

Evaluating Saudi Teachers' Knowledge in Teaching Students to Read in Arabic

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore these expectations on teachers of Arabic reading, in three keys stages of reading instruction: the planning stage, the presentation stage, and the evaluation stage. The purpose of this study is to reveal the knowledge of the teachers of Arabic reading in grades five and six of primary school. The study attempted to answer the question: What is the Saudi teachers' knowledge in teaching primary school students to read in Arabic in terms of (planning, presentation and evaluation). The data were collected quantitatively from 30 of supervisors of Arabic language teachers. The findings of this study determined the skills-based competencies as perceived by Saudi teachers that are needed to teach Arabic reading in the grades five and six of primary school. Furthermore, the findings of this study may inform the policies and practices for the teaching of Arabic reading and the training of teachers of Arabic language in the primary school. Also, the study has provided the education field in Saudi Arabia with actual statements on the knowledge of the teachers of Arabic reading in the primary schools. The supervisors evaluated teachers' knowledge for planning skills as fair level, they evaluated teachers' knowledge for presentation skills as good standard and they evaluated teachers' knowledge for evaluation skills as poor level.

Keywords: Evaluating, Saudi teachers, knowledge, read, Arabic

Introduction

Reading is considered important in Saudi Arabia. People in Saudi Arabia read the Holy Qur'an every day, as 100% of the Saudis are Muslims (Timothy et al., 2006). Furthermore, in chapter 96 of Holy Qur'an, āyah 1-5 the first direct revelation to the Prophet Mohammed was the Clinging Clot chapter (Al-Alaq). The commencement of this chapter and the Qur'an as well, was: "Read in the name of your Lord and Cherisher..., He Who taught the use of the pen. Taught the human that which he knew not" (Ali, 2005) p. 457. Because of this, Islam encourages Muslims to seek knowledge through reading.

There are complaints in Saudi Arabia about students' poor literacy standards and associated low levels in reading skills, which are claimed to be due to the drop in the Arabic language teachers' performance (Al-Thumali, 2002; Al-Uthaym, 2003). Many teachers seemed to be ignoring the importance of reading and its objectives. Teachers considered a reading lesson as being leisure time (Al-Huwaymil, 1996) and demonstrated a lack of interest in teaching reading skills (Al-Qahtani, 2007). In fact, the teaching of Arabic reading requires specific teaching skills and teachers should know and be aware of these skills to facilitate students' learning (Al-Ruqy, 2008).

Teaching Arabic reading skills to students requires teachers to demonstrate particular pedagogical skills. Teachers are expected to exhibit high skills in three stages of their teaching: during the planning of reading lessons; during the implementation of the plan in classrooms; and during the evaluation process. Without awareness of the importance of these skills, and of their current lack of knowledge, teachers cannot achieve the objectives of teaching Arabic reading (Bazarah, 2009). All of the above confirms that it is necessary for teachers to have a clear understanding of what to do when teaching Arabic reading and to know and be aware of the skills needed to teach Arabic reading at the levels of planning, presentation, and evaluation in order to teach Arabic reading effectively.

Compared to research on other Arabic language skills, the research on Arabic reading is strong; namely writing, speaking, and listening in the Arab world (Al-Qahtani, 2007). However, it has been noticed that school students have a poor attitude to Arabic reading in Saudi Arabia while the Arabic language teachers have poor teaching skills (Al-Isawi, 1993; Al-Khalifah, 2005; Al-Shaharani, 1997). It is important for teachers to know and be aware of the skills involved in teaching Arabic reading and how these skills can be implemented in the classroom. Hence, the aim of this study is to identify current levels of Arabic language teachers' knowledge of the skills required to teach the Arabic language in the grade five and six of Saudi Arabian primary schools. In particular, the study aims to look at three stages involved in teaching Arabic: planning, presentation, and evaluation. Furthermore, the importance of this study emerges from the fact that its results can assist the Arabic language teachers and the supervisors of Arabic language in teaching Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia. The results from this study will also reveal the current state of teachers' mastery of these skills and in turn assist planners and decision makers of the Arabic language teachers' preparation programs to plan more suitable preparation programs for the future.

Objectives of this Study

1. To assist Arabic language teachers in identifying and applying the required skills-based competencies of teaching the Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia.
2. To assist Arabic Language supervisors in evaluating teachers' performance in teaching Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia.
3. Measurement instrument to facilitate the evaluation of teaching Arabic reading in Saudi Arabia. Which is a questionnaire for Arabic language supervisors in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, who are experts in supervising Arabic language education. This questionnaire sought supervisors' judgments on what Saudi teachers of Arabic language know about the teaching of reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia.

Research Questions

The specific focus of this study is to explore the knowledge of Arabic language teachers in Saudi Arabia who teach students in the grade five and six of primary school to read in Arabic. The study attempts to answer the following research question:

How well do the Saudi teachers in grade five and six of primary schools know the skills-based competencies (planning, presentation, and evaluation) for teaching Arabic reading?

Importance of Reading

The developing of reading skills in the primary years lays a foundation for lifelong critical reading and learning across all disciplines. Moreover, it is essential to never under-rate the importance of the skills required to decode print with accuracy and fluency (Parris et al., 2009). Reading is one of the most important activities in the linguistic life of the individual and the group and one of the most important tools for the acquisition of knowledge, culture, and communicating with the production of human knowledge. The reader goes from one piece of information to another in the reading of the text, from understanding to concluding, and from linking to analysing. Reading fuels the reader's imagination and develops mental abilities and thinking skills (Bazarah, 2009).

Reading is a tool used to facilitate learning in all aspects of school and in life. Without the ability to read, students will not be able to learn as a similar rate to their peers. Through reading, students are empowered to use their language to comprehend and interact in their immediate surroundings and in wider society (Marzano, 2007; Marzano et al., 2012; Rayner et al., 2010). Reading has helped students develop and learn in the school environment in many ways. Shihātah (1997) stated that reading has four advantages for students: (1) enhanced their experiences and allowed them to reach their maximum potential; (2) allowed students to develop their knowledge base and to apply this knowledge in their relationships with other people; (3) increased their self-confidence; and (4) provided students with the ability and knowledge to further problem solve and develop new ideas. Reading is also important for the wider community because it has helped communities share with other communities and cultures and linked community members with their national heritage. Moreover, reading has helped community member to become more familiar with their national heritage and in turn promoted education, industry, and agriculture (Abdulhadi, 2003).

Reading Processes and Theoretical Models

Reading is a cognitive and emotional process that has included the interpretation of symbols and written letters received by the reader through the eyes or using the fingertips for people with visual impairments. This process of understanding apprehends the meanings and links them with previous experiences, criticism, and problem-solving (Shahatah, 1997). Reading is learning the words and pronouncing them, understanding the text and being able to critique it, expanding experiences and benefits from reading, solving problems and achieving comfort (Al-Khalifah, 2004). Reading requires a complexity of skills involving the manipulation of many processes and models, often each process refers to only one aspect of it, however, they are in essence all models or components of models and processes of reading. This will not outline all existing or potential models and processes of reading, but will focus on a selection of endorsed and highly regarded processes and models (Rayner et al., 2010).

Cognitive scientists composed ten questions two decades ago that should be asked when approaching reading. It is to be noted that these same ten questions still remain extremely relevant to current research on the psychology of reading (Rayner et al., 2010). These questions are identified in Table 1 and relate to the identification of words in association with reading and spoken language as well as the skills required in order to read or speed-read and how to support students to read, in particular those who experience difficulties in this area.

Table 1 Psychology of reading

Questions on psychology of reading

1. How are text words identified?
2. How does the system of spoken language interconnect with identifying words and reading?
3. Are words identified in the text in a different way to when they are on their own in isolation?
4. How does the action of the eyes motioning across the page shape the answers to the questions listed above?
5. How does the reader extend past the literal meaning of individual words?
6. What are the new mental structures formed after reading?
7. How does the actual skill of reading grow?
8. How can we address individual diversity amongst readers from the same culture and also across cultures?
9. How can we identify and address supporting reading difficulties?
10. Can basic reading be improved upon to an increased level of higher order thinking, such as speed-reading?

