



**Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension and
creative thinking of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL
learners?**

By

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Abstract

Reading is an abundant source of creativity and one of the main ways for foreign language learners (EFL) to acquire information. Likewise, creativity is an essential life skill which is highly related to EFL development. Yet, studies have shown that EFL learners lack basic reading skills and many face comprehension difficulties. Nor is creativity fully established and appreciated in the context of EFL.

This study explored perceptions of supervisors', teachers' and learners' on reading, collaboration and creativity. It investigated the effects of incorporating Creative Circles (C.C.) approach on Saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension and creative thinking.

A mixed method approach was adopted in this quasi-experimental study. Eight EFL supervisors, 45 EFL teachers and 90 EFL learners from three natural classes in one middle-school participated in the study. Prior to the intervention, surveys and interviews were conducted to find out the extent to which reading skills and creativity are promoted in reading classes and to explore participants' perceptions on collaborative reading and creativity. The three classes were taught by the same teacher with one being an experiment class (C.C. class) and the other two as comparison classes. During the three-month long intervention, learners in the experiment class were introduced to the Creative Circles approach, while the other two classes approached reading lessons as they normally did without any changes or modifications. All the participants were tested for their reading comprehension and creativity prior to and after the completion of the intervention. In addition to quantitative data, learners in the experiment class and the teacher were asked to keep journals to describe their learning/teaching experience about the C.C. approach. The quantitative data was then analysed using t-test, ANOVA and correlation analysis, whereas the qualitative data was analysed thematically.

The findings reveal an insufficient understanding and lack in promoting of reading skills, collaboration and creative thinking among Saudi EFL supervisors, teachers and students. Comparisons of pre-and post-tests results show that incorporating C.C. approach in teaching reading could improve students' reading comprehension and creative thinking domains (with the exception of originality). the C.C. approach also appears to have a positive impact on students' attitudes towards reading and collaboration. The correlation analysis did not show a significant relationship between reading and creativity. Drawing from the findings of this study, suggestions and pedagogical implications for reading instruction and fostering creativity in the Saudi EFL classroom and the wider EFL context are discussed.

Dedication

Dedicated with love to

My most beloved mother and my family

(my wife and my children Ziyad, Omar, and my new inspiration Sarah).

It is also dedicated to the memory of my father, who passed away a long time ago but whose kindness and wisdom will continue to guide and inspire my journey in life.

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

The English language is an internationally influential language. It has become the language of communication in many aspects of people's modern life regardless of where they live or what they do. For instance, English is the prevailing language in the fields of science and technology, commerce, politics, entertainment, tourism, cultural exchange and more. According to David (1997) and Kelly (2004), English is oftentimes referred to as the globe's lingua franca while Albl-Mikasa (2010: 1) describes its international reach as being "one of the most significant developments of this century". Hence, many countries all over the world have included English as a compulsory school subject in their educational programmes, even at a primary level (Nunan, 2001).

In the Arab World, a lot of attention has been given to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. However, the quality of teaching and learning practices has not shown much improvement. Fareh (2010: 3601), a teacher trainer and an author of a series of textbooks on teaching English as a foreign language in several Arab countries, revealed that EFL programmes in the Arab World, despite generous spending, has not reached the desired outcomes. He identifies the following as the reasons behind this problem: insufficient teacher training, teacher-centered language classes, unmotivated students with low language proficiency, ignoring communicative activities that develop language skills, inefficient EFL textbooks, inappropriate language assessment and a lack of exposure to foreign languages.

Similarly, the situation in Saudi Arabia is far from ideal. Al-Karroud (2005) asserts that most Saudi secondary stage graduates lack language competency and skills. He describes them as being unable to read, write or speak English satisfactorily. Moreover, according to "Test and Score Data Summary" for the Educational Testing Services (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012), the TOEFL test scores of Saudi students were the lowest when compared to their peers in other Middle Eastern countries in all four of the following skills: listening, speaking, writing and, in particular, reading. Saudi students' scores were the lowest worldwide alongside applicants from countries such as Guinea and Angola in reading English. Saudi students, along with students from the United Arab Emirates, also scored the lowest in the IELTS in 2012 in its two versions: Academic and General Training.

The disturbing TOEFL and IELTS results in reading can be attributed to: (a) teacher-centered reading classes in which EFL learners do not actively participate; (b) low standards of EFL teacher training programmes in teaching students reading; (c) overemphasizing the literal level of comprehension questions and ignoring the other levels; (d) poor reading skills of EFL learners; (e) limited vocabulary and (f) lack of motivation (Al-Karroud, 2005; Al-Qahtani, 2010; AL-Roomy, 2013).

Moreover, reading, as one of the key language skills, can be perceived as a complex mental activity which integrates two processes: decoding a written text (word recognition) and comprehension (grasping the meaning behind the text) (Gough, Hoover, & Peterson, 1996). Based on this definition, the two processes interact with one another to establish an understanding. To accomplish this result, the word recognition process must engage the learner's relevant schemata and initiate thinking about the collective meaning of a text (Collins & Collins, 2002).

Reading is an indispensable skill for foreign language learners. Nuttall (1996: 30) states that "language improvement is a natural by-product of reading." It is even considered to be "an essential skill, perhaps the most important skill, taught in schools" (Collins & Collins, 2002: 9). This is quite evident in a foreign language classroom where learners are constantly constructing the meaning of the texts before them regardless of the focus skill as they need to comprehend, interpret, infer and draw conclusions. In fact, Alfassi (2004) emphasises the point that as the learner matures, texts become a major source of information. Hence learning to read and learning from reading are crucial in creating skilled learners, who can achieve greater levels of language proficiency than those who cannot read well.

Regrettably, reading is often marginalized in a Saudi EFL classroom setting. AL-Nifayee (2010) criticizes the reading activities inside these classes as being solely focused on grammar and vocabulary while ignoring other comprehension activities or reading strategies. Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman (2011: 69), after discussing the importance of reading comprehension skills, state: "Most EFL students, especially school students, are often unable to comprehend a written text effectively". Furthermore, Al-Nujaidi (2003) points out that Saudi first year university students' reading ability is far below the acceptable standards and that their vocabulary is very limited (between 500 and 700 word families).

The aforementioned views are in agreement with the researcher's own experiences of working as an EFL teacher and as EFL supervisor in the Saudi Ministry of Education for 16 years. Based on the researcher's classroom observations, teaching practices in an actual reading class involve: oversimplification of reading texts and activities through summarizing passages in the students' first language and answering comprehension questions for them, excessive use of L1, discouraging interaction between students, under emphasising higher order thinking skills, providing little training on reading strategies. Even in testing reading, EFL teachers often provide students with passages and comprehension questions that were previously taught and most of the test items do not go beyond the literal level of comprehension. In these conditions, it is quite difficult to imagine how students' reading comprehension abilities and thinking skills could be developed or stimulated.

In addition to reading, creative thinking, which involves the generation of ideas that are both new and valuable, is an important element of language. Language can be viewed as a space where normalizing powers, which tend to conventionalize language, are in tension with centrifugal powers, which decentralize and promote creative language use (Bakhtin,1981). In other words, when we use language in everyday life, we conform to the norms and conventions of the language, but at the same time we tend to be adventurous and play with language in order to express and emphasise our creative abilities. Creativity in language can be seen as the property of exceptional people such as poets and novelists-inherency model, or it could be viewed as the property of all people who communicate with one another using the language in different settings- sociocultural model (Kumagai, 2012). The latter model is more relevant to this study because it is emphasises the importance of creativity in language as the product of sociocultural and interactional processes, viewing language and creativity as dynamic, sociocultural, and interactionally produced, whereas the inherency model perceives both creativity and language as static and product-oriented. Therefore, creativity in language could be considered as an everyday phenomenon, created by ordinary people in different contexts (Carter and McCarthy, 2004). Hence, creativity in relation to language could be defined as "A property of all language use in that language users do not simply reproduce but recreate, refashion, and recontextualise linguistic and cultural resources in the act of communicating" (Swann & Maybin,2007: 491)".

Moreover, reading and creativity are closely related. Since the potential of being creative exists in all humans, many researchers believe that it could be fostered and developed

through reading (Scanlon, 2006; McVey, 2008; Sturgell, 2008). Reading the least structured communication vehicle; therefore, it has the capacity for generating different interpretations and extensions. It is also capable of inspiring and motivating people. This is probably what led Berg & Rental (1967:224) to describe it as “the best possible stimulus for sparking creativity”. In addition, the strong connection between reading and creativity is evident in the fact that they both share common characteristics (McVey, 2008; Sturgell, 2008). Such traits include encouraging self-discovery, free thinking, curiosity, imagination and higher-order-thinking skills (Wang, 2012). In fact, creativity is clearly part of reading, especially in activities such as prediction, open-ended questions, discussions and elaboration exercises. These reading activities stimulate readers’ divergent thinking and encourage them to go beyond the lines and interact with the content of the reading material on various levels, from the directly experienced events to the indirect encounters (Ritchie, Luciano, Hansell, Wright & Bates, 2013).

Creativity, too, is crucial to education in general. Life is becoming increasingly complex and demanding for individuals as they go through the many changes and challenges which they have to tackle. Modern societies do not only appreciate the informed learner, but also the more autonomous and resourceful thinker. As Lin and McKay (2004: 4) point out: "It is not what pupils learn that makes the difference, but it [is] how they learn". Therefore, the development of students' thinking skills provides them with the necessary tools to seek knowledge and to be independent learners.

Enhancing creativity, as a part of the thinking process, is one of the main goals of education. It is an essential tool to solve problems and to overcome future challenges (Zai-toon, 1987). It is characterized by an awareness of one's own self and surrounding conditions while engaging the imagination to reach a quick perceptive solution to a problematic situation. Indeed, fostering creativity in the educational system creates the future's valuable contributors to societies' development who are responsible, well equipped and positive towards risks, challenges and opportunities (Morris, 2006). This necessitates the urgency for educators to move from rote learning towards creating classroom atmospheres that fosters creativity (Özcan, 2010).

Several governments have initiated programs to increase their country’s creativity, including Canada, the UK, The Netherlands and the European Union (Rietzschel, De Dreu & Nijstad, 2009). The Saudi government also realised the importance of creativity and established King Abdul-Aziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and

Creativity (*Mawhiba*) in June, 2000. The Foundation message serves three major goals: (1) improving and expanding what is being offered to educate gifted individuals; (2) promoting an awareness of creativity in society and; (3) supporting sustainable development in the Kingdom. The foundation strives to focus on public and higher education, nurture creativity in the fields of science and technology, cooperate with other organisations that serve its purposes, explore and identify talent and creativity regardless of social, economic or background differences and communicate *Mawhiba's* message to the Saudi society.

Despite *Mawhiba's* efforts and the recommendations of several studies conducted in Saudi Arabia that advocate fostering and developing creativity (e.g., Suliman, 2007; Al Zaidi, 2008; Al Inizi, 2006; Zarnoqi, 2007), less has been achieved in terms of creativity in the Saudi school system. Al Khadra (2005) emphasises the need to reconsider the current Saudi educational programmes designed to develop students' creativity because there is a widening gap between reality and expectations. In fact, studies show that Saudi state school students lack creative thinking skills (Ambusaidy & Al Baluchi, 2005; Al Qtaibi, 2009). With respect to language teaching, it is not difficult to establish a connection between language learning and creativity as most communicative activities (e.g., role-play) encourage learners to be more imaginative as well as flexible and original in their thinking. This has led some researchers such as Filimban (2010) to conclude that students' low level of achievement in English is mainly because approaches and methods that are practiced in schools do not involve communicative activities, which are creative in essence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and the Rationale

In the context of what has been previously discussed about the current displeasing situation of teaching reading to Saudi EFL learners as well as the unsatisfactory EFL classroom practices which do not encourage creativity, it has become evident that there is a need to adopt a teaching strategy which improves reading comprehension and fosters creative thinking of Saudi EFL learners. To address this issue, the present study has proposed Creative Circles approach a promising strategy.

Creative Circles approach is based on The Learning Circles Strategy which took shape in 1959 when Robert Karplus, a professor of physics at the University of California Berkeley and J. Myron Atkin, a professor of education, cooperated to develop as a strategy for teaching science. At its early stages, this strategy, which was intended to teach science to

elementary level learners, had two phases; invention and discovery (Atkin & Karplus, 1962). Later in 1967, an exploration phase, which precedes the *invention* and *discovery* phases, was introduced (Karplus & Thier, 1967). In order to further clarify the meaning of each phase for teachers, Karplus changed the names of the phases (3E) into: *exploration*, *introduction*, and *application* (Karplus et al., 1977). This model has been modified over time to include 4E, 5E and 7E but all of these models are only variations and they share the same basic principles set by the early 3E model (Campbell, 2006).

Moreover, the Creative Circles approach complies with cooperative learning in that students work together to achieve common goals and try to accomplish objectives that benefit all of group members. Students discuss texts with each other, help one another understand, and encourage each other to perform well and Individual participation is monitored regularly to ensure that all students are contributing and learning.

Creative Circles approach also adheres to the basic principles of cooperative learning in the classroom set by leading researchers (e.g., Stahl, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998a). First, there is a clear set of specific student learning outcome objectives. The new approach provides a well-thought-of plan about what students and teachers are expected to learn and do in class. The outcomes are also specified in terms of their emphasis on academic, metacognitive and cognitive skills and abilities. Second, this approach encourages students to “buy in to” the target outcomes as their own. This is done with the help of a skilled teacher and attainable and relevant goals that could increase students’ self-confidence and enhance their sense of collaboration. Third, positive interdependency and individual accountability (Johnson & Johnson, 1994), which are essential elements of cooperative learning, are promoted in the creative circles’ groups through assigning roles to every student and by asking them to sign a group contract. Fourth, the class, which incorporates creative circles approach, is divided into small heterogeneous groups of five to six members according to their academic abilities. Students in this type of group tend to support and interact better with one another, tolerate diversity and consider different viewpoints and thoughts (Stahl, 1994). Finally, reflectivity, an important aspect in cooperative learning, is emphasised through the use of reflective journals that students are asked to fill out after each lesson. In these journals, students comment on their effort as a team in areas such as (a) how well they achieved group objectives, (b) what went well and why, (c) what went wrong and why, (d) how did they feel and why and (e) how to improve their group work in the next lesson. Reflection is a

powerful tool that raises the awareness of students and provides them with constructive feedback from peers (*Ibid*).

As a type of cooperative learning, this model has its roots in the Constructivist Theory. Karplus used the Children's Mental Functioning Model of Jean Piaget as the basis for constructing his strategy (Renner, Abraham, & Birnie, 1988). Consequently, the three phases of the learning circles strategy correspond to Piaget's three stages of cognitive development: assimilation, accommodation and organisation (Radwan, 2004). Also, this model recognizes the basic principles of constructivism such as a student-centred classroom environment, inquiry-based learning, peer teaching, social interaction and promoting learners' thinking and reflection (Driscoll, 1994).

The Creative Circles approach, which is based on Learning Circles Model, is useful and more appealing to students in various ways. Al-Ameen (2001) indicates that group work increases students' achievement and improves their attitudes towards learning. It also enhances students' critical thinking skills and creativity (Brandt 1994; Lavoie, 1999). Although The Learning Circles Model is mainly used to teach science subjects, it is a cross disciplinary strategy which can be applied across all school content areas and at different school levels and it has strong potential as an aid to achieve the desired outcomes (Al Otaibi, 2008; AlSufyani, 2010). Finally, learning circles, as a collaborative effort between students, can be a solution to the problems of mixed-ability classrooms such as lack of interest and participation, ineffective learning and indiscipline (Shen & Huang, 2007). Therefore, it can be very helpful in language classrooms, especially in reading comprehension lessons since it enables students to approach reading texts individually and as a group in a supportive environment without risking or neglecting different reading competency levels among students.

Building on the benefits of this model, Creative Circles adopts a five-phase approach to learning that fosters creativity and, at the same time, works to improve students' reading comprehension. At each phase, students carry out specific tasks. The aim of the first phase (*engagement*) is for the teacher to uncover a students' prior knowledge about a certain topic and to engage them with the lesson through raising questions and problems and making them curious about the topic. In this way students can associate and interact with the topic, and the rest of the phases become meaningful (Bybee, 1997; Campbell, 2006).

During the second phase (*exploration*), learners are encouraged to establish a common starting point for current and later discussions and connections. This phase provides learners with opportunities to discover, question, inquire and deal with misconceptions collaboratively in order to conceptualize the ideas and views they explored earlier (Lindgren & Bleicher, 2005). During this stage the teacher works as a facilitator who encourages group discussions and asks guiding questions (Al-Khalili et al. 1996; Ayyash, 2007). In the third phase (*explanation*), learners are given the chance to present their groups' thoughts and findings and to enhance their own learning through questioning the thoughts and findings of the other groups. The teacher monitors the discussions and assists learners to understand the concepts and make connections with different conclusions than those that the other groups arrived at (Campbell, 2006). The fourth phase (*elaboration*) aims at extending learners' understanding of the newly learned concepts and ideas through the teacher's encouragement to apply what they have learned in situations similar to the ones that they have already explored (Ettiyo, 2006; Bybee, 1997). In the fifth and final phase (*evaluation*), learners are encouraged to gauge their understanding and growth through formative assessment during the previous phases. Also, evaluation in this stage includes open-ended questions, writing journals or demonstrations and often-times asking probing questions (Campbell, 2006).

Although the proposed approach is similar to learning circles in its developmental stages and in the fact that it is undertaken collaboratively, it is more concerned with fostering learners' creative thinking and developing their reading skills in an EFL context. Creativity is considered to be a skill that can be developed through teaching efforts and intervention programmes that target improving such skill (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; King, 1994). In fact, Saudi government bodies such as *Mawhiba* (2009), a foundation for giftedness and creativity that was established in 2000 under the presidency of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and international policy documents like the recent EU Educational and Training 2020 Policy (2012) have included creativity as a core educational objective. Therefore, the proposed Creative Circles approach incorporates activities that encourage students to think and behave creatively. These activities involve questioning and challenging, making connections and seeing relationships, imagination, exploring new ideas, criticizing ideas, actions and outcomes and supporting learners to reflect on and evaluate their learning (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2005; Ofsted, 2010). In addition, this approach promotes creative thinking through encouraging students to go beyond the literal meaning

of the texts they read. According to this model, reading is viewed as a dialogue between reader and text in which the reader contributes as much as the text. Thus, reading becomes an empowerment effort that motivates readers to understand themselves and stimulates their imagination and resourcefulness in four overlapping phases. The *descriptive* phase allows reader to understand the content by asking ‘*what*’, ‘*when*’, ‘*where*’, ‘*who*’ and ‘*why*’ questions. In the *personal* phase, readers interact emotionally with the text and ask ‘*How do I feel about this?*’ ‘*What do I like/dislike?*’ or ‘*How has my experience differed?*’. The *critical* phase engages the reader in a critical reflection to evaluate the purpose and truthfulness of the information in the text through asking questions such as ‘*Is this statement right?*’ or ‘*What are the author’s intentions?*’. Finally, in the *creative* phase, readers are encouraged to use their imagination and curiosity to elaborate and co-construct ideas through transforming and manipulating the concepts and themes provided by the text. The questions in this phase could be ‘*What do I know now that will empower me?*’ ‘*How can we improve life/conditions?*’ or ‘*In what ways can we act differently?*’. The creativity activities in the pre and post reading phases help to round up, consolidate, and extend students’ understanding independently and collaboratively, and encourage further language use and fluency (Al-Ameen, 2001; Brandt 1994; Lavoie, 1999; Al Otaibi, 2008; AlSufyani, 2010; Shen & Huang, 2007).

Creative circles as a collaborative effort can also serve the purpose of improving EFL learners' reading comprehension (Takallou & Veisi, 2013). Unlike reading individually, reading collaboratively in a foreign language can provide a communicative purpose for reading and create a classroom atmosphere in which learners can question and share ideas and feelings about the texts that they read (Goodmacher & Kajiura, 2010). In addition to significantly decreasing classroom anxiety and overall language anxiety, reading in small groups motivates learners and encourages critical thinking (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010; Gokhale, 1995; Totten, Sills, Digby & Russ, 1991). This type of reading might bring about the following benefits: increased learners' comprehension and talk time, the presence of a supportive and communicative learning environment and the natural stimulation of learners' cognitive, linguistic, and social abilities through the interactive nature of collaborative reading (Momtaz & Garner, 2010). Based on the previous discussion, the researcher believes that the Creative Circles approach can help improve the unsatisfactory level of Saudi intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension and promote creative thinking in language classrooms. This study may also be useful in the wider EFL context

which, as recent studies suggest, needs to implement strategies and methods for developing the reading comprehension of EFL learners and nurture their creative potentials.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study has been undertaken using a mixed methods methodology in order to advance the understanding of the impact of Creative Circles approach in developing the reading comprehension and creative thinking of Saudi EFL middle school learners. The specific research objectives were to identify:

1. The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' use of reading skills
2. The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' attitudes towards reading
3. The extent to which EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking
4. EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity
5. The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' reading comprehension
6. The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' creative thinking

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to the understanding of learning circles' role as a pedagogical strategy in teaching reading in English as a foreign language. Despite of recommendations of adopting learning circles in any school subjects (AlSufyani, 2010), an extensive search of the literature published about learning circles fails to reveal any study in Saudi Arabia or in the Arab world that has incorporated learning circles as an instructional strategy in an EFL context. Hence, the present study opens the door for other Saudi researchers to employ learning circles in the hopes of improving EFL learners' language skills within the Saudi EFL instructional setting.

Internationally, most of the available research in learning circles strategy was in the fields of mathematics and in science subjects (e.g., Physics, Chemistry and Biology). Although, there have been a number of studies in "literature circles" in an EFL context, they differ from the current study in that their main focus was to study, in depth, English literary works such as stories and poems as well as literary terminologies; and whether the proficiency level of the participating students' was reasonably developed as to be able to read and

interact with complex texts. Therefore, the present study might be regarded a considerable addition to the body of research on learning circles.

Moreover, it is hoped that this study could establish an understanding of how Creative Circles approach influences reading comprehension instruction and teachers' awareness of creative thinking in an EFL context where various levels of learning objectives as well as different teaching roles, such as coaching, facilitation and coordination are involved. It also tries to explore the effect of this approach on the development of students' reading comprehension and creativity as well as its potential in improving their social skills and motivation.

In addition, this study is also interested in offering a fresh perspective for EFL course planners and designers when it comes to reading and creative thinking. This might be achieved through providing challenging and interactional types of activities that involve positive and efficient group work when addressing reading texts. Also, this study attempts to draw attention to fostering thinking and creativity in reading activities, an important issue that is largely ignored, especially in EFL settings.

1.5 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is arranged in six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a background about the study and the rationale behind conducting it, including the general interest of the study and its objectives. The next chapter (Chapter 2) reviews the literature and key concepts relevant to this study and lays out its conceptual framework. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the study, the data collection and the followed procedures. It also considers relevant background information about the Saudi context where the study is based and from where the data was collected. In Chapter 4, findings obtained from the quantitative data (the questionnaires and the reading/ creativity tests) as well the qualitative data (the interviews and reflective journals) are presented. Following on from this, in Chapter 5, an overview of the significant findings of the study is presented, and then the findings are considered in light of existing literature. Finally, in Chapter 6, the conclusion of the study and a consideration of the implications, contribution to knowledge, and suggestions for further research are provided.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, literature relevant to the study will be explored. The primary focus of this chapter is to develop a conceptual understanding of reading comprehension as well as creative thinking that can be linked to the wider EFL context and to the Saudi context in particular. Exploring the concepts of reading and creativity is central to this study both in terms of providing a theoretical background to these concepts and in informing methods of inquiry, analysis and further discussions.

This chapter will start by exploring definitions, purposes, components, models of reading and relationships between L1 and L2 reading. In addition, issues in reading instruction and developing reading comprehension in the Arab World as well Saudi Arabia will be detailed. This review will inform the investigation of the issues observed in reading by Saudi EFL learners. Next, a consideration of the concept of creativity through detailed discussions of its definitions, dimensions, theories, relationship to education and the promotion of creativity in the Saudi context. Further discussions of the relationship between creativity and language teaching and reading in particular will be presented. The chapter concludes by introducing the Creative Circles approach as an approach that might address the issues related to reading comprehension and creative thinking. This approach will be explored by providing its background, relationship to constructivist theory and significance in the EFL context. A summary of this chapter will be provided at the end of this literature review.

2.1 Exploring reading

Most people around the world take reading for granted. In fact, more than 80% of the world's population can read (UNESCO, 2012). The advent of electronic communication has only emphasised the importance of reading skills to appropriately manage large quantities of information. Also, many people around the world can read in English as a second or a foreign language. They do this for various reasons such as, migration, interaction within multilingual countries, transportation and educational opportunities. In addition, reading in English occurs in informal settings like reading newspapers, magazines, posters, adverts, e-mails and text messages and reading can happen in formal settings such as academic and workplace contexts. In modern societies, second language

(L2) reading skills are a major concern as success, now and in the future, can be much harder to achieve without them. In fact, school systems worldwide, including Saudi Arabia, require students to learn English as an additional language.

2.1.1 Purposes of Reading

The various contexts in which reading occurs require different reading purposes. In an academic setting, six major types of reading emerge: (1) search for information (scanning), (2) gain quick understanding (skimming), (3) learn, (4) integrate, (5) evaluate and (6) comprehend the text in general (Harmer, 2001).

Searching for information usually includes *skimming* and *scanning* (Guthrie, 1988). Both of these processes work at a high rate of words per minute and they enable the reader to identify specific information (scanning) and create a quick general understanding of the text (skimming). Skimming can be used to determine what the text is about, decide whether the text is worth reading and to decide on which text to focus on when presented with many texts to read (Grabe, 2009).

Reading to learn is evident in an academic context. This form of reading is based on what the instructor or the textbook identify as important information which might be used in a certain task or needed in the future. This type of reading is quite demanding because the reader is required to identify and recall the main idea and supporting ideas (Enright, Grabe, Koda, Mosenthal, Mulcany-Ernt & Schedl, 2000). Reading to learn usually requires reading short sections of texts at a slower reading speed (Carver, 1992a). The reader also has to establish a connection between the text and his/her prior knowledge.

A more complex and demanding form of reading is *reading to integrate*. It involves the process of synthesizing information from a number of sources or from different chapters in a book or a textbook (Chall, 1983). The reader must identify the organisational frame (comparison-contrast, narration, description, problem-solution, and cause-effect) of each text and build his/her own over-arching and coherent organisational frame of the multiple texts that are being synthesized.

Reading to evaluate is more complex in interaction with the text than reading to integrate. It requires the reader to make decisions about the importance or persuasiveness of certain aspects of the text they are presented with. Also, intertextual connections are to be made between the text and the reader's own prior knowledge and attitudes. The demands in reading to evaluate involves the application of the reader's emotions, interests and

preferences to their interpretation of the text they are presented with as well as active inferencing and reinterpretation of the text (Chall, 1983).

The sixth and most common purpose for reading is *reading for general comprehension*. It provides the general foundation for other forms of reading, and it generally represented by the term '*reading comprehension*' (Carver, 1992a). For L1 learners, this type of reading is easier because of its extended exposure to automatic word recognition, syntactic, meaning formation and text structure processes. Conversely, foreign language learners find reading comprehension significantly challenging because they have to master the application of those processes in such a short amount of time. They also lack the proper exposure to the language that they have chosen to learn (Grabe, 2009).

Sometimes, due to certain factors, different reading purposes are selected, which significantly affect the comprehension processes used by the reader. For example, a number of studies have shown that students with low background knowledge of a topic carefully read texts to comprehend, whereas students with high background knowledge about a topic are selective readers (McNamara, et al., 1996; Voss & Silfes, 1996). Also, genre differences can affect reading processes (Grabe, 2002). McDaniel et al (1986, 1995) argue that the readers purposefully adjust their reading processes of comprehension according to differences in text types. In second language reading situations, researchers believe that L2 readers find it difficult to shift their reading strategies when the text type that they are reading changes (Horiba, 2000). In general, according to the reading purposes, readers vary their reading processes such as, reading rate, comprehension checking and rereading (Lorch, Lorch, & Kluzewitz, 1993). For example, students who are reading for study purposes are more engaged in inferential connections, whereas those who are reading for pleasure use general associations and evaluation (Linderholm & van der Broek, 2002).

Overall, the wide range of literature on reading purposes highlight their importance and influence. Certain reading purposes activate specific reading processes in various combinations. This fact surely has an impact on the way the term "reading" is defined. Grabe (2009) argues rather convincingly that reading should be regarded as a combination of different skills which are only different in emphasis and elaboration.

2.1.2 Defining reading

There is no shortage of definitions of reading. Reading is usually defined in simple terms such as "reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in

language form via the medium of print" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998:22), or, "Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known" (Koda, 2005: 4). However, as explained earlier, reading is more complicated because it involves different reading purposes which activate different processes. To better understand reading, it is important to understand what readers fluent in a language do when they read (Ashby & Rayner, 2006). Grabe (2009) describes reading, as performed by fluent readers, as a combination of processes which are rapid, efficient, comprehending, interactive, strategic, purposeful, evaluative, learning and linguistic.

Skilled readers read rapidly and efficiently. Most of the materials they read are read at the rate of 250-300 word per minute (Pressley, 2006). They are also efficient in the sense that their processing skills, such as word recognition, syntactic parsing, inferencing, evaluation and text comprehension coordinate and work together smoothly (Breznitz, 2006).

Reading is an interactive process that involves comprehending the material that they are reading. Comprehension is the central goal for fluent readers. However, reading should not be equated to comprehension as there are other comprehending processes such as listening and visual comprehension. Reading is also interactive since it involves parallel interaction among many cognitive processes. The interaction process brings into play the writer's message and the reader's background knowledge and personal interpretation of the text (Breznitz, 2006).

Reading is also a strategic and flexible process. It requires the reader to anticipate and select, organise and summarise information as well as monitoring comprehension and reaching the reader's goals. Reading is flexible since the fluent reader is expected to adjust their processes and goals as reading purpose shifts or comprehension breaks down (Grabe, 2009).

In addition, reading is a purposeful and evaluative process. It is purposeful because of the fact that the fluent reader can successfully align the processes being applied and reading purposes. This, of course, is closely related to being an evaluative process as the reader tries to be purposeful and strategic. Evaluation occurs when the reader reacts to the text and the author's message.

Furthermore, reading is a learning and linguistic process. The continuous evaluation makes reading a learning process as the reader tries to respond to the text. Reading is also a

linguistic process as it is quite clear that reading is not possible unless the reader is able to connect graphemes to phonemes without recognizing organisational words and without having linguistic knowledge about the language of the text. In fact, linguistic knowledge is central to reading comprehension (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005).

The above provides a good description of what fluent readers do when they read and the functional components that are involved. This outlines an appropriate definition to reading as complex skill.

2.1.3 Processes of Reading

As explained earlier, reading is a complex phenomenon that has a wide range of purposes and characteristics. This complexity extends to the processes involved in carrying out the activity of reading. Understanding these processes is crucial to establish a beneficial framework for reading instruction (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005; Koda, 2005). Reading components can be categorized into low-level and high-level processes which operate at the same time and interact with each other (Grabe, 2009).

2.1.3.1 Low-Level Processes

Low-level reading processes are the resources which form the foundation of reading and they are, once automatized, essential for fluent reading (Hulstijn, 2001; Koda, 2005). These resources include word recognition, grammatical knowledge (word integration), semantic meaning and working memory.

Word recognition is one of the most important processes in reading comprehension and a good predictor of reading abilities (Perfetti, 2007; Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005). In fact, reading comprehension is impossible without efficient word recognition (Grabe, 2009). It involves the interaction of orthographic, morphological, phonological, semantic and syntactic skills which contribute to lexical access and integration (Perfetti, 2007). All of these skills must be automatized and accurate in order for fluent reading to happen. Automaticity is developed as an outcome of first attending and then proceduralising tasks (Anderson, 2007-2008).

There is a plethora of research on the importance of grammar in reading comprehension (Nation & Snowling, 2000; Bowey, 1995). *Grammatical knowledge*, like determiners, word ordering, tenses, clauses, modality and pronominal forms, is essential for reading as grammatical information is highly involved when it comes to comprehension (Grabe 2005;

Perfetti, 1999). Syntactic parsing also has a significant impact on reading processing time. Extensive research has shown that complex grammar structures in a text increase the texts processing time (Fender, 2001).

Semantic meaning is created through a network of meaning units which emerge from words, phrases and clauses. These units work together simultaneously with word recognition and syntactical information in order to comprehend a text (Perfetti & Britt, 1995).

One of the main resources for reading comprehension is *working memory* (Daneman & Merilke, 1996). It is a mental capacity system that is limited and that involves processing active information (Baddeley, 2007). It builds a temporary connection with the long-term memory to carry out various tasks. Baddeley and Hitch (1974) explained that working memory is made up of an attentional control system *executive control* backed by *phonological loop* (which stores, rehearses and activates speech-based information) and *visuo-spatial sketchpad* (which stores, rehearses and activates visual and spatial information). The working memory plays a major role in lower-level reading processing. It aids the phonological, orthographic and morphological processes in word recognition. It also executes the syntactic and semantic processes and stores information at clause level to develop networks which are needed for the comprehension of text (Baddeley, 2006).

2.1.3.2 High-Level Processes

Unlike the role of low-level reading processes, the role of high-level processes is not as well defined. Recent studies have established a coherent understanding of how high-level processes work to achieve comprehension (Rapp, van den Broek, McMaster, Kendeou & Espin, 2007; Zwaan & Rapp, 2006). These processing components are often automatized unless, for example, a new reading purpose emerges which may call for conscious efforts to satisfy that purpose. According to Grabe (2009), high-level processes of reading comprehension includes a text model of reader comprehension, a situational model of reader interpretation and the use of reading skills and resources.

The text model requires an understanding of the explicit message of a text. Text comprehension draws on information generated in low-level processes like word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic encoding and also combines that with the network of ideas that are already activated by textual input in the working memory. In this model, operations such as creating connections in a network, overlapping elements,

suppression of less important information, summary of events and inferencing are also used to link new ideas to the already activated network in order to maintain a coherent understanding of the text (Pressley, 2006; Grabe, 2009).

The situation model is generated as readers bring their own interpretation to the texts that they read. This model represents the integration of the information that readers bring to the reading with the text's explicit information (Goldman, Golden, & van den Broek, 2007). As the reader processes the text, different contextual factors come into play to make sense of the text that they are reading. These factors include the reader's purpose, task expectations, genre, prior knowledge, evaluation of the text, attitudes and interpretation inferences (Grabe, 2009).

This two-model framework provides a more fitting conceptualization of reading comprehension. It explains how a certain text can be read differently. It recognizes the effect of different genres on comprehension and explains reading issues among people who are poor readers (Grabe, 2009). In addition, this model incorporates the views of both the writer and the reader of a text and shows that emphasis on one of these models varies according to levels of reading ability, purposes and text genres (Kintsch, 1998; Long, Johns, & Morris, 2006; Voss & Silfies, 1996; Einstein et al., 1990).

Moreover, there are some reading skills and recourses that are involved in high-level processes as part of the development of the text model and the situation model. These include executive control, goal setting, strategy use, metacognitive knowledge, metalinguistic awareness and comprehension monitoring. *Executive control* implements key aspects of comprehension such as problem solving, inferencing, goal shifting and monitoring (Miyake, 2004). Also, *goal setting* is shown to have a major influence on comprehension outcomes in the context of L1 and L2. It controls what information is needed and how much effort is required to achieve a goal (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005).

A central issue in reading and comprehension development is *Strategy use*. Being strategic represents a conscious need to respond to comprehension issues such as goals, restoring understanding, or guessing the meaning of new words (Grabe, 2009). In addition, *metacognitive knowledge* is crucial to comprehension in the sense that it helps in checking one's understanding, achieving goals and using linguistic resources (Nagy, 2007).

Metalinguistic awareness is another resource that can aid comprehension, particularly when the reader experiences comprehension difficulties (Kuo & Anderson, 2008). It

involves the reflection on one's own knowledge of word-learning skills, syntactic structuring and discourse organisation. *Comprehension monitoring* is also necessary, especially with written texts, as they sometimes present dense or decontextualised information, unfamiliar vocabulary and contradictions to prior knowledge. Monitoring is a mechanism by which the reader responds to non-comprehension through the use of strategies to create an appropriate text model and situation model (Grabe, 2009).

2.1.4 General Reading Comprehension Models

Reading models are created through the synthesizing of research results in order to understand the nature of reading. They attempt to represent reading theories and explain what reading involves and how comprehension is built. Therefore, these models organise research results to better understand reading and provide further research exploration. However, models, as Grabe (2009), describes them, are not without problems because they simply cannot explain all the existing evidence available that comes from research findings. Therefore, there is an element of subjectivity as the authors of texts need to make decisions about what to include in their models. This is based on their research backgrounds, training, and on social and cultural perspectives. Nonetheless, reading models provide a significant contribute in relating theories about reading to research findings and creating new hypotheses to improve the current understandings of reading.

According to Gabe and Stoller (2002), reading comprehension models can be divided into two categories: metaphorical models, which describe general processes of how comprehension occurs, and research-based models which use empirical data to support their rationales for effective cognitive processing in reading.

2.1.4.1 Metaphorical models of reading

Metaphoric models are the most commonly used models to describe the various mental processes that are carried out in reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). They include bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models (Hudson, 2007). These models are beneficial in the sense that they provide a simple explanation for the process of reading comprehension. However, they are criticized for ignoring crucial details and being outdated.

Bottom-up models are often describes as being a text-driven linear type of reading. They refer to the mechanical processes involved in analysing text that is read as letter-by-letter, word-by-word, and sentence-by-sentence (Grabe, 2009). The acquired information is then

encoded by high-level processes in a sequential manner (Rumelhart, 1994). In bottom-up models low-level processes are highlighted while inference from background knowledge has little influence (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Top-down models highlight the active involvement and control of readers to process the text, in which the role of readers' goals, expectations and strategies play an important role. Reading in top-down models is “conceptually driven by the higher-order stages rather than by low-level stimulus analysis” (Samuels & Kamil, 2002: 212). Therefore, interaction of all processes, inference and prior knowledge are critical in developing comprehension of a text. However, the top-down model does not explain mental formations of comprehension, nor specify the mechanisms by which readers perform inference or sample the text to meet their goals and expectations (Grabe, 2009).

Interactive models combine the advantages in the two previously mentioned models to build comprehension through simultaneous interactive processes (Rumelhart, 1994). For instance, in order for low-level processes such as word recognition and syntactic parsing to be fast, they will need the support of high-level processes such as predictions, inference and the use of context and background knowledge. In this way, the bottom-up and top-down processes interact to decode and interpret the text as it is being read (Anderson, 1999).

2.1.4.2 Research-based models of reading

In addition to the metaphorical models discussed earlier, there are a number of models that are empirically tested and widely recognized. In the following lines, these models are briefly presented.

The Construction-Integration model is one of the most influential models of reading established by Kintsch and Van Dijk (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). They clearly differentiate between text model (comprehension) and situation model (interpretation). They believe that comprehension involves intersecting propositions and requires summarizing processes.

According to this model, comprehension is built by an interactive combination between construction and integration processes. As a text is being read, automatic bottom-up processes such as word recognition, syntactic parsing and proposition generation are supported by restructuring processes to create a coherent network of information that represent the text. This network becomes the basis for comprehending and interpreting a text (Grabe, 2009).

Structure Building Framework builds upon Van Dijk and Kintsch's model and is primarily concerned with how comprehension is constructed through sentence-by-sentence analysis. According to this model, comprehension differences among individuals are the result of five processes: laying foundation, mapping on the foundation, shifting to a new foundation, suppressing information and enhancing information (Gernsbacher, 1990, 1997).

When a reader reads the first segment of a text, a foundation of meaning is created. Key information is mapped onto this foundation as they read more relevant segments. New foundations are built when the reader encounters new segments which present different contexts or participants. These foundations are linked to support comprehension, which is also aided by suppressing and enhancing mechanisms (Grabe, 2005). Studies on this model support the claims that weaker readers find it difficult to keep a coherent understanding, shift to new segments and suppress irrelevant information. This can be due to deficiencies in reader's background knowledge, vocabulary or lack of experience on how to build a coherent mental representation of the information based on cognitive processes and mechanisms. Also, this model is applicable to other forms of comprehension such as listening and visuals (Grabe, 2009).

The Landscape Model of Reading, which is considered to be an operationalization of Kintsch's model, was proposed by van den Broek (Goldman, Golden, & van den Broek, 2007). Its main focus is on discourse analysis for reading comprehension and how readers meet their "standard of coherence" by estimating the activation level of concepts in the text. The estimation is influenced by whether the concept is mentioned in the current clause, available from the prior clause, inferred and required to connect to prior referents, inferred and required to connect with the current clause or associated semantically with the current clause. Research on this measure of activation shows a strong relationship with students' performance as most students place the most importance in the concepts with the highest level of activation determined by this model (Grabe, 2009).

The Capacity Constrained Reader Model (CC READER Model) was first introduced by Just and Carpenter in 1980 (Just & Carpenter, 1987). According to this model, comprehension is created through combining automatic low-level processes with interactive high-level ones within the limited capacity of the working memory. This model focuses on the factors that affect cognitive capacity and how the working memory's limitations influence reading comprehension. Some of these key factors are syntactic complexity, linguistic ambiguity, variations in selectivity and suppression, information

maintenance demands, external memory load and time constraints (Just & Carpenter, 1992).

The Interactive Compensatory Model was developed by Stanovich (1980) and it argues that reading involves many interactive and automatic processes which operate efficiently. However, if one of these processes breaks down, other processes will compensate for it in order to maintain comprehension. This model also claims that faster reading skills result in more independence from context support (Stanovich, 2000).

The Verbal Efficiency Model, which was developed by Perfetti (1985), argues that word recognition is responsible for building comprehension. The basic assumption of this model is that successful comprehension is the result of automatized word recognition, well-represented lexical entries and efficient working memory operations (Grabe, 2009). According to this model, problems in high-level processes arise from the inefficient word recognition skills, indicated by problems with one or more of word recognition's components i.e.; phonological, orthographic and semantic information (Perfetti, 2007).

The Compensatory-Encoding Model takes on the assumptions of The Verbal efficiency model (Walczyk et al., 2001). Unlike the Interactive Compensatory Model, this model argues that higher-level strategies continually compensate for reading comprehension inefficiencies. It also claims that when there is no time pressure, metacognition and strategy use, play an important role in comprehension whereas low-level processes become more predominantly involved with reading under time pressure (Breznitz, 2006).

The Simple View of Reading Model argues that reading comprehension is the result of the interaction between word recognition and comprehension abilities (Adolf, Catt & Little, 2006). Advocates of this model accept the fact that there are other factors which influence reading comprehension but these factors are considered marginal when compared to decoding and comprehension skills. The model offers a general view of reading based on statistical argument derived from scores of standardized tests.

The Guessing Game Model, proposed by Goodman (1967), gained popularity amongst researchers in applied linguistics and education although its claims are not well supported (Grabe, 2009). According to this model, reading is a universal process in which readers approach the text with certain hypotheses, predictions and background knowledge that are confirmed or disproven through sampling the text. The reader then starts to generate new predictions. This model is reader-driven and perceives reading as an interactive and

communicative process in which graphophonemic knowledge is not given major priority (Samuels & Kamil, 2002; Urquhart & Weir, 1998).

The Rauding Model, introduced by Carver (1984), highlights reading purposes and claims that comprehension processes can be quantified to build common standards that a learners' comprehension can be measured against. Carver (1997, 2000) argues that reading efficiency consists of rate (the speed at which the decoding and general cognitive skills are carried out) and accuracy (comprehension abilities). Based on speed and accuracy, reading can have five levels: scanning, skimming, Rauding (reading for general comprehension), reading to learn and reading to memorize (Grabe, 2009).

2.1.5 Second Language Reading Models

Very few models have been developed in L2 reading which are generally derived from L1 reading models (Nassaji, 2011). The scarcity of L2 reading models can be attributed to a wide range of factors such as age, L2 teaching and learning settings, motivation and L1 literacy levels (Lems, Miller, & Soro, 2010). There is also lack of resources and well trained researchers in L2 reading. In addition, language learners spend little time in reading classes and therefore, it is quite difficult to carry out longitudinal studies which can create well established L2 reading models (Grabe, 2009).

The early research in L2 reading has, thus far, adopted a bottom-up view of reading which mainly focuses on decoding the text to construct the meaning from letters and words to phrases and clauses (Carrell, 1988). From the 1970s onwards, the attention, strongly influenced by The Guessing Game Model's assumptions, shifted from decoding and general cognitive skills to comprehension abilities which highlights the reader's background knowledge, predictions and active engagement with the text (Manoli, 2013; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). This led to the emergence of some key L2 models such as *Coady's reading Model* and *Bernhardt's Compensatory Model of Second Language Reading* and *Birch's Hypothetical Model of Reading Process* (Manoli, 2013; Lems et al., 2010).

On one hand, *Coady's reading model* elaborated on Goodman's Guessing Game Model. Coady (1979) claimed that reading comprehension is constructed through the interaction of conceptual abilities, processing strategies and background knowledge. On the other hand, *Bernhardt's reading model* (2005) adopted an interactive-compensatory model of reading which suggests that reading comprehension involves world knowledge, language (e.g. word recognition, syntactic parsing, phonology, morphology, etc.) and literacy

(strategic reading knowledge). According to this model, L1 literacy explains 20% of L2 reading proficiency whereas L2 knowledge accounts for 30 percent. 50% of L2 proficiency is attributed to other features such as strategy use, content, interests and motivation (Nassaji, 2011; Lems et al., 2010).

Birch's *Hypothetical Model of Reading Process* is made up of two parallel domains: processing strategies and knowledge base. Processing strategies comprises cognitive strategies (e.g. inferencing, predicting, problem-solving) and language strategies (e.g. letter recognition, word identification), but knowledge based processes include world knowledge and language knowledge (e.g. phonology, orthography). The two domains inform one another; however, unlike cognitive strategies and world knowledge which can be deployed in any setting, language strategies and knowledge are critical to reading (Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010). This suggests that for high-level processing to occur, learning low-level reading processes is required.

To sum-up, all of the models discussed earlier maintain the importance of component reading skills that contribute to reading comprehension. These include word recognition, vocabulary and grammar knowledge, inference, discourse awareness, metacognition, fluency practice, accuracy and motivation. In addition, these models emphasise the influence of low-level reading processes on comprehension as they can enhance or prevent readers' cognitive abilities from assisting the reader to comprehend the text fluently.

2.1.6 The relationship between L1 and L2 reading

In this section, universal aspects of reading developed across languages and major differences between L1 and 2L reading will be explored. Also, key theories about L1 transfer effect on L2 reading development will be reviewed.

2.1.6.1 Reading in different languages

Every language has its own orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics which influence first language reading development as well as second language reading acquisition. In terms of orthographies, languages can be phonological (e.g., English, Hindi, Turkish), syllabic (e.g., Japanese, Thai, Cambodian) and morpho-syllabic (e.g., Chinese). Language orthographies can be either *shallow* or *deep* depending on the level of correspondence between words and word-level pronunciation.

Other features of language orthographies, such as density of print, length of words and level of emphasis on visual processing, play a major role in word-level reading in different languages. For example, readers in language like Chinese or Hebrew read more slowly than English readers because these languages have more information per orthographic unit (Rayner, Juhasz, & Pollatsek, 2005; Share & Levin, 1999). Also, length of words can slow down the word-reading time in language such as Finnish and Turkish due to their complex morphology (Lyytinen et al., 2006). Visual processing skills feature among the influential orthographic differences between languages in word recognition development. Readers in languages that are nonalphabetic or densely orthographic tend to have an emphasises on visual processing skills apart from phonological processing (Grabe, 2009).

Languages differ immensely in their phonological systems, some of them are very limited (e.g., Mura language), others are very expansive (e.g., English, Xu language). Also, they vary substantially in their morphology, some being quite simple (e.g., Chinese, English), others being fairly complex (e.g., Turkish, Finnish, Spanish, Eskimo, Hebrew) (Grabe, 2009).

All the above gives rise to the notion of linguistic distance between any two languages as a factor to consider in second language reading development. The more linguistic similarities two languages share, the easier it becomes for people to learn each other's languages and vice versa. Also, the same can be said about the writing system. If two languages share a high degree of similarity in writing system, it takes less time for speakers from both languages to read each other's words (Lems et al., 2010; Bialystok, 2001).

2.1.6.2 Common reading cognitive and linguistic processes

There are a number of basic skills which are universal across languages and influential to developing reading comprehension (Comrie, Matthews, & Polinsky, 2003). These universals include the reader's ability to decode phonologically, employ syntactic knowledge, specify reading purposes, use reading strategies, apply metacognitive awareness to different levels of useful metalinguistic knowledge, utilise working memory, engage background knowledge and use rapid pattern recognition and automatic skills (Grabe, 2009). It is worth noting that although the above mentioned processes are universal, they develop differently from one language to another. In fact, languages share general reading principles but they may differ in the specific reading abilities which operationalise those principles.

2.1.6.3 First language influence on L2 reading

The effects of L1 on L2 reading can be either a positive influence or a negative interference. This cross-linguistic interaction takes place when some characteristics of a first language are applied to second language reading contexts (Oldin, 2003; Bialystok, 2001).

The argument that first language reading experience can have a positive influence on reading in another language is well supported (Lems, 2010). In general, good first language readers tend to be good at reading in another language. The areas of development in second language reading that can benefit from first language reading abilities include phonological awareness, syntactic awareness, vocabulary, discourses processing, text structures and comprehension (Koda, 2005). However, this influence is not immediate or automatically available. It requires more practice and instruction in L2 as well as automatized basic reading skills (Grabe, 2001).

Moreover, metalinguistic awareness in the first language can help to facilitate learning to read in the target language. The ability to think about and reflect upon language forms and functions in the first language allows L2 readers to distinguish words from non-words, recognize and correct phonological and syntactical errors, make mental translations, recognize foreign accents and structural ambiguities. In fact, practicing metalinguistic skills helps second language learners to improve their reading comprehension in the target language as well as their own (Vygotsky, 1986; Bouffard & Sakar, 2008; Zipke, 2008).

In addition, first language interference occurs when some of its features use similar features in the second language. Some of the affected areas of influence include phonology, sound-symbol correspondence, vocabulary and syntax (Lems, 2010). Nonetheless, first language interference is not responsible for all second language errors made by learners. Some of the errors may be due to the learner's linguistic development or individual interpretations of what is being read.

2.1.6.4 Difference between L1 and L2 reading contexts and readers

Reading in a second language is a very complex issue to investigate as there are numerous reasons why someone studies or researches a second language. Many second language learners come in different second language proficiency levels as well as first language literacy levels. The first language linguistic knowledge they bring to a second language reading setting can either facilitate or interfere with the reading process. In addition to the

varied context in which someone becomes an L2 learner, L2 research must address major issues like tracking L2 readers' progress, lack of resources and conducting follow-up research. The next section discusses three major areas of differences between first language and second language reading as outlined by Grabe and Stoller (2002) and Gabe (2009), linguistic and processing differences, developmental and educational differences and sociocultural and institutional differences.

2.1.6.5 Linguistic and processing differences

Unlike first language learners who come to school with a linguistic resource base, second language readers have to deal with, lexical, grammatical and discourse knowledge of the new language, which can be overwhelming at times. This issue emphasises the importance of systematic teaching in an L2 structure and genre (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000; Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Pearson and Fielding, 1991).

As L2 readers develop their reading abilities through direct instruction, they acquire greater metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness than L1 readers. This awareness becomes a useful resource for reading as it enables readers to control their cognitive abilities through planning, organising and evaluating their own learning (Urquhart and Weir, 1998).

Another major difference between L1 and L2 readers is the amount of exposure and practice they have to reading printed text. L1 readers spend a great amount of time reading L1 print and developing low-level and high level processes to the point of automaticity. On the contrary, L2 readers have little exposure to texts or reading practice in the target language which prevents them from building up fluency as well as an efficient repertoire of L2 vocabulary (Koda, 1996). The issue of linguistic differences between L1 and L2 obviously has a huge influence on reading. Languages can differ in their orthography, phonology, grammar, morphology and/or semantics. The extent of shared features between two languages can determine the level of cross-linguistic influence that can either facilitate or interfere with L2 reading development.

Apart from L1 influence, readers' proficiency in the target language plays a major role in L2 reading development. In fact, *Language Threshold Hypothesis* states that L2 readers need to have enough linguistic knowledge and fluency processing in their target language for L1 reading strategies and skills to support comprehension of L2 texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). This argument, supported by studies in L1 versus L2 language knowledge, signifies the importance of L2 knowledge over L1 reading abilities, and that the level of linguistic

threshold depends on the difficulty of the task (Alderson, 2000). Generally, L1 and L2 reading differ in complex issues such as vocabulary, orthography, grammar, discourse and metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness. Differences also extend to the amount of exposure an L2 learner has to their chosen language and L2 proficiency level. Thus, in the issues of language transfer, L2 threshold and interaction between languages to aid comprehension are emphasised.

2.1.6.6 Developmental and educational differences

There are significant individual and experiential differences between reading in L1 and L2 in areas such as level of L1 reading abilities, L2 reading motivation, types of L2 texts and L2 reading resources.

L2 readers are affected by their reading abilities in their native language (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). The influence is related to the transfer of L1 reading resources to support L2 reading since fluent L1 readers are more successful in doing that than weaker L1 readers. These L1 resources, to which little attention is given by educators, involve linguistic abilities and strategic, problem-solving and metacognitive skills.

Motivation is a factor that differentiates between readers in L1 and L2 readers. L2 readers develop differing motivation according to reading purposes, past instructional experiences and task demands. L2 learners also bring differing attitudes to L2 reading based on their prior education in an L1 and L2 context and on sociocultural variables. All of these points help shape L2 readers' perceptions, emotions, responses and willingness to read in the target language. Thus, exploring these areas can assist in identifying L2 readers' strengths and weaknesses as a way forward, beyond reading assessment measures, to more effective reading instructions (Dörnyei, 2001b).

The experience of reading different types of texts in L1 and L2 settings is a major issue in understanding reading differences between languages. L2 readers often read different types of texts in their chosen language more than they do in their native language. However, the texts they encounter in an L2 setting are often simplified and rarely geared towards learning new material or developing academic specialty (Grabe, 2009). Moreover, L2 readers utilise resources that are not commonly used in L1 reading which facilitate language learning. These resources include the use of dictionaries, cognates, grammar textbooks, translation and vocabulary lists and glosses, all of which contribute more to L2 readers' metalinguistic awareness compared to that of monolingual L1 readers (Koda, 2007).

2.1.6.7 Sociocultural and institutional differences

There are a number of social and cultural factors that can influence L1 and L2 reading development. These factors include differences in sociocultural backgrounds, discourse organisation and expectation of L2 educational authorities.

Readers bring their own L1 social and cultural assumptions about literacy to the texts that they read in L2. In some societies, reading is uncommon, while in others it is expected that everyone should be literate. This reality would bring about some influential community attitudes towards reading which shape how individuals approach and process reading activities in both L1 and L2 (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Because of these sociocultural variables, texts are perceived as sacred and unchallenged in some cultures, whereas others view texts as personal opinions which can be criticized. Of course, this creates some serious difficulties for L2 readers if the reading purpose becomes incompatible with the reader's L1 cultural assumptions.

The variations of the preferred types of discourse organisation by different societies are another major distinction between L1 and L2 reading experience. The differences in cultures as to what counts in a text as an argument, an evidence and an emphasis can have considerable consequences on L2 reading experiences. L2 readers' unfamiliarity with how texts are organised in the target language can result in a lot of confusion and difficulty in comprehension. This issue highlights the importance of exploring L2 discourse organisation as part of reading instruction (Grabe, 2009).

L1 and L2 educational institutions differ in their goals, attitudes, and expectations, which in some cases contrast with one another. These differences can manifest themselves in assessment, curricula, student-teacher relationship, classroom management, class size, teacher training and general funding to educational resources. Such issues have a significant role in facilitating or impeding L2 reading (McKay, 1993).

2.1.7 Theories on the relationship between L1 reading and L2 reading development

There are three major theories that are proposed to explain the effects of L1 reading abilities on L2 reading development. The following theories will be discussed briefly below: The Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, The Language Threshold Hypothesis and the Dual-language Hypothesis.

2.1.7.1 The Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis

This theory hypothesizes that reading across all languages shares common abilities, which can transfer from the native language to the target language when the reader's L1 reading abilities reach a certain level of proficiency (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006). This theory also argues that L1 reading abilities are more crucial to L2 reading development than L2 proficiency (Grabe, 2009).

To understand the shared common and the uncommon abilities between languages, Cummins (2000) introduces two forms of language, a body of simple and universal language abilities which are acquired in natural settings, which is labelled as "Basic Interpersonal Communicative skills" and the other form refers to "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" which involves the instructional language required for reading and writing in content areas. This type of language tends to develop as learners are exposed to more highly specialized knowledge in different fields (Fang, 2008; Zwiers, 2008).

This theory is well supported by research which shows that literacy skills in one language strongly predict similar literacy skills in another language, more specifically phonological awareness, pragmatics, comprehension and strategy use (Dressler & Kamil, 2006). However, later studies suggested the greater role of L2 language abilities as being an important resource for L2 reading development in areas such as vocabulary knowledge, morphosyntactic knowledge, listening comprehension, orthographic processing (Geva, 2006; Lesaux, Lipka & Siegel, 2006).

Based on the above, it can be argued that only certain L1 reading skills are capable of being readily transferred to L2 reading, and that L2 proficiency is needed for L2 reading development. In other words, both L1 transfer skills and L2 skills contribute to L2 reading.

2.1.7.2 The Language Threshold Hypothesis

This hypothesis holds that a level (threshold) of linguistic proficiency in L2 needs to be attained before L1 linguistic skills can be transferred to facilitate L2 reading (Lems et al., 2010). Therefore, in contrast to The Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, L2 proficiency is of greater importance than L1 reading skills in the development of L2 reading (Grabe, 2009; Alderson, 2000).

However, the varied levels of linguistic skills and academic demands between readers have led to the belief that there are two thresholds: dominant bilingualism and balanced

bilingualism (Lasagabaster, 1998). Dominant bilingualism (lower threshold) occurs when the L2 reader achieves a high level of competency in one of two languages. This threshold does not cause any negative influence on the cognitive processing of the learner. When a high level of competence in both languages is achieved, a balanced bilingualism (higher threshold) occurs, bringing about positive cognitive effects. The negative influence only exists when the reader has a low level of linguistic knowledge in both languages (Cummins, 1976, 1979). Yet, the positive and negative cognitive effects are not the products of linguistic competence only. Social, attitudinal and educational variables should be considered too (Cummins, 1976).

Although many studies support the existence of thresholds (van Gelderen et al., 2004; 2007), this hypothesis is criticized on the basis that the described thresholds are not very well defined. Also, the continual change in the relationship between L2 proficiency and L2 reading abilities is complicated. In addition, L2 reading development seems to be different between child, adolescent and adult readers in terms of the L1 skills that can transfer to L2 reading (Grabe, 2009).

2.1.7.3 The Dual-language Hypothesis

Recent discussions of L2 reading development have highlighted the notion that a L2 reader approaches a text with an interactive two-language system (Koda, 2005, 2007). This system is continual and responsive to many factors such as the reader, genre, topic, task, objective and context. The dynamic relationship between L1 reading abilities and L2 proficiency both contribute significantly in understanding L2 literacy knowledge (Bernhardt, 2005). Of course, to build a complete picture of L2 reading, the existence of other variables should be considered, for example, motivation, exposure, sociocultural factors, metacognition and prior knowledge.

The dual-language system raises the issue of defining universals of reading again, in terms of what aspects are considered L2 reading specific and others that are related to L1-L2 interaction. Some researchers suggest that phonological processing and rapid automatic naming are aspects of general reading development across languages, whereas orthographic processing, vocabulary and syntax are more language specific. Also genres, reading goals, exposure and types of strategy in L2 reading are not universal because of the sociocultural effects (Geva & Wang, 2001; Gabe, 2009). Moreover, there are cognitive processing abilities, independent of linguistic knowledge influence, which interact and support one

another in L1 and L2 reading development. These processes include working memory, metalinguistic awareness, motivation, metacognitive awareness and coherence and pattern recognition (Tomasello, 2003).

2.1.8 Developing reading Comprehension

This section will explore different constructs of reading skills and examine the main elements of reading comprehension that are grammatical knowledge, reading comprehension strategies, developing strategic reader, discourse knowledge and vocabulary knowledge. These aspects are considered to be influential in reading comprehension and are essential in reading instruction (Grabe, 2009; Pressley, 2002; Grabe 1991).

2.1.8.1 Constructs of reading comprehension skills

It is common when reading theorists that there are different levels of understanding a text. Some distinguish between the literal meaning, the inferred meaning and the implications of a text (Alderson, 2000). Similarly, Gray (1960) described these levels as reading the lines (literal reading), between the lines (inferencing) and beyond the lines (critical reading). These levels of understanding have always infused discussions about identifying reading skills and whether they can be separated from each other.

Some reading researchers considered readers' abilities to comprehend a text at different levels. Kintsch and Yarbrough (1982) differentiate between two levels of comprehension: comprehension of words without the sentence and comprehension of sentences without the organisation of the text. Kintsch and van Dijk referred to these two levels as "micro-processes" and "macro-processes". Davis (1968) identified the following as reading skills: recalling word meanings, drawing inferences about word meaning from context, finding explicitly stated information, synthesis of ideas in the text, drawing inferences from the text, identifying an author's attitudes, identifying an author's technique and understanding text organisation.

Munby (1978) developed a taxonomy of micro reading skills that were very influential in L2 syllabus design. This taxonomy lists the following as important reading skills: recognising script, deducing the meaning of a new word, understanding explicit information, understanding implicit information, understanding conceptual meaning, understanding the communicative value of sentences, understanding relations within a

sentence, using lexical cohesion devices to understand relations between parts of a text, using syntax to understand cohesion between parts of a text, interpreting a text by having an outsider view it, identifying discourse indicators, recognizing the main ideas in discourse, distinguishing between the main ideas and details, summarizing a text, skimming, scanning and transforming information.

Other researchers developed different reading skill classifications. Rubin (1981) classified reading skills as, clarification, guessing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) categorized reading skills as, cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective skills, which were further broken down into subskills. Another popular taxonomy in L2 reading is the one created by Oxford (1990). She proposed the following categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. Grabe (1991) divided reading skills into: automatic recognition, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, discourse knowledge, prior knowledge, synthesis and evaluation, and metacognitive awareness.

