

Teachers' Opinions and Practices Regarding Reading Comprehension Classes

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Abstract. Due to the great influence of the teachers' beliefs on their classroom practices, an understanding of this relationship is important for the improvement of teachers' professional preparation and the successful implementation of new curricula. The purpose of this study was, first, to investigate the construct of teachers' belief systems about reading theories and strategies, then to explore the degree of consistencies or discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and their practical teaching activities. Participants consisted of 21 male and female EFL teachers at Shiraz Azad University and the Iran Language Institute (ILI) who were chosen randomly. The study collected data using Teaching English Reading Questionnaire and note taking while observing classes. The data were analyzed using an explanatory -QUAN-Qual mixed method of data analysis (Creswell, 2005). The results showed that the instructors emphasized cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and linguistic knowledge. The results of the questionnaire revealed that there is a consistency between teachers' beliefs about reading strategies and their classroom practices. By comparing quantitative results of the questionnaire with those of classroom observation it was found out that, in spite of being generally aligned, there was some contradictory evidence regarding teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. However, these differences were not unexpected because of the complexities of classroom life and the complex relationship between beliefs and facts.

Keywords: Reading, beliefs, teachers' beliefs, classroom practices, reading strategies.

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1. Introduction

Language teachers' beliefs and understandings of teaching as well as learning play an important role in their classroom practices and in their professional growth. As Harste and Burke (1977) postulated, teachers make decisions about classroom instruction in light of theoretical beliefs they hold about teaching and learning.

Their theoretical beliefs are thought to make up an important part of the prior knowledge through which teachers perceive, process, and act upon information in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Munby, 1982). Some have argued that teachers' beliefs act as a filter through which a host of instructional judgments and decisions are made (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Shavelson, 1983; Shavelson & Stern, 1981).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teachers' belief

Sigel (1895, p. 351) defines beliefs as "mental constructions of experience—often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts", and Harvey (1986, p.313) as "an individual's representation of reality that has enough validity, truth, or credibility to guide thought and behavior" (cited by Pajares, 1992).

Pajares (1992, p.326) believes that "researchers have defined beliefs in terms of their own agendas and seldom explored the many possible interactions among belief sub-constructs or their connections to other cognitive or affective structures".

Clark and Peterson (1986, p.258) described teachers' beliefs and theories as "the rich store of knowledge that teachers have that affects their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions". Vygotsky (1978) added a social aspect to teacher beliefs by including the interconnected inferences in how a person constructs themselves in relation to the world. From his or her own belief constructs, a person will base his actions. Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, and Stiles (1998, P.27) argued that, "beliefs are more than opinions: they may be less than ideal truth, but we are committed to them".

According to Aguirre and Speer (2000), current definitions of teacher beliefs found in the education literature focus on how teachers think about the nature of teaching and learning. In this context, beliefs are defined as “conceptions” (Thompson, 1992, p.132), “world views”, and “mental models” that shape learning and teaching practices (Emest, 1989, p.250).

Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) studied the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. They dealt with teachers from grades 4, 5, and 6 using a belief interview technique. Predictions about teaching practices were made from the belief interviews of 39 teachers and were related to practices observed in their classrooms. The results demonstrated that beliefs of teachers relate to their classroom practices.

Chou (2008) conducted a study based on the assumption that teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs. He investigated the beliefs about teaching reading among 42 university instructors. The degree of discrepancies or consistencies between teachers' beliefs and their practical teaching activities was explored. The findings indicated that there were no significant differences between the participants' beliefs and their classroom practices.

Woolacott (2002) also conducted a series of interviews to identify teachers' beliefs and strategies about reading instruction among two experienced 7th grade teachers. The results highlighted the importance of teachers' beliefs that in turn had a strong impact on the choice of teaching approaches. The findings have contributed to the application of teaching practices and understanding teachers' decision making.

In brief, these researchers concluded that an investigation of teachers' beliefs is worthwhile and the insights gained from such studies can help foreign and second language teachers cope with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being, and they even shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement.

2.2 Reading comprehension

Most researchers' efforts to describe the nature of reading abilities and

their development have focused on the cognitive aspects of reading-the mental processes readers actually use in comprehending texts when engaging in different types of real life reading. Reading, in its broad sense, is defined as “a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know” (Grabe, 2009, p.74).

The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) noted that reading comprehension involves four components: (1) the reader, (2) the text, (3) the activity, and (4) the situational context. The first three essential components-the reader, the text, and the task-occur within the fourth component of reading comprehension-the situational context.

