check if your guess was correct, or close enough to get the main idea.

2) Study the following sentences from the text. Using the context, guess the meaning of the words in bold (circle a) or b) ):

1. The view is **propounded** especially in relation to grammar and vocabulary, and frequently with reference to pronunciation.  
a) put forward    b) prevented
2. To show that there was a system beneath the apparent **chaos** of usage.  
a) disorder    b) aims
3. This ought to be **imposed** on the whole of the speech community.  
a) caused    b) obligated
4. Which of the bolded words in the following sentence means 'forbidden' and which means 'agreed'? Explain how do you know that?

Some usages are '**prescribed**', to be learnt and followed accurately; others are '**proscribed**', to be avoided.

- a) prescribed.....
- b) proscribed.....

Look again at the bold words and try to guess their meaning. Use your dictionary to check if your guess was correct, or close enough to get the main idea.

3) Decide whether the following statements are true, false or not given. Check your answers by re-reading the section of the text where you are most likely to find information.

1. There are understandable reasons why arguments occur about language.
2. People feel more strongly about language education than about small differences in language usage.
3. Our assessment of a person's intelligence is affected by the way he or she uses language.
4. Prescriptive grammar books cost a lot of money to buy in the 18th century.
5. Prescriptivism still exists today.
6. According to descriptivists it is pointless to try to stop language change.
7. Descriptivism only appeared after the 18th century.

Both descriptivists and prescriptivists have been misrepresented.

## Appendix 7: Text 3 Attitudes to Language

It is not easy to be systematic and objective about language study. Popular linguistic debate regularly deteriorates into interactive and polemic. Language belongs to everyone, so most people feel they have a right to hold an opinion about it. And when opinions differ, emotions can run high. Arguments can start as easily over minor points of usage as over major policies of linguistic education.

Language, moreover, is a very public behaviour, so it is easy for different usages to be noted and criticised. No part of society or social behaviour is exempt: linguistic factors influence how we judge personality, intelligence, social status, educational standards, job aptitude, and many other areas of identity and social survival. As a result, it is easy to hurt, and to be hurt, when language use is unfeelingly attacked.

In its most general sense, prescriptivism is the view that one variety of language has an inherently higher value than others, and that this ought to be imposed on the whole of the speech community. The view is propounded especially in relation to grammar and vocabulary, and frequently with reference to pronunciation. The variety which is favoured, in this account, is usually a version of the 'standard' written language, especially as encountered in literature, or in the formal spoken language which most closely reflects this style. Adherents to this variety are said to speak or write 'correctly'; deviations from it are said to be 'incorrect'.

All the main languages have been studied prescriptively, especially in the 18th century's approach to the writing of grammars and dictionaries. The aims of these early grammarians were threefold: (a) they wanted to codify the principles of their languages, to show that there was a system beneath the apparent chaos of usage, (b) they wanted a means of settling disputes over usage, and (c) they wanted to point out what they felt to be common errors, in order to 'improve' the language. The authoritarian nature of this approach is best characterised by its reliance on 'rules' of grammar. Some usages are 'prescribed', to be learnt and followed accurately; others are 'proscribed', to be avoided. In this early period, there were no half-measures: usage was either right or wrong, and it was the task of the grammarians not to simply record alternatives, but to pronounce judgement upon them.

*Adopted from Cambridge English IELTS 9 (2013:63).*

## Appendix 8: Second Team-teaching Lesson Plan

Course text: Play is a serious business (p.6)  
 Tutor's name: Salem Hamed Abosnan  
 Student number: ..... Date & length: .....  
 Collaborators: 1- English language teacher 2- Researcher

