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Investigating the Instructional and Assessment Strategies That Teachers Use in Reading Classes in Elementary Schools: A UAE Study

Fatima Matar Khdoum Hamad Al Nuaimi

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United Arab Emirates University

College of Education

Department of Curriculum and Methods of Instruction

INVESTIGATING THE INSTRUCTIONAL AND ASSESSMENT
STRATEGIES THAT TEACHERS USE IN READING CLASSES IN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A UAE STUDY

Fatima Matar Khdoum Hamad Al Nuaimi

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Under the Supervision of Dr. Sadiq Ismail

November 2018

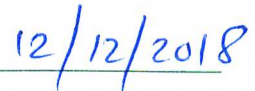
Declaration of Original Work

I, Fatima Matar Khdoum Hamad Al Nuaimi, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this thesis entitled “*Investigating the Instructional and Assessment Strategies that Teachers use in Reading Classes in Elementary Schools: A UAE Study*”, hereby, solemnly declare that this thesis is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Sadiq Ismail, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not been previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation, and/or publication of this thesis.

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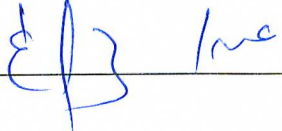
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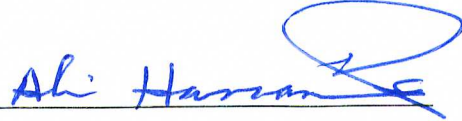
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reading strategies; and assessment strategies teachers use in their reading classes. Furthermore, it aims to explore the types of reading difficulties students face while reading English. The research is based on three research questions. Firstly, what kind of instructional strategies do elementary school teachers use in their reading classes? Secondly, what type of assessment strategies do elementary school teachers use to assess reading? Lastly, what do elementary school teachers perceive as the difficulties that their ESL learners face while reading in English? The main objectives of this research are to explore the different types of reading strategies used by teachers in reading classes, reading problems that learners face in reading classes and the types of assessments strategies used by teachers. To answer the research questions, the researcher employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The study includes a questionnaire and classroom observations. The questionnaire was distributed to 186 teachers in 13 public schools in Al Ain and the researcher observed six teachers from three different grades. The results showed that the reading strategies teachers preferred using, were to predict the content of the story by looking at the cover picture or the title, reading aloud and retelling the story. The findings showed that most of the teachers frequently used answering questions, reading aloud and retelling the story as assessment strategies in the classrooms. In addition, the study revealed that the teachers viewed the inability of students to guess the meaning of words through the text as a reading difficulty students face. Moreover, the study revealed that the students in elementary schools, in Al Ain, faced some difficulties in reading and have difficulty in pronouncing the words, using the features of the text and identifying the main idea of the text.

Keywords: Elementary Teachers, Reading Instructional Strategies, Reading Assessment Strategies.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

دراسة استراتيجيات التدريس والتقييم التي يستخدمها المعلمون في حصص القراءة في المدارس الابتدائية: دراسة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

المخلص

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الرسالة هو دراسة دراسة استراتيجيات القراءة، واستراتيجيات التقييم التي يستخدمها المعلمون في دروس القراءة، و معرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب أثناء القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية . يقوم البحث على ثلاثة أسئلة بحثية. تتمثل الأهداف الرئيسية لهذا البحث في التعرف على الأنواع المختلفة من استراتيجيات القراءة التي يستخدمها المعلمون في دروس القراءة، والصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة اثناء القراءة باللغة الانجليزية، بالإضافة إلى استراتيجيات التقييم التي يستخدمها المعلمون.

للإجابة على أسئلة البحث، استخدمت الباحثة مجموعة من الأساليب الكمية والنوعية. تشمل الدراسة استبيانًا والملاحظات الصفية. تم توزيع الاستبيان على 186 معلماً في 13 مدرسة حكومية في مدينة العين. بالنسبة للملاحظة الصفية، لاحظت الباحثة ستة معلمين من ثلاثة صفوف مختلفة. وأظهرت النتائج أن المعلمين يفضلون استخدام استراتيجيات التنبؤ، والقراءة بصوت عال وإعادة سرد استراتيجيات القصة في حصة القراءة.

كما استخدم المعلمون استراتيجية طرح الأسئلة، والقراءة بصوت عال وإعادة سرد القصة كاستراتيجيات تقييم في حصص القراءة. وكشفت الدراسة أيضاً أن المعلمين ينظرون إلى عدم قدرة الطلاب على تخمين معنى الكلمات من خلال سمات النص كأحد الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلبة أثناء القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية. من الضروري ان يتم عمل بحوث مستقبلية في هذه المجالات الثلاثة.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: معلموا المدارس الابتدائية، استراتيجيات تدريس القراءة، استراتيجيات تقييم القراءة.

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Dedication

To my beloved parents and family

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has aimed to reform their education system and numerous resources have been invested in developing their education sector, aiming to increase student attainment and progress in international assessments (National Agenda). To be able to compete with others around the world, Emirati nationals have been encouraged to learn the English language.

The English Language has become one of the most geographically spread languages (Fishman, 1977) around the world. Arabic is the official language of the UAE, however, English is considered the ‘International’ Language and is emphasized in education and starting at Kindergarten stage. Also, most universities in the UAE require that students are proficient in English and hence, they must reach a specific score in internationally recognized English assessments. This is because most of the courses at the university level are being offered in English to keep up with the latest research that is presented in the English Language across the world. Therefore, it is imperative for students to be proficient in English.

In the Progress Report of the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2016, the UAE attained 450 points in the overall reading average scale of fourth graders (Warner-Griffin, Liu, Tadler, Herget & Dalton, 2017). This is below the scale center point which is set at 500 points (placing the UAE between low and intermediate). This shortcoming may be due to the many problems found in the reading skills of students. To better study, this critical skill, reading comprehension can be explored to analyze the problem that Emirati students may have difficulty in. Reading comprehension is one of the most essential skills in learning the English

Language. According to Rajab, Zakaria, Rahman, Hosni & Hassani (2012), many people do not realize that reading is not just understanding the words in the text, but it contains a comprehension process where the individuals try to construct their own interpretation of the text. To explore this problem further, it is very vital to study the instructional and assessment strategies that the teachers use in their reading classes.

During the journey of education in the UAE, more specifically in the early 1950s and 1960s, the education sector leaders initiated the recruitment of teachers from Egypt and Kuwait to teach students (Dickson, 2013). Five decades later, in 2006, Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate in the UAE, started the new educational approach which is described as an "ambitious reform agenda" (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer, & El Nemr, 2007). The new program in education started in partnership with the private sector and this program was named the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) (Dickson, 2013). Abu Dhabi Department of Knowledge and Education (ADEK) applied this program in a staggered approach; first in kindergarten schools, then in primary schools, and finally in secondary schools. The strategies ADEK employed for improving learning revolved around students' acquiring skills in addition to content, developing their 21st - century skills and becoming independent global learners. These new strategies aimed to improve the students' progress and attainment and allowing future generations to compete internationally (National Agenda).

In order to attain and to progress in education, the curriculum must be reviewed and changed in order to remain continually current with changes and upgrades.

The PPP changed the English Language subject, Mathematics, Science and the Arabic Language subjects. ADEK then sought to recruit expatriate teachers most of whom were Native English teachers. This was explicitly done in kindergarten schools to ensure the development of English at an early age. The following subjects namely: English, Mathematics and Science were taught through the medium of English and hence, they were being taught primarily by English Medium Teachers (EMTs) who are native English speakers (Dickson, 2013). However, with these changes, the international assessments including the PIRLS assessment did not see the country move towards passing the international benchmark (Warner-Griffin, Liu, Tadler, Herget & Dalton, 2017).

Students in the UAE are simultaneously trying to learn the language and the contents; which is known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Hence, the students have to put extra effort into the reading tasks by firstly, learning how to read and secondly, reading in order to learn. In Science and Mathematics, it is expected that students that have the ability to read and understand all the English words that appear in the subjects themselves, understand the main objectives of the lesson better.

Students need to have acquired a wide range of vocabulary when learning a second language in order to interpret the texts that they are given in teaching and testing situations (Koda, 2007; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Fender (2008) studied the relationship between spelling knowledge and reading skills and concluded that English second language (ESL) reading development requires the emergence of ESL word recognition. Word recognition abilities include phonological and orthographic

decoding skills that are independent of ESL oral proficiency and general vocabulary knowledge.

This research attempts to find the most common reading problems ESL learners face in elementary schools. Furthermore, tries to explore the instructional and assessment strategies that teachers use in reading classes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many students have difficulties in reading and pronouncing words; especially words that have vowels or silent letters such as an hour, Wednesday and bit. This research attempts to explore the reading strategies that teachers are adopting in the classroom and the problems that students may face while they are reading in English. Additionally, this research leads to focus on the assessment strategies that teachers use with their students in reading lessons. The investigation of this topic is motivated by the Abu Dhabi Emirates vision that aims to develop the reading comprehension skills of students.

The problem presented is that some of the Emirati students do not experience any problems with conversing in English, but when confronted by a book or a text, experience problems in comprehending the text or answering the questions related to the text. Therefore, the study attempts to explore the main factors that lead to this problem. The literature reviewed showed that the students face some difficulties in their reading comprehension skills. For example, Saigh and Schmitt (2012) claimed that when processing English, Arabic speakers read and recognize short and long vowels in a way similar to their first language (L1) and as a result, affects their ability to spell (Saigh & Schmitt, 2012). Abdorahimzadeh (2014) studied the

students' interests toward reading and stated that the students in primary schools perform better when reading topics with high interests rather than the topics with low interests.

Hence, it is imperative to give the students the opportunity to independently select the topics or the books that they are interested in. However, this is not the case when being assessed in reading because students do not have a choice in the topics and hence, this may result in lower performance in their reading skills. There are many reasons that prevent the reader from comprehending the text for instance, some readers do not possess relevant background knowledge about the text they read, or they do not know how to make a connection among the relevant text-based information. Also, some of the readers do not integrate their background knowledge with the text to draw inferences needed to build a coherent representation (Cain & Oakhill, 2007; Van den Broek & Espin, 2012).

According to Khalil (1989), it is not enough to teach the punctuation, vocabulary and syntax of the language when teaching a second language. He further claimed that the cultural aspect should be included when teaching students a second language because this will help them acquire a closer understanding of both languages. Therefore, the teachers must be able to integrate the culture of the new language that is being taught (Khalil, 1989). This may be an issue that students in the UAE suffer from when they learn the new language because they do not learn the nature and cultural aspect of the language.