In trying to define the process of reading in a more detailed way, researchers have increasingly come to agree on a view of reading as involving a set of common underlying processes and knowledge bases. Two groups of processes are distinguished in the reading literature: the processes for decoding words and the processes for comprehending a text, or so-called lower-level and higher-level processes (Birch, 2007; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Koda, 2004; Weir & Khalifa, 2008). These two types of processes are equally important if reading is to occur, and the understanding of these component processes is thus considered essential in order to identify appropriate implications for instruction.

Johnson (1992) examined the extent to which ESL teachers possess theoretical beliefs in teaching reading which reflect the methodological divisions of skill-based, rule-based and function-based approaches toward L2 teaching. She also analyzed the extent to which teachers' theoretical beliefs were consistent with their practices. On the basis of theoretical profiling instruments completed by 30 teachers, she found that'... the majority of these ESL teachers (60%) possess clearly defined theoretical beliefs which consistently reflect one particular methodological approach to second language teaching' (p.93).

2.3 Research questions

This study was an attempt to answer the following questions:

1-What are the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the importance of reading theories/strategies for reading comprehension?

2-What are the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the necessity of reading theories/strategies for reading comprehension?

3-What are their actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies?

4-What is the relationship between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices?

5-What is the effect of the teachers' experience on their actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The study sample consisted of the 21 male and female EFL teachers at Shiraz Azad University and the Iran Language Institute (ILI) who were chosen randomly.

3.2 Instrumentation

To answer the research questions formulated in this study, the researcher used Teaching English Reading Questionnaire.

The questionnaire investigates three parts of teachers' belief systems: Part A-the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension; Part B-the necessity of reading theories and strategies in teaching practices, and Part C-actual employment of reading theories and strategies in classroom practice. Each part contains 20 identical elements that are considered important factors in reading. The questionnaire adapted Likert scales 1 to 5, in which 1 indicates the least importance or the least agreement on a certain statement, while 5 refers to the most important or strongest agreement of the item.

The 20 items are classified into six categories of reading strategies. Items 1-3 refer to linguistic knowledge, such as studying vocabulary or grammar. Item 4 is about translation, namely translating English texts into L1. Items 5-8 are related to conceptually-driven basis, such as activating background knowledge or understanding the connections between paragraphs. Items 9-16 concern cognitive strategies, such as guessing, scanning or skimming. Items 17-18 are about metacognitive

strategies, such as monitoring learners' reading comprehension. Finally, items 19 and 20 are categorized as aided strategies.

Part B investigates teachers' beliefs about ideal instruction of reading and strategies which are necessary for reading comprehension. Items included are, for example, "I believe that teaching vocabulary should be included in reading instruction," or "I believe that teaching syntactic knowledge should be included in reading instruction." Part C refers to teachers' self-reported classroom practices. Items included are, for example, "Identify the frequency of teaching vocabulary in your reading class (1 indicates 'never' and 5 means 'always')," or "Identify the frequency of teaching syntactic structure in your reading class (1 indicates 'never' and 5 means 'always')."

In addition, an open-ended question, used to provoke teachers' self-reported teaching approach and basic personal information, was included. A complete copy of the instrument is found in Appendix A.

3.2.1 Reliability of the questionnaire

Checking the reliability of the questionnaire, Table 3.1 indicates the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the 60 items and that of the three parts. The internal consistency reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha for the entire inventory computed on 21 participants was .90. For Part A, Cronbach's alpha achieved a coefficient of .80, for Part B .78 and for Part C .82.

Spearman's rho was computed to investigate the correlation between the three parts as well as the six categories of reading theories and strategies (Table 1).

Table 1: Correlations between the three parts of teaching english reading questionnaire

		Importance	Necessity	Employment
Importance	Pearson Correlation	1	.654**	.507*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.019
	N	21	21	21
Necessity	Pearson Correlation	.654**	1	.724**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	21	21	21
Employment	Pearson Correlation	.507*	.724**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	
	N	21	21	21

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data provided strong evidence that the three parts-the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension, the necessity of reading theories and strategies in teaching practices, and actual employment of reading theories and strategies in practical classrooms, were correlated with each other.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The Teaching English Reading Questionnaire was used to reveal the diversity of beliefs self-reported by teachers as well as the use of a range of teaching strategies in practical setting. Then, in order to explore the participants' practices, five teachers, as the representative of the group, were observed by the author during their teaching.