### Reading Lesson Plan:

Stage, timing & interaction	Action	Procedure	Aims
Stage 1:  <b>Brain storming.</b> Approx. 5 min. T ⇌ Sts'	Discuss the topic 'Play is a serious business' with the teacher, in order to have a general knowledge about the topic.	Teacher discusses with learners the title and provides them with general information about the text, by asking the following possible questions about the passage: When you were a small boy/girl did you like playing? Which activity did you like to play at? Did you enjoy playing with other kids? What benefits do you gain from playing? Did it help build your muscles or develop a better brain? Do you think that animals play like human beings? How?	This stage is a warming up step to help learners become interested, activate schemata and use their prior knowledge about the topic. In addition, learners will make predictions about the text  The aim of framing questions in this stage is to stimulate learners' curiosity and maintain concentration.
Stage 2: <b>During reading, Task 1.</b> Approx. 5 min. T = S & S = S	Learners read the following two sentences from the first paragraph: Playing is a serious business. Children engrossed in ..... . Play may look like a carefree and exuberant way to.....	The teacher asks the students about their expectations of the sort of information which should be in the blank spaces. Then, ask the students to read the first paragraph and check their answers.	Warming up activity, to help the learner guess the sense of the word/sentence structure by using his/her syntactic knowledge.
Task 2: 10 min. Sts' ⇌ Text	Read quickly through the paragraphs.	Teacher asks the student to underline the unknown words.	To scan for unfamiliar words and understand their context.
Task 3: Approx: 15 min. T ⇌ Sts'	Students listen to the teacher and follow the instructions.	The teacher writes the unfamiliar words suggested by learners on the board: Explain for learners how to decode words by 'breaking words into segments' (see activity 1 below). The teacher explains for the learners how to guess the meaning of unknown words. That is, by bolding the words in the context, then giving two options for the learner to choose the correct one (see activity 2 below).	To gain knowledge of how to use the interactive reading model (top-down, bottom-up strategies) to comprehend the text.
Task 3: 10 min. Sts' ⇌ Text	Read the text again and use the dictionary.	Teacher asks the students to read again and use the dictionary, and summarise each paragraph in one sentence.	In order to provide a basic meaning of text.
Task 4: 10 min. Sts' ⇌ Text	Read it again and summarise the whole text.	Teacher asks the learners to give a general idea of the whole context.	By reading several times, the reader will learn new word meanings, idioms and phrases that s/he will not forget.
Stage 3: <b>Post reading, 5 min.</b> Sts' ⇌ Text	In pairs read the passage and try to find an answer for activity 3 below.	The teacher observes and takes notes.	To check if the learner comprehends the text.
Task 2: Feed back T ⇌ Sts'	Learners listen and take notes.	Teacher provides learners with feedback on their performance.	To give Students' a sense of conclusion to the lesson. To focus on how successful learners completed the task and further improvement in their language

- T = Teacher - Sts' = Students'

### Handouts

1) Try to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words by analysing prefixes (word beginning), suffixes (word ending) and infixes (main part) of the word.

For example, if we break down the word 'playfulness' in the second paragraph into parts, you'll see that it consists of:

- The main word 'play' meaning engaging in activity for enjoyment
- The suffix '-ful' meaning full of
- The second suffix '-ness' meaning the state of
- The expression 'playfulness' thus means: the state of being engaged in full activity for enjoyment.

Now try the following words:

1. disappear
2. developmental
3. endurance

Look again at the words you underlined in Task 1 and try to guess their meaning. Use your dictionary to check if your guess was correct, or close enough to get the main idea.

2) Study the following sentences from the text. Using the context, guess the meaning of the words in bold (circle a) or b) ):

1. The latest idea suggests that play has **evolved** to build big brains.  
a) team      b) developed
2. Eighty per cent of deaths among **juvenile** fur seals occur because playing pups fail to spot predators approaching.  
a) children      b) cars
3. The **optimum** time for playing would depend on when it was most advantageous for the young of a particular species to do so..  
a) obligated      b) ideal
4. Children **engrossed** in a make-believe world, fox cubs play-fighting or kittens teasing a ball of string aren't just having fun.  
a) engaged      b) tends

Look again at the bold words and try to guess their meaning. Use your dictionary to check if your guess was correct, or close enough to get the main idea.

3) Discuss with your partner which of the three paragraphs contains the following information:

1. The way play causes unusual connections in the brain which are beneficial.
2. A description of the physical hazards that can accompany play.
3. A description of the mental activities which are exercised and developed during play.
4. The classes of animals for which play is important.

## Appendix 9: Text 4 Play Is a Serious Business

Does play help develop bigger, better brains?