Gallagher (2011) claimed that the new generation of students in the UAE will benefit from bilingual education, however, it may be challenging to the students because of the diagnostic features of the Arabic Language and the linguistic distance

between the two languages. Hence, being able to recognize the practical strategies and assessments used in schools are very important in developing the reading abilities of students.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study aims to investigate instructional strategies, assessment strategies and reading difficulties that students face in reading classes in the UAE. The objectives are as follows:

- To explore the reading strategies that are used by teachers in English classes.
- To explore the type of assessment strategies implemented in elementary schools to assess reading.
- Explore the problems that impact elementary learners in reading comprehension.

1.4 Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What kinds of instructional strategies do elementary school teachers use in their EFL reading classes?
- 2) What type of assessment strategies do elementary school teachers use to assess EFL reading?
- 3) What do elementary school teachers perceive as the difficulties that their EFL learners face while reading in English?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study helps to identify the main factors that impact the reading skills of ESL learners in the English language subject, in the UAE, at the elementary level. It could also lend support in understanding the teachers' experience in using these strategies that impact reading. Teachers may either not know enough or not implement all the needed strategies in reading. This could be used as support in professional development planning to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Also, the information obtained from this research provides evidentiary data for teachers and researchers who plan to study the level of the students in reading comprehension, as it contains reading strategies used in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers who facilitate teaching the English Language might develop some strategies that help improve students' performance in reading comprehension, and this can be done through revealing some factors that impact students' reading.

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

This study is designed to explore the teachers' strategies that are being used in the elementary reading classroom. Also, it focuses on assessment strategies and reading difficulties that learners face in classes. It is generally accepted that the nature of perceptions in human characteristics can be regarded as a subjective notion which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Due to this perceptive nature, classroom observations were added to further clarify reading strategies in the classroom, which may support the increase of the generalization of the findings.

Delimitations

The scope of the study includes English Medium Teachers (EMT's) and Emirati English Medium Teachers (E_EMTs) in Al Ain public schools, which allows the researcher to narrow the factors and findings to this area. This also allows the researcher to use this information in the region and its surroundings and the governmental entity which may benefit from it.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms

ADEK: Department of Knowledge and Education (ADEK) - formerly known as Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC).

ESL: English as a second language – Learners who learn English as a second language.

L1: Learners who learn English as their First language.

L2: Learners who learn English as a second language.

Elementary Teachers: teachers who are teaching students from grade one to five.

Reading Instructional Strategies: The strategies used in the classroom for learners to develop the skill of reading (Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson, 1991).

Reading Assessment Strategies: The strategies used to indicate the level and skills of learners in reading (Klingner, 2004).

EEMTs: Emirati English Medium Teachers.

PIRLS: Progress Report of the International Reading Literacy Study.

1.8 Summary

Reading is a very vital skill required to comprehend a language. To develop the English language skills of students in the UAE, different instructional and assessment strategies must be implemented. This study attempts to explore the

teachers' strategies in English second language classes. This exploration would serve as a baseline to build upon in later steps including curriculum development, professional development and further studies. There is a gap in the literature with regards to a descriptive study of what the teachers implement in the reading classroom in the UAE. Although the limitations encompass subjectivity among the perceptions of teachers and generalizability, this study can be an important first step towards exploring the nature of strategies being implemented in reading classes in the UAE.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the main topics of the literature review. In the first section, the researcher provides a brief introduction to the topic. The second section is about the theoretical framework, and it relates to the reading comprehension area and second language (L2) acquisition. The third section focuses types of reading. The fourth section discusses the components of reading. The fifth section touches on the reading comprehension strategies. The sixth section is about English foreign language and reading strategies studies. The seventh and eighth sections are about reading difficulties and reading comprehension assessments strategies. Finally, there will be a chapter summary.

In order to expand knowledge and advance in the professional world with today's economy, learning multiple languages has become an increasingly valuable skill. The English Language is explicitly considered a desirable skill to promote globalization. The English Language appears as one of the most critical and global languages of this century. It is an international language that brings together nations from different backgrounds. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) pays close attention to teaching and learning the language in schools; and invests resources and money in bringing English native speakers to teach in schools. However, there is still room for improvement as some students show some difficulties in understanding and reading English in general. Although some of the students have verbally acquired the language, they still have not acquired the reading skill. One of the primary skills in reading is comprehending what is being read and this is where students need to understand the material they read in order to reach the objective and meaning of it

completely. This research will focus on elementary students because the elementary stage is a part of the foundation in gaining the knowledge needed to acquire English as a second language. When students attain these reading skills at an early stage, they will then build upon these skills in middle and secondary school. According to Yogurtcu (2013, p. 376), "Reading comprehension means an interpretation of a literal text in the context of the linguistic text". Dabarera, Renandya, & Zhang (2014) stated that reading comprehension aims to understand the text that is being read, and once that is accomplished, the reader knows what he/she can read and what the text demands, thus leading to metacognition. Therefore, it is imperative for ESL students to understand the text and not only translate it. This is further highlighted by Krashen (1993, p. 85): "When children read for pleasure, when they get 'hooked on books', they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called 'language skills' many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure the attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that our children simply do not have a chance".

With the acquisition of second language learning comes various theories. However, the focus in the study is based on the following two theories, namely, Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Interaction Theory.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Although numerous theories are exploring second language acquisition, this study is based on two theories namely: Cognitive Learning Theory and the Social Interaction Theory. Researchers have investigated language acquisition for many years; especially second language acquisition and the impact of language acquisition on reading comprehension in later stages. Snow (2002) indicated that failure to become an expert in reading can lead to adverse outcomes in school and later in life. This means that the ability to read plays a vital role in regards to students' achievements in the classroom. Reading is defined not only by recognizing words but also as comprehending the contents being read. Cain & Oakhill (2007) indicated that readers face some difficulties in comprehending the text for different reasons including that they might not have prior knowledge related to the text; not make a connection to the relevant text base; or not integrate their previous knowledge with the text.

Another skill that is needed for reading is decoding. Sweet & Snow (2003) explored this skill and reached an understanding that if this skill is not acquired correctly, it can make the reader struggle to comprehend the text. They further claimed that students who do not succeed in decoding in elementary school struggle later when they have been promoted to higher grades because the texts become more complex. As for McMaster, Van Den Broek, Espin, Pinto, Janda, Lam, et al. (2015), they stressed the importance of routine and planned processes in reading. They further explained that readers can make a connection between the main elements of the text which helps the reader organize the text and find it coherent. Hence, the

previous knowledge and the reading strategies that the readers have learned, helped them in comprehending the text they have read.

Vocabulary also plays a vital role in reading comprehension. According to Folse (2004) & Mehring (2005), learners acquire a second or foreign language, through learning vocabulary. Agbatogun (2014) suggested that learning a second language (L2) requires that the learners attain the passion toward the learning activities through communication, participation and using the target language in a real context. During interactions with other EMTs, it was revealed that many students in elementary schools do not have enough skills in dealing with the text that they read, because they are not trained to use reading strategies when they read. Additionally, most of the students do not connect what they have read to their previous knowledge; which is very important for the learners as this can help them use their prior knowledge in order to build a new understanding of the text.

Among the more critical aspects of reading is the ability to be an active reader. Masuhara (2009) supports this claim and also added that readers must be active and not passive when reading. This is further elaborated by the understanding that a reasonable reader does not just focus on the text that he/she reads, but goes beyond by evaluating and analyzing what he/she reads and present his/her opinions. This type of higher level thinking skills enables learners to think critically. Students need to have an opinion and complete understanding of everything they read to help gain their argumentative skills. Argumentative skills are of the higher order thinking skills that the UAE is currently focusing on enhancing, with the aim of improving the level of usage of knowledge that students acquire during her/his studies.

2.2.1 Cognitive Approaches and Second Language Acquisition

The Cognitive Learning Theory is one of the critical theories that explore second language Acquisition. Mitchell and Myles (2004) mentioned that the researchers who care about the cognitive approach focused on the learning component of second language learning (SLL). They believe that understanding how the brain acquires and processes new information will help the learners understand the second language acquisition process. Hence, this approach focuses on learners as individuals.

This theory stresses on issues such as: Why do some students exceed others in learning other languages? And how do learners use their sound knowledge in real situations when they face a problem with their incomplete linguistic system? The cognitive approach is categorized into two main approaches regarding second language acquisition. These approaches are processing approaches and constructionist approaches. Processing approaches focus on how second language learners practice the language and how their ability to practice the language develops over time. It also focuses on the time that is spent on learning the language. However, the constructionist approach views language as use of communicative needs that disproves the needs of "innate", and "acquisition devices" (Mitchell and Myles, 2004, p. 97). Hence, the cognitive approach focuses on the mental process that happens in the brain and helps to produce the language. Furthermore, it shows the types of products that the process will give the learner.

Van Den Broek & Espin (2012) distinguished between two main concepts that are related to reading comprehension. These two concepts are "product" and "process." "Product" is the mental representation of the "textual information" that

happened in the reader's mind after he/she read a text. To have a successful process of comprehension, all the elements of the mental representation should be connected such as the facts, the events, and all other aspects in a meaningful way. In other words, it should have some coherence between all elements in the text. Further, according to Van Den Broek & Espin (2012), many of these relations of the mental representation that help learners reach the coherent phase must be deduced. For example, the students need to know why this character does the type of action in the text and the aim of the text overall. In this approach, our comprehension of the text depends on the integration of many cognitive processes such as a mental representation of the text in the readers' mind and the background knowledge. The cognitive reading comprehension involves two processes namely: lower cognitive process and higher cognitive process. The lower level process includes translation and the written code to meaningful units, and the higher level combines these units to meaningful representation (Broek, Helder, & Karlsson, 2014).

The quality of the mental representation is determined by the success or failure of the reader in performing the process of comprehension. This mental representation is practiced by answering the comprehension questions, retelling the text, paraphrasing or applying the textual information in any skills (Van Den Broek & Espin, 2012).

Another approach that is linked to language acquisition is the psycholinguistic theory. Psycholinguistic theory links the human mind with the human language. It is considered the 'psychology of language,' enunciating that there are psychological factors that enable humans to acquire the language (Maftoon & Shakouri, 2012). Conversely, sociocultural theory, states that social interaction is

not needed to acquire the second language in the psycholinguistic theory. The individual internal cognitive processes are activated when subjected to the language, allowing the individual to comprehend and acquire the second language (Long, 1997). The basic processes of reading enacted that readers interpret the text in a certain way. Readers are assumed to interpret this text through a “story grammar,” which is a primary account of fictional stories that the readers interpret and develop based on the repetition of the stories and the acquisition of knowledge through human interactions (Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006). The setting, initiating the event, internal response, attempt, consequence, and reaction are all categories that form part of the story grammar.