With respect to stages of reading, some researchers (e.g., Gibbons, 2002; Brown, 2001; Wallace, 1992) have suggested that reading skills develop in three stages: pre, while and post. The *pre* stage focuses on activating the readers' prior knowledge, identifying discourse structure and generating vocabulary (Antoni, 2010). The *while* reading stage involves reading aloud and silent reading. The goal is to motivate students and to help them understand the meaning of the text. In the *post* reading stage, readers are expected to evaluate their comprehension through activities such as scanning, summarizing, predicting, questioning, clarifying and monitoring comprehension (Doolittle, 2006).

Although, the idea of creating reading skills and sub-skills remains popular and influential in discussions of reading, separating reading skills by creating taxonomies is a controversial issue (Liu, 2010). These classifications are not well supported by empirical evidence. In addition, the identified reading skills are not discrete and easily defined because they overlap (Alderson, 2000). The considerable degree of disagreement over identifying and labelling separate reading skills has led to other views of reading skills.

Several simpler alternative views to the divisibility of reading skills has emerged. Lunzer, Waite and Dolan (1979) believe that reading is a global ability because the claim that separate reading skills exist lacks empirical evidence. Another view analysed reading into word recognition, fluency and problem-solving abilities (Carver, 1992a). A further

alternative view divides reading into word recognition and comprehension (Gough, Juel and Griffith, 1992b). Urquhart and Weir (1998) proposed a different perspective in which different reading skills operate at different levels of reading. These levels are reading expeditiously for global comprehension, reading expeditiously for local comprehension, reading carefully for global comprehension and reading carefully for local comprehension. When the different views of reading comprehension skills mentioned earlier were analysed, it can be concluded that they share basic components which can be employed to enhance reading achievement. These elements are discussed next.

2.1.8.2 Elements of reading comprehension

Grammar knowledge

Although, grammar knowledge is critical for reading comprehension, its role is not appreciated by reading researchers and teachers (Fender, 2001). This is probably due to the popularity of communicative methods which do not put too much emphasis on grammar, and that focusing on grammar in reading lessons could significantly reduce the time needed for actual reading (Grabe, 2009). Nonetheless, there is a need to consider grammatical knowledge as there is a strong relationship between syntactic awareness and building reading comprehension, especially for L2 readers (Nagy, 2007, Gelderen, Schoonen, Glooper, Hulstijn, Simis, Snellings & Steven, 2004). This is even evident in the significant correlation between grammar and reading in IELTS and TOEFL tests (Alderson, 1993; Enright, Grabe, Koda, Mosenthal, Mulcany-Ernt & Schedl, 2002).

When reading a text, the reader activates word recognition processes as well as grammatical analysis. This analysis provides structural information and builds up phrasal and clausal units needed for the creation of a semantic proposition. The ongoing integration of word recognition and syntactic processing, constructs the meaning for text comprehension (Fender, 2001; Kintsch, 2001). In fact, grammar supports reading comprehension through providing signals that help readers interpret and integrate sentences to disambiguate meaning, tracking referents and developing default processing and repair strategies. Also, grammatical information supports reading comprehension by helping readers to distinguish between main and supporting information and identify changes of events and ideas as well as the author's attitudes (Grabe, 2009).

Reading comprehension strategies

In learning contexts, students usually deal with demanding texts which requires attentional, metacognitive and strategic processes. In fact, the outcome of research on reading comprehension asserts the need for developing metacognitive awareness and effective reading comprehension strategies (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002). In this respect, the role of instructional support to incorporate comprehension strategies provided by peers, curriculum and more importantly by teachers is critical (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004). Teachers can assist in developing students' reading comprehension strategies through teacher-student discussions and conversations about and around the text as it is being read. These strategies can be very productive if they are taught explicitly and intensively over a long period of time in order to be automatized (Block & Pressley, 2007; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995).

Although there are major differences between studies on L1 and L2 reading strategy in research concerns, topics and level of generalizability, findings of L2 studies strongly support those of L1 studies. Thus, the relevance of L1 reading strategies to L2 reading settings is confirmed (Hudson, 2007; Taylor, Stevens & Asher, 2006; Koda, 2005). A number of strategies that significantly improve reading comprehension have been identified by recent studies. These strategies include summarizing, generating question, answering questions, activating background knowledge, monitoring comprehension, using text-structure awareness, using inferencing and graphic organisation (McIntyre et al., 2011; Grabe, 2009; Anderson & Jetton, 2000; Block & Pressley, 2001; Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Pressley, 2000; RAND, 2002; Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002). The following is a brief explanation of each strategy:

- *Summarizing* is the learners' ability to identify and reiterate the main idea of the text in their own words. A plethora of studies in L1 reading comprehension supports the positive influence of summarizing on learners' comprehension (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002; Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001). However, in an L2 reading contexts, very few studies examined the effect of summarizing on reading (Grabe, 2009).
- *Generating questions* is a part of efficient readers' resources before, during and after reading the text. This strategy is quite effective and common among L1 readers but not well supported by empirical research in L2 reading (Guthrie & Taboada, 2004; Grabe, 2009). Students are trained to ask questions and to speculate about the text, clarify

meaning, answer specific questions, determine the author's style, intents and attitudes, and focus their attention (Miller, 2002).

- *Answering questions* is a very important cognitive ability. Readers can benefit significantly from thinking about how to answer questions raised by teachers or peers before, during or after reading as well as listening to other people's experiences (Anderson & Biddle, 1975). Readers' comprehension improves when they are asked and also taught how to answer questions, particularly higher-order thinking questions. These thinking questions require readers to analyse, synthesize, infer and evaluate information from the text. Moreover, in L2 reading contexts, the answering questions strategy is shown to be effective (Kern, 2000).
- *Activating background knowledge* encourages readers to provide information about the topic they will read by bringing their own knowledge to the surface or through giving them new information that they can utilise in order to build their vocabulary and comprehend better (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Background-knowledge activation appears to improve L2 readers' recall, comprehension and prediction capabilities, given the compatibility between the readers' prior knowledge and the information in the text (McIntyre, Hulan & Layne, 2011; Chen & Graves, 1995). Ogle's (1986) K-W-L activity is a popular example of how to activate readers' prior knowledge through asking them what they *Know*, what they *Want* to know and what they *Learned* about a topic.
- *Monitoring Comprehension* is a crucial metacognitive strategy which involves having a reason for reading, recognizing the text structure, identifying the main ideas, relating the text to background knowledge, dealing with reading difficulties and clarifying ambiguities (Baker, 2002). Teaching monitoring to students can be quite a challenge but teachers can explicitly teach their students to, for example, read a portion of a text and retell what they understood from the text to each other in pairs or groups. This kind of activity helps students explore other interpretations and identify any breakdown in their comprehension (McIntyre et al., 2011). However, in L2 settings, the effect of monitoring comprehension is still under-researched (Grabe, 2009).
- *Understanding Text Structure* is a powerful means that students use to learn to comprehend a text. With fiction, teachers can guide students by using story maps. As for non-fiction, teachers can train students to recognize discourse signals that help them to identify text organisation, whether it is sequence, comparison, how-to, description,

categorical text, problem-solution or cause and effect. Research involving expository and narrative prose has shown that readers with a good understanding of a texts structure exhibit better text understanding and learning (Grabe, 2003; Oakhill & Cain, 2007). It is also useful that readers are taught about text conventions such as labels, pictures, captions, maps, type of print, index and glossaries because knowing the purpose of these conventions aids comprehension of all types of texts (McIntyre et al., 2011).

- *Inferencing* is an ability which can significantly improve reading comprehension, and represents the difference between poor and good readers (Yuill & oakhill, 1991; Hansen, 1981). Inferencing is a complex ability which helps readers interpret the meaning of the text by using prior knowledge, contextual clues, text-structure awareness, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension monitoring (McIntyre et al., 2011, Grabe, 2009). In L2 settings, tracking referents and information retrieval (as major aspects of inferencing) have a positive impact on comprehension abilities (Pretorius, 2005; Walter, 2004).
- *Graphic organisers* (e.g., Venn diagrams, matrices, flow charts) as visual representations of texts assist readers' comprehension. Graphic organisers combine the awareness of text-structures to readers', main-idea identification and imagery to help readers to analyse the text effectively (McIntyre et al., 2011). This strategy has been proven to be influential in both L1 (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002) and L2 reading (Jiang, 2007).

Although the above discussed strategies are well supported empirically, teaching comprehension effectively normally focuses on both strategy instruction and attention to word recognition, vocabulary, prior knowledge, fluency and extensive reading (Rapp, van den Broek, McMaster, Kendeou & Espin, 2007). Also, it is important not to treat these strategies individually. Rather, they need to be viewed in combinations as strategic readers naturally do when they process texts. This issue is taken up in the next section.

Developing strategic reader

The last section focused on important comprehension strategies which can be taught to improve reading comprehension. In this section, the focus moves on to developing strategic readers, who deploy effective strategies automatically and regularly based on the task, objectives, processing abilities and awareness to comprehension effectiveness (Grabe, 2009). Clearly, it is essential for teachers to train learners why, when and how to use reading comprehension strategies (Baker, 2002). There are two major aspects of strategic reading,

their level of engagement with the text and their ability use of reading strategies in combinations.

In terms of levels of engagement, when a good reader interacts with a text, they employ a combinations of strategies as well as their metacognition (Pressley, 2002b). Before reading, good readers plan their reading, recognize the purpose of their reading, activate background knowledge and preview and make predictions about the text (Pressley, 2006). During the reading processes, engaged readers use strategies such as reading selectively, rereading, monitoring their comprehension, identifying key information, using inferencing and prior knowledge, guessing the meaning of unknown words, making use of text structure and forming an interpretation of the text as they read. When good readers finish reading, they check their understanding, evaluate the text and the author, resolve comprehension difficulties, internalize the information in the long-term memory and mentally summarise the main ideas in the text (Grabe, 2009). From this view of active engagement with the text, it becomes evident that good readers have a large repertoire of reading strategies, and that these strategies are used in combination (Anderson, 1999).

Another aspect of good readers is their ability to use multiple reading strategies, flexibly and to adapt them to their own reading situations (Pressley & Harris, 2006). In fact, the objective of a good reader is to actively engage with the text as well as regulate combinations of strategies that seem to succeed in achieving comprehension. Therefore, it is important that teachers help learners to become aware of these combinations of strategy, teach them when and why they are needed and to train them regularly (Block & Pressley, 2007). According to Grabe (2009), some of the best empirically supported approaches to multiple-strategy instruction are: Know-Want-to-know-Learned (KWL), Experience-Text-Relate (ETR), Question-Answer-Response (QAR), Direct Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA), Reciprocal Teaching, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), Self-Explanation Reading Training (SERT), Direct Explanation, Questioning the Author, Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI) and Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI).

In summary, most L1 reading studies recognize the importance of teaching and applying reading strategies to achieve comprehension. This can be realised through instructional approaches that combine multiple reading-strategy use with teaching comprehension, rather than focusing on individual strategy training (Pressley, 2006). Unfortunately, in L2 settings, a limited number of studies have considered multiple-strategy reading comprehension instruction (Grabe, 2009; Taylor, Stevens, and Asher, 2006). Moreover, it

is quite evident that developing strategic readers involves effective word recognition skills, metacognition, vocabulary knowledge and the use of appropriate reading strategy combinations.

Discourse knowledge

Metadiscourse or text-structure awareness refers those linguistic systems that a writer uses to attend to his readers' need for elaboration, clarification and perception-guidance in the text. It is well established that text-structure awareness, including strategies for interpreting text organisation, facilitates comprehension construction. This metalinguistic knowledge enables readers to organise and integrate text contents to establish meaning (Zarrati, Nambiar & Maasum, 2014). Thus, it has become a major objective of reading instruction to raise readers' awareness of text organisation and teach them how to use this awareness to achieve effective comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Jiang & Grabe, 2007).

The ability to use discourse structure knowledge to facilitate reading comprehension is supported by a number of discourse signals, around which taxonomies were created (e.g., Vandekoppe, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2005). For example, Hyland (2005), building on previous works, proposed two categories of discourse signals: interactive and Interactional. The interactive signals are those ones that help to guide the reader when reading a text. They include *transitions* (expressions of relations between main clauses), *frame markers* (discourse sequences and stages), *endophoric markers* (information in other parts of the text), *evidential* (information from other texts) and *code glosses* (elaborate propositional meaning). The Interactional signals, which attempts to involve the reader in the text, involves, *hedges* (withholding certainty), *boosters* (emphasising certainty), *attitude markers* (express author's attitude), *self-mentions* (reference to author) and *engagement markers* (building relationship with reader).

There are three main streams of research on teaching text structure awareness: (a) direct teaching of discourse signals, (b) use of graphic organisers that represent text structure and (c) teaching comprehension strategies that draws readers' attention to text structure (Grabe, 2009). In general, raising readers' awareness of text structure appears to significantly improve readers' comprehension in L1 (Dymock, 2005; Williams, 2005) as well as in ESL settings (Lukica, 2011; Jiang & Grabe, 2007). Although there seems to be limited research on discourse structure instruction in EFL settings, the same conclusion can be made about

its strong influence on reading comprehension of EFL learners (Zarrati et al., 2014; Namjoo & Marzban, 2012; Vahidi, 2008).

Vocabulary knowledge

A crucial component to successful literacy skills is knowledge of vocabulary. Learning a word involves various aspects such as knowledge of its spelling, morphology, part of speech, pronunciation, meanings, collocations, meaning associations, uses and type of register (Grabe, 2009). Many studies have investigated the relationship between vocabulary and reading, highlighting the development of learners' vocabulary as a major priority in L1 and L2 reading instruction.

In an L1 context, studies have shown that there is a strong, almost perfect, correlation between vocabulary and reading (Stanovich, 1986; Carver, 2003). They even complement each other as the more a person's vocabulary grows, the more they can read and comprehend and vice versa (Roth, Speece, & Cooper, 2002; Wagner, Muse & Tannenbaum, 2007b). In L2 settings, vocabulary knowledge appears to have a significant relationship with reading skills (Verhoeven, 2000). It is considered to be the strongest predictor of the L2 reading ability of students in different grade levels (Bossers, 1992; Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Nassaji, 2003b).

However, vocabulary knowledge is complex and multi-dimensional. This is evident in issues like active/passive vocabularies, breadth/depth of vocabulary and explicit/contextual vocabulary teaching and learning. This complexity necessitates a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning vocabulary. Carroll (1987) proposed that teaching vocabulary should accommodate for planned and unplanned activities, systematic and haphazard instruction, written and oral input, building on prior knowledge and focusing on the meaning and formal features of words. In fact, most researchers believe that in order to learn vocabulary effectively, learners should be involved in extensive reading, explicit vocabulary instruction, word-learning, strategies learning, word recognition fluency activities and vocabulary appreciation (Graves, 2000; Nation 2001; Stahl & Nagy, 2006; Grabe, 2009). In addition, a review of a number of studies outlined the following as effective techniques to promote vocabulary learning: semantic mapping, concept mapping, using glosses, studying key word before reading, multiple exposures to vocabulary, independent word learning, using dictionaries, learning synonyms and raising learners' interest in vocabulary (Blachowicz & Miller, 2000; Graves, 2000; Nation, 2001). In general,

vocabulary learning is an incremental process that requires long-term practice and exposure. For successful vocabulary learning, students need to be provided with explicit vocabulary instruction, vocabulary practice opportunities and a rich classroom environment which promotes vocabulary learning and heightens their awareness of words. Students should also be encouraged to be independent and self-motivated vocabulary learners.

2.1.9 Reading and Arab EFL learners

Most educational systems in Arab countries recognize the importance of the English language, and therefore it has become part of the curricula from an early stage. However, Arab learners' level of reading proficiency is unsatisfactory to say the least (Randall & Meara, 1988; Ryan & Meara, 1991; Fender, 2003; Hayes-Harb, 2006; Alotaibi, 2009). One major consideration is the fact that English is a foreign language in Arab countries, which means it is hardly ever used outside of a school setting. Of course, there are other reasons which may have resulted in poor reading comprehension among Arab learners and they will be discussed next.

One of the main reasons behind reading comprehension difficulties among EFL Arab readers can be the orthographic differences between English and Arabic. Unlike English, which has a deep orthography and irregular grapheme-phoneme correspondence, Arabic has a very consistent letter-sound correspondence (Grabe, 2009). Also, Arabic, which is read from right to left, is a consonantal alphabetic language in which vowels appear rarely in the form of diacritic marks (Fender, 2003). These characteristics require Arab readers to rely more on higher-order contextual cues and strategies to recognize words (Abu-Rabia, 1998). This may suggest that Arab readers are more experienced in top-down than in bottom-up processes, which are also needed for successful reading comprehension in English.

Abbot (2006), who compared Japanese readers with Arabic readers, concluded that Arab readers tend to be slower in bottom-up, local, language-based reading processes like breaking words into smaller parts, using knowledge of syntactic structures or punctuation, scanning for specific details, paraphrasing or rewording the original text and looking for key vocabulary or phrases. However, Arab readers outperform Japanese readers in using top-down, global, knowledge-based reading strategies such as recognizing the main idea, integrating scattered information, drawing an inference, predicting what might happen in a related scenario and recognizing text structures. Abbot's findings were also confirmed by

other researchers (e.g., Fender, 2003; Hayes-Harb, 2006; Alotaibi, 2009). Furthermore, Arabic and English not only differ in the orthographic systems but they also have significant differences in the alphabetical systems, phonology, spelling, pronunciation and discourse structure (Mourtaga, 2006).

Moreover, poor reading comprehension among Arab readers can be due to reading instruction and teachers' perceptions of reading. Many EFL teachers in the Arab world, especially Arab teachers, tend to follow Grammar-Translation Method in teaching reading. Reading lessons can be described as teacher-centred and mainly focused on the literal level of comprehension (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2011). A considerable number of EFL teachers seem to misunderstand the process of reading, which greatly influences their students' reading achievement. Mourtaga (2006) surveyed 30 EFL teachers in Gaza about reading and his study revealed that most teachers lack sufficient knowledge about reading instruction.

Moreover, some of the problems in reading comprehension may stem from Arab readers themselves. Due to little practice and exposure to English, Arab readers seem to lack linguistic competence and motivation to learn the target language (Mahmoud, 2005; Al-Jarf, 2007; Al-Shorman, 2010; Tahaine, 2010; Al-Khasawneh, 2010). Also, many Arab students learn English for the purpose of passing the examination rather than learning it to communicate in real life situations (Kannan, 2009).

Apart from the linguistic and educational analysis, the cultural aspect of language learning plays a major role in the current level of proficiency of Arab EFL readers. Arabs are very proud of their mother tongue and they consider Arabic a sacred language with which the Holy Book of Islam (the Qura'n) was revealed (Mourtaga, 2006). Therefore, introducing a foreign language to children raises major concerns to some Arab educators. For instance, a huge debate ensued in Saudi Arabia when English was introduced to elementary stage learners in 2005. Some educators believe that teaching English to children at an early age might have negative effects on their acquisition of Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2005). Others thought of this step as promoting 'western culture and values' among young learners (Al-Faisal, 2005). Nonetheless, these views have become less popular and the general census is that learning foreign languages (English in particular) is important for a person's success in life. In addition, recent studies show that learning English at a young age might have a positive outcome on a learner's foreign as well as native language proficiency (Alamri, 2008; Al-Thubaity, 2011; Gawi, 2012).

The state educational system in Saudi Arabia, which adopts a gender separation policy, consists of three levels: elementary (from the age of 6), intermediate (grades 7 to 9) and secondary (grades 10 to 12). Generally, students are assessed through examinations and they need to score at least fifty percent of the overall grade in each taught subject in order to move on to the next level (AL-Roomy, 2013).

English was first taught in the intermediate and secondary levels in 1927, and more recently in the elementary level in 2005 (Alamri, 2008, Al-Qahtani, 2010). Students learn English at the elementary stage from the 4th grade onwards (two classes per week). At the intermediate level students take four 45-minute periods a week, while at secondary stage students take between 4 to 5 English lessons per week, depending on the type of the approved schooling system (The Saudi Ministry of Education is piloting a number of new schooling systems, especially for the secondary stage). Despite the fact that the Saudi educational system has been teaching English for a very long time, students' proficiency level in English in general, and in reading in particular, is far from satisfactory (Al-Karroud, 2005; Al-Qahtani, 2010; AL-Roomy, 2013).

In reviewing recent studies on Saudi EFL learners' level of proficiency, Saudi students appear to have very a limited vocabulary (890 of the 5,000 most frequent words in English). They also seem to be unmotivated and they lack basic communicative abilities (Nezami, 2012). These issues can be attributed to a number of reasons such as inefficient teaching instruction, inappropriate teaching materials, lack of practice in class, insufficient teacher-training, the backwash effect of testing on learning and teaching, lack of exposure to the target language and the limited time allocated to learning English at school (Al-Sadan, 2000; Alzahrani, 2009; Al-Mansour, 2009; Gawi, 2012). In addition to the above, there is a noticeable inconsistency between textbooks taught to the three levels of education because the Ministry of Education has assigned different textbooks, designed by different publishers, to different school levels. This problematic situation of textbook selections might create long-term problems for EFL teachers and learners as well.

With regard to reading skill, Saudi learners obviously share the same difficulties that Arabs EFL learners have when reading English texts. In fact, according to TOEFL and IELTS data summary reports, Saudi test takers' level of reading proficiency is the lowest worldwide (IELTS, 2012; Educational Testing Services, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Nezami (2012) conducted a study to investigate university level EFL Saudi learners'

comprehension strategies and reading skills and identified the following as major problems for Saudi EFL readers:

- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulty in understanding the meaning of text
- Lack of self-study activities
- Spelling and pronunciation problems
- Disinterest in collaborative work and group discussions
- Lack of extensive reading
- Difficulties in scanning and skimming
- Lack of motivation
- Syntactic parsing difficulties
- Difficulties in prediction and in using prior knowledge
- Inability to summarise a text

Moreover, Al Nooh & Mosson-McPherson (2013) surveyed a group of Saudi secondary stage EFL learners and EFL teachers to identify learners' reading problems. They concluded that concentration, overall comprehension, reading fluency, motivation and retention were among the problematic variables which influence their reading achievement. Learners also expressed that decoding sounds and words, reading books of their own choosing, listening to the teacher read aloud to class, scaffolding, systematic vocabulary instruction and reading aloud themselves are among the most effective techniques they need to understand English texts reasonably well.

Some of the most cited factors which influence the current EFL reading situation in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries include the reading culture in L1 communities, L1 reading standards, background knowledge, methods of reading instruction, backwash from testing and learner's motivation (O'Sullivan,2004). Firstly, reading in the Saudi community is not popular. In fact, Saudi students are poor readers in their mother tongue as they rarely read for pleasure (NEXT PAGE FOUNDATION, 2007). The same can also apply to reading English texts (Al-Nujaidi, 2003). Secondly, standardized Arabic is not common in the Saudi community since local dialects are the more prevalent mother tongue(s). This has created a unique situation in which reading skills in standardized Arabic are at the second language level, whereas English reading skills are at a third language level (O'Sullivan,2004). Thirdly, background knowledge is one of those factors that can hinder

or facilitate reading. Saudi students appear to lack certain general background knowledge and global awareness. This can be attributed to learners' reading habits in both L1 and L2 (Alsamadani, 2009). Fourthly, reading instruction in Saudi Arabia is problematic. A number of studies maintain that Saudi EFL teachers are not highly qualified and that they lack the proper training to implement effective teaching methods (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Bersamina, 2009). In fact, much of the teaching inside the classroom is test-driven instruction which is generally geared towards passing the final exams. (Mustafa, 2002). Fifthly, using standardized tests at schools led learners to believe that reading in English is just a part of school work and nothing more, which prevents them from transferring successful L1 strategies to L2 (Wurr, 2003). Sixthly, viewing English as only a school subject might have influenced Saudi EFL readers' attitudes and motivation negatively as they would only pursue reading in English for academic purposes (O'Sullivan, 2004).

Although the above mentioned factors are very influential in the current situation of reading instruction in Saudi Arabia, other reader and text variables are also significant in explaining the problems Saudi EFL readers face. Reader variables include readers' linguistic knowledge (L2 culture, phonology, syntax, morphology, orthography and semantics), metalinguistic knowledge and discourse knowledge. Also, text variables can involve text topic, genre, organisation, linguistic features and readability. Indeed, to build a more elaborate and clearer picture that would truly explain the Saudi EFL reading context, these factors, though very complex, will have to be taken into consideration. Given the complexity of the situation, the present study attempts to investigate major issues that contribute to poor reading comprehension such as reading habits, attitudes, reading skills, reading instruction and creativity from different perspectives (learners, teachers and supervisors). It also tries to provide a practical approach to reading instruction that addresses these important issues in a manner that might pave the way to other attempts to improve reading comprehension in Saudi Arabia and in the wider EFL context.

2.2 Creativity

Creativity is another important topic that is addressed in this thesis. The importance stems from that fact that it is a significant domain of thinking skills, which is a major contributor in the development of reading comprehension, particularly in the EFL reading instruction setting. To establish this point, this section will look into different definitions of creativity,

its dimensions and theories, its connection to education and language teaching and the relationship between creativity and reading.

2.2.1 Defining Creativity

For decades, researchers have attempted to define creativity and find the best ways to promote it in society (Runco, 2004). They have also tried to develop theories to explain creativity (e.g., Maslow, 1968; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996), and instruments to measure it (e.g., Thomas Tallis School 2008; Redmund, 2007; Torrance, 1974; Ellis, Myers, and Buntin, 2007; Grainger, Barnes, and Scoffham, 2006; Robson, 2012, 2013; Assessment of Performance Unit, 1991). However, debate remains about what creativity means, its theories and how it can be assessed (Mike & Andrew, 2014).

The following list presents some of the most common definitions of creativity which were established by prominent scholars in the field:

- Torrance (1974: 4): “[Creativity is] becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge . . . identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies: testing and retesting these hypotheses . . . and finally communicating the results”;
- Boden (1999: 351): ‘Creativity is the generation of ideas that are both novel and valuable’;
- Johnson-Laird (1988: 203): ‘mental processes that lead to solutions, ideas, conceptualisations, artistic forms, theories or products that are unique and novel’;
- Ken Robinson (NACCCE, 1999: 30): ‘Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value’;
- Kaufman and Sternberg (2007: 55): ‘A creative response to a problem is new, good, and relevant’.

These definitions, although similar in essence, seem to emphasise different facets of creativity. Torrance and Boden’s definition focuses on the creative *person*, whereas Johnson-Laird and Robinson’s definition is based on the *process* of creativity. As for Kaufman and Sternberg, their definition describes creativity as a *product*. Other aspects of creativity include the environment that incubates creativity, the influence on people’s

thinking and the potential of becoming creative (Simonton, 1990; Runco, 2007; Fumoto, Robson, Greenfield, & Hargreaves, 2012).

Creativity can also be defined through an understanding of the common misconceptions about it. One of the myths about creativity is the belief that it is only related to arts and has no major significance in other areas such as technology, education, and science. Restricting creativity to a very limited number of extremely talented individuals is another misconception. The next fallacy pertains to the claim that creativity is acquired through unsystematic play and unsupported activities. Finally, there is this common view that associates creativity with fun and holds that high level of subject knowledge is not necessary to be a creative person (Sharp, 2004).

By examining the above definitions, it becomes evident that there is a broad range of creativity-related notions and behaviours which makes it impossible to talk about the whole spectrum of creativities (Cook, 2012). In general, the most important indicator for creative thinking in people is the motivation to face new challenges, engage in activities and endure difficulties (Fumoto, Robson, Greenfield & Hargreaves, 2012). In the next section, a discussion of the conventional dimensions of creativity will be presented.

2.2.2 Dimensions of creativity

The first dimension of creativity pertains to the ***creative person***, which focuses on personal traits and cognitive styles. Early studies (e.g. Getzels and Jackson, 1962) associated creativity to divergent thinking (generating as many different solutions to a problem as possible), whereas intelligence was more associated to convergent thinking (providing a correct answer to a problem based on logic and deduction). However recently, this view has become unpopular as real-life creativity involves both divergent and convergent thinking (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; Fumoto et al., 2012).

Some of the crucial personal characteristics of a creative thinker are their sense of independence, tendency to challenge conventional opinions, values, rules and standards, as well as self-confidence (*Ibid.*). Some researchers have attempted to make a connection between creativity tests scores and these personal traits, but this attempt was not very popular as creativity is not a stable quality that can be measured in a test without considering context (Fumoto et al., 2012; Mike & Andrew, 2014).

The second dimension of creativity focuses on the *creative product or output* in a particular setting. The idea that identifies creativity with creation is prevalent in the literature on creativity (Ferrari, Cachia & Punie, 2009). Examples of creative products are those that learners develop in classrooms such as drawings, speeches, discussions of reading texts and written assignments or the works of poets, musicians and designers all of which could be judged by experts for their creativity (Amabile, 1996; Ferrari, Cachia & Punie, 2009).

The third dimension of creativity is the *creative thinking process*. The first known model that explored processes (or stages) of creativity was developed by Wallas (1926). These stages progress as follows: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. During the preparation stage, a person becomes captivated by a problem and gives their full attention to it. This is followed by the incubation stage in which new thoughts and connections are developed subconsciously. Then illumination happens when a new solution is suddenly realised by synthesizing ideas and connections made in the previous stage. Finally, the creator verifies the new creative solution through conscious and logical measures (Fumoto et al., 2012). There are, of course, other suggested models such as that of Cropley's model (1997) who added two stages to Wallas's model, communication (asking others for feedback) and validation (judging the creative outcome by experts). Also, Koberg and Bagnall's model (1991) identifies the seven stages to creativity, namely, acceptance, analysis, definition, ideation, solution, implementation, and evaluation. Nonetheless, these models are quite similar in that they explain the creative process as going through the following phases, problem identification, solution finding and solution implementation.

Finally, the fourth dimension of creativity is the *environment* in which creativity takes place. Studies (e.g. Gardener, 1993) that looked into contexts of creativity distinguish between the "big C" (which refers to major breakthrough solutions like that of Einstein or Picasso) and the "small c" creativity (which refers to the small, everyday life novel solutions). Similarly, Boden (1999) distinguishes between psychological and historical creativity. The former applies to ideas that someone might personally consider new, when in fact other people have already thought of them. The latter is about novel ideas that no one has ever thought of before. Recently, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) proposed a "mini c" which describes creative ideas in very young children, and "pro-c" which applies to genuine ideas in a certain field or profession. The above discussion highlights the

importance of diverse cultural and social contexts and their role in understanding and appreciating creativity.

2.2.3 Theories of Creativity

Research on creativity either emphasised uniformed people's beliefs about creativity or experts' (e.g. scientists, theorists) definitions of creativity. This has led to categorizing theories of creativity into implicit and explicit ones (Olivia, 2012). Implicit theories describe everyday people's perceptions, thoughts, beliefs and personal definitions of creativity and creative individuals, whereas explicit theories consist of scholarly definitions and interpretations of creativity which are based on systematic and critical research (Runco and Johnson, 2002).

2.2.3.1 Implicit theories

People develop their implicit theories of creativity through invoking their personal knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, which influence their perceptions of creativity and helps them to recognize and label creative behaviours. Implicit theories, despite being informal, are useful in helping researchers identify creative attributes and thinking processes (Saunders & Ward, 2006).

In the educational context, teachers' implicit theories of creativity are the most studied by researchers (e.g. Runco, 1984; Chan & Chan, 1999; Runco, Johnson, & Bear, 1993). Apparently, this is because teachers play a major role in fostering and developing their students' creativity (Olivia, 2012). In these studies, teachers were asked to define creativity, identify creative behaviours, recognize personal qualities of creative students or distinguish between creative and uncreative characteristics. For example, some of the creative personal qualities that teachers identified in creative students include being independent, original, flexible, initiator, visionary and unrestrained (Runco, 1984).

Moreover, researchers attempted to differentiate between creative and uncreative students. For instance, Runco et al. (1993) as well as Chan & Chan (1999) asked teachers to categorize a number of adjectives and phrases to describe creative and uncreative students. Among the adjectives they chose for creative students are imaginative, questioning, active, adaptable, brave, emotional, sharp, ambitious, artistic, happy, thoughtful, smart, confident, courageous, determined, dreamy, easy-going, emotional, energetic and motivated. Uncreative students, on the other hand, were described as being too careful, conventional,

grumbly, unconstructive, passive, unconfident, stubborn, inhibited, cynical, unsociable, self-pitying, shallow and unmotivated (Olivia, 2012). Although, studies on implicit theories of creativity might not be rigorous and well-grounded, they provide valuable insights into creativity and creative thinking and they help to inform and define explicit theories of creativity (Sternberg, 1993).

2.2.3.2 *Explicit theories*

Explicit theories have contributed significantly to understanding and conceptualizing creativity. The very many different perspectives of these theories have been influenced by the wide variety of creativity definitions, conceptualizations and research orientations. Major theories of creativity can be categorized as follows: *Developmental, Psychometric, Economic, Stage and Componential Process, Cognitive, Problem Solving and Expertise-Based, Problem Finding, Evolutionary, Typological, and Systems* (Kozbelt, Beghetto, & Runco, 2010). Of course, there are other theories but they mostly focus on particular subtopics of creativity like personality, its biological features, enhancing techniques and cultural differences, all of which are beyond the scope of this review. Nonetheless, each of the major theories mentioned earlier will be discussed next, highlighting their key features, assertions, concepts and level of magnitude.

Developmental Theories (see, for example, Helson, 1999; Subotnik & Arnold, 1996; Albert & Runco, 1989) emphasise the person, environment and potential for creativity. They help in understanding creativity through studying the backgrounds of creative people and they also suggest ways in which to foster for creativity. In addition, creativity often ranges between personal creativity (small- c) to professional creativity (pro- C) as the developmental view of creativity begins with the more subjective type of creativity and moves towards more objective and well-established creative qualities (Kozbelt et al., 2010).

Developmental theories examine areas such as the personal history and the social backgrounds of extremely creative people (e.g. Goertzel & Goertzel, 1976). Studies in this area have shown that families of creative people expose their children to different types of experiences and they facilitate their journey to independence. Moreover, research on family structure (e.g. birth order, gender of siblings, age gap between siblings) has proven crucial in learning about creativity. For instance, Galton (1969) argued that firstborn children tend to be more successful as a result of a developmental advantage over their siblings. Also, Gaynor & Runco (1998) believe that middle children have the potential to become creative

because they always have to think of different ways to attract the attention of their parents away from older and more privileged siblings. Another line of research involves how the environment can nourish and support creativity by providing children with enough opportunities to play which allows them to freely explore and develop their imagination (Pearson, Russ, & Cain Spannagel, 2008; Russ & Schafer, 2006).

Psychometric Theories, which are generally independent from theoretical frameworks, focus on creativity measurements and help to inform other theories of creativity. These theories emphasise creative products and the magnitude of creativity in them ranges between the little-c and the Big-C (Kozbelt, Beghetto & Runco, 2010). In addition, psychometric theories are hugely concerned with reliability and validity issues as they involve many types of creativity assessments. Reliability would include inter-judge reliability and inter-item reliability, whereas validity involves predictive validity and discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is particularly important because it attempts to establish the distinction between creativity assessments and other non-creative measurements. Although several studies have supported the discriminant validity of many creativity tests, this type of validity depends on an individual's level of ability, the testing environment and the test itself (Fuchs-Beauchamp, Karnes, & Johnson, 1993; Kim, 2005). Furthermore, psychometric theories have also proposed the idea of domain-specific talents (e.g., mathematical creativity, verbal creativity) which is now popular in psychometric research (Baer, 1998; Plucker, 1998).

Economic Theories provide new and very useful views on creativity, which span from little-c to Big-C Creativity, because they attend to general and macro-level considerations. They recognize that “market forces” or the cost-benefit analysis influence over creativity (Kozbelt et al., 2010). One view believes that creative behaviours can be reinforced or discouraged based on the benefits and costs of these behaviours (Rubenson & Runco, 1995). Another view argues that creativity thrives in tolerant and permissive societies (Florida, 2002). A third economic theory argues that creativity/profit is achieved when individuals invest in currently unpopular ideas that succeed later on for example buying low and selling high (Sternberg and Lubart, 1992, 1995). In sum, these theories draw heavily on economics and they provide testable hypotheses for achieving creativity.

Stage and Componential Process Theories focus on creativity as a process that goes through stages and has different components, ranging from mini-c to Big-C Creativity. One of the most famous models that looked at creativity in terms of stages is Wallas's model

(1926), that believes the creative process goes through the following stages linearly, preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. The linearity of these stages has been challenged in favour of recursion, believing that a person can cycle through them more than once and in different combinations (Kozbelt et al., 2010). Moreover, several current models have either renamed some of these stages (e.g. naming the preparation stage as *problem finding* or *problem construction*), or added other sub-stages (e.g. adding valiative and evaluative sub-stages to verification stage) (for example, see Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976; Runco, 1994; Mumford, Baughman, Threlfall, Supinski, & Costanza, 1996; Runco & Vega, 1992). Some recent theories have perceived creativity as having component elements. For instance, Runco and Chand (1995) proposed a model for the creative process that adopts that of Wallas but also adds another layer, recognizing the influence of knowledge and motivation. Amabile's (1999), on the other hand, suggests a model that involves domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and task motivation.

Cognitive Theories assert the fact that creativity is based on cognitions and that creative people possess special cognitive abilities, hence emphasising the person and the process in the creative effort. These theories focus on a verity of topics such as general abilities (e.g. memory, attention), individual differences, metacognitive processes and unintentional processes (Kozbelt et al., 2010). A major research study in this type of theory is that of Mednick (1962), in which he argues that original ideas are the result of making remote associations. Another popular work in creative cognition is Guilford's study (1968) which introduces his SOI (Structure of Intelligence) model, which made the distinction between divergent and convergent thinking, both of which are involved in the creative process (Torrance, 1995; Cropley, 2006).

Metacognition, which pertains to subconscious processes, has also been associated with creativity. Many metacognitive strategies have been considered to be beneficial and thought to facilitate creative thinking. Among these strategies are, "think backwards," "turn the situation upside down," "shift your perspective," "put the problem aside," and "question assumptions" (Davis, 1999; Kozbelt et al., 2010).

Problem Solving and Expertise-Based Theories of creativity, which are influenced by cognitive theories, draw the attention to the creative person and process as domain knowledge and cognitive processes are emphasised in achieving creative solutions to ill-defined problems. These theories view creativity, ranging from little-c to Big-C creativity, as a rational experience which is open to empirical investigation and prolonged strategic

learning (Kozbelt et al., 2010). Although, the problem-solving/expertise theories put a lot of emphasis on relevant background knowledge to achieve Big-C Creativity, recent studies have concluded that it is only one factor amongst others which contribute to major creative breakthroughs (Eysenck, 1995; Murray, 2003; Simonton, 2004). In general, this theoretical view of creativity has made valuable contributions to the scientific study of creativity even though it has been challenged by other accounts of creativity such as “problem-finding” which will be discussed next.

Problem-Finding framework of creativity came as an opposing response to the problem-solving view of creativity as the latter fails to explain problem realization and the motivational reasons behind it (Runco, 1994). Its main assertion is the subjective experience of the creative person and the exploratory processes that they engage in to identify problems, hence the magnitude level of creativity in this framework is mostly little-c creativity (Kozbelt et al., 2010). This view of creativity is often criticized for not explaining the nature of problem finding and for underemphasising habitual patterns of behaviour (Dudek & Cote, 1994; Kozbelt et al., 2010).

Evolutionary Theories of creativity draws on the ideas of Darwinian views which studies Big-C creativity primarily. A good example for these types of theories is Simonton’s model (1984, 1988, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2004), in which he covered most dimensions of creativity such as personal and potential, process, product and persuasion in a two-stage mental process (blind generation of ideas and elaboration). The evolutionary view posits a number of claims about creativity. Firstly, the creative process is full of disorderly experiments and unsuccessful beginnings (Weisberg, 2004). Secondly, it is inaccurate to assume that creative people are good evaluators of their ideas, nor does their ability to critique develop with age (Simonton, 1977a, 1984). Thirdly, creators have little control over the fate of their creation as their products will be judged by others, and the more productive they become, the more likely it is that their creativity achieves the Big-C magnitude (Sawyer, 2006).

Despite the huge influence of the evolutionary view of creativity, it has been criticized along several lines. Firstly, it overestimates the role of the chance factor in a creative achievement. Secondly, the two-step cognitive process of creativity does not sufficiently specify the intricate details of these steps (Simonton, 1997). Thirdly, this view fails to explain the major discrepancies regarding the relation between productivity and Big-C creativity, productivity and age, or varied career paths for creative people (Simonton, 1988, 1997).

Typological Theories provide a unified view of creativity by making connections between problem-solving/expertise and evolutionary theories of creativity. The Typological view emphasises a creators' individual differences and categorizes them based on systematic differences between them (e.g., Epstein, 1991; Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Heier, 1996; Isaksen, Lauer, & Wilson, 2003). One of the best works that showcase the typological view is the Galenson's model (2001, 2006). This model encompasses most creative dimensions such as person, process, product and place, and the level of creativity it focuses on is primarily Big-C creativity (though it could also be extended to little-c creativity). Galenson applies two levels of analysis to creativity: career path (macro-level) and working methods (micro-level). He argues that there are two types of creative people, the seekers and the finders (Kozbelt et al., 2010). The seeker creators often do not have clear ideas and goals at the outset and they usually use the trial and error approach, spending a huge amount of time finishing a creative effort. Although, the quality of their creative work and productivity tends to develop steadily with age, they do not seem to produce abrupt major breakthroughs. Because seekers rely heavily on their expertise and domain knowledge, it is very rare that they could produce creative achievements at a young age (Kozbelt et al., 2010). On the other hand, finders (or conceptual innovators) seem to have a clear idea about their creative project and the goals that they are planning to achieve. Hence, they are very effective at finishing their work within the time frame they set for themselves. In addition, their career journey is characterized by sudden changes and exceptional innovations, which is not age-restricted.

Despite the comprehensiveness of Galenson's model and the support it has from some quarters, its major assumptions have been contradicted by other studies (e.g., Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2006; Simonton, 2007a). Also, subjectivity in analysing and interpreting the emerging data may hugely affect the reliability of the model's categorization of creative people (Kozbelt et al., 2010).

System Theories, which maintain a broader view of creativity than other theories, conceptualize creativity as a complex system of interacting elements, the relation between which needs to be explored in order to fully understand creativity. The works of Gruber and his colleagues (1981a; Gruber & Wallace, 1999) Csikszentmihalyi (1988a, 1999) and Albert (2012) are good examples of research studies that adopt the system theories view of creativity. Gruber and his fellow researchers introduced the *evolving systems* model which attempts, through case studies, to understand the characteristics of creators. Unlike

cognitive theories, the evolving system emphasises an understanding of a creative effort's dynamics and development in relation to the influences of personal objectives, knowledge and social context (Kozbelt et al., 2010).

Csikszentmihalyi (1988a, 1999) proposed another influential system theory model which is less focused on the creative person but highly stresses the important role of environment and the contribution of other individuals in the phenomenon of creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (1988a) claimed that creativity is evaluated through the interaction between (1) the existing knowledge of a particular domain; (2) the person who contributed to the existing knowledge; (3) experts in that particular domain. Csikszentmihalyi's work also draws attention to the undiscussed role of gatekeepers who greatly influence the decision on what counts as creative. Although Csikszentmihalyi's model generated a lot of beneficial information, its qualitative nature made it difficult for other researchers to verify its major assumptions. Furthermore, unlike Gruber, Csikszentmihalyi's approach was not methodologically well established (Kozbelt et al., 2010). Albert (2012), in another system model, maintains that the interaction between factors such as families, schools and local culture is influential in nourishing or restricting the development of creative acts. He also strongly stresses the importance of freedom to help individuals think creatively.

In conclusion, it is clear from the previous discussion of theories that there are many different perspectives and assumptions about creativity. It is also noted that social creativity is quite underemphasized compared to individual creativity, which is overrated (John-Steiner, 2000; Salomon, 1993). In fact, as promoted in this study, most of the creative results are the product of collaboration with others as well as the interaction between individuals and their social environment (Csikszentmihályi & Sawyer, 1995; Fischer et al., 1998). The best possible way forward in this situation is to explore creativity in its broadest sense, acknowledging the influence of collaboration and social contexts as well as incorporating other opposing views in order to advance their own theoretical perspective and the broader knowledge of creativity in general (Kozbelt et al., 2010).

With regard to developing new creativity theories or models, it is important for researchers to carefully consider which level and dimension of creativity they want to emphasise in their works, obviously without ignoring the other levels and dimensions. This, of course, should be based on previous theories, insights and research on creativity to achieve maximum gains and continue to inform future efforts to understand this phenomenon.

2.2.4 Creativity in Education

The interaction between creativity and education extends to cover aspects such as problem-solving in subject areas, creative teaching and teaching to improve students' creative thinking. Although the relationship between creativity and education is an obvious one in theory, the case is not the same in reality (Makel, 2009). Creativity has always been emphasised in childhood education and in gifted education as well. It was important in education in the 1960s and 1970s, but its influence on education seems to be periodic and conditioned by educational research interests and creativity is not a priority in the educational debate at the moment (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2010).

Creativity can be considered through the perspectives of educators and creativity researchers. Educators often view creativity as a means towards a goal such as improving specific cognitive abilities or increasing motivation. In fact, creativity is an attractive topic for educators as it can be employed in developing students' inventiveness, problem-solving skills and the desire to learn. However, to many educators, it can pose a threat to classroom management and class control (Smith & Smith, 2010). As for creativity researchers, they are faced with theoretical and practical difficulties. Some thorny theoretical questions arise when we consider creativity in an educational setting (e.g., what to make of a creative teaching idea? What about adopted ideas? How can one tell the difference between a creative idea and a simple insight?). In terms of practical difficulties, researchers often have major issues with regard to sampling, research instruments and level of creativity.

2.2.5 Creativity in the Saudi Educational Context

As Saudi Arabia is changing into an information society, where social and technological advances are the driving forces to economic growth and competitiveness, new challenges have emerged in learning and teaching contexts. This situation has called for flexible thinking and creative abilities, which means that the aim of education is not only to communicate information or develop certain skills and knowledge but also to foster creative thinking and enhance thinking skills. The Saudi Ministry of Education has realised the critical role of creative thinking and begun to take practical measures to foster creativity in a rather traditionalist society where freedom of expression and imagination are restricted to some extent (Al-Salmi, 2010). The following is a historical overview of the efforts that were made to foster creativity in the Saudi educational context.

In 1970, the Saudi Educational policy emphasised the need for identifying gifted students and fostering creativity, articles 57, 192, 193 and 194. However, most efforts were restricted to competitions and participation in exhibitions (Academy for psychology, 2013). This continued until 1996 when a project was carried out to design a programme that identifies and cares for the gifted. This step lead to the creation of the *Gifted Students Support Centres* the following year (*Ibid.*). These centres, besides identifying gifted students, encourage research in the field of creativity and provide educational programs that are not available in state schools. They also assist families of gifted students in nurturing the talent of their children with a range of mentoring and fostering programmes (Al-Attas, 2005; Al-Enezi, 2003). The centres provide additional classes in science, mathematics, computer, art, and physical education. The aim of these classes is to develop students' creativity and problem solving abilities as well as encouraging students to make their own inventions which are presented in workshops, exhibitions and competitions. Also, psychological and social care is extended to support the children and their families so that they can discuss any issues and work out suitable solutions (Hijazi & Naser 2001).

In 2000, *The King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba)* was established under the presidency of The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. This independent foundation works in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and other national and international institutions, private or governmental. It targets students from elementary, middle, and secondary schools as well as college students. Its main objective is to promote and enhance areas such as building and developing creativity, leadership and critical thinking, pioneering, and the development of advanced competencies in key disciplines (maths, science, and information technology). In addition, the foundation supports creativity through offering national and international scholarships, competitions, and awards to gifted individuals (Tuwaijri, Abdulmajed, & Mohammad, 2000; Fathalla, 2003). The Ministry of Education funds the foundation; however, it is also financially supported by charities and the private sector as well (Al-Attas, 2005). Moreover, the foundation cooperates with its counterparts in other countries through exchange student programmes as well as arranging exhibitions and conferences (Al-Nokali, 2004).

In 2001, The Ministry of Education introduced 'The General Directorate for Gifted Students Support'. Its main goals are to plan and train, identified gifted students and provide support and enrichment programmes to them (Al-Faisal, 2009). This department

also coordinates other government organisations and professional associations to establish a central database of creative people and monitors their progress (Ministry of Education, 2002a). When a gifted student is identified, they can be promoted to a higher class appropriate to their level of ability. In addition, these students are introduced to additional tasks and projects specially designed for gifted children and they may even be offered classes after school and during summer holidays (Al-Nafie, Al-Qtami, & Al-Dobiban, 2000). This department also provides counselling services to help students achieve their potential, and to assist their teachers in attending to their needs and developing their talent (Al-Pakistani, 2007).

Furthermore, there is state and private support for creativity in Saudi Arabia. For example, *King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology* offers support in areas such as identifying gifted students, fostering science projects, and raising community awareness. In addition, this institute evaluates a students' scientific innovations at all educational levels and hosts scientific exhibitions, lectures, conferences and competitions (Al-Attas, 2005). Another example of private support is '*Almarai*' company's annual award, which was created in 2000 to support scientific innovations and encourage researchers, inventors and gifted students in Saudi Arabia (Al-Salmi, 2010).

2.2.6 Evaluating the Saudi Educational policies on creativity

Despite all the efforts that have been made by the Ministry of Education as well as the state and private support to creativity in Saudi Arabia, little has been achieved. Many Saudi educators criticize the Ministry's efforts as lacking the strategy and the vision needed for establishing defined and positive outcomes (Al-Khalidi, 2001; Al-Pakistani, 2007). This is also being coupled with the bureaucratic nature of the Ministry's procedures and decision-making processes that result in lack of cooperation between local and regional centres as well as with other professional organisations and universities. One issue relates to the unreliable methods of gifted students' identification process which depend mainly on students' achievement scores, teacher nominations and occasionally the use of Wechsler IQ Test (Abu-Nawas, 2005). In addition, once a gifted student graduates from schools, no further support or contact is maintained with them, resulting in a huge loss of talent, resources and effort (Al-Salmi, 2010). A further issue relates to the centralization of creativity programmes that restrict their implementation to urban areas, resulting in programmes neglecting gifted children from rural areas. Other related issues include

shortages of staff, a lack of up-to-date research in the Saudi context and didactic and inflexible teaching and learning processes that do not nurture creativity (Al-Attas, 2005; Al-Salmi, 2010).

Perhaps the most noticeable observation of all about fostering creativity in the Saudi context is the prevailing view that promoting creativity is separate from the mainstream academic curriculum and that it is only offered to a few students who are classified as “*gifted*” or “*talented*”. This has created a negative impact as only a small portion of students are provided with systematic support to develop their creative thinking whereas the majority of students are deprived of such privilege, which goes against the fact that humans are creative creatures and that everyone has the potential to be creative (Beghetto, 2010; Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Robinson, 2001; Shneiderman, 2000). In addition, separating creative thinking from mainstream education has lead teachers to believe that nurturing creativity is not a part of their responsibilities in schools as there are centres and special courses that are devoted to serve this particular objective. Another important observation is the strong emphasis on creativity in science and technology in the Saudi context. Ignoring the promotion of creativity in other school subjects, especially English, would lead educators to believe the only creativity that matters should be scientific and at the most eminent levels. This could be extremely damaging in fostering creativity in language classrooms as these biases continue to be reinforced in the minds of language teachers and learners, leaving little chance of nurturing creativity in the humanities and social sciences.

2.2.7 Creativity and language teaching/learning

Creativity as a life skill has become increasingly important in language classrooms as it can be connected to language learning in different ways (Akinwamide & Adedara, 2012). For example, language is considered generative in nature and it can result in creativity, which in turn triggers learning. Also, involving students in creativity tasks improves their motivation and self-esteem, which are crucial to language learning. Moreover, creative work can enrich the classroom experience and lead to authentic and meaningful communication and cooperation (Akinwamide, 2007).

Creativity has been linked to improvements in students’ achievement in second language learning. In fact, contemporary language teaching methods recommend language activities that nurture creativity in language learners, especially those which are student-centred, interaction-based, and open-ended (Richards, 2013). These types of tasks would serve two

purposes, developing linguistic skills as well as fostering the learners' creative thinking and behaviour (Burton, 2010). Creative thinking is influential in facilitating language learning because it is very useful in functional and situational language activities such as role-play and simulations, which place more demand on students' imagination and divergent thinking (Richards, 2013).

In general, there is an overlap between language learning and creativity, which means fostering students' creative thinking and improving their linguistic abilities do not require exceptional measures. In fact, both have the same pedagogical principles to facilitate learning such as active involvement of the learner, social participation, meaningful activities, restructuring prior knowledge, being strategic, engaging in self-reflection, creating motivated learners, helping students to learn to transfer and aiming towards understanding rather than memorization (Kampylis, 2010).

Creativity in language is considered the capacity of everyone, not a selected few (Carter and McCarthy, 2004; Prodromou, 2007). In fact, Swann and Maybin (2007: 491) define creativity in language as "A property of all language use in that language users do not simply reproduce but recreate, refashion, and recontextualise linguistic and cultural resources in the act of communicating". In this sense, Carter (2004) identified four functions of creativity in language: giving pleasure; evoking alternative fictional worlds which are recreational and which recreate the familiar world in new ways; expressing identities; and establishing both harmony and convergence as well as disruption and critique (p. 82). Therefore, for a second/foreign language learner to understand the multiple functions of creativity, it is critical that he/she engages in different types and levels of genres, settings and questions. Yet, most of the prevalent communicative language pedagogy nowadays tends to focus on usefulness and practicality rather than paying more attention to developing interpersonal relationships, expressing one's own identity and playing with language (Cook, 2000; Widdowson, 2000; Carter, 2007). In fact, these creativity-friendly language functions, in second/foreign language contexts, could be regarded as a means and an end of language learning (Cook, 2000).

The four functions of creativity in language that was outlined earlier should also be easily extend to foreign language teaching/learning settings. Giving pleasure as one of the functions of creativity in language, through language play, occurs when learners manipulate the target language as a source of enjoyment and relaxation. Research on language play shows that it facilitates language proficiency and leads to deeper processing of lexical

items. These results beg the reconsideration of second/foreign language learning contexts which generally discourage playfulness and pleasure in favor of seriousness and ideal behavior (Bell, 2009). Another function of creativity involves language learners recontextualising or creating new situations where they can use the language creatively in classroom. This could take the form of teacher-organized activities such as role-play and games, or incidental and spontaneous activities (Kumagai, 2012). Expressing identities is probably one of the most discussed functions of creativity in language (*Ibid*). It pertains to language learners using the target language to express or perform opinions of self and others in fictional or nonfictional communicative events as part of the classroom language learning. The activities that are used to express identities might include dramatization, code switching and code mixing, all of which allow learners to employ different stylistics of the target language and foster creativity. Strongly connect to the previous function, creativity can be used to establish harmony with group members or disruption to outsiders. This goes to show that when language learners communicate, the purpose is not necessarily to transfer information but rather to develop relationships, express identities and promote a sense of community (Cook, 2000; Carter, 2007).

Moreover, creativity, although constrained by inflexible syllabus, dull textbooks, lack of time, and the exams washback effect, is valuable for foreign language education as well as general educational goals and attitudes (Read, 2015). Promoting creativity in language classrooms engages and motivates learners to study in a foreign language while making the learning experience memorable and enjoyable. It also develops important qualities such as patience, flexible thinking and resourcefulness. In addition, it provides learners with personalized challenges and a sense of curiosity about and ownership over their thoughts and actions. In fact, developing creativity in language classroom encourage divergent thinking and could provide the basis for more advanced conceptual creative thinking beyond the classroom (Papalazarou, 2015; Read, 2015; Kurtz, 2015).

However, despite the importance of creative thinking, it has not been well represented as a topic in language education research, nor was it emphasised in language education practice (Albert, 2006; Dornyei, 2005; Boden, 2004). Perhaps the educational policies as well as the beliefs that teachers and students hold about creativity might have played a significant role in this realization. Now, what is needed is a curriculum that promotes creativity through offering opportunities for students to ask questions, formulate problems, generate ideas, and draw conclusions, which would enable students to construct and co-construct

knowledge. This would eventually improve learning conditions, leading to enhancing students' language abilities as well as creative thinking (Craft, 2005).

2.2.8 Reading and creativity

Scholars on creativity (e.g., Taylor & Sacks, 1981; Torrance, 1988, 2000) suggest that the creative potential exists in all humans and it can be developed through learning. Hence, many researchers supported the recommendation to foster creative thinking through reading activities (Scanlon, 2006; McVey, 2008; Sturges, 2008). Moreover, since it has been established that thinking skills are closely related to language acquisition (Piaget, 2002; Vygotsky, 1986), it is highly possible that there is a connection between reading and creative thinking (Wang, 2012).

Compared to other communication vehicles, reading is the least structured. According to Berg & Rental (1967:224) "reading, with its capacity for interpretation, illumination, and extension, makes it the best possible stimulus for sparking creativity". In fact, the literature on creativity associates the traits and abilities that are required for both reading and creative thinking (McVey, 2008; Sak, 2004; Smith, Paradise & Smith, 2000; Sturges, 2008). Among the shared characteristics are the freedom and ability to communicate ideas, emphasis on self-discovery, promotion of curiosity and imagination and attention to higher-order-thinking skills (Wang, 2012). Mechanisms for reading role in promoting creative thinking can be evident in the increase of diversity in mental representations available for manipulation during creative thinking. In fact, the reading process helps students expand the range of their experiences, encouraging them to move beyond the directly experienced events to those indirect encounters presented in the content of reading materials, whether fiction or non-fiction (Ritchie, Luciano, Hansell, Wright & Bates, 2013).

Studies, although limited, have indicated that there is a relationship between reading and creativity. For example, Torrance and Harmon (1961:212) studied the effects of memory, evaluative, and creative reading sets on test performance. The randomly selected participants of 115 graduate students were assigned to three groups. Each group was given different reading "sets": *memorization*, *critical analysis*, and *creative application*. The findings revealed that teaching students "to assume various reading sets will have differential effects on the kinds of goals achieved". Students who were given the creative "set" achieved the highest scores in creative applications. This suggested that introducing creative habits should be an important goal of reading instruction. In addition, Wang (2012)

explored whether extensive reading practice could be related to high creative performance among university students. The participants filled out a questionnaire (that inquired about the total courses taken in the school year, total hours spent on reading) and completed a creativity test. The results indicated that students who spent more time on reading performed significantly better in the creativity test, concluding that creativity scores, especially scores in *elaboration*, are significantly correlated with attitudes toward reading and the amount of time spent on reading. In another study, Mousavi, Maghsoudi & Yarahmadi (2013) investigated the possible interaction between Iranian EFL learner's creativity and their reading comprehension ability as well as the impact of general English proficiency on their reading comprehension ability in relation to their creativity. A questionnaire on creativity and a reading comprehension test was administered to 60 EFL learners. The findings show a positive correlation between a learner's creativity, its two subscales (*elaboration* and *flexibility*) and their reading comprehension ability.

A further study by Ritchie, Luciano, Hansell, Wright and Bates (2013) assessed reading, spelling and non-word repetition in a large, representative sample of adolescents and young adults, and examined their associations with creativity, indexed by the trait openness to experience and a creative writing task. Their findings show that creativity and reading ability were significantly associated in a series of regression models controlling for IQ, age, and sex, concluding that higher reading scores were associated with higher scores on creativity measures. Another study carried out by Naghadeh, Kasraey, Maghdour, and Eyvezi (2014) investigated the relationship between creativity and reading comprehension. In their study, a group of 82 students were surveyed using Arjmand Creativity Questionnaire followed by a reading comprehension test. The correlation analysis suggested that there is a significant positive correlation between creativity and reading comprehension. The previously explored studies are not conclusive because the limited number of studies on this topic as well as the inconsistent correlation between reading and some subsets of creative thinking such as elaboration and originality. Nonetheless, they all emphasise the importance of integrating creativity in reading comprehension activities because creative reading is a part of all successful reading experiences (Moorman & Ram, 1994).

In sum, reading is often thought of as a skill to be learned and practiced. In classrooms, students learn basic reading skills such as decoding, learning new vocabulary, finding the main idea and skimming. In fact, classroom teachers mainly emphasise basal reading,

vocabulary drills and comprehension assessment. However, reading can also be considered a creative effort (Moorman & Ram, 1994). Reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts foster students' creativity through stimulating their imagination and satisfying their curiosity. Therefore, to motivate and support their creativity, students should have open access to a variety of reading materials at school and at home. The more students are exposed to different types of reading materials, the more they are likely to be both skilled readers and creative thinkers (Small & Arnone, 2011). Furthermore, in order to help students become creative readers, Torrance (1965) proposed two suggestions. Firstly, students should be encouraged to make predictions and have their own expectations. This would make students more responsive to the texts they read by identifying new relationships and making predictions. Secondly, students should create constructive ideas based on their reading. This can be achieved through going beyond the facts and information given in the text as well as elaborating and transforming ideas and thoughts generated from their reading.

2.3 Creative Circles

So far, this chapter has discussed the topics of reading and creativity with reference to the wider EFL context and the Saudi context in particular. Given the unsatisfactory situation of reading instruction and creative thinking in language education, this study proposed Creative Circles as a viable solution.

Creative Circles, as proposed by this study, is a collaborative instructional model that is informed by Learning Circles strategy (Atkin & Karplus, 1962), which was introduced by Robert Karplus and Myron Atkin when they joined forces to build up a science teaching strategy intended to teach elementary level learners, coming in two steps of *invention* and *discovery* (Atkin & Karplus, 1962). In 1967, an exploration phase was introduced to precede invention and discovery phases (Karplus & Thier, 1967). In order to additionally explain the meaning of each phase for teachers, Karplus had to change the names of the phases into *exploration*, *introduction*, and *application* (Karplus, Lawson, Wollman, Appel, Bernoff, Howe, Rusch, & Sullivan, 1977). Later variations were the 5E and the 7E. However, despite its popularity, the Learning Circles Model focuses on science subjects and has never been employed in teaching English or promoting creative thinking in EFL contexts (to the best of the researcher's knowledge). Also, this model may be influenced by some of the disadvantages associated with group work such as having 'free riders' in

the group, conflict between group members and lack of organization and clear objectives (Wei & Tang, 2015). Therefore, this study attempts, as will be explained next and in the methodology chapter, to incorporate Creative Circles approach, which is an extenuation of Learning Circles, in a Saudi EFL setting and address the shortcomings that were identified about it.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the phases of the Creative Circles model begin with *Engagement*, whereby the teacher creates student interest, elicits students' questions, and ascertains students' prior knowledge with respect to the topic(s) to be read. During the *Exploration* stage, the teacher encourages students to collaborate actively on reading tasks with other students with limited teacher input. The teacher provides directions and responds to students' questions while acting as a facilitator, providing students with opportunities to seek their own answers to the problems. Within the *Explanation* phase, which recurs at different times during the lesson, the teacher encourages students to explain concepts through teacher questioning while prompting students to give evidence to support their ideas. Also, in this phase, the teacher introduces formal definitions and explanations of ideas and information drawing upon students' experiences during the exploration activities. In the *Elaboration* phase, the teacher encourages students to apply or extend their newly constructed concepts into different or real-life contexts. Assessment is ongoing throughout the lesson, whereby the teacher formatively observes and assesses students' learning as well as letting students assess their own learning. In the *Evaluation* phase, a summative evaluation is developed. It takes the form of reflective journals, which students write to evaluate their own learning and identify strengths and areas of improvement.