However, as previously stated, the main goal in this section is to focus on the development of various reading models created to address specific aspects of the processes of reading. Some of the many models devised over the last three decades include Interactive-Activation, Activation Verification, Multiple Read-Out, Multiple-Trace Memory, Multiple-Levels, Connectivist Dual-Process; and Bayesian Reader models (Norris, 2006; Stalker et al., 2006). These models have influenced the direction of current reading models.

In addition to the current models of reading, it is important to acknowledge reading theory development that commenced several decades ago and first gained prominence in the 1970s. The emergence of reading theory development provided a foundation for more recent theories. These earlier theories were grouped into three broad categories: the bottom-up theory, the top-down theory, and the interactive or transactive theory. Bottom-up theories focused on the meaning of text being found directly in the text on the page and that this literally travels from the page to the eyes with the text page representing the bottom and the process of it travelling up to the eyes, is the up process (Vialle et al., 2000). This theory further argued that meaning is derived by a process of reading that starts with looking at letters that form printed words and then looking at words that create sentences and whole text; it is this combination that together allows meaning to emerge (Vialle et al., 2000).

The bottom-up theory fostered the belief that reading is a process involving a number of skills, from being instructed from simple to complex, together creating a combined process for reading, viewing it essentially as a visual stimulus on the page that needs to be identified and linked to the correct phonics (P. Harris et al., 2001).

Top-down theories place importance on the first stage of reading processes, commencing in the brain, the top and then travelling down to the text, where the reader relied on their prior learned experiences (secured in their brain) to unpack the text. The goal of reading from top-down is to use the reader's prior knowledge and experience to make meaning. Reading is considered a process of complexity that is reliant on factors from inside the reader's mind and externally from the physical representation of text on the page. In practice, this theory places emphasis on the reading being a meaning-making process, with a relationship between meaning being constructed in the head first from prior knowledge, that then influences how the text print and the sound patterns relate to predicted meanings being constructed in the learner's mind hierarchically (P. Harris et al., 2001). The top-down model fosters a constructivist approach to reading (Vialle et al., 2000).

The Interactive or transactive theories evolved in the 1980s that reading is a process of making meaning that relies on adopting all processes present in the 'top-down' model, it also needs, at times, to include that readers have a skills based focus, that is parallel to a bottom-up model approach (P. Harris et al., 2001). There is a belief that the interactive model of reading acknowledged that reading is a social act with social purposes. Moreover, the process of arriving at making meaning from text is an active, constructive, and cultural process. It is a transaction taking place between the cultural context of the reader's prior knowledge and the author's intended cultural meanings (Kucer et al., 2006). Two current reading models outlined below are the Dual Route Cascaded (DRC) model and a selection of parallel processes that are best known as, triangular. These models are considered the most current (Coltheart et al., 2001).

Models of word identification.

These two models offered contrasting frameworks in respect to the process in which words are identified and represented in the cognitive lexicon, delving into whether word identification is directed by language rules that are utilised to access the pronunciation and decoding of word and word meaning, or whether it is a process in which different forms of lexical information give more subtle boundaries to the pronunciations and/or meanings that evolve throughout the duration of identifying words. The DRC model is placed in parallel with the former viewpoint, whereas the triangle models are placed more towards alignment with the latter viewpoint (Rayner et al., 2010).

Two basic assumptions exist within the DRC model (Coltheart et al., 2001). The first assumption is that the

pronunciation of words can be fuelled in two actions – via applying grapheme-to-phoneme rules that then translate into the individual letters (graphemes) of a whole word, transferring into their matching phonological phoneme representations and then moving onto a more specific mapping of the spelling of words into its decoded pronunciation; hence, this model is passed in the dual route model approach (Lee et al., 2001). The second assumption involved the way in which lexical representations, both orthographic and phonological word forms are represented holistically, in discrete separate steps in the lexicon, in order for the words to be decoded by mapping the graphemes of the word onto the orthographic unit that enables most appropriate matching, followed by the orthographic unit to activating the phonological unit in a direct manner that corresponds to the decoded pronunciation of the word. However, in contrast to other Dual Route approaches, the already placed and direct avenues which operate in parallel to the DRC model, in respect to word pronunciation of any word in the majority of instances being determined in combination by the overall products of both these avenues. These two avenues provide strong decoding and pronunciation of regular word spellings but not in irregular words (Rayner et al., 2010).

Models of syntactic parsing.

To progress on from the above outlined models of how the meaning and pronunciation (decoding) of words occurs, onto how they these individual work meanings are then constructed into making meaning of the entire sentence – models of syntactic parsing, that essentially explain the manner in which linguistic structures and limitations, actually guides how the needed representations are constructed to be able to make sense of the whole sentence meaning (A. J. Harris et al., 1979). These models take a bottom-up input approach to the meanings of each word presented by the characteristics of word identification models previously discussed and reviewed above. These models are placed into three general categories: garden path models, constraint-based models, and a selection of models that have been put into place using connectionist frameworks (Rayner et al., 2010). The first two of these groups of models have gained significant acknowledgement and given that the key assumptions of the connectionist models are mostly parallel with those models of the constraint-based approach, the following discussion will concentrate on the garden-path and constraint-based models, that will be outlined below. The main distinction between these two categories of models is the degree of importance placed on the syntactic processing taking place during the reading (Rayner et al., 2010).

The garden-path models prioritise the grammatical structure and construction of the sentence. Garden path models have suggested that the reader first constructs an individual grammatical analysis of a sentence (words, phrases, and clauses), followed by interpreting this sentence, and if lacking clarification of the overall sentence, the reader re-engage in further analysis of the sentence. However, the construction of a single analysis is not a mandatory requirement of the model that allows grammatical local priorities in understanding the meaning of the semantics. But rather, serial first-depth models make an assumption that one analysis is selected and that the first analysis is merely the one that is finished first (Clifton Jr et al., 2003).

The primary contrasting approach is the constraint-based models that present the grammatical structure of a sentence is merely one aspect of many constraint dynamics interlinking in sentence understanding. Therefore, constraint-based models, view the grammatical structure as carrying a high degree of importance in determining the final interpretation of sentence meaning, but it omits precedence over other points, such as the contextual constraints or the plausibility. The constraint-based model utilised various diverse forms of information. In order to arrive at these predictions, the diverse kinds of information activation across the connections to scaffold both of the two-potential sentence meaning interpretations, in order to enable a number of process cycles, resulting in the model finally settling into a state parallel with either of the two interpretations..The overall objective is to provide explanations as to why mistakes in analysis happen and to be able to identify the processes in which this misanalysis re corrected, in order to enable the readers to be able to construct accurate interpretations of sentence meaning (Rayner et al., 2010).

Progressing on from the above, explicit models of processes for arriving at individual word meaning and whole sentence meaning when reading, the discourses extending on from this can be described as the basic fundamental discourse processes of reading as listed below (Kucer et al., 2006):

Pre-Reading: The initial levels of learning, as described in Bloom's Taxonomy, involve recognising and comprehending features of a text. Bloom's taxonomy is a technique of distinguishing the fundamental questions within the education system.

Initial Reading: Initial reading tasks orient the learner to the text and activate the cognitive resources that are associated with the learner's own expectations..

Rereading: In rereading, the learner is encouraged to engage in active production such as verbal or written analysis and argumentation. These activities require longer and more complex discourse. At this point, the language learners' critical thinking needs to interact with their general knowledge.

Reading Strategies

In the last decade there has been notable growth in the interest of conducting research into strategies to optimally teach young learners. Upper primary school students are pre-adolescents and they possess characteristics shaped by their own individual and unique literacy needs (Risko et al., 2008), which include the following five areas: (1) Their experience with relevant and a range of texts; (2) Opportunities for developing relationships; (3) Opportunities for engaging in discussions and critical thinking; (4) Being motivated and engaged in the learning processes; and (5) A feeling of autonomous learning and having an identity.