On the other hand, to the theorists, an individual first does internal processes in order to learn the language and then starts to use the language socially. The Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (Liu, 2015) states that the input of the language is essential to allow the learner to process the information internally and then use it accordingly. Hence, the continuous input also ensures that the learner, when subjected to sufficient input, ensures that the language is acquired correctly. Liu also claimed that Krashen’s theory is overambitious and that Krashen over exaggerates the input hypothesis. He further explained that Krashen assumes that the comprehensible input is the causal factor of second language acquisition and all other factors only work with it. He disregards internal factors or internally driven systems that might foster the acquisition process without the comprehensible input.

2.2.2 Sociolinguistic Perspectives and Second Language Acquisition

Long (1997) has attempted to link the environmental features of the language and the second language acquisition. He linked them through the steps starting with

the linguistic/conversational adjustments and to the comprehension of input. He then moved on to step 2 which indicated that comprehensible input promotes the acquisition and lastly, step 3 where the learner deduces that linguistic/conversational adjustments promote acquisition (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Long (1997) extended his interaction hypothesis from Krashen's input hypothesis where he administered a study on 16 native speaker-native speakers and 16 native speaker-non-native speaker pairs.

Sociolinguists focus on the different patterns of the language and how people speak differently in different social contexts (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Amongst the most critical socio-theorists is Vygotsky. According to Gánem-Gutiérrez (2013), Vygotsky studied the individual as "a socio-cultural being" which supports the understanding of the individual. According to Gánem-Gutiérrez (2013), Vygotsky believes that in order to understand the individual, it is vital to understand his environment. The sociocultural theory indicates that learning a second language will help the learners use the language as a "mediation" tool in social and cognitive contexts. In the sociocultural approach, social interaction allows the construction of the knowledge of the second language (Lantolf, 2000). Students learn through regulation, which uses words to define a specific object or action. They then reshape their cultural perception through the use of these words. The students may use object regulation, which is the use of external objects to understand the concepts more elaborately. Examples of object regulation may be translation tools, power points or corrective feedback. Sociolinguists extend the meaning of context with regards to reading as a broader social context with its values and beliefs.

Reading is described as a social process where it establishes, structures and maintains social relationships among the students (Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006). It is further believed within this theory that readers construct the meaning of words and texts within a culture. Hence, in second language acquisition, a form of regulation is feedback from teachers, working within groups, collaborating and communicating within a social and cultural context. Also, using cooperative reading strategies may impact students positively. In a study by Sabbah (2016), it was found that when the Jigsaw strategy was used in an ESL class, students reading level increased.

Further, in a study by Commander and de Guerrero (2016) where Shadow Reading is explained in an ESL classroom and is supported by literature on how it can benefit readers by pairing two students together and having them repeat their reading to each other. It is believed that within this theory, schools must ensure that reading is within a sociocultural environment to ensure its development by including different groups or paired reading strategies or providing feedback to the reader. The following paragraphs explain the different types of reading.

2.3 Types of Reading

There are many types of reading that the teacher can use in the classroom such as shared reading, silent reading, guided reading and paired reading. Using different types of reading strategies and activities help the learners comprehend the text more effectively. The study by Kirmizi (2009) showed that using specific mental processes help good readers build a constructive process. Four successful prescribed reading processes have been identified. They are:

2.3.1 Guided Reading

Guided reading is one of the processes that has been implemented in elementary schools to teach reading. This process provides a clear opportunity to teach reading and comprehension skills which then enhances their reading proficiency. The teacher works with a group of students that have similar interests and levels of reading (Mary, 2013). Guided reading was introduced to an elementary school in 1999 by the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in the United States of America. Before 1999, teaching reading skills depended on the approach that each organization used. As any strategy in teaching, it is critical to acknowledge the purpose to which this strategy is being used. Hence, Ford (2015) mentioned that the purpose of using guided reading in the classroom is that it gives the students the chance to practice different strategies with the teacher's support and to practice these strategies individually.

Guided reading may assist students in transitioning to silent, independent reading. Hence, after students mastered this type of reading and acquired the language at their grade level, they can then begin reading independently. It also gives the teacher a chance to help students who have the same level in reading by applying a familiar strategy to them into new reading texts that match their levels. Jones (2008) mentioned the importance of guided reading. It reiterated that the nature of group work in guided reading helps the students to exchange and discuss complex meanings of the text. Furthermore, in a quasi-experimental study that was completed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 60 students in grade 4, it was found that after a three weeks guided reading program, there was a significant improvement of the students' reading comprehension (Salhyyah & Kamil, 2011).

2.3.2 Shared Reading

Shared reading occurs when the teacher gathers all students in the classroom and reads to them. This strategy is fundamental because it helps to clarify and facilitate children's literacy and language skills. Shared reading provides an anchor for teachers to show what great readers do and also use as a motivation that they too can become great readers. Shared reading contains many skills including oral language, listening comprehension, vocabulary development and print concepts (Dynea & Justice, 2015). It is especially crucial in the pre-school stage and elementary school. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) indicated that the quantity of the shared reading that the child experienced in the pre-school stage can make an 8 percent difference in the child's reading future. Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui & Stoolmiller (2004) also claimed that shared reading can help increase the vocabulary of children in reading because, in shared reading, vocabulary is taught explicitly. During their experimental study of kindergarten students, it has emerged that students in the intervention group (receiving shared reading) had greater gains in explicitly taught vocabulary. Additionally, in a Spanish-speaking language learner community, a shared reading intervention was conducted to support the growth of the students' vocabulary and it was found that there was a growth in the content vocabulary knowledge of the students in English (Pollard-Durodola, Gonzalez, Saenz, Soares, Resendenz, Kwok, Davis & Zhu, 2016).

2.3.3 Silent Reading

Silent reading is one of the reading types that teachers use in the classroom after shared reading, where the students sit in their seat and read silently and independently. Van Den Boer, Van Bergen & de Jong (2014) indicated that the focus

now, in schools, is to move from primary instruction to oral decoding and then follow with silent reading. It was also claimed that silent reading helps the students depend on themselves and build their vocabulary. Many types of research in silent reading showed that silent reading helped improve some cognitive skills such as focusing on the identification of phonemes in the spoken language. Among these researchers are Denton, Enos, York, Francis, Barnes, Kulesz, & Carter (2015) who indicated that the assessment of the silent reading strategy can help the teacher identify some reading difficulties; especially with higher grades such as grade 6 or 8, by observing their development in reading. They also stated that teachers face problems in measuring silent reading since it is not a distinct behavior, so some teachers use the self-report strategy for the students to help them identify how many words they can read. Kim, Wagner & Foster (2011) also reiterated that silent reading is a form of reading fluency. They concluded that skilled readers benefitted more from silent reading as it works more for those students who understand the text and those who have proficient reading comprehension skills.

Furthermore, Van Den Boer, Van Bergen & de Jong (2014) found that in 132 fourth graders who used silent reading, there was a direct correlation between the reading mode and phonological awareness, rapid naming and visual attention span. However, there is a gap in the literature with regards to silent reading in the United Arab Emirates. Thus, studies of teacher usage and student impact regarding silent reading need to be researched further.

2.3.4 Paired Reading

Paired reading (PR) is a type of reading that the teacher can implement in order to improve the level of comprehension and to help students who face some

impediments in reading. In paired reading, the teacher divides the students into pairs and asks them to read a book that matches their levels and interests. Topping (2001) defined Paired Reading as a method used by peers or parents to improve oral reading skills and to help students access and comprehend the texts that are above their actual level. This is done by using a framework that encourages the prediction and non-intrusive error correction. Therefore, this reading strategy can help students who are not confident in reading to read and to comprehend the text that they read.

Also, in the study by Topping (2001) regarding paired reading, mentioned some advantages of using paired reading including helping the low achieving students, or the students who face some difficulties in reading, to develop excellent reading skills. Moreover, PR can also help the tutor in improving these students reading abilities. Shany & Biemiller (2010) studied the effects of assisted reading and found that students who have assisted reading gained more vocabulary and their comprehension improved. Hence, this emphasizes the effectiveness of peer reading and its impact on the reading skills of students. In another study by Roth (2015), it was found that there was a significant difference in oral reading fluency rates of third grade students who had completed a buddy reading program and students who had not. Rogers (2011) found that using the buddy reading activity in the classroom created and expanded possibilities related to reading, writing, listening, viewing and speaking. It facilitated the ability of students to make text connections and work collaboratively. Additionally, it was found to enhance students' motivation and confidence. With regards to the UAE context, there was a study done in 2008 with English language learners and buddy reading where they found that the strategy was beneficial and exciting for the students (Alfalasi, 2008).

2.4 Components of Reading

The components of reading are identified in the National Reading Panel as the following: phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2005). A brief summary of these components are presented in this study as follows:

2.4.1 Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear the sounds within words (Shanahan, 2005). The student should be able to hear the individual sounds within a word as an early reading skill. Students who can use this skill at an earlier phase of learning their sounds and letters (phonics), should be able to segment and blend syllables to form words (Shanahan, 2005). The National Reading Panel examined 52 studies that found that phonemic awareness instruction improved reading (Shanahan, 2005). In a study done in the United Arab Emirates, it was found that 145 teachers that taught first to third grade did not have an adequate understanding of this component of reading (Tibi, 2005). A sample of 83 kindergarten teachers were also examined in the UAE with regards to their knowledge, classroom practices and skills of phonemic awareness. It was established that there is a gap between their knowledge and skills and the implementation of this knowledge and skills in the classroom; and that the teachers were found to rarely practice any phonemic awareness strategies (Alghazo & Hilawani, 2010). Phonemic awareness intervention programs have also been shown to impact reading and Suggate (2014) conducted a detailed analysis of intervention – control groups and studied the long-term effects of reading interventions. Amongst these intervention programs, phonemic awareness interventions showed proper maintenance and long-term effects on students.

2.4.2 Phonics

Students use the relationship between sounds and letters to read in phonics (Shanahan, 2005). Teachers teach the sounds of letters, the pronunciation of these letters through sound and how to decode words. Teachers that use a program or plan to teach phonics using systematic phonics and teachers who teach sounds of letters based only on the need of the student is called responsive phonics. The National Reading Panel examined 38 studies that established that systematic phonics instruction improved reading (Shanahan, 2005). This is more important in the kindergarten age group and the activities that have been found to teach phonics are both dictation and invented spelling (Shanahan, 2005). In a study, in the UAE, at the Modern Vocational Beter, 64 students were taught the sounds of letters in a reading intervention program and it was found that there was a significant improvement in the students' ability to decode high-frequency target words (Assaf, 2016).