Teachers were observed on three successive 90-minute lessons while teaching reading comprehension. The observed lessons were part of their regular classroom instruction and representative of their reading instruction. The class sizes ranged from 15 to 25 students. All classroom observations were recorded as handwritten and word-processed field notes. As much as possible, the language of the teacher and the students was recorded verbatim and researcher used concrete, objective language to describe what she observed.

3.4 Data analysis

The following data analysis procedures and techniques were used to obtain the needed results for the analysis of the related research questions. First, to answer the first three questions, the mean and standard deviation of each item and each category were calculated and then, t tests were computed to compare teachers' beliefs about the importance and employment of reading theories and strategies. Secondly, to answer the fourth question, Spearman's rho was computed to investigate the correlation between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Finally, the results obtained through questionnaire were compared to those of class observations to come to a final result based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the importance of reading theories/strategies for reading comprehension

To answer this question, the arithmetic mean, standard deviation and the ranking of the pedagogical beliefs about the importance of reading theories/strategies among the teachers were calculated for each of the tool domains. Table 2 presents means and standard deviations given to each item in teachers' beliefs about the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension.

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Table 2: Descriptive statistics of each item in teachers' beliefs about the importance of reading theories and strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Vocabulary	4.2381	.62488
2. Grammar	3.2857	.64365
3. Reading aloud the text	2.4286	1.43427
4. Translating the text into Farsi	1.7143	.95618
5. Prior knowledge or background knowledge about the reading content	3.2381	.88909
6. Understanding the connections of each paragraph	3.5238	.87287
7. Understanding the types of the text	2.7143	.95618
8. Title	3.3810	.86465
9. Guessing the meaning of words	4.0000	.77460
10. Scanning	4.0952	.70034
11. Skimming	3.9048	.88909
12. Finding main idea	4.3810	.66904
13. Summarizing	3.1905	.92839
14. Outlining	3.3810	.97346
15. Retelling the text	2.7143	1.10195
16. Predicting the main idea of the following paragraph	2.9524	.97346
17. Monitoring reading comprehension constantly	3.5238	.92839
18. Asking questions to check comprehension	3.9524	.80475
19. Using dictionaries	3.0000	1.00000
20. Using visual support	3.2381	.99523

The results showed that the three most important teaching theories or strategies advocated by the instructors were "Finding main idea" ($M=4.38$, $SD=.67$), "Vocabulary" ($M=4.23$, $SD=.62$), and "Scanning" ($M=4.10$, $SD=.70$). In addition, the three least important strategies included "Translating the text into Farsi" ($M=1.71$, $SD=.96$), "Reading aloud the text" ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.43$), and "Retelling the text" ($M=2.71$, $SD=1.10$). Table 3 presents means and standard deviations of the six categories for part A, which is the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of each category in teachers' beliefs about the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistic Knowledge	3.3175	.61893
Translation	1.7143	.95618
Conceptually-Driven Basis	3.2143	.57709
Cognitive Strategy	3.5774	.57889
Metacognitive Strategy	3.7381	.70034
Aided Strategy	3.1190	.87899
Valid N (listwise)		

Based on the results presented in Table 3, teachers believe that metacognitive strategy ($M=3.73$) is the most important reading strategy in reading comprehension. T tests were computed using the mean scores to compare teachers' beliefs about the importance of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension between these six categories. An acceptable significance level was deemed to be $p < .05$. Table 4 presents paired sample t tests for mean differences between these six categories.

Table 4: Paired sample t tests for category vs. category in importance of theories/strategies

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Linguistic Knowledge - Translation	1.60317	1.17198	.25575	1.06969	2.13666	6.269	20	.000
Pair 2	Linguistic Knowledge - Conceptually-Driven Basis	.10317	.59214	.12922	-.16636	.37271	.798	20	.434
Pair 3	Linguistic Knowledge - Cognitive Strategy	-.25992	.72384	.15795	-.58941	.06957	-	20	.115
							1.646		