Bryant Furlow investigates

Playing is a serious business. Children engrossed in a make-believe world, fox cubs play-fighting or kittens teasing a ball of string aren't just having fun. Play may look like a carefree and exuberant way to pass the time before the hard work of adulthood comes along, but there's much more to it than that. For a start, play can even cost animals their lives. Eighty per cent of deaths among juvenile fur seals occur because playing pups fail to spot predators approaching. It is also extremely expensive in terms of energy. Playful young animals use around two or three per cent of their energy cavorting, and in children that figure can be closer to fifteen per cent. 'Even two or three per cent is huge,' says John Byers of Idaho University. 'You just don't find animals wasting energy like that,' he adds. There must be a reason.

But if play is not simply a developmental hiccup, as biologists once thought, why did it evolve? The latest idea suggests that play has evolved to build big brains. In other words, playing makes you intelligent. Playfulness, it seems, is common only among mammals, although a few of the larger-brained birds also indulge. Animals at play often use unique signs - tail-wagging in dogs, for example, to indicate that activity superficially resembling adult behaviour is not really in earnest. A popular explanation of play has been that it helps juveniles develop the skills they will need to hunt, mate and socialise as adults. Another has been that it allows young animals to get in shape for adult life by improving their respiratory endurance. Both these ideas have been questioned in recent years.

Take the exercise theory. If play evolved to build muscle or as a kind of endurance training, then you would expect to see permanent benefits. But Byers points out that the benefits of increased exercise disappear rapidly after training stops, so any improvement in endurance resulting from juvenile play would be lost by adulthood. 'If the function of play was to get into shape,' says Byers, 'the optimum time for playing would depend on when it was most advantageous for the young of a particular species to do so. But it doesn't work like that.' Across species, play tends to peak about halfway through the suckling stage and then decline.

*Adopted from Cambridge English IELTS 4 (2005:50).*

## Appendix 10: A Sample of Think-aloud Protocols Data Analysis

**The candidate:** *I think it's 'scientists'*

*Note: she continue reading silently to guess the second deleted word (line 7). Think for a while and writes 'put' as the 2<sup>nd</sup> deleted word.*

*Continue reading silently to guesses the 3<sup>rd</sup> deleted word (line 9) as 'were', then continues \*\*\*\* till the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph. ++++*

**Comment [o4]:** Thinking in L1: في العادة هذه الكلمة تسبق INTO

\*\*\*\* According to Professor Newman, the larger Australian city of  
 === Melbourne ©© \*\*\*\* is a rather unusual city in this sort of comparison. He describes it as two cities: 'A European city surrounded by a car-dependent one'. Melbourne's large tram network has made car use in the inner city much lower, but the outer suburbs have the ... /// \*\*\*\* car-based structure as most other Australian cities. The explosion in demand for accommodation in the inner ... /// \*\*\*\* of Melbourne suggests a recent change in many people's preferences as to where they live. ++++.

**Articulating phonemes/syllables & REP syll**

**Thinking silently without reading**

**Thinking silently without reading**

**Pausing while reading**

\*\*\*\* Newman says this is a new, broader way of considering public transport issues. In the past, the case for public transport has been made on the basis of...!!! && \*\*\*\* and social justice === considerations rather than economics. Newman, however, believes the study == demonstrates that 'the auto-dependent city model is inefficient and grossly inadequate in economic as well as environmental terms'. ++++

**No attempt to guess the deleted word**

**Articulating phonemes/syllables**

**Articulating phonemes/syllables**

**Stop reading for a while**

!!.. && \*\*\*\* use was not included in the study but Newman noted that the two most 'bicycle friendly' cities considered - Amsterdam and == Cop/enhagen ©© \*\*\*\* were very == efficient, even though their public transport systems were == 'reasonable but not special'.

**No attempt to guess the deleted word**

**Articulating phonemes/syllables & REP syll**

**Articulating phonemes/syllables**

**Articulating phonemes/syllables**

**Comment [o5]:** Continues to the third paragraph aloud

**Comment [o6]:** Then continue RA

**Comment [o7]:** Then continue RA

**Comment [o8]:** Continues to the fourth paragraph aloud

**Comment [o9]:** Continues to the fifth paragraph



\*\*\*\*It is common for ... ~~///~~ \*\*\*\*of road networks to reject the models of cities with good public transport by arguing that such systems would not work in their particular city. One objection is climate. Some people say their city could not make more use of public transport because it is ... ~~///~~ too hot or too cold ~~○~~. Newman rejects this, pointing out that public transport has been successful in both Toronto and Singapore and, in fact, he has checked the use of cars against climate and found 'zero correlation'.