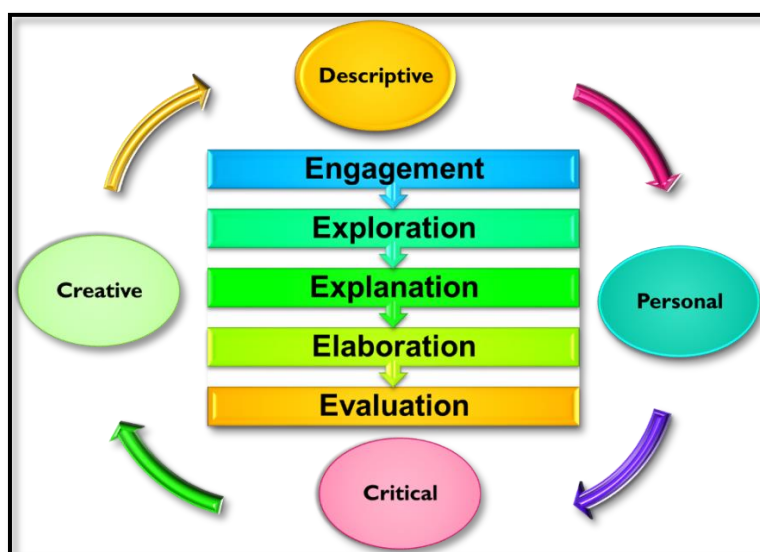


Figure 1: Creative Circles reading instructional model

Moreover, this model promotes effective reading and creative thinking by encouraging students to go beyond finding out what is written on a page. According to the model, reading is viewed as a dialogue between reader and text in which the reader contributes as much as the text. Hence, reading becomes more than just a source of information and entertainment it becomes an empowerment effort. Indeed, effective reading creates opportunities for readers to understand themselves and others as well as provides them with a source of imagination and inspiration. The Creative Circles model evolves through four phases, which do not occur independently, but simultaneously. In the *descriptive* phase, the reader attempts to understand the content of the text through dealing with questions and queries that ask *what, when, where, who, and why*, which can be answered by the text. In the *personal* phase, readers react to the text through expressing their own feelings and emotions drawing on their real life experiences in conditions related to the text. Through this process, the reader confirms, evaluates or expands their experience in relation to the information from the text. The questions that can be asked in this particular phase might be: *How do I feel about this? What do I like/dislike? or How has my experience differed?* In the *critical* phase, the reader engages in a critical reflection, which involves evaluating and passing judgments on the purpose, bias and truthfulness of the information in the text. The type of questions in this phase could be: *Is this statement right? What would be the consequences? What are the author's intentions? or What is the point the author is trying to prove?* Finally, in the *creative* phase, the reader is moved to action by the text and uses their imagination and curiosity to create constructive ideas through elaborating on and transforming the concepts and thoughts provided in the text. The type of questions to guide the dialogue in this phase might be: *What do I know now that will empower me? How can we improve life/conditions/relations? or In what ways can we act differently?*

2.3.1 Relating Creative Circles to the constructivist theory

As Keser (2003) points out, many of the existing models in the area of education as well as teaching process are rooted in a constructivist learning theory. Constructivism theorizes that learners construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences reflecting on those experiences (Kilavuz, 2005). The constructivist classroom bears a number of characteristics and principles that have come to define the learning process. Firstly, in a constructivist classroom, learning is constructed as previous knowledge is the basis for the new knowledge learners create. Secondly, learning is also active. Students participate fully in learning activities while teachers coach, moderate, suggest and facilitate. Thirdly, learning

is considered a reflective process in which learners, with teachers' help, reflect on their experiences either privately or in group discussions. Fourthly, the constructivist classroom is collaborative. Collaboration is valued in learning because students not only learn from themselves but also from their peers from whom they can pick up learning strategies and methods of inquiry. Fifthly, learning is mainly inquiry-based. Students ask questions, investigate a topic, and use a variety of resources to solve and answer those questions (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

The generative model of the Creative Circles approach is closely related to constructivist teachings. It encourages students' active participation, collaboration, reflectivity and inquiry-based learning. Each of the phases in Creative Circles is having a particular function, both serving consistent and effective teaching as well as in improving learners' perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Bybee, Taylor, Gardner, Scotter, Powell, Westbrook, & Landes, 2006). When learners are inspired by forming a kind of mental disequilibrium or become interested in addressing a known or unknown real-life situation, the first phase in learning which is called *Engagement* occurs. The motivation and curiosity produced in the first phase guides the learners to the second step, called *Exploration*, through which they employ immediate and tangible experience to inspect, examine and collect information, as well as to check their predictions, and verify their hypotheses. Such data gives them the power to set into motion and find some answers to the questions that were set in the engagement phase. The exploration phase requires teachers to be supportive enough and assist learners so that they secure. They also need to provide a supervised and open question and answer sessions so that learners can expose their misgivings regarding a particular point of discussion. The phase of *Explanation* follows as the third step in which the teacher becomes active in the sense that they unify and make sense of the observations and information gathered by learners to generate valid justifications for their outcomes. They bring in suitable terms and notions relevant to the experience of learners at this moment of the development. *Elaboration*, as the fourth phase, follows with a new set of challenges presented to the learners aiming to let them apply their newly gained knowledge to suggest explanations, make decisions and see themselves as enabled enough to analyse and come to logical conclusions. This phase is sometimes performed during another inquiry task or as an annex to the Exploration step. Finally, the *Evaluation* phase tries to establish whether or not learners have gained an accurate understand of the notions and ideas discussed and to see if they can take a broader view in generalising and transferring their

skills to other contexts (Wilder and Shuttleworth, 2004). With help of the aforementioned phases, the Creative Circles approach can be applied when learning new topics as well as when making an effort to gain a deeper understanding of already familiar ones as learners can employ both their previous knowledge and experience and their newly encountered knowledge (Newby, 2004).

2.3.2 Justifications for implementing Creative Circles

Given the unsatisfactory situation of reading instruction and creativity promotion in the Saudi EFL setting that was discussed previously, the Creative Circles approach can be a pedagogically vibrant platform for addressing these issues in particular as well as developing language acquisition in foreign language classrooms in general. This format of reading instruction provides opportunities for learners to model and judge the effectiveness of reading comprehension strategies. When learners read collaboratively in small groups, they can read texts more efficiently and incorporate reading skills to better understand the reading material. The cooperation between learners' strategic reading and active engagement with what they read can lead to motivated readers. In fact, social interaction and interactive learning that is associated with collaborative reading can sustain learners' motivation, which is necessary for successful reading efforts (Mathewson, 1994).

In addition, this approach shares important aspects with influential teaching methods such as Communicative Approach (CLT) and Task Based Learning and Teaching (TBL). Creative Circles shares with CLT the common goal of developing learners' linguistic fluency. This occurs when learners read with their peers and collaborate to negotiate meaning, correct their understanding and use communication strategies (Shelton-Strong, 2012). In addition, Creative Circles seem to adhere to the requirements of TBL, which emphasises exposure to rich comprehensible input, negotiation of meaning and motivation to listen, read and to speak the language (Willis 1996). Creative Circles facilitate these conditions through reading and interacting within group discussions, which provide sufficient comprehensible input. Also, learners' motivation is increased through genuine communication efforts that provide them with ample time, space and freedom to deal with clearly defined reading tasks. This is coupled with the benefits of peer and teacher-led feedback, which are crucial for language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2010).

Moreover, the Creative Circles approach may have several positive effects on EFL learners (See Figure 2). Firstly, this approach can enhance learners' attitudes and self-confidence

through working independently and collaboratively in preparation for and participation within group discussions about what is being read. Secondly, it can provide readers with incidental learning opportunities, which can raise their awareness, improve their achievement and encourage reflectivity in meaningful reading activities. Thirdly, this type of approach advocates reading for pleasure, reading habits and noticing incidents that allow for L2 acquisition to take place (Spada & Lightbown 2010). Fourthly, since the approach is collaborative in nature and easy to implement, it can be useful in mixed-abilities classes as well as with other school subjects (Al Otaibi, 2008; AlSufyani, 2010). Fifthly, readers' creative thinking can be enhanced through creativity activities in the pre and post reading phases, which can help to round up, consolidate, and extend their understanding and interpretation of the text being read. In fact, students are given the chance to creatively elaborate on the topic independently and collaboratively, which allows for further language use and fluency.

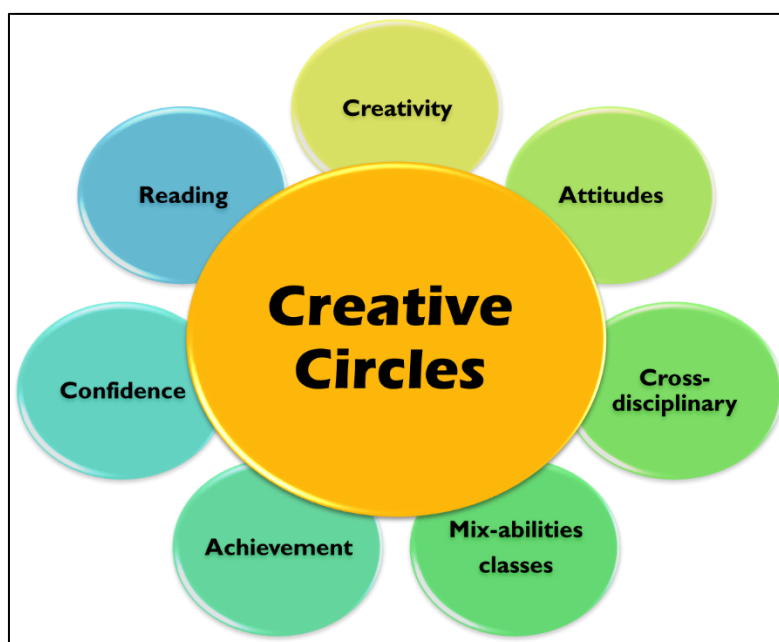


Figure 2: Benefits of Creative Circles approach

Sixthly, another important aspect to Creative Circles is its encouragement of peer evaluation through constant involvement in discussions and comments about each member's contribution and effort. It also encourages self-evaluation using a reflective journal in which learners respond to questions about their progress and feelings, performance and improvement plans. Seventhly, as the teacher's role moves away from lecturing towards facilitating and monitoring. Hence, he has enough opportunities to

evaluate language use and overall performance in order to further improve language learning/teaching experiences.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, a conceptual understanding of reading comprehension and creative thinking has been developed. The literature review shows that reading, despite all extensive research mentioned, remains a huge problem in EFL countries in Asia, the Middle East as well as Africa and South American countries. Moreover, fostering creativity in the Saudi context, similar to other EFL contexts, is separate from the mainstream academic curriculum, creating a negative impact on teachers' and students' perceptions since only a small number of students are provided with systematic support to develop their creative thinking. Creativity also receives little attention in language education theory as well as practice. Another point is that EFL intermediate stage (middle school) is still under-represented in research with regard to creativity and language skills, especially reading.

The Creative Circles approach can offer a framework for developing the reading skills and maybe help address the challenges for learners who aim to learn English in contexts like the EFL context in the Middle East and worldwide. The Creative Circles approach has the potential to offer sufficient intensity and support to EFL readers through working together in peer-assisted learning. This approach can promote students' learning motivation and satisfaction and allow them to interact, help one another increase understanding and overcome comprehension problems in the text. This approach, indeed, is supported by a growing number of research studies, which indicate that collaboration and interaction with peers can actually develop learners' reading abilities (Almasi, 1996; Ghaith, 2003; Tok, 2008).

Furthermore, the Creative Circles approach can offer a platform for enhancing creative thinking in EFL classrooms. It can provide students with an environment that promotes creativity in a task-centred language class enriched by disagreements, arguments, debates, opposing viewpoints and diverse ideas, all of which are key elements shared in creative problem solving as well as group work. In addition, this approach highlights group creativity and promotes creativity in the mainstream curriculum and language education, an issue rarely raised in EFL research, particularly in the Saudi context.

3. Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the research questions. Then, a discussion of the methodological approach which was considered appropriate for the investigation of research questions is presented. This is followed by, theoretical underpinnings and design, starting with an outline of the key methods employed; namely, semi-structured interviews, a reading comprehension test, a creative thinking skills test, student and teacher reflective journals. Justifications for the use of these research instruments are provided since this is extremely essential for the design and validity for each method. After that, an illustration of the process of data collection as well as an overview of methods used in data analysis is provided. Finally, ethical issues related to the research process are explained.

3.1 Research Questions

This project is guided by an overarching research question and several subordinate questions and objectives. The main question of this research is as follows:

"Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension and creative thinking of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners?"

The following sub-questions reflect the micro aims and objectives of the project:

1. What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' use of reading skills?
2. What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' attitudes towards reading?
3. To what extent do EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking?
4. What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity?
5. What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' reading comprehension?
6. What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' creative thinking?

The goals of the first four questions were to draw on learners' and teachers' experience and views of the current teaching practice of reading skills as well as how frequent these skills are actually taught and practiced. These questions also explored teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes towards reading English texts in a classroom situation, creativity and reading collaboratively. The answers to these questions assisted in revealing

problematic issues with reading classes from both sides that significantly affect their performance and the possible solutions to overcome them. To obtain the necessary data, EFL teachers and learners were asked to fill in attitudes and reading skills questionnaires. Questionnaires provide anonymity, reduce bias and they are practical and cost effective (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2012). This is followed by semi-structured interviews with some EFL teachers, supervisors (experienced language teachers who are assigned as inspectors and visit schools regularly) and learners. Interviewing, as a data collection method, is a natural and interactive approach of inquiry that can be used in different situations to cover a wide range of topics. Also, because of its flexibility and social acceptance, it is capable of generating rich and reliable data (Dörnyei, 2007).

As sub-questions 5 to 6 have a more practical nature, a quasi-experimental design was used, involving a reading comprehension test and a creative thinking test. To answer the fifth question, the reading comprehension test was used to assess students' performance before and after the intervention programme. Comparing the pre-test scores of the three groups determined whether the groups were comparable prior to intervention, whereas comparing the post-test scores assisted in detecting any significant differences in the scores of the experimental and comparison groups that could be attributed to the intervention. The results provided the researcher with the necessary evidence to decide whether the group, which was trained to use creative circles, performed differently from the comparison group. The hypothesis under investigation was that students in the experimental group would outperform their counterparts in the comparison group in the post reading comprehension test.

Similarly, to answer the sixth question, two creative thinking test forms were administered pre and post to all groups. The pre-test was used to establish comparability, whereas the post-test scores was used to identify any significant change which could be related to the intervention programme. This study hypothesized that the experimental group would perform significantly better in the post-test than the comparison groups as a result of incorporating Creative Circles approach.

Based on the gathered data from the reading comprehension test and the creativity test, the possibility of a relationship between reading and creativity within the context of the intervention programme was explored. Moreover, after the intervention, the attitudes and views of the teacher and students of the experimental group were investigated in a number of interviews to offer them the opportunity to elaborate on their experience. This helped

the researcher in understanding the processes involved in the actual application of Creative Circles during the experimental phase.

3.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

It is important for any researcher to explicitly state his/her philosophical stance and ideas. In doing so, the reasons for incorporating quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches will be justified (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, this section concerns the philosophical stance taken throughout this research. It also provides the basic considerations of that worldview as well as how this view shaped the approach to research.

The term worldview, also known as paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000); epistemologies and ontologies (Crotty, 1998), refers to a collection of personal assumptions and beliefs that shape one's views about the world and the nature of research, which often lead researchers to adopt quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2009). It can also be influenced by many factors such as area of discipline, past research experience and the context of study (Koshy, Koshy & Waterman, 2010). Four major worldviews in social sciences are discussed next: positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism. The latter, pragmatism, was adopted in this study.

The positivist worldview is a deterministic philosophy which holds that outcomes can be determined by causes. It also tries to reduce ideas into small sets of data (variables) in order to test them. Positivism is based on careful observations and measurements of the objective phenomenon that exists "out there", and which should to be represented numerically (Macdonis & Gerber, 2010). Therefore, positivists adhere to scientific methods when verifying theories. In other words, researchers formulate hypotheses, collect data objectively to support or refute their hypotheses, and make decisions and recommendations (Creswell, 2009).

The second worldview is constructivism, and is often associated with interpretivism. This perspective holds that the human knowledge is constructed through interacting with their world. This constructive process is influenced by cultural and social factors, which shape how people view and make sense of their world in different ways (Crotty, 1998). The multiple meanings that are derived from different perspectives encourage researchers to focus on the complexity of views rather than reducing meanings into a short list of few categories or ideas. Thus, rather than starting with a theory (as in positivism), constructivists generate and interpret these complex meanings inductively through open-

ended questions and discussions, seeking to understand the context of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Some researchers embrace the views of the advocacy/ participatory approach. One of the main features of this form of inquiry is its focus on creating change and planning action agendas in society so as to free and empower its members. This is usually done through initiating debates and discussions, and thus stimulates the will to change (Wilkinson, 1998). Another feature of advocacy/ participatory approach is its practical and collaborative nature. Participants in this type of inquiry can develop research questions, collect information, or analyse generated data in an attempt to allow their voice to be heard (Creswell, 2009).

The adopted perspective in this study is the pragmatic worldview. Central to this view is the emphasis on successful applications and solutions to problems (Patton, 1990). Therefore, instead of emphasising strategies of inquiry, researchers focus their attention on the phenomenon and all the possible approaches to understand it (Tashakkori & Teddlie , 2010; Morgan, 2007).

In agreement with the pragmatic perspective, this study adopted a mixed methods approach in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the unsatisfactory situation of EFL reading instruction in Saudi Arabia as well as finding a practical solution to this problem. According to Creswell (2009: 11): “The pragmatic researchers look to the *what* and *how* to research, based on the intended consequences- where they want to go with it”. Hence, this study is not totally committed to any particular school of thought. Rather, it draws freely, with appropriate justifications, from quantitative and qualitative suppositions in a manner that best meets the needs and objectives of the study. Consequently, pragmatism enriches this study and its outcomes through the involvement of multiple strategies of inquiry, various worldviews, and different types of data and analysis techniques. Additionally, this study, as pragmatism advocates, acknowledges the uniqueness of its EFL social, cultural, historical and political contexts; but at the same time provides theories and practices that could extend and relate to other EFL contexts.

3.3 Methodological Approach

A mixed methods design was proposed in order to answer the questions of the present study. Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005) consider one method of research to be one of the greatest dangers to the development of social sciences studies. This is intuitively sensible

given that different research questions require different avenues of investigation, and that designing a study is determined by its aims, questions and available sources. Complex issues such as reading, creativity and classroom reality as well as the limitations of every research method all suggest the need to adopt a mix methods research approach to collect data. In this sense, the research design could be strengthened through achieving a fuller understanding of the researched topic and verifying emerging outcomes through the corroboration of findings.

The main purpose of employing mixed methods in a study is to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data with an attempt to integrate the characteristics of the two research approaches. Therefore, narratives and quantitative analyses enable, interpret and inform each other, avoiding polarization and extreme views (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As Strauss and Corbin (1998: 34) point out: "Qualitative and quantitative forms of research both have roles to play in theorizing". It is worth noting that research studies of learning circles strategy were predominantly quantitative in nature, which can be useful in identifying the variables that seem to affect reading comprehension and creativity. However, qualitative methods offer the interpretative perspective to clarify the objectively measured variables even further (Anderson & Poole, 1994). An adoption of a mixed methods approach in the current research could bring the best of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The qualitative aspect of the research captures the meaning and the context of what is being investigated while the quantitative aspect produces reliable and generalisable outcomes based on its systematic and controlled process of inquiry (Dörnyei, 2007).

Despite the advantages a mixed method approach can offer, it is also important to note some of the disadvantages (Mason, 2006). Here, two key issues arise; the first is the researcher's lack of methodological skills to deal with both quantitative and qualitative data. The second issue is the numerous unprincipled combinations of mixing methods (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). It has also been emphasised that mixing methods demands specifying the aims of each method and the expected data as well as considering all the stages of the research process. Realizing the importance of these issues, the researcher decided to participate in many theoretical and practical workshops on quantitative and qualitative methods as well so as to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills required to successfully employ a mixed methods approach in the current research and achieve triangulation.

Triangulation refers to combining different data sources and different data collection methods to study the same social phenomenon (Patton, 1990; Dörnyei, 2007). In this research, triangulation was achieved by integrating the qualitative data of interviews, student and teacher reflective journals with the quantitative results from tests and questionnaires. This allowed the researcher to explore the topic of the research from different perspectives and avoid the limitations of a mono-method approach as well as maximize the confidence in the results and minimize bias issues.

The process of combining methods is structured around two factors: the importance given to each method and time ordering. For the first concern, the qualitative approach in this study followed the quantitative approach to further deepen the understanding of its results and inform the structure and content of the intervention. As for the second concern, Table 1 shows how the six data collection methods (questionnaire, interviews, comprehension test, creativity test, teacher's and student journals) are employed for the duration of the entire intervention programme to examine the effectiveness of Creative Circles approach in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension and creative thinking.

		Questionnaire	interviews	Reading test	Creativity test	Teacher journal	Student journal
Duration of Intervention Programme	Week1	✓ (exp./com.)*	✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp./com.)	✓ (exp./com.)	✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week2					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week3					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week4					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week5					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week5					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week7					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week8					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week9					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week10					✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week11			✓ (exp./com.)	✓ (exp./com.)	✓ (exp.)	✓ (exp.)
	Week12	✓ (exp./com.)					
	Week13		✓ (exp.)				

*comp. (Comparison groups) / *Exp. (experimental group)

Table 1:Matrix of Methodological Triangulation

3.4 Context of the Study

The experiment was conducted at Saudi state intermediate school in Jeddah City. This school, which is situated close to the city centre, consisted of three levels (three classes per level), and the average number of students per class is between 25 and 30. One of the reasons for choosing this particular school was that it is located in a major city. This is an important issue as the general tendency for most Saudi families is to move from rural to

urban areas where the infrastructure is well developed and major facilities, schools, universities and job opportunities are available. Another reason is that it is a typical state middle school in Jeddah City and in most Saudi cities with regard to its facilities, teaching materials, resources and number of staff and students. Also, the EFL teacher at this particular school expressed his interest in the experiment and volunteered to participate, which was a positive indication for a good starting point in achieving the goals of the study.

With regard to classroom organisation, classrooms were rectangular, in which students' desks (25 to 30 per class) were placed in a number of parallel rows with a blackboard on the wall opposite the students' desks. The teacher's desk was placed next to the blackboard and opposite the students' desks. The above described layout is typical of most Saudi EFL classrooms (Grami, 2012; Syed, 2003). Although these classes were quite crowded, there was enough space in the classroom to do the necessary seating arrangements for the implementation of the present study's experiment.

The student participants (age 15 to 16) were all male (as schools in Saudi Arabia adopt single-sex policy in education), and they have similar cultural and economic background. In order to create homogenous classes, all efforts were made by the school to evenly distribute students of different achievement levels among classes of the same stage. The research targeted third grade students in particular because they have sufficient experience in learning English and that this level forms the foundation for developing their reading skills as they are being introduced to longer reading passages (250- 350 words) which were not emphasised in the two previous levels. In fact, one of the main objectives of learning English in the third grade is to develop students' reading ability and enable them "to read and understand English written material" (Al-Swat, 2010: 6).

The EFL teacher participant, aged 37 is a Saudi national who holds a bachelor degree in English and a diploma in teaching English as a foreign language. He has a 13-year-experience in teaching English to intermediate stage students and has participated in a number of training courses such as cooperative learning, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), class management, and the Six Thinking Hats strategy. After a casual meeting between him and the researcher at one of the teacher-training sessions, he expressed his interest to participate in the present research.

The textbook 'Say it in English' was designed by a group of Saudi EFL teachers and supervisors. The textbook consists of eight units (two of which are revision units); each

unit is divided into four forty-five-minute lessons per week. It constitutes a hybrid syllabus combining structural, functional and topical threads which focuses on language functions in which grammar is carefully controlled and the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed gradually (Al-Yousef, 2007). The following are the themes around which the textbook was designed: 'Learning tools', 'Making Plans', 'Going to Places', 'Save our planets' and 'The senses' and 'Friendship'.

With regard to reading skill, the passages were chosen and prepared at higher level than the average student so that learners have a taste of real life situations. Passages are also followed by some reading comprehension activities (Say it in English-Third year intermediate 'Pupil's Book, Term 1', 2014: 3-9). However, this textbook has been criticized for being incoherent, difficult and having too many lessons that cannot be covered within the lesson time-frame. Furthermore, the reading activities and practice, as well as assessment techniques are considered inappropriate to students' proficiency level, and that they fail to address the issue of individual differences between students (Al-Swat, 2010; Al-Yousef, 2007).

3.5 Participants

Three intact third-grade classes, which comprised 30 EFL learners per class (90 students in total), were chosen from a state school in Jeddah city. All students were Saudi males between the ages of 15 and 16, and all participants' first language was Arabic. They had been learning English for four years before they progressed to third-grade level, and their exposure to the target language outside the classroom, which is common among most EFL learners, was very limited except for television programmes or social media networks which do not actually replace real face to face interaction or maintain a considerable progress in language proficiency.

One of these three classes was assigned as the experimental group while the other two comprised the comparison groups. These groups were surveyed and tested before and after the intervention to measure their reading comprehension and creativity. Also, thirteen students from the experimental group were interviewed before and after the intervention to explore their experience and opinions of reading classes, collaborative reading and the intervention by the end of the study.

In addition, the EFL middle school teacher who expressed his interest in participating in the experiment was trained to teach the experimental group via Creative Circles while the

comparison groups, taught by the same teacher, went about their usual English classes without changes except for providing students in the second comparison group with a sample of the tweaked lessons that were introduced to the experimental group. The reason for this decision was to address the issue of the Hawthorne Effect (explained later in this chapter). Towards the end of the experiment, this teacher was interviewed to capture his experience and personal views about the implementation of Creative Circles.

Moreover, 45 Saudi EFL middle school teachers as well as six EFL supervisors took part in the study. They were chosen based on the level they teach, their experience and willingness to participate. Teachers were surveyed to understand to what extent they teach reading skills and what attitudes they have towards collaborative reading. Eight of these teachers and six English language supervisors were interviewed to find out their thoughts and perceptions on reading comprehension lessons and collaborative reading in Saudi state schools.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process consisted of the following three stages:

3.6.1 Pre-experiment stage

During the Pre-experiment stage of data collection, three third grade intermediate classes from the school which facilitated the experiment were assigned, one as the experimental group and the other two as the comparison groups. The three classes responded to two questionnaires: (1) attitudes towards reading and collaborative reading and (2) reading habits and skills. Also, 45 EFL middle school teachers were surveyed to find out the extent to which they promote reading skills and creativity in their reading classes and to explore their perceptions on collaborative reading and creativity.

After answering the questionnaires, thirteen student volunteers from the experimental group as well as eight EFL teachers who teach the same grade level were interviewed individually in Arabic. The participating students were chosen based on their English language proficiency (5 high, 4 med and 4 low), whereas the teachers were chosen based on their teaching experience (from novice to experienced). The aim of these interviews was to allow them to express their views and attitudes towards teaching and learning reading comprehension lessons and collaborative activities. Also, they were asked about teaching practices that facilitate or impede creativity in EFL classroom context. Warm-up questions

were asked before the interviews to ensure that the interviewees felt comfortable and willing to share their experiences and opinions. Each digitally recorded interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes depending on the details provided by each participant.

Next, the reading comprehension and creative thinking tests were administered to three participating classes. The researcher made his best efforts to make the items and the instructions of the tests clear and within a reasonable time frame; and that students were allowed to ask for clarification at any time during the tests. Participants were assured that the results would not have any negative consequences on their academic achievement. The collected data in this stage were analysed later in order to compare and integrate it with the data gathered from the other stages of the study.

3.6.2 During experiment stage

During stage of data collection involved the application of the intervention which employed the Creative Circles approach. The teacher, who had been previously trained to use this teaching approach, taught all three classes. Students in the experimental group were taught reading comprehension lessons via Creative Circles approach for approximately eleven weeks. The first comparison group were introduced to some of the lessons that were taken by the experimental group. As for the second comparison group, students did not do any collaborative reading or creativity tasks. In this way, the researcher was able to compare between all three groups and decide whether Creative Circles improved students' reading comprehension and creativity. Furthermore, after each lesson, the teacher completed a journal whereas the students in the experimental group filled in a learning journal. Both teaching/ learning journals were based on the Six Thinking Hats model.

3.6.3 Post-experiment stage

In the post-experiment stage of data collection, towards the end of the experiment, the study tools (the reading comprehension test, creativity test and the questionnaires) were administered again to all the participating classes. Moreover, thirteen students from the experimental group and their teacher were interviewed in order to share their accounts and views about Creative Circles approach and how it influenced teaching/learning reading comprehension as well as creativity.

3.7 Data collection tools

A multi-strategy research was conducted in this study, whereby different data collection methods were used to gather the necessary data during three different stages, tools included pre and post questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, a proficiency test, a reading comprehension test, a creativity test. Also, the teacher and students in the experimental group were asked to keep a reflective journal during the experiment. What follows is a detailed description of each tool.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires in this study were administered to 90 EFL students and 45 EFL teachers who participated in the experiment. The two diagrams below (Figure 3 and Figure 4) show the type of questionnaires and whether they were used before (pre) or before and after (pre-post) the experiment.

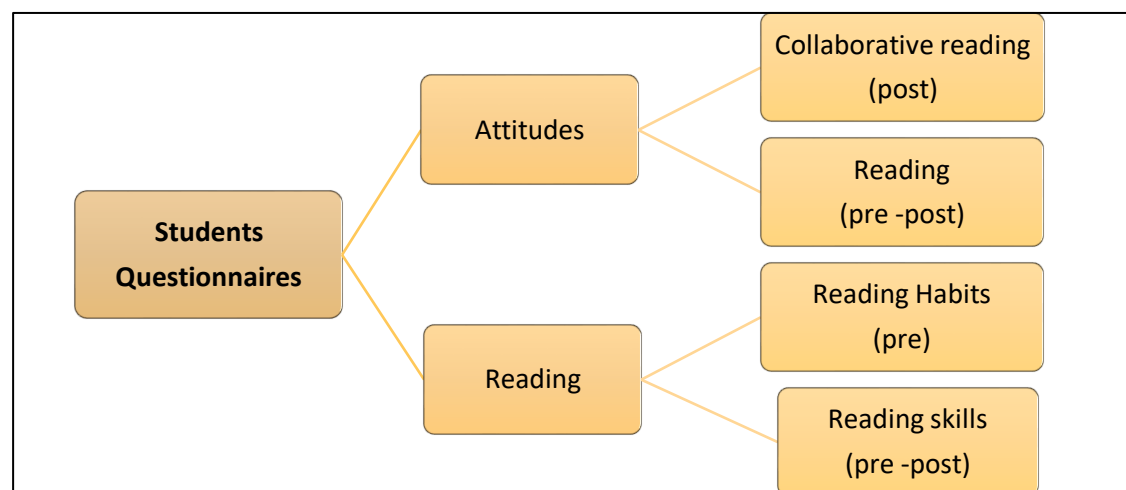


Figure 3:Types of questionnaires administered to EFL students

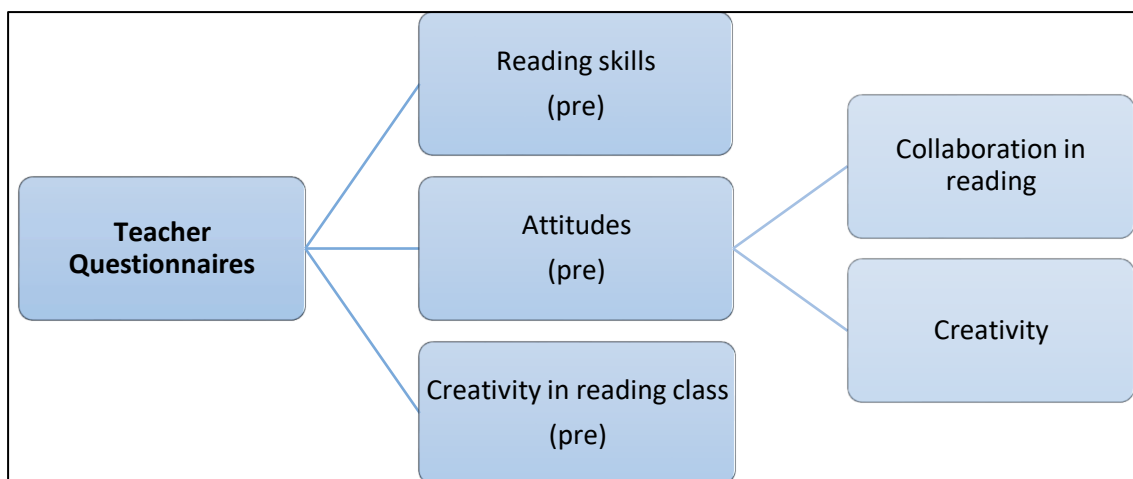


Figure 4: Types of questionnaires administered to EFL teachers

3.7.1.1 Students' Attitudes Questionnaire

Attitude is a highly complicated concept that has many definitions (Yamashita, 2004). Eagly and Chaiken (1993: 1) defined attitudes as: “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour”. It is also defined as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person institution or event” (Ajzen, 1988: 4). Gardner "(1980 :267) described attitudes as “the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic. In general, there is a wide agreement that attitudes have three components: cognitive (personal, evaluative beliefs), affective (feelings and emotions), and conative (action readiness and behavioural intentions) (Breckler, 1984; McKenna, 1994; Ruddell & Unrau, 1994; Solomon, 1996; Reeves, 2002).

As a part of the current study's data collection methods, a questionnaire (See Appendix E) was designed as a preliminary instrument to gather information in relation to EFL third grade middle school learners' attitudes towards reading English texts and group work in reading classes. The data generated by this method was corroborated by findings from other methods such as interviews and journals, which would be discussed later on in this section.

The gathered data was used to inform the researcher's design of the intervention in the study (after piloting the questionnaires) and in providing information needed for doing comparisons between the participating groups. Also, the findings of the questionnaire offered a clear picture of the respondents' attitudes towards reading English texts and group work during reading comprehension activities. Thus, the objective of the questionnaire was

to explore EFL students' feelings, beliefs and behaviours towards reading English texts and collaborative reading.

The questionnaire was based on a number of studies that used various attitudinal scales, some of which are similar in their contexts and participants to the current study (e.g., Yamashita, 2013, 2004; Halimahtun et al., 2010; Tamrackitkun, 2010; West, 2010; Clark & Foster, 2005; Teale & Lewis, 1981). However, despite the general agreement on the tri-component view of attitudes which was explained earlier, none of the reading attitudes studies that were examined by the researcher had all of these three components. Therefore, it was decided that the design of the attitude questionnaire for this study would include these three domains and touch upon issues related to students' attitudes toward reading for school, reading out of school and the usefulness of reading to have a more valid and reliable attitude measure.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, which is considered versatile and reliable according to Dörnyei (2002). There were 27 statements to which participants indicated their opinions by marking '*strongly agree* ', '*agree* ', '*neutral* ', '*disagree* ', and '*strongly disagree* '. Although the items were initially written in English, they were translated into Arabic for the participants. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was given to two native speakers of Arabic, who are also English instructors, to verify the accuracy of the translation. All the necessary adjustments were made based on their comments.

In April 2014, the questionnaire was piloted online (using SmartSurvey™ website) at a middle school in Jeddah City on 35 third-grade students. This school was chosen for piloting because teachers in both schools have the same professional qualifications, and because of its similarity and close proximity to the school in which the main study had been previously planned. Also, both schools taught the same prescribed English textbook and the school environment in both cases was quite similar. This meant that learners in both schools shared similar teaching/learning experience as well as socio-economic level. Moreover, a Cronbach's Alpha Test was carried out to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability of the piloted questionnaire was (0.70) for the *attitudes towards reading* section, and (0.81) for the *attitudes towards collaborative reading* section, which made the questionnaires strongly reliable (DeVellis, 2003).

After the piloting, necessary adjustments and corrections were made. For instance, the translation of items: (4), (9) and (21) in the *attitudes towards reading* section and items:

(2) and (12) in the *attitudes towards collaborative reading* section were modified to gain more clarity. Additionally, even though the *attitudes towards reading* section was considered highly reliable, items (1) and (18) were deleted to further improve the scale's reliability, which increased to (0.75) after deletion.

3.7.1.2 *Students' Reading Questionnaire*

The second questionnaire that was designed for students is the reading questionnaire (See Appendix F). Its aim was to explore students' reading habits and to find out the extent to which they were exposed to reading in their native language as well as in English. The questionnaire also aimed at identifying the extent to which students practiced English language reading skills.

The first part of the questionnaire was about students reading habits in Arabic and in English. It consisted of ten questions which enquired about how often they read outside school, whether they believe they read enough, the number of books they have at home, the type of reading materials they preferred to read, and the people who inspired them to read. These questions were developed based on reading questionnaires that were used in a number of studies (e.g., Ifanti, 2012; Tamrackitkun, 2010; West, 2010; Clark & Foster, 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2001).

The objective of the second part of the reading questionnaire was to identify how frequently EFL learners use reading comprehension skills. Although the possibility of identifying independent reading skills and sub-skills is a very controversial issue, the availability of reading skills taxonomy is "enormously pervasive and influential" (Alderson, 2000: 10). In fact, it is quite difficult to investigate reading as a process or as a product, or even construct a reading comprehension test without some kind of identified reading comprehension skills which guide this effort.

In order to construct the questionnaire, a number of reading skills taxonomies identified through an extensive literature review (e.g., Al-roomy, 2013; Hessamy, 2013; Pan & Wu, 2013; El-Safory, 2011; Shang, 2011; Kaya, 2010; Liu, 2010; Cheng, 2009; Davis 1968; Munby, 1978; Grabe, 1991; Weir, 1997; Barati 2005; IELTS; TOEFL; STEPS). After examining these studies and language proficiency tests, the questionnaire in this study was developed to include four types of reading: careful local reading, careful global reading, expeditious local reading and expeditious global reading (Hessamy, 2013; Barati 2005; Weir, 2004; Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Weir, 1997). For each type of reading, a number of

sub-skills were identified as the basis of the 28-item developed for this questionnaire. Thus, the questionnaire could be considered comprehensive and thorough enough to cover most, if not all, of the identified reading comprehension skills and sub-skills found in the reviewed works.

The questionnaire used a six-point Likert scale. Participants indicated their opinions of the 28 statements by marking ‘*always*’, ‘*most of the time*’, ‘*sometimes*’, ‘*rarely*’, ‘*never*’ and ‘*I do not know*’. The items were translated from English into Arabic and the translation was reviewed by two native speakers of Arabic, who are also English instructors. The necessary corrections were made based on their comments.

The questionnaire was piloted online at the same middle school in which the attitude questionnaire was piloted. The Cronbach’s Alpha Test was run to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability of the piloted questionnaire was (0.96) which is considered an excellent reliability coefficient (George & Mallery, 2003).

After the piloting, necessary adjustments and corrections were made. For instance, the translation of items: (6), (11) and (27) were modified to clear any ambiguities. Moreover, the last column in the scale “*I do not know*” was deleted because students found it confusing and difficult to differentiate from the column “*rarely*”, resulting in a five-point instead of six-point Likert scale.

3.7.1.3 *The teacher questionnaire*

The teachers’ questionnaire (See Appendix H) consisted of four sections. The first section (27 items) looked at how often EFL middle school teachers encourage their students to practice reading skills in their reading classes. The second sections (11 items) concerned the extent to which EFL teachers promote creativity in their reading classes. The objective of the third and fourth sections (16 and 11 items respectively) was to identify EFL teachers’ attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity in reading classes. In constructing the questionnaire items for reading skills and collaborative reading, the corresponding items in the students’ questionnaire were used after making the necessary modifications. Furthermore, the items of the section on the instructional activities that facilitate the development of creative thinking and the formation of creative habits were developed in accordance with findings and recommendations provided by authors in the field of creativity in general as well as those who were interested in fostering creativity in foreign

language classrooms (e.g., Lee, 2013; Ong, Hartzell, and Greene, 2009; Runco, 2007; Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, Hartman, & Westberg, 2002; Daiute & Dalton, 1993).

The first two sections of the questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. Participants indicated their opinions of the statements by marking ‘*always*’, ‘*most of the time*’, ‘*sometimes*’, ‘*rarely*’ and ‘*never*’. As for the third and fourth sections, participants responded on a five-point Likert scale (‘*strongly agree*’, ‘*agree*’, ‘*neutral*’, ‘*disagree*’ and ‘*strongly disagree*’). The items were in English, and they were reviewed by two native speakers of English who work in Saudi Arabia as English instructors. Some items, like items 3 and 4 in section 2 and item 4 in section 4 were modified based on instructors’ comments.

The questionnaire was piloted online on 25 middle school EFL teachers. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire as a whole was calculated, generating an excellent score of (0.93). Also, the reliability coefficient of each separate section is as follows:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Cronbach’s Alpha</i>
1	0.91
2	0.81
3	0.92
4	0.88

Table 2: The reliability coefficient of each section of the questionnaire

3.7.2 Interviews

Kvale, (1996:1) defines qualitative interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to reveal the meaning of peoples' experiences". This "gold standard of qualitative research" (Silverman, 2000:51) can serve as a stand-alone data collection method, or it can be embedded with a quantitative method in a mixed-method study (Richards, 2009). In addition, qualitative interviews are expected to remain anonymous in most cases and are used for the sake of research purposes only (King & Horrocks, 2010: 2). This interviewing style is recommended for qualitative analyses as it enables ‘rapport to be developed; allows participants to think, speak and be heard; and [is] well suited to in-depth and personal discussion’ (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p 22). Throughout semi-structured interviews, an informal and friendly manner of communication

between the researcher and participant is encouraged (Madill, 2011). As such, semi-structured interviews are flexible and are comprised of open-ended and non-leading questions in order to capture the unique experiences the participants.

Although qualitative interviews share basic commonalities, they can be divided into different types. According to the degree of structure, they can be: structured, open and semi-structured (Myers & Newman, 2007; Richards, 2009; Robson, 2011; Hall, 2013). The structured interview, also known as "standardized interviews" (Mackey & Gass, 2005:173), is highly controlled in its data collection process. The interviewer asks a pre-determined set of questions and the respondents are expected to provide short and focused answers, restricting the possibility of further explanation or elaboration. This tight control over responses makes the collected answers accurate, comparable across interviewees as well as quantifiable, making interviews very similar to questionnaires and surveys (Hall, 2013). The down side to structured interviews, however, is that they lack variation, flexibility, and depth; and that they are mainly used when questionnaires cannot be used for practical reasons (Dörnyei, 2007; Richards, 2009).

The polar opposite method to the structured interview is the open interview, also called 'unstructured', 'in-depth' or 'ethnographic' interview (Richards, 2009). It relies heavily on interaction; the intention is to put interviewees at ease to open up and reveal as much information as possible about their views, feelings and experiences. To do this, the interviewer has to build a strong relationship with informants, built on trust and genuine interest (Turner, 2010:755). During this informal approach, the interviewer does not ask specific questions based on a detailed interview guide, but rather utilises a set of open and probing questions and encourages the interviewee to lead the interaction (McNamara, 2009). Although interruptions are minimized, the interviewer can ask occasional questions, provide feedback and ask for clarification. Hence, meaning is created through careful analysis of constructive interaction (Richards, 2003).

Open interviews are appropriate when a researcher is trying to deeply investigate a phenomenon or conducting an exploratory work before a major study. It is also used when the researcher knows very little about the topic under investigation (Richards, 2009). Although this kind of interview is very flexible and powerful in generating rich data, it is usually criticized for being: (1) unreliable, (2) time-consuming, (3) difficult to manage and (4) difficult to compare generated data across informants (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). Moreover, because of the interactive nature and sophistication of this

type of interview, interviewers need to be very experienced in designing, conducting and analysing it (Richards, 2009).

The third and most common type of interviews is the semi-structured interview. It attempts to employ the best of what the previous two types of interviews have to offer (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, on one hand, the researcher has a good idea about the topics to cover and questions to ask so that he can make credible comparisons between the informants' responses. On the other hand, the interview guide is flexible enough to allow for in depth probes and it lets informants express themselves freely to further develop and enrich data (McNamara, 2009; Britten, 1999). In this respect, it is advisable for researchers to start with open questions and gradually move on to more specific ones so as to let the interview progress naturally (Richards, 2009:186).

Qualitative interviews can be also divided according to the number of times they are conducted (i.e. one-off or multiple interviews). Typically, a qualitative interview is administered within a single session which lasts roughly between 30 to 60 minutes (Dörnyei, 2007). However, this type of interview is criticized for providing poor and insufficient data which does not yield reliable results (Polkinghorne, 2005). To overcome the shortcomings of single interviews, multiple-session interviews were proposed (Polkinghorne, 2005; Adler & Adler, 2002). For example, Polkinghorne (2005) suggests making three sessions with sufficient intervals between them. The first one develops the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees and explores the domains to be investigated. The second interview is more focused, drawing on the time given to the interviewer to develop the interview guide and to the interviewee to have enough time to think deeply about the topic under investigation. The third session works as a revision session in which the researcher asks follow-up and clarification questions.

Intuitively, selecting the right type of interview depends on the research topic and the key questions and theoretical standpoints that guide the research. For instance, in depth interviews are more appropriate if the researcher is investigating someone's life story or experience, whereas a well-known topic may require a more controlled interview with a larger sample. In addition, the circumstances that surround the study itself or its participants may necessitate the use of a certain type of interview for convenience purposes (e.g. interviewing political leaders, ethnic or religious groups). Moreover, the assumptions the researcher has may significantly influence his/her choice of the type of interview as well as the number of sessions involved. For example, a researcher with a positivist stance may

most likely consider a single structured interview to collect quantifiable data from a representative sample.

3.7.2.1 The design of the interview in this study

The researcher considered semi-structured interviews favourable for the present study compared to the other types of individual interviews as well as focus groups since semi-structured interviews bring together the best features of all the discussed types. They are also more likely to produce the true views of the participants after establishing the required levels of confidentiality and trust. Furthermore, the extensive information and knowledge provided by the participants' verbal accounts can only be possible to achieve through one-to-one conversations (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Prior to implementing the Creative Circles approach, thirteen 3rd grade middle school EFL learners, eight EFL middle school teachers and six EFL supervisors were interviewed. Students were interviewed in the school's English Language Centre (which was quiet, well facilitated and relaxing), while the interviews with teachers and supervisors were held at The Southern Office of Educational Supervision in Jeddah. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes on average, and were carried out in the first language of the participants in order to ensure clarity and to maximise understanding. The questions considered general and easy to answer were asked at the beginning of the interview in order to engage respondents and put them at ease. Each interview was digitally audio-recorded to help gather as much relevant data as possible and remain attentive to the interviewed during the sessions. Of course, there was a concern regarding the age difference between the researcher and the student interviewees, but the long experience of the researcher has as a school teacher and as a supervisor substantially assisted in conducting the interviews successfully.

The students' interview schedule (See Appendix G) was divided into two sections. The first section consisted of a series of questions that explored their reading habits in Arabic and in English. Students were also asked about their personal stories of learning English and their experience in learning to read in English in classroom contexts. For example, students were asked about the importance of English, how reading is taught in Saudi classrooms, how they actually read a textbook passage for comprehension, what problems they encounter while reading and how they overcome them, and what type of reading texts they prefer. The second set of questions aimed at exploring the beliefs and orientations of students

regarding collaborative learning in general and in reading lessons in particular. Students were asked about their attitudes towards group work, any past experiences of reading in a group and their opinions on collaborative reading.

The teachers' interview schedule (See Appendix I) was divided into three sets of questions. The first set explored Saudi EFL teachers' views on students' level of proficiency in English in general and in reading English texts in particular. They were asked about their knowledge of reading skills and which of them they considered crucial. They also described how they go about teaching reading in a typical reading lesson and the difficulties they encounter during the lesson and the ways in which they deal with them. The second set of questions involved teachers' understanding of the concept of collaboration and their past experiences and opinions of collaborative reading activities. The third set questions attempted to capture teachers' conceptualization and opinions of creativity in reading comprehension lessons. This included whether creativity could be incorporated in reading lessons and how, and what classroom practices could promote creativity.

The EFL supervisors' interview was similar to the teachers' interview. It looked at supervisors' take on teaching/ learning reading, collaboration and creativity. It was important to include the thoughts and views of those who work closely with EFL teachers and learners as they are responsible for visiting and evaluating teachers as well as checking students' progress in learning English. The information they provided brought up valuable insights on issues related to the current study.

After the intervention, a series of interviews were carried out with the same thirteen students from the experimental group, who had been interviewed before the intervention, as well as with their teacher. The researcher attempted to obtain information about the attitudes of the participants towards the intervention programme as a whole. The interview process also utilised stimulated recall as an introspect method. This was a way, as recommended by Gass & Mackey (2000) and Nunan (1992), of exploring the thoughts and reflections of participants while they were doing activities from the intervention programme aided by extracts of the taught lessons.

3.7.3 Language Proficiency Test

At the beginning of the first term in 2014, the *TOEFL Junior Standard Test* was administered to the three participating classes in order to identify the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level of the students in general. This was

done to make sure that the three groups were homogenous, and that no significant differences existed between them with regard to their language proficiency prior to the planned intervention. The scores were also mapped to CEFR levels to help in confirming students' English proficiency levels. The *TOEFL Junior Standard Test* is intended for students age 11+ and can be used for placement in language classrooms. The two-hour test consists of 126 items testing three areas: listening comprehension (42 items), reading comprehension (42 items), and language form and meaning (42 items). Results of the test showed that the students' proficiency level was between levels A1 and A2 in the CEFR system. The scores also did not show any significant differences between the three groups.

3.7.4 Reading Comprehension Test

The TELC (*The European Language Certificates*) reading comprehension test was adopted and administered in order to answer the second question of the present study which was concerned with whether Creative Circles approach could improve students' reading comprehension. Two forms of reading comprehension section of TELC were used as pre and post tests before and after the intervention. The TELC test, which is recognized by Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), was used because it has international recognition at universities, companies and government authorities as well as a transparent world-renowned CEFR level system. It offers authentic and practical examination tasks that are especially designed for A1-A2 level of foreign language learners (TELC, 2014). The reading comprehension test was used to examine whether Creative Circles as an instructional approach had any effect on students' reading comprehension ability.

Each test form had a total of 12 matching items based on three reading passages. The answers were scored as either correct or incorrect and the highest achievable score was 24. The test forms were sent to a number of lecturers and PhD students to validate the tests' clarity, suitability for the measured skills, appropriateness for students' level and timing. Then, the two forms were piloted with participants who were not part of the actual experiment. The aims were to measure the tests' reliability, detect possible flaws in testing procedures and identify unclear or ambiguous items. The internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for Forms A and B based on students' performance in the pre-test were found to be 0.80, and 0.83, respectively.

3.7.5 Creative Thinking Skills Test

To answer the question about whether Creative Circles can improve EFL learners' creative thinking, a measure for creativity had to be used. El-Murad & West (2004: 192-194) mentioned three types of creativity measurements: psychometric tests, expert opinion and biometric.

The psychometric tests attempt to objectively measure aspects of mental or personal abilities and attributes through applying valid and reliable instruments. Examples of these instruments are: Guilford's "Unusual Uses Test" (Guilford, Merrifield, and Wilson, 1958); his "Structure of the Intellect" Test (SOI) (Guilford, 1967); Mednick's "Remote Associates Test" (Mednick, 1962); Torrance's "Tests of Creative Thinking" (TTCT) (Torrance, 1974). The second category's (expert opinion) advocates believe that evaluating the product by experts is the only way for measuring creativity (Bailin, 1984). Two important examples of this type of measurement are "Expert Opinion Creative Ability Profile Scale" (Reid & Rotfeld, 1976) and Amabile's "Consensual Assessment Technique" (CAT) (1982). Finally, the biometric measurement of creativity involves measuring glucose metabolism in the brain while the subject is engaged in a creative activity.

For logistical and practical reasons, the researcher ruled out the last two categories (expert opinion and biometric measurement) as viable options for the present research. Both are time consuming and difficult to implement in an EFL classroom setting. There is also an element of subjectivity involved in the measurement process as opposed to psychometric tests. Finally, and most importantly, the ethical considerations cannot be guaranteed because of the involvement of different individuals and organisations.

After reviewing the available psychometric creativity tests, the researcher decided to adopt Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) as an appropriate option for the present research for a number of considerations. First, this test has a high prediction power when compared to other creativity tests as confirmed by Plucker (1999). Second, many researchers consider this test to be the most established and widely used creativity measurement (Baer, 1993; Davis, 1997; Kim, 2006a; Kyung, 2006; Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2008; Almeida, Prieto, Ferrando, Oliveira, & Ferrándiz, 2008). TTCT have been used in over 2,000 studies and have been translated into more than 32 languages (Frasier, 1990). Third, unlike other creativity tests, there is an Arabic version of TTCT which was prepared by Al-Sulaimani (1991) and administered to Saudi students in a number of studies (e.g.

Filimban, 2010; Al-raeqi, 2010; AlSufyani, 2010). Fourth, this test has been proven to be valid and reliable (Al-Sulaimani, 1991; Filimban, 2010; Al-raeqi, 2010; AlSufyani, 2010; Cramond, Matthwes-Morgan & Bandalos, 2005; Plucker, 1999; Torrance 1966, 1980, 1981a); Torrance & Wu, 1981; Yamada & Tam, 1996). Fifth, this test is appropriate at all levels, first graders through adults (Scholastic Testing Service, 2015), and it has been used with the same grade level as the sample of this research (Filimban, 2010; Al-raeqi, 2010).

The TTCT battery consists of two separate formats (verbal and figural) which are available in two forms, A and B. The figural component is composed of three activities which last 10 minutes each: Picture Construction; Incomplete Figures; and Repeated Figures (Torrance, 1974, 2000a). In these activities, participants are required to draw additions to shapes and incomplete figures to create a certain meaning to those shapes. The verbal component consists of five different types of activities: Ask-and- Guess, Product Improvement, Unusual Uses, Unusual Questions, and Just Suppose. The stimulus for each task consists of a picture to which individuals respond in writing. For both formats, raw scores are calculated by assigning points to appropriate and related responses, specifically defined in scoring guidelines prepared by test designers.

The researcher believes that the verbal format of TTCT was suitable for the purposes of this research. This format has been translated into Arabic and was used in a number of studies in the Middle East. It was also used by Saudi educational researchers in various fields, especially in EFL classroom contexts (e.g. Filimban, 2010). Moreover, according to Al-Sulaimani (2003), the Arabic version of TTCT verbal format has been proven to be highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) and valid (validity coefficient = 0.96).

3.7.6 Teacher Reflective Journal

During the intervention, the teacher kept a reflective journal which was filled in after each lesson. The journal (See Appendix M) was based on de Bono's Six Thinking Hats model which is a system of conscious thinking about an issue in a certain direction for a certain amount of time (de Bono 1997). Using this model, the researcher was able to capture the teacher's experience, feelings, reactions, attitudes, views, ideas, and suggestions about the intervention programme. The data generated could be related to other data collection methods in this research such as interviews in order to achieve triangulation.

The Six Thinking Hats model is based on de Bono's Parallel Thinking which proposes a way of thinking that is "practical, constructive, and invites participants to give their full

attention to one point of view at a time " (Li, Eckstein, Serres, & Lin, 2008:2). Using this model helps avoid confusing and conventional ways of thinking, and it achieves impressive and effective outcomes (de Bono, 1999). Although the model was designed and used extensively in business settings, it proved to be very successful in many fields (Li et al., 2008). This technique involves putting on and taking off six imaginary coloured hats (white, red, black, green, yellow and blue) which represent different thinking points of view. This allows for full exploration of a topic or a problem in a positive and constructive way.

The white hat addresses cognition, objectivity and explores facts and needed information. It asks questions such as ‘What information / facts do we know?’, ‘What is missing?’. The red hat legitimizes affect and subjective feelings that influence thinking by examining fears, likes, dislikes, loves and hates. It focuses on questions like ‘How do I feel about this?’ and ‘How am I reacting to this?’. The black hat tries to logically identify and explain negativities, risks, dangers, weaknesses and potential problems. Some of the possible questions when putting on the black hat are: ‘What are the weaknesses?’ and ‘Will it work? Why it won't work?’. When wearing the Yellow hat, one looks for feasibility, benefits and advantages. Under this hat, some of the questions that can be asked are: ‘What are the benefits?’ and ‘Why will this idea work?’. The green hat involves exploring other alternatives and new ideas, and doing some ‘out of the box’ thinking. It asks, ‘What haven't you considered before?’ and ‘What are some other ways to solve the problem?’. Finally, the blue hat is unique as it thinks about thinking and brings in discipline and focus to the thinking process. It is responsible for summaries, overviews, and conclusions, and it asks: ‘What are you thinking about?’ and ‘What are the goals to achieve?’ (de Bono, 1999; Goebel and Seabert 2006; Mathew, 2009).

Acknowledging the benefits of the Six Thinking Hats model, a reflective journal for the teacher of the experimental group was designed based on the suggestions of Mathew (2009). The journal was easy to use and practical, and it reflected the experience of teacher based on the principles of Six Thinking Hats model. After every reading lesson, during the intervention, the teacher filled in a reflective journal which explored his views and feelings about the implementation of Creative Circles approach and about the lesson as a whole.

3.7.7 Students' Reflective Journals

A reflective journal is a tool which enables students to write down their ideas, personal thoughts and experiences, as well as reflections and insights they may have about the learning process (Stevens & Cooper, 2009). It encourages students to be active learners and allows them to express their personal views and critique their work and other people's work. Also, it can enhance students' creative thinking and sense of inquiry about different issues and problems (Chirema, 2007). Generally, there are two major types of reflective journals: unstructured and structured. Unstructured journals are used to record thoughts and feeling with minimal direction, whereas structured journals provide students with a predetermined set of questions for them to answer based on their experience (Assessment Resources, 2014).

During the experiment in the current study, every student in the experimental group was encouraged to keep a journal (See Appendix L). This journal was comparable to the *teacher reflective journal* in that it adopted the Six Thinking Hats model. The journal was of the structured type, in which students were asked to respond to specific questions. The reasons for choosing a structured journal were to guide students' views and perceptions towards the current study's objectives as well as make the task clearer and easier for students to accomplish. (Assessment Resources, 2014; McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Thus, after every lesson, students were given the chance to express their opinions and thoughts about the lesson: what they achieved, what went well during their collaborative reading, what went wrong, how they felt about the reading tasks and what they could do to improve their performance.

3.8 Fieldwork and Empirical Study

3.8.1 Quasi-Experiment: Experimental and Comparison Groups

The current study involved three classes in a state middle school in Jeddah City that were randomly assigned into: experimental, comparison (A), comparison (B) groups. Based on the design of this study, the experimental group was introduced to reading through Creative Circles and all of the tweaked reading lessons which were developed by the researcher. Conversely, in comparison group (A), participants read individually and were introduced to a sample of those tweaked lessons. Students in comparison (B) group read individually but were not introduced to any of the developed lessons. The reason behind this

organisation was to enable the research to make the necessary comparisons and to address the issue of *Hawthorne Effect*, which claims that people tend to change their behaviour when they receive special attention such as being observed or involved in a new experience (Jean, 2013; Coombs & Smith, 2003).

3.8.2 The design of the tweaked reading lessons

The materials introduced to the experimental group (See appendix J) consisted of eight reading lessons that were taught in two phases: an intensive reading skills training stage and an application stage. The design of activities for both stages were based on the suggestions and recommendations of several leading authors in the field (e.g., Lee, 2013; Lems et al., 2010; Grabe, 2009; Drapeau, 2009; Harmer, 2007; Hedge, 2003; Dörnyei, & Murphey, 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Nutall, 1996; Alderson, 2000; Fisher, 1997; Reid et al., 1989; Grellet, 1981). The first part, the intensive stage, involved exploring and using word attack skills such as using grammatical function and internal structure of a word as a structural clue and making inferences from context. It also included training in text attack skills like interpreting pro-forms and discourse markers, understanding the functional value and text organisation of discourse, making inferences and predictions, evaluating texts, skimming and scanning.

The second part was designed to be an extension to the newly learned reading skills. The reading lessons in this stage were developed from the prescribed textbook that is being taught to the Saudi 3rd grade middle school EFL learners. These lessons were tweaked to accommodate Creative Circles approach's principles such as promoting creativity and reading collaboratively. In addition to the passages in students' textbooks, a number of carefully chosen reading passages were included. They were adapted from "*Q Skills for Success Reading and Writing: Intro: Student Book with Online Practice*" authored by Bixby & McVeigh (2011) and "*English for Saudi Arabia: 1st Year Secondary Term1: Student's book*", 2013 Edition. As Williams (1986: 42) points out: "in the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible". Therefore, interest was a key criterion in selecting the passages. Another criterion considered for selecting the texts was variety. The passages varied in topic, length, rhetorical organisation and reading purpose. A third factor for the selection was the readability and suitability of texts to the level of EFL beginners. To do that, a number of readability formulas were used, including what Crossley (2011) recommends for second language reading passages as well as the traditional formulas such

as Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, Gunning-Fog Score, Coleman-Liau Index and SMOG Index. The texts in the students' textbook were compared to the added ones, and they all appeared to be within the same grade level and readability.

Each 45-minute long lesson in these two parts was designed according to the five-phase approach to learning, which includes *Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration* and *Evaluation* (Campbell, 2006). This model, as explained in chapter 2, is thought to have a positive influence on students' achievement, attitudes towards learning and creativity (Brandt 1994; Lavoie, 1999). Hence, it was adapted into the present study.

3.8.3 Teacher Training

McNamara, Toran, & Ahearn (2009) asserted that teacher training which focuses only on transferring knowledge didactically to teachers would yield limited results. Teachers would find it difficult to utilize and implement the information they have learned in classroom settings. Therefore, the teacher training in this study attempted to provide the participating teacher with information as well as the experience to implement the newly learned ideas.