Yang (2006) has highlighted that given that there are many varied definitions of reading strategies have been presented and therefore, Block (1986) created two classifications for reading strategies: general strategies and local strategies. General strategies deal with higher level reading comprehension, whereas local strategies deal with the basics of linguistics such as vocabulary, sentence construction and grammar (Block, 1986; Yang, 2006). Some examples of general strategies are: predicting, text structure awareness, integrating information, presenting questions, text interpretation, using knowledge and associations from personal and educational experiences, reflection on processes and behaviours, monitoring comprehension, self-correction, and text reactions.

Furthermore, a significant number of studies over the decades of modern educational research have explored how reading strategies influence readers' comprehension (Block, 1986; Ellery et al., 2011; Kralovec et al., 2001; Parris et al., 2009). In many respects, reading is a thinking activity. Readers do more than just recognise the symbols and words in a written text. They think about the meaning of what they read and link it to their previous knowledge. It is a comprehension process involving different types of experiences (Holliday, 2008) that include: topic and vocabulary in written text, use of the language, sounding out letters, and reading the symbols.

Teachers aim to teach using strategies that ultimately motivate and engage students via the learning processes. Motivating students to learn to read, teachers must recognise that the learner is often only engaged in reading the basic content in a cursory way (Irvin et al., 2008). Hence, teachers need to be enthusiastically aware of what their students' interests, ability strengths and which aspects of the multiple intelligences are characteristic of each learner (Ellery et al., 2011). When teachers use strategies to engage students, then student outcomes are improved (Marzano, 2007). Upper primary students need to have progressed into higher levels of being autonomous learners, where the main goal of a higher order thinking skilled reader is to be self-regulated and independent learners (Parris et al., 2009).

Strategies described as enduring fundamental steps that will provide scaffolding that underpins current ongoing reading initiatives that will support and promote proficiency in reading are effectively stipulated in the table below (Ellery et al., 2011).

Table 2 Initiative to promote and support reading

Word study	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
Synthesising	Phrasing		Previewing
Analysing affixes	Scaffolding	Associating	Activating and connecting
Analysing root words	Rereading	Contextualising	Predicting
Spelling	Expressing	Visualising	Inquiring and inferring
	Pacing	Personalising	Determining importance
	Wide reading	Referencing	Summarising and synthesising

* Adapted from Ellery (2011).

Pani (2004) conducted research into reading strategy instruction through mental modelling, which promoted teachers modelling the mental processes that a more advanced reader uses when making meaning of a text. Mental modelling informed students about the logical processes that are behind an active strategic reader. It essentially demonstrated to the learner the 'how' processes of thinking aloud, as one works through making meaning of a text (Pani, 2004). Hence, the reader can get an idea of what is happening in the processes of the reader who is more advanced, that the student can then mimic and learn from.

The use of readings strategies does not always guarantee a definite path to proficient reading comprehension. Furthermore, reading strategies may not work effectively or ineffectively for any reader but rather, the reader may or may not achieve proficient comprehension of a text, as it is always dependent on factors such as: the individual reader, the text type, the context and what other reading strategies have been employed. Hence, it is paramount that readers are taught a variety of strategies, so that they can embrace using different strategies at various times. This is referred to as learners developing meta-cognitive awareness, meta-cognition of reading strategies or comprehension monitoring strategies (Yang, 2006).

There are numerous reading strategies for teachers to employ. Reading; strategies are divided into two main sections: general strategies and local strategies. The focus of general strategies is on higher order thinking skills utilised in reading comprehension, such as making inferences, whereas local strategies aim at dealing with the

very basics of linguistic knowledge, such as word meaning and sentence constructions (Block, 1986; Yang, 2006). Moreover, reading strategies are the broad mental processes that range from arriving at word meanings in context in relation to the extract. Additionally, comprehension monitoring strategies involved processes that incorporated formative assessment, planning, and evaluation (Cohen, 2014).

Types of Reading Taught According to Performance

Reading aloud is the process of capturing the printed characters, delivered to the brain through the eye, understanding the combination of symbols in isolation, and then matching them with stored meanings inside the brain. After that, the words are spoken aloud and with the aim of correct pronunciation (Ulayan, 2000). Reading aloud is the process by which translation of written symbols becomes spoken words and audible sounds, with a variety of emphases, depending on the intended meaning. Reading aloud occupies a prominent place in the field of literacy as it enables teachers to evaluate students' reading abilities and to identify potential reading difficulties (Al-Bajjah, 2001). The drawbacks of reading aloud include factors such as insufficient lesson time for all students to participate in reading aloud, time taken to read aloud is much longer than time taken for silent reading, and reading aloud required students to focus on the words, grammar, and pronunciations, which may result in reduced text comprehension and understanding of meaning (Amir, 2000; Samak, 1998).

On the other hand, reading aloud has many benefits. It is the foundation of language arts and it is an experience involving different elements: the teacher, students, and a piece of literature. The role of the teacher when students are reading aloud is to be knowledgeable about children's literature and literary theory and to conduct discussions in the classroom. Students also must become effective participants during reading lessons. They need to pay attention to the piece of literature they are reading and sustain it in their minds. They are expected to interpret the general meanings and share them with classmates. Teachers need to judge whether a piece of literature is suitable for the reading aloud lesson. (Serafini et al., 2003).

2.6 Approaches to Teaching Reading in the First Language

The teacher's knowledge, be it personal or practical, helps to direct reading lessons by the type of lesson plan they choose for the reading lesson and how the teachers interact with students during lesson time, in addition to then assessing the students' performance on the literacy activity. This approach to teaching reading will guide students' involvement in literacy activities and their overall attitudes toward reading (McEwan, 2002; Vacca et al., 2014).

There have been various approaches to teach reading in the first language. In the middle of the 20th century, the whole-word approach became popular. In this approach, students learned whole words by sight and then broke down the words into their components after learning a number of words. This whole-word approach did not last long and subsequently its use faded over time as the approach was revealed as being ineffective in learning to read (Taylor et al., 2002). With the decline in the whole-word approach, the whole-language approach gained popularity.

The main aim of the whole-language approach is focused on involving students in reading and writing activities at the same time. From an opposing view, another method also became popular, namely the systematic teaching of phonics. The debate between the supporters of the two approaches was intense until the early 1990s, when Pressley and his colleagues noticed the gap between these approaches (Taylor et al., 2002). The instructional approaches of teaching reading are summarised as follows: the basic reading approach, the language-experience approach, integrated language arts, literature-based instruction, technology-based instruction, and approaches and strategies in comprehensive instruction (Vacca et al., 2014).

Research on Teaching of Reading

A study by Alrashed (2001) proposed programs to develop the skills of silent reading and was conducted to investigate the impact of silent reading on improving the level the learner's academic achievement. The study aimed to identify the effectiveness of the program for the development of silent reading skills and test its effectiveness on a sample of sixth grade students in Riyadh. Moreover, the study found the need to detect as early as possible those students whose ability to read silently had declined, thereby making it easier to help them. Finally, it recognised the need to establish training courses for teachers in how to design treatment programs for silent reading, under the guidance of academics in reading education from the Faculties of Education (Al-Rashid, 2001).

al-Thaqafī (2001) conducted a study to determine the skills needed by Arabic female teachers when teaching reading in the last three grades of the primary school. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire applied to a sample of 157 professionals and educational supervisors. The study identified 36 planning skills, 41 implementation skills, and 20 evaluation skills. The study recommended that training sessions for teachers who teach reading should aim at raising the level of their performance, directing attention to the training of female teachers of Arabic in all skills in teaching reading, ensuring attitudes applied to promote the growth of these skills, and linking the in-service training programs with the teachers' preparation programs (Al-Thaqafi, 2001).

In an investigation of the methods of teaching, Igra (2009) conducted a study in the USA using literacy theory as a reading strategy. This study explored twelve literature teachers' prior knowledge and practice, and examined their involvement in professional development. This study connected professional development, teacher knowledge, classroom practice, and student learning. The researcher observed and supported teachers' practice and assessed their students' learning. The researcher conducted interviews for teacher and student, observations in classroom, and assessments for the student learning. The study suggested that interpretive frameworks empowered students to deepen comprehension and develop multiple theoretically-grounded interpretations of literary and non-school texts (Igra, 2009).