Thinking silently without reading then continue RA

Comment [o10]: Thinking: I think it's 'to be'

Thinking silently without reading Reread the sentence ←

Comment [o11]: After reading the whole sentence, she returns thinking: it's 'maybe'.

Finishes reading the first text.

Interviewer: Is comprehending the text easy for you?

The candidate: No!

Interviewer: Why?

The candidate: Because it is the first time that I read it. In speaking lessons I take one or two times.

Comment [o12]: Reason one for difficulty in comprehending

Comment [o13]: She think it's pronunciation lesson.

Interviewer: But it is reading!

The candidate: In reading I should read it two or three times to get the idea.

Comment [o14]: Strategy 1

Interviewer: Is the text difficult?

The candidate: It's not too difficult.

Interviewer: Are there any difficult words?

The candidate: Yes there are!

Comment [o15]: Vocabulary difficulty

Interviewer: Which word or sentence did you find difficult to understand?

The candidate: The problem is the text, which is too long, the case makes it difficult to comprehend. Therefore, because this is the first time you will not understand it.

Comment [o16]: Reason two for difficulty in comprehending: long sentences

Interviewer: Please can you tell me everything you understand from the text you just read?

The candidate: It's about a group of scientists conducting research and one of them conducts a study about the car industry, and maybe about cities. It is not clear! There are some words that if I translate them I will know what it is about.

Comment [o17]: Solution to comprehend: not able to translate

Interviewer: Ok, let us return to the deleted words. I notice that you guessed the 1<sup>st</sup> deleted word, line 6, as 'scientists'. Can you tell me how do you guess it?

**The candidate:** Maybe because he is describing Australia or maybe a particular person.

**Interviewer:** You guess the second deleted word as 'put', how?

**The candidate:** Oh, this is the word, which comes after 'into' so I guess it is 'put into'!

**Comment [o18]:** Grammatical justification for the selection

**Interviewer:** You guessed the third deleted word as 'were', how did you do that?

**The candidate:** Yes, 'were able'.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**The candidate:** He is speaking about the past 'pointed out'. Therefore, I was able. *لانه يتحدث عن "يؤقتد اوت"*

**Comment [o19]:** Grammatical justification for the selection

**Interviewer:** Ok, you couldn't guess the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> deleted words, why?

**The candidate:** The difficulty begins from the third paragraph, where I am now! I mean difficulty in comprehending the text.

**Interviewer:** When you are reading, you are reading aloud. Can you explain why you do that?

**The candidate:** This is normal. To read clearly for the teacher so he can hear our pronunciation.

**Comment [o20]:** Reason for reading aloud

**Interviewer:** Why?

**The candidate:** To see if I pronounce any word wrongly.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe for me the strategies you used to understand the text?

**The candidate:** Simply, I am looking and pronouncing the words!

**Comment [o21]:** Reading strategy

**Interviewer:** Ok, when you pronounce them, do you know their meaning?

**The candidate:** Yes, some I do and some I don't. To see if I know the word before or not.

**Comment [o22]:** Advantages of reading aloud

**Interviewer:** If you didn't see it before, what do you do?

**The candidate:** I look at the previous words to see its meaning from the context.

**Comment [o23]:** Fixing reading strategy

**Interviewer:** Do you know this topic before?

**The candidate:** No!

**Comment [o24]:** No experience about the topic

**Interviewer:** Do you use your grammatical knowledge to guess the meaning of the words?

**The candidate:** No!

**Comment [o25]:** No use of grammatical knowledge. However, she used.

**Interviewer:** But I saw you using your grammatical knowledge when you guessed the word 'were'. Therefore, you used it!

**The candidate:** Oh, yes! I do but I don't know how.

**Interviewer:** What about your vocabulary knowledge, does that help you understand the context?

**The candidate:** Yes, I use them with the words that I know but it didn't make any change.

**Comment [o26]:** Used vocabulary knowledge

**Interviewer:** If I give you a dictionary to use to translate the unfamiliar words, will that help you?

**The candidate:** Surely, now I know the meaning of some of the words, but if I used the dictionary, I'll have the full meaning of the words and also their pronunciation.