Pair 4	Linguistic Knowledge - Metacognitive Strategy	-.42063	.76307	.16652	-.76798	-.07329	-	20	.020
								2.526	
Pair 5	Linguistic Knowledge - Aided Strategy	.19841	.85735	.18709	-.19185	.58867	1.061	20	.302
Pair 6	Translation - Conceptually-Driven Basis	-	1.10397	.24091	-	-.99748	-	20	.000
		1.50000						2.00252	6.226
Pair 7	Translation - Cognitive Strategy	-	1.27101	.27736	-	-	-	20	.000
		1.86310						2.44165	1.28454
Pair 8	Translation - Metacognitive Strategy	-	1.40068	.30565	-	-	-	20	.000
		2.02381						2.66139	1.38623
Pair 9	Translation - Aided Strategy	-	1.25119	.27303	-	-.83523	-	20	.000
		1.40476						1.97430	5.145
Pair 10	Conceptually-Driven Basis - Cognitive Strategy	-.36310	.58883	.12849	-.63113	-.09506	-	20	.010
								2.826	
Pair 11	Conceptually-Driven Basis - Metacognitive Strategy	-.52381	.80197	.17500	-.88886	-.15876	-	20	.007
								2.993	
Pair 12	Conceptually-Driven Basis - Aided Strategy	.09524	.77248	.16857	-.25639	.44687	.565	20	.578

The analysis of paired sample t tests revealed that these participants believed linguistics knowledge was significantly more important than translation, $t(20)=6.27$, $p<.0001$. Metacognitive strategy was significantly more important than linguistic knowledge, $t(20)=2.53$, $p=.020$, translation, $t(20)=6.62$, $p<.0001$, conceptually-driven basis, $t(20)=2.99$, $p=.007$, and aided strategy $t(20)=2.53$, $p=.014$. Conceptually-driven basis was significantly more important than translation $t(20)=6.23$, $p<.0001$. Cognitive strategy was significantly more important than translation, $t(20)=6.72$, $p<.0001$, and conceptually-driven basis, $t(20)=2.83$, $p=.010$. Finally, aided strategy was believed to be more important than translation, $t(20)=5.15$, $p<.0001$.

4.2 The teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the necessity of reading theories/strategies for reading comprehension

To answer this question, too, the arithmetic mean, standard deviation and the ranking of the pedagogical beliefs about the necessity of reading theories/strategies among the teachers in the basic cycle in general and for each of the tool domains in particular were calculated.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of each item in teachers' beliefs about the necessity of reading theories/strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Vocabulary	3.8095	.92839
2. Grammar	3.0952	.76842
3. Reading aloud the text	2.6190	1.28360
4. Translating the text into Farsi	1.8095	1.12335
5. Prior knowledge or background knowledge about the reading content	3.6667	1.01653
6. Understanding the connections of each paragraph	3.5714	1.02817
7. Understanding the types of the text	2.6190	1.07127
8. Title	3.7619	.88909
9. Guessing the meaning of words	4.0476	.86465
10. Scanning	4.0952	.70034
11. Skimming	4.0000	.63246
12. Finding main idea	4.2857	.56061
13. Summarizing	3.7619	.76842
14. Outlining	3.5238	.81358
15. Retelling the text	3.7143	.95618
16. Predicting the main idea of the following paragraph	3.4286	.92582
17. Monitoring reading comprehension constantly	3.4286	.97834
18. Asking questions to check comprehension	4.0952	.83095
19. Using dictionaries	3.0952	1.04426
20. Using visual support	3.4762	.87287

As illustrated in Table 5 the three most essential teaching theories or strategies advocated by the instructors were “Finding main idea” (M=4.28, SD=.56), “Scanning” (M= 4.10, SD=.70), and “Asking questions to check comprehension” (M=4.10, SD=.83). In addition, the three least important strategies included “Translating the text into Farsi” (M=1.81, SD=1.12), “Understanding the types of the text” (M=2.62, SD=1.07), and “Reading aloud the text” (M=2.43, SD=1.43). Table 6 presents means and standard deviations of the six categories for part B, the necessity of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of each category in teachers' beliefs about the necessity of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistic Knowledge	3.1746	.71195
Translation	1.8095	1.12335
Conceptually-Driven Basis	3.4048	.73517
Cognitive Strategy	3.8571	.47809
Metacognitive Strategy	3.7619	.73517
Aided Strategy	3.2857	.87423

Based on the findings, the participants stated cognitive strategy (M=3.86) as the most essential strategy in reading comprehension. On the other hand, translation (M=1.80) was considered to be the least important strategy in reading comprehension.