One study on the knowledge of teaching reading comprehension mapping the terrain investigated what teachers know and do in the course of teaching reading comprehension, and why it is that most U.S. students do not learn to comprehend text well in 4th and 5th grade classrooms Scott (2009). Scott (2009) identified the skills needed by teachers to teach reading comprehension. Scott (2009) conducted a corpus of videotaped lessons, interviews with teachers about their work, and artefacts that purport to define the knowledge base for teaching reading comprehension. The study aimed at answering the following questions: What is it specifically that the participating teachers in the study do when they use strategies to teach reading? What are possible challenges and influential factors affecting teachers' implementation of reading comprehension instruction?

The study results emphasised several emerging themes. First, while analysis of classroom data indicated notable differences in respect to actual reading comprehension instruction, these discrepancies may be a result of the how reading comprehension instruction is characterised in policies, assessments, and accessible resources. Of significance is how the analysis reveals fundamental flaws and discrepancies in the ways in which leading literacy academics arrive at definitions of what reading comprehension is and the manner in which reading comprehension is conceptualised in other resources.. The study concludes with a proposal of a theory of knowledge for teaching reading comprehension (Scott, 2009).

al-Rūqy (2008) examined student teachers' abilities to teach reading skills in the higher three grades in primary school in Taif. The participant population consisted of all student teachers (58) at the Teachers College in Taif. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher prepared a checklist (including a list of skills) to observe student teachers during their teaching practicum. The study concluded by defining the skills needed for the teaching of reading: preparing, implementing, and evaluating in primary school. Furthermore, the study discovered the low performance of student teachers in reading teaching skills during the teaching practicum program in which the students teachers did not achieve many of the program's objectives (Al-Ruqy, 2008).

Research on Teachers of Arabic Language

The literature in this section discussed the research studies conducted in the Arabic speaking world in order to evaluate teachers' skill to teach Arabic language; on training needs; and on the requirements of personal qualities and professional competence for Arabic language teachers. These studies provided ample amount of information on the evaluation of teachers' teaching skills that helps this current study in evaluating reading skills of teachers in the primary Arabic classes.

The Faculty of Education in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, conducted a study in 1992 to investigate the impact of scientific, teaching profession and cultural courses in the classroom practice of the student teachers. The main objective of this study was to measure the skills of the student teacher. This study used a list of skills to evaluate the performance of student teachers. it was found that the student teachers had sufficient skills to teach before graduation. However, they did not reach the highest level of performance during their teaching practice (Ismael, 1992).

Bakkār (2001) conducted a study on the practice of female student teachers for the required teaching standards of King Saud University. the researcher designed a checklist composed of eight criteria and 33 discretionary measures. The study concluded set of findings (N. Bakkar, 2001):

- Student teachers' proficiency was 50% of the required teaching standards.
- Student teachers did not practice the standards of the conversation of substance.

The study revealed that 30% of the total study population achieved the discrimination level of required standards.

al-Fahimī (2001) investigated the training needs of Arabic Language Teachers in the first three grades of primary school to identify the needs of the teaching profession on the one hand and the needs for specialisation in the Arabic language on the other. The researcher used a descriptive survey method and a questionnaire on 80 training needs. The survey was distributed among 68 supervisors and 186 teachers. The most prominent findings identified a list of training needs for teachers of the first three grades at primary school, in order of importance of each need (Al-Fahimi, 2001).

al-Thumālī (2002) conducted a study to determine the personal qualities and professional competence requirements of Arabic language teachers at secondary school. The study aimed to identify the personal qualities (physical, mental, moral, psychological, and social) and professional competence (knowledge, skills, and

attitudes) required of these teachers from the viewpoint of Arabic Language Supervisors. The researcher used a descriptive approach using a questionnaire, which included a set of thirty personal qualities characters and sixty-six professional competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes), and then applied them to all the supervisors of the Arabic language (71 supervisors) in the Makkah region (Makkah, Jeddah and Taif). (Al-Thumali, 2002).

al-'uthaymīn (2003) conducted a study on the practice of female teachers teaching the skills of literary texts in an intermediate school in Makkah. The study aimed to investigate the current state of their practice for preparation, implementation, and evaluation skills. The researcher used a descriptive approach, and the study instrument was a checklist applied to 59 female student teachers. The important findings of the study were:

Student teachers neglected many teaching skills in the three aspects of preparation, implementation, and evaluation during the teaching practicum; and

Student teachers did not apply the needed teaching skills of literacy that help the development of literacy in female students (Al-Othaymin, 2003)

al-Qaḥṭanī (2007) conducted a study to evaluate the current state of student teachers' performance for the skills of speaking and writing education in grade six in a primary school in the Jeddah Governorate. The study used a descriptive approach using a checklist of 45 teaching skills of speaking and writing. The instrument was implemented on a sample consisting of 68 student teachers with Arabic language specialisation in a teaching practice program. The study revealed that there was a relatively low level of performance in their implementation of the program of teaching practice, and finally the skills of implementation; the average grade of the student teachers in evaluating skills was 2.91 out of 4, and the average grade in preparing skills was 2.83 out of 4, while the average grade in implementing skills was 2.62 out of 4 (Al-Qahtani, 2007).

Bāzar'ah (2009) conducted a study to evaluate Arabic language teachers in the light of the necessary skills for developing creative thinking amongst students in the first grade of secondary school at Makkah. The researcher devised a list of basic teaching skills to develop creative thinking and created an observation checklist containing 39 teaching skills. And then the checklist applied to 40 Arabic teachers. The study showed the poor performance of Arabic teachers for the skills of developing creative thinking. The study recommended that teacher training programs should contain training themes to help train pre-service teachers on the skills of developing creative thinking and methods of development (Bazarah, 2009).

In conclusion, the research conducted on teaching, planning, presenting and evaluating Arabic is of significant value to the entire research on Arabic Language Studies. Moreover, this literature review has determined the necessary explicit teaching skills of Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it has highlighted that the current knowledge of theoretical models and strategies for teaching reading currently used in Saudi Arabia by teachers are antiquated and do not reflect current trends in teaching reading. Consequently, this lack of current teaching practices that best promote reading success will affect the growth of Arabic literacy outcomes in Saudi Arabia.

Teacher's knowledge and skills.

The current study is concerned with evaluating Saudi teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching students in the grade five and six of primary school to read in Arabic. Sanders, Wright, & Horn, (1997) claimed that teachers' knowledge and a solid repertoire of skills is critical in promoting successful teaching practice. According to these authors, this level of knowledge and skills is justified for a number of reasons. First, the teaching of reading of language remains with a student for their entire life and provides a foundation for further learning in all subject disciplines, as well as life skills. If the mastery of language is weak or the concepts of language pronunciation are incorrect, then the individual's language skills will be hindered. Due to this, teachers' must have a strong command of the language to instruct students accurately and with clarity of concepts (Sanders et al., 1997). Additionally, the level of teachers' confidence in their grasp of the language and its textual features will directly impact their teaching to students and potentially improve student learning outcomes.

Given how crucial successful teaching and learning is at the primary level, fostering the knowledge of language and skills to teach it becomes the backbone of a good teacher (Webster-Stratton et al., 2001). Lyon & Weiser (2009) found that teacher knowledge and instructional mastery are proven to be equally of co-dependent importance when teaching reading. Academic studies of merit based on this topic of teacher knowledge and instructional competency, appear to be lacking in making insights into finding the key causal links existing within teacher knowledge, teaching expertise and student outcomes when teaching reading. (Lyon et al., 2009).

Methodology and Research Design

Research Design

This study explored the current knowledge utilised by teachers in the grade five and six of primary school to instruct Arabic reading in Saudi Arabia. Knowledge refers to the generic knowledge a teacher must have in order to function as a teacher, whilst skill refers to how the teachers' knowledge is applied or translated into practice. Therefore, this study essentially attempted to investigate the current knowledge base of the theoretical models as

understood by Saudi teachers in the grade five and six of primary school and exactly how this knowledge is applied in the context of teaching Arabic literacy in the classroom through three distinct pedagogies: planning, presentation, and evaluation. Approaches to teaching literacy have transformed over the years, with predictions indicating that changes are still on the rise, emerging from educators evolving understandings of teaching instruction (Parris et al., 2009). Hence, this research design is extremely purposeful in view of evaluating current teaching practice in the area of Arabic reading, in order to determine where the strengths and weaknesses lie and to ascertain if changes need to be made in respect to supporting and developing optimal Arabic literacy pedagogy.