2.4.3 Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading fluency is defined as the ability to read text with accuracy and appropriate speed (Shanahan, 2005). The National Reading Panel examined 51 studies that concluded that oral reading instruction improved reading achievements (Shanahan, 2005). The study further found that it improved decoding, word recognition, and silent-reading comprehension in a diverse group of students with different abilities within the grades one to nine. It also emerged that oral reading fluency should contain the repetition of reading aloud and as the fluency improves the number of repetitions gradually decreases. Students should also get feedback from the listener (paired reading). There is a gap in the literature with regards to oral reading fluency in the context of the UAE. Hence, it is essential that studies that

examine the use of these strategies and the impact that they may have on students be examined.

2.4.4 Vocabulary

Vocabulary instruction refers to teaching students word meanings (Shanahan, 2005). The National Reading Panel examined 45 studies that found that vocabulary instruction improved reading achievement as measured by reading comprehension assessments (Shanahan, 2005). Through these studies, it was found that vocabulary should be taught directly and indirectly. Direct instruction included providing students with definitions and context analysis of meaning. As for indirect instruction, it included reading independently and finding meanings. It was also found that teaching students prefixes and suffixes (word parts) had a positive impact on reading comprehension. In a study by Martin (2010), it was found that when using Interactive Whiteboards (IWB) as a tool for vocabulary development for students in the third grade, in the UAE, the students had a significant improvement in their vocabulary.

2.4.5 Reading Comprehension

Comprehension is the construction of meaning of a text or word (Shanahan, 2005). It requires the thoughtful interaction of the reader with a text and the above components of reading influence the reading comprehension skill of students. The National Reading Panel examined 205 studies that found that reading comprehension instruction had a positive impact on reading achievement (Shanahan, 2005). It found that seven comprehension strategies impacted reading significantly, including question asking, monitoring, summarization, question answering, story mapping, graphic organizers and cooperative grouping. Furthermore, modeling is enunciated

where teachers model some of these comprehension strategies and then gradually release the responsibility to the students. A mixed approach towards these strategies must be taken by the teacher in order to ensure effective comprehension instruction. A number of these strategies are explored further in this study.

2.5 Reading Comprehension Strategies

Maroof (2016) defined reading comprehension as the interpretation of the text that varies from reader to reader. There are many reading comprehension strategies the teacher can use in the classroom to enhance reading. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) indicated that 36 percent of grade eight students in the United States (US) were categorized as proficient readers whereas 22 percent of grade eight students face difficulties in reading and comprehending the most accessible text. That means even English first language speakers (EFL) face some difficulties in comprehending the text. In this study, the researcher will cover seven main strategies that most teachers use around the world when teaching reading.

2.5.1 Meta-Cognition Strategy

According to Berkeley, Mastropieri & Scruggs (2011), the meta-cognition strategy involves the knowledge that the person has; and the strategies; and the assessment that they use to achieve their goals; and to follow their progress. Readers use this strategy to think about and reflect on what they have read. Pintrich & De Groot (1990) indicate that the adolescents who use the cognitive and the meta-cognitive strategy frequently got better grades in the courses that depended on literacy skills. In a study by Philip and Hua in Malaysia (2017), it was found that when English Second Language (ESL) students were taught using an explicit direct

instruction of learning strategies they can use in comprehending reading, the high ability, and low ability students benefited from these sessions. In another study in Malaysia, by Hassan (2017), it was found that 40 secondary school students using reading metacognitive strategies, improved their reading ability.

2.5.2 Graphic and Semantic Organizers

It is of the utmost importance to know the types of learners based on their preferred model of learning. There are three types of learners: the first type is the learners that learn by listening (auditory), and the second type are the learners who learn by seeing things (visual) and the third type are the learners who learn by using manipulatives and hands-on activities (kinesthetic) (Willingham, 2008). A graphic organizer or semantic organizer is one of the tools that the teacher can use in teaching reading comprehension, especially with those students who learn best by using visual resources. Praveen & Rajan (2013) further explained graphic organizers where they presented an elaborate definition for graphic organizers. They define a graphic organizer as a figure or map that shows the relationships intended for the thinking skill verbs. The researchers showed that using a graphic organizer in teaching students reading comprehension can help the learners to develop their reading skills. Also, integrating a graphic organizer in teaching reading to middle school English Second Language (ESL) speakers helped them to improve their comprehension skills (Rawson & Kintsch, 2005). Praveen & Rajan (2013) emphasized this idea by stating that using visual aids can help the learners to understand and acquire the information in the text effectively more than other strategies such as skimming, scanning, and note taking. By using graphic organizers, students can organize their thinking and their information about the text.

2.5.3 Answering Questions

Another strategy to enhance reading comprehension is answering questions. Answering questions can help students improve their reading skills because they learn how to distinguish between the information that they need and the information that they do not need to answer the questions (Cerdán, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Gilabert, & Gil, 2009). There are different ways of using the answering question strategy. The teacher might give the students the passage, and they will answer the questions that are related to this passage, or the teacher gives the students the passage and asks them to search for the information needed to understand the text. According to Cerdán, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Gilabert, & Gil (2009) there are two types of questions the teacher can ask the students: high-level thinking questions and low-level thinking questions. The study showed that the high-level questions have a positive impact on students learning because it helps them understand the text deeply and allows them to recall and link their previous knowledge (Vidal-Abarca, Gilabert, & Rouet, 1998; Vidal-Abarca, Mengual, Sanjose, & Rouet, 1996). Asking questions helps students think deeply about the text that they have read. Additionally, it helps them comprehend the text more. Contrary to this understanding, Rouet (2001) found that during a summary task, students that answered high-level questions were not significantly different from students that answered low-level questions hence, it is essential that this strategy is further explored.

2.5.4 Making Predictions

Students need to be encouraged to think critically. One of the ways teachers can do this with their students in reading classes is to ask them to predict the content of the book by looking to the pictures or reading the title. This strategy motivates the

students to participate, and it also improves their imagination. Bailey (2017) emphasized the importance of using prediction with the students because through prediction the student is guessing what will happen in the story or what the characters are going to do. However, active readers will always use the clues from the story and their experiences to make a prediction. Bailey (2017) stated some advantages of using prediction with children. Prediction can help the students become more interested in the book, and keep them involved in the lesson. Teachers should also encourage them to ask questions related to the story and to recall facts from the story. Raudenbush (2017) reported that people thought prediction only happens before they read, but there are some strategies that students can use to clarify their prediction such as asking questions or making a chart.

2.6 English as a Foreign Language Reading Strategies Studies

This section reviews the different studies that implemented reading strategies to EFL learners in both Asian and Gulf countries. In a quasi-experimental study by Shih & Reynolds (2015), an intervention class was compared to a traditionally taught class to examine the impact of the think-pair-share cooperative strategy on students. The students were English Foreign Language Learners (EFL) in a Taiwanese setting. The students had an increase in their motivation when the use of this strategy was combined with reading instruction. Although the study used open-ended questions and a questionnaire, further pedagogical implications must be examined to verify the impact of the use of this strategy. The 102 high school students had a better perception of learning when the use of the think-pair-share strategy was used. In another study by Gani, Yusuf & Susiana (2016), experimental research was done to investigate the effects of using Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) on EFL

learners. The data collection used were tests and a questionnaire on 67 students in a high school setting in Indonesia. The students that were taught using the CSR strategy had achieved better scores than those that were not. In addition, 80 percent of the students gave more positive responses with regards to learning with the CSR strategy and there was also a noticeable positive outcome in their social relationships and interactions. In a study in Saudi Arabia conducted by Abdelhalim (2017), 50 female university freshmen were investigated using a quasi-experimental design. The experimental group went through reading learning using an instructional strategy that focused on habits of mind: self-managing, self-monitoring and self-modifying. They were also taught using a collaborative based shared inquiry strategy. The experimental group was found to have achieved higher levels in reading comprehension skills and engagement.

In a descriptive study that explored teachers' beliefs regarding critical reading strategies in EFL classes in Vietnam by Huan (2017) it was concluded that this strategy increased students' comprehension skills. It was also found that student-related factors were the highest influencers that impacted the teachers' decision making of using these strategies. In another teacher perception study, by Al-Awidi & Ismail (2014), in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), it was found that when using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to develop reading skills in EFL students, 145 randomly selected teachers believed that this strategy has some benefits for students. The benefits included providing opportunities for active interaction and differentiated instruction. Furthermore, the teachers indicated that it enhanced reading skills, identifying letters, and supported children's reading.

In a study by Ahmed and Rajab (2015), they found that using an extensive reading enrichment program in Egypt and Saudi Arabia enhanced students' reading comprehension skills. This study was conducted with a sample of 112 primary students over 9 months, in a quasi-experimental setting. Data showed that there was an improvement in English proficiency in the experimental group. The study also showed that limited exposure to the English language in students might result in a relapse in learning as they progress in age.

2.7 Reading Difficulties

Students face many problems in reading comprehension; especially if they read the text in their Second Language. Researchers in this field indicate many problems, but in this research, the focus will be on the most recurrent reading difficulties.

Word recognition is one of the difficulties that ESL speakers face in reading; the difficulties lie upon recognizing the words while they are reading. Saigh & Schmitt (2012) indicated that there are steps to acquire the vocabulary and the first step is to begin the first form-meaning link and state that most of the vocabulary and the activities achieved this link. In their study, they explored Arab English Second Language (ESL) learners and found that the students have problems with short vowels (vowel blindness). It was noted that students interpreted the vowels similarly to how they interpreted their L1 (Arabic Language) which in turn, impacted how they process English words. To help solve vowel blindness, Alsadoon & Heift (2015) explored the impact of vowel training on 30 beginner ESL students and concluded that vowel blindness was reduced in the experimental group when compared to the control group.

Another difficulty that the English second language learners (ESL) face is syntax awareness. Nergis (2013) explored the factors that affect reading comprehension and found that in 45 students from the English Language Teaching Department in Turkey, syntactic awareness was a predictor of academic reading comprehension in L2 learners. The same study defined syntax awareness as the process where the reader builds a relationship between words and the grammar used. As for Grabe (2009), found a link between syntactic awareness and L2 reading comprehension by elaborating that if students face some difficulties in grammar, they will also have some difficulties in reading comprehension. Grabe (2009) is not the only researcher who explored L2 reading development and the syntax. Cain (2007) studied the grammar and vocabulary knowledge and found a positive relationship between them and syntactic awareness. Cain (2007) explored this link between syntactic awareness and reading ability in 8 and 10 year old learners and found that there is a relation between syntactic awareness and reading comprehension which is mediated by both vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Whereas, Shiotsu & Weir (2007) studied the importance of syntactic awareness compared to the range of vocabulary in reading. They did this in two pilot studies in two different contexts, which are homogeneous learners in Japan and heterogeneous learners in the United Kingdom. They found that in predicting performance on reading text, syntactic knowledge is a key essential.