4.3 The teachers' actual classroom practices in teaching reading comprehension

To answer this question, such as the first two questions, the arithmetic mean, standard deviation and the ranking of the degree of practicing pedagogical beliefs by teachers of reading comprehension in general and for each of the tool domains in particular were calculated.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of each item in teachers' actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Vocabulary	4.1429	.91026
2. Grammar	3.6667	.79582
3. Reading aloud the text	2.8571	1.38873
4. Translating the text into Farsi	1.5714	1.20712
5. Prior knowledge or background knowledge about the reading content	4.0476	.80475
6. Understanding the connections of each paragraph	3.2381	1.04426
7. Understanding the types of the text	2.9048	1.22085
8. Title	4.2381	.76842
9. Guessing the meaning of words	4.0000	.70711
10. Scanning	3.7619	1.26114
11. Skimming	3.6667	1.19722
12. Finding main idea	4.0952	.99523
13. Summarizing	3.9048	.76842
14. Outlining	3.2381	.88909
15. Retelling the text	3.0000	.00000
16. Predicting the main idea of the following paragraph	3.2857	1.18924
17. Monitoring reading comprehension constantly	3.4762	.98077
18. Asking questions to check comprehension	4.5238	.81358
19. Using dictionaries	3.0476	1.28360
20. Using visual support	3.4762	1.07792

According to Table 7, "Asking questions to check comprehension" (M= 4.52), "Making predictions based on the title" (M= 4.24), and "Vocabulary" (M= 4.14) gained the highest mean scores and are the most practiced strategies. On the other hand, "Translating the text into Farsi" (M=1.57), "Reading aloud the text" (M= 2.86), and "Understanding the types of the text" (M= 2.90) obtained the lowest mean scores and are the least practiced strategies.

Table 8 presents means and standard deviations of the six categories for the actual employment of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of each category in teachers' actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Linguistic Knowledge	3.5556	.69389
Translation	1.5714	1.20712
Conceptually-Driven Basis	3.6071	.70521
Cognitive Strategy	3.6190	.68520
Metacognitive Strategy	4.0000	.68920
Aided Strategy	3.2619	.98259
Valid N (listwise)		

Table 8 represents that the participants practice metacognitive strategy (M= 4) more than the other strategies. They also reported translation as the least practiced strategy (M= 1.57). T tests were computed using the mean scores to compare the employment of reading theories and strategies in reading comprehension between these six categories. An acceptable significance level was deemed to be $p < .05$. Table 9 presents paired sample t tests for mean differences between these six categories.

Table 9: Paired sample t tests for category vs. category in employing strategies

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Linguistic Knowledge - Translation	1.98413	1.25378	.27360	1.41341	2.55484	7.252	20	.000
Pair 2	Linguistic Knowledge - Conceptually-Driven Basis	-.05159	.91949	.20065	-.47014	.36696	-.257	20	.800

Pair 3	Linguistic Knowledge - Cognitive Strategy	-.06349	.88640	.19343	-.46697	.33999	-.328	20	.746
Pair 4	Linguistic Knowledge - Metacognitive Strategy	-.44444	.85038	.18557	-.83153	-.05736	-2.395	20	.027
Pair 5	Linguistic Knowledge - Aided Strategy	.29365	.97597	.21297	-.15060	.73791	1.379	20	.183
Pair 6	Translation - Conceptually- Driven Basis	- 2.03571	1.13271	.24718	-2.55132	-1.52011	-8.236	20	.000
Pair 7	Translation - Cognitive Strategy	- 2.04762	1.24780	.27229	-2.61561	-1.47963	-7.520	20	.000
Pair 8	Translation - Metacognitive Strategy	- 2.42857	1.31611	.28720	-3.02766	-1.82949	-8.456	20	.000
Pair 9	Translation - Aided Strategy	- 1.69048	1.33675	.29170	-2.29896	-1.08199	-5.795	20	.000
Pair 10	Conceptually- Driven Basis - Cognitive Strategy	-.01190	.72014	.15715	-.33971	.31590	-.076	20	.940
Pair 11	Conceptually- Driven Basis - Metacognitive Strategy	-.39286	.71402	.15581	-.71787	-.06784	-2.521	20	.020
Pair 12	Conceptually- Driven Basis - Aided Strategy	.34524	1.24367	.27139	-.22088	.91135	1.272	20	.218
Pair 13	Cognitive Strategy - Metacognitive Strategy	-.38095	.88430	.19297	-.78348	.02158	-1.974	20	.062
Pair 14	Cognitive Strategy - Aided Strategy	.35714	1.00334	.21895	-.09957	.81386	1.631	20	.118
Pair 15	Metacognitive Strategy - Aided Strategy	.73810	1.28081	.27950	.15508	1.32111	2.641	20	.016

According to the analysis of paired sample t tests, these participants stated that the linguistics knowledge was employed more than translation, $t(20)=7.25$, $p<.0001$. Metacognitive strategy was employed significantly more than linguistic knowledge, $t(20)=2.40$, $p=.027$, translation, $t(20)=8.46$, $p<.0001$, conceptually-driven basis, $t(20)=2.52$, $p=.020$, and aided strategy $t(20)=2.64$, $p=.016$. Conceptually-driven basis was employed more than translation $t(20)=8.24$, $p<.0001$. Cognitive strategy was practiced significantly more than translation, $t(20)=7.52$, $p<.0001$. Finally, aided strategy was stated to be employed more than translation, $t(20)=5.80$, $p<.0001$.