The training was carried out between 31 August and 25 September 2014, and it involved eight online sessions (via Skype) with the participating teacher. Four topics were discussed; two sessions per topic. In the first session, the topic was discussed theoretically through supplementary materials that were sent to the teacher, and then the teacher applied a related task in the classroom context. This is followed by a follow-up online session to discuss any issues and concerns raised by the teacher. Table 3 below shows the topics and the subtopics that were discussed as well as the tasks that were implemented:

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Subtopic</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Task in classroom</i>	<i>Application</i>
<i>Reading skills</i>	1	Reading-reading skills-teaching reading	31/08/14	1h: 30min.	Identify reading skills in a lesson you taught and critique it.	02/09/14
	2	Discussion of application	04/09/14	1 hour		
<i>Collaboration</i>	1	Collaboration-collaborative reading - group work design	07/09/14	1h: 30min.	Implement a reading lesson based on collaborative reading principles.	09/09/14
	2	Discussion of application	11/09/14	1 hour		
<i>Creativity</i>	1	Concept-types-applications in L2 context	14/09/14	1h: 30min.	Implementation of creativity activities / design your own	16/09/14
	2	Discussion of application	18/09/14	1 hour		

<i>C.C. lessons</i>	1	Organisation- implementation- timeframe	21/09/14	1 hour	Pilot one of the C.C. lessons	23/09/14
	2	Discussion of application	25/09/14	1 hour		

Table 3: Teacher training programme before the experiment

This training programme emphasised providing the teacher with not only information but also experience in terms of teaching reading skills, collaborative reading and creativity. It also prepared the teacher for the types of activities that he would teach during the experiment. Moreover, the programme aimed at identifying any issues before the implementing the major study. The follow-up sessions highlighted timing, assigning roles to students and class control as problematic.

The teacher indicated that some of the lessons were too long to be covered in 45 minutes, which was the usual timeframe of a language class in Saudi schools. To address this problem, it was agreed to review the tweaked lessons and reduce the number of the items and tasks. As for assigning roles, the researcher and the teacher decided that students should have rotating roles and the tasks assigned to each role needed to be clear and simple. In this way, students could experience different roles and develop their linguistic and social skills in a non-threatening environment. With respect to class control, the teacher was reminded that collaborative reading was more of a student-centered approach, which means that students are given more responsibilities and control over their learning. Therefore, they should be given enough time and freedom as long as they do not interrupt the learning of others or the achievement of the set objectives.

3.8.4 Creative Circles formation

As explained above, three weeks before the actual experiment, the teacher participated in five training sessions with the researcher via Skype platform. Although the teacher had previous experience in group work, the researcher believed it would be better to discuss important issues such as teambuilding, role assignment and positive reinforcement with the teacher before implementing the experiment.

In order to prepare the students for the upcoming Creative Circles tasks, and also to make them actively engaged in the tweaked lessons, the teacher was asked to dedicate a few classes to familiarise students with the collaborative reading sessions. The preparation process followed similar available examples in the literature (e.g., Lundstorm & Baker

2009; Min, 2006; Rollinson, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2005) and included briefing students about the concept of collaboration, building groups, assigning roles, resolving group issues, describing teacher's role and introducing collaborative reading activities.

A number of arrangements were made to create a suitable classroom environment for Creative Circles. First, the teacher divided the class into five heterogeneous groups (six students per group) based on their level of language proficiency as indicated by their results in school examinations of the previous semester and their scores in the *TOEFL Junior Standard Test*, which was administered earlier on in the study. Second, the seating arrangement in the classroom was changed so that students sat face-to-face with their group members around a large table instead of sitting in rows. Third, members of each group were asked to work out a name for their group. In doing so, a sense of shared identity among group members was created. Fourth, during the training, students were asked to discuss and sign a group contract. The contract, adapted from Liang's (2002) study, included statements of *do's* and *don'ts* (See appendix K), to which students were able to add or modify based on their own group discussions. This practice aimed at promoting self-control, learner autonomy, and democracy in the management of groups. It also helped to speed up the process of internalizing group social and procedural norms.

After the process of teambuilding, each member in the group was assigned a particular role to play during the reading lessons, which was more concerned with how the task is done than the task's content. This is an important step to address the issues of nonparticipation and interpersonal management difficulties (Cohen, 1994). Each student had to rotate the roles every two lessons. This was to help students explore their potentials and abilities, as well as to share the workload of every role. Adapted from Dörnyei, & Murphey (2003), the responsibility of each role was explained in detail in Table 4.

<i>Role</i>	<i>Job description</i>
<i>Leader</i>	organises group discussions-makes sure everyone gets help- monitors behavior
<i>Observer</i>	makes sure that each member is on task - encourages participating in the discussion
<i>Checker</i>	checks everybody's understanding- makes sure everyone finishes the worksheet or assigned task in class
<i>Time-keeper</i>	makes sure that the assigned tasks are completed on time
<i>Mediator</i>	resolves problems and conflicts in the group- communicates with other groups
<i>Reporter</i>	summarises and reports group discussion- the group's speaker

Table 4: Students' roles

To prepare students for performing their roles effectively, the job description of each role was discussed and explained clearly and explicitly with the purpose of raising students' awareness about the importance and nature of their assigned roles. Also, during the preparation period, the teacher modeled some of the roles. This was followed by controlled practice in which students were encouraged to play their roles and then report to the group their responsibility during the practice sessions.

3.8.5 Implementing Creative Circles

After students were familiarised with the collaborative reading climate through the training sessions, they are introduced to the tweaked reading lessons which lasted for 12 weeks. Instead of reading in the conventional way as the comparison groups did, the experimental group read in a student-centered context, which promoted creativity and required plenty of students' active engagement, participation, and shared responsibility for teaching and learning. Each lesson went through the five stages of Creative Circles that were explained in chapters 1 and 2: *Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration* and *Evaluation*. As students progressed in each stage, the activities varied in demand, encouraging students to be descriptive, personal, critical and creative.

The first four lessons comprised the intensive reading course, in which students familiarised themselves with various reading skills and practiced different types of word attack skills and text attack skills. In the remaining lessons, students were introduced to reading passages and several related comprehension activities. All the lessons included activities that encouraged and facilitated readers' creativity through stimulating their convergent and divergent thinking processes. After each lesson, students were asked to fill out a journal that reflects their thought, feelings and opinions of the lesson they just had taken.

With regard to the teacher, he was responsible for organising the reading sessions and providing reading materials and suitable resources. He made sure that students were aware of the goals and the desired outcomes, and encouraged members of each group to support and share with each other to achieve success. He was also responsible for time management and monitoring groups as they work to evaluate students' efforts as individuals and to see how they process new information. He used to take notes of students' misconceptions and misunderstandings, and addressed them during group work and at specific teacher-class time that was set after every stage as a wrap-up activity. Additionally, the teacher filled out a reflective journal after each lesson to capture his thoughts and opinions of the teaching

and learning processes in the lesson that he had taught and his suggestions as to how future lessons could be improved.

3.9 Quantitative Data Reliability Measures

Reliability provides information about whether the data collection procedure is consistent and precise, and it is considered a prerequisite to validity (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989; Cohen et al., 2000). Reliability can be divided into, internal reliability (consistency of data collection procedures, analysis, and interpretation) and external reliability (replicating the original study and gaining similar outcomes) (Nunan, 1992). To achieve reliability in the present study, a triangulated approach to data collection was applied to allow for a multi-perspective examination of the research questions as discussed earlier in this chapter. Moreover, in the case of reading comprehension test and creativity test, two equivalent forms for each test were used in the pre and post administration of research tools.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaires and tests, they were piloted on third grade students at a state intermediate school in Jeddah who were comparable to the sample that was chosen for the main study. This was done to address any problems before starting the main research. Piloting helped in evaluating the feasibility and usefulness of the research tools, and in doing any required modifications.

In addition, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reported for all the quantitative tools in this study (see sections: 3.7.1.1, 3.7.1.2 and 3.7.4). This internal consistency test of reliability was considered more appropriate than the "test-retest" method because the latter can be significantly influenced by time and practice effect.

Since the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) could be considered to be both subjective and objective, two raters were involved (the researcher and a certified examiner from Taif Gifted Centre). A correlation analysis between the scores of the two raters was performed, which is one of the most common ways to measure inter-rater reliability (Hayes and Hatch, 1999). The estimated reliability between raters is 0.92, with 95% confidence interval, which is quite high according to Landis and Koch (1977), supporting the reliability of scoring the creativity test.

3.10 Quantitative Data Validity Measures

Validity refers to the extent to which the research or a set of instruments actually measures what it intends to measure (Joppe, 2000; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). The quantitative aspect of the present research acknowledges the two major types of validity that are crucial for administering research: internal and external validity.

Internal validity investigates whether the changes in the dependent variable are directly related to the independent variable. There are a number of ways in which internal validity can be influenced, including participant characteristics, drop outs, inattention and attitude, maturation, instrumentation and test effects (Mackey & Gass, 2005:109).

To address the previously mentioned issues in the present study, efforts were made to ensure that the participants were of similar language background, language learning experience and proficiency level. For example, the *TOEFL Junior Standard Test* was administered to the participants to identify their Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level and make sure that there were no significant differences between them before the planned intervention. Results indicated that the participants were between levels A1 and A2 in the CEFR system and there were not any significant differences between them.

Also, the issue of drop outs, which is highly influenced by participants' level of attentiveness and attitude, was considered during the intervention. In order to deal with this issue, every effort was made to make the items varied and reasonably demanding as suggested by Mackey & Gass (2005). As for maturation, this study involved two comparison groups which provided an opportunity to test whether changes (if any) in the experimental group's performance in reading and creativity was due to the intervention or as a result of the maturation process.

A key issue that affects the internal validity is the comparability of tests. In this study, equivalent forms of the reading comprehension and creativity tests were administered as pre- and post-tests. The time span between the pre- and post- application of this test was not considered as an issue because of different forms of tests that were used before and after the intervention.

As for the external validity, it is concerned more with the possibility to generalize the findings of a particular study. In this sense, in order to achieve valid and generalisable results, the sample should be representative of the whole population. However, most

empirical research in social science, particularly in applied linguistics, employs non-probability sampling (Dörnyei, 2007: 98-99). Practical criteria like accessibility and availability explain why researches resort to such option. Therefore, and for practical reasons, the present study's sample consisted of three intact classes (30 students per class) from a state middle school in Jeddah City. They shared common characteristics with other state intermediate school students in the western region of Saudi Arabia such as age, gender (all males), educational background and social and economic status. Also, they shared similar amount of exposure to English and the type of English language instruction. However, because of the nature of the sampling process, the researcher provided sufficient details of the limitations this sample had in this section and in reporting the results.

Moreover, to confirm the validity of the study's instruments, they were piloted and examined by a number of experts. The instruments were evaluated based on their suitability for the research questions, appropriateness of linguistic items, difficulty, length, clarity of items and instructions.

3.11 Qualitative data credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability

The reliability (trustworthiness) of qualitative methods (interviews, students' and teacher's reflective journals) used in the present study was achieved through considering the following criteria: credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Mackey & Gass, 2005). To ensure the *credibility*, triangulation and ongoing peer reviewing throughout the study was maintained as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985:301). As a means of enhancing credibility, the interview schedule, student and teacher reflective journals were piloted to ensure their clarity and practicality. Furthermore, in an attempt to keep the researcher as involved as possible with the experiment, there was regular contact and detailed discussions with the teacher who was participating in the experiment before, during and after each step of the intervention (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Transferability refers to the possibility of generalising the acquired results to other contexts or settings. This was achieved in this study by providing rich accounts and detailed descriptions of the methods and findings sufficient enough for readers to understand the characteristics of the research context and participants. This would allow other researchers to decide on what could be transferred to their own situations by comparing their research contexts to that of the current study (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 180).

Confirmability is similar to the concept of replicability in quantitative research. In this study, every possible efforts were made to provide the data on which the interpretations of the researcher were based. Thus, other researchers can review the data and verify, modify or reject it.

As for *dependability*, it aims at evaluating the context of research and relationships among participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005). A good way of enhancing dependability in the current study was to use the electronically recorded data, which captured the data collection context, and drew inferences from all the possible cues. Also, the stimulated recall technique as well as student and teacher reflective journals improved dependability through exploring and revealing the thought process and feelings of participants during the implementation of the experiment.

It is important to point out a few factors, such as the interviewer's characteristics and interview location, which might have influenced the interviews that were conducted in the present study. These factors can be related to the *Social Attribution* and *Social Distance* models; the first suggest that people may modify their responses to satisfy the interviewer's norms and expectations while the latter relates response editing to the degree of similarities or differences between the respondents and the interviewer such as age, position, stance, gender or race (Singer, Frankel & Glassman, 1983; Van Tilburg, 1998). Upon realizing these factors, the researcher assured the respondents of the confidentiality of the interviews and that there are no right or wrong answers. In addition, they were told that they were free to express themselves without fearing any kind of consequences. The researcher also made use of his long experience of teaching and dealing with young EFL learners to make them feel at ease and establish a rapport with them which might contribute to the collected data. Moreover, the location of the interviews was carefully considered so that it would create a relaxing and friendly atmosphere. However, it has to be noted that despite taking all the above mentioned measures, one cannot eliminate the influence of these factors on the collected qualitative data.

3.12 Data Analysis

The collected data from different sources were analysed either qualitatively or quantitatively. The following sections describe the analysis process in general. Further detailed analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data will be presented in another chapter.

3.12.1 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data collected for analysis to examine the effects of Creative Circles were generated by the following tools:

	<i>Tool</i>	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Post</i>
1	Reading habits questionnaire (students)	✓	
2	Attitude towards reading and collaborative work questionnaire (students)		✓
3	Reading skills questionnaire (students)	✓	✓
4	Reading skills and creativity promotion questionnaire (teachers)	✓	
5	Attitude towards collaborative work and creativity questionnaire (teachers)	✓	
6	Proficiency Test	✓	
7	Reading Comprehension test	✓	✓
8	Creativity test	✓	✓

Table 5: Quantitative data collection tools

The scores from questionnaires, reading comprehension and creative tests were encoded so that they could be analysed using the SPSS statistical software application. At the start, descriptive statistics, which form the basis of inferential statistics, were obtained, including measures of central tendency and measures of variability as well.

In order to make the necessary comparisons between results of the questionnaires and tests before and after the experiment and to assess the impact of Creative Circles on Saudi middle school EFL learners, the scores of the experimental and comparison groups in the pre and post tests were compared using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test. ANOVA is used when we are interested in comparing the mean scores of more than two groups. In this study, two different types of one-way ANOVA were used: between-groups ANOVA (used when there are different participants in each of the groups and also referred to as an independent groups-design) and the repeated-measures analysis of variance (used when the same participants are measured at different points in time and also referred to as a within-subjects design). The ANOVA tests help in determining whether there are significant differences in the mean scores on the dependent variable across the three groups. The Post-hoc tests can be used to identify where these differences lie (Pallant, 2010). With respect to measuring the effect of Creative Circles approach on creativity, the same procedures, which were mentioned above, was applied. Also, the effect of this approach on each component of creative thinking, namely fluency, flexibility and originality were examined.

In order to determine the relationship between reading comprehension and creative thinking, a correlation analysis was applied. This statistical procedure determines the strength, direction and significance of the relationship between the two variables in the context of this study. Moreover, the *effect size*, which measures the strength of the research results, is considered important. It is a feature of a good research since it shows the importance of the findings and allows other researchers to investigate its generalizability with other similar research settings (Ellis, 2000; Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 2001). Thus, this study reported the effect size of Creative Circles approach on reading comprehension and creativity using *Cohen's d*, which is considered a standard procedure for calculating effect size (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

3.12.2 Qualitative data Analysis

After conducting all the interviews and collecting the reflective journals, the next step was to analyse and interpret the gathered data. There are many approaches to analyse interview data because of the wide range of theoretical positions and the pertaining methodologies. However, a major distinction can be made between all those approaches in relation to their focus. While some approaches recognize the importance of language and how it is used in social encounters, other approaches emphasise content and taking an emic perspective to understand the informant's experience (King & Horrocks, 2010:142). In this study, the thematic analysis, an approach which systematically identifies, organises, and offers insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset was adopted. This method of analysis allows the researcher to explore and understand the collective or shared meanings and experiences. The main reasons for adopting this method were because of its accessibility and its flexibility. It offers an uncomplicated and systematic method of coding and analysing qualitative data, which can then be connected to broader theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Moreover, thematic analysis is flexible in that it can be conducted in different ways: inductive versus deductive or theory driven data coding and analysis; an experiential versus critical orientation to data; and an essentialist versus constructionist theoretical perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Yet, coding and analysis often use a combination of these perspectives as it is impossible to be *purely* inductive or deductive. In general, successful analysis requires careful transcription, coding and developing themes.

Transcription is an essential process in analysing qualitative data which involves converting recorded data into text. This step is important because it familiarises the researcher with the data that is being dealt with (Langdridge, 2004). Although time consuming, transcribing in this study was made less challenging by breaking down the data into manageable chunks and by making use of transcription analysis software such as NVivo 10, which is well-known and accessible (Richards, 2003). Moreover, the researcher made sure that the style of transcription is consistent by following one of the various offered transcription systems (e.g. Jefferson, 1984; Silverman, 1993; Poland, 2002).

King & Horrocks (2010: 144-149) warned against three issues that can seriously affect the quality of transcription and the entire study in general: quality of recording, decontextualisation of interview data and tidying up conversations. The researcher ensured the effectiveness of the recording by using a good quality recorder and by speaking clearly. As for the issue of decontextualisation, the researcher made all possible efforts to cover both the immediate context (nonverbal and paralinguistic aspects) and the overall context (e.g., setting, relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, gender and social dynamics). Furthermore, trying to create a neat version of the actual data can damage its credibility. Therefore, the researcher transcribed the exact conversations without attempting to correct them.

After transcribing the spoken data, it was analysed to derive themes, which are patterns in participants' accounts that distinguish certain perceptions or experiences relevant to research questions. The researcher followed the recommendation of King & Horrocks (2010) to analyse transcribed data in three stages. In the first stage, interesting data in participants' accounts that are of value in answering the research questions were highlighted (descriptive coding). This was done through skimming and re-skimming the transcripts while writing down brief comments (codes), which naturally emerged, on the margin (see Table 6). The second stage involved interpreting the descriptive data from the previous stage by grouping together codes that seemed to share similarities in meaning into interpretive codes, while in the third stage, more general themes, which were built upon the interpretive themes, were identified (see Table 7). Another layer of analysis that the researcher was aware of is the interactional aspect of the conversation because it could seriously affect the creation and development of meaning. That is why Baker (2002) prefers describing interviews as "accounts", instead of mere "reports".

EFL teachers' perceptions about creativity	
Interview transcript	transcript Initial coding framework
<u>Interviewer</u> : what about creativity? What is your understanding of creativity?	
<u>Teacher</u> : I think creativity means coming with something that is unusual. A totally unusual idea. Something that no one has done before. This is how I understand it.	-unusual -never done before
<u>Interviewer</u> : Could creativity be employed in English language learning?	
<u>Teacher</u> : We can, for example, ask students to do extracurricular activities so that students would do things that you, as a teacher, would have not expected. So, I think it [creativity] can be employed in L2 classrooms on the basis that teacher know exactly what they are doing, what things are required of students and how students might react. However, I have never employed creativity in my classes. I think students would benefit from this, but we, teachers, do not encourage them to get involved in such activities. So, I believe those teachers are to blame for that. I think that this needs proper training, preparation and self-development on the part of teachers.	-As an extracurricular activity -Never employed creativity in class -Teachers do not foster creativity -Lack of knowledge about creativity -Need for training
<u>Interviewer</u> : Do you think EFL teachers foster for creativity in their classes?	
<u>Teacher</u> : I think it is not being fostered properly. I think teachers lack the sufficient knowledge about creativity. They do not know the concept of creativity. Teachers mainly focus on teaching the language and they hardly make progress in that, let alone developing students' creativity. Some teachers believe creativity is something only suitable for advanced students. But this could be because they do not incorporate creativity in their language classes. If they do, they might recognize its value.	- teachers focus on language skills -little time for developing creativity -creativity unrelated to language teaching -creativity only for advanced learners

Table 6: An example of an initial coding framework

EFL teachers' perceptions about creativity	
Final coding framework	Initial coding framework
1. Unclear concept of creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unusual ideas • things never done before • difficult to define creativity • generating new ideas
2. Irrelevance between creativity and language teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only suitable for Arts, physics & chemistry • not the responsibility of EFL teachers
3. Lack of support to creativity in textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few activities that generate new ideas • textbooks need major reform to promote thinking skills
4. No connection between creativity and reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading is only about extracting information • reading more not necessarily make a creative person • creativity does not make a good reader
5. Saudi students lack creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • underdeveloped cognitive abilities • creativity only suits older and more advanced students
6. Lack of teacher training on fostering creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-service teacher education only focuses on language skills • in-service teacher training not sufficient and limited to teaching methods and classroom management
7. General Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of time • creativity activities not taken seriously • unfamiliarity with creativity activities • old-fashioned/ teacher-centred teaching practices

Table 7: An example of a final coding framework

3.13 Ethical Issues

The moral and ethical issues are quite complicated and require a great deal of attention since they exist at every step of any research study. Indeed, it is as King & Horrocks (2010: 103) describe: "a complex and demanding responsibility". This necessitates a careful consideration of the impact of the research and the acquired data on all those involved. Consequently, research institutes, such as Newcastle University, understand this primary concern and usually require researchers to go through an ethical approval process which carefully reviews their topics and methodologies. Thus, the researcher was required to obtain the ethical approval from the university before conducting the research experiment.

In general, the ethical evaluation is primarily based on the principles of utilitarian and communitarian ethics. Utilitarianism stresses individual autonomy and happiness of human as the desired consequence of any action, whereas communitarian ethics focus on collaboration, shared values and care. Since research governance has become common in almost every research domain, ethical codes have emerged to set the standards for ethical practice. These codes share a number of fundamental concerns like informed consent, no deception, right to withdraw, debriefing and confidentiality (Willig, 2001).

Obtaining the consent of the participants before administering the research experiment is a point that all ethical codes stress (e.g. British Sociological Association, 2002, updated 2004; British Educational Research Association, 2004; British Psychological Society, 2006). In this respect, the researcher conscientiously shared as much information about the research as possible, bearing in mind the negative implications of doing so on the produced data. The shared information in the present research included the purpose of the research, the reasons for choosing the participant, the freedom to withdraw at any point without negative consequences, what was expected of the participant, arrangements for handling the data and study results and contact details. Participants were also informed of the potential benefits and risks of their participation in the programme (Dörnyei, 2007; King & Horrocks, 2010).

In line with the Newcastle University code of practice (Newcastle University, 2014), the project was reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. The approval of this research project was confirmed by the committee on 17 April 2014. Following this step, a request for permission to conduct research at one of the Saudi middle schools in Jeddah City was made (see Appendix C) and an official

approval was obtained from Saudi Ministry of Education (see Appendix D). As the study involved EFL teachers, supervisors and EFL middle school learners, they were asked to read and sign the following consent forms pertaining to their involvement before participating in the project:

- 1) Informed consent to participating teachers (see Appendix A, Part 1)
- 2) Informed consent to participating students (see Appendix A, Part 2)
- 3) Participants Information sheet for teachers (see Appendix B, Part 1)
- 4) Participants Information sheet for students (see Appendix B, Part 2)

Moreover, any academic research treats the issues of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity very seriously. Based on the Data Protection Act 1998, there are legal implications for disclosure or misuse of personal information. Therefore, the researcher was obligated to make sure that participants were given pseudonyms and none of the participants' personal information was disclosed. Also, the researcher tried to identify and manage beforehand any threats that could endanger the participants physically or emotionally because of administering the experiment. Regarding anonymising data, alternative names instead of the real ones in recorded or transcribed data were used so that the participants were not traceable or identifiable.

3.14 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodology and design of the study. The chapter commenced with a description of the methodological approach, followed by a review of the project research questions. Next, the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the study were discussed. This was followed by a detailed description of the context of the study, the participants, data collection procedures and instruments (See Table 8 below for a summary of the research questions and the related data source for each one of them). The quasi-experimental design aspect of the research was then outlined. It adopted a mixed-method approach, in which the qualitative tools were employed to support and facilitate the main quantitative research tools, in an attempt to fill the gap in literature which called for a fuller picture and an in-depth investigation. Moreover, the research design focused on a triangulated approach to data collection based on methods and time to allow a comprehensive analysis of research questions as well as constructing validity and reliability. The chapter has also provided a thorough explanation of the preparation of the

tweaked reading lessons, teacher training, groups formation and Creative Circles implementation procedures. Additionally, further measures to ensure the reliability and validity of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were discussed, followed by an elaborate outline of the data analysis process. Finally, efforts to ensure the integration of ethical considerations into the research process were mentioned.

<i>Research Question</i>		<i>Data source</i>	
1	What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' use of reading comprehension skills?	Reading comprehension skills questionnaire/ Semi-structured interviews	Journals
2	What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards reading?	Attitude questionnaire / Semi-structured interviews	
3	To what extent do EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking?	Reading comprehension skills questionnaire/creativity questionnaire	
		Semi-structured interviews	
4	What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity?	Attitude questionnaire / Semi-structured interviews	Journals
5	What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension?	Reading comprehension test (TELC English A2 School)	
6	What is the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' creative thinking?	Torrance's "Tests of Creative Thinking" (TTCT)	

Table 8: Summary of research questions and the related data sources

4. Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This chapter will present the findings from the study which have been organised into six main sections. In keeping with the research questions underpinning the study, the first section considers Saudi EFL learners' reading habits and the extent to which they use reading comprehension skills. This is followed by a section which explores learners' attitudes towards reading in English and collaborative learning. The next section brings to light the extent to which EFL teachers teach reading skills and promote creativity in their reading classes. Teachers' attitudes towards creativity and collaboration are examined in the fourth section, while the fifth section investigates the impact of the Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension and the relationship between reading and comprehension. The final section studies the effect of Creative Circles on learners' creative thinking.

In each section, the findings are discussed in relation to key themes identified as explained in chapter 3 above. In line with the mixed methods approach utilised in this research, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated where appropriate throughout the analytical discussion. The quantitative data will be considered first, whereas the qualitative findings are used to inform and elaborate on them further, including how far these findings confirm or contest quantitative findings. In some cases, themes are identified from the qualitative data alone.

4.1 Effects of Creative Circles on learners' use of reading skills

Before examining the impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' reading comprehension skills, it was thought a good idea to consider Saudi EFL learners' reading habits and the extent to which they use reading comprehension skills. This might contribute to the understanding of learners' current reading proficiency level.

4.1.1 Students' reading habits

Students were asked 10 questions (1-10 in Appendix E) to explore their reading habits in Arabic (the native language) and in English (the target language). The first question students were asked was whether they read books, magazines or articles of any type outside school. Results show that nearly half of the students (40%) reported that they never read in

Arabic at home, and the majority of them (63%) do not read in English at home (See Figure 5).

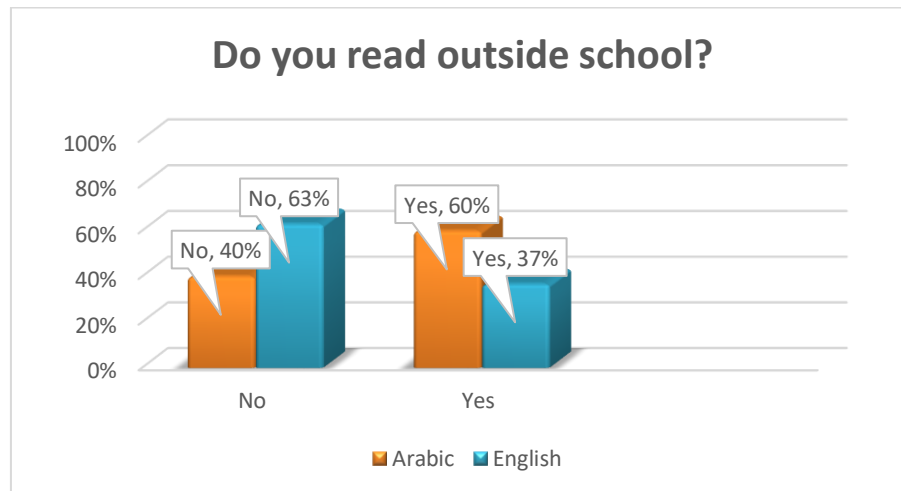


Figure 5: Do you read at home?

In terms of how often they read in Arabic or in English, Figure 6 suggests that students' reading in both languages is inadequate. For instance, regarding frequency of reading, of those who read on a daily basis, only 11% read in Arabic, and no students reported reading in English. The majority of students read in Arabic once or twice a week (62%) and nearly one third of them read once or twice a month. Regarding reading in English, almost half of students read once or twice a week, whereas the other half read once or twice a month.

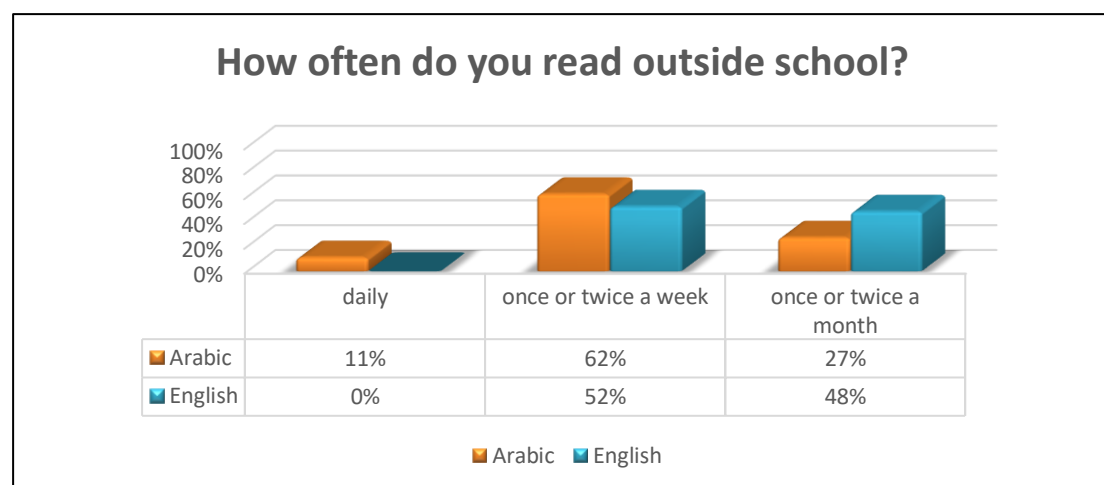


Figure 6: How often do you read at home?

When students were asked whether they “read enough”, the majority reported they did not read enough although they want to in both languages (90% in Arabic and 86% in English). Only 4% of students believed they read enough English and 9% of them just do not wish

to read in the target language. Similar result can be said about reading in Arabic (See Figure 7).

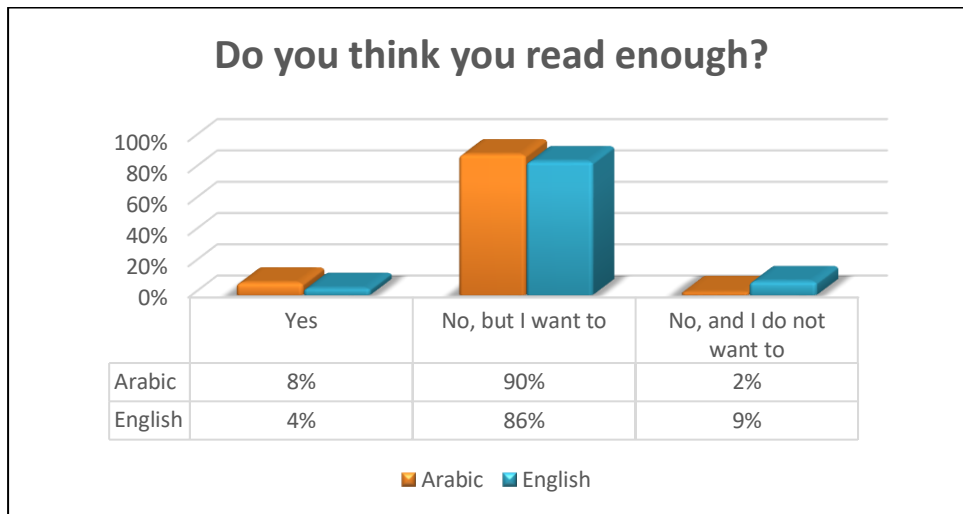


Figure 7: Do you think you read enough?

With respect to students' preference to read, similar results were found between Arabic and English. In both languages, almost one third of students demonstrated a preference for reading from electronic sources with limited word counts (such as communication networks, e-mails and text messages). Approximately one quarter of students (22 students out of 90) preferred to read short stories. In contrast, students were least interested in poems and novels (See Figure 8).

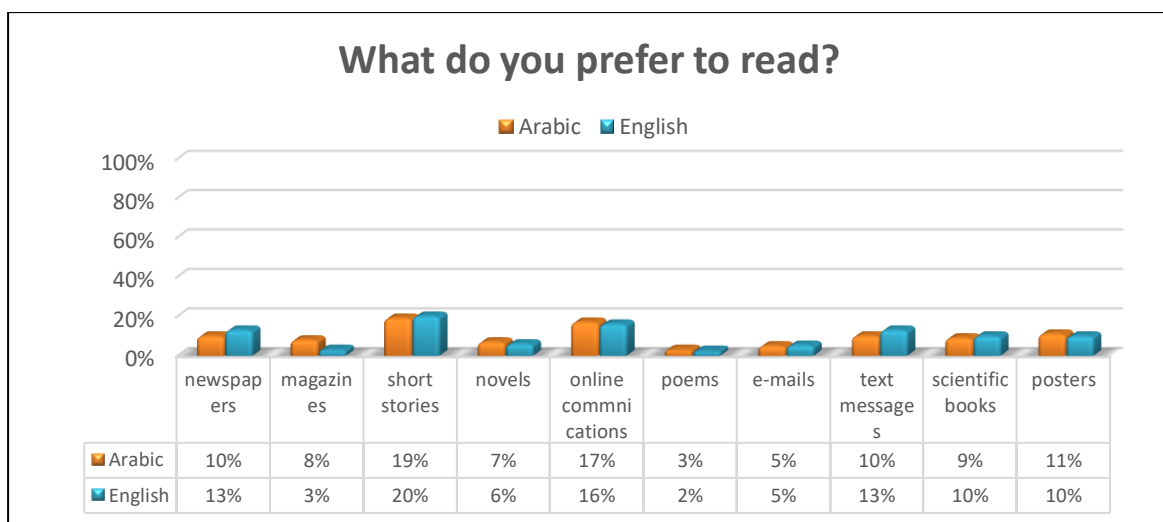


Figure 8: What do you prefer to read?

Results were similar in both languages when students were asked about the people who have the most influence on them to read (Figure 9). More than one third of students reported

that ‘teachers’ as their first source of motivation to read. Second to teachers, family members were considered influential in increasing students’ interest to read in Arabic (28%) and in English (30%). Based on students’ responses, ‘self-motivation’ was ranked third in encouraging them to read (27% in Arabic and 23% in English). ‘Friends’ appeared to play a limited role in motivating students to read. It is worth mentioning that there were no great differences between ‘teachers’, ‘my family’ and ‘self-motivation’, indicating that these factors carry similar importance in the drive to read. However, results indicate that students are highly extrinsically motivated, as more than 77% of them believe that the sources of inspiration for them to read are their teachers, family members and peers.

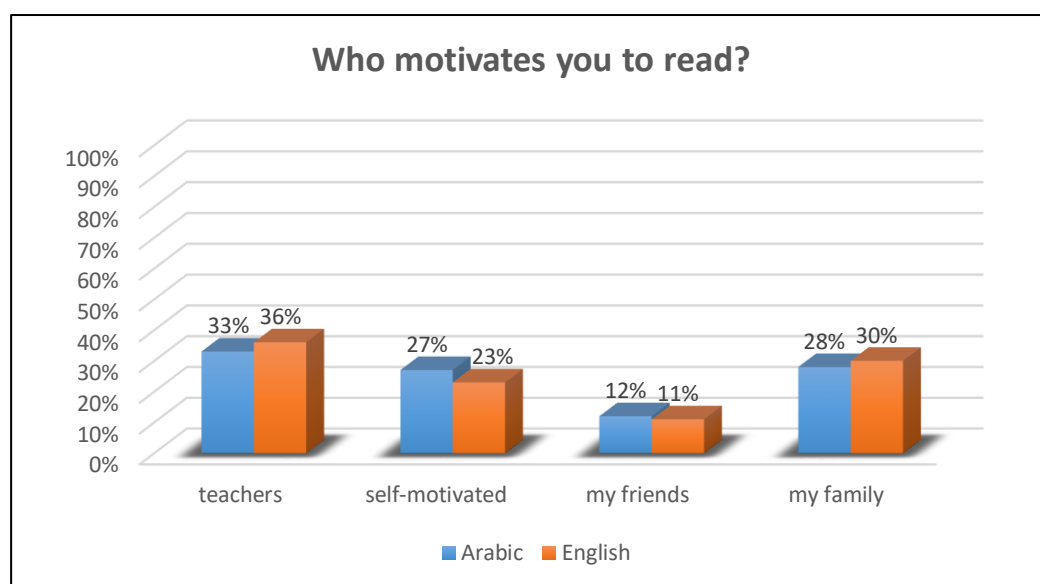


Figure 9: Who motivates you to read?

The findings of the questionnaire seemed to be corroborated by the data gathered from interviewing students. Many of the 14 interviewed students indicated that they rarely read in Arabic, especially those with low and intermediate level of reading proficiency in English. For example, Ali said: *“I do not read much. If I read, I would read for about 10 minutes”*. Omar also commented that: *“I read in Arabic every other week for a short time, and it is not a lot”*. Students at these levels tend to read very short texts such as text messages, headlines of newspapers and social media sources such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. With regard to reading in English, these students hardly read anything. Omar, for example, acknowledged that: *“I do not read outside the class. I do need to read more English to improve my language skills”*. When asked about the reasons why they do not read enough English, if any, Saif, Hani, Sultan and Omar indicated that ‘lack of interest’, ‘poor reading skills’, ‘socio-economic status’ (as students who are poor or live

in remote areas have limited access and/or opportunities to reading sources) and ‘ineffective teaching practice of reading skills’ were the main reasons for their inability to read well in English.

Students with higher level of reading proficiency in English seem to read more in their first language. Being skilled readers might have a positive effect on students’ attitudes, which could influence the effort and time they spend on reading in both languages. For instance, Naser mentioned that: *“In my free time, I read my favourite (Arabic) novel. I also read short stories and magazines, I do the same with English texts”*. Some students, like Samir, have their own personal library. These students liked to read extended pieces of texts such as novels, stories and newspaper articles as well as contents available in social media networks. Students at this level indicated that ‘family members’ and ‘teachers’ were the main sources of motivation for them to read. For instance, Ahmad said: *“I am really enthusiastic about reading in English. It is all because of my family. My brother used to read to me his English textbooks when I was young. My father, too, helped me learn to read”*. Samir also mentioned that: *“my teacher encourages me to read. He praises me when I make the effort to read in English. I really like English because of him”*. Self-motivation was also evident in participants’ responses, as they understood the importance of being able to read in English and the influence it might have on their future education and career.

4.1.2 Students’ use of reading skills

In this part of questionnaire (See Appendix E), students’ use of reading skills was explored. The questionnaire comprised 28 items and was developed to investigate the two types of reading ‘careful reading’ and ‘expeditious reading’ in reading lessons. These two types of reading were based on the works of Hessamy (2013), Barati (2005), Weir (2004), Urquhart & Weir (1998) and Weir (1997). In doing so, the questionnaire became comprehensive enough to embody the identified reading comprehension skills and sub-skills in major studies as explained in the previous chapter.

The questionnaire was administered before and after incorporating Creative Circles approach into reading lessons. The aim was to determine whether there was a significant change in students’ use of reading skills that could be attributed to applications of Creative Circles. The collected data, which will be discussed in detail next, showed a significant improvement in the experimental group’s use of reading skills as compared to the other two comparison groups.

4.1.2.1 Pre-intervention Phase

Before implementing the Creative Circles intervention programme, the questionnaire was administered to the three participating classes. Table 9 shows some revealing results about the extent to which participants from the three classes believe they use *careful reading* skills.

	<i>Item</i>	<i>always</i>		<i>mostly</i>		<i>sometimes</i>		<i>rarely</i>		<i>never</i>	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I can guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word through its position in a sentence. (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives)	0	0%	3	3%	28	31%	55	61%	4	4%
2	I can answer questions about the information or facts that are clearly stated in the text.	0	0%	1	1%	18	20%	36	40%	35	39%
3	I can make use of prefixes, suffixes and word roots to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. (For example, unhappy= un (not) + happy; teacher= teach+ er; -logy = science).	0	0%	3	3%	21	23%	48	53%	18	20%
4	I can draw conclusions from information that is not explicitly stated.	0	0%	6	7%	21	23%	32	36%	31	34%
5	I can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and examples.	0	0%	2	2%	22	24%	44	49%	22	24%
6	I can understand the implications of the passage.	0	0%	3	3%	16	18%	46	51%	25	28%
7	I can interpret pronouns when I read a given text.	0	0%	3	3%	23	26%	47	52%	17	19%
8	I can make use of discourse markers in the text (e.g. however/for example/ In addition) to aid my understanding.	0	0%	3	3%	16	18%	47	52%	24	27%
9	I can distinguish between facts and opinions in the text.	0	0%	0	0%	22	24%	51	57%	17	19%
10	I can recognize the purpose of sentences in the text (e.g. providing: a definition, a description, an apology or instructions).	0	0%	1	1%	24	27%	45	50%	20	22%
11	I can recognize the author's attitude and bias.	0	0%	4	4%	20	22%	49	54%	17	19%
12	I can rearrange scrambled sentences or paragraphs.	0	0%	0	0%	27	30%	43	48%	20	22%
13	I can recognize the type of text I am reading (e.g. instructive/ descriptive/ informative).	0	0%	2	2%	15	17%	51	57%	22	24%
TOTAL		0	0%	30	2%	273	23%	594	50%	301	26%

Table 9: Students' use of Careful reading skills

Based on Table 9, 76% of all the participants 'rarely' or 'never' use careful reading skills. Also, one quarter of the respondents reported that they 'sometimes' apply these skills, and only 2% believed they 'mostly' use careful skills. However, none of the students indicated that they 'always' employ these skills when reading texts. Almost identical results were obtained regarding 'expeditious reading' skills (See Table 10 below).

	Item	always		mostly		sometimes		rarely		never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I can look for a specific piece of information without having to read the whole text.	0	0%	1	1%	9	10%	51	57%	29	32%
2	I try to remember what I already know about the topic to help me understand the text I am about to read.	0	0%	2	2%	19	21%	33	37%	36	40%
3	I can use clues in the text, such as headings and titles to help me find the information I need	0	0%	6	7%	26	29%	36	40%	22	24%
4	I can get the main idea of a text by quickly looking at its title, subheadings, photos, tables, etc. which come with it.	0	0%	4	4%	26	29%	39	43%	21	23%
5	I can move my eyes quickly across the page until I locate the information I need.	0	0%	3	3%	21	23%	49	54%	17	19%
6	When I read the title of a text, I can predict its content.	0	0%	2	2%	23	26%	47	52%	18	20%
7	I can make use of numbers, names or dates when I try to answer a particular question.	0	0%	3	3%	30	33%	38	42%	19	21%
8	When I finish reading a paragraph, I can guess what the next paragraph is about.	0	0%	1	1%	26	29%	46	51%	17	19%
9	I can make use of the words that are bold faced, italics, or in a different font size, style, or color to help me find what I am looking for.	0	0%	1	1%	24	27%	42	47%	23	26%
10	I can read a text quickly and get the most important information from it.	0	0%	2	2%	21	23%	52	58%	15	17%
11	I can make use of transitional phrases (e.g. first, second, then, however, moreover) when I try to find a specific information.	0	0%	1	1%	22	24%	45	50%	22	24%
12	Before I read, I run my eyes over the text and notice names, numbers and italicized words so that I can have a general understanding of the text.	0	0%	2	2%	17	19%	50	56%	21	23%
13	I can make use of key words or phrases in the text to help me answer a specific question.	0	0%	1	1%	17	19%	52	58%	20	22%
14	Before I read a passage, I look at the first few sentences of each paragraph so that I can understand the central idea of the text.	0	0%	0	0%	15	17%	58	64%	17	19%
TOTAL		0	0%	29	2%	296	23%	638	51%	297	24%

Table 10: Students' use of Expeditious reading skills

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in SPSS software to compare the three participating classes and to make sure that there were no significant differences between them before commencing the intervention programme. As shown in Table 11, there was no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in their use of 'careful reading' skills for the three groups: $F(2, 87) = .076, p = .92$. Moreover, the actual difference in the mean scores between the groups was extremely small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .001.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	.067	2	.033	.076	.927
<i>Within Groups</i>	38.087	87	.438		
<i>Total</i>	38.154	89			

Table 11: Comparisons of the use of careful reading skills by the three classes

Similar results were obtained regarding students' use of 'expeditious reading' skills (See Table 12). Results from running the ANOVA test did not generate any significant differences between the three groups at the $p < .05$ level in their use of 'expeditious reading' skills for the three groups: $F(2, 87) = .124, p = .88$. The difference between groups was marginal as the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .002.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	.267	2	.133	.124	.883
<i>Within Groups</i>	93.333	87	1.073		
<i>Total</i>	93.600	89			

Table 12: Comparing use of Expeditious reading skills for the three classes

The results above suggest that Saudi students, especially those in this study, hardly apply their expeditious and careful reading skills when they read English texts at school. Also, the findings show that there are no significant differences between the three participating classes regarding their use of expeditious and careful reading skills prior to the implementation of Creative Circles approach.

In addition to the quantitative data generated by the questionnaire, Saudi EFL learners, teachers and supervisors were interviewed to explore how students read English passages, the reading difficulties they face when they read and how students are usually taught in Saudi EFL reading classes.

EFL learners' perceptions:

When students were presented with some reading text samples (extracted from the textbook they were going to study during the semester) in the interview and asked about how they approached reading them, some of their accounts were as follows:

- Jalal: *“I read the title. Then, I just start reading the rest. I take it in small portions. When I start answering comprehension questions, I just look for words in the passage that are like those in the questions and copy and paste the whole thing”.*
- Omar: *“I start by looking at the pictures to understand the general idea. I read the title and then I read the passage right from the start. I mostly read word by word and underline key words, which I ask the teacher about their meaning. But I am still unsuccessful at understanding”*
- Saif: *“I look at the title. Then, I read on. However, I frequently stop because of unknown words”.*
- Saud: *“First, I look at the title and then I read silently I keep on reading even if I come across new vocabulary. I try to guess its meaning from the context, but understanding the passage is still a major problem for me because of it”.*
- Ali: *“I just cannot read. I understand 0% of what I read”.*

Examining these accounts, among others, shows that most students were unfamiliar with reading skills in general and how to read passages appropriately, and very few students demonstrated some knowledge of expeditious reading skills such as previewing and skimming as well as careful reading skills such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through using contextual clues. The accounts also highlighted the importance and the integrative nature of careful reading and expeditious reading skills in the process of comprehension. For instance, Saud mentions the use of expeditious reading skills but he also expressed the frustration he feels because inefficient careful reading skills hinder his comprehension of the passage. Furthermore, data from the interviews highlighted the issue of mixed-ability classes and having students with wide range of reading abilities in the same reading class.

When students were asked about the difficulties they encounter while they read, almost all of them mentioned *‘meaning and pronunciation of new vocabulary’* as the main concern. Some students, like Omar, Majed and Hani, indicated that *‘badly structured texts’*, *‘lack of pictures and illustrations’*, *‘complex sentence structure and grammar’* were major problems for them when they read. Others, like Saif and Ahmad, blamed themselves for their *‘unwillingness to make a real effort’* to read and learn how to read, and their teachers because of their ineffective *‘teaching methods and styles’*.

Regarding teaching methods, students were asked to comment on how they were taught during reading lessons and whether they had received any previous training on reading skills. The following are few of their responses:

- Ahmad: *“The teacher starts by asking: who wants to read loudly? If no one volunteers, he randomly chooses. This takes half of the class time. He then asks us to read silently and asks us about our understanding of the passage in Arabic. After that, he tells us to answer the questions individually. Sometimes he answers the first question for us and leaves the rest for us to answer on our own. The lesson ends with a review of our answers. Teachers in general do not tolerate miscomprehension or mistakes”*.
- Nasser: *“I remember three types of teachers. The first type would start by reading the whole passage aloud. He then translates it into Arabic. Finally, we are asked to answer the questions after he translates them for us. The second type of teachers would ask us to read silently and then they select some students to read aloud. After that, they ask students to translate as much as they can before we answer the comprehension questions. The third type of teachers randomly select some students to read aloud. Then, they choose some key words and ask about their meaning. If no one knows, teachers would translate. Finally, we answer the questions and review the answers with teachers to make the necessary corrections”*.
- Hani: *“the teacher starts the reading lesson by first playing a recording of the passage twice while we follow. Then, he explains the meaning of the passage as well as the comprehension questions in Arabic. The teacher plays the recording a second time and picks only those who want to participate and lets them answer the questions”*.

By examining these responses, as well as other students’ comments, reading lessons appeared to be mainly teacher-centred, poorly structured and L1-oriented. The teaching practice seemed to lack appropriate reading stages (pre, while and post) activities and little attention is paid to drilling crucial reading skills in both careful and expeditious types of reading. In fact, all participants (after explaining key reading skills) indicated that they had never been involved in any kind of reading skills training organised by their teachers at any point in their school life. Also, there seemed to be a general emphasis by teachers on reading aloud and checking students’ pronunciation, as Jalal, Ali and Nasser pointed out in the interviews.

In some cases, students were left to read silently and then answer the comprehension questions on their own; in other cases, teachers write answers to comprehension questions on the board and ask students to copy them in their notebooks, as indicated by Omar and Ahmad. Moreover, these teaching practices are not conducive to improving students' thinking skills as they provide little room for successful communication as well as discussions and sharing ideas and thoughts between learners and teachers and among learners themselves.

EFL teachers' perceptions:

To understand the full picture of Saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension skills, eight teachers were interviewed. They were asked for their opinions of their students' reading skills and the reasons underlying those views. All the interviewed teachers indicated that Saudi EFL learners' reading abilities are generally poor. For example, Hameed (20 years of experience) described students as 'unmotivated', 'struggling' and 'in constant need of help' in reading lessons. Mohammad (12 years of experience) went on further to say that *"Students are superficial, they read lines but they cannot read between the lines. A considerable number of them cannot even read letters correctly"*. Mansouri (10 years of experience) believed that the level of Saudi students' reading skills are 'far below the average' and that they 'cannot even understand the main idea of what they read'. Ahmad (7 years of experience) further claimed that almost *"80% of students do not understand English texts"*.

In the interviews, teachers attributed this bleak picture of Saudi students' reading skills to a variety of internal and external reasons. As for the internal reasons, most teachers believed students' 'overall low level of language proficiency' and 'limited vocabulary' are at the heart of the problem. For example, Hisham (25 years of experience) said: *"For 25 years, I had to devote the first two to three weeks to teaching students the English alphabets. Students are not proficient enough"*. Mohammad agreed by commenting that: *"we, teachers, emphasise grammar and vocabulary instead of focusing on developing students' reading skills because of their low proficiency level"*. Ahmad Also added that students *"know very few English words that they are unable to understand reading passages"*.

Furthermore, poor reading skills in students' native language were reported by some teachers as having a major influence on students' reading skills in the target language. Hameed asserted: *"We are a nation that does not read. How do you expect students who*

cannot read well in their own mother tongue to read properly in another language?” This point was shared by Abdulla (14 years of experience) who commented: *“we do not read enough in Arabic and in English”*.

Moreover, most of the interviewed teachers reported students’ lack of interest in reading as a major problem that ultimately leads to poor reading comprehension skills. When teachers were asked to trace back the roots of students’ disinterest, some of them, like Hameed, mentioned that students became *“too much involved with modern technology, especially smart phones applications and text messaging”*. Because of this, students do not spend enough time on reading academic text or longer texts of different genres. However, Noor claimed that there is a ‘negative social attitude towards learning English’ which affects students’ interest in reading English texts. He maintains that *“learning English is unreligious thing to do. Instead, students should learn Arabic, the language of the Holy Qur’an”*. However, this view was not shared by most interviewees (students, teachers, and supervisors) who stressed the importance of learning English for varied reasons and purposes.

Regarding the external reasons, many teachers considered the ‘prescribed English textbooks’ responsible for Saudi students’ poor reading skills. For instance, Noor (5 years of experience) commented: *“the current textbooks contain insufficient reading activities and they do not emphasise reading skill”*. Hameed spoke of the problems of textbooks’ contents and continuous replacements. He believed that:

“The frequent changing of textbooks is very disturbing for teachers and students as well. Whenever we familiarise ourselves with one textbook, we are asked to teach a new one. Also, the textbooks we are teaching now have too many lessons, unfamiliar topics and long lists of vocabulary items; things we cannot go through within the class time-limit. And I believe that these textbooks do not pay the proper attention to developing students’ reading skills”.

Related to the problems in EFL textbooks is the gap between teachers and policy makers in the Ministry of Education. Hameed complained that: *“there is poor communication between us and local and central educational authorities”*. In his opinion many complaints, suggestions and ideas are not ‘taken seriously’ and have not been communicated and shared with officials at higher levels in the Saudi educational system. Teachers feel they are not involved in making important decisions about the design and selection of the appropriate

textbooks. Moreover, teachers, like Mansouri, complained that: *“in-service teacher-training programmes are insufficient”*; which are, according to him, *“a key issue in updating and developing teaching English language skills including reading”*. Noor indicated that there is a need to allocate more classes to English in school timetables as he believed that *‘4 periods a week are not good enough’*. These observations, and many more, can only be addressed by the central authority in the Ministry of Education, which does not appear to cooperate strongly with practitioners in the field (i.e. supervisors and teachers).

Some of the interviewed teachers blamed their fellow teachers for students’ poor reading skills. Hisham, for example, pointed out that there are: *“many incompetent teachers”* and that they simply *“ignore students learning needs”*. Abdullah also described them as being *“passive and unmotivated to work on improving their students’ reading skills”*. Mansouri added: *“teachers themselves are not proficient in English language”* and that *“they are unfamiliar with recent developments in language teaching”*. In fact, teaching grammar and translation seemed to be common in reading classes as expressed by many teachers. This issue is a reminder of the previous discussion about insufficient and ineffective in-service teaching programmes.

Some teachers held parents responsible for their children’s poor reading comprehension skills. Hameed stated: *“some parents are not supportive. They do not encourage their children to read in their own native language, let alone in English”*. He asserted that children need to have a ‘role model’ at home that inspires and motivates them to develop a positive attitude towards reading. He went on to say: *“I am a teacher and a parent. I do not read a lot and I truly feel responsible for my son’s lack of reading practice”*. Also, Ahmad and Abdullah maintained that some parents show little interest in cooperating with teachers to encourage their children to read and improve their reading habits. Hisham feared that we are increasingly moving towards being a *“non-reader culture”* because of parents’ disregard to the importance of reading when in fact family could play a key role in fostering and developing reading skills in children, especially from an early age.

A group of teachers identified ‘lack of exposure to English’ as a general problem that negatively affects student’s language abilities. Abdullah explained that:

“English in Saudi Arabia is a foreign language. Our students do not practice English outside schools. In fact, they have got less than 45 minutes to do so. It is even much less than 45 minutes as teachers spend quite a lot of time on classroom

discipline, checking homework and attendance, organising materials and explaining questions and concepts. Students do not really spend enough time practicing reading and other language skills. I believe they need more time.”

It is quite difficult to imagine how students can improve their reading skills when they do not have enough opportunities to practice these skills, at least inside language classrooms. Hisham commented on this by criticizing how EFL teachers in Saudi schools teach English. He said:

“After 25 years of teaching and observing other teachers, I can say that English is taught as a school subject, not as a language. Teachers take over most of the class time while students sit passively. And to make things even worse, Arabic is the dominant language in class!”

This comment, coming from a very experienced teacher, demonstrates how lack of exposure can be a huge problem inside language classrooms as much as it is a problem outside schools. It sheds the light on issues like teacher-centered classrooms and excessive use of first language. In addition, it points out to the fact that treating English as only an exam-oriented school subject, and not also as a medium of communication, can have negative consequences on students’ language abilities. In Hisham’s own words, the outcome of such an approach is *“almost zero”*.

EFL supervisors’ perceptions

Perceptions of EFL supervisors were quite like those of teachers regarding students reading skills. All six supervisors who were interviewed reported that Saudi students’ reading comprehension skills are ‘extremely poor’, ‘way below the expected level’ and ‘really disappointing’. In fact, Osama went on to say that: “Almost 70% of them [students] are not proficient enough to comprehend a text, even those who are beyond secondary stage”.

Furthermore, there appears to be a marked agreement between supervisors and teachers when supervisors were asked about the factors that contributed to students’ poor reading abilities. The responses they provided almost mirrored the reasons identified by teachers. However, most of them placed more emphasis on issues like ‘lack of exposure to target language’, poor teaching skills and teacher training programmes’, ‘little attention to comprehension and more attention to reading aloud’, ‘students’ lack of motivation’, ‘little emphasis on reading skills in textbooks’, ‘unfamiliar and unsuitable reading topics’, ‘lack of reading skills training for students’, and ‘students’ limited vocabulary’.

4.1.2.2 Post intervention phase

After approximately three months of applying Creative Circles approach, the reading skills questionnaire was re-administered to the three participating classes (1 experimental group and 2 comparison groups). Table 13 below compares between students' use of Careful and Expeditious reading skills before and after the intervention.

Group	Careful reading/ pre	Careful reading/post	Sig.	Exped. reading/ post	Exped. reading/ post	Sig.
Comaprison1	4.2	4.07	0.1	3.8	4.0	0.1
Comaprison2	3.8	3.9	0.1	3.7	3.9	0.4
Experimental	4.2	2.3	.00*	3.6	2.3	.00*

Table 13: Comparisons between each groups' use of reading skills before and after intervention

The table does not indicate any significant differences in using careful and expeditious reading skills between the mean scores of all groups before and after the intervention. On the contrary, the mean scores of the experimental group shows significant differences after implementing Creative Circles approach, indicating that students in the experimental group used Careful and Expeditious reading skills more often than their peers in the comparison groups.

The following are the findings that were derived from the questionnaire, interviews with students and teacher of the experimental group. Also, journals that were written by students in the experimental group were analysed to further inform the results.

Careful reading skills

An ANOVA test was run to compare the three groups based on students' use of *careful reading skills* after the intervention programme. First, a descriptive statistics table (Table 14) was generated. The mean scores in this table explain the average frequency of students' use of careful reading skills in each group (1=always, 2=mostly, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never). By examining the table, it is clear that students in the experimental group *mostly* (2.3) used their careful reading skills while they were reading, whereas the other two groups seem to *rarely* (4, 3.9) use them.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Confidence Interval for Mean</i>	
					<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<i>Comparison Group1</i>	30	4	.18	.03	4	4.1
<i>Comparison Group 2</i>	30	3.9	.26	.04	3.8	4
<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	2.3	.28	.05	2.2	2.4
<i>Total</i>	90	3.4	.84	.08	3.2	3.6

Table 14: Descriptive comparisons between three classes in careful reading skills

Second, an ANOVA table (Table 15) was also generated, in which a between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore whether the differences between the three groups were significant. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in using careful reading skills between the three groups: $F(2, 87) = 472$, $p = .00$. Moreover, the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .72, which means that the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very high according to Cohen (1988:284–287).

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	57.9	2	28.9	471.5	.000
<i>Within Groups</i>	5.3	87	.06		
<i>Total</i>	63.2	89			

Table 15: ANOVA test for careful reading skills questionnaire

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (Table 16) indicated that the mean score for the experimental group ($M = 2.31$, $SD = .283$) was significantly different from both comparison groups, Comparison group1 ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .182$) and Comparison group2 ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .266$). However, Comparison group1 did not differ significantly from Comparison group2.

<i>(I) Group</i>	<i>(J) Group</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Confidence Interval</i>	
					<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<i>Comparison group1</i>	Comparison group 2	.126	.06	.12	-.03	.28
	Experimental Group	1.762*	.06	.00	1.61	1.91
<i>Comparison group 2</i>	Comparison group1	-.126	.06	.13	-.28	.03
	Experimental Group	1.636*	.06	.00	1.48	1.79
<i>Experimental Group</i>	Comparison group1	-1.762*	.06	.00	-1.91	-1.61
	Comparison group 2	-1.636*	.06	.00	-1.79	-1.48

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

Table 16: A careful reading multiple Comparisons Tukey HSD test between groups

The above findings lead to the conclusion that students who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention tended to use careful reading skills more often than students in the other two groups. Furthermore, the large effect size that was calculated indicates that 72 percent of the variance in students' use of careful reading skills could be explained by implementing Creative Circles.

Expeditious reading skills

An ANOVA test was run to compare the three groups based on students' use of *expeditious reading skills* after the intervention programme. A descriptive statistics table (Table 17) was generated. The mean scores in this table explains the average of how frequently students use reading skills in each group (1=always, 2=mostly, 3=sometimes, 4=rarely, 5=never). The table shows that students in the experimental group *mostly* (2.3) used expeditious reading skills while they were reading, while students in the other two groups *rarely* (4, 3.8) use them.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Confidence Interval for Mean</i>	
				<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	4.09	.229	4.00	4.17
<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	3.87	.223	3.78	3.95
<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	2.35	.274	2.25	2.45

Table 17: Descriptive comparisons between three classes in expeditious reading skills

The ANOVA table (Table 18) shows a between-groups analysis of variance, which was conducted to explore whether the differences between the three groups were significant. Results showed that there were statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in use of reading skills questionnaire scores between the three groups: $F(2, 87) = 453, p = .00$. Moreover, the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .68, which means that the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very high.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	53.7	2	26.8	453.9	.000
<i>Within Groups</i>	5.15	87	.05		
<i>Total</i>	58.9	89			

Table 18: ANOVA test for expeditious reading skills questionnaire

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (Table 19) indicated that the mean score for the experimental group ($M = 2.35, SD = .274$) was significantly different from both

comparison groups, Comparison group1 ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .229$) and Comparison group2 ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .223$). However, Comparison group1 did not differ significantly from Comparison group2.