This study used descriptive design, which is utilised to define and describe the facts related to a situation, to clarify the aspects of a situation and to interpret them according to the available facts (Berg, 2009; Bordens et al., 2005; De Vaus, 2001; Henn et al., 2006).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has firstly adopted the descriptive method, due to the social nature of the subject studied and to allow for a clear description of the authentic situation surrounding teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching students in the grade five and six of primary school to read in Arabic. The researcher has also utilised the quantitative methods for data collection, to further enhance definitions and descriptions of the key facts related to current Saudi teachers' reading pedagogies and the processes underpinning teaching reading in the grade five and six of Saudi primary schools.

Supervisors' Rating of Teachers' Knowledge of the Skills-Based Competencies

The researcher has conducted this study to address the study question:

How well do the Saudi teachers in the grade five and six of primary school know the skills-based competencies (planning, presentation and evaluation) for teaching Arabic reading?

Participants.

Thirty supervisors of Arabic language teachers in Asir Province were selected to participate in this study. Their information and work places were obtained from the Directorate of Education in the Province of Asir, in Saudi Arabia. The supervisors were distributed across six education offices around the Province. The Directorate of Education in the province of Asir allocated these education offices throughout the province, to facilitate supervising the educational processes in the schools. Also, supervisors of Arabic language teaching from the Asir Province are involved in the research, as they set the curriculum and assess the performance of teachers as part of their duties. Therefore, they can be considered specialists in this area.

Instrument and Procedure.

The researcher compiled the study questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to address the study question:

How well do the Saudi teachers in the grade five and six of primary school know the skills-based competencies (planning, presentation and evaluation) for the teaching of Arabic reading?

The questionnaire commenced with an appropriate introduction to explain and clarify the aim of this study. The questionnaire was sent to the Arabic Language Supervisors and was primarily aimed at exploring the supervisors' views and beliefs on Arabic reading teachers' knowledge in teaching students in the grade five and six of primary school to read in Arabic. Furthermore, the questionnaire also specifically investigated the three key stages of reading instruction: planning, presentation, and evaluation.

Validity and Reliability of the Study Instruments

The researcher considered the study instrument's validity, stability using the following processes:

Validity:

The researcher determined the study's instrument validity to explore how the instrument measure what it is purported to measure. The researcher compiled the instrument's items in a questionnaire. After that, the researcher referred the questionnaire to a number of Saudi Arabian discipline academics. Their comments and notes were reviewed and taken into account for improving and enhancing the instruments' items.

Reliability.

The researcher determined the reliability of the study instrument by taking a pilot study on 10 supervisors of Arabic language teaching and applying the instruments to them. After the duration of two weeks, the researcher applied the same instrument, a second time, to the same pilot sample in order to determine the coefficient correlation between the two applications, by using Cronbach's Alpha Equation. The table below show the instruments reliability statistics.

Table 3 Supervisors' instrument reliability statistics

Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Validity index
Planning skills	12	0.796	0.892
Presentation skills	19	0.869	0.932
Evaluation skills	12	0.822	0.907

From the above table, the values of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for all instruments' dimensions are exceeding the agreed reliability statistics (0.70). Hence, it is confirmed that all instruments used for the data collection have achieved high reliabilities.

Limitations

The focus of this study was reliant on the following contextual boundaries:

Male participants only. There are no female participants because the education in Saudi Arabia separates males and females for cultural and religious reasons.

- Supervisors must have studied the teaching preparation program for eight semesters or more.

It is only explicitly concerned with defining the skills of teaching Arabic reading in the three dimensions of planning, presentation and evaluation.

The study is also only concerned with examining and analysing the grade five and six of primary school in Saudi Arabia. This is due to the fact that students in grade five and beyond are expected by the end of these grades to have already obtained sufficient and acceptable levels of knowledge of Arabic reading. Furthermore, primary school years are considered the most essential stage for learning to read (Barchers, 1998).

It was implemented in the southern region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Asir Province. Asir is one of the largest provinces in Saudi Arabia.

Results

The scenarios of the data analysis proceed according to participants' responses to the study instrument, taking into consideration the research question as follows: *How well do the Saudi teachers in the grade five and six of primary school know the skills-based competencies (planning, presentation and evaluation) for the teaching of Arabic reading?*

Table 4 presents the percentages of supervisors' responses regarding the teachers' knowledge of planning skills required for teaching Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia. When looking at the key areas of planning, presentation and evaluation skills of the teachers involved in this research, the skills held by the supervisors in assessing these areas of performance are invaluable. This group have the fundamental task as part of their every day job description of assessing teacher skill level and ability of implementation of curriculum items and key teaching techniques. The supervisors' assessments are essential to provide a balanced and objective outcome of the results of this project.

From the results displayed in table 4, where the supervisors' responses regarding their evaluations to the teachers' knowledge in respect to the planning skills required to teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia; it is generally observed that the total grand mean of the participants when responding to the twelve skills of teaching Arabic reading is reaching 3.04 with standard deviation equals to 0.87. Clearly, this indicates that teachers' knowledge in the required planning skills to teach Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary schools tends to be average in terms of the supervisors' responses. The researcher considers this to be somewhat of an improvement since al-Ghuşun (1998) revealed in her research findings on the evaluation of student-teachers' knowledge of teaching skills in Arabic language was found to be very low and in fact, she described them as being unable to perform the teaching skills of Arabic Language.

Table 4 Supervisors' responses regarding teachers' knowledge of planning skills

Statements	Sample responses in percentages					Mean	Stdv.	Order
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	None			
Determine the previous expertise of students relevant to the lesson	0.0	13.3	36.7	36.7	13.3	2.50	0.90	12
Determine the reading skills needed by students during the reading lesson	0.0	23.3	30.0	46.7	0.0	2.77	0.82	10
Identify new vocabulary in the reading text	6.7	56.7	13.3	23.3	0.0	3.47	0.94	3
Determine the lesson units in which students can identify the main ideas and sub- ideas	3.3	23.3	56.7	16.7	0.0	3.13	0.73	4
Formulate comprehensive and diverse behavioural objectives which are linked with the students' experiences	0.0	20.0	30.0	43.3	6.7	2.63	0.89	11
Select the appropriate conditions and teaching aids that raise the motivation of students during the lesson	6.7	23.3	36.7	33.3	0.0	3.03	0.93	5
Choose appropriate teaching methods that provide students with the skills of reading, taking into account individual differences between students.	6.7	10.0	56.7	26.7	0.0	2.97	0.81	7
Select the teaching aids relevant to the objectives of lesson and appropriate to the level of students	6.7	3.3	60.0	26.7	3.3	2.83	0.83	9
Determine the appropriate literacy activities (during class and after class) that develop reading skills	6.7	20.0	40.0	33.3	0.0	3.00	0.91	6
Determine the appropriate methods of evaluation for each of the behavioural objectives	6.7	10.0	60.0	16.7	6.7	2.93	0.91	8
Determine the timeframe for the implementation of each stage of the lesson	6.7	50.0	26.7	16.7	0.0	3.47	0.86	2
Determine appropriate homework related to class work	23.3	36.7	33.3	6.7	0.0	3.77	0.90	1
Total grand mean						3.04	.87	

These findings also reveal from the results outlined in Table 4 that the most important skills that teachers demonstrated having good knowledge of when planning to teach Arabic reading include the following: identifying new vocabulary in the reading text, which rated as 63.4% in the good to excellent total; determine appropriate homework related to class work, which rated as 60% in the good to excellent total; determine the timeframe for the implementation of each stage of the lesson, with rated as 56.7% in the good to excellent total. These three skills are essential for time management of class work and ensuring that outcomes expected of teachers by the curriculum are achieved. The researcher believes that these three particular planning skills have rated higher in the supervisors' responses to their rating of the teachers' knowledge of skills in these areas due to the fact that they tend to take less outside of school hours lesson preparation and as such are easier for teachers to apply than some of the other planning skills expected of them. New vocabulary in the reading text in particular is easily identifiable by teachers giving them an instant awareness of this being a focal point of lessons. The above results based on the displayed tabulated summary of the supervisors' responses to these teaching skills is supported by the mean values 3.47, 3.77, and 3.47, with standard deviations 0.94, 0.90, and 0.86, as shown in table 4.