Therefore, it is imperative for the students to have a full understanding of the grammar skills in the L2 to acquire good reading skills. Moreover, the focus on vocabulary knowledge is significant because many researchers link between word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and syntactic awareness and how they can affect

reading comprehension. If the learners do not have the right amount of vocabulary, they will struggle while they are reading.

There were discussions on the literature about the "depth" and the "breadth" of vocabulary. Nassaji (2004) researched the link between vocabulary depth and breadth and how they influence the vocabulary knowledge. Nergis (2013) differentiated between the depth and breadth by defining both of them where depth is defined as how well the meanings are known and the breadth as how many words are known.

Moreover, Nassaji (2004) emphasized knowing the meaning in a specific context and not just the meaning of the word. Essentially, the students need to know how to use the appropriate word in the appropriate context. If there is a limitation in knowing the meaning of the words that they read, they will, as a result not know how to explain and interpret what they read. In a study by Marzban & Hadipour (2012), 40 Iranian intermediate EFL learners were studied to investigate the impact of depth versus breadth of vocabulary knowledge, and the results showed that there is a positive correlation between lexical inferencing and word knowledge.

2.8 Reading Comprehension Assessment Strategies

Choosing an effective assessment method to assess students' comprehension will enable and empower the teacher to make good reflective decisions about students' improvement and progress in reading. There are different assessment strategies that the teacher can use to assess reading comprehension. In this research, the researcher will mention some of these strategies that teacher can use in the classroom.

2.8.1 Student Portfolios

Another assessment tool is the student portfolio. As a teacher, I prefer to use this tool as evidence of students' work. In a study by Lynch (2001), it indicated that the portfolio could show different activities for learners and the different strategies that the teacher has used in the classroom. It also showed the progress of students across time and the attainment of their reading outcomes at any point in time. The students can also use the portfolio to reflect upon their progress and self-assess themselves and set targets. In a Malaysian study, nine ESL secondary school teachers developed a portfolio assessment model (Samad, Hussin & Sulaiman, 2015) where the teachers indicated that when using a portfolio to assess EFL students, they can document the students' growth. Furthermore, indicated that teaching sustained when the assessment techniques that used, help the students to achieve their learning outcomes. Further studies of the teacher perceptions regarding this type of assessment in EFL classrooms can be done by expanding the sample of participants to increase generalizability. In contrast to these studies, a study by Ebrahimzadeh & Khodareza (2016) found that using portfolio assessment did not show significant differences in the reading development of 52 female EFL students. The design used was a quasi-experimental pre/post-test approach and concluded that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control group.

2.8.2 Summary & Information Transfer

To assess reading comprehension, the teacher can also use two ways which are the summary strategy and the information transfer strategy (Alderson, 2000). In the summary strategy, the learners summarize what they understood from the text; whereas in the information transfer strategy, the learners transfer what they

comprehend into table, graphs or charts. In a study by Bean & Steenwyk (1984), summarization instruction was given to an experimental group. The groups were assessed using a summary writing task and it was found that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group. In a study by Habib (2016), ten EFL teachers and 30 secondary school students were asked about the most common strategies used in assessing reading comprehension and it was found that writing summaries were amongst the most used form of assessments.

2.8.3 Paraphrasing

In addition to these strategies, paraphrasing is another strategy for teaching reading comprehension. Concurrently, the teacher can use it to assess reading fluency. In paraphrasing, the students read the text and then write it in their own words. These types of assessments can help the teacher to decide how much the students gain from reading and their progress over time. In a study by Haganan, Casey & Reid (2012), six third grade students who had difficulties in comprehension received one on one instruction using the Reading a Paragraph (RAP) paraphrasing strategy. During RAP, students were to ask themselves what the main idea of the paragraph was and state two details. In order to assess the students' understanding of the paragraph, the students must use their own words to paraphrase (Schumaker, Denton, & Deshler, 1984). This strategy was found to have an impact on students, and the students significantly improved in their comprehension. As an assessment, it requires the students to perform processes including chunking and paraphrasing, which also assesses these processes.

2.8.4 Cognitive Assessments

Another reading assessment studied by Carlson, Seipel, & McMaster (2014) was developed to identify comprehension differences among readers and consists of a Multiple Choice Online Cloze Comprehension Assessment (MOCCA). The assessment was studied for two years on third to fifth grade students, consisting of 92 participating students in the first year and 98 participating students in the second year. The results showed that MOCCA could be used as a valid reading assessment that assesses cognitive reading processes and shows the differences in these processes during reading. Identifying the differences in these process during reading helps in determining the types of intervention programs or strategies that can be used based upon students' individual needs. Although the time it took to conduct the research was rather long, in order to generalize the findings, it is suggested that the sample number is increased and the range of grades and needs (English Foreign Language Learners or Learning Difficulty Learners) are also analyzed. In another study by Mostow, Huang, Jang, Weinstein, Valeri & Gates (2017), the MOCCA is developed, evaluated and refined to assess students reading comprehension. When it was compared to human judgment it was found that this assessment did significantly better than humans at generating ungrammatical and nonsensical distractors. Another study of a cognitive assessment by Ranjbaran & Alavi (2017) explored and implemented on 1986 EFL students in Iran, showed that specific reading attributes were pinpointed using this assessment. This allowed learners strengths and weaknesses to be assessed in reading and thus, helps teachers make individualized plans for them.

2.8.5 Self –Assessment

Self -assessment strategies are used in learning as they provide learners with an opportunity to self-monitor themselves and check the progress of their learning (Boud, 2013). Furthermore, they may give a learner the opportunity to diagnose the problem that they are facing and find a way to remediate their learning. They advocate independent learning and self-knowledge of the criteria needed to attain the level needed in any form of learning (Boud, 2013). In addition to the effect on learning, students also view self and peer assessment favorably, whereby it gave them some level of authority with regards to their learning. A study done on 233 students regarding self and peer assessment found that they viewed these assessment strategies beneficial to the learner by allowing the learner to gain a better understanding, produce improved work, develop empathy, better read others' work and to increase motivation (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). In another study completed in South Korea, 254 EFL learners were asked to perform self-assessments regularly throughout a semester (Goto, Butler & Lee, 2010). There was an increase in the performance of the students in English, and the teachers and students were found to perceive the use of self-assessment strategies favorably.

A study in Iran explored the impact of self-assessment on EFL learners' receptive skills in listening and writing. It was found that amongst the 120 students that went through a pre-test/post-test design, self-assessment significantly improved their receptive skills (Shahrakipour, 2014). With the focus on reading, a study conducted in Jordan, on 136 eleventh grade EFL students, was based on the effect of self-assessment on reading students' performance (Baniabdelrahman, 2010). In a pre-test/post-test design, it was found that the self-assessment strategies had a

positive effect on the students' performance in reading English. In another study completed in Oman on twelfth grade EFL students and their performance in English after a self-assessment intervention, it was found that this strategy had a positive effect in the performance of English reading (Moheidat & Baniabdelrahman, 2011).

2.8.6 Peer Assessment

As indicated previously, students favor the use of peer assessment strategies when learning (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). This strategy is the critical evaluation of other learners' work (Brown, 2015). It increases student involvement and increases collaboration between students where they can have discussions and work towards constructively improving their work (Brown, 2015). In a study that explored the impact of peer feedback on reading comprehension using reciprocal teaching (RT) groups, 12 fifth grade classes were videotaped and subjected to a pre-test/post-test design (Schünemann, Spörer, Völlinger, & Brunstein, 2017). It was found that students were able to provide their peers with informative feedback. It is also recommended that further training in these strategies could result in a difference in performance in reading comprehension. In a study in China on EFL writing and peer assessment, it was found that after using this strategy, students' perceptions and the value of peer assessment increased (Zhao, 2014). There is, however, a gap in the literature on the impact of peer-assessment in reading, specifically in the UAE and the Arab world. Thus, it is imperative to assess the use of this strategy to be used for further studies and determining the impact of the strategy on reading comprehension.

2.9 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter focused on the literature review regarding reading strategies, assessment strategies, and reading difficulties. It explored essential

theories that deal with the human mind and learning the second language. The main theories are Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Interaction Theory. Cognitive Learning Theory is how the brain acquires and deals with new information whereas, Social Interaction Theory deals with social interaction and how humans acquired the language by interacting with others. This chapter explored the research questions in relation to peer-reviewed literature. Finally, the literature review supports these research questions:

- What kinds of instructional strategies do elementary school teachers use in their EFL reading classes?
- What type of assessment strategies do elementary school teachers use to assess EFL reading?
- What do elementary school teachers perceive as the difficulties that their EFL learners face while reading in English?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study was conducted to investigate the instructional and assessment strategies that elementary school teachers use in reading classes in an elementary school. This chapter introduces the instruments and the methods that were developed in this study. The researcher used a quantitative and qualitative design to conduct this study by using Convenience sampling which tests 186 participants from a population of 500 EMTs and EEMTs teachers. The chapter also includes the following sections namely: the research questions, the study design, the setting, population, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis, ethical issues, and limitation. This study attempts to answer these questions.

3.2 Research Questions

- What kinds of instructional strategies do elementary school teachers use in their EFL reading classes?
- What type of assessment strategies do elementary school teachers use to assess EFL reading?
- What do elementary school teachers perceive as the difficulties that their ESL learners face while reading in English?

3.3 Research Design

To achieve the purpose of this study the researcher used a mixed method design. The researcher used a questionnaire and classroom observations to study reading strategies, reading difficulties that EFL learners face in reading classes, and reading assessments that are given by the teacher during reading activities. The aim

of using mixed methods is that the quantitative method provided an overall statistical picture of reading strategies, assessment strategies, and reading difficulties that have been used in elementary schools. Using a qualitative method helped the researcher to explore and investigate reading difficulties in depth. According to Creswell (2009), a mixed method is defined as the analysis, interpretation of the collection of both qualitative and quantitative research within a study.

3.4 Setting

The study was conducted in the United Arab Emirates, and the researcher chose Al Ain City in the Abu Dhabi Emirate. 45 elementary schools followed the New School Model (NSM), and only 13 schools participated in this study. NSM focuses on student-centered learning, where the students learn to be independent learners by communicating and working collaboratively with their peers. These types of schools facilitate learning by using technology and different types of resources that meet students' learning styles (ADEK, 2013).