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comparison group1	Comparison group 2	.219*	.063	.002	.07	.37
	Experimental Group	1.738*	.063	.000	1.59	1.89
Comparison group 2	Comparison group1	-.219*	.063	.002	-.37	-.07
	Experimental Group	1.519*	.063	.000	1.37	1.67
Experimental Group	Comparison group1	-1.738*	.063	.000	-1.89	-1.59
	Comparison group 2	-1.519*	.063	.000	-1.67	-1.37

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

Table 19: Expeditious reading multiple Comparisons Tukey HSD test between groups

The findings that were presented earlier suggests that students in the experimental group who participated in the Creative Circles intervention started to use expeditious reading skills more often than students in the other two comparison groups. Furthermore, the large effect size that was calculated indicates that 68% of the variance in students' use of expeditious reading skills could be explained by Creative Circles.

Furthermore, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Table 20) revealed a statistically significant increase in the experimental group's use of expeditious and careful reading skills following participation in the Creative Circles program, $Z = -4.3$ and 4.8 , $p < .000$, with a large effect size ($r = .62$ and $.65$). The median score on the use of expeditious and careful reading skills increased from pre-program ($Md = 2.34$ and 2.31) to post-program ($Md = 4$ and 4).

		Ranks				Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
		N	mean rank	sum of ranks	Z	
Expeditious Reading-Post Expeditious Reading-Pre	Negative Ranks	26	16.10	418.50		
	Positive Ranks	3	5.50	16.50		
	Ties	1				
	Total	30			-4.347	.000
Careful Reading- Post Careful Reading-Pre	Negative Ranks	30	15.50	465.00		
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30			-4.785	.000

Table 20: Wilcoxon test for the experimental group's use of expeditious and careful reading skills

Participating students' views

Interview and journal data that were gathered from students in the experimental group after the implementation of Creative Circles approach provided some insights into students' use of careful and expeditious reading skills. As discussed in chapter two, expeditious reading emphasises the macrostructure understanding of texts and selectivity in reading, whereas careful reading aims at detailed comprehension and close reading of texts. What follows is an exploration and an interpretation of students' views and perceptions of their reading skills in relation to these two types of reading.

Regarding expeditious reading skills, students seem to be generally satisfied with what they had achieved in reading skills such as skimming and scanning. For example, Ali indicated that the activities that he was involved in enabled him to *“get the overall impression of a passage through learning about text types and identifying text topic”*. When asked about the significance of such improvement, he explained that it allowed students to recognize the main purpose of what they read as well as some features that were related to certain types of genres. Omar added that *“being taught explicitly about different purposes of texts has helped me find out whether a passage was written to inform, instruct, or entertain”*.

Moreover, students commented, in their own words, on scanning, which is another reading skill related to expeditious type of reading. Some students such as Jalal and Ahmad mentioned that it was 'exciting' for them to find specific details (e.g. names, figures, and dates) and that even though they were used to scanning exercises, they believed Creative Circles addressed the 'need to do scanning activities' more than what they were doing in the past. It seems that this type of activity improves students' attitudes and boosts their confidence, as it does not require a lot of syntactic processing or macrostructure building up. Furthermore, many of the interviewees mentioned that prior to the intervention there was not enough emphasis on skills such as 'activating prior knowledge', 'previewing' and 'making predictions'. All of the attention, in their opinion, was paid to reading aloud and answering questions based on the reading passage.

As for careful reading skills, most students pointed out that they had never been involved in activities that were geared towards developing careful reading skills before Creative Circles intervention. When asked about the activities they found new to them, many students mentioned activities like using 'grammatical function, word root and contextual clues to guess the meaning of new words', 'establishing a plain sense of a text through

interpreting discourse markers', 'recognizing the functional value of a sentence', 'recognizing text structure', 'making inferences' and 'evaluating a text'. As these skills were included in the Creative Circles intervention, most students expressed positive comments about the benefits of being involved in such an experience. For example, Nasser said:

"I have found learning about these skills very useful. I like the design of these activities. It is gradual and really makes me think deeper so that I could read better. I believe reading is better learned this way".

Ahmad also maintained that: *"To me, this [the intervention] was very useful. I have never seen such organisation, design and clarity. There were so many exciting reading skills activities. I also noticed my friends enjoying the lessons. Most students were active"*. Omar compared Creative Circles lessons to reading lessons in his textbook and said: *"The way the lessons were designed here [the intervention] is far better than the organisation of the textbook, it really gives more attention to reading"*. However, few students such as Jalal and Ali expressed their wish to be allowed more time and practice with reading skills. They also criticized Creative Circles for having 'too many activities'. Nonetheless, they maintained that the programme was 'really beneficial and exciting'.

Participating teacher's views

The teacher of the experimental group offered important some interesting observations in his interview after the implementation of Creative Circles approach. Ayman, the participating teacher, held very positive view of Creative Circles' role in introducing and developing students' reading skills in English. He described Creative Circles as *"A very successful programme"*. He valued this programme's significance in engaging and improving students' reading skills. For example, he noted in his journal:

"I found significant improvements thanks to creative circles. Many students liked the way in which the lessons are presented, they enjoyed the activities and they showed more interest than they used to. They were more engaged and on task, they also showed huge progress in their reading abilities".

He offered a range of reasons why he thought Creative Circles approach had a positive effect on students' reading skills. As demonstrated by the earlier quote, 'improving students' attitudes' is one of the reasons. Another reason was the 'logical structure and organisation of Creative Circles'. He commented *"I really liked the way the programme*

was organised. It was very clear and meaningful to me and my students". Moreover, He described the 'reading skills training-oriented' aspect of the intervention as being an important factor in improving students' reading skills. Aymen pointed out *"It [Creative Circles approach] is desperately needed. Students lack many reading skills and had no previous training before"*. According to Ayman, 'Raising students' awareness' of reading skills was considered a crucial for the success as well an outcome of this programme. He maintained, in the interview that:

"Students have become conscious of reading skills, what and how these skills help in comprehension. They had the chance to try them over and over again. Our discussions as well as the journals they kept helped them internalize and appreciate these skills more, something they had never experienced before".

This quote also signifies the importance of having a 'reflective attitude'. The journals students kept gave students the opportunity to clarify their ideas, to gain insights and to deepen their understanding of reading skills in a way that encourages them to monitor their own comprehension and to be empowered and independent.

4.2 Effects of Creative Circles on learners' attitudes towards reading

To investigate whether Creative circles had a significant effect on students' attitudes towards reading, an attitude questionnaire was administered to the three participating groups before and after the intervention. This attitude questionnaire, as explained in the previous chapter, was designed to measure the three common aspects of attitude—*affective* (feeling), *cognitive* (thinking) and *conative* (intention)—based on a five-point scale (ranging from full disagreement = 1 to full agreement = 5). The analysis in this part will start with the pre-quantitative results of 'attitudes towards reading' followed by relevant qualitative data, and in the same manner; the post results will be presented. It is worth mentioning that a section was added to the questionnaire in the post intervention phase to gauge the experimental group's attitudes towards reading via Creative Circles.

4.2.1 Pre-intervention phase

Before implementing Creative Circles approach, all students answered a questionnaire that explored their attitudes towards reading in English. Table 21 details their responses in each attitude domain.

	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
Affective domain					
1. Reading in English at school is not enjoyable	8%	19%	37%	24%	12%
2. I remain confident when I read English texts even if I do not understand every word	34%	24%	4%	34%	2%
3. I become worried when I cannot understand every word in an English text	27%	36%	23%	11%	3%
4. I become anxious whenever I am asked to read in English.	12%	33%	23%	17%	14%
5. I look forward to English reading classes	16%	7%	33%	37%	8%
6. I feel excited when I read English texts	27%	9%	28%	32%	4%
7. I dislike reading English texts at school	29%	23%	28%	4%	16%
8. I avoid reading English outside school unless it is necessary	20%	20%	27%	11%	22%
9. I respect people who are able to read in English	41%	37%	16%	4%	2%
Cognitive domain					
10. Reading is an important skill as it significantly develops my language proficiency	53%	40%	6%	1%	0%
11. Learning to read English is more important than other skills (i.e. speaking, writing)	18%	33%	23%	21%	4%
12. Reading English texts is hard	14%	30%	29%	9%	18%
13. Being able to read in English increases my chances of getting a good job	61%	27%	11%	1%	0%
14. Being able to read in English is important for my future education	53%	36%	6%	2%	3%
15. Reading English is useful in getting good grades at school	39%	41%	19%	1%	0%
16. Reading English helps me to understand the TV programs and movies that I am interested in	51%	26%	14%	7%	2%
17. Being able to read in English improves my self-image	24%	42%	24%	6%	3%
Conative domain					
18. If I have free time, I will read English texts (e.g. books, stories, magazine, newspaper)	10%	22%	30%	24%	13%
19. If I come across an English text that interests me, I make an effort to read it	7%	3%	10%	38%	42%
20. I belong to/want to join an English book club.	14%	11%	23%	21%	30%
21. If there is an English language library near me, I will apply for a membership	14%	7%	33%	18%	28%
22. I urge myself to read English texts as often as possible	0%	19%	36%	4%	41%
23. I want to learn effective reading strategies to improve my reading abilities in English	61%	23%	13%	0%	2%
24. I have/ plan to have a personal library of English texts	17%	9%	21%	23%	30%
25. I want to read in English so that I can learn more about other cultures	11%	36%	49%	3%	1%
26. I want to participate in the reading lesson activities	9%	9%	24%	28%	30%

Table 21: Pre-intervention attitude towards reading questionnaire

Looking at the *affective domain*, students seemed to have negative attitudes towards reading in English. Results show that almost one quarter of respondents did not enjoy reading and more than one third of them were not sure. Again, more than half of students did not feel confident when they read English texts and two thirds of them are worried when they read.

Also, half of the respondents disliked reading and feel anxious whenever they are asked to read. In addition, almost half of students avoid reading outside school and do not look forward to reading lessons at school. Yet, the majority of students highly respect those who are able to read English texts effectively.

With respect to the *cognitive domain*, the students expressed their understanding of the value of reading in English and showed attitudes that are more positive than that of the affective domain. Most them showed their appreciation of reading in English and the influence it has on their language proficiency (93%), future education (89%), employment (88%), grades at school (80%) and self-image (66%). Yet, almost half of them believe that reading in English is a difficult task.

As for the *conative domain*, students did not show much enthusiasm or willingness to read English texts if chance allows it. For example, the majority of students (80%) reported that they would not make the effort to read an interesting English text if they come across one. Moreover, almost half of them do not intend to apply for a library membership or own their own personal library. Similarly, more than half do not wish to participate in English reading activities or even encourage themselves to read. However, many students expressed the need for learning effective reading strategies to improve their reading abilities and expand on their knowledge of other cultures.

Pre-intervention groups comparisons

A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the attitudes questionnaire (See Appendix E) to find out whether there were any significant differences in attitudes towards reading between the three participating groups before implementing Creative Circles to the experimental group. See Table 22 for the means and standard deviations for each of the three groups.

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Affective Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.6	.48
	Comparison group 2	30	2.8	.45
	Experimental Group	30	2.7	.44
<i>Cognitive Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.9	.52
	Comparison group 2	30	2.7	.41
	Experimental Group	30	2.8	.53
<i>Conative Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.6	.81
	Comparison group 2	30	2.4	.71
	Experimental Group	30	2.3	.90

<i>Attitude to Reading- Total</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.3	.43
	Comparison group 2	30	2.3	.35
	Experimental Group	30	2.2	.49

Table 22: Pretest means and standard deviation of attitudes towards reading

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity was of variance was not significant [*Levene F* (2, 87) = 1.14, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of attitude towards reading questionnaire score (See Table 23) did not reveal any statistical significant differences in all domains: Affective domain [F (2, 87) = 1.95, $p > .05$], cognitive domain [F (2, 87) = .58, $p > .05$], the conative domain [F (2, 87) = .87, $p > .05$] and in the total attitude scales as well [F (2, 87) = .09, $p > .05$] indicating that all three groups had similar attitudes towards reading. The mean score of each domain suggested that students in general have slightly negative attitudes towards reading prior to implementing Creative Circles (between 2=disagree and 3= neutral in the attitudes scale).

		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Affective Domain</i>	Between Groups	.83	2	.41	1.9	.147
	Within Groups	18.4	87	.21		
	Total	19.3	89			
<i>Cognitive Domain</i>	Between Groups	.28	2	.14	.58	.558
	Within Groups	21.3	87	.24		
	Total	21.6	89			
<i>Conative Domain</i>	Between Groups	1.15	2	.57	.87	.420
	Within Groups	57.4	87	.66		
	Total	58.5	89			
<i>Attitude to Reading- Total</i>	Between Groups	.03	2	.01	.092	.912
	Within Groups	15.9	87	.18		
	Total	16	89			

Table 23: ANOVA for pre application attitudes towards reading questionnaire

Exploring Saudi students' relatively negative attitudes towards reading

In order to investigate the slightly negative attitudes that students held with regard to reading, fourteen of them were interviewed. By examining the interview data, several themes emerged which were related to the three attitudes domains in the questionnaire (affective, cognitive and conative). As for the affective domain, 'discomfort' was voiced by a group of students in different ways. Sometimes it reflected uncertainty—Omar, for example, noted "*I feel confused as to what to do when I read*". Sometimes the feeling of being displeased and dissatisfied was expressed. Jalal reported "*To be completely honest, I get so bored when I read in English*". Students also talked about another related theme, that of 'anxiety'. Extended reading texts might have caused students to feel anxious. Ali

commented *"It is panicking to read these long passages and to answer all those questions. I was not taught well enough to deal with such a tough task"*. Sometimes anxiety stems from students' fear unfamiliar vocabulary. Badr, for example, noted *"I worry whenever I do a reading ...so many unknown words"*. Another emerging notion that students spoke of was the 'fear of being ridiculed'. For instance, Sultan confessed *"I am afraid of having to read out loud as others would laugh at the way I read"*. This fear makes students avoid reading all together so that they do not lose face if they commit any mistakes.

Moreover, students' beliefs (the cognitive domain) seemed to contribute to students' poor attitudes towards reading. Negative 'Self-perception' about linguistic abilities was common among some of the interviewees. It could be quite difficult to develop a positive attitude towards reading if a student continues to convince himself that he is unable and will not be able to read English texts properly. Jalal, for example maintained: *"I am poor reader. I won't be able to read and comprehend what I read"*. Similarly, Saif noted *"I don't understand English reading texts at all. I believe this is my own fault. I just cannot understand"*.

It is these beliefs about oneself that would negatively influence how students value the role of reading in developing their overall language abilities.

The other notion that was voiced by a number of students pertained to lack of 'connection' with and 'exposure' to English texts. Salem complained about teachers: *"with the little reading we actually do, teachers keep on emphasising reading aloud and passing exams more than asking us about how we feel and think about the text"*. Samir, on the other hand, blamed the choice of topics in the prescribed textbooks for being *"inappropriate for our age and the time we live in"*. Some students raised up the issue of 'uselessness' of reading in English in their context. For example, Hani explained *"we don't read in English outside school. We only read in Arabic. We don't need to read English texts"*. Others believed it would only be useful for those who are going abroad or planning on studying subjects that are only taught in English such as medicine and engineering. Students also point out to the issue of 'inability to make general sense' of what they read. Majed explains:

"I can read letter and words but I immediately forget them once I move on to the next sentence or the next paragraph. A text to me is just lines and lines of unconnected words".

This quote reveals how difficult it can be for some students to create a mental picture of the passages they read which may eventually put them off and lose their interest to read.

As for the final domain of the attitudes towards reading questionnaire (the conative domain), most students expressed their eagerness to be able to read properly in English. This takes us back to ‘reading habits’ questionnaire which was discussed earlier on in this chapter where 86% of students indicated that ‘they do not read enough in English, but they want to’. However, one needs to differentiate between the wish to be a good reader and putting words into action or at least having the intention to improve one’s reading abilities if circumstances allows. Many of those interviewed did not show that type of commitment. Instead, they expressed the frustrations and difficulties they were experiencing with reading English texts.

4.2.2 Post intervention phase

A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the attitudes questionnaire to find out whether there were any significant differences in attitudes towards reading between the three participating groups after implementing Creative Circles to the experimental group (See Table 24) for the means and standard deviations for each of the three groups).

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Affective Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.2	.41
	Comparison group 2	30	2.4	.35
	Experimental Group	30	4.1	.32
<i>Cognitive Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	3.1	.30
	Comparison group 2	30	2.9	.28
	Experimental Group	30	4	.42
<i>Conative Domain</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.8	.29
	Comparison group 2	30	2.8	.34
	Experimental Group	30	3.8	.35
<i>Attitude to Reading- Total</i>	Comparison group1	30	2.4	0.2
	Comparison group 2	30	2.6	0.2
	Experimental Group	30	3.9	.21

Table 24: Posttest means and standard deviation of attitudes towards reading

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant [*Levene F* (2, 87) = .92, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of attitude towards reading questionnaire score (See Table 25) revealed statistical significant differences in all three domains: affective domain [F (2, 87) = 299, $p < .05$], cognitive domain [F (2, 87) = 280, p

< .05], the conative domain [$F(2, 87) = 268, p < .05$] and in the total attitude scales as well [$F(2, 87) = 320, p < .05$] indicating that the three groups held different attitudes towards reading. The mean score of each domain for each group suggested that students in the two comparison groups still have slightly negative attitudes towards reading (between 2=disagree and 3= neutral in the attitudes scale), while the experimental group held a more positive attitude towards reading after participating in Creative Circles approach (almost 4= agree in the attitudes scale).

		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Affective Domain</i>	Between Groups	33.1	2	15	299	.000
	Within Groups	11.8	87	.13		
	Total	44.9	89			
<i>Cognitive Domain</i>	Between Groups	65.9	2	32.9	280	.000
	Within Groups	10.2	87	.11		
	Total	76.1	89			
<i>Conative Domain</i>	Between Groups	58.6	2	29.3	268	.000
	Within Groups	9.5	87	.10		
	Total	68.2	89			
<i>Attitude to Reading- Total</i>	Between Groups	20.6	2	14	320	.000
	Within Groups	3.8	87	.04		
	Total	31.8	89			

Table 25: ANOVA for post application of attitudes towards reading questionnaire

Post hoc comparisons using Tukey procedures were used to determine which group means differed. The results given in Table 25 indicated that the mean score of the experimental group who were taught via Creative Circles ($M = 3.98, SD = .215$) was significantly higher than comparison group1 ($M = 2.46, SD = .205$) and comparison group2 ($M = 2.66, SD = .207$); there were no significant differences between comparison group1 and comparison group 2. Moreover, the effect size was very large (eta squared was .65), which means that 65% of the change in students' attitudes towards reading could be the result of using the Creative Circles approach.

Comparing experimental group's attitudes before and after implementing Creative Circles

A paired-sample T-test (Table 26 below) was carried out to compare students' attitudes towards reading in English before and after the application of Creative Circles approach in each domain. The analysis indicates that students' attitudes after implementing Creative Circles approach has improved significantly in two domains: the affective [$t(29) = 6.8, p < .0005$ (two-tailed)] and the conative [$t(29) = 6.2, p < .0005$ (two-tailed)], whereas the

cognitive domain did not show any significant change. Also, the eta squared statistic indicated a large effect size.

	Domain	Paired Differences			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
<i>Affective</i>	AffectiveDomain-Pre–AffectiveDomain-Post	-.41	0.5	0.1	-6.8	29	.00*
<i>Cognitive</i>	CognitiveDomain-Pre-CognitiveDomain-Post	-.04	0.5	0.1	-.4	29	.66
<i>Conative</i>	ConativeDomain-Pre –ConativeDomain-Post	-.47	1	0.1	-6.2	29	.02*

Table 26: Comparison of attitude domains before and after intervention in the Experimental group

Furthermore, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Table 27) revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's attitudes towards reading on affective and conative domains following participation in the Creative Circles program, $Z = -3.3$ and -3.2 , $p < .000$, with a large effect size ($r = .42$ and $.41$). The median score for the affective and conative domains increased from pre-program ($Md = 2.6$ and 2.2) to post-program ($Md = 3.7$ and 3.9). The cognitive domain remained unchanged.

Ranks						
		<i>N</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	<i>Z</i>	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>AffectiveDomainPost</i> <i>AffectiveDomainPre</i>	Negative Ranks	6	10.2	61.5		
	Positive Ranks	22	15.6	344		
	Ties	2				
	Total	30			-3.3	.000
<i>CognitiveDomainPost</i> <i>CognitiveDomainPre</i>	Negative Ranks	15	14	211		
	Positive Ranks	14	16	224		
	Ties	1				
	Total	30			-0.14	.888
<i>ConativeDomainPost</i> <i>ConativeDomainPre</i>	Negative Ranks	7	15.2	183		
	Positive Ranks	23	15.6	282		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30			-3.2	.000

Table 27: Wilcoxon test for comparing students' attitudes before and after the intervention

The reasons behind the positive change in the affective and conative domains will be discussed in the next section. As for the cognitive domain, which pertains to one's beliefs, students' attitudes remained unchanged probably due to the fact that they already understood the value of reading in the target language even before the new approach was implemented.

Experimental group's attitudes towards reading via Creative Circles

As explained earlier in this part, students in the experimental group were surveyed for their views on their experience of reading via Creative Circles. A fifteen-item questionnaire was administered after the experiment. Table 28 shows students' views on Creative Circles in their reading classes.

Item	<i>Strongly disagree</i>		<i>disagree</i>		<i>neutral</i>		<i>agree</i>		<i>strongly agree</i>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. motivates me to learn English	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%	16	53%	12	40%
2. makes the reading tasks enjoyable	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	17	57%	12	40%
3. is boring	11	37%	15	50%	3	10%	0	0%	1	3%
4. improves my comprehension of the text I read	0	0%	2	7%	2	7%	17	57%	9	30%
5. motivates me to be actively involved in the reading lesson	0	0%	2	7%	0	0%	16	53%	12	40%
6. makes me feel uneasy	9	30%	16	53%	2	7%	2	7%	1	3%
7. gives me enough time to reflect on what I have learned	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	16	53%	13	43%
8. allows me to learn from my peers and share ideas	0	0%	2	7%	1	3%	21	70%	6	20%
9. makes me lose my self-confidence	10	33%	13	43%	1	3%	3	10%	3	10%
10. is a waste of time and efforts	14	47%	7	23%	5	17%	2	7%	2	7%
11. suits my level of language proficiency	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	21	70%	8	27%
12. improves student-student relationship	2	7%	1	3%	3	10%	21	70%	3	10%
13. has a negative effect on the teachers' personal relationship with their students	11	37%	7	23%	8	27%	3	10%	1	3%
14. encourages me to do more collaborative activities in the future	0	0%	2	7%	3	10%	21	70%	4	13%
15. is useful in reading lessons	0	0%	3	10%	3	10%	21	70%	3	10%
16. is ineffective in improving my reading abilities	11	37%	12	40%	1	3%	2	7%	4	13%

Table 28: Students' views on Creative Circles Approach

Table 28 clearly shows an overwhelmingly positive reaction to read via Creative Circles. Students had very positive feelings towards Creative Circles as 93% of them thought it motivated them to learn English while almost 97% of them enjoyed reading. Also, Creative Circles seemed to reduce students' anxiety levels and boost their confidence significantly as 83% of them felt relaxed when they read English texts.

Moreover, most students (90%) believed Creative Circles approach was appropriate to their level of language proficiency. Regarding reading comprehension, 87% of students believed their reading skills were improved due to participating in this experiment, which was described by 80% of them as very useful and effective.

As a social communication tool, the new approach appeared to have a positive influence on classroom interaction. Students' responses show that 80% of them thought their involvement in the experiment positively affected their student-student relationship and 60% did not see in it any threat to their relationship with their teacher. Furthermore, the results show a high sense of eagerness among students to participate in future collaborative reading activity similar to the one they were introduced to in this experiment. Almost 83% of students agree with this idea. In order to investigate these results further, qualitative data obtained from interviews with students in the experimental group and the journals they wrote during the intervention are analysed next.

Students' and teacher's positive views on reading via Creative Circles

Unsolicited, students from the experimental group offered a range of reasons why they thought reading via Creative Circles was offering them a very positive experience. The most common were (the responses taken from journals will be indicated):

- *Enjoyment and engagement*: most of the students expressed their enjoyment over reading in groups during the intervention period. Ahmed, in his journal, made the observation that *"I noticed my friends enjoying the lesson. They were very active"*. Omar attributed the excitement he felt (which was shared by a number of students) to the presence of pictures and illustrations, interesting topics and types of questions and clear and logical organisation of reading lessons.
- *Self-Confidence*: some students reported a growth in their self-confidence, as they realised that they had been equipped with reading skills they had little knowledge of prior to participating in Creative Circles. Ali, for example, noted in his journal *"I am now more capable of reading in English. The skills we learned were very helpful"*. Jalal went on to say *"Prior to this programme, I was not sure how to deal with a reading text; now I learned the proper way to read"*. Other students brought up the notion of 'self-worth' as working with a group made them recognize that their own thoughts and ideas were of value. For example, Kareem said with a smile on his face *"At least I have a say in all the decisions in the group and that everyone should respect that"*.
- *Diversity understanding*: a number of students commented on how this experience had made them more accepting to students of different levels of proficiency. Nasser, for instance, explained *"I used to think that working with low level students is bothersome. However, working with them in my group made me realise how good it feels to help"*.

others". Omar thought *"working with good students was unimaginable in whole class teaching"* and that Creative Circles gave him the opportunity to *"communicate with them and cooperate"*.

- *Flexibility*: many students believed that Creative Circles could be used in learning other language abilities. Badr, for example, noted *"I can see this programme used in developing our writing, speaking and listening skills. It is really worth the try"*. Others thought it could be adopted in other school subjects. Kareem commented *"This is so beneficial, logical and organised that it can be extended to other school subjects"*.
- *Efficiency*: Many students believed that reading via Creative Circles was manageable and saved time as well as effort. Omar reported *"I liked the idea of assigning a specific role of every member of the group made it easier for us to work on reading tasks. Gradually, we were able to deal with more extensive texts in a short time"*. Ali showed his appreciation of reading in a group compared to individual reading by quoting one of Prophet Muhammad's sayings, which roughly means *"God's hand is with those who have team spirit"*.
- *Linguistic value*: many of those interviewed praised Creative Circles for providing them with more incidental and planned opportunities to use the target language as an instrument of communication and learning. Ahmed commented in his journal *"in our group, we were able to talk in English about different things like the reading tasks and our own personal thoughts"*. In the same respect, Ali added *"we tried to make English as the medium of communication in our group as much as possible. We tried to correct each other mistakes but the most important thing was getting the point across clearly. I think we made good progress"*. The weaker students held positive opinions of how Creative Circles improve their language abilities mainly due to cooperative learning environment that supports students' efforts. Ali, for example, said *"I think there was a huge progress in my language skills, especially in my ability to comprehend English texts thanks to the help I got from my friends"*.
- *Readiness*: most students expressed their willingness to participate in reading activities that incorporate Creative Circles. When Jalal was asked about this, he answered rather emphatically *"Absolutely! I wish it can be implemented in all English lessons"*. Some students also voiced their readiness to read in general. When asked about any particular reasons related to Creative Circles, they pointed out some of the ideas that were presented

above, like ‘enjoyment’, ‘self-confidence’ and ‘linguistic value’. Others mentioned ‘intellectual value’ to be a contributor to their readiness to read. For instance, Badr believed “*the more you read, the more you add to your knowledge and solve problems in your life*”.

- *Reflectivity*: an important outcome of engagement with Creative Circles was that many of the students learned to be reflective about their own learning. This reflectivity was apparent in the journal that students were asked to write after each lesson [because of the journal students had to write after each lesson]. Many students were more self-aware of their own understanding and how it changed through time. Illustrative of this sense is the comment Jalal made in his journal when he noted that “*It makes me aware of my weaknesses in reading as well as my learning needs. I want to use it [the journal] with other subjects at school*”. Badr added “*It was like a self-evaluation exercise. It was very helpful to me in that it made me think of ways to improve myself. I even used it to compare my notes as I progressed in the programme*”.

When the teacher of the experimental group was interviewed after implementing Creative Circles, he echoed many of the positive points commented by students above, especially ‘enjoyment’, ‘diversity understanding’, ‘confidence’, ‘linguistic value’ and ‘readiness’. He commented:

“Many students liked the way in which the lessons were presented. They enjoyed the activities and showed more interest in reading than they used to. They were more engaged and on task and eager about the coming reading lessons”.

He also expressed his satisfaction at how weaker students became more interested and involved in reading tasks.

Students’ and teacher’s negative views on reading via Creative Circles

Alongside these positive comments, students noted a number of negative aspects of their experience. The most common were:

- *Unfamiliarity*: A small number of students spoke of how uncomfortable it made them to deal with varied types of tasks and questions (e.g., creativity and text evaluation tasks). Ali, for example, noted “*We are not used to these types of activities. At first, I felt uncertain as to how do them properly*”. However, he mentioned “*later on during the programme, I*

began to understand what was required of me". He praised the 'gradual progression' of lessons, which he thought was a great help. Unfamiliarity with group work norms and organisation was also a source of discomfort. Omar confessed *"I have never been involved in collaborative work before, particularly in English classes. I was not sure if it is going to work for me"*. Then, he pointed out the important role of his teacher when he noted *"but our teacher was really helpful and supportive"*.

- *Difficulty of task*: A few students thought of the activities as very demanding. 'unfamiliarity' was one of the reasons they mentioned. Another reason was 'time constraints'. Jalal explained in his journal *"we needed more time to be familiar with these types of questions and group work"*. However, many of them highly appreciated the facilitative role the teacher played. For instance, Kareem expressed his gratitude to his teacher by saying *"Our teacher was so patient and encouraging. He moved from group to group offering advice and the support we needed to overcome any possible difficulties"*.

- *Groupwork issues*: Some students mentioned a number of problems they observed in their groups. 'Misbehavior' and 'not being on task' were among the main problems that students pointed out. Other students complained about dominant students and how little lower ability students contributed to the achievement of tasks. When asked about how they were able to deal with these issues, students mentioned the important role played by the teacher and group leaders. For example, Badr noted:

"Before the start, our teacher explained to us what it means to work in a group. He also mentioned some of the issues that we might have and ways to resolve them. He also offered his help whenever we needed him to intervene".

Nasser described how his group leader dealt with complaints about less able students by saying:

"He [the group leader] emphasised that we all benefit from working together as those who know will get the chance to demonstrate their knowledge by explaining things and those who do not know will get the benefit of learning something new".

Again, the experimental group teacher provided very similar observations to that of students. A problem he mentioned was that one or two students were 'solitary readers' who liked to read on their own. He offered a solution, which he thought was successful, by which they joined their groups and were allowed to work solitarily within their groups as they needed. He explained that this strategy worked and they gradually began to work in

harmony with other members of their groups. The teacher also praised Creative Circles for giving roles to students, group leader in particular, as he noted *“assigning roles to students was very helpful in dealing with problems, especially group leaders. They kept problems to a minimum”*.

Overall Student View

Reading via Creative Circles was a new experience for all students on the course. Most students commented that they felt that this was a useful thing to do, valuable to them in a number of important ways. Typical comments include *“a most beneficial exercise”* (Omar), *“a worthwhile reading exercise”* (Kareem), *“rewarding, and at times quite enjoyable to do ... an effective tool for learning how to read”* (Ahmed), *“a very successful experience”* (Nasser), *“a really helpful approach to reading”* (Jalal). The tone of most students’ opinions on their experience of reading via Creative Circles was hugely positive, bearing in mind that their interviews and journals were all anonymous to maintain the validity of their view about the experience. Students’ opinions about Creative Circles were also confirmed by their teacher’s observations and comments which were very much in favor of the intervention programme.

4.3 EFL teachers’ promotion of reading skills and creativity

To understand the current situation in Saudi EFL classes in relation to reading and creativity, it seemed quite natural to consider teachers teaching practice in these areas. Therefore, forty-six middle school EFL teachers were surveyed about the extent to which they teach reading skills to their students and whether they promote creativity in language classrooms. The survey was followed by fourteen interviews with EFL middle school teachers and supervisors.

It was a two-part survey (See Appendix E) in which the first part explored the extent to which teachers practiced teaching reading skills in reading lessons. The 27- item scale (ranging from 1= never to 5= always) was developed to include the two types of reading ‘careful reading’ and ‘expeditious reading’, which were discussed earlier on in this chapter. The second part looked at how often creativity was promoted by EFL teachers in their language classrooms.

The interviews that followed aimed at explaining some of the results that were obtained by the survey as well as allowing teachers and supervisors to describe what is meaningful or

important to them regarding reading skills and creativity. The collected data, which will be discussed in detail next, showed that EFL teachers do not put sufficient emphasis on letting their students practice reading skills. The results also show that teachers do not pay enough attention to creativity in language classroom context.

4.3.1 The extent to which EFL teachers encourage use of reading skills

Teachers who participated in the survey were asked as to how often practicing reading skills is promoted in their reading classes. The results pertaining to *Careful Reading* skills in Table 29 shows most of the participating teachers do not promote careful reading skills in classroom. For example, more than 65% of teachers rarely or never foster skills such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words (items 1, 5 and 9), making inferences (items 6 and 10), establishing plain sense of a text (items 13 and 16), evaluating the text (items 17 and 21), recognizing text type (item 25), understanding explicitly stated information (item 2), recognizing the functional value of a sentence (item 20) and recognizing text organisation (item 24). About quarter of the responses show that teachers ‘sometimes’ emphasise these skills, and only less than 10% of teachers believe that they mostly or always focus on these skills in reading classes. Moreover, the overall mean scores for *careful reading* was obtained from this table to find out the average of how frequently teachers foster practicing reading skills in their reading classes (5=always, 4=mostly, 3=sometimes, 2=rarely, 1=never). The overall mean score indicates that teachers *rarely* (2) promote careful reading skills.

Item	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Mostly		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through identifying its grammatical function	5	11%	30	65%	7	15%	3	7%	1	2%
2. Answering questions about information or facts that are clearly stated in the text	16	35%	20	43%	6	13%	4	9%	0	0%
5. Making use of prefixes, suffixes and word roots to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. (For example, unhappy= un (not)+ happy; teacher= teach+ er; -logy = science)	9	20%	22	48%	7	15%	7	15%	1	2%
6. Drawing conclusions from information that is not explicitly stated	6	13%	27	59%	7	15%	3	7%	3	7%
9. Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and examples.	11	24%	21	46%	7	15%	5	11%	2	4%
10. Understanding the implications of the passage	8	17%	29	63%	6	13%	2	4%	1	2%
13. Interpreting pronouns in a given text	7	15%	27	59%	7	15%	5	11%	0	0%
16. Making use of discourse markers in the text (e.g. however/for example/ In addition) to aid understanding	6	13%	26	57%	5	11%	5	11%	4	9%
17. Distinguishing between facts and opinions in the text	10	22%	27	59%	5	11%	2	4%	2	4%

20. Recognizing the purpose of sentences in the text (e.g. providing: a definition, a description, an apology or instructions)	10	22%	24	52%	6	13%	3	7%	3	7%
21. Recognizing the author's attitude and bias	10	22%	26	57%	4	9%	3	7%	3	7%
24. Rearranging scrambled sentences or paragraphs	4	9%	31	67%	5	11%	3	7%	3	7%
25. Recognizing the type of the reading text (e.g. instructive/ descriptive/ informative)	12	26%	25	54%	2	4%	4	9%	3	7%

Table 29: How often teachers promote careful reading skills

Very similar results were obtained regarding *Expeditious reading* skills. As Table 30 demonstrates, most teachers chose ‘rarely’ and ‘never’ when asked about whether they encourage practicing *Expeditious reading* skills in their reading classes. More than 70% of the respondents ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ emphasise activating prior knowledge (item 4), previewing (item 8), making predictions (items 12 and 15), skimming (items 19, 23 and 27) and scanning (items 3, 7, 11, 14, 18, 22 and 26). Again, like *Careful reading*, the overall mean score indicates that teachers *rarely* (2) promote *Expeditious reading* skills.

Item	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Mostly		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
3. Looking for a specific piece of information without having to read the whole text	13	28%	21	46%	4	9%	4	9%	4	9%
4. Making use of their background knowledge about the topic they are reading to help them understand the text	11	24%	24	52%	7	15%	4	9%	0	0%
7. Using clues in the text, such as headings and titles to help me find the required information	11	24%	24	52%	8	17%	2	4%	1	2%
8. Getting the main idea of a text by quickly looking at its title, subheadings, photos, tables, etc.	24	52%	15	33%	5	11%	2	4%	0	0%
11. Moving the eyes quickly across the page to locate the required information	17	37%	16	35%	6	13%	3	7%	4	9%
12. Predicting the content of a text through reading its title	14	30%	22	48%	6	13%	3	7%	1	2%
14. Making use of numbers, names or dates to answer a particular question	17	37%	17	37%	10	22%	2	4%	0	0%
15. Guessing what comes next while reading a text	10	22%	20	43%	7	15%	5	11%	4	9%
18. Making use of the visual features of words (e.g. bold, italicized, in a different font size, style, or color) to find the required information	13	28%	23	50%	4	9%	4	9%	2	4%
19. Reading a text quickly to get the most important information from it	11	24%	23	50%	8	17%	2	4%	2	4%
22. Making use of transitional phrases (e.g. first, second, then, however, moreover) to find a specific information	6	13%	29	63%	7	15%	3	7%	1	2%
23. Noticing (before reading the text in detail) names, numbers and italicized words to get a general understanding of the text	11	24%	25	54%	6	13%	3	7%	1	2%
26. Making use of key words or phrases in the text to answer a specific question	12	26%	27	59%	3	7%	2	4%	2	4%

27.Looking (before reading the text in detail) at the first few sentences of each paragraph to understand the central idea of the text	11	24%	21	46%	7	15%	4	9%	3	7%
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Table 30:How often teachers promote Expeditious reading skills

To gain some insights into the above presented quantitative data, several middle school EFL teachers and supervisors were interviewed (See Appendix F). Teachers were asked about the reading skills they know and emphasise, how often they promote reading skills and why and how they proceed in a typical reading lesson. Supervisors were also asked for their views and observations on reading instruction in general and reading skills in particular. Based on the information gathered from interviews with teachers, no teacher attempted to train his students to practice various careful or expeditious reading skills in classroom or at home as an extracurricular reading activity. Several reasons for not emphasising reading skills in classrooms were mentioned, and the most common were:

- *Lack of knowledge about reading skills*: when teachers were asked to list the reading skills they know, many of them provided a very short list. ‘Skimming’ and ‘scanning’ were the most common ones. Most of teachers were not familiar with other reading skills and ways to teach them. For example, Mohammad confessed “*We were taught very little about reading skills at teacher college*”. When provided with a list of reading skills, Noor commented “*Many of these are new to me. And even if I know them, I do not know how to teach them to my students anyway*”.
- *Lack of teacher training*: teachers stressed the need for pre and in-service teacher training on teaching language skills, including reading. Ahmad agreed with Mohammad’s comment above and explained:

“The pre-service training was insufficient. We were left alone to teach English for the first time with little advice from university supervisors. They attended our classes once or twice during the whole semester and most of them were there just to evaluate us”.

When asked how they learned to teach reading, Abdulaziz commented “*we mainly observed experienced teachers, asked our colleagues or read some books to get help*”. Teachers also complained about in-service teacher training. Mansouri indicated that:

“The number of the available teacher-training programmes for language teachers are very limited and theoretical in nature”. Hameed added “*there is little*

connection between what we were presented with in teacher-training programmes and our actual classroom experience”.

Experienced teacher such as, Hisham (25 years) exclaimed *“Actually, I cannot recall being involved in a training programme on reading skills”*. He also pointed out to the problem that even if programmes are implemented, little is done to track the progress or provide teacher with support if needed.

- *Issues with English language textbook:* most teachers believed that the prescribed textbooks do not promote practicing reading skills. According them, there should be more reading activities and reading passages to work with. For example, Hameed noted:

“In our textbooks, little attention is given to reading skills. There are not enough reading activities and extended passages which we can use to practice important reading skills”.

Also, Hisham and Abdullah maintained that the current English textbooks mostly emphasise teaching listening, speaking and grammar.

- *Presuppositions about students’ abilities:* the majority of the interviewed teachers held, in contrast to real situation, higher expectations of their students’ reading abilities as they reach third-grade intermediate stage. For example, Hisham complained that:

“Students who reach this level [third grade intermediate] have very poor reading skills. This forces teachers to start with the basics as remedial programmes, a luxury we do not usually have with such tight schedules at school”.

Hisham believed that because of the difficulties associated with implementing remedial programmes, many teachers just *“go with the flow”* and do not bother themselves. Related to this issue was the growing feeling among teachers that trying to help students develop their reading skills is a waste of effort. Noor commented rather pessimistically:

“It is a hopeless case. Students should have learned the basics of reading skills before they reach third grade. I do not know what exactly they were doing in the previous five years of learning English. Now, we just have to work with what we have got, and we have got very little to be honest with you”.

Although there is some truth to what Noor said, surrendering to these thoughts by teachers would certainly have a negative effect on their desire to teach in general and to work on developing their students’ reading skills in particular.

- *Resistance to change:* Several interviewees pointed out that teachers develop routines for teaching reading which are difficult to break. This could be due to teachers' desire to reduce the workload. For example, Mansouri explained:

"Unfortunately, some teachers make it their mission to find shortcuts. They want to put as little effort as they possibly can in teaching reading, or any skill for that matter".

Another reason might be related to loss of control in class. Ali commented on this point by saying: *"changing my teaching style so that students get more freedom will be chaotic. Some Students mistake freedom for being able to do whatever they want to do"*. Moreover, fear of the unknown could be related to resistance to change. Abdullah commented:

"Some of the reading skills are new to me and I am not so sure about teaching them to my students. This needs a lot of preparation and thinking".

Furthermore, teachers' predispositions towards change may affect their resistance to it. Hameed, for instance, reported: *"I have 22 years of experience in teaching English. I am not willing to experiment new things in my class at all. I know all the tricks that I need to be successful"*.

- *Avoiding responsibility:* Sometimes what has not been said is more interesting than what has. A notable observation during the interviews with teacher was that very few of them blamed themselves for not promoting reading skills in their reading classes. Most teachers considered students, parents, community, textbooks and school environment as the main sources of the unsatisfactory situation of students' reading skills. The issue of teachers avoiding responsibility and blaming others encourages them to think that they are neither part of the problem nor the solution, which reflects negatively on their efforts to work on developing their students' reading skills.

In addition to the points made above, supervisors provided the following as some of the reasons that hinder promoting reading skills in Saudi EFL reading classes:

- *Indifference to teaching:* Some supervisors, based on their fieldwork observations, indicated that a considerable number of teachers show indifference to teaching. According to Osama, teachers generally *"seemed uninterested and do not involve themselves in classroom activities"*. Anwar added: *"these teachers do not like to prepare*

for lessons and they use the same materials year after year". In respect to reading, Tariq noted:

"They just go over the reading lesson so quickly and they hardly give their students the chance to learn or practice reading skills. They rarely give homework or encourage extensive reading".

Tariq also described them as *"impassionate about teaching and unmotivated enough to respond to students' needs"*.

- *Overemphasis on reading aloud:* Most of the interviewed supervisors believed that teachers give too much priority to reading aloud which comes at the expense of reading comprehension. Sa'ad, for example commented *"teachers spend most of class time reading aloud to their students and asking them to read aloud that no time is left for practicing reading comprehension skills"*. In addition, Anwar pointed out that very few students benefit from reading aloud as *"Some EFL teacher focus on reading aloud, which is quite problematic. One student reads aloud while the rest of the class passively listen to him, if they are listening at all!"*
- *Exam-oriented teaching:* a recurrent theme by supervisors was teachers' focus on helping students passing the end-of-the-year test. Osama explained the danger of putting too much emphasis on exams when he commented: *"this will lead to sacrificing important reading activities that promote creativity and independent thinking"*. Anwar also believed that *"teachers [because of exam-oriented teaching] will treat English as only a school subject, not as a language. This encourages them to overlook reading skills which need to be learned and refined through providing students with sufficient learning opportunities"*. Furthermore, Jamal pointed out an important observation that many teachers, at the end-of-the-year test, provide their students with already seen passages and questions. This, according to Jamal, turns the reading part in tests into a *"memorization activity that is far from evaluating students' actual reading ability"*.
- *Teachers' low level of language proficiency:* Some supervisors felt that some teachers' limited language competency was key in their lack of effort to promote reading skills. Khalid, for example, believed in an Arabic proverb that says which means *"You cannot give what you do not own"*. He explained:

“Some teachers lack language proficiency that they cannot read properly in English. They do not possess the reading skills that they are trying to teach. Clearly, this will not work out!”

Tariq stressed the need for EFL teachers to take part in language development programmes to enhance their language skills. He believed that this process would *“improve teachers’ confidence and reduce their anxiety of using the target language in class”*.

4.3.2 The extent to which EFL teachers promote creativity

In this section of questionnaire, teachers were surveyed for their behaviours and beliefs that facilitate the development of creative thinking and the formation of creative habits in their students. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire (See Table 31) was made up of 11 items to measure how frequent teachers exhibit behaviours that promote creativity in their language classes. In general, results in the table clearly show that Saudi EFL teachers make little effort to foster creativity in their teaching practice. More than 70% of teachers never or rarely involve students in problem-solving tasks, vary their teaching strategies, accommodate for different styles of learning or use open-ended questions. The majority of the participants (85%) seldom incorporate activities that stimulate students’ imagination and more than 60% of them hardly encourage students to evaluate what they read or allow for debating views and ideas. Although most teachers do not tolerate mistakes in class (83%), more than half of them still recognize students’ emotions and motivations as well as encourage them to read different types of text.

Item	Always		Most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. I provide my students with problem-solving tasks in my reading classes	2	4%	4	9%	7	15%	28	61%	5	11%
2. In my reading classes, I use activities that inspire students' imagination	1	2%	3	7%	2	4%	39	85%	1	2%
3. Mistakes are tolerated in my reading classes	1	2%	1	2%	6	13%	27	59%	11	24%
4. In my reading lessons, I try to facilitate different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal)	3	7%	3	7%	5	11%	32	70%	3	7%
5. I encourage students to read a wide range of texts	16	35%	18	39%	7	15%	4	9%	1	2%
6. In my reading classes, I am aware of students' motivation and emotions	13	28%	13	28%	6	13%	14	30%	0	0%
7. I vary my teaching methods in reading lessons	4	9%	0	0%	4	9%	38	83%	0	0%
8. I use open-ended questions in my reading lessons	3	7%	3	7%	7	15%	30	65%	3	7%

9.I ask my students to evaluate the texts they read (asking about source, author, audience, and purpose)	7	15%	5	11%	5	11%	19	41%	10	22%
10.I encourage my students to express their views and differences	4	9%	2	4%	3	7%	33	72%	4	9%
11.I encourage my students to use any newly learned English expressions and constructs	2	4%	5	11%	16	35%	17	37%	6	13%

Table 31: Teacher behaviors that promote creativity

Given these quite negative findings about EFL teachers' behaviours that foster creativity in reading classes, it was important to investigate them further through conducting several interviews with EFL teachers and EFL supervisors. The interviewees were asked about their views on creativity, attitudes towards it, its application in L2 learning and reasons for not promoting creativity in English reading classes. Some of the most common themes were as follows:

- *Unclear concept of creativity*: most of the interviewees believed the concept of creativity to be quite confusing. Some teachers, Mohammad for example, claimed they have never heard of this concept. Abdulaziz also agreed with Mohammad by confessing *"I have never thought about creativity or ways in which it could be employed in my class. To think of it now, I think it is difficult to define creativity"*. Other teachers held different views about creativity such as 'generating new ideas'(Mansouri), 'the ability to come up with unusual answers'(Hameed), 'applying ideas in new situations'(Hisham), 'giving different opinions' (Abdullah), 'creating something not thought of' (Ahmad).

- *Creativity is inappropriate in language teaching*: Some teachers associate creativity with other school subjects like science and mathematics. Abdullah, for instance, commented:

"I think creativity is more appropriate with subjects like physics, chemistry and other scientific topics. Creativity is about generating new ideas and inventing new things. I cannot see this is possible in language classes".

Ahmad agreed with Abdullah's comment by saying: *"I do not see how students of English could create something that wasn't thought of previously in my class"*. To Noor, the EFL teacher's goal is to *"help students improve their language skills, not to teach them how to be creative"*. It seems that these comments were based on the teachers' own interpretation of creativity.

- *Lack of support to creativity in textbooks*: Most teachers felt that the available English textbooks do not promote creativity. Noor, for instance, noted *"I cannot find but a few, if*

any, activities which develop students' creative thinking and allow them to generate new ideas". Hisham added that: *"these textbooks do not pay much attention to the actual needs of EFL learners and teachers. Developing creativity and thinking skills in general is one of these needs"*. He asserted the need for major reforms to textbooks for them to successfully achieve important goals such as developing creativity.

- *Irrelevance between creativity and reading skill*: many teachers believe there is little, if any, connection between creativity and reading. Noor, for example, was clear on his opinion that: *"there is no connection between the two"* and that they are *"unrelated"*. Hameed believed that the relevance depends on the topic of the passage. He commented: *"if the topic of the passage is about inventions, then a connection between creativity and reading can be established"*. These views, as explained earlier, can be linked to teachers' lack of clear understanding of the concept of creativity. In fact, some have never heard of its applications in language classrooms before.

- *Saudi students lack creativity*: Some teachers pointed out that incorporating creativity in Saudi schools is not feasible. One of the reasons was that students' cognitive abilities are not developed enough to manage creative thinking processes. For example, Noor said: *"I do not think creativity is suitable for our students. Their abilities are way below doing creative activities and tasks"*. Hisham went on further to describe students as not having *"what it has got to take to be creative"*. He believed they are *"not that type of student with whom creativity activities work well"*. Furthermore, Abdulaziz, felt that creativity activities *"suite older and more advanced students"* if it were to succeed. It seems that teachers' negative opinions of their students as well as their personal perceptions of the concept of creativity have a huge influence on how suitable creativity activities are in their language classes.

- *Lack of teacher training on fostering creativity*: Almost all teachers who were interviewed indicated that they were not involved in any training which valued the importance of creative thinking in language classrooms. Ahmad, for example, commented *"Most of our training at the university was focused on teaching English language skills"*. As for in-service training, Hameed complained that English teachers' training is not sufficient and is limited to language teaching methods and classroom management strategies.

- *Constraints:* Some teachers believed that involving students in creativity activities in class would prevent them from doing other things. Mohammad complained: “*we do not have time to do the tasks in the textbook, let alone, preparing and implementing creativity activities*”. He emphasised the need for student to “*take more English classes than what they are taking at the moment*”, which give teachers the time to work on developing students’ creative thinking. Hisham, also, indicated that students usually “*do not take these activities seriously*”. He believed that students are not used to creativity activities and they need to be introduced to them gradually.

Moreover, Saudi EFL supervisors had their own interpretations of the concept of creativity. Some of them are ‘thinking outside the box’(Sa’ad), ‘Achieving goals with little time and effort’ (Khalid), ‘looking for unusual solutions’ (Jamal), ‘looking at issues from different perspectives’ (Anwar) and ‘breaking boundaries’ (Osama). Moreover, the majority of them believed that, in theory, creativity could be incorporated in EFL classes but in reality, most teachers do not employ creativity activities.

In addition to teachers’ unfamiliarity with the concept of creativity, supervisors believed that teachers’ old-fashioned way of teaching hinder the promotion of creativity in language classes. Sa’ad, for example, noted:

“Most of our EFL teachers adopt Grammar-Translation-Method in their teaching. So you would naturally expect most the class time is spent on teaching grammar points and translation into Arabic”.

Hence, he believed that there is no time left for fostering creativity or thinking skills in general. Anwar, also, pointed out: “*most of English classes are teacher-centred*”. In his opinion, this type of classes does not provide students with the necessary opportunities to develop their creative thinking as “*teachers spend most of their time lecturing while students take notes*”.

4.4 Teachers’ attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity

It was important to investigate teachers’ attitudes towards creativity and collaborative reading. In part, the answer to this question might contribute to the understanding of the previous question’s findings about teachers’ promotion of reading skills and creativity. In addition, learning about teachers’ attitudes could help improve future applications of Creative Circles and language teaching methods that incorporate collaborative reading or

promote creativity in general. Therefore, forty-six middle school EFL teachers participated in an attitude questionnaire which was followed by fourteen interviews with EFL middle school teachers and supervisors.

It was a two-part survey (See Appendix F) in which the first part explored teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading. This attitude questionnaire, which consisted of 16 items, incorporated the three common aspects of attitude—*affective* (feeling), *cognitive* (thinking) and *conative* (intention)—based on a five-point scale (ranging from full disagreement = 1 to full agreement = 5). The second part sought teachers' attitudes towards creativity and its promotion in their reading classes and it was made up of 11 items.

Following the two-part questionnaire, interviews with eight teachers and six supervisors were conducted. They aimed at explaining some of the results that were obtained by the questionnaire as well as allowing teachers and supervisors to have their say regarding collaborative reading and creativity.

4.4.1 EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading

Upon examining Table 32 (below), it seemed that teachers held a slightly positive attitude towards collaborative reading (overall mean=3.5 out of 5). More than half of the teachers (57%) were in favour of employing collaborative reading in their classes. However, almost one third of respondents were against collaborative reading and another 14% felt unsure about it.

When teachers' feelings towards collaborative reading were explored, most of the teachers who participated in the survey (82%-86%) felt collaborative reading can make their teaching experience enjoyable and maintains their self-confidence. Although more than two thirds of teachers felt strongly about the positive effect of collaborative reading on their anxiety levels and on their relationship with students, almost one quarter of them (24%) were not sure about this effect and 7% to 11% of them held negative feelings.

Regarding teachers' beliefs, the majority of teachers (80%-90%) believed collaborative reading motivates students, improves students' reading comprehension, makes teaching more effective, saves time and effort, allows for peer teaching, and improves students' creative thinking. Although 57% of teachers believed that students would not find collaborative reading boring, almost one quarter of them were not sure and 20% thought it was. Also, 73% of teachers thought class control could be maintained though collaborative reading. However, 11% were not sure and 16% thought it could negatively affect class

management. More than two thirds of teachers (67%) agreed that collaborative reading could be useful in mixed-abilities classes. However, almost the rest of the respondents (26%) were impartial about their opinion.

As for teachers' intentions, the majority of teachers had the intention to make collaborative reading part of their teaching practice in the future. Another 13% of them were neutral while 4% do not plan to incorporate collaborative reading in their teaching.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>1.Motivates my students to do the reading tasks</i>	26	57%	18	39%	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%
<i>2.Makes teaching reading enjoyable for me</i>	21	46%	19	41%	5	11%	1	2%	0	0%
<i>3.Is boring for students</i>	4	9%	5	11%	11	24%	17	37%	9	20%
<i>4.Improves students' comprehension of the text they read</i>	19	41%	18	39%	8	17%	1	2%	0	0%
<i>5.Motivates students to be actively involved in the reading lesson</i>	20	43%	20	43%	4	9%	1	2%	1	2%
<i>6.Makes me feel worried</i>	3	7%	0	0%	11	24%	23	50%	9	20%
<i>7.Makes my teaching effective</i>	19	41%	20	43%	6	13%	1	2%	0	0%
<i>8.Allows students to learn from my peers and share ideas</i>	16	35%	23	50%	7	15%	0	0%	0	0%
<i>9.Makes me lose my self-confidence</i>	2	4%	2	4%	4	9%	18	39%	20	43%
<i>10.Is a waste of time and efforts</i>	4	9%	4	9%	2	4%	18	39%	18	39%
<i>11.Is useful in mixed-language abilities classes</i>	14	30%	17	37%	12	26%	2	4%	1	2%
<i>12.Allows me to monitor students' understanding and assist them in their learning</i>	15	33%	24	52%	6	13%	1	2%	0	0%
<i>13.Has a negative effect on the teacher's personal relationship with his students</i>	4	9%	1	2%	11	24%	17	37%	13	28%
<i>14.Will be part of my future teaching</i>	15	33%	23	50%	6	13%	2	4%	0	0%
<i>15.Makes me lose control of the class</i>	4	9%	3	7%	5	11%	20	43%	14	30%
<i>16.Improves students' creative thinking</i>	21	46%	20	43%	5	11%	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	207	28%	215	29%	104	14%	124	17%	86	12%
OVERALL MEAN	3.5									

Table 32: Teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading

In order to gain better understand of the quantitative results, interviews were conducted with fourteen EFL teachers and supervisors. They were asked about how they conceptualize collaboration and their overall opinions of collaborative reading. They were also asked whether they actually employ it in their reading classes as well as the benefits and concerns they might associate with collaborative reading in EFL contexts.

- *Concept of collaboration*: most teachers had a superficial impression of collaboration as ‘group work’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘working together’. A few were more specific such as Abdullah who described collaboration as: “*A group of students working on a task. They are supposed to exchange ideas and information, helping one another to achieve the shared goals*”. Hisham pointed out the important role of teachers when he described what collaboration meant to him by saying: “*students learn in groups while teachers organise and supervise their learning*”. Still the interviewed teachers did not seem to have a fully established understanding about the concept of collaboration for reasons that will be explained later in the discussion.

- *Attitudes towards collaboration*: Most interviewed teachers held positive perspectives towards collaboration. Examples of the positive comments on collaboration were: “*it is very convenient for me and my students. It develops students linguistically and morally*” (Hameed), “*It is an excellent idea. It creates a community of learning and a sense of independency*” (Hisham), “*It boosts students’ confidence and makes them very active*” (Mohammad) and “*It brings to class a much-needed positive change compared to traditional classes*” (Ahmed). Although teachers offered positive comments, it is important to remember that these were mainly based on their impressions, not necessarily on actual personal experiences.

- *Adopting collaboration in reading lessons*: when teachers were asked whether they actually incorporate collaboration in reading classes or with other skills in general, the majority of them did not experience collaboration-based language classes. In fact, in Mohammad’s view: “*most EFL teachers do not use group work in their classes*”. Another teacher, Abdulaziz, believed that collaborative reading is a: “*bad idea to implement*” as he believes that reading is only a “*private activity*”.

Those who do implement collaboration, like Hisham, generally ask students to: “*answer questions and look up words in dictionaries at home before coming to class to work in pairs to verify their answers*”. Not much interaction or assistance, monitoring and organisation is expected from the teacher. Others, like Noor employ collaboration occasionally and with selected activities such as translating words into Arabic or answering general questions about the lesson.

- *Benefits of collaboration in reading lessons*: Most teachers believed that collaborative reading could be more interesting to students than reading individually. Mohamad

explained: *“reading in a group would arouse students’ curiosity and hold their attention as they feel more responsible for their own learning”*. Noor also believed that collaborative reading can *“boost students’ self-confidence” as they work together and “encourage one another in accomplishing reading tasks”*.

As for comprehension, Ahmed was convinced that collaboration could improve students’ understanding of the text they read. He argued that *“teamwork spirit”* makes students *“interact more”* and *“feel more responsible for each other’s success”* in completing a reading task.

- *Concerns about collaboration in reading lessons:* Almost all interviewed teachers considered ‘class-control’ as the main concern for them when implementing collaboration in reading lessons. Noor, for example, commented *“the class could easily become chaotic and out of control”*. He reasoned that students are not used to such type of learning environment. A second concern for teachers was the ‘extra workload’ that they need to manage. Mohamad felt *“this type of teaching needs a lot of preparation and organisation. We [teachers] already have so much to deal with”*. A third concern was to do with failure in group dynamics. Ahmad, for instance, feared that *“students might not help each other in their groups. Some students might not respect the group codes and get into a major conflict”*. He also warned against *“free-riders”* in groups, who do not participate in group work. The fourth concern pertained to practicalities. Some teachers believed that collaboration could be ‘very time-consuming’ during the reading class because *“teachers need to make lots of preparations, organisation and monitoring”*, as Mohamad explained. There was also the issue of classroom logistics, which involved the equipment and materials needed for collaborative work. Mansouri believed that schools do not usually provide enough support in this respect.

Regarding the interviews with EFL supervisors, all supervisors held positive attitudes towards collaboration and expressed their enthusiasm to implement it English language teaching. However, they all noted that applying collaboration in Saudi EFL classrooms is extremely limited at best. On the rare occasions when collaboration is implemented, most supervisors described them as ‘poorly executed’ and ‘disorganised’, which made the experience ‘unpleasant’ and ‘ineffective’.

By examining the findings of the questionnaire and interviews, a link could be established between them. The acquired data from the interviews shows that lack of first-hand

experience in implementing collaborative reading and the above-mentioned concerns could explain why a considerable number of teachers who participated in the questionnaire were undecided or even in disagreement with some statements about collaborative reading.

4.4.2 EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity

Table 33 below shows the descriptive statistics as well as the mean score of the attitude towards creativity questionnaire that was answered by 46 EFL teachers. Teachers' attitudes, in general, were slightly positive towards creativity (Mean= 3.65). However, an in-depth analysis of responses revealed some interesting observations, which will be discussed next.

Regarding teachers' feelings towards infusing creativity in reading classes, almost two thirds of the respondents (61%) liked the idea of employing creativity in their reading classes. Yet approximately one quarter of them (24%) had negative feelings towards the idea and 15% were undecided. Similarly, more than half of the teachers felt creativity activities in reading classes would improve students' attitudes towards reading. However, 24% of teachers disagreed, and 20% of them remained neutral.

Considering teachers' beliefs about creativity, only 22% of teachers believed creativity is a clear concept to them while more than half (54%) of them thought the concept of creativity is ambiguous, and the remaining 24% were not sure. Moreover, almost half of the teachers (48%) maintained that creativity is not applicable in reading lessons while an approximate percentage (41%) thought it could. Similarly, when teachers were asked about the usefulness creative thinking, more than half of the teachers did not believe in its benefits and 34% thought it is not important. Yet, 24% of responses were in favour of its usefulness and 32% of teachers thought it is worth the time and effort.

Additionally, teachers' responses seemed to be divided regarding the suitability of creativity activities to large classes. One third of the responses was in favour, another third opposed and the final third was undecided. Furthermore, just 2% of teachers thought that incorporating creativity in their classes would improve their teaching skills, most of them (81%) did not think it would make a significant contribution, while another 17% held a neutral opinion. The final observation about teachers' beliefs pertains to whether the current reading lessons foster creativity. When teachers were asked about this point, more than half of them believed that reading lessons does not improve creativity. One third of the respondents were undecided and only 9% thought that reading could actually develop students' creativity.

With respect to conative domain of teachers' attitudes towards creativity, more than half of teachers did not feel the desire to incorporate creativity activities in their reading classes. Still, more than a quarter of them (26%) were uncertain and only 19% did wish to use this type of activity in their teaching. Similarly, when asked whether they had plans to implement creativity activities in reading lessons, more than half of respondents expressed that they do not have the intention of use these activities in the future. Only 20% of teachers have plans to introduce creativity in their classes while one third of them held neutral opinions to this idea.