On the other hand, supervisors as evaluators for teachers' knowledge regarding the planning skills to teach Arabic reading believed that: teachers' performance tends to be poor in the skills of determining the reading skills needed by students during the lesson and determining the previous expertise of students' relevant to the lesson and formulating comprehensive and diverse behavioural objectives which are linked with the students' experience. These two skill areas rated poorly with 46.7% and 50% of the supervisors' responses falling into the lowest ratings. Additionally, the skill of formulation comprehensive and diverse behavioural objectives which are linked with the students' experiences had a total of 50% rating when combining the total falling into the poor and

none category.

Whereas, in respect to the other skills outlined in the teachers' knowledge in planning skills to teach Arabic reading, this knowledge tends to be functioning at an average level. In the skill of *determining the lesson units in which students can identify the main ideas and sub-ideas*, only 16.7% rated this as 'poor'. This is perhaps due to the fact that the lesson units are pre-determined in the curriculum and the teachers are able to work within the curriculum framework, where quite often the identification of main ideas and sub ideas is outlined in the objectives of the pre-determined unit in the curriculum. Furthermore, the skill of *selecting the appropriate conditions and teaching aids that raise the motivation of students during the lesson* rated 30% in total of the good/excellent category.

The researcher believes that this is due to the fact the classroom environment and equipment for teaching is well funded in the schools, hence providing teachers with the tools to very easily succeed in meeting good standards in the classroom environment with the relevant resources at hand. Furthermore, 60% rated the skill of determining the appropriate literacy activities (during class and after class) that develop reading skills as average to good, with majority falling on the average rating. The skills of *choosing appropriate teaching methods that provide students with the skills of reading, taking into account individual differences between students, determining the appropriate methods of evaluation for each of the behavioural objectives, and selecting the teaching aids relevant to the lesson objectives and appropriate to the level of students*, in total, all rated as an average of 58.9, % falling into the average category. The responses regarding the above results are supported by the means values that are extended from 2.97 to 2.83.

Table 5 Supervisors' responses regarding teachers' knowledge of presentation skills

Statements	Sample responses in percentages					Mean	Stdv.	Order	
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	None				
Introduce the reading text with an appropriate manner	0.0	70.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	3.70	0.47	6	
Use the experience of students in the lesson	0.0	43.3	53.3	3.3	0.0	3.40	0.56	13	
Display the reading text in front of the students	20.0	40.0	13.3	26.7	0.0	3.53	1.11	11	
Train the students on the skill of silent reading	13.3	66.7	10.0	10.0	0.0	3.83	0.79	4	
Guide students to put lines under each difficult word in the text	13.3	70.0	13.3	3.3	0.0	3.93	0.64	3	
Discuss with the students after silent reading to confirm their understanding of the text	20.0	70.0	6.7	3.3	0.0	4.07	0.64	1	
Explain the text difficulties with appropriate teaching methods	0.0	50.0	33.3	16.7	0.0	3.33	0.76	16	
Discuss the main idea in the text with the students	13.3	56.7	26.7	3.3	0.0	3.77	0.82	5	
Explain concepts and new vocabulary on the board	0.0	76.7	13.3	10.0	0.0	3.67	0.66	8	
Guide students to employ new vocabulary in meaningful sentences	0.0	53.3	33.3	6.7	6.7	3.33	0.88	17	
Perform a model of reading aloud	6.7	83.3	10.0	0.0	0.0	3.97	0.41	2	
Train students to read with correct pronunciation and language rules	3.3	60.0	36.7	0.0	0.0	3.67	0.55	9	
Divide the text into units	3.3	20.0	66.7	10.0	0.0	3.17	0.65	18	
Explain each of the text ideas in clear language	6.7	43.3	46.7	0.0	3.3	3.50	0.78	12	
Motivate the students to extract the contained ideas of the text	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	3.67	0.48	7	
Link the text ideas to each other	0.0	70.0	16.7	13.3	0.0	3.57	0.73	10	
Link the text ideas with the students' experiences and their environment	0.0	56.7	26.7	16.7	0.0	3.40	0.77	14	
Ensure a free atmosphere between the students to express their ideas and opinions	0.0	43.3	46.7	10.0	0.0	3.33	0.66	15	
Train the students to read critically	0.0	20.0	20.0	46.7	13.3	2.47	0.97	19	
The grand mean							3.54	0.70	

From the results outlined in table 5, it displays the supervisors' responses regarding the evaluations of teachers' knowledge in the presentation skills required to effectively teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia; the total grand mean of the supervisors' responses, when responding to the nineteen skills is 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.70. This indicates that teachers' knowledge in presentation skills for teaching Arabic reading is generally at a good level. Again, this finding demonstrates that there have been improvements in teachers' skills knowledge when teaching Arabic language, as al-Rāshid (2001), al-Rūqy (2008), revealed in their research findings that teacher performance in the dimensions of presentation was relatively low, which was also the case for planning and evaluation. It is noticed from the above statistics in Table 5, that the skills rated as high in regards to teachers' knowledge regarding the required presentation skills to teach Arabic reading include the following:

- Discuss with the students after silent reading to confirm their understanding of the text
- Perform a model of reading aloud.
- Guide students to put lines under each difficult word in the text
- Train the students on the skill of silent reading
- Discuss the main idea in the text with the students
- Introduce the reading text with an appropriate manner

The high ratings stated by the supervisors to the above skills is supported by the mean values extended between 4.07 to 3.70

In addition to this, it is noted from the results in Table 5, that the only skill that supervisors believe the teachers' knowledge rated as poor is *train the students to read critically*, which means that teachers do not concentrate on training students to read critically during teaching the lesson, as the mean value of the participants is reaching 2.47 with Stdv. 0.97. It is important however to not solely consider the mean and standard deviation values but also examine the raw data. In particular, it should be acknowledged that *Display the reading text in front of the students* is also rated relatively low in the sample responses in percentages, with a rating of 26.7% teachers given a 'poor' result, while its standard deviation was a fairly high 1.11 and the mean a consistent 3.35.

Table 6 Supervisors responses regarding teachers' knowledge of evaluation skills

Statements	Sample responses in percentages							
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	None	Mean	Stdv.	Order
Organise the time between reading, discussion, explanation, and training of reading skills	0.0	63.3	23.3	6.7	6.7	3.43	0.90	5
Use teaching aids in a timely and interesting manner	0.0	13.3	80.0	6.7	0.0	3.07	0.45	9
Use formative evaluation relevant to the lesson	0.0	23.3	46.7	23.3	6.7	2.87	0.86	11
Use summative evaluation relevant to the lesson	0.0	43.3	50.0	6.7	0.0	3.37	0.61	7
Use diverse questions that develop higher mental processes for students	0.0	10.0	53.3	30.0	6.7	2.67	0.76	12
Ask questions in a clear well-formulated manner regarding the text ideas	0.0	63.3	30.0	6.7	0.0	3.57	0.63	4
Ask questions linking the reading lesson with other language skills	0.0	43.3	50.0	6.7	0.0	3.37	0.61	6
Instruct the students to summarise the text	0.0	30.0	36.7	33.3	0.0	2.97	0.81	10
Link evaluation process with the lesson behavioural objective	0.0	33.3	40.0	26.7	0.0	3.07	0.78	8
Follow up on students' homework	0.0	90.0	6.7	3.3	0.0	3.87	0.43	1
Reinforce students' answers	0.0	70.0	26.7	3.3	0.0	3.67	0.55	2
Correct students' mistakes and give the appropriate feedback	0.0	66.7	26.7	6.7	0.0	3.60	0.62	3
The grand mean						3.29	0.70	

Table 6 summarising the supervisors' responses regarding the evaluations of teachers' knowledge concerning the evaluation skills required to effectively teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia. The results show that the total grand mean of the participants' responses when responding to the twelve evaluation skills is reaching 3.29 with a standard deviation equal to 0.70, which indicates that teachers' knowledge in the evaluations skills to teach Arabic reading tends towards an average level.