3.5 Population and Participants

The participants of this study were all Native English Medium Teachers (EMTs) and Emirati English Medium Teachers (EEMTs) in Al Ain City which is approximately 500 teachers. 186 teachers, both male and female teachers, with their ages ranging between 25 and 60, participated in this study. The number of the males was 13, and the number of females was 173. All of the EMTs were responsible for teaching English, Mathematics, and Science with an allocation of 30 periods each week at the elementary level. Moreover, each teacher is responsible for teaching two sections of classes. All the teachers who participated in this study implemented the Department of Knowledge and Education (ADEK) curriculum.

There is a total of 45 elementary schools in Al Ain. The researcher used convenience sampling on 13 elementary schools in Al Ain and the selection of the participants from these schools. The researcher relied on the personal experience of working amongst EMTs in the workplace in choosing convenience sampling. Also, this group was accessible to the researcher, making it convenient and easy to distribute questionnaires among the thirteen schools instead of the whole city.

Additionally, this type of technique is useful in studying certain cultural domains that have specific characteristics. Amongst the participants, six teachers were chosen for the classroom observations. The researcher used purposive sampling in classroom observation. Two teachers were from grade five, two teachers from grade four and two teachers from grade two. The number of the students was 27 students in each section in grade five and 25 students in each section in grade four and 24 students in one of the sections in grade two and 25 students in the other section. All students were Emirati students. The purpose of targeting this group is to simplify and facilitate the data collection for the researcher. The total number of participants was 186 teachers. The participants' demographic variables including gender, grade allocation, and teaching experience were all analyzed (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic information

Grades	Number of teachers	Teaching experience	Number of teachers
1	36	1-5 years	28
2	33	6-10	50
3	40	More than 10	108
4	31		
5	34		
Total	186	Total	186

3.6 Instrumentation

Many research instruments can be used in the research field such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, and designing a program. This study was conducted by using two types of instruments that were classroom observations and questionnaires. The instruments tested the variables that included reading strategies, reading difficulties—and assessment strategies. The questionnaire was distributed to 186 EMTs and EEMTs in Al Ain City and collected from all of them.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

Using a questionnaire is very useful because it is cheap, very detailed and it can cover many topics. According to Wilkinson & Birmingham (2003), many researchers prefer a questionnaire because it is easy and it can cover many variables. Additionally, the researchers can present numerous details in the questionnaire. However, it is difficult to design a questionnaire. This difficulty is encountered in writing the components of the questionnaire because the researcher can use some difficult or ambiguous words that can lead to misunderstandings among the readers. Also, the researchers may find some difficulties in analyzing the questionnaire, and it can take time such as weeks to finish. Wilkinson & Birmingham (2003) stated that using questionnaires could be useful for the researchers because researchers can collect vast quantities of information without spending lots of money. Also, the researchers can collect data from a variety of responders and developing a questionnaire does not require much training from the researcher (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2012).

In this study, the researcher developed a questionnaire by reflecting on personal teaching strategies and issues (see appendix 1). The items in the

questionnaire reflect the three main questions in the research. The researcher then gave the questions to five evaluators who reviewed the questions. One of the evaluators was an EMT experienced teacher who has experience in research, and the other evaluators were instructors from the college of education at the UAEU.

The researcher then distributed the questionnaire to EMTs / EEMTs in thirteen elementary schools in Al Ain. The questionnaire contained 35 Likert-scale items. The Likert-scale contained five components: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The questionnaire had three parts which started with demographic questions such as gender, grade and years of teaching experience. The following first part used ten Likert-type questions that focused on reading strategies including types of reading strategies and a number of strategies. The second part of the questionnaire studied the assessment strategies that teachers used in their classroom when they teach reading. This part contained eight Likert-scale items which focused on the questioning of teachers, assessment strategies, resources used and the integration of 21st-century skills in the classroom. The final part contained eight Likert-type questions and studied the teachers' views regarding the problems that the learners face in their classroom.

3.6.2 Classroom Observations

To further answer the research questions and support the findings of the questionnaire, the researcher used classroom observations. The researcher focused on the instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and any difficulties that the students may face in reading classes. Six teachers in three different grade levels were asked to be explicitly observed, during reading classes—the teachers selected from

the researcher's school. Amongst the six teachers, two teachers taught grade two; two teachers taught grade four and two teachers taught grade five.

The researcher spent two weeks performing repetitive classroom observations and took intensive notes during each observation and, furthermore, videotaped all the lessons. She observed each teacher twice. This allowed the researcher to elaborate further on the strategies and difficulties in the classroom. Also, the data looked to trace the recurrent practices in all the classes. Strauss & Corbin (2008) suggested that it is beneficial to use observations because it offers the researcher an enriched the thinking and social reality.

After completing the observations, the researcher conducted a theme analysis. The researcher attempted to recognize patterns within the observation as part of the thematic analysis and analyze them to present during the discussion.

External classroom observations help improve teachers' performance by improving the teaching quality of the teacher and direct them to better practices (Haep, Behnke & Steins, 2016). In addition, external classroom observations can also show the real practices that happen in the classroom and what types of obstacles may hinder the teachers' abilities in the classroom (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

3.7 Instrument Validity Procedures

3.7.1 Validity

Testing validity is essential to know if the instrument measures what it is meant to measure. Construct, and content validity are regarded as the most critical aspects of any instrument (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). Amongst the researchers

that have expressed the importance of measuring validity is Joppe (2000) who looked at the validity as a tool that helps researchers analyze the usefulness of the tool.

To establish the content and construct validity of the questionnaire, it was tested for construct and content validity. The researcher used multiple ways including pilot testing, peer reviews and consulting expert educators from the College of Education at UAEU. These experts included four professors and one EMT experienced teacher. Reviewers were asked to provide comprehensive feedback regarding the word choice, types and number of questions. Additionally, the process of piloting the questionnaire involved distributing the questionnaire to 10 teachers to be reviewed. The ten teachers gave positive feedback and supported the questionnaire's validity.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which the instrument consistently measures what it is supposed to measure (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). According to Golafshani (2003) when the stability of the instrument is high, that means that the reliability of the results is also high. To make sure that the research instruments are reliable, the researcher used 10 EMTs and conducted a pilot study. Those ten teachers were later excluded from the actual study. The internal consistency was calculated by using the Cronbach Alpha for each of the four domains and was found to be 0.91. This high Cronbach Alpha value indicates a high level of internal consistency between the domains. To assess the inter-rater reliability, the researcher asked a higher experienced teacher to transcribe a sample from each lesson. Then, the researcher compared the transcriptions and found that there were not many differences. This essentially, means that there was a high consistency and the difference was minimal.

3.8 Data Collection

To facilitate the process of data collection, the researcher obtained permission from ADEK to distribute the questionnaire and perform classroom observations. The researcher then discussed and decided on the number of questionnaires to be distributed with the Senior Leadership team including the Vice Principal and the Head of Faculty (HOF). Due to the convenience and accessibility, the researcher would distribute it to 13 schools. The Senior Leadership Team then proceeded to contact other leaders in the schools via emails to ensure that the questionnaires were received and answered. The researcher then proceeded to send the emails to all the participating schools and included the ADEK approval (Appendix 2 and 3). The participating schools responded to the HOF, Vice Principal and the researcher and hence, a visit to the school was made to drop off the questionnaire. The schools took between two to three weeks to respond to the questionnaire. After three weeks the researcher collected the 186 questionnaires. After collecting the data, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS) to analyze the results.

Amongst the participating teachers and schools, six teachers were observed. During each observation, the researchers took extensive notes about the class activity. All the notes were recorded and organized in accordance with the main themes of the study. Consequently, the transcriptions were analyzed using thematic analysis and presented as part of the results.

3.9 Data Analysis

In this step, the researcher used descriptive statistics analysis to analyze the Likert-type responses. This descriptive statistics analysis was conducted by using the

Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS) and used to obtain descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and rank). The researcher primarily used comparisons of means and standard deviations in the analysis. These analyses provided answers to what types of reading, assessment strategies and the difficulties that the students face while reading in English.

To analyze the data and reach the findings for the classroom observation, the researcher adopted the grounded theory. According to Büscher (2007), grounded theory is seen as a methodology that is developed by obtaining the data from social research. It is one of the alternative ways for the qualitative studies (Roman, Osinski & Erdmann, 2017) As for the classroom observations, the researcher analyzed them by summarizing the results.

3.10 Ethical Issues

The researcher explained clearly that all data collected was for research purposes only and will be dealt with confidentially. The participants were also given the option of conducting the questionnaire or opting out of participating. Hence, it was voluntary.

3.11 Summary

This chapter provided information with regards to the methodology-used in this study. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of research. The participants were chosen from 13 schools in Al Ain City. The researcher employed a questionnaire which was distributed to 186 teachers in different schools in Al Ain and performed classroom observations on six teachers

among the participants. Furthermore, the chapter explained the instrument validity procedures that were performed, the collection and analysis of data.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter aims to document the findings of research conducted to investigate the instructional assessment strategies together with the barriers that learners encounter in reading. The researcher employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to reach the findings through a questionnaire and classroom observations. The questionnaire was purposely developed for the present study. The results displayed in tables and presented in themes after calculating the mean scores of the responses and analyzing classroom observations.

4.2 Kinds of Reading Strategies used

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the strategies that elementary teachers use in their reading classes. The overall mean score of the ten strategies is $M=3.94$. The highest mean ($M = 4.52$) which is the most reading strategy used, is the prediction of the content of the story by looking at the cover picture or reading the title. The next strategy used ($M = 4.45$) is the “read aloud” and third most strategy used was “retelling the story” ($M = 4.31$). The lowest mean and hence, the least strategy used in reading is “students writing questions they expect to find answers for” ($M = 3.23$).

Table 2: Results of question 1: Reading strategies used in the classroom

Reading Strategy	N	Mean	SD	Rank
Predict the content of the story by looking at the cover picture or the title.	174	4.52	0.788	1
Conduct a picture walk through the book before they read.	186	4.17	1.082	4
Write questions they expect to find answers for in the text.	186	3.23	1.145	10
Read aloud.	185	4.45	0.89	2
Read silently and highlight the new words.	185	3.6	1.109	8
Write the main idea after reading the text quickly.	184	3.29	1.188	9
Retell the story.	186	4.31	0.9	3
Match pictures with the story events.	186	4.16	0.91	5
Use context clues to guess the meaning of new words.	186	4.05	0.999	6
Use graphic organizer.	185	3.71	1.037	7
Overall		3.949		

4.3 Kinds of Assessment Strategies used

Table 3 demonstrates different types of assessment strategies used by teachers to assess reading comprehension in the elementary classroom. The overall mean score of the nine assessment strategies is $M = 4.028$. The range of the mean scores is between 4.47 and 3.26. The highest mean score reported is $M=4.47$, and therefore, the most used assessment strategy is “the answering of questions about the text.” The second most used assessment strategy is “the read-aloud assessment strategy” ($M = 4.41$). As for the lowest mean and hence, the least used strategy is “writing an end to a story” ($M = 3.26$). In general, the mean scores for most assessment strategies is higher than 3.