Item	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.Creativity is a vague concept to me	8	17%	17	37%	11	24%	5	11%	5	11%
2.The current reading lessons can improve students' creativity	1	2%	3	7%	15	33%	13	28%	14	30%
3.Creative thinking skills are useless in reading classes	14	30%	11	24%	10	22%	5	11%	6	13%
4.Creativity activities in reading classes are a waste of time	7	15%	8	17%	15	33%	8	17%	8	17%
5.I intend to use creativity activities in my reading lessons	4	9%	5	11%	12	26%	13	28%	12	26%
6.Using creativity activities improves my teaching skills	0	0%	1	2%	8	17%	15	33%	22	48%
7.I want to incorporate creativity activities in my reading classes	2	4%	7	15%	12	26%	12	26%	13	28%
8.Creativity activities are applicable in reading lessons	7	15%	12	26%	5	11%	15	33%	7	15%
9.Creativity activities in reading classes have a negative influence on students' attitudes towards reading	6	13%	5	11%	9	20%	13	28%	13	28%
10.Creativity activities are inappropriate in large classes	6	13%	11	24%	15	33%	9	20%	5	11%
11.I dislike the idea of using creative thinking exercises in my reading lessons	5	11%	6	13%	7	15%	13	28%	15	33%
TOTAL	60	12%	86	17%	131	22%	121	24%	120	24%
OVERALL MEAN	3.65									

Table 33: Teachers' attitudes towards creativity

The findings about teachers' attitudes towards creativity questionnaire that were presented above seemed to support the factors identified in section (4.3.2) above which were derived from interviews with EFL teachers and supervisors. These factors include 'Unclear concept of creativity', 'Inappropriate in language teaching', 'Lack of support to creativity in textbooks', 'Irrelevance to reading skill, Unsuitability for Saudi students', 'Lack of teacher training on fostering creativity', 'Constraints' and 'old-fashioned and teacher-centered approach to teaching English'.

An important conclusion that could be drawn from the factors mentioned above is the need to introduce the concept of creativity as well as its importance and applications in language classrooms. The obtained results in this study clearly indicate that many teachers, even supervisors, do not seem to have a clear understanding of creativity. Moreover, some of them associate creativity with outstanding ‘inventions’ and major ‘breakthroughs’, which did not make sense to them in language classes. Familiarizing teachers with creativity and its applications can have a huge influence on addressing the misconceptions they may have about creativity, which can lead to an improvement in their attitudes. The change in teachers’ attitudes would reflect positively on their behavior in reading classes even if textbooks do not support creativity. Teachers would willingly work on their teaching methods and design their own activities and questions that foster for creativity.

4.5 The impact of Creative Circles on learners’ reading comprehension

As discussed in Chapter 3, the TELC (The European Language Certificates) reading comprehension test was adopted and administered in order to address the question of whether Creative Circles could improve students’ reading comprehension. Two forms of reading comprehension test were administered (as pre- and post-tests) before and after the implementation of Creative Circles on the experimental group, the other two groups also took the reading comprehension tests (pre and post) for comparison reasons. The test results [The obtained results], which will be discussed next, showed that the experimental group made a significant improvement in their reading comprehension in the post-test [phase of reading comprehension test] compared to the comparison groups, indicating the positive effect of Creative Circles on students’ reading comprehension.

In this section, the results of the pre- and post-tests will be presented and the necessary comparisons will be made to identify the impact of Creative Circles on students’ reading comprehension. Moreover, relevant findings from qualitative tools (interviews and journals) will be provided accordingly.

4.5.1 Pre intervention phase

Before the start of the intervention programme, the first form of the reading comprehension test was administered to the three participating groups to measure the comparability of students’ reading comprehension abilities. A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out to examine whether any significant differences exist in the

mean scores among the three groups. A box plot was generated for the three groups (Figure 10), and by comparing the scores of the three groups, it is clear that the median is similar, with the median of *Control Group2* is slightly lower. The *Experimental Group* and *Control Group2* appear to have larger variability than *Control Group1*. However, all of the three groups are reasonably symmetric and no obvious outliers in any of the groups were identified.

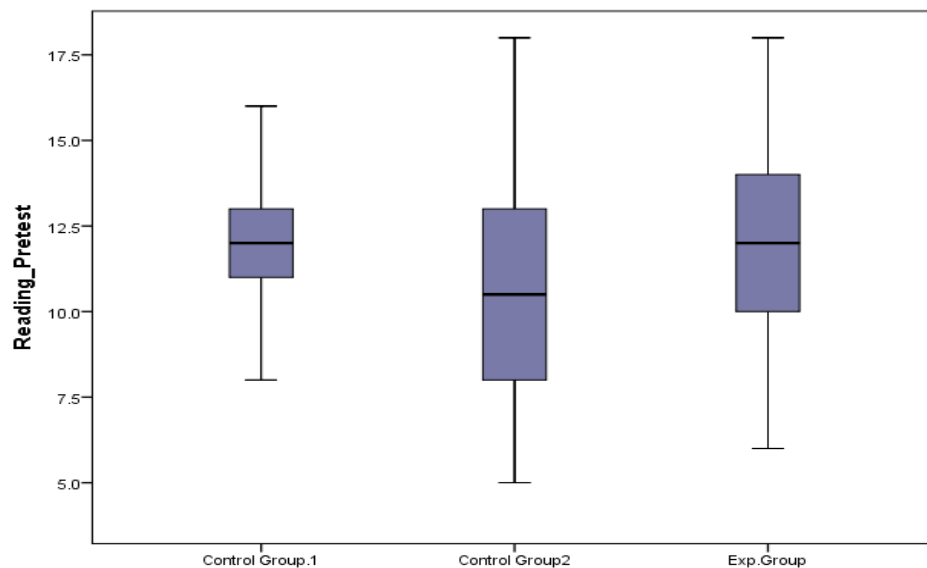


Figure 10: Boxplot of the three groups' scores in the reading comprehension pretest

For further investigation, the mean scores and standard deviation for each group in the pre-test were compared (Table 34). Also the results from the ANOVA test of students' scores were obtained (Table 35).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Comparison group1	30	11.67	2.24	10.8	12.5	6	16
Comparison group 2	30	10.70	3.63	9.3	12.0	5	18
Experimental Group	30	11.70	3.06	10.5	12.8	6	18

Table 34: Descriptive statistics results for pre intervention phase reading comprehension test

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant [*Brown-Forsythe F* (2, 76) = 1.05, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of the pre intervention phase reading comprehension test (See Table 35) did not reveal any statistical significant differences between the three groups: [*F* (2, 87) = 1.05, $p > .05$], indicating that all three

groups had similar levels of reading comprehension abilities prior to implementing Creative Circles.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	19.3	2	9.678	1.05	.35
<i>Within Groups</i>	801.2	87	9.210		
<i>Total</i>	820.6	89			

Table 35: ANOVA among the groups in the pre intervention phase reading comprehension test

4.5.2 Post intervention phase

After implementing the Creative Circles to the experimental group, another equivalent form of the reading comprehension test was administered to the three participating groups. A box plot was generated for the three groups (Figure 11). By comparing the scores of the three groups, it is clear that the median of the *Experimental Group* is much higher than the other two groups, whereas the medians of both *Control Group1* and *Control Group2* are almost the same. The *Experimental Group* and *Control Group2* appear to have larger variability than *Control Group1*. Overall, all of the three groups are reasonably symmetric and no obvious outliers in any of the groups were identified.

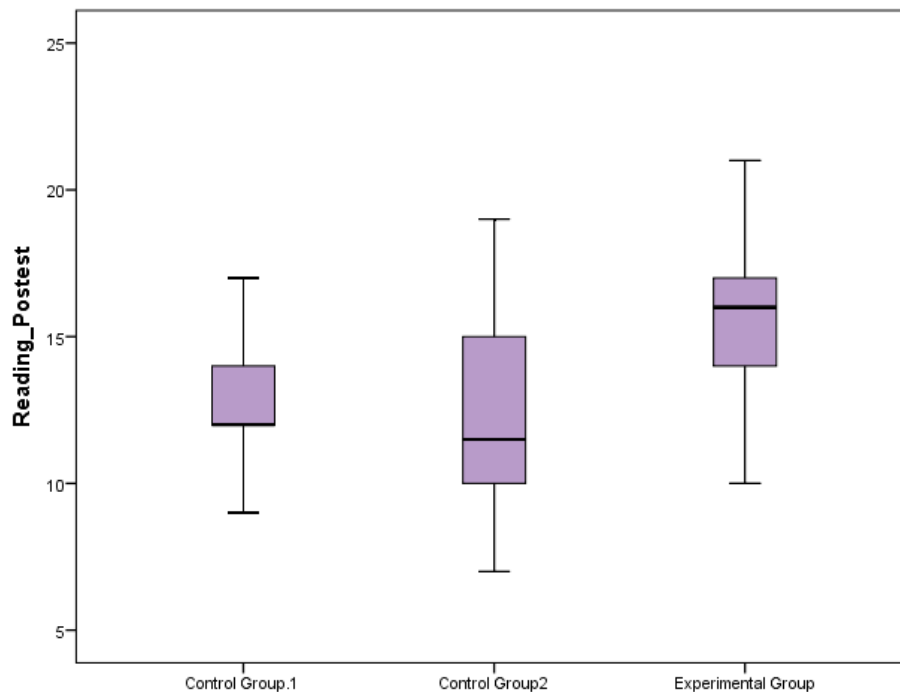


Figure 11: Boxplot of the three groups' scores in the reading comprehension post-test

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether any significant differences existed in the mean scores among the three groups. Table 36 shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each group in the post-test, whereas Table 37 shows the results obtained from the ANOVA test of students' scores.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Confidence Interval for Mean</i>		<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
				<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>		
<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	12.6	2.1	11.85	13.42	8	17
<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	11.9	3.1	10.80	13.13	7	19
<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	15.8	2.7	14.84	16.89	10	22

Table 36: Descriptive statistics results for post intervention phase reading comprehension test

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant [*Levene F* (2, 87) = 2.32, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of the post intervention phase reading comprehension test (See Table 37) revealed significant statistical differences between the three groups: [F (2, 87) = 18.045, $p < .05$], indicating that the participating groups had different levels of reading comprehension after the implementation of Creative Circles approach to the experimental group. To find out exactly where the differences among the groups occur, a post-hoc test was needed.

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	261.089	2	130.544	18.045	.000
<i>Within Groups</i>	629.400	87	7.234		
<i>Total</i>	890.489	89			

Table 37: ANOVA among the groups in the post intervention phase reading comprehension test

The post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (Table 38) indicated that the mean score for the experimental group ($M = 15.8$, $SD = 2.7$) was significantly different from both comparison groups, Comparison Group1 ($M = 12.6$, $SD = 2.1$) and Comparison Group2 ($M = 11.9$, $SD = 3.1$). The results also show that Comparison Group1 did not differ significantly from Comparison Group2. The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was considerably high as the calculated effect size using eta squared was 0.64.

<i>(I) Group</i>	<i>(J) Group</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Confidence Interval</i>	
					<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<i>Comparison group1</i>	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	.667	.694	.604	-.99	2.32

<i>Comparison group 2</i>	Experimental Group	-3.233*	.694	.000	-4.89	-1.58
	Comparison group1	-.667	.694	.604	-2.32	.99
<i>Experimental Group</i>	Experimental Group	-3.900*	.694	.000	-5.56	-2.24
	Comparison group1	3.233*	.694	.000	1.58	4.89
	Comparison group 2	3.900*	.694	.000	2.24	5.56

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

Table 38: Multiple Comparisons Tukey HSD test between groups for post reading test scores

Furthermore, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Table 39) revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension scores following participation in the Creative Circles program, $Z = 4.91$, $p < .000$, with a large effect size ($r = .64$). The median score for the reading comprehension test increased from pre-program ($Md = 12$) to post-program ($Md = 16$).

		<i>Ranks</i>				
		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>Sum of Ranks</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
<i>Reading_Posttest</i> <i>Reading_Pretest</i>	Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00		
	Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30			4.91	.000

Table 39: Wilcoxon test for the experimental group's pre and post reading test scores

From the findings presented above, it can be concluded that students who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention exhibited better reading comprehension skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups. Moreover, the large effect size that was calculated indicates that 64% of the variance in students' reading comprehension performance could be explained by the implementation of Creative Circles.

The journals and interviews with students from the experimental group and their teacher provided additional insights into the impact of Creative Circles on students' reading comprehension. In sections (4.1.2) and (4.2.2), the influence of Creative Circles was discussed in detail. From the reactions of learners in the experimental group and their teacher, the increase in students' use of reading skills was a key outcome of Creative Circles. The teacher as well as the students reported an improvement in students' use of *expeditious* and *careful* reading skills that were ignored in the conventional reading lessons. In addition, they valued the explicit teaching of reading skills and the clarity, organisation and gradual progression of activities. They also pointed out that Creative Circles contributed significantly in raising students' awareness of various reading skills and in

creating enough opportunities for them to practice and internalize these skills, something that is overlooked by many EFL teachers in Saudi reading classes.

Furthermore, Creative Circles helped students address the issue of vocabulary which, to most EFL students and teachers, hinders comprehension. For example, Jalal was referring to structural clues (such as grammatical functions and morphology) that helped students deal with new vocabulary when he commented in his journal: *“We learned a great deal on how to deal with unfamiliar words. So, we learned that sometimes grammar can help. Sometimes words’ beginnings and endings help”*. Others, like Omar, referred to inferencing from context when he expressed his enjoyment: *“It was very exciting to guess the meaning of a new word by reading what came before and after it”*.

Moreover, the efficiency and flexibility of Creative Circles facilitated the development of reading comprehension abilities in multilevel classes. Students were able to learn from each other in a non-threatening environment that provided planned as well as incidental learning opportunities. Another key outcome of Creative circles, which contributed to improving students’ reading comprehension, took the shape of positive attitudes towards reading among learners. This was evident in the increase of their enjoyment of reading as well as the improve self-confidence. They also showed more readiness to read inside and outside school and more acceptance of students from different levels of linguistic competence.

4.6 The impact of Creative Circles on learners’ Creative Thinking

In order to investigate whether Creative Circles had an effect on learners’ creative thinking, two forms of the verbal format of Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) were administered to all participating groups before and after the intervention. The results of the experimental group were compared to those of the comparison groups to check for differences in the overall score of creativity test as well as the scores in three dimensions of creativity: *fluency*, *flexibility* and *originality*. Analysis of the obtained data revealed that students in the experimental group scored significantly higher than the two comparison groups in the overall creativity test as well as in two subsets of creativity: *fluency* and *flexibility*. Below, key results will be presented in details along with findings obtained from journals and interviews with students and the teacher of the experimental group.

4.6.1 Pre-intervention phase

Before the start of the intervention programme, the first form of creativity test was administered to the three participating groups. A box plot was generated for the three groups (Figure 12), and by comparing the scores of the three groups, it is clear that the median is similar, with the median of *Experimental Group* is slightly lower. The *Experimental Group* appear to have larger variability than the *Control Groups 1 and 2*. However, all three groups are reasonably symmetric and no obvious outliers in any of the groups were identified.

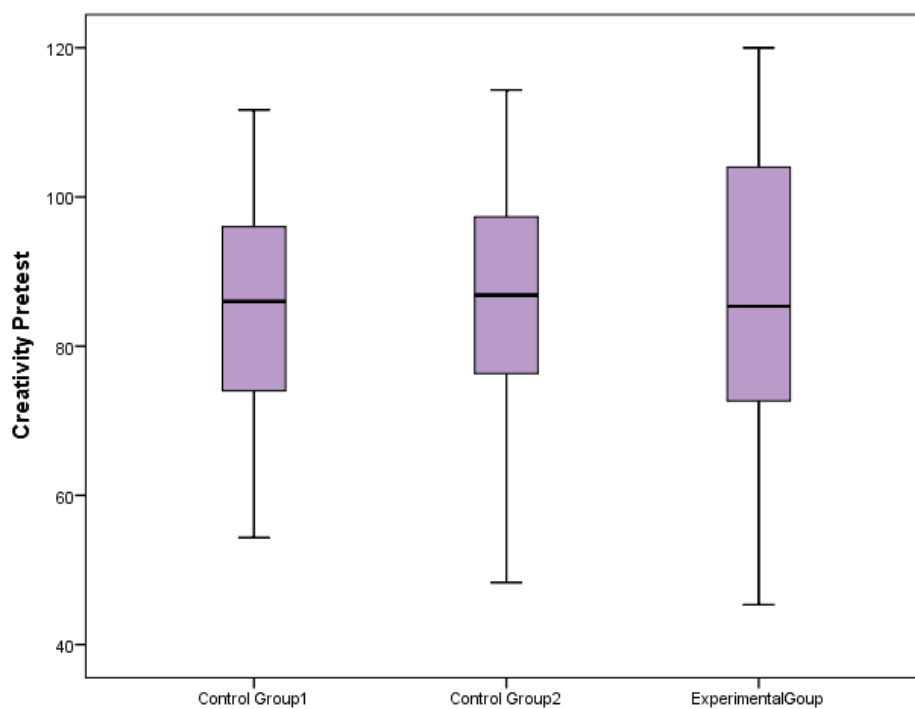


Figure 12: Boxplot of the three groups' scores in the creativity pre-test

For further investigation, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out to examine whether any significant differences exist in the mean scores among the three groups. Table 40 shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each group in the pre-test, whereas Table 41 shows the results obtained from the ANOVA test of students' scores.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Total	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	54.7	16.4	34	80
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	55	17.7	38	79
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	56.3	20.4	35	82
Fluency	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	58.4	17	35	81
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	59.4	19.1	37	82

	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	53.4	23	30	83
Flexibility	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	54.5	16.6	34	80
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	55.1	18.4	35	86
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	56.2	20.3	34	85
Originality	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	51.4	15.8	33	85
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	50.7	16.4	30	80
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	59.4	18.7	30	81

Table 40: Descriptive statistics results for pre intervention phase creativity test

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant [*Levene F* (2, 57) = .356, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of the pre intervention phase creativity test (See Table 41) did not reveal any statistical significant differences between the three groups: [Total *F* (2, 57) = .063, $p > .05$], [Fluency *F* (2, 57) = .523, $p > .05$], [Flexibility *F* (2, 57) = .068, $p > .05$] and [Originality *F* (2, 57) = .103, $p > .05$], indicating that students in all three groups were within the same levels of creativity prior to implementing Creative Circles. When the ‘average standard score’ for each group was calculated according to the ratings offered in ‘*Manual for scoring and interpreting results*’, students were ranked as ‘average’ as their average scores were between 41-60% (Torrance, 1990).

Dimension		Sum of Squares	df	Mean	F	Sig.
Total	<i>Between Groups</i>	42.1	2	21	.063	.93
	<i>Within Groups</i>	29082	57	334		
	<i>Total</i>	29124	59			
Fluency	<i>Between Groups</i>	416	2	208	.523	.59
	<i>Within Groups</i>	34604	57	398		
	<i>Total</i>	35020	59			
Flexibility	<i>Between Groups</i>	46.489	2	23	.068	.93
	<i>Within Groups</i>	29941	57	344		
	<i>Total</i>	29988	59			
Originality	<i>Between Groups</i>	60	2	30	.103	.90
	<i>Within Groups</i>	25284	57	291		
	<i>Total</i>	25344	59			

Table 41: ANOVA among the groups in the pre intervention phase creativity test

4.6.2 Post intervention phase

After implementing the Creative Circles to the experimental group, another equivalent form of creativity test was administered to the three participating groups. A box plot was generated for the three groups (Figure 13). By comparing the scores of the three groups, it is clear that the median of the *Experimental Group* (96.3) is much higher than the other two groups, whereas the medians of both *Control Group1* and *Control Group2* are very similar (88.5 and 85.8). The *Experimental Group* and *Control Group1* appear to have relatively

larger variability than *Control Group2*. Overall, all of the three groups are reasonably symmetric and no obvious outliers in any of the groups were identified.

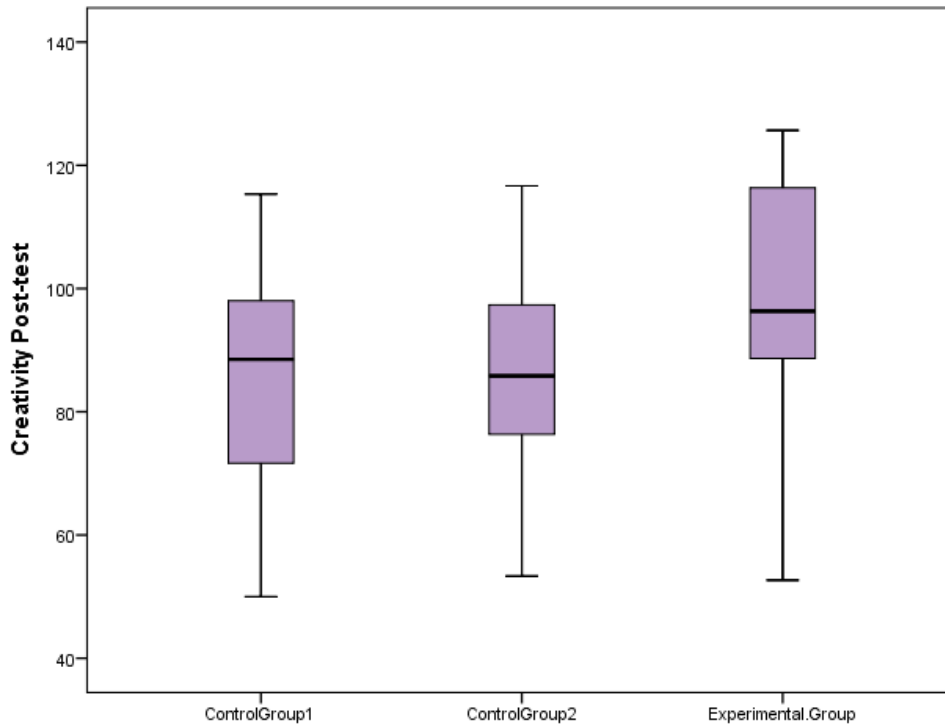


Figure 13: Boxplot of the three groups' scores in the creativity post-test

For further investigation, an ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether any significant differences exist in the mean scores among the three groups. Table 42 shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each group in the post-test, whereas Table 43 shows the results obtained from the ANOVA test of students' scores.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Total	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	54.8	16.9	50	89
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	56	17.3	53	92
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	69.4	19.5	57	97
Fluency	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	58.8	18.4	53	81
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	50	18.9	44	83
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	70.5	23.4	61	90
Flexibility	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	55.2	17.6	52	88
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	55.8	19.1	50	86
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	75.4	17.6	56	95
Originality	<i>Comparison group1</i>	30	50.4	15.6	32	89
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	30	52.2	15.8	33	88
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	30	57.3	19.6	46	90

Table 42: Descriptive statistics results for post intervention phase creativity test

An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses. The test for homogeneity of variance was not significant [*Levene F* (2, 57) = .121, $p > .05$] indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met. The ANOVA of the post intervention phase creativity test (See Table 43) revealed significant statistical differences between the three groups in the following dimensions: [Total F (2, 57) = 4.5, $p < .05$], [Fluency F (2, 57) = 7, $p < .05$] and [Flexibility F (2, 57) = 5, $p < .05$]. However, groups' scores did not differ significantly in *originality* dimension [Originality F (2, 57) = 1.3, $p > .05$]. The findings indicate that, apart from the *originality* dimension, the participating groups demonstrated different performance levels in creative thinking after the implementation of Creative Circles to the experimental group. To find out exactly where the differences among the groups occur, a post-hoc test was needed.

<i>Dimension</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Total	<i>Between Groups</i>	2909	2	1454	4.5	.014*
	<i>Within Groups</i>	28118	57	323		
	<i>Total</i>	31027	59			
Fluency	<i>Between Groups</i>	5882	2	2941	7	.001*
	<i>Within Groups</i>	36149	57	415		
	<i>Total</i>	42031	59			
Flexibility	<i>Between Groups</i>	3332	2	1666	5	.008*
	<i>Within Groups</i>	28746	57	330		
	<i>Total</i>	32078	59			
Originality	<i>Between Groups</i>	776	2	388	1.3	.273
	<i>Within Groups</i>	25614	57	294		
	<i>Total</i>	26391	59			

Table 43: ANOVA among the groups in the post intervention phase creativity test

The post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (Table 44) indicated that the mean score for the experimental group in *fluency* dimension ($M = 70.5$, $SD = 23.4$), *flexibility* dimension ($M = 75.4$, $SD = 17.6$) and overall creativity ($M = 69.4$, $SD = 19.5$) was significantly higher than both comparison groups, comparison group1 [*fluency* dimension ($M = 58.8$, $SD = 18.4$), *flexibility* dimension ($M = 55.2$, $SD = 17.6$) and overall creativity ($M = 54.8$, $SD = 16.9$)] and comparison group2 [*fluency* dimension ($M = 50$, $SD = 18.9$), *flexibility* dimension ($M = 55.8$, $SD = 19.1$) and overall creativity ($M = 56$, $SD = 17.3$)].

The results also show that comparison group1 did not differ significantly from comparison group2. The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was considerably high as the calculated effect size using eta squared for each dimension was as follows: *fluency*=

.50, *flexibility*= .51 and the total score of creativity test= .35. Moreover, when the ‘average standard score’ for each group was calculated according to the ratings offered in ‘*Manual for scoring and interpreting results*’, students in the experimental group were ranked as slightly ‘above average’ as their average scores were between 61-84% in the *total* creativity test score as well as *fluency* and *flexibility* subsets. The other two groups remained within the range of ‘average’, and all three groups were ranked ‘average’ in the *originality* subset.

<i>Creativity Dimension</i>	<i>(I) Group</i>	<i>(J) Group</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>Comparison group1</i>	Comparison group 2	-1.189	4.642	.964
		Experimental Group	-12.611*	4.642	.021
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	Comparison group1	1.189	4.642	.964
		Experimental Group	-11.422*	4.642	.042
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	Comparison group1	12.611*	4.642	.021
		Comparison group 2	11.422*	4.642	.042
<i>Fluency</i>	<i>Comparison group1</i>	Comparison group 2	-1.233	5.263	.970
		Experimental Group	-17.733*	5.263	.003
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	Comparison group1	1.233	5.263	.970
		Experimental Group	-16.500*	5.263	.007
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	Comparison group1	17.733*	5.263	.003
		Comparison group 2	16.500*	5.263	.007
<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Comparison group1</i>	Comparison group 2	-.533	4.693	.993
		Experimental Group	-13.167*	4.693	.017
	<i>Comparison group 2</i>	Comparison group1	.533	4.693	.993
		Experimental Group	-12.633*	4.693	.023
	<i>Experimental Group</i>	Comparison group1	13.167*	4.693	.017
		Comparison group 2	12.633*	4.693	.023

Table 44: Multiple Comparisons Tukey HSD test between groups for post creativity test scores

Furthermore, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Table 45) below revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group’s creative thinking scores in the *Fluency* and *Flexibility* domains following participation in the Creative Circles program, $Z = -3.5$ and 4.7 , $p < .000$, with a large effect size ($r = .45$ and $.61$). The median score for the *Fluency* and *Flexibility* domains increased from pre-program ($Md = 8.50$ and 7.20) to post-program ($Md = 17.63$ and 15), whereas the scores of the *Originality* domain remained unchanged.

<i>Ranks</i>						
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Fluency_Post</i> <i>Fluency_Pre</i>	Negative Ranks	7	8.50	59.50		
	Positive Ranks	23	17.63	405.50		
	Ties	0				
	Total	30			-3.5	.000*

<i>Flexibility_Post</i> <i>Flexibility_Pre</i>	Negative Ranks	3	7.20	55.00		
	Positive Ranks	26	15.00	435.00		
	Ties	1				
	Total	30			-4.7	.000*
<i>Originality_Post</i> <i>Originality_Pre</i>	Negative Ranks	15	14.23	213.50		
	Positive Ranks	10	11.15	111.50		
	Ties	5				
	Total	30			-1.3	.16

Table 45: Wilcoxon test for the experimental group's pre and post creativity test scores

Based on the findings presented above, it can be concluded that students who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention programme exhibited better creative thinking skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups. Moreover, the large effect size that was calculated indicates that implementing Creative Circles could explain 50, 51 and 35% of the variance in students' Fluency, Flexibility and overall creative performances, respectively. However, the three participating groups did not show any significant differences in the 'originality' dimension either before or after the implementation of Creative Circles.

Students' journals and interviews data provided by members from the experimental group as well as their teacher highlighted some crucial insights into the impact of Creative Circles on students' creative thinking. The following are the most recurring:

- *Increased motivation:* as explained in section (4.2.2), students reported in the interviews as well as in their journals that Creative Circles were more enjoyable and engaging. They also explained how Creative Circles boosted their self-confidence and increased their willingness to read when compared to the other two groups. These positive attitudinal observations and the flexibility, efficiency and linguistic value of Creative Circles helped in increasing students' motivation and reinforced the drive to read and to be involved in creative thinking activities. Moreover, the comments provided by the teacher of the experimental group supported the idea that not only that Creative Circles were motivational to students but also to teachers. For example, the teacher of the experimental group pointed out that:

"Students were very active and I think I learned a lot from the interactive nature of the class as well as peer teaching. This made me realise the importance of student-centre approach. I was deeply moved by students' efforts and active participation".

- *Clearer conception of creativity:* as discussed earlier in section (4.3.2), most teachers felt that creativity is a confusing concept. Some of them claimed that they had never heard or thought about it in EFL classroom context. The teacher of the experimental group did not hold a different view prior to the experiment. However, after implementing Creative Circles, he believed that:

“Contrary to what I used to think, creativity is not only about inventions and making outstanding discoveries. It can also be about little things in life. The most important thing for us [teachers] is to encourage students’ creativity and provide them with enough opportunities to simultaneously enhance their creativity and language abilities”.

- *Promotion of group creativity:* most students emphasised the benefits of group creativity and the sharing of ideas with other members of the group in creativity exercises. Jalal mentioned an important aspect that stimulate divergent thinking when he commented *“our group consisted of different levels of students who had different learning backgrounds. We were able to generate lots of ideas and solutions”*. This point highlights the positive influence of diversity of roles and education in promoting creativity in the face of tendency to establish uniformity in creating ideas. Moreover, the social interaction role in promoting creativity was voiced by some students. For instance, Nasser commented:

“Members of my group were committed to doing the tasks properly, and we communicated with each other with respect and support. We felt equal and everyone had something to contribute”.

- *Promotion of thinking and metacognitive awareness:* The majority of interviewed students praised Creative Circles as conducive to nurturing thinking and metacognitive awareness. Omar, for example, recalled how the activities in Creative Circles encouraged him to: *“think and read between and beyond the lines”*. He explained:

“It was an eye opening experience to be involved in tasks such as creativity activities, functions of sentences, making inferences and evaluating texts. Such tasks make you think very deeply and learn more”.

Moreover, some students believed that Creative Circles helped raise their metacognitive awareness. Beside activities and questions in each lesson that show the value of metacognition and develop higher order thinking skills, students indicated that the learning journals they wrote after each lesson were beneficial to their metacognition. Badr, for

instance, explained how journals helped him to learn to regulate his thinking by saying that:

“Journals were like self-evaluation exercise. The process of writing a journal helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses, which allows me to think of ways to improve myself. I even compare my notes in my journals regularly as the year progresses”.

- *Classroom practices conducive to creativity development:* when the students and their teacher were asked about classroom practices that encouraged them to think creatively, the mentioned practices such as ‘working in groups’, ‘independency’, ‘facilitative role of teacher’, ‘respect between teacher and students and among groups’, ‘encouraging curiosity and risk-taking’, ‘teacher’s genuine interest in students’ efforts’, ‘evaluating ideas’, and ‘teacher’s modelling’.
- *Creativity-friendly tasks:* students as well as the teacher of the experimental group were asked about the tasks that, in their views, encourage creativity during the intervention. They indicated that ‘divergent thinking tasks’ which involved ill-defined problems (such as the creativity activities at the beginning and the end of each lesson), ‘open-ended tasks’ (like post-reading questions) and ‘unfamiliar tasks’ (like *fact/opinion*, *author’s bias*, *text type* and *text organisation*).
- *The need for fostering creativity in EFL classrooms:* during the interviews, students were asked whether they were involved in creativity activities prior to Creative Circles programme. Almost, all of them maintained that they had never exposed to such activities in any EFL classroom or any school subject for that matter. Even the teacher of the experimental group stated that he had little knowledge of creativity and its implementation in EFL contexts prior to participating in the experiment. He also revealed that most of the textbooks he taught gave very little space, if any, to creativity. He emphasised the need fostering creativity in EFL textbooks when he commented:

“Saudi educational policy makers need to be more practical and put words into actions. They need to ask curriculum designers to adopt creativity exercises in the prescribed textbooks they put in use in our schools”.

He also asked for *“some room of freedom for teachers to plan and prepare their own materials that promote creativity”*. However, before doing that, he stressed the need for:

“Providing teachers with sufficient training and support to help them explore the concept of creativity and the different ways of integrating it into their classroom teaching practice”.

He believed that in doing so, many ‘myths’ about creativity and its applications in EFL contexts could be eliminated, and that teachers would be more convinced that encouraging creativity is beneficial for teachers as well as students.

4.6.3 The correlation between reading comprehension and creative thinking

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there was an association between students’ scores in reading comprehension test and their creative thinking test scores. To this end, the scores (pre and post) of experimental group in the reading comprehension test and the creativity test were correlated using Pearson’s r correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Regarding pretest scores, results (Table 46) did not show any significant correlation between the two variables (reading comprehension and creativity), $r = .10$, $n = 30$, $p > .0005$. Similarly, no significant relationship between the two variables was observed in the post-tests phase, $r = .20$, $n = 30$, $p > .0005$.

		<i>Creativity _Pretest</i>	<i>Reading_ Pretest</i>
<i>Creativity _Pretest</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1	.102
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.592
	<i>N</i>	30	30
<i>Reading_ Pretest</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.102	1
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.592	
	<i>N</i>	30	30
		<i>Creativity _Post-test</i>	<i>Reading_ Post-test</i>
<i>Creativity _Post-test</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1	.201
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.981
	<i>N</i>	30	30
<i>Reading_ Post-test</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.201	1
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.981	
	<i>N</i>	30	30

Table 46: Correlation between pretest/posttest scores of creativity and reading tests

4.7 Summary

To sum up this chapter, based on the research questions of the current study, a descriptive and interpretive analysis of the collected data from different sources and perspectives was presented. Accordingly, the results from statistical analyses as well as findings of the

thematic content analyses were obtained and integrated where appropriate to present the study's findings and avoid repetition.

1.The first research question explored the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' use of reading comprehension skills. Results revealed that Saudi students do not read much in either Arabic or English. Also, they seem to lack sufficient knowledge about reading skills and they do not apply *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills enough when they read English texts. When the Creative Circles programme was implemented, the experimental group showed significant increase (with a large effect size) in their use of expeditious and careful reading skills as compared to the other two comparison groups.

Results obtained from qualitative data revealed that students seemed to be generally satisfied with what they had achieved in *expeditious* reading skills such as skimming and scanning. They believed Creative Circles addressed the 'need to do more scanning activities' than what they were doing in the past. In fact, the majority of students mentioned that prior to the intervention programme there was not enough emphasis on skills such as 'activating prior knowledge', 'previewing' and 'making predictions'. All of the attention, in their opinion, was given to reading aloud and answering questions based on the reading passage.

As for *careful* reading skills, the majority of students pointed out that they had never been involved in activities that were geared towards developing careful reading skills before the Creative Circles intervention programme. As these skills were included in the Creative Circles programme, most students expressed positive comments about the benefits of being involved in such an experience.

Moreover, the teacher of the experimental group held a very positive view of their Creative Circles role in terms of introducing and developing students' reading skills in English. The teacher valued this programme's significance in engaging and improving students' reading skills, and praised the logical structure and organisation of the programme and the 'reading skills training-oriented' aspect of it. Based on his observations, he asserted that both developing 'students' awareness of reading skills' and having 'a reflective attitude' were considered crucial for the success as well significant outcomes of this programme.

2.The second question of the study attempted to explore the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards reading. Prior to implementing Creative Circles, results from the pre application quantitative and qualitative tools showed slightly

negative attitudes held by students against reading. They showed signs of discomfort, anxiety and fear of being ridiculed'. They also had negative self-perception about their linguistic abilities and that they were unable to make general sense of what they read. They also believed that there is a lack of connection with what they read in English texts and that reading in English in their own context is uselessness.

After implementing Creative Circles, students in the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their attitudes towards reading compared to the other two groups. Students held very positive views about Creative Circles, describing them as motivational and appropriate to their level of language proficiency. With regard to reading comprehension, most students believed their reading skills were improved. Moreover, as a social communication tool, Creative Circles appeared to have a positive influence on classroom interaction. The teacher of the experimental group mentioned the following as some of the main benefits of Creative Circles: 'enjoyment', 'diversity acceptance', 'increased confidence', 'linguistic value', and 'readiness'. He also expressed his satisfaction at how weaker students became more interested and involved in reading tasks.

3.The third question examines the extent to which EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking. The results pertaining to *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills showed that the majority of participating teachers do not promote them in classroom. Based on interviews with teachers, the main reasons underlying lack of attention to reading skills include unfamiliarity with reading skills, lack of teacher training, issues with English teaching textbooks, presuppositions about students' abilities, resistance to change, and avoiding responsibility. Furthermore, EFL supervisors provided the following as some of the reasons that hinder the promotion of reading skills in Saudi EFL reading classes: indifference to teaching, overemphasis on reading aloud, exam-oriented teaching and teachers' low level of language proficiency.

Regarding promoting creativity, the findings of the questionnaire showed that Saudi EFL teachers make little effort to foster creativity in their teaching practice. When teachers were interviewed about their views on creativity, some of the most common themes were 'unclear concept of creativity', 'creativity is inappropriate in language teaching', 'lack of support to creativity in textbooks', 'irrelevance of creativity to reading skill', 'unsuitability of creativity for Saudi students' and 'lack of teacher training on fostering creativity'. In addition to teachers' unfamiliarity with the concept of creativity, supervisors believed that

teachers' old-fashioned way of teaching hinder the promotion of creativity in language classes.

4.The fourth question relates to EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity. With regard to collaborative reading, it seemed that teachers held a slightly positive attitude. More than half of the teachers were in favour of employing collaborative reading in their classes. However, almost one third of respondents were against collaborative reading and another 14% felt unsure. Interviews with EFL teachers revealed that most of them did not seem to have a fully established understanding about the concept of collaboration. Moreover, when teachers were asked whether they actually incorporate collaboration in reading classes or with other skills in general, the majority of them did not experience collaboration-based language classes. Some of the main concerns about collaborative learning, according to teachers, were class-control, extra workload, failure in group dynamics, classroom logistics and practicality.

As for EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity, students' attitudes, in general, were slightly positive towards creativity. The findings of teachers' attitudes towards creativity questionnaire seemed to support the factors which were derived from interviews with EFL teachers and supervisors. These factors include 'unclear concept of creativity', 'inappropriate in language teaching', 'lack of support to creativity in textbooks', 'irrelevance to reading skill, unsuitability for Saudi students', 'lack of teacher training on fostering creativity', 'constraints' and 'old-fashioned and teacher-centered approach to teaching English'. An important implication that can be drawn here is the need to introduce the concept of creativity as well as its importance and applications in language classrooms. The obtained results in this study clearly indicate that many teachers, even supervisors, do not seem to have a clear understanding of creativity.

5.To address the fifth question, which investigates the impact of Creative Circles approach on EFL learners' reading comprehension, two forms of reading comprehension test were administered before and after the implementation of Creative Circles programme on the experimental group and the comparison groups. The obtained results showed that the experimental group made a significant improvement in their reading comprehension in the post phase of reading comprehension test compared to the comparison groups, indicating the positive effect of Creative Circles on students' reading comprehension.

The qualitative data results revealed an increase in students' use of *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills as a key outcome of Creative Circles. Students also pointed out that Creative Circles contributed significantly in raising students' awareness of various reading skills and in creating enough opportunities for them to practice and internalize these skills, something that is overlooked by many EFL teachers in Saudi reading classes. Furthermore, Creative Circles helped students address the issue of vocabulary which, to most EFL students and teachers, hinders comprehension. Moreover, the efficiency and flexibility of Creative Circles facilitated the development of reading comprehension abilities for multilevel classes and improved students' attitudes towards reading.

6. The Sixth and final question investigates the impact of Creative Circles approach on EFL learners' creative thinking. Two forms of the verbal format of Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) were administered to all participating groups before and after the intervention. Results showed that students who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention programme exhibited better creative thinking skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups. Moreover, the large effect size that was calculated indicates that implementing Creative Circles could explain 50%, 51% and 35% of the variance in students' Fluency, Flexibility and overall creative performances, respectively. However, the three participating groups did not show any significant differences in the 'originality' dimension either before or after the implementation of Creative Circles.

Students' journals and interview data provided by members from the experimental group, as well as their teacher, highlighted some crucial insights into the impact of Creative Circles on students' creative thinking. The most recurring themes were: increased motivation, clearer conception of creativity, promotion of group creativity, promotion of thinking and metacognitive awareness, and the need for fostering creativity in EFL classrooms.

Overall, the findings and discussion in this chapter lead to the conclusion that the implementation of Creative Circles improved reading comprehension of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners as well as their creative thinking. Findings also showed an increase in students' use of reading skills and an improvement of their attitudes towards reading and collaborative reading. The next chapter discusses these findings as well as other observations and outcomes from the research questions through the theoretical and empirical dimensions of this study.

5. Chapter Five: Discussions

Introduction

The main goal of this study was to examine the practicability of a Creative Circles approach in a Saudi middle school EFL classroom by investigating its effect on students' reading comprehension and creative thinking. However, before implementing the Creative Circles approach, the study explored students' reading habits and their use of reading comprehension skills. The Study also investigated Saudi EFL teachers' promotion of reading skills and creativity as well as their attitudes towards creativity and collaboration in EFL classrooms.

The sample in this study consisted of three third-grade middle school Saudi EFL classes (thirty students per class) 45 Saudi EFL teachers and six EFL supervisors. The three classes participated in a three-month long quasi-experimental study in which the Creative Circles approach was applied to the experimental group, whereas the second group received some of the tweaked lessons and the third group did not receive any additional materials. The quantitative data collection methods involved questionnaires about use of reading skills, attitudes and promotion of creativity and collaboration. They also included reading comprehension and creativity tests. As for the qualitative data collection methods, students' and teacher reflective journals and semi-structured interviews were used.

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 4 and considers the implications related to reading comprehension and creativity in EFL contexts. The organisation of the discussion will be around the answers to the research questions stated in Chapter 4 above. Accordingly, the first section in this chapter discusses the effect of the Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' use of reading comprehension skills (Section 5.15.1). Then, the findings concerning the impact of Creative Circles on Saudi EFL students' attitudes towards reading will be considered in the second section (Section 5.2). Next, the extent to which EFL teachers promote the use of reading skills and creativity as well as their attitudes towards creativity and collaboration will be explored in Sections 5.3 and 5.4. After that, Sections 5.5 and 5.6 present the impact of Creative Circles on EFL students' reading comprehension and creativity. Following on from this, the theoretical and practical implications of the study will be considered. Finally, the thesis will conclude with

reflections on the contribution of the study, its limitations and possible directions for future research.

5.1 The effect of Creative Circles on learners' use of reading skills

The first research question investigated the effect of the Creative Circles approach on students' use of reading skills. However, this section will begin with exploring learners' reading habits first as they might contribute to the understanding of learners' current reading proficiency level and use of reading skills. To achieve this, the participants were surveyed and interviewed about their reading habits in Arabic and in English. They were also asked about their use of reading skills before and after the implementation of the Creative Circles approach. The results obtained from an analysis of questionnaires and interview data were presented in the previous chapter. An overview of the key findings with respect to this research question will be provided next, and further detailed discussions and recommendations will follow.

5.1.1 Saudi students lack reading habits

A questionnaire was administered to explore students' reading habits in Arabic (native language) and in English (target language). Analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of students rarely read in Arabic or in English at home. Of those who read, very few read in Arabic, and none of them read in English on daily basis. When students were asked whether they "read enough", the majority of them reported they do not read enough, even though they want to, in both languages. In addition, students seemed to prefer reading from electronic sources with a limited word count such as social communication networks, e-mails and text messages and they were also interested in reading short stories.

Results were similar in both languages when students were asked about the people who have the most influence on them to read. More than one third of students reported that 'teachers' are their first source of motivation to read. Second to teachers, family members were considered influential in increasing students' interest to read. According to students' responses, 'self-motivation' was ranked third in encouraging them to read whereas 'friends' seemed to be the least factor in motivating students to read. However, it is worth mentioning that there were not any major differences between 'teachers', 'family' and 'self-motivation', indicating that they have similar importance in encouraging students to read. In addition, the data gathered from interviews conducted with students seems to support

the findings of the questionnaire. Many of the interviewed students indicated that they rarely read.

5.1.2 Saudi students rarely make use of reading skills

The pre-intervention phase revealed that the majority of students rarely use careful and expeditious reading skills. The findings of the questionnaire were corroborated by data from interviews with students, teachers and supervisors.

Examining students' accounts of how they approach a reading passage shows that very few of them demonstrated some knowledge of *expeditious* reading skills such as previewing and skimming as well as *careful* reading skills such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through using contextual clues. The overwhelming majority of students were unfamiliar with reading skills in general and how to read passages appropriately.

When students were asked about the difficulties they encounter while they read, almost all of them mentioned 'meaning and pronunciation of new vocabulary' as the main concern. Some students concluded that 'badly structured texts', 'lack of pictures and illustrations', 'complex sentence structure and grammar' were major problems for them when they read. Other students mentioned 'students' unwillingness to make a real effort' and 'teaching methods' as major difficulties. Students indicated that reading lessons were mainly teacher-centred, poorly structured and L1-oriented. The teaching practice seems to lack appropriate reading stages (pre, while and post) activities and little attention was paid to drilling crucial reading skills in both careful and expeditious types of reading. Also, teachers generally emphasis reading aloud and checking students' pronunciation.

EFL teachers and supervisors offered two types of factors that are affecting students' reading abilities namely, internal and external.

5.1.3 Positive effect of Creative Circles approach on students' use of reading skills

After applying the Creative Circles approach to the experimental group, the reading skills questionnaire was re-administered to the three participating classes. The findings indicate that students from the experimental group, who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention programme, tended to use careful and expeditious reading skills significantly more often than students from the other two groups did.

Interview and journal data that was gathered from the experimental group after the implementation of Creative Circles provided some insights into students' use of *careful*

and *expeditious* reading skills. With regard to *expeditious* reading skills, students seem to be generally satisfied with what they had achieved in reading skills such as skimming and scanning. Students believed Creative Circles addressed the need to do more skimming and scanning activities than what they were doing in the past through explicit instruction. It seems that the new approach improved students' attitudes and boosted their confidence. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees mentioned that prior to the intervention programme there was not enough emphasis on skills such as 'activating prior knowledge', 'previewing' and 'making predictions'. All of the attention, in their opinion, was directed to reading aloud and answering questions based on the reading passage.

As for *careful* reading skills, the majority of students pointed out that they had never been involved in activities that were geared towards developing *careful* reading skills before the Creative Circles intervention. As such, most students expressed positive comments about the benefits of this approach such as explicitness and gradation in learning reading skills, exciting and thought –provoking activities, clarity and organisation.

5.1.4 Discussion of findings

With regard to Saudi EFL students' reading habits in both Arabic and English, the findings of this study agree with many Arab world studies (e.g., Jraissati, 2010; Bendriss & Golkowska, 2011; Hanna, 2011; Al-Yacoub, 2012; Kechichian, 2012) which concluded that Arab students, including Saudis, of all levels rarely read as some researchers maintain. The findings of this study also coincide with Saudi studies (e.g., Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015; Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2011; Al-Musallam, 2009) which show that Saudi students do not have the tendency to read in Arabic or in English. In fact, Al-Nujaidi's (2003) found that the majority of Saudi students do not read outside school.

The study confirms the findings of Rajab & Al-Sadi (2015) which indicate that Saudi students spend a considerable amount of time using and reading via social media tools. Indeed, teenagers in general spend a great deal of their time on reading materials related to online gaming and social applications such as Instagram, twitter and Periscope. The texts in these platforms provide readers with short and informal type of texts which are of little use in developing their reading abilities, especially when dealing with academic texts. Therefore, as Rajab & Al-Sadi point out, it is more appropriate to label Saudi students as "unmotivated readers" rather than "non-readers". In this respect, the current study reveals that 'teachers', 'family members' and 'self-motivation' are all crucial in motivating

students to read in both the target and native languages Yet, as the findings of this study suggest, the motivation factor can interact with other internal and external factors, which were mentioned in the previous section. In addition, the results of this study signify the influence of family on developing learners' reading comprehension. At school, Saudi EFL learners spend less than four hours per week learning English, which is obviously not enough to learn the language. Given the limited instruction time learners receive at school, it is quite important to engage families as part of their children's language learning experience (Xu, 2010).

Those factors may also explain the findings of this study concerning students' poor use of *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills. In fact, Alsamadani (2011) confirms these findings by indicating that there is a huge gap between Saudi students' actual reading proficiency level and expected reading proficiency, even at university level. However, the literature on reading provides other factors that might have contributed to students' poor reading comprehension. Among the most cited factors affecting reading in the Saudi context include attitudes towards reading, the reading culture in the L1 community, L1 reading standards, background knowledge and backwash from testing (O'Sullivan, 2004). Even standardized Arabic is not common in Saudi communities as local dialects are more prevalent, creating a unique situation in which reading skills in standardized Arabic are at the second language level, whereas English reading skills are at a third language level. In addition, other reader and text variables are significant in explaining the problems Saudi EFL readers face. On one hand, reader variables include readers' linguistic knowledge (L2 culture, phonology, syntax, morphology, orthography and semantics), metalinguistic knowledge and discourse knowledge. On the other hand, text variables involve text topic, genre, organisation, linguistic features and readability. In fact, this discussion demonstrates the complexity of reading skills as there are many interconnected variables involved, and to address them can be a huge undertaking.

Nonetheless, the outcomes of the Creative Circles approach, as a humble attempt to improve students' reading comprehension, are indeed encouraging. This approach provides students with much needed reading skills training, something they do not seem to experience in their own native language as well as the target language. It recognizes the importance of explicit teaching and practice of word level as well text level reading skills as part of students' daily diet, which is recommended by many researchers (e.g., Nuttall, 1996; Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Atkins, 2013). It also attempts to integrate skill-

based and text-based teaching as it encourages emphasising *careful* and *expeditious* types of reading in every reading class. Moreover, the Creative Circles approach encourages students to be more metacognitively aware of their reading skills and progress in learning in general. This is promoted through explicit teaching, various activities during the lesson and journals that are written after each lesson. Furthermore, the gradation and recycling of reading skills that are part of the approach help students acquire subtler high-order reading skills, and integrate and transfer the learned skills in new contexts.

Teachers might also benefit from this approach. As indicated by previous research as well as the findings of this study, many EFL teachers do not promote reading skills in class due to a lack of knowledge or motivation. The teacher of the experimental group had ample opportunities to expand his knowledge of reading skills as well as to teach and promoted them through materials and training sessions, which could easily be adopted to help other EFL teachers. In addition, the new approach can help motivate teachers as it assigns a facilitative role for them, which may reduce the pressure on them by transferring some of the responsibilities to their students. It also involves teachers in a journey of continuous education and professional development, which can increase motivation immensely (Menyhárt, 2008).

The findings of this study lends support to a number of suggestions. Firstly, there is a need to promote reading habits in students' first and in target languages as well to make students want to read. This can be accomplished through employing school/class libraries and attract students to reading with the help of their teachers. Providing students with a reading-friendly environment where plenty of suitable and interesting reading sources can help students establish and maintain reading habits, which could lead students to become effective readers. Secondly, it is crucial to have intensive reading programmes, which explicitly teach students important reading skills in both their native and target languages. This lends support to *The Developmental Interdependence Theory* which hypothesizes that reading across all languages shares common abilities, which can transfer from the native language to the target language when the reader's L1 reading abilities reach a certain level of proficiency (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006). This is also in support of *The Language Threshold Theory* which holds that a level (threshold) of linguistic proficiency in L2 needs to be attained before L1 linguistic skills can be transferred to facilitate L2 reading (Lems, Miller & Soro, 2010).

The third recommendation concerns the importance of pre-service and in-service teacher training on reading skills instruction as the findings of previous studies and the present study show that they lack the necessary knowledge about reading skills and ways in which they can be promoted. Fourthly, great care should be given to students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation if any success is to be achieved in developing students' reading comprehension. Lastly, this study highlights the need for effective parental involvement in students' education. It provides a range of benefits for parents and children including improvements in reading abilities (Frank & Rosén, 2008; Sylva, Sammons & Taggart, 2004).

5.2 The Effect of Creative Circles on learners' attitudes towards reading

The second research question concerns the effectiveness of Creative Circles in improving students' attitudes towards reading. To this end, an attitude questionnaire was administered to the three participating groups before and after the intervention programme. Also, a section was added to the questionnaire in the post intervention phase to explore the experimental group's attitudes towards reading via Creative Circles. The results from analyzing the questionnaires and interviews were explained in the previous chapter. In what follows, major findings of the analysis will be presented followed by further detailed discussions and recommendations.

Results from the attitude questionnaire and interviews prior to implementing the Creative Circles approach with students and teachers revealed that Saudi students hold slightly negative attitudes towards reading. When the interviews data was analysed in relation to the three attitudes domains in the questionnaire (affective, cognitive and conative), a number of themes were identified. With respect to the affective domain, students voiced feelings of discomfort, anxiety and fear of being ridiculed.

5.2.1 Positive effect of the Creative Circles approach on learners' attitudes towards reading

After implementing the Creative Circles approach in the experimental group, the attitude questionnaire was re-administered to the three participating classes to find out whether there were any significant differences in attitudes towards reading between the three participating groups. The results in all attitude domains for each group suggested that students in the two comparison groups still maintained a slightly negative attitude towards

reading, while the experimental group held a more positive attitude after implementing the new approach. In addition, the effect size was very large, which suggests that 65% of the change in students' attitudes towards reading can be accounted for by the Creative Circles approach.

In addition, a comparison was made between students' attitudes towards reading in English before and after the application of the Creative Circles approach in each domain. The analysis indicated that students' attitudes after the experiment improved significantly in two domains: the *affective* and the *conative*, whereas the *cognitive* domain did not show any significant change. The unchanged attitudes in the cognitive domain was probably because students already understand the value of reading in the target language even before implementing the new approach.

5.2.2 Positive attitudes of students towards reading via Creative Circles

Students in the experimental group were surveyed for their views on their experience of reading via Creative Circles. Results show an overwhelmingly positive reaction to reading via Creative Circles. Students had very positive feelings towards the Creative Circles approach as it motivated them to learn English and enjoy reading. Also, the approach seemed to reduce students' anxiety levels and boost their confidence significantly. Moreover, the majority of students believed the new approach improved their reading comprehension and was appropriate to their level of language proficiency. Furthermore, the results show a high sense of eagerness among students to participate in future collaborative reading activity similar to the one they were introduced to in this experiment.

Students offered a range of reasons why they thought that reading via Creative Circles was a very positive experience. The most common were that the approach was enjoyable and engaging and boosted their self-confidence. Students also praised the approach's flexibility, efficiency and linguistic value. They believe it made them more appreciative of diversity in class and more reflective and self-aware of how and why their understanding changes through time. Most of the students expressed their willingness to participate in reading activities that incorporate Creative Circles.

When the teacher of the experimental group was interviewed after implementing Creative Circles, he echoed many of the points discussed above, especially 'enjoyment', 'diversity acceptance', 'confidence', 'linguistic value' and 'readiness'. He also expressed his satisfaction at how weaker students became more interested and involved in reading tasks.

With respect to shortcomings, students of the experimental group and their teacher pointed out some of the negative aspects of their experience. The most common were unfamiliarity with new types of questions, difficulty with some tasks and some groupwork issues. However, students' overall opinion was very positive and they felt that the Creative Circles approach was very useful. Students' opinions about the approach were also confirmed by their teacher's observations and comments, which were supportive of the intervention programme.

5.2.3 Discussion of findings

This study came as an attempt to investigate the development of students' reading attitudes, an area that have been largely overlooked in the EFL contexts (Lee & Schallert (2014; Karimabadi, Khonamri & Mahdavi, 2015). This section starts with a discussion of the findings concerning students' L2 reading attitudes in general. This is followed by considering the impact of incorporating the Creative Circles approach on students' L2 reading attitudes in light of the related literature.

With respect to students' L2 reading attitudes, this study shows that Saudi students hold a relatively negative attitude towards reading English texts, which agrees with other studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (e.g., Zaid, 1993; Al-Jarallah & Al Ansari 1998; Al-Qahtani, 2010; Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015). Students' feelings of discomfort, anxiety, fear of being ridiculed, beliefs of low self-perception and a lack of eagerness and intentions to read could be attributed, as suggested by findings of this study, to a number of reasons. Firstly, students' poor reading culture and habits in L1 seem to have an influence on their desire to read in L2. This comes in agreement with the conclusions of McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth (1995) and Yamashita (2004) that reading attitudes from L1 could transfer to L2 and that L1 reading attitude is one of the key factors forming L2 attitude (Day & Bamford, 1998).

Secondly, the findings of this study lends support to Alsamadani's (2009) conclusion that the level of reading comprehension skills is very influential in shaping Students' attitudes towards reading. As established by this study as well as other studies (e.g., Al-Nujaidi 2003; Al Abik 2014), Saudi students exhibit low levels of reading comprehension skills. In fact, in the TOEFL score data summary for the last 10 years, Saudi students were at the bottom of list in reading skills performance in the Middle East and North Africa (Al Abik, 2014). Hence, the negative attitudes that students hold towards reading can be justified as Saudi students lack the proper knowledge and practice of effective reading comprehension skills.

This is consistent with previous studies, which point out that the level of reading proficiency is a key factor that influences students' attitudes (e.g., Brooks, Schagen and Nastat, 1997; Clark, Torsi and Strong, 2005).

Thirdly, the present study identifies some issues related to the instructional design, which might contribute to students' L2 reading attitudes. Students mentioned exam-oriented teaching practice and ineffective reading instruction as demotivating. They also indicated that they could not relate to the topics given in reading classes that were uninteresting and outdated. This is consistent with O'Sullivan's (2004) findings that testing backwash, pedagogical approaches and learner interests contribute significantly to students' attitudes. In addition, this study supports the argument of Day and Bamford (1998) that pleasant experiences in a language classroom environment (with teachers, peers, learning materials, and activities), can actually develop positive reading attitudes in L2, and vice versa.

Fourthly, as identified by this study, a lack of exposure to English could be a major contributor to L2 reading attitudes. In an EFL context, it is quite difficult to establish a prolonged interaction with English texts to develop a positive attitude inside or outside school. This situation has probably led some students to believe that L2 reading is not useful, at least in the near future. This finding agrees with Al-Seghayer's (2014) conclusion that students find English irrelevant to their immediate needs, except for as a school subject which they can easily pass if they just memorize certain grammatical rules, passages, and vocabulary (Elyas and Picard, 2010). Furthermore, limited exposure to L2 can have a negative influence on students' schemata which is necessary for reading comprehension as well as developing a positive attitude towards reading (Alderson, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2004). Also, lack of exposure may explain why Saudi students are more extrinsically motivated, which means they are more responsive to external factors such as teachers, family members, peers and instructional settings as confirmed by other studies such as Al-Seghayer (2011) and Javid, Al-Asmari, and Farooq (2012).

Regarding the effect of implementing the Creative Circles approach, it seems to have had a positive influence on students' L2 reading attitudes. When students from the experimental group were surveyed to explore their attitudes towards reading via Creative Circles, they showed very positive attitudes, indicating the approach's important role in improving students' reading comprehension since attitudes play a significant effect on L2 reading comprehension (Bernhardt, 2011; Grabe, 2009).

The new approach seems to have successfully addressed most of the factors that influence Saudi students' L2 reading attitudes. Creative Circles as a collaborative reading approach helped students in the experimental group, according to this study's findings, to overcome feelings of discomfort, anxiety and low self-esteem. This is in line with the conclusion of Karimabadi et al. (2015) and Hsu (2010) who reported that their students find this approach of reading instruction enjoyable and interesting. This, in turn, makes students more relaxed, reduces their anxiety levels and boosts their confidence (Brown, 2000).

As for reading comprehension skills, which is another key contributor in shaping L2 learners' reading attitudes, Creative Circles proved to have linguistic value in helping students to gain a deeper understanding of what they read. This might be explained by the confidence students had from working with their peers in a non-threatening environment. This view is shared by Suwantharathip (2012) who believes that reading through this method (reading collaboratively) provides students with the opportunity to gain confidence through talking and expressing their opinions, planning the tasks, grouping data, substantiating ideas with examples and discussing the results. Another explanation of the success of Creative Circles in developing reading skills could be related to the explicit teaching of reading comprehension skills. The systematic explicit practice of reading techniques such as careful and expeditious reading skills can help refine the skills of proficient readers and make low-proficiency students become skilled learners. In fact, many studies (e.g., Armbrister, 2010; Chen, Chen, & Sun, 2010; Mesh, 2010; Bolukbas, Kaskin, & Polat, 2011) support the idea that students' reading comprehension could be improved through collaborative work.

Moreover, Creative Circles seem to stimulate students to read since many of the surveyed and interviewed students from the experimental group expressed their eagerness and intention to read as opposed to their peers in the other comparison groups. This is in line with the findings of Karimabadi, Khonamri and Mahdavi (2015) who illustrated that learners who are engaged in collaborative reading activities show more willingness to read. Again, working with peers in a reduced stress atmosphere can actually improve reading comprehension skills and self-confidence may contribute to students' desires to read even outside school.

Reflectivity is an important aspect of Creative Circles that might have improved students' L2 reading attitudes. Students in the experimental group expressed their appreciation at being able to reflect on their reading experiences regularly. In fact, reflective attitudes help

students to develop a questioning attitude and new perspectives, identify areas for improvement, address new challenges effectively, generalise and apply newly learned knowledge to new situations (Gibbs, 1988). Reflectivity can actually aid the development of students' critical thinking and promote independency (Hinett, 2002). It can also, as this study revealed, improve students' attitudes, enhance learners' motivation and build up their confidence (Graham, 2003; Thrope, 2004).