**Comment [o27]:** Dictionary advantages

**Interviewer:** Why do you focus on pronunciation in reading?

**The candidate:** My main problem is in pronunciation as with the other students.

**Comment [o28]:** The main purpose

**Interviewer:** Let us see your pronunciation knowledge in the next text.

## **Appendix 11: Plain Language Statement - Students in Class Observation**

*NB. To be translated into Arabic and made available to participants in English and Arabic, to select as they wish.*

### **1. Study title and Researcher Details**

The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities:  
Methods and Models.

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan, PhD Research Student at Glasgow University.

### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the challenges Libyan teachers face in teaching learners to read in English, and the challenges that learners face in reading in English. This research will investigate how English reading skills are being taught in Libyan Universities. Before you decide if you will take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or you would like more information on. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at Glasgow University. The aim of the research is to explore the teaching of reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities.

### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are learning English as a Foreign Language. Your experiences of learning the language will inform the research.

## **5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way, or jeopardise your relationship with me or any member of staff with whom you work.

## **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you agree to take part in this research project you will be asked to allow me to observe and video-tape the reading class which you attend with your usual teacher, so I can learn about the methods of teaching English reading that are used in Libyan Universities. In this classroom observation, I will not participate in the lesson activities. I will sit at the side of the class watching and taking notes, to explore the ways of teaching and learning English reading.

## **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

## **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The findings of the classroom observation will be used to inform my research and will be written up in English as part of the requirements for completion of a PhD in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The material may subsequently be used in conference presentations, publications arising from my research and to inform teaching and learning approaches. No participants will be identified in the findings of any presentation or publication resulting from the research. The final PhD thesis will be openly available from the University of Glasgow.

## **9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

The research is fully sponsored and funded by the Libyan government. The Libyan Government will not have an access to any identifiable information you will provide.

## **10. Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and is being supervised by Dr Nicki Hedge ([Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)), Dr Alison MacKenzie ([Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk)), School of Education, University of Glasgow

and by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

## **11. Contact for Further Information**

Nicki Hedge

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan

Email: [Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)

Email: [s.abosnan.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:s.abosnan.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

*If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you may contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Valentina Bold*  
[Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk).

## **Appendix 12: Plain Language Statement for Students Participating in Stage One**

*NB. To be translated into Arabic and available to participants in English and Arabic to select as they wish.*

### **1. Study title and Researcher Details**

The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities:  
Methods and Models.

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan, PhD Research Student at Glasgow University.

### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the challenges Libyan teachers face in teaching learners to read in English, and the challenges that learners face in reading in English. This research will investigate how English reading skills are being taught in Libyan Universities. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or you would like more information on. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at Glasgow University. The aim of the research is to explore the teaching of reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities.

### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are learning English as a Foreign Language. Your experiences of learning the language will inform the research.

### **5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way, or jeopardise your relationship with me or any member of staff with whom you work.

### **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you agree to take part in this research project you will be asked to read two texts and 'think aloud' while doing so (this method of enquiry is called a 'think-aloud protocol'). This will take approximately 30 minutes (15 minutes for each text) and it will be followed by an interview of about 30 minutes in which we will discuss your responses. In the interview we will also speak about the way you learn to read these types of texts. The interviews and think-aloud protocols will be audio-taped. For the think-aloud, I will ask you to speak in Arabic, and for the interviews you may speak in Arabic or English, whichever you prefer.

### **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

### **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The findings of the interviews and think-aloud protocols will be used to inform my research, and will be written up in English as part of the requirements for completion of a PhD in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The material may subsequently be used in conference presentations, publications arising from my research and to inform teaching and learning approaches. No participants will be identified in the findings of any presentation or publication resulting from the research. The final PhD thesis will be openly available from the University of Glasgow.

### **9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

The research is fully sponsored and funded by the Libyan government. The Libyan Government will not have an access to any identifiable information you will provide.



## **10. Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and is being supervised by Dr Nicki Hedge ([Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)), Dr Alison MacKenzie ([Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk)), School of Education, University of Glasgow and by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

## **11. Contact for Further Information**

Nicki Hedge

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan

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*If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you may contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Valentina Bold [Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk).*

## **Appendix 13: Plain Language Statement for Students Participating in Stage One and Two**

*NB. To be translated into Arabic and made available to participants in English and Arabic, to select as they wish.*

### **1. Study title and Researcher Details**

The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models.