Table 3: Results of question 2: Assessment strategies used in the classroom

Assessment Strategies	N	Mean	SD	Rank
Answer questions about the text.	186	4.47	0.877	1
Use running record test to assess students' reading comprehension.	184	4.18	1.148	5
Use self- assessment to help students think about their reading.	185	3.55	1.073	7
Retell what they have read.	185	4.32	0.848	3
Draw a story map or a concept map.	184	3.78	1.024	6
Write an end to a story.	184	3.26	1.099	8
Describe the characters of a story.	183	4.26	0.842	4
Read aloud.	182	4.41	0.975	2
Overall		4.028		

4.4 Teacher Perceptions of Difficulties EFL Learners Face in English

Table 4 demonstrates the results of the Teacher perceptions of difficulties that EFL face in their reading classes. The highest means reported respectively are $M = 3.52$, $M = 3.47$ and $M = 3.46$ and hence, the most difficulties faced by students are “using the text features to guess the meaning of the words”, “distinguishing the main ideas from the minor ideas”, and “understanding the relationships between parts of the text”. The lowest means reported respectively are $M = 3.05$ and $M = 3$ and hence, the least problems faced by EFL learners in reading are “matching the pictures with the story events” and “skipping difficult words when reading”.

Table 4: Results of question 3: Teacher perceptions of difficulties EFL learners face in english

Reading Difficulties	N	Mean	SD	Rank
Understanding the purpose of the reading texts.	185	3.45	1.042	4
Using the text features to guess the meaning of the words.	184	3.52	0.952	1
Understanding the relationship between the parts of the text.	183	3.46	0.959	3
Distinguishing the main ideas from minor ideas.	185	3.47	1.011	2
Skipping difficult words when reading.	184	3.30	1.113	7
Matching the pictures with the story events.	185	3.05	1.239	8
Predicting the content of the story.	184	3.27	1.155	5
Understanding the language of the text.	184	3.50	1.035	6
Overall		3.37		

4.5 Findings of Classroom Observation

The researcher conducted classroom observations for six teachers. Two teachers from grade two, two teachers from grade four and two teachers from grade five. To collect the data, the researcher used notes and videos to record the lessons. After reviewing all the lessons, the researcher highlighted the most important themes. The purpose of using classroom observation is to support the finding from the questionnaire. The researcher divided the themes into three main themes according to the most critical topics that the research questions covered. These themes are reading strategies, assessment strategies, and difficulties faced in the EFL elementary classroom during reading. The following table has a summary of the

main themes found during classroom observations. The full transcript can be found in Appendix 4.

Table 5: Themes found during the classroom observations

Themes	Reading strategies that elementary school teachers used in their reading class.	Types of assessment strategies that elementary teachers use to assess reading comprehension.	Difficulties that face ESL/EFL learners while they are reading in English
	<p>Four out of six teachers taught writing through reading. Also, all teachers asked the students to spell the words when they faced difficulty to pronounce the words. However, four teacher out of six teacher used choral reading and shared reading at the same time with one of their groups or with the whole class by giving the students the same text and asked them to use pointer or their finger to follow while there are reading with the teacher or sometimes reading aloud to students and introducing the title, cover and the author and asked the students some questions about the text.</p>	<p>All teachers chose different students to read different words. Two teachers from grade five asked the students to find the main idea of the text wither by telling their partner about the main idea of their book or answering teacher’s questions about the main idea. All teachers asked the students “why” questions and asked the students to give reasons and explain their answer. one teacher from grade four asked the students to summarize what did they learn from the story.</p>	<p>Students among all grade levels have problems in pronouncing some words and finding the main idea of the text. Also, some students in all grade level do not know the purpose of the text. They read and because they don’t know the purpose they face difficulty to guess the meaning of the words.</p>

4.5 Summary of Results

This chapter focused on reporting the findings of the study. The results showed the most reading strategies used in an EFL classroom are predicting the content of the story by looking at the cover page or title, reading aloud and retelling the story. The top three used assessment strategies in the EFL elementary classroom are answering questions about the text, reading aloud and retelling what they have read. The top three reading difficulties in the EFL elementary classroom are found to be using text features to guess the meaning of the words, distinguishing the main ideas from minor ideas and understanding the relationships between parts of the text. As for the least used reading strategy, identified respectively as reading silently and highlighting the new words, writing an end to a story, and matching the pictures with the story events. The result presents that of the questionnaire and classroom observations.

The results reflect the overall mean score of the ten reading strategies ($M=3.94$). Many teachers use read-aloud strategy in their reading classes. In general, there is no significant difference between all strategies. However, many teachers showed less interest in using read silently and highlight the new words strategy ($M=3.6$). The overall mean score of the nine assessment strategies is $M=4.028$. For the classroom observations, all teachers asked the students to spell the words when they faced difficulty in pronouncing the words. However, five out of the six teachers helped the students to get the correct answer by trying to spell the words to them, then asked the whole class to repeat the answer. Finally, students specifically in grade five face difficulty in distinguishing between the main ideas from the minor ideas.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' views regarding the reading strategies, assessment strategies, and difficulties faced in the elementary classroom. To answer the research questions, the researcher used a quantitative method through a questionnaire supported by a qualitative method through classroom observations. This chapter discusses the results presented in chapter 4 in light of the relevant literature, and it will provide conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Question One: What kinds of Instructional Strategies do Elementary School Teachers use in their EFL Reading Classes?

Question 1 is related to the types of reading strategies that the teachers use in their reading classes. The results showed that the teachers prefer the strategy of story prediction. In this strategy, students are expected to predict the content of the story by looking at the cover picture or the title, and this strategy has the highest mean ($M = 4.52$). This is supported by studies that have used prediction as a reading strategy. Bailey (2017) reported that prediction helped the students to be interested in the story, ask questions, become involved in the lesson and recall the information presented. This also aligns with the researcher's observations during the reading class. Many students preferred to participate when the teacher asked them to predict the events of the story because they know that there is no wrong answer and they can use their imagination to answer this question. Also, using prediction allowed students to use their imagination and creativity to think of answers.

Amongst the common strategies of reading identified by the teachers is reading aloud. This was also found in the classroom observations, where four out of

the six teachers used choral reading and reading aloud with their students. Many teachers used this strategy to improve students reading and vocabulary. Also, it encouraged low students to participate with their classmates. In a study of the National Reading Panel, 51 studies were examined and found that oral reading instruction improved reading achievement (Shanahan, 2005). Another study conducted in Saudi Arabia found that the learners preferred oral reading (Alshumaimeri, 2017). The tenth graders expressed that oral reading allowed them to memorize text, increase concentration and practice the pronunciation of the words in the text.

The lowest means and thus the least strategies used in reading include students writing questions they expect to find answers for ($M = 3.23$). Most of the teachers did not use this strategy because most of the students do not like to write or they do not know what they need to write or how to write. This strategy is not commonly discussed in the literature. The next lowest mean and least used reading strategy was found to be silent reading and highlighting the new words ($M = 3.6$). Although there is a gap in the literature regarding the views of teachers about silent reading in the UAE, silent reading has become a focus in schools (Van Der Boer, Van Bergen & de Jong, 2014). Although this is in disagreement with the results found in this study but could be because teachers do not have enough information on the implementation process or even how to assess silent reading. In a study by Denton, Enos, York, Francis, Barnes, Kulesz, & Carter (2015), indicated that teachers faced problems in measuring silent reading as it is not an apparent behavior. Hence, further studies are needed with regards to implementing and assessing this strategy in reading classes.

5.3 Question Two: What Type of Assessment Strategies do Elementary School Teachers use to Assess EFL Reading?

Question 2 focused on assessment strategies that the teachers use in their reading classes. The results from the questionnaire indicated that the most used assessment strategy in reading was identified as answering questions related to the text. The mean score for this strategy was ($M = 4.47$). The second highest and most used assessment strategy ($M = 4.41$) was identified as the read-aloud assessment strategy. The result from the classroom observations yielded similar findings with regards to answering questions as one of the assessment strategies. All teachers asked “why” questions in their reading classes. Reflecting on the literature review, many scholars emphasized using the questioning technique as one of the ways of assessing students’ understanding of the text. For example, Cerdán, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Gilabert & Gil (2009) said that asking questions helped the students distinguish between the information that they need from the text and the information that they do not need. Additionally, they indicated that there are two types of questioning which are high-level questioning and low-level questioning. High-level questioning has a positive impact on students’ understanding because it helps the students to understand and comprehend the text deeply.

Teachers may also prefer this strategy because it allows them to identify which parts of text the student may be struggling with and hence, needs to be retaught. Moreover, it provides the teacher with an indication of students’ comprehension level and what types of questioning techniques they need to use with their students. Teachers may also prefer it because it gives instant answers and allows them to give immediate feedback.

As for the least used assessment strategy, it was identified as writing an end to a story ($M = 3.26$). This strategy is more recent and entails students predicting and imagining what could happen next in a story. Although this strategy may reveal the cognitive understanding of the story to the students, some teachers may not prefer it because it is too challenging to the students. Teachers may also face an issue with students that have a difficulty in writing therefore, cannot write endings. Literature was not found with regards to this strategy implementation.

5.4 Question Three: What do Elementary School Teachers Perceive as the Difficulties that their ESL Learners Face while Reading in English?

Question 3 focused on the teachers' views about the identified reading difficulties that learners face while they are reading in English. It was noted that using the text features to guess the meaning of the words is one of the major problems that learners face while reading. A further explanation of identifying meanings of words is explained by Nergis (2013) who differentiated between depth and breadth of the words and defined depth as how well the meanings are known and breadth as how many words are known. Moreover, Nassaji (2004) emphasized the importance of knowing the meaning in a specific context. It is essential for beginner learners to understand what they are reading; especially if they are reading a text in another language. Knowing the meaning help the learners answer the questions that are related to the text and hence, show understanding of the text. During the observations, the learners failed to use the text features such as the vocabulary and syntax to guess the meaning of the text and started to become worried and frustrated, resulting in the loss of attention to the lesson. This further demonstrates the questionnaire results and is supported in the study by Saigh & Schmitt (2012) where Arab ESL students face vowel blindness which impacted how they process the

English words. Furthermore, Cain (2007) found that syntactic awareness and reading comprehensions is mediated by vocabulary knowledge. Hence, it is essential that this problem is analyzed, and studies need to be conducted to find a solution and promote reading among the students.