4.4 The relationship between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices

Spearman's rho was computed to investigate the correlation between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

Table 10: Correlation between the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom practices

	Teachers' Beliefs	Actual Practice
Teachers' Beliefs	Pearson Correlation	.507*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019
	N	21
Actual Practice	Pearson Correlation	.507*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019
	N	21

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 10, based on the data obtained through questionnaire, there is a significant ($\text{sig.}=.01$, $p<.05$) and positive ($r=.50$) relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

4.5 The effect of the teachers' experience on their actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies

Based on the teaching experience, the teachers were divided into three groups. Table 11 shows the number of the participants in each group.

Table 11: Frequency and percentage of the participants of each group

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0-6Years	5	23.8
	6-10Years	7	33.3
	More than 10 Years	9	42.9
	Total	21	100.0

Table 12 presents the difference between the means of seven variables.

Table 12: ANOVA results on linguistic knowledge, translation, conceptually-Driven basis, cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, aided strategy, employment

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Linguistic Knowledge	Between Groups	.748	2	.374	.758	.483
	Within Groups	8.882	18	.493		
	Total	9.630	20			
Translation	Between Groups	.914	2	.457	.291	.751
	Within Groups	28.229	18	1.568		
	Total	29.143	20			
Conceptually-Driven Basis	Between Groups	.164	2	.082	.151	.861
	Within Groups	9.782	18	.543		
	Total	9.946	20			
Cognitive Strategy	Between Groups	3.906	2	1.953	6.411	.008
	Within Groups	5.484	18	.305		
	Total	9.390	20			
Metacognitive Strategy	Between Groups	.343	2	.171	.337	.718
	Within Groups	9.157	18	.509		
	Total	9.500	20			
Employment	Between Groups	1.740	2	.870	.891	.428
	Within Groups	17.570	18	.976		
	Total	19.310	20			
Employment	Between Groups	.625	2	.312	1.313	.294
	Within Groups	4.283	18	.238		
	Total	4.907	20			

The difference between the means of four dependent variables, as indicated in Table 12, was not significant. Scheffe Table (13) shows the difference between the means of the teachers' experience groups on their actual classroom practices in teaching reading strategies.

Table 13: Scheffe test to compare the differences among Groups

Dependent Variable	(I) VAR00001	(J) VAR00001	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Linguistic Knowledge	0-6Years	6-10Years	-.47619	.41131	.524	-1.5729	.6205
		More than 10 Years	-.14815	.39181	.931	-1.1928	.8965
	6-10Years	0-6Years	.47619	.41131	.524	-.6205	1.5729
		More than 10 Years	.32804	.35400	.657	-.6158	1.2719
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.14815	.39181	.931	-.8965	1.1928
		6-10Years	-.32804	.35400	.657	-1.2719	.6158
Translation	0-6Years	6-10Years	-.51429	.73327	.785	-2.4694	1.4408
		More than 10 Years	-.46667	.69850	.802	-2.3291	1.3957
	6-10Years	0-6Years	.51429	.73327	.785	-1.4408	2.4694
		More than 10 Years	.04762	.63110	.997	-1.6351	1.7303
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.46667	.69850	.802	-1.3957	2.3291
		6-10Years	-.04762	.63110	.997	-1.7303	1.6351
Conceptually-Driven Basis	0-6Years	6-10Years	-.19286	.43166	.906	-1.3438	.9581
		More than 10 Years	-.21667	.41119	.871	-1.3130	.8797
	6-10Years	0-6Years	.19286	.43166	.906	-.9581	1.3438
		More than 10 Years	-.02381	.37151	.998	-1.0144	.9667
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.21667	.41119	.871	-.8797	1.3130
		6-10Years	.02381	.37151	.998	-.9667	1.0144
Cognitive	0-6Years	6-10Years	-1.15714*	.32318	.008	-2.0188	-.2954
		More than 10 Years	-.66111	.30786	.128	-1.4820	.1597