5.3 EFL teachers' promotion of reading skills and creativity

The third research question explored the extent to which Saudi EFL teachers promote reading skills and creativity in reading classes. To address this question, a two-part questionnaire was administered to 45 middle school EFL teachers. The questionnaire was followed by fourteen interviews with EFL middle school teachers and supervisors. The first part of the questionnaire explored the extent to which teachers practiced teaching reading skills in reading lessons. The second part examined whether creativity is promoted in the EFL setting. Results obtained from the questionnaires and interviews show that EFL teachers do not promote reading skills among students sufficiently, nor do they pay enough attention to creativity in the language classroom context. The next sections will show key findings with further detailed discussions and recommendations.

5.3.1 EFL teachers do not promote reading skills

When teachers were surveyed to find out whether they promote reading skills in their reading classes, the results pertaining to *careful* reading skills show that the majority of them do not promote careful reading skills in classroom. Similarly, results regarding *expeditious* reading skills demonstrate that most teachers chose 'rarely' and 'never' when asked about whether they encourage practicing *expeditious* reading skills in their reading classes. Moreover, interviews with EFL teachers and supervisors revealed that teachers do not attempt to train their students to practice various careful or expeditious reading skills in classroom or at home as an extracurricular reading activity. These findings come in line with Alsamadani (2012) and Sofi (2015) who concluded that EFL teaching practices in Saudi classrooms do not focus on reading skills and strategies but rather on practicing silent reading and literal level of reading comprehension questions.

Interviews with teachers helped to identify some of the reasons for their undermining of reading skills in classrooms. One of the most common reasons was their unfamiliarity

with reading skills and the ways in which to teach them. This result confirms Albik's (2014) finding that Saudi EFL teachers struggle to understand and teach reading skills, which means they lack sufficient knowledge of reading skills (Alsamadani, 2012) as well as the ability to teach them (Alshumaimeri, 2011).

Related to the point above is the lack of training in reading instruction which teachers highlighted in this study. They indicated that there is insufficient pre as well as in-service teacher training in the teaching of language skills, including reading. This finding is confirmed by Al-Seghayer (2015: 91) who indicated that Saudi EFL teachers, "*lack clear instructional materials on how to implement newer methods, adequate training of EFL professionals, and the various responsibilities assigned to EFL teachers*". Saudi teachers' poor reading instruction skills are evident in their classroom teaching practices. Assalahi (2013) describes how a typical reading lesson progresses in Saudi classrooms. According to him, the lesson usually begins by asking students to read the passage silently. This is followed by the teacher's translation of the passage into Arabic before checking students' comprehension orally or in writing. Then, teachers conclude the lesson by writing all of the answers on the board. In fact, Alsamadani (2012) maintains that there is a huge gap between the recommendations of recent studies to move towards the explicit teaching of reading skills and the reality of reading instruction in Saudi Arabia.

Another reason for teachers' indifference to promoting reading skills in Saudi classrooms is that they expect their students to be already proficient readers in English. According to a considerable number of teachers, students should have learned the basics of reading skills before they progress to the middle school level. When teachers discover that their presuppositions about students' abilities were not as expected, some of them are forced to start with remedial programmes, a luxury teachers do not usually have with such tight teaching schedules. Therefore, many teachers do not bother themselves and work with whatever little knowledge and experience students might have about reading skills.

Teachers' resistance to change also contributes to the problem at hand. Results in this study show that teachers develop routines of teaching reading that are hard to break. This could be due to their desire to reduce the workload so that they put as little effort as they possibly can in to teaching reading. Their resistance to change may also be related to having some preconceived ideas about change as representing loss of control over their class or fear of the unknown. This finding is confirmed by Assalahi (2013: 591) who described his experience as an EFL supervisor with Saudi EFL teachers by commenting:

“From my personal experience, one thing I did not find an answer to, at the time, was the slow change, if any, of erroneous teaching assumptions and practices, when most of the teachers defaulted the bulk of their lessons into grammar instruction. No matter how hard I tried to train, observe and discuss implementation of CLA, teachers were less responsive and more "stubborn" to change”.

Related to Assalahi’s comment is what this study revealed about teachers’ avoidance of responsibility and indifference to teaching. Most teachers held students, parents, community, textbooks and school environment responsible for learners’ inefficient reading abilities. EFL supervisors noted that a considerable number of teachers show indifference to teaching as they generally appear to be disinterested and unprepared for lessons. This is supported by the observations of Al-Seghayer (2014), Almaeena (2014) and Khan (2011) who pointed out that Saudi EFL teachers lack both the skills and interest in teaching the English language, a feeling that could easily filter through to their students.

In addition to the points made above, EFL supervisors believe that an exam-oriented type of teaching hinders the promotion of reading skills in reading classes. Based on their fieldwork experience, supervisors noted that the main concern of many EFL teachers is to help students pass the end-of-the-year examinations, in which students are given the same reading passages that they have previously read during the academic year. Hence, reading becomes more of a recalling activity and language turns into a school subject, far from being used as an interactive communication tool, which is one of the major objectives of teaching English in Saudi Arabia (Mahib-ur-Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). In these circumstances, it is quite difficult to expect reading activities to foster creativity and thinking skills. Alsamadani (2009: 73) attested to this conclusion when he commented on reading lessons in Saudi classrooms saying that: *“It is unusual for teachers to ask high-level questions such as critical and analytical ones”.*

An important issue that has been raised in this study is EFL teachers’ low level of language proficiency, which negatively affects the promotion of reading skills in their reading classes. Based on the observations of supervisors, many teachers show limited language competency. This supports Al-Seghayer’s (2014) conclusion that many Saudi EFL teachers are not professionally and linguistically competent and that they lack a firm understanding of methods of teaching language elements. Hence, it is quite difficult to imagine such teachers helping students to practice reading skills since they lack mastery of the reading skills they are trying to teach in the first place. In fact, as Al-Seghayer (2015) noted, a

considerable number of Saudi EFL teachers lack proper command of English as well as language teaching skills such as eliciting thoughts, giving instructions, explaining, giving feedback, and error correction.

Participant in this study maintained that the prescribed textbooks do not actually promote reading skills. Teachers believed there are not enough reading activities that could be utilised to encourage students to practice reading skills. In fact, there is a high level of dissatisfaction among English teachers with the textbooks they are required to work with (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Studies that evaluated EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia show that textbooks do not enhance language skills and creativity in students or teachers (Alshumaimeri, 1999, Albedaiwi, 2014). This could be why many of the participants in this study emphasised the need to pay more attention to reading skills in textbooks. Also, many teachers who participated in this study stressed that they need to be more involved in the process of designing and evaluating any language textbooks as they feel they are largely ignored in this respect. In addition, the ongoing process of piloting many textbooks designed by different publishers for many years in Saudi Arabia has created a disconnection between the three levels of educations (elementary, intermediate and secondary). Lack of proper coordination and planning on the part of the Ministry of Education has left EFL teachers with very little to expect and to work for regarding improving their students reading skills or language skills in general.

5.3.2 EFL teachers do not promote creativity

Participating teachers in the current study were surveyed for their behaviours and beliefs that facilitate the development of creative thinking and the formation of creative habits in their students. The results show that Saudi EFL teachers, in general, make little effort to foster creativity in their teaching practice. The majority of them never or rarely involve students in problem-solving tasks, vary their teaching strategies, accommodate for different styles of learning or use open-ended questions. They rarely incorporate activities that stimulate students' imagination and hardly ever encourage students to evaluate what they read or allow for debating views and ideas. Consequently, Saudi students lack problem solving skills, critical thinking skills and creativity, which is confirmed by this study as well as other studies such as that of Althaqafi (2011) and Alnofaie (2013).

To investigate the unsatisfactory findings about EFL teachers' behaviours that do not foster creativity in reading classes, several EFL teachers and EFL supervisors were interviewed

about the reasons for not promoting creativity in reading classes. One of the most common reasons was the unclear concept of creativity to both EFL teachers and supervisors. Most teachers believe the concept of creativity to be quite confusing. Some claimed they have never heard of creativity while Others held different views of creativity such as ‘generating new ideas’, ‘the ability to come up with unusual answers’, ‘applying ideas in new situations’, ‘giving different opinions’, ‘creating something not thought of’ and ‘generating new ideas’. The varied definitions of creativity that were obtained from this study support the conclusion of Wilson (2005:30) who described teachers’ definitions as wide-ranging and as having different meanings to different people. Having personal ideas about what creativity means can affect a teacher’s approach to teaching, attitudes and assessment of activities that develop creativity (Odena, 2001).

In addition, the current study reveals that EFL teachers believe promoting creativity is inappropriate in language teaching and that it is more suitably associated with other school subjects like science and mathematics. To these teachers, the main goal is to help students learn language skills, not to be creative. It seems that this view was based on the teachers’ own understanding of the concept of creativity as well as their language teaching philosophies. It is quite common among EFL teachers to treat *language* in language classrooms as a subject matter – lexis, structure and phonology, not as a tool to achieve meaning co-construction, where being critical, open to other ideas, collaborative, imaginative and independent is required (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Another reason for lack of creativity promotion by Saudi EFL teachers, as found by this study, is their belief that creativity is irrelevant to reading. Teachers think there is little, if any, connection between the two concepts. This view, as mentioned earlier, can be linked to teachers’ lacking a clear understanding of the concept of creativity, which makes it difficult for teachers to establish possible connections between reading and creativity. In fact, some teachers have never heard of creativity or its applications in language classrooms before. Moreover, in the context of language learning, reading is often perceived by teachers as a skill to be learned and practiced, not as an activity that stimulates students’ imagination and develop their creative thinking (Small & Arnone, 2011).

According to the participating teachers in this study, the available EFL textbooks are not supportive of creativity. Most of them noted that the number of activities that develop students’ creative thinking are extremely limited and that textbooks do not pay much attention to the actual needs of EFL learners and teachers, one of which is developing

creativity and thinking skills. This view is supported by Shaneen's (2010:47) conclusion that *"school textbooks contain very little material which is actually geared towards developing creativity, despite increasing calls for this"*. This perhaps gives an indication that the implementation is not quite as advanced as the policy statements set by the Saudi Ministry of Education and that there is a need for major reforms to textbooks to successfully achieve important goals such as developing creativity.

There is a common perception amongst a considerable number of EFL teachers that Saudi students are not well prepared to be creative. Some teachers believed that creativity is not suitable for Saudi students as their abilities are way below being capable of carrying out creative activities. Some of them described students as not having 'what it takes to be creative'. Other teachers mentioned age and experience factors as having a huge influence on students' creative thinking, pointing out that creativity suits older and more advanced students. Again, as explained earlier, it seems that teachers' somewhat negative opinions of their students' linguistic abilities (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2011) as well as their personal perceptions of the concept of creativity (Wilson, 2005) greatly affect their views of how suitable creativity activities are in their reading classes.

Lack of teacher training on how to foster creativity is considered one of the crucial factors that affects Saudi EFL teachers' views and behaviours towards promoting creativity in their language classrooms. Almost all interviewed teachers indicated that they were not involved in any training on fostering creative thinking in language classrooms. According to them, most of the pre- and in-service teacher training is limited to teaching English language skills and classroom management strategies. This finding comes in line with several studies (e.g., Puccio & Cabra, 2010; Al-Salmi, 2010; Sen and Sharma, 2004; Sarsani, 1999) who emphasise that lack of teacher training on creativity can impede the development of students' creative skills. In fact, lack of knowledge and training in this respect can negatively affect teachers' attitudes and motivation, both of which are needed to foster creativity in classrooms (Sen & Sharma, 2004). Therefore, researchers (e.g., Fleith, 2000; Runco & Johnson, 2002; Sternberg 2003; Al-Salmi, 2010) signify the important role of trained teachers, who have experience and knowledge about creative thinking in encouraging and improving creativity in students to a great extent.

A related issue that was raised by many EFL supervisors as one of the major reasons for not promoting creativity is the teachers' inappropriate pedagogies and teaching practices.

They believed that teachers' teacher-centred approach and emphasis on the Grammar-Translation Method hugely hinder the promotion of creativity in language classes because most of the class time is spent on lecturing and teaching grammar points and translation. Hence, it is quite difficult to provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their creativity. This view about Saudi teachers' teaching competency is shared by researchers such as Fareh (2010) and Al-Aqeel (2005) who echoed these concerns as well as other issues like teachers' emphasis on rote learning and evaluation. These teaching practices and behaviours inhibit creativity as students are constantly under control and are given restricted choices and opportunities to develop their creative potential, undermining the diversity of students' ideas (Johnston, 2005; Shaheen, 2010).

Some EFL teachers and supervisors in this study consider issues like lack of resources, learning habits and home environment as influential constraints to developing creative thinking. These problems could prevent fostering creative thinking because they include shortages of staff, time, support, equipment, and/or information that is needed for the implementation of creative activities. These finding agree with Davis (1999) who believes that such problems could interfere with new ideas, activities, and possibilities and hinder creative thinking.

5.4 EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity

To investigate teachers' attitudes towards creativity and collaborative reading, 45 middle school EFL teachers participated in an attitude questionnaire which was followed by fourteen interviews with EFL middle school teachers and supervisors. While the first part of the survey that explored teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading consisted of 16 items, the second part that sought teachers' attitudes towards creativity and its promotion in their reading classes comprised of 11 items. Following the questionnaire, interviews with eight teachers and six supervisors were conducted. The aim was to explain some of the results that were obtained by the questionnaire as well as to allow teachers and supervisors to express their own feelings and opinions regarding collaborative reading and creativity.

5.4.1 EFL teachers hold mixed attitudes towards collaborative reading

Upon examining the results of this study, it seems that teachers hold a slightly positive attitude towards collaborative reading. More than half of the teachers were in favour of employing collaborative reading in their classes. However, almost one third of respondents

were against collaborative reading and another 14% were unsure about it. When teachers' feelings towards collaborative reading were examined, most of the teachers felt that collaborative reading could make their teaching experience enjoyable, reduce anxiety, improve relationship with students and maintain self-confidence.

Regarding teachers' beliefs, the majority of teachers believe that collaborative reading could motivate students, improve their reading comprehension, make teaching more effective, save time, allow for peer teaching and improve creative thinking. Also, the majority of teachers thought class control could be maintained though collaborative reading, and that this approach could be useful in mixed-abilities classes. As for teachers' intentions, most teachers had the intention to make collaborative reading part of their teaching practice in the future.

However, teachers' positive reaction towards collaboration does not seem to translate well in their actual teaching practices. In fact, when teachers in this study were asked whether they actually incorporated collaboration in reading classes or with other skills in general, the majority of them expressed that they did not have experience with collaboration-based language classes. Therefore, most of their views were mainly impressionistic, not based on actual personal experiences. Even those who believed that they would implement collaboration only asked students to answer questions and look up words in dictionaries at home. In addition, they only employed collaboration occasionally and with very few selected activities such as translating words into Arabic or answering general questions about the lesson. During class time, little interaction or assistance, monitoring and organisation were observed. These findings are consistent with that of Mansour & Alhodithy (2007-a) who indicate that the present Saudi classrooms do not support the principles and practices needed for collaboration, and that the existing cooperative grouping efforts lack the necessary knowledge and expertise for effective group work. Indeed, all the supervisors who were interviewed in this study noted that applying collaboration in Saudi EFL classrooms is extremely limited at best. On the rare occasions when collaboration is implemented, most supervisors described them as 'poorly executed' and 'disorganised', which made the experience 'unpleasant' and 'ineffective'.

Moreover, most teachers in this study seemed to have positive opinions about implementing collaboration in reading. They believe that collaborative reading provides students with the opportunity to work together and develop a diverse set of reading skills, communicate more, improve understanding, establish a sense of belonging and share their own

knowledge in a non-stressful environment. This is confirmed by other researchers (e.g., Alharbi, 2008; Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013; Algarfi, 2010) who conclude that collaboration has a positive influence on Saudi students' achievement and linguistic abilities, including reading skill. However, as explained earlier, teachers seldom incorporate collaboration in their language teaching.

The reluctance to apply this mode of teaching, as this study revealed, could be due to a number of misconceptions and presumptions that teachers hold about the implementation of collaboration in language classrooms. First of all, most teachers had a superficial impression of collaboration and did not seem to have a fully established understanding of its concept. Gillies (2008) echoes the same finding as he concludes that one of the reasons behind teachers' reluctance to embrace collaboration may be partly due teachers' lack of clear understanding of this pedagogical practice and ways in which it can be implemented in classroom. Not only do teachers lack common conceptions of collaboration, they even have different opinions on how frequently collaboration in the classroom should occur (Chiriac & Frykedal, 2011). Secondly, teachers might hold certain assumptions about students' attitudes towards collaboration such as the idea that individual differences between members in a group could result in some kind of resistance to group work, especially from higher achieving students who, as teachers assume, become worried as they help other at the expense of their own progress (ibid.).

Thirdly, some teachers had the preconceived opinion that working in groups could create problems such as indiscipline and extra workload for teachers. Almost all interviewed teachers considered 'class-control' as the main concern for them as students are not used to this type of learning environment. They also believe that group work puts extra pressure on them when they already have a lot to deal with. This point confirms Gillies & Boyle's (2010) finding that teachers think that there is a lot of input required from them in group work such as organisation and finding suitable tasks, printing up roles, and finding good resources. Gillies & Boyle also mention that teachers believe students may misbehave or do not act accordingly with group norms and rules since group work requires a completely new mind-set from them.

The fourth misconception held was that some teachers in the study were concerned about the context (time and space) in which collaboration is implemented. Some teachers believed that collaboration could be time-consuming during the reading class as it would involve a lot of preparation, organisation and monitoring. There was also the issue of classroom

logistics (which include equipment and materials needed for collaborative work), an area in which schools do not usually offer enough support. Chiriac & Frykedal's (2011) study agree with this point when they indicated that teachers emphasised time, space and support as important aspects which could facilitate or hamper the use of group work.

Although teachers have slightly positive attitudes towards collaboration, it does not seem to materialize in the classroom as these attitudes are mostly based on beliefs and presumptions more than practical experience. The lack of personal experience along with preconceived misconceptions and concerns about this mode of teaching have led teachers to abandon the idea of implementing collaboration in their language classrooms. Therefore, it is recommended that EFL supervisors and teachers (both pre- and in-service) have access to extensive professional development that include theory and philosophy of collaborative learning, collaborative-based demonstrations and microteaching, and ongoing coaching and collegial support at the classroom level. In fact, to establish a positive and long lasting effect on teachers' attitudes, it is important to ensure that teachers are provided with an ongoing in-class support, which is tailored to their own situations, from peers, supervisors and school administrators. This should be coupled, as suggested by Cheng (2000), with language teaching materials that support the implementation of collaborative learning. Moreover, as suggested earlier, teachers need to be motivated intrinsically and extrinsically. To do that, it is recommended that there is a review and reform of teacher work context and work content conditions as well as an evaluation of the processes and conditions which pertains to teachers' reward and annual raise.

5.4.2 EFL teachers hold mixed attitudes towards creativity

When teachers were surveyed about their attitudes towards creativity, the results show a slightly positive attitude. It might seem confusing as to how teachers could have positive attitudes towards creativity and yet do not promote it in their actual teaching practice. However, as Plucker, Beghetto & Dow (2004) and Runco (2007) explained, teachers might appreciate and preach creativity as a theory but they do not practice it in reality for various reasons, of which lack of clear understanding of creativity is the most crucial.

Data obtained from the attitude towards creativity questionnaire showed mixed results. With respect to teachers' feelings towards infusing creative thinking in reading classes, more than half of the teachers liked the idea of employing creativity in their reading classes. However, almost the other half either had negative feelings towards the idea or were

undecided. Similarly, more than half of the teachers felt creativity activities in reading classes could improve students' attitudes towards reading. Yet, the other half of teachers either disagreed or remained neutral.

As for teachers' beliefs about creativity, many of the surveyed teachers thought that the concept of creativity is quite ambiguous. Moreover, while a considerable number of teachers believe creativity is not applicable in reading lessons, a similar number of them thought it could be. When teachers were asked about the usefulness of creativity in reading lessons, more than half of them did not believe in its benefits. In addition, teachers' responses seemed to be divided regarding the suitability of creative activities to large classes since one third of the responses were in favour, another third opposed and the final third was undecided. Furthermore, very few teachers thought that incorporating creativity in their classes would improve their teaching skills, while most of them did not think it would make a significant improvement to their teaching skills. Regarding whether the current reading lessons promote creativity, more than half of the teachers thought that reading lessons do not foster creativity.

With respect to the conative domain of teachers' attitudes towards creativity, more than half of the teachers did not express the desire to incorporate creative activities in their reading classes. Similarly, when asked whether they had plans to implement creative activities in reading lessons, more than half of respondents did not show any intentions to use these activities in the future.

These mixed results that were obtained from teachers' attitudes towards the creativity questionnaire seem to support the factors discussed in Section (5.3.2). These factors include 'Unclear concept of creativity', 'Inappropriate of creativity in language teaching', 'lack of support to creativity in textbooks', 'creativity irrelevance to reading', 'Saudi students unpreparedness', 'lack of teacher training on how to foster creativity', 'EFL teachers' inappropriate pedagogies and practices for teaching', 'lack of resources', 'learning habits' and 'family support'. These factors highlight the need to familiarise textbook designers, EFL supervisors and teachers with creativity and its applications. This can have a huge impact on addressing the lack of knowledge and misconceptions they may have about creativity and an improvement in attitudes can be achieved. The change in teachers' attitudes would reflect positively on their behavior in reading classes even if textbooks do not support creativity as they would be motivated to modify their teaching practices to adopt techniques and strategies that promote creativity.

5.5 The Creative Circles approach has a positive effect on learners' reading comprehension

A reading comprehension test was adopted and administered in order to determine whether the Creative Circles approach could improve students' reading comprehension. Two forms of reading comprehension test were administered (as pre and post-tests) before and after the implementation of the Creative Circles approach to the experimental group. The other two groups also took the reading comprehension tests on two occasions for comparison reasons. The statistical analysis of the pretest results did not reveal any significant statistical differences between the three groups, indicating that all three groups had similar levels of reading comprehension abilities prior the experiment.

After the implementation of the Creative Circles approach to the experimental group, another equivalent form of the reading comprehension test was administered to all three participating groups. The analysis of the post-test reading comprehension revealed significant statistical differences between the groups, indicating that the participating groups had different levels of reading comprehension. The post-hoc comparisons indicates that the experimental group's scores were significantly higher than those of the comparison groups. Based on this analysis, students who were taught via the Creative Circles approach show better reading comprehension skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups with a large effect size.

A key outcome of the Creative Circles approach from the reactions of learners in the experimental group and their teacher was the increase in students' reading comprehension and use of *expeditious* and *careful* reading skills compared to traditional teaching methods, as observed by both the teacher and the students. This result is in agreement with the findings of various studies on the positive effect of collaborative reading in terms of reading comprehension (e.g., Adams, 1995; Ghaith, 2003; Stevens, 2003; Takallou & Veisi, 2013).

Collaborative reading as a learning technique is considered an effective tool in improving students' ability to read with comprehension. When students read collaboratively, they jointly brainstorm, interact, decode texts, evaluate and make decisions together, something that requires students to reflect on their knowledge and share generalizations and elaborations with others. This exchange of ideas and experiences is an effective way to develop students' "*depth of processing*" (Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991) as students, in group work, discuss and communicate their thought processes and problem-solving

strategies to one another. Moreover, collaborative reading involves questioning, discussion, and cooperative learning which makes it highly effective in improving students' use of comprehension strategies and retention (Gauthier, 2001; Caposey & Heider, 2003).

In addition, this study reveals that both students in the experimental group and their teacher appreciated explicit teaching of reading skills and the clarity, organisation and gradual progression of the activities. This finding is consistent with other studies (e.g., Janzen, 2003; Pressley, 2006; McNamara, 2007) who maintain that explicit teaching of reading skills helps students become expert readers and develops a more positive attitude towards reading. The explicit teaching of reading skills involves explaining what reading comprehension skills are, and where, when, how, and why they can be used/adapted to various situations. It also includes modelling reading skills, and providing feedback to students (Pressley, 2006). This helps students to develop an awareness of the interactive nature of reading process and the effective role of comprehension-fostering activities. Although, some researchers (e.g., Alsamadani, 2009) claim that explicit teaching of reading skills does not improve comprehension, the mounting evidence, including findings of this study, is in support of the effectiveness of the explicit instruction of reading skills in improving L1/L2 reading comprehension (Salataci and Akyel 2002; Akkakoson and Setobol, 2009; Gorsuch and Taguchi 2010; Wichadee, 2011; Kazemi, Hosseini & Kohandani, 2013).

One of the most important advantages of the Creative Circles approach is its attention to both low-level and high level reading processes. Based on the data obtained from the experimental group's reading questionnaire, as well as their journals and the interviews with both students and their teacher, both levels of reading comprehension were facilitated. Both levels of processing are considered the building blocks of comprehension (Grabe, 2009). Bearing in mind that Saudi EFL learners are poor readers, this approach provides students with sufficient practice of recommended low-level processes such as word recognition, knowledge of grammar and basic sentence structure (Rasinski, 2003; Grabe, 2005). It also emphasises high-level processes such as drawing on background knowledge, recognizing and processing discourse structure and markers, evaluating text information and monitoring one's comprehension. However, it is important to stress the fact that long-term practice and extensive exposure to target language texts is the only way to develop mastery of reading comprehension skills as L2 reading is a long and highly complicated process (Grabe, 2009).

Another key outcome is the significant increase in students' awareness of their own thinking as well as the various reading skills used when a text is approached, which pertains to the concept of 'metacognition'. Through the explicit teaching and training of reading skills and the use of tools such as student journals and thinking activities, students were given enough opportunities to practice and internalize skills, and students obtained active control of their cognitive processes. Metacognition is very influential in reading comprehension (Aksan and Kisac, 2009). It involves two interacting elements: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Kazemi, Hosseini & Kohandani, 2013). Knowledge of cognition in reading comprehension consists of activities such as identifying reading skills, knowing how to deploy these skills and knowing when and why these skills are applied, whereas regulation of cognition involves all of the mental processes that are used to control and monitor one's own reading (*Ibid.*). Based on the previous explanation, it is quite clear that metacognition is extremely important for the improvement of students' reading comprehension, and to pay more attention to metacognition is of paramount priority.

Furthermore, students in the experimental group as well as their teacher noted that Creative Circles have immensely helped students to address the issue of vocabulary, which is considered a very influential factor in improving or hindering reading comprehension (Qian, 2002; Mehrpour, Razmjoo, and Kian, 2011; Farvardin and Koosha, 2011; Rouhi & Negari, 2013). Both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension have a two-directional relationship as vocabulary knowledge helps learners to comprehend the text and the process of reading contributes in increasing learners' vocabulary size (Maher, 2008). The new approach and the accompanying materials provided students with sufficient training opportunities to explore and learn new vocabulary through word attack skills such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through identifying grammatical functions, examining prefixes, suffixes and word roots, using synonyms, antonyms and contextual clues, interpreting pro-forms, discourse markers and the functional value of words. Teaching these skills as well as text-attack skills was a rarity in the Saudi EFL context as described by students, teachers and supervisors in this study and in the findings of other studies (e.g., Alsamadani, 2012; Sofi, 2015; Alsamadani, 2012; Alshumaimeri, 2011). Therefore, providing students with the knowledge and practice of these important vocabulary-learning skills is highly recommended.

The results of this study show that the Creative Circles approach is an efficient and flexible tool to use to facilitate the development of reading comprehension skills in large and mixed-abilities classes. Students from the experimental group believe that the approach has improved their reading comprehension. They also indicated that it was very useful and worked well with their level of language proficiency as well as their crowded class. The teachers echoed these points and added the observation that poor readers were actively involved during the lesson. These findings were supported by that of Khan (2008), Goodmacher & Kajiura (2010), Pan & Wu (2013) and Takallou & Veisi (2013) who maintain that collaborative reading can assist teachers in large and mixed-abilities classes who cannot attend to all of the students' needs and queries during the lesson. Groups help to address the issues of discovering and attending to all of the reading problems in a more effective learning environment which promotes interaction, communication, socio-linguistic competence (Bolukbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011; Ning, 2011). In addition, in this kind of environment, students are able to learn from each other in a non-threatening environment that provides planned as well as incidental learning opportunities.

An important outcome of the Creative circles approach, as discussed in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, was the development of positive attitudes towards reading among learners. This was evident in the increase of their enjoyment of reading as well as an improvement in self-confidence as well as their readiness to read inside and outside of school. In addition, Students have shown more acceptance of different levels of linguistic competence. A positive attitude towards reading is essential for reading comprehension as, first, it is important for achievement in reading (Russ, 1989) and, second, without having a positive attitude, even competent readers will not read when given the opportunity. In fact, it is commonly agreed that positive attitudes are a prerequisite for reading (Maguire, 2015). Negative attitudes towards reading bring about unfavourable effects on students' motivation, which lowers their chances of reading any text or making significant progress (Alexander & Cobb, 1992). In contrast, positive attitudes create more successful reading experiences and encourage extensive reading, which can result in greater comprehension (Thames & Reeves, 1994).

5.6 The positive effect of Creative Circles approach on learners' Creative Thinking

To examine the effect of Creative Circles on learners' creative thinking, two forms of the verbal format of Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) were administered to all

participating groups before and after the intervention. The statistical analysis of the pretest results did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the three groups, indicating that students in all three groups were within the same levels of creativity prior to implementing the Creative Circles approach. When the 'Average Standard Score' for each group was calculated according to the ratings offered in 'Manual for scoring and interpreting results', students were ranked as '*average*'.

After implementing Creative Circles to the experimental group, another equivalent form of creativity test was administered to the three participating groups. Analyses of test scores of the post intervention phase revealed that students who were involved in the Creative Circles intervention exhibited better creative thinking skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups with a large effect size. However, the three participating groups did not show any significant differences in the '*originality*' dimension either before or after the implementation of Creative Circles. When the 'Average Standard Score' for each group was calculated, students in the experimental group were ranked as slightly '*above average*' in the *total* creativity test score as well as in *fluency* and *flexibility* subsets. The other two groups remained within the range of '*average*', and all three groups were ranked '*average*' in the *originality* subset.

Although, the improvement in the creativity of the experimental group's students is significant compared to the other two groups, it is not hugely different. This can be considered reasonable as some researchers consider creativity to be a long-term process (Runco & Pezdek, 1984). The results show that the experimental group's scores have significantly improved compared to the other groups in all subsets of TTCT test except for in *originality*. A possible explanation to this is that *originality*, when compared to *fluency* and *flexibility*, incorporates more complex thinking processes that requires producing rare or unique ideas and making remote associations which move away from common rules (Romo, 1997). Nonetheless, the finding of this study lends support to the mounting evidence that short-term interventions on the development of creativity can actually be effective (Akar & Şengil-Akar, 2013).

Upon examining journals and interview data provided by some members from the experimental group as well as their teacher after implementing Creative Circles, a number of outcomes were highlighted as having positive effects on students' creative thinking. The first outcome is an observed increase in student as well as teacher motivation. Students reported that Creative Circles were more enjoyable and engaging. They also explained how

Creative Circles boosted their self-confidence and made them more willing to read when compared to the other two groups. These positive attitudinal observations and the flexibility, efficiency and linguistic value of Creative Circles helped to increase students' motivation and reinforced the drive to be involved in creative thinking activities. Moreover, the teacher of the experimental group supported the idea that not only were Creative Circles motivational to students but also to teachers. These findings come in line with the conclusions of creativity researchers (e.g., Amabile, 1996; Collins & Amabile, 1999; Beghetto, 2010; Hennessey, 2015) that creativity generally flourishes under conditions that support intrinsic motivation (indicated by enjoyment, interest, involvement), which is highly neglected in many language classrooms (Saheen, 2010); and to a certain extent, extrinsic motivation, which includes rewards, competitions and judgments (Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003). This has led researchers such as Beghetto (2010) to suggest that teachers should be aware of students' motivation and to carefully consider their motivational messages to them. In fact, the consensus among psychologists and pedagogues is that attitudinal and motivational aspects are the basis of creativity in a person (Sternberg, 2010).

The second outcome of Creative Circles is that it provided teachers with a clearer concept of creativity. As discussed previously in section (5.4.2), most teachers felt that creativity is a confusing concept and some of them even claimed that they had never heard or thought about it in an EFL classroom context. This is confirmed by the findings of various studies (e.g., Plucker et al., 2004; Aljughaiman and Mowrer-Reynolds, 2007; Al-Salmi, 2010) which found that confusion about the nature of creativity is a huge obstacle for teachers who want to promote creativity in their classes. In fact, this confusion might be the source of a variety of problematic beliefs about creativity.

Prior to the experiment, the teacher of the experimental group did not seem to hold any views different from those given by the interviewed teachers. However, implementing Creative Circles has helped them, according to their own observations and reports, to clarify the ambiguity surrounding the concept of creativity through providing the teacher with sufficient knowledge and practice in order to foster creativity in an EFL context. In fact, this study emphasises the important role of providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and practical experience to address problematic attitudes and beliefs about creativity which could hinder the development of creativity in EFL classrooms. Such beliefs include associating creativity with nonconformity, impulsivity, and disruptive behaviour, equating creativity with originality, emphasising creative eminence, focusing

on the creation of a tangible product and relying solely on extrinsic motivators (Chan & Chan, 1999; Runco, 2007; Beghetto, 2010).

The third outcome of this study pertains to the positive effect of group creativity on students' creative thinking. Most students emphasised the benefits of creativity group work and sharing ideas with other members of the group when dealing with the tasks of the lesson. This view is shared by Lassig (2012) who maintains that group creativity plays a positive role in developing students' creative thinking through sharing decision-making responsibilities and encouraging and supporting each other's ideas. In fact, group work is believed to be critical for developing students' creativity as it provides students with enough opportunities to explore ideas convergently and divergently in a socially, emotionally and cognitively safe environment that allows them to freely participate (Esquivel, 1995; James, Gerard and Vagt-Traore, 2004; Shaheen, 2010). Therefore, this study emphasises the role of group creativity at the classroom level, an issue that is greatly overshadowed by the focus on competition and individual student achievement (Craft, 2008a).

The fourth outcome of this study is related to Creative Circles' promotion of thinking and metacognitive awareness. The majority of interviewed students praised the new approach as it provided them with activities that nurtured their thinking and metacognitive awareness. They believe that the approach has encouraged them to think deeply and read between and beyond the lines. Students also noted that they became more metacognitively aware as the activities (including the journals) in each lesson show the value of metacognition and develop higher order thinking skills. They considered keeping the reflective journal as a self-evaluation exercise which allows them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to think of ways to improve their performance. These findings were in line with literature that stressed the importance of metacognition in the development of creative thinking (Armbruster, 1989; Barak, 2010; Jausovec, 1994; Nickerson, 1999; Sternberg & Williams, 1996; VanTassel-Baska & MacFarlane, 2009). In fact, Pesut (1984) believes that creative thinking is a process that is controlled by metacognition, which supports generating original ideas and associations. In addition, researchers believe that creative activities are actually action-oriented metacognitive processes which help to maintain and improve creativity. Hence, as the metacognitive ability of an individual improves, so does their creative thinking (Hargrove & Nietfeld, 2015).

As a fifth outcome, the Creative Circles approach has created a classroom environment that exhibited practices conducive to creativity development. When the students and their teacher were asked about classroom practices and values that encouraged them to think creatively, they mentioned practices such as ‘working in groups’ (discussed in detail earlier), ‘independency’, ‘facilitative role of teacher’, ‘respect between teacher and students and among groups’, ‘encouraging curiosity and risk-taking’, ‘teacher’s genuine interest in students’ efforts’, ‘evaluating ideas’, and ‘teacher’s modeling’. These identified practices and values are aspects of the learning environment which is believed to be very influential in promoting creativity (Lassig, 2012). Beghetto & Plucker (2006) hold that classroom environments can positively affect the creative growth of learners when their learning is more student-centred and moves beyond reproduction of knowledge to engaging and developing learners’ knowledge and skills. Classroom situations characterized by openness and flexibility are believed to be supportive of developing creativity as these traits encourage independent, autonomous learning (Halpin, Goldenberg, & Halpin, 1990; Amabile, 1996).

Teachers can also have a significant influence in creating a classroom environment that nurtures creativity (Lassig, 2012). Teachers can contribute to the creativity development of their students by adopting certain strategies like using open ended tasks (Mann, 2006), promoting independent learning and experimenting (McWilliam, 2008), teaching techniques that facilitate creative thinking such as brainstorming and problem solving strategies (Starko, 2005) and raising students’ metacognitive awareness (Nickerson, 1999). Teachers can also create an affective climate that enhances students’ creativity through encouraging intrinsic motivation for creativity through, for example, incorporating students’ interests into their learning (Cramond, 2005), helping students identify their potential (Torrance, 1981), creating a safe environment in which mutual respect prevails (Cramond, 2005) and encouraging imagination, risk taking and perseverance (Craft, 2011).

The sixth outcome, which relates to the previous point, is that the present study provides various creativity-friendly tasks to help to facilitate students’ creative thinking. Students as well as the teacher of the experimental group were asked about the tasks that, in their view, encourage creativity. They indicated the following tasks as the most facilitative: ‘divergent thinking tasks’ which involved ill-defined problems (e.g., creativity activities at the beginning and the end of each lesson), ‘open-ended tasks’ (e.g., post-reading questions) and ‘unfamiliar tasks’ (e.g., fact/opinion, author’s bias, text type and text organisation).

Incorporating these types of activities might improve the Saudi curricula (and elsewhere in other EFL contexts) which is often described as didactic and inflexible to meet the standards needed to nurture creativity (Al-Salmi, 2010). In fact, Shaheen (2010) insists that textbooks offer very little opportunities to promote and develop creativity, despite the official written policies that call for fostering creativity. This perhaps gives an indication that implementation is far from the ambitious targets of policy statements.

5.6.1 The need for fostering creativity in EFL classrooms

When students were asked whether they were involved in creativity activities prior to the Creative Circles experiment, almost, all of them maintained that they had never been exposed to such activities in any EFL classroom or in any school subject for that matter. Even the teacher of the experimental group stated that he had little knowledge of creativity and its implementation in EFL contexts prior to participating in the Creative Circles programme. He also revealed that most of the textbooks he taught left very little space, if any, for creativity.

He emphasised the need for fostering creativity in EFL textbooks and providing teachers with the necessary training on creativity and ways of integrating it into their teaching practice. This call for fostering creativity in language classrooms was echoed by researchers such as McRae (1991) and Maley (2012) who described language teaching procedures as narrow and unadventurous. McRae (1991: vii) believes that the teaching of the English language suffers from a lack of imaginative involvement on the part of learners, and this would eventually lead to a “*one-dimensional learning achievement*”.

In order to foster creativity in EFL classrooms, it is quite important to identify and address the barriers to creativity. Among these barriers are the knowledge-based type of teaching, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about creativity, students’ self-beliefs and the motivational environment (Beghetto, 2010). If there is any chance to promote creativity in the classrooms, teachers need to stop depending solely on an all too familiar approach to teaching which involves transmitting facts and information to be memorized and recited upon request. They should provide students with enough opportunities to explore and exchange their ideas and insights with peers and teachers, especially from a younger age.

Convergent teaching has also lead to problematic teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about creativity. One of these problems pertains to teachers’ views of the ‘ideal student’. To teachers who believe in convergent teaching, the ideal student is compliant and conforming.

Therefore, it is not surprising that teachers associate creativity with chaos and disruptiveness (Chan & Chan, 1999). In addition, teachers often hold the belief that for a person to be creative, their creation should be considered a break-through or an outstanding worldwide achievement (Big-C), when in fact, Big-C creativity represents only one end of the creativity continuum of various levels and magnitude (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007). Another issue is teachers' emphasis on creative end-products, not the process. As a result, teachers might not recognize and support the development of students' creative potential.

Students' self-belief plays a crucial role in expressing or suppressing their creative potential. Although inaccurate at times, self-belief can boost a student's self-confidence which makes it easier for them to share and develop new thoughts and ideas. In fact, believing in one's own imaginative abilities and competence in creating new ideas and solutions encourages students to take risks, a crucial trait of a creative person. Of course, to support these beliefs, there has to be a supportive classroom environment characterized by positive feedback and encouragement to students' creative potential and abilities.

Teachers should consider the motivational message in the classroom environment which plays an important role in promoting or hindering students' creativity. As explained earlier, creativity is believed to flourish under conditions where intrinsic motivation is supported. Students' motivation can be negatively affected by teachers pressuring them to compete or be publicly evaluated. Consequently, students become more stressed and anxious to the point that their willingness and capacity for creativity start to diminish. Teachers need to be aware of the nature of the learning tasks in which they involve their students. The more the task provides students with opportunities to take intellectual risks, the more their creative potential develops (Beghetto, 2010). Furthermore, teachers need to pay more attention to extrinsic motivators too. This is because some students' creative thinking can actually improve through competitions, rewards and incentives (Amabile, 1996; Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003). Yet, teachers should also be cautious about overemphasising extrinsic motivators, as they tend to have suppressive influence on creative potential.

Throughout this section, the importance of fostering creativity in EFL classrooms has been established. In addition, a number of suggestions have been made regarding classroom context, teaching approach, learning tasks and beliefs that teachers and students hold towards creativity which could have a significant influence on promoting creativity in the classroom.

5.6.2 The relationship between reading and creativity

As Taylor and Sacks (1981) and Torrance (1988, 2000) suggested, the potential for creativity exists within all human beings and that creative thinking skills can be learned. With this view in mind, many researchers (e.g., Sak, 2004; Sturgell, 2008; McVey, 2008; Scanlon, 2006) maintain that creativity can be promoted through reading. In fact, reading encourages similar characteristics as those suggested by creativity researchers for promoting creativity, such as openness and communicating ideas (Beghetto, 2005; Gardner, 1988; Torrance, 1992), self-discovery (Amabile, 1996), and individuality as well as collaboration (Harrington, Block, & Block, 1987). This might suggest that the quantity of reading a person does not alone promote creative thinking. In addition to quantity, the quality of what is being read as well as the kind of tasks associated with it are believed to foster and develop creative thinking.

With regard to the type of association between reading and creativity, some studies found a strong, positive correlation between them. For example, Wang (2012), Ritchie, Luciano, Hansell, Wright and Bates (2013) and Naghadeh, Kasraey, Maghdour, and Eyvezi (2014) found that students who spend more time reading tended to obtain high scores on creativity tests. However, in contrast to these studies, the findings of the present study did not reveal any significant correlation between students' level of reading comprehension and their creative thinking scores in the creativity test. This could be due to a number of reasons. First, creative thinking skills develop over an extended period of time, a condition that was not met in this short experimental study of three months. Second, the reading comprehension skills of the participants in this study were poor. Therefore, to establish a correlation between their creative thinking and reading ability could be quite problematic and might generate misleading information. Third, correlation coefficients from studies using a restricted range of cases, which is the case in this study, can often generate unexpected results (Pallant, 2010). Fourth, both reading and creativity are complex concepts that are influenced by a wide range of factors and can be sensitive to the specific contexts in which they are applied. This may produce different results in different studies. However, lack of correlation, which was determined by the present study, does not undermine the positive interactive connection between reading and creativity as explained earlier in this section.

5.6.3 Evaluation of incorporating Torrance Creativity Test

In the present study, Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) was used to assess students' creative potential. It is considered the most popular and highly researched creativity test which is widely used worldwide (Almeida, Prieto, Ferrando, Oliveira, & Ferrandiz, 2008; Zeng, Proctor & Salvendy, 2011). Upon implementing this test in the present study, a number of issues were noted. Firstly, the literature on creative thinking has substantiated that *originality* and *appropriateness* (which pertains to whether a suggested solution answers the demands of the problem context) are two indispensable criteria needed to fully capture the concept of creativity (Weisberg, 2006). Although *originality* is accounted for in the TTCT, the criterion of *appropriateness* is not represented in the scoring process. Hence, TTCT does not assist in determining the practicality and appropriateness of a certain response to a given problem.

Another issue about TTCT is that it does not integrate the four phases of creative process: problem analysis, ideation, evaluation, and implementation. Torrance tests seem to highlight the ideation phase and do not account for other phases in the measurement procedure. With regard to problem analysis, rather than providing test-takers with open-problem and open-solution cases, TTCT offers only open-solution situations. The test also ignores the evaluation phase and implementation phase, which are considered vital constituents of creative thinking (Zeng et al., 2011). Therefore, only emphasising original thought processes in the TTCT undermines other important aspects that are needed to fully understand and appreciate creativity.

Using abstract tasks and subjective types of scoring are also problematic in TTCT. The use of abstract tasks disassociates the test from reality as real-life problems are not used. This is coupled with the subjective form of scoring that is used, which negatively affects the reliability of the test. Consequently, these weaknesses can harm the predictive validity of TTCT. In fact, a considerable number of assessments of the predictive validity of the existing creative thinking tests were quite pessimistic (Plucker, 1999).

One of the problematic aspects with TTCT is its lack of recognition of students' social and cultural conditions that surrounds their creative thinking. It seems that creativity in the test is perceived as context-independent, undermining a wide range of creativity domains and their social contexts. This comes in contrast with what is generally believed that a persons'

level of creativity depends on their social and cultural environment as well as their expertise and familiarity with presented information (Schmid, 2005).

Nonetheless, the merits of TTCT upon which the decision to use it in this study was made should not be undermined. This test is the longest running, most researched, and most widely used in educational contexts from among all creativity tests (Kaufman, Plucker, et al., 2008). In fact, most creativity tests borrowed from or are very similar to the TTCT (Kaufman, Plucker and Russell, 2012). Torrance did not claim to know all dimensions of creativity, nor did he suggest that the generated results from his test were to be used as the bases for making important decisions. Yet more importantly, the main objective of the test, in his opinion, was to understand and nurture people's creativity (Zeng, Proctor & Salvendy, 2011), which serves the purpose of the current study. Moreover, Torrance Test is commonly used in efficacy studies and in determining the effectiveness of creativity training programmes, such as the one adapted in this study (*Ibid.*). The test can also be administered to groups or individuals in various educational settings, from kindergarten stage up to university level students (Kim, 2006). However, the shortcomings that were identified earlier should be considered in order to further develop the test. In light of the preceding discussion, no creative thinking test can capture the full picture of the concept of creativity. The best suggestion that can be made at the moment is to have reliable and valid results is to incorporate more than one creativity test. At the same time, further research effort should be made to broaden creativity measurement tools by integrating into them new domains and conceptions of creativity so that they may represent a more comprehensive assessment of people's creative potential.

6. Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

The overall aim of this study was to advance the understanding of the impact of the Creative Circles approach on developing Saudi EFL middle school learners' reading comprehension and creative thinking. The specific research objectives were to identify:

1. the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' use of reading comprehension skills
2. the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards reading
3. the extent to which EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking
4. EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity
5. the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' reading comprehension
6. the impact of Creative Circles approach on Saudi EFL learners' creative thinking

Since the previous chapter is large and requires a summary, this chapter will revisit the research objectives above, summarizing the findings of this research work and offering conclusions based on them. Recommendations for future research will be discussed, in terms of how to progress this research study. Importantly, the contribution of this research to the development of EFL reading comprehension and creative thinking will be clarified. In addition, a section reflecting on the researcher's PhD journey is included. By adopting this structure, it is intended that the research work will be concluded to reflect on whether the objectives stated at the start of this research have been met, including considerations of the value of this study.

6.1 Summary of key findings

The study was carried out at a Saudi middle school in Jeddah, involving three third grade classes. The research sample also included EFL teachers and EFL supervisors. A triangulated approach was adopted in order to collect data by means of multiple instruments- reading comprehension test, creativity test, questionnaires, reflective journals and semi-structured interviews over the period of school term.

Research Objective 1: The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' use of reading skills

Preliminary results show that Saudi students lack reading habits. The majority of them reported they do not read enough, even though they want to, in both languages. In addition, students seem to prefer reading from electronic sources with limited word count such as communication networks, e-mails and text messages. Also, students considered 'teachers', 'family' and 'self-motivation' relatively carry the same importance in encouraging students to read in Arabic and in English as well. When students were asked about the reasons for not reading enough in English, they indicated that the main reasons were 'lack of interest', 'poor reading skills', 'socio-economic status' and 'inefficient teaching practice'. Moreover, the pre-intervention phase revealed that the majority of students rarely use *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills. Two types of factors that affected students' reading abilities were identified: internal and external. The internal factors were students' 'overall low level of language proficiency', 'limited vocabulary' 'poor reading skills in Arabic', 'lack of interest in reading' and 'excessive involvement with the internet and social media technology'. With regard to external reasons, 'little emphasis on reading skills in textbooks', 'unfamiliar and unsuitable reading topics' 'the gap between teachers and policy makers in the Ministry of Education', 'insufficient in-service teacher-training programmes', 'EFL teachers' incompetency', 'lack of parent support', 'lack of role model' and 'lack of exposure to English' were recognized as responsible for Saudi students' poor reading skills.

After incorporating Creative Circles approach with the experimental group, students tended to use *careful* and *expeditious* reading skills significantly more often than students from the other two comparison groups did. With regard to *expeditious* reading skills, students in the experimental group believe that Creative Circles addressed their need to do more *expeditious* reading activities as there was not enough emphasis on skills prior the intervention. Similarly, the majority of students pointed out that they had never been involved in activities that were geared towards developing *careful* reading skills. However, after the intervention, most students expressed positive comments about the benefits of this approach such as explicitness and gradation in learning reading skills, exciting and thought-provoking activities, clarity and organisation.

Research Objective 2: The impact of Creative Circles approach on learners' attitudes towards reading

Prior to implementing the Creative Circles approach with students and teachers it was revealed that Saudi students hold slightly negative attitudes towards reading. With respect to the affective domain, students voiced feelings of discomfort, anxiety and fear of being ridiculed. As for students' beliefs (cognitive domain), negative 'Self-perception' about one's linguistic abilities, 'lack of connection' with what is being read and 'poor reading comprehension skills' seemed to contribute to students' relatively poor attitudes towards reading. Regarding the conative domain, many students did not show enough eagerness or well-thought plans to read in English. In fact, the majority of students expressed frustrations about the difficulties they experience in reading English texts.

After implementing the Creative Circles approach in the experimental group, results from the attitude questionnaire and interviews have shown that students in the experimental group held a significantly more positive attitude compared to the other two groups. When a comparison was made between students' attitudes towards reading in English before and after the intervention in each domain, the analysis indicates that students' attitudes after intervention has improved significantly in only two domains: affective and conative, whereas the cognitive domain did not show any significant change.

When students in the experimental group were surveyed and interviewed for their views on their experience of reading via Creative Circles, results show an overwhelmingly positive reaction. They believed that the approach was motivating, enjoyable and anxiety-reducing. They also thought the new approach improved their reading comprehension as well as attitude towards collaboration, and that it was appropriate to their level of language proficiency. Students' reasons for their very positive experience included the increased enjoyment, engagement and self-confidence, the approach's flexibility, efficiency, linguistic value and encouragement of diversity reflectivity. Regarding the approach's shortcomings, the most common negative aspects were unfamiliarity with new types of questions, difficulty of some tasks and some groupwork issues.

Research Objective 3: The extent to which EFL teachers promote reading skills and creative thinking

Results pertaining to *Careful Reading* skills show that the majority of teachers do not promote careful reading skills in classroom. Similarly, results regarding *expeditious*

reading skills demonstrated that most teachers chose ‘rarely’ and ‘never’ when asked about whether they encourage practicing *expeditious* reading skills in their reading classes. The most common reasons for teachers’ lack of emphasis on reading skills in classrooms included unfamiliarity with reading skills, lack of training in reading instruction and unrealistic high expectations of students’ reading proficiency. Also, teachers’ resistance to change, avoidance of responsibility and indifference to teaching, exam-oriented type of teaching, low level of language proficiency and lack of reading skills promotion in the current prescribed textbooks were all important factors that contributed to the current situation in language classes.

With respect to promotion creative thinking, results indicate that Saudi EFL teachers, in general, make little effort to foster creativity in their classrooms. The reasons were the unclear concept of creativity, teachers’ belief that creativity is irrelevant to language teaching or reading, lack of support in EFL textbooks for creativity, negative teachers’ views about Saudi students’ creativity and a lack of teacher training. EFL supervisors added that teachers’ teacher-centred approach and emphasis on the Grammar-Translation-Method, lack of resources, learning habits and home environment hugely hindered the promotion of creativity of Saudi students.

Research Objective 4: EFL teachers’ attitudes towards collaborative reading and creativity

Although many teachers in this study held a slightly positive attitude towards collaborative reading, a considerable number of them were either against or unsure about employing collaborative reading in their classes. Those who were in favour believed that it motivates students, improves reading comprehension, makes teaching more effective, saves time and improves creative thinking. They also thought collaborative reading could be useful in mixed-abilities classes. However, teachers’ positive attitude was in disagreement with their classroom teaching practice. In fact, the majority of them did not experience collaboration-based language classes. Reluctance to apply this mode of teaching, as this study reveals, could be due to lack of experience and deep understanding of collaborative learning, the assumption that students would resist collaborative work, concerns about indiscipline, lack of support and extra workload associated with this mode of teaching.

As for teachers’ attitudes towards creativity, results were mixed. Similar to the situation with collaborative reading, teachers held slightly positive attitudes towards creativity but

they do not promote it in their actual teaching practice. More than half of them liked the idea of employing creativity in their reading classes and felt creativity activities in reading classes could improve students' attitudes towards reading. However, almost the other half either had negative feelings towards the idea or were undecided. Moreover, teachers held mixed opinions about the applicability, usefulness and the desire to incorporate creative activities in EFL reading comprehension lessons. Also, many teachers thought that reading lessons do not foster creativity. The factors discussed in the previous section could explain the mixed results especially teachers' lack of clear understanding of creativity.

Research Objective 5: The impact of Creative Circles on learners' reading comprehension

The results of the reading comprehension test that was administered to the experimental and comparison groups after the intervention revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension abilities. The success of the Creative Circles approach can be attributed to its adoption of collaborative reading as a teaching/learning technique, explicit teaching of reading skills, attention to low-level and high level reading processes and metacognitive awareness. The experimental group as well as their teacher noted that Creative Circles has immensely helped students to address the issue of vocabulary, a very influential factor in improving or hindering reading comprehension. This approach has also been described as an efficient and flexible tool in large and mixed-abilities classes and it has a positive effect on development of EFL learners' attitudes towards reading.

Research Objective 6: the impact of Creative Circles on learners' creative thinking

After implementing Creative Circles to the experimental group and administering the creativity test to the three participating groups, results revealed that students who were involved in the Creative Circles exhibited better creative thinking skills as they outperformed their peers in the other comparison groups. However, the three participating groups did not show any significant differences between them in the 'originality' dimension either before or after the implementation of Creative Circles. In the post-test, students in the experimental group were ranked as slightly 'above average' in the overall creativity test score as well as in *fluency* and *flexibility* subsets. The other two groups remained within the range of 'average', and all three groups were ranked 'average' in the *originality* subset. In addition, the findings of this study highlight the need for fostering creativity in Saudi EFL classrooms and lending support to the mounting evidence that

short-term interventions on the development of creativity can actually be effective. Results also did not reveal any significant correlation between students' level of reading comprehension and their creative thinking scores in the creativity test.

The identified positive effects of the Creative Circles approach on students' creative thinking included an observed increase in students' as well as teacher's motivation, a deeper understanding of the concept of creativity, acknowledgement of the positive effect of group creativity and the promotion of thinking and metacognitive awareness. In addition, the Creative Circles approach has encouraged classroom practices that were conducive to creativity development such as working in groups, independency, facilitative role of teacher, respect between teacher and students and among groups, encouraging curiosity and risk-taking, teacher's genuine interest in students' efforts, evaluating ideas, and teacher's modeling. Furthermore, the approach provided various creativity-friendly reading tasks to help facilitate students' creative thinking such as divergent thinking tasks, open-ended questions and unfamiliar activities. These tasks might come as an answer to issues in the Saudi curricula -and elsewhere in other EFL contexts that are believed to be didactic and inflexible and do not meet the standards of nurturing creativity.

6.2 Implications and recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve EFL reading comprehension and creative thinking. To enhance EFL reading comprehension, recommendations about students' reading habits, attitudes, comprehension and teachers' promotion of reading skills will be presented next.

6.2.1 Reading habits

With regard to reading habits, there is a need to promote reading habits in students and in target languages through employing school/class libraries and attract students to reading with the help of their teachers. In addition, it is crucial to involve students in intensive reading training and explicitly teach students important reading skills in both the native and target languages. Another recommendation would be to emphasise reading skills instruction in pre-service and in-service teacher training. Moreover, great attention should be given to students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as effective parental involvement in students' education if any success is to be achieved in developing students' reading comprehension. Although, some family members hesitate to be involved in their

children's learning experience because of their own lack of English language proficiency, schools need to open channels for collaboration and communication with them to help them overcome any concerns they may have and inform them on ways to contribute to their children's progress. They may also provide valuable information to schools and EFL teachers such as how their children feel about reading in English, what difficulties they face and what reading activities they prefer.

6.2.2 Attitudes towards reading

The results of this study have demonstrated a connection between L1 and L2 attitudes towards reading as well as reading attitudes and reading achievement in L2. Therefore, L2 reading development should not be considered in isolation from improving students' L1 reading. Saudi educational policy makers should work on common approaches and measures to promote reading in both languages and improve students' reading skills and attitudes as they can transfer from one language to the other (Alderson, 2000).

More attention should be paid to Saudi students' intrinsic motivation to read, a "key ingredient missing for most Saudi students" (Al-Seghayer, 2014: 18). Every effort should be made, from all of those concerned, to make reading materials relevant for students so that they could become more engaged and competent readers who initiate and persist with reading tasks (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Another way of enhancing intrinsic motivation is by giving students ownership of what they read and offer them meaningful choices of texts. Students are more likely to become engaged in that experience. However, much relies on the experience of EFL teachers and the promotion of well-sourced classroom/school and public libraries. In addition, teachers should work on improving students' self-efficacy through maintaining their success in reading no matter how small. When Teachers encourage their students and support their perception that they are capable of reading well, they are helping them to achieve more and become more engaged with reading (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). In fact, this is what is called the "Positive Mathew Effect", which means success begets more success (Davoudi & Kamrood, 2015).

A third recommendation can be to encourage the use of collaborative reading in Saudi EFL classrooms. As the results show, this type of reading helps students to improve their reading skills and attitudes, overcome their feelings of anxiety and low self-esteem and makes them more willing to read. Moreover, involving students in reflective activities about their

reading experiences can also enhance their attitudes significantly. Finally, this study may pave the way for future research in L2 reading attitudes and the three domains of cognition, affect, and conation, an area that has so far been underexplored.

6.2.3 Improving reading comprehension

Several recommendations can be suggested based on the discussion about the positive effect of the Creative Circles approach on learners' reading comprehension. Firstly, given the unsatisfactory English language proficiency level of Saudi students at different academic stages, it is quite important to introduce English to Saudi students at an earlier stage in their life. Even though the English language is introduced to Saudi students at grade 4 in elementary stage (Alfares, 2014), it does not seem to have a significant impact on the development of their language abilities as students learn English during two periods of 35 to 45 minutes per week. Therefore, the idea of exposing students to English at the first grade and allocating more classes to language learning is worth considering as recent studies suggest that most youngsters can successfully learn more than one language from their earliest years (Kuhl, 2004).

Secondly, based on the positive effect of collaborative reading in this study, it is recommended that this mode of teaching be adopted at different school levels. The findings of this study have shown that collaborative reading develops students' reading comprehension and improves their attitudes towards reading. It has also shown its usefulness in large and mixed-abilities classes, which is the case in Saudi schools. Furthermore, Creative Circles have helped to address the issue of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary items in reading passages, which is considered the most problematic aspect as reported by EFL students and teachers as well.

Thirdly, the findings of this study highlight the important role of metacognition in developing students' reading comprehension, which is also the conclusion of several studies (e.g., Flavell, 1979; Flavell et al., 2002; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Razi & Çubukçu, 2014). Therefore, metacognitive strategies (declarative, procedural, and conditional) should be fostered in Saudi EFL reading classes through familiarizing students with these strategies, modelling them to students and providing enough opportunities for students to practice them. This study proposes reflective journals and explicit reading skills instruction as methods of fostering students' metacognitive awareness, which could eventually facilitate the comprehension processes.

The fourth recommendation of this study is for all those concerned (Saudi educational policy makers, textbook designers, EFL supervisors and teachers) to encourage consistent explicit teaching of reading skills to Saudi EFL readers. Learners should be aware of and have sufficient practice and training on how to use low-level and high-level reading processes. In fact, most recent research findings concur on one fact that explicit reading skills instruction and training significantly improve students' comprehension in both L1 and L2 (e.g., Cubucku 2008; Akkakoson and Setobol, 2009; Grabe, 2009; Wichadee, 2011; Alsamadani, 2012).

Closely related to the previous suggestion, it is highly recommended that explicit reading skills instruction is emphasised not only in L2 but also in L1 as well. This is based on the critical role that L1 plays in L2 reading development as proposed by different well-known theories on L1 reading skills transferable effects on L2 reading development such as the *Interdependence Hypothesis*, *The Common Underlying Proficiency Theory* and the *Threshold Hypothesis*. It is important to identify ways in which L1 can support EFL learners' reading development. This could probably involve building students' metacognitive, metalinguistic and sociocultural awareness as well as cognates and morphological similarities (Grabe, 2009).

In closing, the implementation of extensive reading programmes in Saudi EFL context is recommended. Research evidence shows that the average time students spend on reading is very little (between seven and 15 minutes per day). Therefore, students need to be engaged in extensive reading at school and at home as related literature supports the effectiveness of extensive reading on student's reading comprehension, motivation and attitudes, vocabulary growth, conceptual-knowledge growth and reasoning (*Ibid.*). Some of the most popular extensive reading programmes include Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Free-reading Time, Reading Lab, class library corner and school library (National Reading Panel, 2000). Regardless of names and labels, the most important goal for extensive reading programmes is to have students read materials that they want to read even on their own.

6.2.4 Promoting reading skills

Firstly, as an initial stage, prescribed Saudi EFL textbooks should be revised and evaluated based on their promotion of language skills, especially reading skills (both *careful* and *expeditious*) as well as thinking skills. Gradually, with proper intensive teacher training, these prescribed books could be treated as reference or guide books, giving teachers more

freedom to organise and design their own reading activities that serve both their students' learning needs and the general aims of the stage they are teaching.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education is encouraged to address teachers' low language proficiency. This issue can be dealt with in a two-fold measure. The existing teachers' language proficiency should be assessed regularly in order to involve them in the appropriate language development programmes. As for the pre-service teachers, they should be required to provide a recognised English language teacher competency test qualification from an independent institution to insure a good level of English language before becoming professional EFL teachers.