Amongst the next two problems that are faced by the learners as per the teachers' views are distinguishing the main ideas from minor ideas and understanding the relationship between the parts of the text. The results of the classroom observations further support the questionnaire findings. This is in agreement with a study done by Alkhaleefah (2017) where 4 EFL learners in Saudi Arabia also faced reading problems linked to the understanding of the text. Since this study is similar to the Saudi context, it could be assumed that readers in the UAE may face the same problem. This is in agreement with the views of the teachers where they have identified text and understanding the text as a reading problem.

The least faced reading problem was identified as matching the pictures with the story events. This is understandable as it does not require in-depth knowledge of the story and uses the visual aids (pictures) as a means to better understand the text. Also, it is a less challenging activity that students do not require contextual knowledge of the text. Students do not need to understand the meanings of words or the relationships between the different parts of the text when matching the pictures.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional, assessment strategies, and reading difficulties that elementary school teachers use and face in elementary reading classes in Al Ain. Exploring these questions is essential to

enhance the progress and attainment of students in reading and reading comprehension. In addition, the reading difficulties and the challenges that the students face in learning other language hinder their ability to read fluently. This research also attempted to be a gateway research for further exploration. The study was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher chose participants from 13 public schools in Al Ain City. In addition, the researcher also used two instruments to collect the data, firstly using a questionnaire that was distributed to 186 teachers and the second instrument was classroom observations conducted with six teachers from the researcher's school.

The finding of this study revealed that the students in elementary schools in Al Ain face some difficulties in reading such as difficulty to pronounce the words, using the feature of the text, and finding the main idea of the text. This is due to the following factors:

1. Lack of flexibility in curriculum standards; this is due to being given the curriculum in a centralized manner. The governing body writes the curriculum, send them to schools with resources. Teachers implement these standards without adapting them to meet their students' needs.

2. Classroom teachers focus more on specific reading strategies such as prediction and read aloud strategies. This can be due to a lack of pedagogical knowledge of implementing such strategies, or lack of motivation to challenge themselves in implementing a new strategy in their classrooms. New and innovative strategies including "Conduct a picture walk through the book before they read," "Use context clues to guess the meaning of new words" and "Use graphic organizer"

may encourage students' engagement in the learning process and may improve the required skills.

5.6 Recommendations

To expand this study, the following recommendations are suggested in each of the domains explored:

5.6.1 For Classroom Teachers

Teachers should use different reading strategies with students because every student has different learning styles. They should also use different reading types such as guided reading, silent reading, and shared reading. Teachers should provide a model reading strategy for the students to show them the right way to pronounce the new words. Moreover, students should be encouraged to read in the classroom by giving them stories that match their levels. They should also take part in reading with their partners.

Different methodologies should be further explored and implemented by the teachers to ensure that students are benefitting from the practices used.

5.6.2 For Leaderships in Schools

The results portrayed that teachers were using reading strategies and assessment strategies that are more familiar to them. Hence, they were not trying out new strategies that are uncommon including silent reading, and using self-assessment. It is recommended that teachers are trained on different strategies of reading, and assessment to reach all students levels and needs. Furthermore, teachers need to be observed continuously to ensure that the strategies in the classroom are effective.

5.6.3 For Developers

To ensure that English reading is specifically designed to meet the needs of the students, curriculum developers need to conduct a needs assessment of the reading problems that are found in the area they are following. Thus, a more analytical investigation of the challenges encountered would aim to overcome the barriers. Curriculum Developers can then design a curriculum that is more suited to the needs of the students. Concurrently, the developers must ensure that assessment strategies are matched to these curriculum standards. Teachers must be trained on how to pedagogically ensure that students are reading at the correct level and that the curriculum is being used effectively.

5.6.4 For Further Research

In light of the present study and the gaps in the literature, further exploration is recommended in the area of reading strategies and assessment strategies that the teachers use with ESL students in reading classes. Also, further exploration on the types of reading difficulties that students face while they are reading in English. For continuity, it is recommended that the study is replicated to further assess the reading strategies used in the classroom in other Emirates with a similar setting. To further develop the exploration, students' perceptions may be investigated as well as the implementation and its effectiveness of reading levels are also recommended in a similar setting.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Investigating the Instructional and Assessment Strategies that Teachers use in Reading Classes in Elementary Schools: A UAE Study

I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the UAE University. The purpose of my study is to identify the instructional and assessment strategies that elementary school English teachers use in reading classes. Another objective is to investigate the difficulties that students face when reading in English. I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will be treated with very high confidentiality.

Demographic Information

• Gender	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>						
• Grade you teach	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Teaching experience	1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

5	4	3	2	1
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

Please tick (✓) the answer that best fits your view

In the reading class I ask the students to:					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Predict the content of the story by looking at the cover picture or the title.					
2. Conduct a picture walk through the book before they read.					
3. Write questions they expect to find answers for in the text.					
4. Read aloud.					
5. Read silently and highlight the new words.					
6. Write the main idea after reading the text quickly.					
7. Retell the story.					
8. Match pictures with the story events.					
9. Use context clues to guess the meaning of new words.					
10. Use graphic organizer.					
I assess students' reading by asking them to:					
11. Answer questions about the text.					
12. Use running record test to assess students' reading comprehension.					
13. Use self- assessment to help students think about their reading.					
14. Retell what they have read.					
15. Draw a story map or a concept map.					

16. Write an end to a story.					
17. Describe the characters of a story.					
18. Read aloud.					
In a reading class students face problems in:					
19. Understanding the purpose of the reading texts.					
20. Using the text features to guess the meaning of the words.					
21. Understanding the relationship between the parts of the text.					
22. Distinguishing the main ideas from minor ideas.					
23. Skipping difficult words when reading.					
24. Matching the pictures with the story events.					
25. Predicting the content of the story.					
26. Understanding the language of the text.					

Appendix 2: UAE University Approval Letter

UAEU College of Education	 جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة United Arab Emirates University
التاريخ: 2017/03/22	
<h3>لمن يهمه الأمر</h3>	
نود إفادتكم علماً بأن الطالبة: فاطمة مطر خدوم النعيمي	
الرقم الجامعي : 200414779	
التخصص : ماجستير المناهج والتعليمات	
مسجله في برنامج الماجستير وتقوم بإعداد بحث بعنوان:	
<p>"The factors that impact reading comprehension on EFL learners in grade four in Al-Ain Elementary Schools."</p>	
من ضمن متطلبات برنامج الماجستير. لذا نرجو التكرم بالموافقة على تسهيل مهمتها البحثية.	
شاكرين ومقدرين حسن تعاونكم.	
هذا وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والتقدير.	
 <p>جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة كلية التربية مساعد العميد لشؤون البحوث والتقدير منسق برنامج الماجستير الإماراتية الحويرض UAEU Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies College of Education UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY</p>	
College of Education Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies PO BOX 15551, Al Ain, UAE T +971 3 713 6221 T +971 3 713 6249 /graduateprogram/www.cedu.uaeu.ac.ae	كلية التربية مساعد العميد لشؤون البحث العلمي والدراسات العليا ص.ب 15551، العين، الإمارات العربية المتحدة ت +971 3 713 6249 ت +971 3 713 6260 /graduateprogram/www.cedu.uaeu.ac.ae

Appendix 3: ADEK Approval Letter



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
التعليم أولاً Education First

Date: 14 th May 2017	التاريخ: 14 مايو 2017
Ref:	الرقم:
To: Public Schools Principals,	السادة/ مديري المدارس الحكومية
Subject: Letter of Permission	الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين
Dear Principals,	تحية طيبة وبعد،،،
The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students.	يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة.
You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ FATIMA MATAR KHDOUN HAMAD ALUAIMI, to complete her research on: Investigating the instructional and assessment strategies and the corrective feedback that elementary school teachers use in reading classes	ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة/ فاطمة مطر خدوم حمد النعيمي، بعنوان: Investigating the instructional and assessment strategies and the corrective feedback that elementary school teachers use in reading classes
Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools.	لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها.
For further information: please contact Mr Helmy Seada on 02/6150140	للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ حلمي سعده على الهاتف 02/6150140
Thank you for your cooperation.	شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم
Sincerely yours,	وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،
<p>محمد سالم محمد الظاهري المدير التنفيذي لتتاع العمليات المدرسية</p>	

Appendix 4: Classroom Observations' Theme

Theme one: Reading strategies that elementary school teachers used in their reading class

Teachers used different reading strategies with their students. Four out of six teachers taught writing through reading. Also, all teachers asked the students to spell the words when they face difficulty to pronounce the words. Three teachers out of six teachers asked the students about the title, author and the illustrator of the story. Moreover, all teacher used answering strategies with their questions by raising different questions. Wither these questions are direct question or questions that need from the students to think and search or summarizing by identifying the main idea. However, four teacher out of six teacher used choral reading and shared reading at the same time with one of their groups or with the whole class by giving the students the same text and asked them to use pointer or their finger to follow while there are reading with the teacher or sometimes reading aloud to students and introducing the title, cover and the author and asked the students some questions about the text. One teacher from grade five used paired reading with two groups of her students. In paired reading students take turns to read. One teacher from grade five she only used guided reading with the whole class. All teacher tried to ask students about the meaning of some words.

Theme two: types of assessment strategies that elementary teachers use to assess reading comprehension

Teachers used different ways to assess their students while there were reading. All teachers chose different students to read different words. Also, all of them asked the students to spell the difficult words. Two teachers from grade five

asked the students to find the main idea of the text wither by telling their partner about the main idea of their book or answering teacher's questions about the main idea. In addition, there were some teachers who questioned the students about the title, cover, author and illustrator. However, one teacher from grade four asked the students to compare between what did they read in the book and what did they knew before. All teachers asked the students "why" questions and asked the students to give reasons and explain their answer. However, one teacher from grade four asked the students to summarize what did they learn from the story. In addition, three teachers out of six teachers asked the students to put the words in sentences.

Theme three: difficulties that face EFL learners while reading in English

From the researcher's observation, most learners have difficulties to understand the language of the text. Also, students in grade five especially they face difficulty in distinguishing between the main ideas from minor ideas. Also, students among all grade levels have problems in pronouncing some words. Moreover, some students in all grade level don't know the purpose of the text that they read and because they don't know the purpose they face difficulty to guess the meaning of the words. Also, they implement low and high level questioning to make sure that all students participate in the lesson.