Strategy		0-6Years	1.15714*	.32318	.008	.2954	2.0188
	6-10Years	More than	.49603	.27815	.231	-.2456	1.2377
		10 Years					
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.66111	.30786	.128	-.1597	1.4820
		6-10Years	-.49603	.27815	.231	-1.2377	.2456
	0-6Years	6-10Years	.34286	.41764	.718	-.7707	1.4564
More than 10 Years		.20000	.39783	.882	-.8607	1.2607	
Metacognitive Strategy C		0-6Years	-.34286	.41764	.718	-1.4564	.7707
	6-10Years	More than	-.14286	.35945	.924	-1.1012	.8155
		10 Years					
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	-.20000	.39783	.882	-1.2607	.8607
		6-10Years	.14286	.35945	.924	-.8155	1.1012
	0-6Years	6-10Years	-.77143	.57850	.428	-2.3139	.7710
More than 10 Years		-.47778	.55107	.692	-1.9471	.9915	
Aided Strategy		0-6Years	.77143	.57850	.428	-.7710	2.3139
	6-10Years	More than	.29365	.49789	.842	-1.0339	1.6212
		10 Years					
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.47778	.55107	.692	-.9915	1.9471
		6-10Years	-.29365	.49789	.842	-1.6212	1.0339
	0-6Years	6-10Years	-.46151	.28562	.296	-1.2230	.3000
More than 10 Years		-.29506	.27207	.566	-1.0205	.4304	
Employment		0-6Years	.46151	.28562	.296	-.3000	1.2230
	6-10Years	More than	.16645	.24582	.797	-.4890	.8219
		10 Years					
	More than 10 Years	0-6Years	.29506	.27207	.566	-.4304	1.0205
6-10Years		-.16645	.24582	.797	-.8219	.4890	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicate that there is just one significant difference. The teachers with 6- 10 year experience used cognitive strategy more than the teachers with 0-6 year experience (Sig.=.008, p<.05).

4.6 Analysis of the qualitative data

The information gained through class observations was recorded verbatim and the researcher used concrete, objective language to describe what she observed. In relating the teachers' stated beliefs to observational data, the researcher did not intend to simply confirm or disconfirm stated beliefs in the participants' teaching practice. Classroom observation aimed to ascertain the extent to which teachers' classroom practices are affected, or not, by their beliefs. To achieve this aim, the observational data were analyzed for the key instructional episodes (Gahin, 2001). Triangulation of the data was established and the episodes were matched against the data obtained from the questionnaire and observation. The analysis of qualitative data indicated that teachers' practices were generally aligned with their stated beliefs. But there was some contradictory evidence between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. For example, they had stated "finding the main idea" as the most important and an essential activity, while the focus in most of the classes was on vocabulary. As another example, "reading aloud the text" was among the least practiced strategies according to the teachers' stated beliefs, while in practice, in all observed classes, it was one of the essential strategies which employed all the time.

4.7 Discussion

The data analysis of the first research question showed that the three most important reading theories or strategies advocated by the instructors were "Finding main idea", "Vocabulary", and "Scanning". Their related categories would respectively be "cognitive strategy", "linguistic knowledge", and "cognitive strategy". In addition, the three least important strategies included "Translating the text into Farsi", "Reading aloud the text", and "Retelling the text", which respectively belong to "translation", "linguistic knowledge", and "cognitive strategy". For the second question, the three most essential teaching theories or strategies advocated by the instructors were "Finding main idea", "Scan-

ning”, and “Asking questions to check comprehension”, which respectively belong to “cognitive strategy”, “cognitive strategy”, and metacognitive strategy”. In addition, the three least important strategies included “Translating the text into Farsi”, “Understanding the types of the text”, and “Reading aloud the text”. The categories of the three least important strategies were “translation”, “conceptually-driven basis”, and “linguistic knowledge”. The result of the third question revealed that “asking questions to check comprehension”, “making predictions based on the title”, and “vocabulary”, were reported as the most practiced strategies. On the other hand, “translating the text into Farsi”, “reading aloud the text”, and “understanding the types of the text” were the least practiced strategies. So, the three most employed categories were respectively “metacognitive strategies”, “conceptually-driven basis”, and “linguistic knowledge”. On the other hand, the three least employed categories were respectively “translation”, “linguistic knowledge”, and “conceptually-driven basis”. To summarize, teachers were flexible in reporting “metacognitive strategies”, “cognitive strategies”, and “linguistic knowledge” as the most important or the most employed strategies in reading comprehension, but they were unanimous in mentioning “translation” as the least important and the least employed strategy in reading comprehension. The result of the fourth research question showed that, statistically, there was a significant and positive relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their actual classroom practices. In order to see if this was actually the case with their real practices, the results of the class observation were compared to those of the questionnaires. The result of the fifth research question indicated that the teachers with 6-10 year experience used cognitive strategy more than the teachers with 0-6 year experience. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire and classroom observations showed that practices and beliefs were generally consistent; however, this study did highlight instances of inconsistency with regard to two beliefs the teachers held (1) that “finding the main idea” was the most important and an essential activity; (2) that “reading aloud the text” was not important in reading comprehension. While in practice “reading aloud the text” was an important activity in all classes and