In addition to this, the supervisors' responses reveal that teachers' performance in some evaluating skills is approaching a rating of good, which supported the mean values that extended from 3.87 to 3.43

- Follow up on students' homework.
- Reinforce the students' answers.
- Correct students' mistakes and give the appropriate feedback.
- Ask questions in a clear well-formulated manner regarding the text ideas.
- Organise the time between reading, discussion, explanation, and training of reading skills.
-
- Whereas, for the other skills, the supervisors' evaluation of teachers' knowledge tends to approach an average rating, as the mean values extended from 3.37 to 2.67. These skills include the following:
 - Ask questions linking the reading lesson with other language skills.
 - Use summative evaluation relevant to the lesson.
 - Link evaluation process with the lesson behavioural objectives.
 - Use teaching aids in a timely and interesting manner.
 - Instruct the students to summarise the text.
 - Use formative evaluation relevant to the lesson.
 - Use diverse questions that develop appropriate mental processes.

However, once more it is important to not solely examine the mean as there are certain areas where some teachers rate very well in while in other areas sometimes as many as a third of teachers rate as 'poorly' or 'none', effectively indicating that more effective teachers are raising the mean for less effective teachers in various areas. These areas include:

- Link evaluation process with the lesson behavioural objectives.
- Instruct the students to summarise the text.
- Use formative evaluation relevant to the lesson.

Summary of Findings

This research has shown that in general the teaching of Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary school to Saudi Arabian students has improved since 2008 (Al-Ruqy, 2008). This primarily seems to be due to a change in teacher training and selection, which has moved from general primary school teachers to teachers specifically trained to teach the Arabic language as a separate subject. New modes of learning have been put in place to train these teachers and outcomes are being assessed with clearer guidelines of curriculum. There is now a stronger framework for teachers of Arabic to work from rather than the older system where Arabic was just one subject amongst many that a primary school teacher was expected to teach the students.

Based on the data analysis conducted, the study concludes with the following key findings:

1. In respect to the supervisors' evaluation of teacher's knowledge for planning skills to teach Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary schools, the results revealed that this group believe teachers' knowledge to be approaching fair.
2. When the supervisors responded to the evaluation of teachers' knowledge for presentation skills to teach Arabic reading, the results confirm that teachers' knowledge is approaching a good standard. This was the area where teachers scored the highest when being rated by independent observers and they themselves also considered it an essential part of imparting the necessary knowledge for the teaching of Arabic to their students. The results also reveal aspects of some skills that included strategies regarded as being successful in the presentation of skills reflecting teachers' knowledge and ability to teach Arabic reading included skills numbers: 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, and 14.
3. The study detects a poor level of teachers' knowledge for training of students to read critically. Hence, it is sufficient to say that this aspect is regarded as an unsuccessful component in teachers' knowledge related to presentation skills. This is of notable concern, as high order thinking skills and how to achieve them has been promoted since it appeared in Bloom's Taxonomy model (Krathwohl, 2002). Igra's (2009) research study on ways of reading suggested that teacher knowledge of interpretive frameworks enables empowerment of students; deepening comprehension whilst developing many theoretically based interpretations of literacy and non-school texts (Igra, 2009).

4. The study detects that supervisors' evaluations of teachers' knowledge in the activity of evaluation skills to teach Arabic reading indicated an average to poor level of teachers' knowledge of evaluation of skills to teach Arabic reading.
5. In respect to revealing that teachers' knowledge in evaluation skills to teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools was rated as fair. In addition to this, the study shows there are some successful aspects in teachers' knowledge regarding evaluation skills to teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia.

Discussion

The conclusions reached in the findings of this study are based on the supervisors' evaluation of teachers' performance, in particular, the supervisors' evaluation of teachers' skills required to plan for the effective teaching of Arabic reading. The results indicate that teachers' knowledge of planning for teaching Arabic reading is at an average level. Furthermore, the results reveal that the most important skills identified as being successful aspects for teachers' knowledge regarding planning to teach Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary schools and the teachers' performance included: *teachers determining appropriate homework related to class work* and *teachers determining timeframes for the knowledge of each stage of the lesson*.

This result is consistent with the outcomes of a study conducted by the Faculty of Education in Madinah, Saudi Arabia (1992), which measured the teaching skills of student teachers. This study discovered that student teachers had sufficient skills to teach before graduation. However, they did not reach the highest level of performance during their teaching practice (Ismael, 1992). This finding indicates that student teachers at university are only being equipped with a basic range of current knowledge and skills on theories of teaching, whilst they are studying. Furthermore, both studies, including this current study and the Faculty of Education in Madinah, do not agree with the findings of the study conducted by Bāzar'ah (2009), which indicated that teachers' performance in skills for developing creative thinking was poor. Bāzar'ah's findings agree with the results of this study in one aspect: that of the teachers' performance, which tended to be poor in the skill of determining the previous expertise of students relevant to the lesson (Bazarah, 2009). The Saudi Arabian education recruitment system has an expectation that upon the completion of the Bachelor of Education that their graduates are performing at the highest level. This expectation of graduates is perhaps somewhat of an assumption, given the findings of this study indicate that teachers, both as graduates and senior experienced teachers of Arabic reading, are performing good or excellent.

In relation to teachers' ability to design and plan for reading in silence, the current study agreed with the study conducted by al-Rāshid (2001) that proposed a program to develop the skills of silent reading through investigation of its impact on improving the academic achievement level. al-Rāshid (2001) revealed in his study a decline in students ability to read silently and the need for early detection along with teacher training (Al-Rashid, 2001). The current study's conclusions revealed similar findings the study of al-'uthaymīn (2003), particularly in relation to their practice for preparation, implementation, and evaluation skills. al-'uthaymīn (2003) concluded that the student teachers neglected many teaching skills in the three aspects of preparation, implementation, and evaluation during the teaching practicum. Furthermore, the student teachers did not apply the necessary teaching skills of literacy that support the development of literacy in female students. These findings are regarded as deficiencies in the skills of female teachers' for teaching literacy texts (Al-Othaymin, 2003).

When examining supervisors' responses regarding the evaluation of teachers' knowledge in the presentation skills needed to teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia, the results indicated that teachers' knowledge in presentation skills, in the samples of the schools, tended to be generally good, whereas, the study detected that the only skill that supervisors believed that teachers' knowledge of that tended to be poor was in training the students to read critically, meaning that teachers do not concentrate on how to equip students with the skills required to read critically. These findings are consistent and parallel with the findings of al-Qaḥṭānī (2007) evaluation of student teachers' performance in speaking and writing revealed a low level of performance overall.

When measuring the teachers' actual performance in the stages of planning, presentation, and evaluation it is apparent that teachers' performance in the area of planning for skills to teach Arabic reading is poor. These results are directly consistent with the conclusions of the study conducted by Bakkār (2001), which concluded that the student teachers' proficiency was 50% of the required teaching standards, whereby student-teachers did not practice the criteria skill of, 'conversation of substance', whilst they had the least average for these standards in relation to the total required standards. Bakkār's study, was similar in findings to the study conducted by al-Rūqy (2008), discovering low level of performance of student teachers in reading teaching skills during the teaching practicum; and they also failed to achieve many of the objectives of teaching (Al-Ruqy, 2008); whilst the current study revealed predominantly poor to fair performance of teachers in the three stages for planning, presentation, and evaluation of skill needed to teach Arabic reading in the grade five and six of primary schools in Asir Province. These findings reveal a need for further teacher training at undergraduate level and also

after graduation in the identified areas required to teach Arabi reading.