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan, PhD Research Student at Glasgow University.

### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the challenges Libyan teachers face in teaching learners to read in English, and the challenges that learners face in reading in English. This research will investigate how English reading skills are being taught in Libyan Universities. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or you would like more information on. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at Glasgow University. The aim of the research is to explore the teaching of reading English as a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities.

### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are learning English as a Foreign Language. Your experiences of learning the language will inform the research.

## **5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way, or jeopardise your relationship with me or any member of staff with whom you work.

## **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you agree to take part in this research project you will be asked to read two texts and 'think aloud' while doing so (this method of enquiry is called a 'think-aloud protocol'). This will take approximately 30 minutes (15 minutes for each text) and will be followed by an interview of about 30 minutes in which we will discuss your responses. In the interview we will also speak about the way you learn to read these types of texts. The interviews and think-aloud protocols will be audio-taped. For the think-aloud, I will ask you to speak in Arabic, and for the interviews you may speak in Arabic or English, whichever you prefer.

In the second stage of the research, I will team-teach with your usual teacher in two lessons, using a new way of teaching reading. After that, I will ask six of you to join a focus group and discuss with me, and with each other, your reactions to the new method of teaching reading that I have introduced. The focus group will last up to 60 minutes, and I will audio-tape the discussion. You will also be asked to participate in one audio-taped think-aloud protocol session which will last 15 minutes, followed by an audio-recorded semi-structured interview for 30 minutes, to evaluate the success of the new method of teaching reading.

## **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed, so that you cannot be recognised from it.

## **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The findings of the interviews and think-aloud protocols will be used to inform my research, and will be written up in English as part of the requirements for completion of a PhD in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The material may

subsequently be used in conference presentations, publications arising from my research, and to inform teaching and learning approaches. No participants will be identified in the findings of any presentation or publication resulting from the research. The final PhD thesis will be openly available from the University of Glasgow.

**9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

The research is fully sponsored and funded by the Libyan government. The Libyan Government will not have access to any identifiable information you will provide.

**10. Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and is being supervised by Dr Nicki Hedge ([Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)), Dr Alison MacKenzie ([Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk)), School of Education, University of Glasgow, and by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

**11. Contact for Further Information**

Nicki Hedge

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## **Appendix 14: Plain Language Statement for Teachers Participating in Stage One**

*NB. To be translated into Arabic, and made available to participants in English and Arabic, to select as they wish.*

### **1. Study title and Researcher Details**

The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models.

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan, PhD Research Student at Glasgow University.

### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the challenges Libyan teachers face in teaching learners to read in English, and the challenges that learners face in reading in English. This research will investigate how English reading skills are being taught in Libyan Universities. Before you decide if you will take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at Glasgow University. The aim of the research is to explore the teaching of reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities.

### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are teaching English as a Foreign Language. Your experiences of teaching the language will inform the research.

## **5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will be free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way, or jeopardise your relationship with me or any member of staff with whom you work.

## **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you accept my invitation to take part in this research project you will be asked to allow me to attend and video-tape one of your reading lesson classes (when convenient to you) as an observer, so I can learn about the methods of teaching English reading that you use. Before that class, I would like to audio-record an interview for 10 minutes, in order to gain some information about the lesson's objectives and materials used. This will be followed by an audio-recorded semi-structured interview for 30 minutes after the lesson. The idea is to obtain some information about the teaching and reading methods used in the class, and to discuss your views of the teaching reading methods used in the Libyan EFL classroom. The main aim of this phase is to get a general idea of how reading English is taught in the Libyan universities.

## **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed, so that you cannot be recognised from it.

## **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The findings of the interviews and classroom observations will be used to inform my research and will be written up in English as part of the requirements for completion of a PhD in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The material may subsequently be used in conference presentations, publications arising from my research, and to inform teaching and learning approaches. No participants will be identified in the findings of any presentation or publication resulting from the research. The final PhD thesis will be openly available from the University of Glasgow.