they did not pay much attention to “finding the main idea” as an essential factor in reading comprehension. The reason can be that the teachers may not be able to articulate fully the beliefs or theories that underline their practice or even be aware of them. Or according to Argyris and Schön (1974), the theory that actually controls someone’s actions is their “theory-in-use”, which may or may not match their “espoused theory” (p. 7). They wrote that learning what people’s theory-in-use is may not simply be a matter of asking them, but their theory-in-use must be constructed from observations of their behavior. As well as underlining the complexity of the relationship between beliefs and practice, this suggests that much care must be taken in the use of surveys and interviews to understand teaching practice. This result agrees with the result of the study conducted by Collie Graden (1996) and showed that practices and beliefs were generally consistent. It also agrees with the result of Richardson, et al. (1991) study which showed the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. They dealt with teachers from grades 4, 5, and 6 using a belief interview technique. The study demonstrates that beliefs of teachers relate to their classroom practices. The result also agrees with the outcome of Chou’s (2008) study based on the assumption that teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between the participants’ beliefs and their classroom practices. The result of this study varies from Bisland, O’Conner & Malow-Iroff’s (2009) study which investigated teaching beliefs of social studies teachers in the basic cycle in New York and the extent of the classroom practice of those beliefs. The study found no proof of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their practice. It also differs from Khader’s (2012) study that adopted a qualitative case study approach to check how the pedagogical beliefs of social studies teachers correspond to the practices observed by their own students. The study concluded that there is no relation between the teachers’ beliefs and constructive classroom practice in social studies.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Studies

This study showed consistency between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and

their practices but there was inconsistency between some teachers' beliefs and their practices. The results are in line with the results of several researchers (e.g. Ogan-Bekiroglu & Akko, 2009 and Mansour, N. 2013) that beliefs interact with practices in complex ways. What teachers profess to believe and what they actually do in the classroom may or may not be consistent. The complexities of classroom life can cause conflict and constrain teachers' abilities to stay faithful to their beliefs and provide instruction which aligns with their theoretical beliefs (Fang, 1996).

In regards to each specific category of reading theories and strategies, the instructors reported that they believed metacognitive strategy, linguistics knowledge and cognitive strategy were effective in reading comprehension. Evidence also could be found that the most important teaching theories or strategies were all located among these three categories. For example, the items "finding main idea" and "skimming" belong to the category of cognitive strategy. The items such as "vocabulary" and "grammar" refer to linguistic knowledge.

On the other hand, the strategies, "using visual support," and "using dictionaries" categorized as aided strategy were ranged as least important elements in reading comprehension. To summarize, the focus on cognitive strategy, linguistics knowledge, and metacognitive strategy has delineated the construct of teachers' belief systems among instructors who participated in this study.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the six specific categories (linguistics knowledge, translation, conceptually-driven basis, cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy and aided strategy) did not necessarily correspond with their counterparts within each of the three parts. This finding provided evidence that the participants may have not reflected all the beliefs on their teaching practices. Of course, the difference was not so huge to reject the overall consistency between their beliefs and practices. The results have resonated with the factor that the way the instructors practice teaching activities in their reading class depends, to a large extent, on their beliefs about learners, learning and theories (i.e., Nespors, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

Further research is needed in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, especially interviews and observations in classroom settings so

that it would be possible to gain a better understanding about teachers' theoretical orientations and classroom practices.

Since the ultimate goal of reading instruction is comprehension, it is recommended that teachers be aware of the effective instructional approaches that would enhance and foster students' comprehension. This can be done by examining the effects of current methods of teaching on students' comprehension and at the same time exploring and investigating the strategies that are embedded in each approach.

Relating to this issue, exploring the reasons why some teachers are resistant to theoretical shifts, which may even lead to better results, is suggested.

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