The majority of the supervisors' evaluation responses regarding the current teachers' knowledge of planning skills were mostly rated as average to good. The skills receiving the lowest scores of poor were in: *determining the previous expertise of students relevant to the reading lesson, determining the reading skills needed by students during the reading lesson and formulating comprehensive and diverse behavioural objectives which are linked with the students' experiences*. The skills receiving average scores were: choosing appropriate teaching methods that provide students with the skills of reading, taking into account individual differences between students and selecting the teaching aids relevant to the objectives of lesson and appropriate to the level of students. The skills that received average to high scores by the supervisors were only in three planning skills: identifying new vocabulary; determining the timeframe for the implementation of each stage of the lesson; and determining appropriate homework.

When the researcher observed the teachers' performance in the classroom using the content analysis checklist for planning the results varied from excellent to none. The supervisors' responses rated planning skills as the lowest and these included: *choose appropriate teaching methods that provide students with the skills of reading, taking into account individual differences between students and determining the appropriate literacy activities (during class and after class) that develop reading skills*. The supervisors' responses rated one planning skill as the highest with a total of 40 percent (combining the figures for excellent and good) was in the area of *determining appropriate homework related to class work*. The supervisors also rated the planning skill of *determine the appropriate literacy activities (during class and after class) that develop reading skills* as good. The area of planning skills that rated the lowest at 1.7% for excellent and 13.3% for good was *formulate comprehensive and diverse behaviour objectives which are linked with the students' experiences*.

These findings indicate that teachers are performing well in the areas of *determining appropriate homework for students and developing literacy activities that promote overall reading skills*. The areas of planning skills where teachers are performing poorly involve *creating behavioural objectives relevant for each student*. This result suggests that teachers need further training in behaviour objectives in order to appropriately meet the individual needs of students and to differentiate the curriculum according to those needs. The teachers' responses regarding the importance of planning skills of teaching Arabic reading rated all of them as highly important, but their performance in the classroom did not rate highly when observed by the researcher. This suggests that teachers have an awareness of what teaching skills are considered important, but are lacking in the knowledge required to teach to a high or excellent standard.

The majority of the supervisors' evaluation responses regarding the current teachers' knowledge of presentation skills were mostly rated as average to good. The criteria areas that received the lowest results were in: training the students to think critically. The skills criteria areas that were rated as average to high included: *discussing with the students after silent reading to confirm their understanding of the text; explaining concepts and new vocabulary on the board; introducing the reading text with an appropriate manner; and guiding students to put lines under each difficult word in the text*. The skill that received the highest rating was *perform a model of reading aloud*.

On the other hand, the teachers' rated the skills of *determine the appropriate literacy activities (during class and after class) that develop reading skills, determining the appropriate literacy activities that develop reading skills, and determining the appropriate methods of evaluation for each of the behavioural objectives* as being of the lowest in importance on the checklist, while the supervisors' responses indicated these skills as being of average to high importance. The teachers rated every other skill on the checklist as highly important. This indicates that teachers in practice have an awareness of what skills need to be taught to reach optimal standards of literacy.

Whereas, in comparison to what the supervisors' considered important for teachers' presentation skills scored mostly poor to average in the areas that the teachers considered as being important. Hence, similar to that of planning, it would suffice to say that this significant contrast indicates that although the teachers have an awareness of what skills are important, they are lacking in the knowledge necessary to attain them to a high or excellent standard. The researchers' rating of the teachers' actual performance throughout the classroom observation checklist for presentation skills was opposite to the supervisors' opinions, as all rated as poor to fair. This indicates that the supervisors and teachers have an awareness of what skills need to be taught to reach optimal standards of literacy.

The majority of the supervisors' responses regarding the teachers' knowledge of evaluation skills of teaching Arabic reading rated as average overall. The skill receiving the lowest result was *using diverse questions that develop appropriate mental processes*. The skills that rated as average to good were: *reinforcing the students' answers; using teaching aids in a timely and interesting manner; and organising the time between reading, discussion, explanation, and training of reading skills*. When the researcher observed the teachers' actual performance in the classroom against the observation checklist regarding evaluation skills the results were predominantly poor. The teachers rated all of the evaluation skills listed in the check-list as important to highly

important, but their performance did not rate this highly when assessed by the researcher or by the supervisors' opinions.

Bakkār (2002) noted in his discussions on education in Saudi Arabia, that the countries overall literacy rate in 2002 was 62.8 percent (A. Bakkar, 2002). This statistic reveals that it is only just over half of the population who have Arabic literacy skills. Education is the key to raising Arabic literacy standards, and quite clearly, if only just half of the population is considered to be literate, then the root cause needs to be treated; that being, how teachers are teaching Arabic reading in schools. Hence, a key question that needs to be addressed and actioned is how to fill this gap. In fact, there is an urgent need to train the teachers of Arabic language through the promotion of learning the required teaching skills in order to develop and improve their current knowledge in the field of teaching Arabic reading.

The researcher believes that as a Saudi Arabian citizen, and given that the Arabic language is the mother tongue, then the education policies and strategies regarding the teaching of Arabic teaching in public schools and in private school need to be revised and reformed. The poor performance of teachers in planning, presentation, and evaluation of skills revealed by this study and analysis of data findings is also supported by the conclusions reached in the study conducted by Bāzar'ah (2009), providing good reason for the researcher to examine exactly what is currently taking place with the instruction of Arabic reading in the upper primary years, where students' receive their general primary. Ideally, students need to be equipped with higher level skills for succeeding in the transition to secondary school Arabic reading curriculum (Bazarah, 2009).

Lastly, the researcher believes that given that the Arabic language is the mother tongue, it is paramount that the education policies and strategies regarding the teaching of Arabic teaching in public schools and even in Saudi private schools, needs to be revised and reformed. There is a need for an education strategy commencing with the teachers themselves, not the students. Teachers must be educated, and extensive professional development training programs, as well as revision of the content of the theoretical models taught at university need to change their approaches to the pedagogy and philosophy of teaching Arabic reading, because the existing applied strategies are clearly not achieving the required goals. The poor performance of teachers in planning, presentation, and evaluation of skills needed to teach Arabic reading in grade five and six of primary schools, as revealed by this study and analysis of data findings that is also concurrently supported by the conclusions reached in the study conducted by Bāzar'ah (2009) where he evaluated Arabic language teachers in the light of the necessary skills for developing creative thinking amongst students in the first grade of secondary school in Makkah. Hence, the providing good reason for the researcher to examine exactly what is currently taking place with the instruction of Arabic reading in the upper primary years, where students receive their general primary. Ideally, the students need to be equipped with higher-level skills for succeeding in the transition to secondary school Arabic reading curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the reality of the current situation, as outlined above, regarding the teachers' knowledge in planning, presentation, and evaluation of the skills of teaching Arabic reading in Asir Province in Saudi Arabian primary schools, and taking into consideration the goal of improving teachers' knowledge in these skills areas, the research findings has recommended the following:

- There is a need to radically change the Arabic reading materials in the grade five and six of primary schools in Saudi Arabia, particularly in terms of its contents, methods, and procedures. These reforms should be supported by providing optimal in-service training programs for Arabic teachers to develop and improve their skills in planning, presentation and valuations of skills the skills needed to teach Arabic reading.
- The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia should revise the approaches of teaching Arabic reading. This revision can be achieved through designing the syllabus of Arabic reading according to the nature of the language and the identified effective processes involved in learning. Additionally, the institution responsible for the preparation and training of future Arabic language teachers should also be responsible for equipping student teachers with strategies, methods, and skills that are adequate to allow them to teach using optimal planning, presentation, and evaluation methods
- Professional preparation of student teachers needs to provide teachers with the sufficient skills that will optimally support them to teach Arabic reading for best outcomes. The Ministry of Education and higher educational institutions should implement this professional work.
- The Ministry of Education needs to establish a system for assessing student teacher graduates so that they receive a ranking indicative of their overall theory and practical experiences. This ranking should affect job placement and would also identify near graduates who may be in need of further supporting professional development and mentoring prior to formal employment as a teacher.
- Teachers, when teaching Arabic literacy in their classrooms, should be encouraged to engage in ongoing professional develop and study and express their ideas about the difficulties they face when developing effective skills in planning, preparation and presentation.

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