**9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

The research is fully sponsored and funded by the Libyan government. The Libyan Government will not have an access to any identifiable information you will provide.

**10. Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and is being supervised by Dr Nicki Hedge ([Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)), Dr Alison MacKenzie ([Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk)), School of Education, University of Glasgow and by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

**11. Contact for Further Information**

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## **Appendix 15: Plain Language Statement for Teacher Participant in Stage One and Two**

*NB. To be translated into Arabic, and made available to participants in English and Arabic to select as they wish.*

### **1. Study title and Researcher Details**

The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models.

Salem Hamed Mohamed Hamed Abosnan, PhD Research Student at Glasgow University.

### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the challenges Libyan teachers face in teaching learners to read in English, and the challenges that learners face in reading in English. This research will investigate how English reading skills are being taught in Libyan Universities. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at Glasgow University. The aim of the research is to explore the teaching of reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities.

### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are teaching English as a Foreign Language. Your experiences of teaching the language will inform the research.



## **5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. You will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way, or jeopardise your relationship with me or any member of staff with whom you work.

## **6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you accept my invitation to take part in this research project you will be asked to allow me to attend and video-tape one of your reading lesson classes (when convenient to you) as an observer, so I can learn about the methods of teaching English reading that you use. Before that class, I would like to audio-record an interview for 10 minutes in order to gain some information about the lesson's objectives and materials used. This will be followed by an audio-recorded semi-structured interview for 30 minutes after the lesson. The idea is to obtain some information about the teaching and reading methods used in the class, and discuss your views of the teaching reading methods used in the Libyan EFL classroom. The main aim of this phase is to get a general idea of how reading English is taught in Libyan universities.

In the second stage of the research, I would like to invite you to contribute to two team-teaching lessons with me, for 60 minutes each, to introduce a different way of teaching reading (leading to 'reading for meaning' using, ultimately an interactive model of reading in a foreign language). Then, I would like to invite you to teach your learners two reading lessons using the same procedure, where I will observe and video-tape the lessons to record the classroom activities, and followed by audio-recorded discussion to evaluate the new methods of teaching reading. Finally, I would like to conduct a 30-minute audio-taped Skype interview with the reading English teacher from Kufra Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the end of the semester, to discuss any changes with respect to reading behaviour, strategies, reaction and performance of the learners.

## **7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information collected during the course of the research project will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

## **8. What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The findings of the interviews, team-teaching group and classroom observations will be used to inform my research, and will be written up in English as part of the

requirements for completion of a PhD in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The material may subsequently be used in conference presentations, publications arising from my research and to inform teaching and learning approaches. No participants will be identified in the findings of any presentation or publication resulting from the research. The final PhD thesis will be openly available from the University of Glasgow.

**9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

The research is fully sponsored and funded by the Libyan government. The Libyan Government will not have an access to any identifiable information you will provide.

**10. Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and is being supervised by Dr Nicki Hedge (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk), Dr Alison MacKenzie (Alison.Mackenzie.2@glasgow.ac.uk), School of Education, University of Glasgow and by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

**11. Contact for Further Information**

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Email: [s.abosnan.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:s.abosnan.1@research.gla.ac.uk)

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[Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Valentina.Bold@glasgow.ac.uk).

**Appendix 16: Participant Consent Form for Learners Observed in Reading Class**

**Name of Researcher:** Salem Hamed Abosnan

**Title of Project:** The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models

**Please initial/check box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐
4. I agree to be observed and video-taped by the researcher in an EFL reading lesson. ☐

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Salem Hamed Abosnan Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 17: Participant Consent Form for Learners Participating in Stage One**

**Name of Researcher:** Salem Hamed Abosnan

**Title of Project:** The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models

**Please initial/check box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐
4. I agree to the interview being audio-recorded. ☐
5. I agree to participate in an audio-recorded think-aloud protocol. ☐

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Salem Hamed Abosnan Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 18: Participant Consent Form- Teachers Participants in Stage One**

**Name of Researcher:** Salem Hamed Abosnan

**Title of Project:** The Teaching of Reading English in a Foreign Language in Libyan Universities: Methods and Models

**Please initial/check box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐
4. I agree to the interviews being audio-recorded. ☐
5. I accept that you can observe and video-tape my reading EFL lesson. ☐

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Salem Hamed Abosnan Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_