Thirdly, as the results of this study show, many Saudi EFL teachers are unfamiliar with reading skills and how they are appropriately taught. This emphasises the importance of training teachers and familiarizing them with reading skills in the teacher education curriculum and in in-service programmes. The training should go beyond the knowledge-based level and exam-oriented teaching, which is prevalent in Saudi teacher-preparation programmes at many universities, to more practicum work in order for teachers to become more proactive in helping students learn. The suggested practical programmes can be jointly designed and supervised by universities and local educational directorates to bridge the gap between universities and schools and between theory and practice. This hands on experience can also assist teachers to understand, evaluate and address the common impression that Saudi EFL students are already skilled readers.

A fourth recommendation is to deal with Saudi EFL teachers' resistance to change and indifference to teaching, which are all signs of demotivated teachers. To address this problem, the Ministry of Education must work on teachers' both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. One suggestion is to link teachers' annual raise to their performance, which is jointly evaluated by the headmaster and EFL supervisor based on multiple and variable sources such as observations, student and parent surveys, portfolios and student test-score data. This measure can boost teacher motivation based on *Expectancy* and *Equity* theories of motivation (Johnson, 1986). Another suggestion is to review and reform teacher work context and work content conditions. Work context conditions include aspects such as class size, availability of teaching materials and quality of supervision, whereas work content conditions involve professional development opportunities, recognition, varied tasks and responsibilities, participation in decision making, helpful feedback and autonomy. Identifying what matters to teachers and how best to motivate them is a complex challenge.

However, working on developing teachers' both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators is extremely important if any improvement is to be expected in teachers' performance and enjoyment of their professional duties. Finally, with learners' growing interest in technology, it is quite important for teachers be familiar with interactive multimedia and computer games and utilize them to develop their reading skills (e.g., learners follow certain instructions to complete a task, understand a story or activate a device). These interactive multimedia applications can even be used as viable tools to provide learners with strategic guidance during reading.

6.2.5 Developing creative thinking

Creativity appears to be under-nurtured in the Saudi educational system, especially in the EFL context. The efforts and special programmes that are being developed to foster creativity are working under the assumption that creativity is separate from mainstream the academic curriculum. The main goal is to identify the very few who could be classified as '*gifted*' and to support their creative potential over a number of years. This creates a situation in which only a few students are provided with systematic opportunities to enhance their creative thinking skills in schools. This also would have a negative effect on the attitudes and motivations of most students who would be labelled as '*ungifted*'. Moreover, this situation may lead mainstream education teachers to believe that they are not responsible for promoting and nurturing creativity in their students. Therefore, it is recommended that educators view creativity as a curriculum goal for the betterment of their students' and country's future, and to integrate creativity into mainstream learning/teaching. To do that, creativity needs to be infused in the mainstream curriculum and more effort should be exerted in connecting creativity to teacher-preparation and teacher development programmes. It is also important to reach out to parents and to the public to disambiguate the concept of creativity so that barriers to creativity can be overcome.

Another suggestion is to adopt/adapt the Creative Circles approach to teaching school subjects, particularly English. The results in the present study have suggested its effectiveness in motivating students and teachers, providing them with clearer conceptualization of creativity, increasing students' metacognitive awareness, creating an environment that is conducive to creativity and providing creativity-friendly activities and tasks. The Creative Circles approach is flexible and can work well with other language

skills and other school subjects. Moreover, this approach highlights the significant role of group creativity in developing students' creative thinking. Collaborative work can promote creativity through sharing responsibilities, peer support and encouragement and exploring ideas convergently and divergently.

Moreover, textbooks, classroom assessments and examinations are also crucial for fostering creativity. The scripted type of textbooks that are dominant in Saudi school should change into a source for developing students' academic knowledge as well as creative potential through giving teachers more freedom to design and incorporating activities that facilitate knowledge and the acquisition of creativity. In fact, learning and creativity development complement one another to deepen students' understanding and enliven their learning experience (Bechetto, 2010). Creativity should be integrated in classroom assessments and examinations, which reminds teachers and students that there are certain expectations to creativity activities. This would spread the important message that creativity matters. As literature on creativity assessment indicates, there are various methods of evaluating students' creative thinking ranging from standardized tests to expert evaluation (Kaufman, Lee, Baer & Lee, 2007), which might be more suitable and practical in classrooms especially when promoting creativity is the main goal, not identifying gifted students.

In addition, given the important connection between reading and creativity that was established in this study, it is recommended that students should be more exposed to reading materials. This could be done through increasing of the reading that students do at school and involving them in extensive reading programmes both inside and outside schools. More importantly, students' reading should include tasks and activities that will stimulate students' thinking skills, particularly creative thinking. The responsibility to recognize and employ these suggestions in classroom contexts lies in the hands of educators such as educational policymakers, textbook designers and teachers as well as parents.

Further recommendations can be made to improve the reliability and validity of Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking that was administered as one of the research tools in this study. One suggestion could be the recognition of students' social and cultural background, which is very influential for developing their creative thinking. Another suggestion might be accounting for the appropriateness criterion in the test design so that it can capture the full picture of the concept of creativity. Related to this point is the need to integrate the four phases of creative process that include problem analysis, ideation, evaluation and

implementation. A final suggestion would be to use real-life problems as activities instead of the abstract tasks that are currently in use. Doing this would help to create an association between the test tasks and reality, which would reflect positively on students' real-world problem solving experiences.

6.2.6 Promoting creative thinking

With respect to promoting creativity, it seems that issues like teachers' beliefs that creativity is irrelevant to language learning and reading or that creativity activities do not suit Saudi students, all stem from teachers' unfamiliarity with this concept and its applications in EFL contexts. In addition, other factors such as curriculum, textbooks and teaching environment and teaching practice need to be considered if we are to successfully promote creativity. Therefore, recommendations can be offered on two levels: policy/curriculum and practical. As for the policy/curriculum level, insufficient emphasis is put on creativity in the existing Saudi educational policy documents. Although the Saudi Ministry of Education's list of general goals and standards for teaching English in schools in Saudi Arabia (2005) mentions the importance of using language to enhance students' thinking skills, including creative thinking, previous studies have shown that this goal fails to materialize (Alfares, 2014). It is recommended that if the concept is to be translated into practice, clear and consistent operational definitions and guidelines need to be provided for textbook developers along with orientation and training to ensure we achieve our objectives.

As for the practical level, some recommendations can be made regarding teachers, textbooks and parental support. Firstly, it is needless to mention that without teacher support (the implementer), curriculum and textbooks are not enough to ensure the promotion of creativity in EFL classes. Therefore, it is important that EFL teachers and supervisors are informed about creativity and how it can be promoted and utilised in the language classroom before (in teacher education programmes) and after they are recruited. These training programmes need to be practical and they should encourage teachers to support and value creativity, and to reflect this on their attitudes and teaching philosophies. Another suggestion is for the local directorates, EFL supervisors and school administrations to advocate classroom teaching practices that are conducive to creativity among teachers. Some of these practices are modeling creativity, removing fears and encouraging risk

taking, encouraging collaborative learning and self-evaluation, establishing personal relationships with students, stimulating students' imaginations, prompting students to evaluate by asking questions, make students learn by doing and discovery, drawing out student's ideas and giving students choices (Burnard, Craft & Cremin, 2006; Woods, 2004; Jeffrey, 2005; Claxton, 2006; Fryer, 2003).

Secondly, for teachers to successfully implement the above mentioned practices, the EFL textbook needs to be supportive of creativity as it is a very strong tool that can help modify teachers' teaching habits. Therefore, it is recommended that textbook developers ensure that activities and questions that have the potential for developing creativity are added, and to include more creativity-conducive content, exercises and questions in the textbooks. This process should go hand in hand with practical teacher training and enrichment courses whose main objective is to inform, motivate and refine teaching skills in this respect.

Thirdly, parental support is critical for the promotion of creative thinking (Vong, 2008; Al-Aqeel, 2005). Parents are influential in fostering and encouraging the creative thinking abilities of their children. Hence, it is suggested that parents are oriented about creativity, its importance and ways in which they can complement to teachers' efforts to foster creativity. Of course, this highlights the parents-school relationship, which needs to be reinforced and maintained so that parents become more involved in the development of their children's all around personality.

6.2.7 Improving teachers' attitudes towards creativity

With respect to teachers' attitudes towards creativity, it is quite clear that teachers lack a clear and common conceptualization of creativity. This finding was also confirmed by other researchers (e.g., Al-Salmi, 2010; Aljughaiman and Mowrer-Reynolds, 2007). Consequently, it is quite difficult to value the importance of creativity and develop a positive attitude towards it. Therefore, the recommendation, beside those outlined in section (5.2.3), would be for the Ministry of Education to adopt creative thinking in its programmes through including and emphasising the topics of teaching creatively and teaching for creativity in pre-service teacher training programmes as well as in in-service EFL teacher workshops. One purpose of this training is to enhance teachers' understanding and attitudes towards teaching creatively and teaching for creativity; hence. Some of the most prevalent myths about creativity can be addressed (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004; Plucker & Dow, 2010). Teachers should be able to discuss their own perceptions on

creativity and correct any misconceptions they might have with existing evidence from up-to-date materials on creativity in psychology and education (Grohman & Szmidt, 2013). This discussion should also help teachers understand how those misconceptions affect attitudes towards creativity and how that in turn affects them and their students in relation to promoting creativity.

The other purpose for the training is to engage teachers in the practical training sessions in creative thinking techniques that are applicable across domains. Grohman & Szmidt (2013) suggest techniques that belong to three general categories: inquisitive (e.g., generating questions, speculations); combinatorial (e.g., making associations); and transformative (e.g., idea improvement or transforming objects). Learning about these techniques and the various ways to adopt/adapt them should help teachers to appreciate creative thinking skills more and to develop a more positive attitude.

However, it is important to understand that shaping creative attitude is not an easy task and changes in attitudes requires time and effort. Therefore, continuous engagement with teachers through various opportunities such as mentoring, coaching, electronic forums or blogs and meetings should contribute in shaping positive attitudes towards creative thinking skills in teachers, and in turn, in their students as well.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

The review of literature in this study made it clear that both concepts of reading comprehension and creativity are fragmentary in the field of TESOL and that there is an acute lack of in-depth research about these two concepts in terms of their development and applications in the EFL classroom contexts. This study has readdressed these issues in several ways.

Empirical contribution

The empirical research work in this study is unique in a number of aspects. First, no other researcher (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) has carried out a study of such depth to incorporate creative thinking and collaboration to develop EFL learners' reading comprehension skills as well as their creative thinking skills. Indeed, previous research on reading comprehension in most EFL contexts worldwide and in Saudi Arabia revealed many issues that needed to be addressed (Sidek, 2011; Shang, 2011; Ling 2011). Similarly, thinking skills, particularly creative thinking skills, is an area which is almost under-

researched and not fully established and appreciated in English language education (Lee, 2013; Albert & Kormos, 2011). Second, unlike many studies in the field of EFL reading comprehension and creativity, it started with an exploration of problems pertaining to these two concepts before attempting to address them in an empirical study. Third, this study brings forth the voice of young EFL learners who are largely under-represented in the field of foreign language learning research. It attempts to explore as well as improve the situation of middle school classrooms, which are often described as inappropriate for the development of early adolescents in terms of satisfying their need to make decisions about the classroom activities and content they are dealing with (Stevens, 2003). Also, it tries to address the significant decline of students' motivation to learn, attitudes towards school and reading skills performance, all of which are associated with early adolescence (Anderman, Maehr. & Midgley, 1999; Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell. & Mazzeo, 1999). In fact, most of the reviewed studies were conducted on tertiary level EFL learners with little emphasis on reading or creative thinking. Fourth, unlike many studies in this area, the present study draws the attention to views on reading and creative thinking from different levels in the Saudi educational system such as EFL learners, EFL teachers, EFL and giftedness supervisors. Hence, the rich and reliable data that was generated could be utilised to assist in reaching useful conclusions and implications for language teaching.

Methodological contribution

This study is also unique in the methodology approach it adopted and the research tools that were used to address the research questions. A mixed-method approach was adopted, which is not common among reviewed studies on reading and creativity in EFL contexts. As for the research tools, various quantitative methods such as questionnaires, proficiency test, reading comprehension test and creativity test were employed. These tools were integrated with qualitative methods like interviews, reflective student and teacher journals to triangulate data and provide more reliable and valid answers to the research questions. With respect to the questionnaires, the main contribution to the attitudes questionnaire was to include an important attitude domain (the conative domain), which is generally neglected in attitudinal questionnaires.

As for reading skills questionnaire, the skills were organised in relation to the four types of reading: *careful local*, *careful global*, *expeditious local* and *expeditious global*. This way

the controversy about identifying independent reading skills and sub-skills could be address. Moreover, the study used TOEFL Junior Standard Test to identify the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level of the students. This consequently helped in choosing a standardized reading comprehension test that was appropriate to the students' level. This procedure has not been used in other studies which generally design their own test or adopted a test with little consideration to the current proficiency level of students, an issue which could endanger the reliability and validity of their findings. Furthermore, unlike the reviewed studies, this study incorporated two parallel forms of standardising the reading comprehension test and creativity test to administer in the pre- and post-stages of the study.

Regarding the qualitative tools that were used in this study, the semi-structured interviews, reflective journals were designed and developed with de Bono's Six Thinking Hats (STH) strategy in mind. This strategy, which was discussed in detail in chapter 3, proposes a way of thinking that is *"practical, constructive, and invites participants to give their full attention to one point of view at a time"* (Li, Eckstein, Serres, & Lin, 2008, p.2). When STH was employed in the design of the qualitative data collection methods in this study, it was used to enable the researcher to fully capture the experience, feelings, reactions, attitudes, views and suggestions of participants. It also helped to relate the generated data to other data collection methods in this research to achieve triangulation.

Creativity and language learning with younger learners

According to complex/ dynamic theory and emergentism, the need to create and use the language in novel ways lies at the core of human language development (Tin, 2013). However, in many L2 and EFL language learning activities employed in research and language teaching contexts, language is used mainly to deal with 'known meaning' rather than to create 'unknown meaning'. This study attempts to increase young EFL learner's desire to explore and activate their linguistic abilities within and beyond their Zone of Proximal Development. It demonstrates how language learning tasks can be transformed into creative tasks that employ combinational thinking (through which old ideas are associated in unfamiliar ways), exploratory thinking (through which all possibilities of an idea are explored) and transformational thinking (which aims not just to analyse and understand but actively look for possibilities to cause change). The resulting playful use of language in these activities, as part of Creative Circles approach, helps to facilitate language

learning by challenging learners' existing linguistic abilities and encouraging them to explore and transform their language. These activities also develop young language learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge through motivating them to say something new. Hence, unfamiliar combinations of words and utterances are created and complex grammar is developed.

The impact of Creative Circles on young EFL learners' reading skills

An important contribution of this study is the Creative Circles Model to reading that was proposed. Based on this model, students approach the reading passage in five stages (explained in detail in chapter 1 and 2): *Engagement*, *Exploration*, *Explanation*, *Elaboration* and *Evaluation*. The reading activities and tasks were developed so that students could move beyond the literal/ descriptive type of reading and on to more personal, critical and creative reading. As the findings of this study have shown, the reading comprehension of students improved as well as their knowledge and use of careful and expeditious reading skills. Also, through engaging and meaningful activities that were offered, students' as well as teachers' attitudes towards reading in English and creativity were improved and maintained. In addition, the teaching materials including lesson organisation, activities and worksheets might be of use to educators, textbook designers and researchers. These materials can be adopted/adapted or even developed further to accommodate for other language skills to improve language education in general.

Furthermore, this model highlights the positive influence of the intensive part of the intervention, in which learners are trained to use careful and expeditious reading skills. The explicit teaching of reading skills to young language learners seems to be beneficial especially if they are poor readers. This underlines the need for such an approach which refines learners' reading skills, addresses misconceptions about these skills and helps to maintain learners' engagement with reading tasks.

Moreover, several important recommendations to develop reading comprehension are proposed based on the adoption of Creative Circles Model in this study. They include encouraging creative and collaborative reading, exposing students to English at the first grade and allocating more classes to language learning, working on common approaches and measures to promote reading skills in L1 and L2, involving students in reflective activities about their reading experiences to enhance their attitudes significantly, giving teachers more freedom to organise and design their own reading activities and encouraging

extensive reading in L1 and L2. Also, it is suggested that teachers' low language proficiency can be addressed through: (1) regular assessment and ongoing language development programmes for in-service teachers and (2) an English language teacher competency test qualification for prospective EFL teachers. In addition, the current study advocates having practical teacher training programmes that are jointly designed, supervised and evaluated by universities and local educational directorates to bridge the gap between theory and practice in language teaching. Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and suggests linking teacher's annual raise to performance as well as reviewing and reforming teachers' working context and content conditions.

Creative Circles' effect on young EFL learners' Creativity and short-term interventions

The implementation of Creative Circles approach seems to have a positive influence on young EFL learners' creative thinking. First, the new approach appears to improve learners' attitudes as the participants reported their enjoyment and boosted self-confidence. The positive attitude of learners and the increase in their drive to be involved in creative thinking activities helped to nurture their creativity especially under conditions that support intrinsic motivation, which is highly neglected in many language classrooms (Saheen, 2010). Second, this approach helps to address the confusion about the concept of creativity, as explained by the participating teacher. Indeed, the confusion about the nature of creativity is a huge obstacle for teachers who want to promote creativity in their classes, which could be the source of a variety of problematic beliefs about creativity. Third, this study highlights the positive effect of group creativity on learners' creative thinking. Most learners emphasised the benefits of group creativity which plays a positive role in developing their creative thinking through sharing decision-making responsibilities as well as encouraging and supporting each other's ideas. In fact, group creativity provides students with enough opportunities to explore ideas convergently and divergently in a socially, emotionally and cognitively safe environment that allows them to freely participate (Shaheen, 2010), which is an issue that is greatly overshadowed by the focus on competition and individual student achievement (Craft, 2008a).

Fourth, Creative Circles approach creates a classroom environment that exhibits practices conducive to creativity development such as 'working in groups', 'independency', 'facilitative role of teacher', 'respect between teacher and students and among groups', 'encouraging curiosity and risk-taking', 'teacher's genuine interest in students' efforts',

‘evaluating ideas’, and ‘teacher’s modeling’. Fifth, the current study provides various creativity-friendly tasks which help to facilitate students’ creative thinking, the most facilitative of which are ‘divergent thinking tasks’ which involved ill-defined problems (e.g., creativity activities at the beginning and the end of each lesson), ‘open-ended tasks’ (e.g., post-reading questions) and ‘unfamiliar tasks’ (e.g., fact/opinion, author’s bias, text type and text organisation). Finally, the present study lends support to the mounting evidence that creativity could be enhanced within a short period of time. Even though many of short-term interventions have the potential of improving young learners’ creative thinking in various school subjects (Eyal, 2016), very little is known about whether this is also applicable in EFL contexts. Hence, the significance of this study lies in furthering the understanding about the potential of short-term interventions to develop young EFL learners’ creative thinking. Accordingly, this study recommends that educational policymakers adopt a clear and consistent operational definition to creativity, and promote creativity-friendly culture involving educators, students and parents. This can be achieved through textbooks, teacher training, parent-involvement and encouraging teaching practices that are conducive to creativity. Unlike the current prevailing view that separates creativity from the mainstream academic curriculum, this study suggests that creativity should be integrated into the mainstream curriculum, and that it is necessary to move away from scripted textbooks to give teachers more freedom so that students’ knowledge and creative potential can be facilitated in language classrooms. The study also encourages the adoption of group creativity in the development of reading comprehension, an uncommon situation in educational settings, especially foreign language teaching/learning context. Finally, an important recommendation pertains to improving the reliability and validity of Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking that was administered as one of the research tools in the present study. These recommendations include recognizing students’ social and cultural background, accounting for the appropriateness criterion in the test design, integrating the four phases of creative process (problem analysis, ideation, evaluation and implementation) and using real-life problems activities instead of abstract tasks.

Reading and creativity

This study has also shed some light on the connection between reading and creativity especially in an EFL context. Reading is considered a creative effort since it has a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts that can stimulate learners’ imagination and curiosity. In other words, the more learners are exposed to different types of reading materials, the

more they are likely to be both skilled readers and creative thinkers. However, very little has been done to establish the relationship between reading and creativity in a foreign language learning setting. The current study is an attempt to understand the nature of that relationship, if it exists. Consequently, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there was an association between the scores of young EFL learners in reading test and their creative thinking test scores.

The statistical analyses of both pre- and post-tests results did not show any significant correlation between reading and creativity. Yet, since this was a small case study, its results should not undermine the positive interactive connection between reading and creativity. In fact, as revealed by the qualitative analysis in this study, all the shared traits between reading and creativity such as encouraging openness, communicating ideas, self-discovery, individuality and collaboration should suggest that perhaps a connection exists between the two concepts and that incorporating creativity tasks in reading lessons for foreign language learners is worth the consideration. Indeed, young language learners could become both creative and good readers when they are given the chance to respond to the texts they read by identifying new relationships and making predictions, and when they are encouraged to go beyond the given information in the text and start to elaborate and transform ideas generated from what they read (Torrance, 1965). Hence, in addition to quantity, the quality of what is being read and the kind of tasks associated with it carry a huge significance for fostering and developing creative thinking.

6.4 Limitations and Suggestions for future research

Although this study has achieved its overall aim of gaining a deeper understanding of reading comprehension and creative thinking at the middle school level of education and related objectives-attitudes, barriers and pedagogical issues, one also has to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, previous research on developing reading comprehension and creative thinking in Saudi EFL is limited. This situation made it difficult to find sufficient related studies in the Saudi EFL classroom context against which the findings of the current study could be compared. Hence, most of the research findings were related to other studies from different EFL contexts, rather than depending solely on EFL studies in Saudi Arabia. Hopefully, this study will encourage many researchers to work more on these topics to increase our understanding of reading comprehension and creativity and improve language teaching and learning in general.

Another limitation pertains to the participants and research context. First, this study was limited to a relatively small sample of Saudi middle-school EFL learners. However, the large plethora of reviewed research about the current situation of reading comprehension instruction and promotion of creative thinking in the Saudi EFL context supports the findings of the present study and, therefore, could extend the generalizability of its recommendations. Nonetheless, further research incorporating a similar design and a larger sample size would be of great value. Also, extending this research to other school levels or even university level students can generate interesting data and valuable insights. Second, the study was conducted in the City of Jeddah, which could differ from other EFL settings within the region and the broader EFL population as well. Thus, replicating this study in different contexts may help generalize its findings and contribute to a fuller understanding of the effects of Creative Circles on EFL learners' reading comprehension and creative thinking. Moreover, this study did not include female students due to the single-sex education policy in the Saudi Educational system. It is recommended that both male and female students be involved in further research in order to see whether the relationship between the variables in question differs according to gender.

A further limitation is that the sample in this study consisted of students from similar language proficiency (between A1 and A2 in the CEFR system). Therefore, another area of future research would be to examine the Creative Circles approach at different proficiency levels. The question that can be raised is: "would similar results be obtained if this study were replicated with students in an EFL context at a different level of proficiency?". In addition, research that considers the Creative Circles approach across proficiency levels would be of benefit. The advantage of looking across different proficiency levels would be capturing reading comprehension and creative thinking changes that might not be detected at one level of proficiency during a relatively short study span. This information might also help teachers and curriculum developers address these changes so that students can continue to make progress.

Although students' reading comprehension and creative thinking were found to develop over the relatively short period of this study as a result of the Creative Circles approach, the time span was not long enough to capture and document all aspects of improvement. Extending the research to longitudinal studies over a longer period of time would provide even richer data and potential insights into the effects of length of study on reading comprehension and creative thinking skills.

This study was further limited by the inherent limitations of the research instruments and the statistical treatment of the collected data. In particular, while it was beneficial to employ interviews to explore development in students' reading comprehension, because of the delay in conducting the post treatment interviews, accuracy in the recall of participants' of Creative Circles' tasks were compromised. Future research may include more follow-up interviews, videotaped observations or think-aloud protocols to generate further valuable and accurate data as the researcher excluded these options due to time constraints and the ban on videotaping classrooms imposed by Jeddah's Educational District. Moreover, the data collection instrument used to measure students' creative thinking (Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking TTCT) was limited to three domains of creativity: *fluency*, *flexibility* and *originality*. Further research should consider using more than one creativity measuring tool to generate more accurate data and contribute to the knowledge about creative thinking, especially in the area of language teaching/learning.

Finally, EFL students' L1 reading skills were not investigated in this study. Research on EFL reading (e.g., Bernhardt, 2005; Koda, 2007) has pointed out that there is a transfer and interaction between EFL learners' L1 and L2 reading skills, an area that is not fully explored. Therefore, a possible direction for future research might be to use a more comprehensive model including L1 and L2 reading skills in order to explore the differential roles of L1 and L2 in predicting L2 reading comprehension within the context and principles established in the Creative Circles approach. Furthermore, in this study, the experimental group, which used Creative Circles as a type of collaborative reading strategy, was compared to classes that approached reading texts as individuals. Further studies may involve comparing this type of approach to other collaborative reading strategies such as Collaborative Strategic Reading.

6.5 Self-Reflection

This study as a whole has been a very inspiring and rewarding experience on both the personal and academic levels. On the personal level, as a mature international PhD student, visiting the UK with my small family for the first time, I found it extremely challenging at the start of my new life in Newcastle. I had to start from scratch and learn about the daunting tasks of renting a house, buying a car, finding schools for my children, enrolling my wife in a language school, shopping, opening a bank account and the list goes on. I had to study and look after my family at the same time, which kept me under a tremendous amount of

pressure all the time. However, sometimes you learn much more from your children than they learn from you. I was inspired by how quickly they managed to cope with their new environment, language demands, schoolwork and cultural norms.

With time, things became easier for us and we started to feel at home by the end of the first year of our stay. Looking at the personal gains from this ‘adventure’, I believe we, as a family, achieved a lot. We all learned life skills that we would not have learned if we had stayed in Saudi Arabia. This experience has taught us how to be independent and to work as a team at the same time. It has also brought us closer together as a family in face of the many difficulties that we had to go through. So, what started as a burden- a mature student with a family- turned out to be a bonus at the end.

On the Academic level, the journey was not that smooth either. The initial research topic was about learning circles and extensive reading. However, after several meetings with my supervisors, I decided to change the topic to Creative Circles and its impact on students’ reading comprehension and creative thinking. The decision was made as a result of lengthy discussions with my supervisors as well as the careful reading of literature on reading comprehension and creative thinking in Saudi Arabia, two problematic areas that need further investigation to expand our knowledge about them and to address some of their complications.

In addition, after reading the PhD Handbook, I decided to apply for the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Training, which is officially endorsed by Vitae, which is the UK organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff. Even though it took me a whole academic year to complete all of its modules, it was worth the effort. I made this decision, with the help and advice of my supervisors after some careful thinking about my research needs, for which the training seemed very convenient (and it was). The training was very intensive, covering most of the important aspects of PhD research skills and knowledge needed to enable any PhD student to continue to develop his/her research skills and to ensure that the acquired skills in a doctorate can be transferred to academia or to his/her own personal life. I especially benefited from modules and events such as *Nature of Explanation and Enquiry*, *Qualitative Methods and Critical Enquiry*, *Quantitative Methods*, *Data Management Workshops*, *Time Management*, *First Year Conference*, *Second Year Poster Conference* and *Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*.

A wonderful highlight in my PhD journey was working as a teaching assistant with my supervisor Dr. Lin who believed in me and gracefully supported me to work in an area with which I was not very familiar nor confident enough to explore. Basically, I was involved in two key TESOL MA programme modules at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences (ECLS): *Introduction to TESOL* and *Thinking Skills*. I took part in various tasks such as managing seminars, microteaching, presentations, lesson plans, teaching evaluation and marking essays. This experience has not only refined my teaching skills and boosted my confidence but also contributed significantly to my knowledge about TESOL and the related up-to-date debates and key issues in language teaching/learning.

As I am approaching the end of this phase of the ongoing journey as a researcher, I believe I can offer future PhD students some advice. The first piece of advice would be to select a topic that genuinely interests you. My academic interests have deep roots in language teaching as I used to be an English language teacher, and an English language supervisor later on. I was always, and still am, interested in identifying and address EFL learners' and EFL teachers' problems. I am particularly interested in reading since reading is second nature to me. Apart from coffee, I think books and passion about teaching are the only things I cannot live without. The second piece of advice would be to always think of yourself as a humble learner no matter how smart or experienced you think you are. My PhD journey has taught me a valuable lesson: how little I know and how much I need to learn. Therefore, let your PhD motto be "The most ignorant is the one who thinks he knows it all". My final suggestions would be to have a thesis action plan, make friends with your fellow researchers and never forget to do some physical exercise (a sound mind in a sound body).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Consent Forms

Appendix B -Participants Information Sheet

Appendix C -A request for permission to conduct study tools

Appendix D -Official approval from Saudi Ministry of Education

Appendix E -Reading habits and attitudes towards reading and group work questionnaire – Student

Appendix F -Reading Skills Questionnaire- Student

Appendix G -Interview Schedule- Student (Pre-intervention)

Appendix H -Reading Skills Questionnaire -Teachers

Appendix I -Interview Schedule- Teachers/supervisors (pre-intervention)

Appendix J -Sample of Creative Circles lessons

Appendix K -Group Contract

Appendix L -Student Journal

Appendix A - Consent Forms



Informed Consent Form- Parents

Project title: Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners?

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my child's participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to let my child participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw my child at any time without giving reasons and that he/she will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like my name (or my child) used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. I do not want my name (or my child) used in this project. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Parent/ Guardian:

Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher Signature Date

Informed Consent Form- Adults

Project title: Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners?

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. I do not want my name used in this project. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix B-Participants Information Sheet



"Can learning in groups improve students' reading comprehension"

INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOU!

Hello, my name is Abdulaziz and I am looking at how group work makes students better readers and thinkers. Please have a look at this leaflet and contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for reading this.

What is the study about?

This study tries to understand your experience of collaborative reading and how you feel about it.

Why have I been chosen?

You are very important and with your help we can learn more about how to improve learning and teaching English.

What will happen in the study?

In this study you will:

- read texts with your group.
- be interviewed about reading and group work.
- answer a reading questionnaire.
- do reading and creativity test.
- fill in a journal.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is voluntary.



Will the things I tell you be kept secret?

No one will know who you are but if you tell me something that indicates that you, or another child, are at risk of quite serious harm then I may need to tell somebody else to keep you safe.

If you would like to take part, then we will need your parents consent.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions:

Abdulaziz Al Qahtani
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU
Email address:
a.al-qahtani@newcastle.ac.uk

If you feel this study has harmed you in any way you can contact Newcastle University using the details below:

Supervisor's name/ Dr. Mei Lin
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU
Email address:
mei.lin@newcastle.ac.uk

Thank you ☺

Participants Information Sheet (Adults)

Study Title: *Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners?*

Invitation Paragraph

Reading is an indispensable skill for foreign language learners. In fact, it is even considered as the most important skill, taught in schools. In addition to reading, creative thinking is an integral aspect of education. The Saudi government realized the importance of creativity and decided in June, 2000 to establish *King Abdul-Aziz & His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba)*. However, many studies show that most Saudi learners lack English language reading competency as well as creative thinking opportunities in the classroom.

What is the purpose of the study?

In this study, we want to see if collaborative reading can improve students' reading comprehension as well as their creative thinking. We also aim to see if this type of reading can encourage students to use reading skills more often and develop positive attitudes towards reading in English and collaborative work. This three-month study will involve 30 EFL teachers and 90 EFL middle school students.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary. We would like you to consent to participate in this study as we believe that you can make an important contribution to the research. If you do not wish to participate you do not have to do anything in response to this request.

What will I do if I take part?

If you are happy to participate in this study, you will answer questionnaires, be interviewed about reading comprehension and creativity.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information you provide to us will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to it. All data collected will only be used for the specific research purposes of this study. Under no circumstances will identifiable responses be provided to any other third party. Information emanating from this study will only be made public in a completely unattributable format.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be part of a PhD thesis. A summary of the results will be sent to you by e-mail. You will not be identified in any report, publications or presentation without seeking your full consent. Direct quotes from the interviews may be used in reports and publications; however, they will be anonymized.

For further queries, please contact:

*Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani,
PhD Candidate, Applied Linguistics
School of Education, Communications and Language Sciences
Newcastle University,
United Kingdom
E-mail: a.al-qahtani@newcastle.ac.uk*

Appendix C- Request for permission to conduct study tools



King George VI Building
Schools of Education, Communication
and Language Sciences
Newcastle University
Newcastle NE1 7RU
England

29th May, 2014

To who it may concern,

Abdulaziz Ali Y Al Qahtani

I am writing to confirm that **Abdulaziz Al Qahtani** is a PhD student in Educational and Applied Linguistics at Newcastle University, UK under my supervision. His research topic is 'Can Creative Circles improve reading comprehension and creative thinking of Saudi third-grade middle school EFL learners?' He has been working very hard and he is going to Saudi Arabia to collect data for his study starting from 12th of October 2014 to 31 December 2014.

May I take this opportunity to thank you, and, through you to the school he will be working with for the support you will be giving him.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mei Lin".

Dr Mei Lin
Director, MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL

Email: mei.lin@ncl.ac.uk

Appendix D- Official approval from Saudi Ministry of Education

الرقم: ٢٠٢٠/١/٢٦
التاريخ: ١٩/٨/١٤٤٠هـ
المرفقات: -



المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التربية والتعليم
(٢٨٠)

الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمحافظة جدة

التخطيط والتطوير - قسم الدراسات والبحوث

إلى : مدير متوسطة المأمون بن تعليم محافظة جدة .
من : مدير التخطيط والتطوير .
بشأن : تسهيل مهمة الباحث / عبد العزيز علي يحيى القحطاني .

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ، وبعد ، ،

بناء على توجيه مساعد المدير العام للشؤون التعليمية على خطاب الملحق الثقافي بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية (المرفق) المتضمن تسهيل مهمة الباحث عبد العزيز علي يحيى القحطاني ، المبتعث للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في مجال الاتصال وعلوم اللغة بجامعة (نيو كاسل) بالمملكة المتحدة ، وذلك استكمالاً لمتطلبات بحث بعنوان " أثر استخدام حلقات التعلم الإبداعية على الفهم القرائي والتفكير الإبداعي لدى متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية بالصف الثالث متوسط ، بإحدى المدارس المتوسطة بتعليم جدة " .

ويرغب الباحث في تطبيق أدوات بحثه (استبانات - مقابلات - اختبارات لفهم القرائي - اختبار للإبداع سجل الطالب - سجل المعلم) على عينة من طلاب الصف الثالث متوسط ، حيث تم فحص أداة البحث وتبين استيفائها لضوابط الوزارة بهذا الخصوص.

نأمل منكم تسهيل مهمة الباحث بتمكينه لتطبيق أدوات بحثه على عينة الدراسة بمدرستكم . وذلك تحت إشرافكم ، وبمشاركة المعلم المختص . شاكرين ومقدرين تعاونكم واهتمامكم بالبحث العلمي .

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

خليل بن فراج الوافي



هاتف ٦٤٤٤٣٠٥ - فاكس ٦٤٣٤٠٤٠ - الرمز البريدي ٢١١٥٨

Appendix E- Reading habits and attitudes towards reading and group work questionnaire – Student

This questionnaire is to better understand the attitudes of EFL learners towards reading and collaborative activities. It consists of three sections. Please read the instructions carefully and choose the appropriate response that reflects your view. This is not a test, so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. You do not even have to write your name. The results of this questionnaire will only be used for research purposes. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Part 1

1. How often do you read in **Arabic** outside school?

- a. Everyday or almost everyday b. Once or twice a week c. Once or twice a month d. Never or almost never

2. Do you think you read enough in **Arabic**?

- a. Yes b. No, but I would like to c. No, and I do not want to

3. How many books in **Arabic** do you read outside school?

- a. None b. 1- 10 c. 11- 50 d. 51 –100 e. 101 and more

4. What is your preferred reading material in **Arabic**? (You can choose more than one)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| ___ Magazines | ___ Newspapers | ___ Short stories | ___ Novels |
| ___ social networking sites | ___ Blogs | ___ Poems | ___ E-mails |
| ___ Text messages | ___ Factual books | ___ Posters | |

Other: _____

5. Which of the following influences you the most to read **Arabic** texts? (Rank them from 1 to 4, with 1 as the most influential):

- ___ My teacher ___ My friends ___ personal motivation ___ family members

Others: _____

6. How often do you read in **English** outside school?

- a. Everyday or almost everyday b. Once or twice a week c. Once or twice a month d. Never or almost never

7. Do you think you enough read in **English**?

- a. Yes b. No, but I would like to c. No, and I do not want to

8. How many books in **English** do you read outside school?

- a. None b. 1- 10 c. 11- 50 d. 51 –100 e. 101 and more

9. What is your preferred reading material in **English**? (You can choose more than one)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| ___ Magazines | ___ Newspapers | ___ Short stories | ___ Novels |
| ___ social networking sites | ___ Blogs | ___ Poems | ___ E-mails |
| ___ Text messages | ___ Factual books | ___ Posters | |

Others: _____

10. Which of the following influences you the most to read **English** texts? (Rank them from 1 to 4, with 1 as the most influential):

- ___ My teacher ___ My friends ___ personal motivation ___ family members

Others: _____

Statement						
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Reading in English at school is not enjoyable.					
2	Reading is an important skill as it significantly develops my language proficiency.					
3	If I have free time, I will read English texts (e.g. books, stories, magazine, newspaper).					
4	I remain confident when I read English texts even if I do not understand every word.					
5	Learning to read English is more important than other skills (i.e. speaking, writing).					
6	If I come across an English text that interests me, I make an effort to read it.					
7	I become worried when I cannot understand every word in an English text.					
8	Reading English texts is hard.					
9	I belong to/want to join an English book club.					
10	Being able to read in English increases my chances of getting a good job.					
11	If there is an English language library near me, I will apply for a membership.					
12	I become anxious whenever I am asked to read in English.					
13	Being able to read in English is important for my future education.					
14	I urge myself to read English texts as often as possible.					
15	I look forward to English reading classes.					
16	Reading English is useful in getting good grades at school.					
17	I want to learn effective reading strategies to improve my reading abilities in English.					
18	I feel excited when I read English texts.					
19	Reading English helps me to understand the TV programs and movies that I am interested in.					
20	I have/ plan to have a personal library of English texts.					
21	I dislike reading English texts at school.					
22	Being able to read in English improves my self-image.					
23	I avoid reading English outside school unless it is necessary.					
24	I respect people who are able to read in English.					
25	I want to read in English so that I can learn more about other cultures.					
26	I want to participate in the reading lesson activities					

Item						
Collaborative learning:		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Motivates me to learn English.					
2	Makes the reading tasks enjoyable.					
3	Is boring.					
4	Improves my comprehension of the text I read.					
5	Motivates me to be actively involved in the reading lesson.					
6	Makes me feel uneasy.					
7	Gives me enough time to reflect on what I have learned.					
8	Allows me to learn from my peers and share ideas.					
9	Makes me lose my self-confidence.					
10	Is a waste of time and efforts.					
11	Suits my level of language proficiency.					
12	Improves student-student relationship.					
13	Has a negative effect on the teachers' personal relationship with their students.					
14	Encourages me to do more collaborative activities in the future.					
15	Is useful in reading lessons.					
16	Is ineffective in improving my reading abilities.					

الجزء الأول:

1. كم مرة تقرأ نصوصاً باللغة العربية خارج المدرسة؟
 أ. يوماً ب. مرة أو مرتين أسبوعياً ج. مرة أو مرتين في الشهر د. غالباً أو إطلاقاً لا أقرأ
2. هل تعتقد أنك تقرأ بشكل كافٍ باللغة العربية؟
 أ. نعم ب. لا، ولكن أود أن أقرأ ج. لا، ولا أريد في القراءة
3. كم عدد الكتب العربية التي تقرأها في المنزل؟
 أ. لا شيء ب. 1-10 كتب ج. 11-50 كتاب د. 51-100 كتاب هـ. 101 فأكثر
4. ماهي المواد التي تفضل قراءتها باللغة العربية؟ (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من عنصر واحد)
 _____ مجلات _____ جرائد _____ قصص قصيرة _____ روايات
 _____ مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي (تويتر، فيس بوك، إلخ) _____ أشعار _____ البريد الإلكتروني
 _____ الرسائل القصيرة _____ الكتب العلمية _____ اللوحات الإعلانية
 أخرى: _____

5. أيّ من الآتي يحفزك أكثر على القراءة للنصوص العربية؟ رتبها من 1 إلى 4 مبتدأً بالأكثر تأثيراً فالأقل:
 - معلمي - دافع ذاتي - أصدقائي - أحد أفراد العائلة
 أخرى تود ذكرها: _____

6. كم مرة تقرأ نصوصاً باللغة الإنجليزية خارج المدرسة؟
 أ. يوماً ب. مرة أو مرتين أسبوعياً ج. مرة أو مرتين في الشهر د. غالباً أو إطلاقاً لا أقرأ
7. هل تعتقد أنك تقرأ بشكل كافٍ باللغة الإنجليزية؟
 أ. نعم ب. لا، ولكن أود أن أقرأ ج. لا، ولا أريد في القراءة
8. كم عدد الكتب الإنجليزية التي تقرأها في المنزل؟
 أ. لا شيء ب. 1-10 كتب ج. 11-50 كتاب د. 51-100 كتاب هـ. 101 فأكثر
9. ماهي المواد التي تفضل قراءتها باللغة الإنجليزية؟ (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من عنصر واحد)
 _____ مجلات _____ جرائد _____ قصص قصيرة _____ روايات
 _____ مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي (تويتر، فيس بوك، إلخ) _____ أشعار _____ البريد الإلكتروني
 _____ الرسائل القصيرة _____ الكتب العلمية _____ اللوحات الإعلانية
 أخرى: _____

10. أيّ من الآتي يحفزك أكثر على القراءة للنصوص الإنجليزية؟ رتبها من 1 إلى 4 مبتدأً بالأكثر تأثيراً فالأقل:
 - معلمي - دافع ذاتي - أصدقائي - أحد أفراد العائلة
 أخرى تود ذكرها: _____

الجزء الثاني : اختر الإجابة التي توضح إلى أي مدى تتفق أو لا تتفق مع العبارات التالية :

العبارة	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق بشدة
1 القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة غير ممتعة.				
2 القراءة مهارة مهمة لأنها تطور من قدراتي في اللغة الإنجليزية.				
3 لو كان لدي وقت فراغ فسوف أقضيه في قراءة كتب أو قصص أو مجلات أو جرائد مكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية.				
4 لدي الثقة بنفسى عندما أقرأ في الدرس حتى ولو لم أفهم معاني بعض الكلمات.				
5 تعلم مهارة القراءة في اللغة الإنجليزية أهم من المهارات الأخرى مثل الكتابة أو الاستماع أو التحدث.				
6 لو مررت بنص إنجليزي مثير للاهتمام فسوف أبذل جهدي كي أقرأه.				
7 أشعر بالقلق حينما لا أستطيع فهم جميع الكلمات في النص الإنجليزي في درس اللغة الإنجليزية.				
8 قراءة النصوص الإنجليزية مهمة صعبة.				
9 أود أن أكون عضواً في نادي للكتاب الإنجليزي.				
10 إجادتي للقراءة باللغة الإنجليزية تزيد من فرصى في الحصول على وظيفة جيدة.				
11 لو كان بالقرب منى مكتبة تعبر كتب إنجليزية فسوف أسعى للحصول على عضويه فيها.				
12 أشعر بالقلق كلما طلب منى المعلم قراءة نص مكتوب باللغة الإنجليزية.				
13 إجادتي للقراءة باللغة الإنجليزية مهمة لتعليمى المستقبلى.				
14 أحت نفسي على القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية قدر الإمكان.				
15 أتطلع دوماً لدرس القراءة في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية.				
16 إجادة القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية تسهل حصولى على درجات مرتفعة في المدرسة.				
17 أريد في تعلم المهارات التي تحسن من قدراتي في القراءة.				
18 القراءة في درس اللغة الإنجليزية أمر مشوق بالنسبة لى.				
19 إجادة القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية مفيدة في فهم ما يجري في البرامج التلفزيونية و الأفلام و مواقع الإنترنت التي تهمنى.				
20 أتمنى لو كان لدي مكتبة شخصية خاصة بالكتب اللإنجليزية.				
21 لا أحب قراءة النصوص الموجودة في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة.				
22 إجادتي للغة الإنجليزية تحسن من نظرتى لذاتى.				
23 أتجنب قراءة النصوص المكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية خارج المدرسة.				
24 أحترم الأشخاص الذين يجيدون القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية.				
25 تعلم القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية يزيد من معرفتى بالثقافات العالمية المختلفة.				
26 أريد في المشاركة في أنشطة درس القراءة.				

الجزء الثالث: اختر الإجابة التي توضح إلى أي مدى تتفق أو لا تتفق مع العبارات التالية عن تعلم القراءة من خلال المجموعات:

العبارة						
القرائة مع مجموعة من الطلاب:						
أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة		
					1	تحفزي على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.
					2	تجعل نشاط القراءة ممتعاً.
					3	تبعث على الملل.
					4	تزيد من استيعابي للنصوص الإنجليزية التي أقرأها.
					5	تحفزي للمشاركة بفاعلية في درس القراءة.
					6	تشعرني بعدم الارتياح.
					7	تعطيني الوقت الكافي للتفكير فيما أتعلمه.
					8	تتيح لي الفرصة لأتعلم من زملائي و أن أشارك معهم الأفكار.
					9	تفقدني الثقة بنفسى.
					10	مجرد مضیعة للوقت و الجهد.
					11	مناسبة لمستواي في اللغة الإنجليزية.
					12	تحسّن علاقة الطلاب بعضهم ببعض..
					13	لها أثر سلبي على علاقة الطلاب بمعلمهم.
					14	تشجعني على المشاركة في المزيد من الأنشطة الجماعية في المستقبل.
					15	مفيدة في دروس القراءة.
					16	غير فعالة في تحسين قدراتي على القراءة للنصوص الإنجليزية.

Appendix F- Reading Skills Questionnaire- Student

	skill	Item
Careful Local Reading	Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through identifying its grammatical function.	1. I can guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word through its position in a sentence. (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives).
	Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining prefixes, suffixes and word roots.	2. I can make use of prefixes, suffixes and word roots to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. (e.g. unhappy= un (not)+ happy; teacher= teach+ er; -logy = science).
	Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through synonyms, antonyms and examples as contextual clues.	3. I can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and examples.
	Establishing a plain sense of a text through interpreting pro-forms.	4. I can interpret pronouns when I read a given text.
	Establishing a plain sense of a text through interpreting discourse markers.	5. I can make use of discourse markers (e.g. however/for example/ In addition) to aid my general understanding of the text.
	Recognizing the functional value of sentences	6. I can recognize the purpose of sentences in the text (e.g. providing: a definition, a description, an apology or instructions).
	Recognizing text organization	7. I can rearrange scrambled sentences or paragraphs.
Careful Global Reading	Understanding explicitly stated information	8. I can answer questions about the information or facts that are clearly stated in the text.
	Making inferences from a text	9. I can draw conclusions from information that is not explicitly stated.
		10. I can understand the implications of the passage.
	Evaluating the text	11. I can distinguish between facts and opinions in the text.
		12. I can recognize the author's attitude and bias.
Expeditious Local Reading	Scanning	13. I can recognize the type of text I am reading (e.g. instructive/ descriptive/ informative).
		14. I can look for a specific piece of information without having to read the whole text.
		15. I can use clues in the text, such as headings and titles to help me find the information I need.
		16. I can move my eyes quickly across the page until I locate the information I need.
		17. I can make use of numbers, names or dates when I try to answer a particular question.
		18. I can make use of visual features of (e.g. bold, italicized, in a different font size, style, or color) to help me find what I am looking for.
		19. I can make use of transitional phrases (e.g. first, second, then, however, moreover) when I try to find a specific information.
Expeditious Global Reading	Activating prior knowledge	20. I can make use of key words or phrases in the text to help me answer a specific question.
	Previewing	21. I try to remember what I already know about the topic to help me understand the text I am about to read.
		22. I can get the main idea of a text by quickly looking at its title, subheadings, photos, tables, etc. which come with it.
	Making predictions	23. When I read the title of a text, I can predict its content.
		24. When I finish reading a paragraph, I can guess what the next paragraph is about.
	Skimming	25. I can read a text quickly and get the most important information from it.
		26. Before I read, I run my eyes over the text and notice names, numbers and italicized words so that I can have a general understanding of the text.
		27. Before I read a passage, I look at the first few sentences of each paragraph so that I can understand the central idea of the text.

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Dear student,

My name is Abdulaziz Al Qahtani and I am conducting a study about what 3rd grade intermediate EFL students' do while reading English texts.

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about what you do when you read a text written in English. Please, read each statement carefully and give your answer. The information you provide in this questionnaire will be strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this research only.

I wish to draw your attention to the following points when you respond to the items of the questionnaire:

- ❖ Read the statements carefully before answering them.
- ❖ Tick only **ONE** box for each statement.
- ❖ Make sure you answer all statements in the questionnaire.
- ❖ There is no right or wrong answers as long as they reflect what you do in reading English texts.

I truly appreciate your cooperation.

The researcher:

Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani,
Newcastle University,
United Kingdom
E-mail: a.al-qahtani@newcastle.ac.uk

	Item					
		Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I can guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word through its position in a sentence. (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives)					
2	I can answer questions about the information or facts that are clearly stated in the text.					
3	I can look for a specific piece of information without having to read the whole text.					
4	I try to remember what I already know about the topic to help me understand the text I am about to read.					
5	I can make use of prefixes, suffixes and word roots to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. (For example, unhappy= un (not)+ happy; teacher= teach+ er; -logy = science).					
6	I can draw conclusions from information that is not explicitly stated.					
7	I can use clues in the text, such as headings and titles to help me find the information I need					
8	I can get the main idea of a text by quickly looking at its title, subheadings, photos, tables, etc. which come with it.					
9	I can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and examples.					
10	I can understand the implications of the passage.					
11	I can move my eyes quickly across the page until I locate the information I need.					
12	When I read the title of a text, I can predict its content.					
13	I can interpret pronouns when I read a given text.					
14	I can make use of numbers, names or dates when I try to answer a particular question.					
15	When I finish reading a paragraph, I can guess what the next paragraph is about.					
16	I can make use of discourse markers in the text (e.g. however/for example/ In addition) to aid my understanding.					
17	I can distinguish between facts and opinions in the text.					
18	I can make use of the words that are bold faced, italics, or in a different font size, style, or color to help me find what I am looking for.					
19	I can read a text quickly and get the most important information from it.					
20	I can recognize the purpose of sentences in the text (e.g. providing: a definition, a description, an apology or instructions).					
21	I can recognize the author's attitude and bias.					
22	I can make use of transitional phrases (e.g. first, second, then, however, moreover) when I try to find a specific information.					
23	Before I read, I run my eyes over the text and notice names, numbers and italicized words so that I can have a general understanding of the text.					
24	I can rearrange scrambled sentences or paragraphs.					
25	I can recognize the type of text I am reading (e.g. instructive/ descriptive/ informative).					
26	I can make use of key words or phrases in the text to help me answer a specific question.					
27	Before I read a passage, I look at the first few sentences of each paragraph so that I can understand the central idea of the text.					



أخي الطالب:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد :

يقوم الباحث بإجراء دراسة حول مدى فاعلية استخدام إحدى استراتيجيات التعلم التعاوني في تحسين مهارات القراءة لدى طلاب الصف الثالث المتوسط في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية. وبين يديك استطلاع لرايكم حول مدى استخدامكم لمهارات القراءة في اللغة الإنجليزية. و يود الباحث أن يؤكد على أن جميع المعلومات التي سيحصل عليها الباحث من خلالك لن تستخدم نتائجها سوى لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط. عليه أمل منك مراعاة ما يلي:

- ❖ أن تقرأ العبارة بعناية قبل أن تحدد الاختيار المناسب.
- ❖ أن يكون الاختيار صادقا وعن فتاعة تامة منك دون تأثير برأي أحد.
- ❖ أن تضع إشارة واحدة فقط أمام كل عبارة.
- ❖ أن تجيب على جميع الفقرات. علماً أنه لا توجد إجابة صحيحة أو خاطئة طالما أنها تعبر عن وجهة نظرك.

شاكراً لك استجابتك و حسن تعاونك، و الله يحفظكم

الباحث :

محمد العزيز بن علي الخطاطبي
a.al-gahtani@newcastle.ac.uk

	الفقرة					
		حادثاً	غالباً	أحياناً	نادراً	لا مطلقاً
1	تساعدي معرفتي بنوع الكلمة (مثال: اسم أو فعل أو صفة) هي تخمين معيها.					
2	أجيب على الأسئلة التي تتطلب معلومة أو حقائق مصرح بها بشكل واضح في النص الذي أقرأه.					
3	أستطيع أن أبحث عن معلومة محددة و مطلوبة دون الحاجة لقراءة النص كاملاً.					
4	أحاول أن أسترخ ما أعرفه مسبقاً عن الموضوع الذي سأقرأه لتساعدني ذلك على استيعاب النص.					
5	تساعدني معرفتي بالروايد التي تليق بالشعارات هي تخمين معانيها (مثال: um هي كلمة er / unhappy هي كلمة logy / teacher - بمعنى علم هي كلمة مثل geology وتعني علم الأرض).					
6	أحاول لتتبع معتمداً على أفكار و معلومات ضمنية وتبر مصرح بها بشكل واضح في النص الذي أقرأه.					
7	أستفيد من العناوين والعناوين الجانبية للنص هي إيجاد المعلومة التي أبحث عنها.					
8	أحاول للفترة الأساسية للنص من خلال الاستعراض السريع للعناوين والعناوين الجانبية و الصور والبيانات.					
9	أفهم معنى كلمة ما من خلال السياق الخاص بها كوجود مرادف لها أو نقيض أو مثال عليها في النص.					
10	يمضيني استدلال و استنباط الأفكار من النص من خلال القراءة بدهقة.					
11	أمرر عيني خلال النص بشكل سريع حتى أتمكن للمعلومة المطلوبة.					
12	من خلال عنوان النص، يمضيني نوع محتوى ما سأقرأه.					
13	عندما أقرأ النص أستطيع أن أعرفه على من تعود الصفات أو أسماء الإشارة.					
14	أستفيد من الأرقام و الأسماء و التواريخ المبردة هي النص هي الإجابة على الأسئلة.					
15	عندما أبتني من قراءة مقطع في النص، أتمكن ما سأقرأه في المقطع الذي يليه.					
16	أستفيد من الشعارات التي تربط بين الجمل مثل (however/for example/ In addition) هي هم النص بشكل عام.					
17	يمضيني أن أفهم بين الجمل التي تتضمن حقائق و الجمل التي تتضمن آراء و وجهات نظر.					
18	أستفيد من الشعارات ذات الحروف العامة أو المائلة أو المستوية بحجم خط مختلف أو بلون مميز لكي تساعدني في إيجاد المعلومة التي أبحث عنها أثناء القراءة.					
19	أقرأ النص قراءة سريعة حتى أعرفه أهم ما يحتويه من معلومات و أفكار.					
20	أستطيع أن أعرفه ما إذا كانت الجملة التي أقرأها تقدم على سبيل المثال وصفاً أو تعريفاً أو اعتذاراً أو تعليلاً.					
21	أستطيع أن أعرفه موقفه كاتبع النص تجاه الموضوع الذي كتبه عنه.					
22	أستفيد من الشعارات الانتقالية بين الجمل مثل (first, second, then, however, moreover) عندما أحاول إيجاد معلومة محددة أبحث عنها.					
23	قول أن أقرأ، أستعرض النص بشكل سريع ملاحظاً الأسماء والأرقام و الشعارات المشتهرة بخط هائل حتى أفهم الفكرة العامة للنص.					
24	أستطيع أن أعيد ترتيب عدة جمل مرتبة بشكل صحيح.					
25	أستطيع معرفة نوع النص الذي أقرأه (إخباري، تعليمي، وصفي، معلوماتي)					
26	أستفيد من الشعارات الرئيسية والعبارات المصممة في النص لتساعدني في الإجابة على سؤال محدد.					
27	قول أن أقرأ بشكل تفصيلي. أقرأ الجمل الأولى في بداية كل مقطع كي أفهم الفكرة الرئيسية للنص.					

Appendix G- Interview Schedule- Student (Pre-intervention)

STUDENT INTERVIEW SHCHEDULE –PHASE 1

"What are the attitudes of middle school EFL learners towards reading in English and collaborative work?"

(Students)

- 1- هل درس القراءة في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية ممتع بالنسبة لك؟ ما الأشياء التي تعجبك والتي لا تعجبك؟
- 2- أوصف لي درس القراءة في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ما هو شعورك تجاه ذلك؟
- 3- هل قراءة النصوص الإنجليزية في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية أمراً سهلاً أم صعباً بالنسبة لك؟ كيف؟
- 4- كيف يساعدك المعلم على استيعاب النص الذي تدرسه؟
- 5- ما الأسئلة التي يطرحها المعلم في الدرس؟ هل من أمثلة؟
- 6- كيف تقرأ النص الذي تريد فهمه؟
- 7- هل تواجه أية صعوبات عند قراءة نصوص باللغة الإنجليزية؟ (ما هو سببها من وجهة نظرك؟) (كيف تواجه تلك الصعوبات؟)
- 8- أي نوع من النصوص تفضل أن تقرأ؟ (قصة / موضوع علمي/ تاريخي) لماذا؟
- 9- هل سبق لك أن تدرّبت على كيفية القراءة الصحيحة؟ (كيف كان ذلك التدريب؟)
- 10- هل سبق لك أن قرأت نصاً ما باللغة الإنجليزية من خلال مجموعة؟ كيف يمكن أن تصف تجربتك؟ هل استمتعت؟
- 11- هل تعتقد أن تعلم القراءة في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال المجموعات مفيد لك؟ (كيف؟)

- 1- Do you like reading lessons? What do you like and dislike about them?
- 2- What do you usually do in reading lessons? How do you feel about this?
- 3- Do you find English texts easy or difficult to read? In what ways?
- 4- How do teachers help students to understand the reading passage?
- 5- What kinds of questions are being asked in the reading class? Can you give examples?
- 6- How do you approach a reading text? Describe what you do to understand it?
- 7- Have you experienced any difficulties when you read English texts? (Why do they occur?) (How do you tackle those problems?)
- 8- What type of texts do you enjoy reading in English? (Expository / Narrative)
- 9- Have you ever been taught you how to read? (Can you describe the training?)
- 10- Have you ever read in a group in your language classroom? (Can you describe it?) (Did you enjoy the experience?)
- 11- In your language classroom, do you prefer to read individually or in a group? Why?

Interview Schedule- Student (Post-intervention)

STUDENT INTERVIEW SHCEDULE –PHASE 2

"What are the perceptions of students on Creative Circles?"

(Students)

- 1- ما هو انطباعك العام حول البرنامج الذي شاركت فيه؟
- 2- هل تشعر بوجود فرق واضح بين مستواك في فهم النص القرآني قبل المشاركة في هذا البرنامج و مستواك بعده؟ في اي الجوانب تحسن مستواك؟ هل من أمثلة؟ وفي أي الجوانب لا زلت تواجه مشاكل؟ ما هو تفسيرك لذلك؟
- 3- في بداية البرنامج كان هناك جزء للتدريب المكثف على مهارات القراءة, هل كان ذلك الجزء مفيداً؟ لماذا؟
- 4- هل كانت مشاركتك مع زملائك في قراءة النص ممتعة؟ هلاً وضحت أكثر؟
- 5- صف لي ما كان يحدث في مجموعتك أثناء نشاط القراءة؟ وأخبرني عن دورك في مجموعتك؟ ماذا عن أدوار بقية زملائك في المجموعة؟
- 6- ما أبرز المشاكل أو العقبات التي واجهتها أثناء القراءة مع زملائك؟ ما سببها؟ كيف يمكن حلها؟
- 7- ما هو أثر قراءتك للنص مع مجموعتك على فهمك للقطعة؟
- 8- هل تقترح أي تغييرات في الدروس حتى تساعدك أكثر على فهم ما تقرأه؟
- 9- ما رأيك في أسئلة التفكير التي عرضت عليك أثناء التجربة؟

- 1- What is your overall opinion of the programme?
- 2- Have you noticed any significant change in your reading abilities before and after this programme? In what aspects do you think you can do better now? (Any examples?)
.In what aspects do you think you still have problems with? (Any explanations?)
- 3- Do you think the intensive course at the beginning of the programme was helpful?
Why?
- 4- Did you enjoy reading the texts with your peers? Can you explain more?
- 5- Describe what actually happened during the group activities. Tell me more about your role in your group. What about the roles of the other members?
- 6- What were the problems that you identified when you worked with you peers? Why did they happen and how did you overcome them?
- 7- How did reading with your peers affect your reading comprehension?
- 8- Are there any changes to the lessons you would like to suggest to help you understand the texts even more?
- 9- What do you think of the creativity activities in the lessons?

Appendix H- Reading Skills Questionnaire -Teachers

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Dear teacher,

My name is Abdulaziz Al Qahtani and I am conducting a study which aims to investigate the reading comprehension skills of EFL students and group work in reading classes.

This questionnaire before you consists of two parts. The first part explores the extent to which reading comprehension skills are taught in your reading class, while the second part looks into your perceptions of collaborative learning. Kindly, express your opinion about all statements carefully and objectively. The information you provide will be strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this study.

I truly appreciate your cooperation.

The researcher:

Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani,
Newcastle University,
United Kingdom
E-mail: a.al-qahtani@newcastle.ac.uk

PART (1): How often do EFL teachers encourage their students practice these skills in your reading classroom?

Item		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through identifying its grammatical function.					
2	Answering questions about information or facts that are clearly stated in the text.					
3	Looking for a specific piece of information without having to read the whole text.					
4	Recalling relevant information about the topic of the reading passage.					
5	Making use of prefixes, suffixes and word roots to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. (For example, unhappy= un (not)+ happy; teacher= teach+ er; -logy = science).					
6	Drawing conclusions from information that is not explicitly stated.					
7	Using clues in the text, such as headings and titles to help me find the required information.					
8	Getting the main idea of a text by quickly looking at its title, subheadings, photos, tables, etc. which come with it					
9	Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through examining contextual clues such as synonyms, antonyms and examples.					
10	Understanding the implications of the passage.					
11	Moving the eyes quickly across the page to locate the required information.					
12	Predicting the content of a text through reading its title.					
13	Interpreting pronouns in a given text.					
14	Making use of numbers, names or dates to answer a particular question.					
15	Guessing what comes next while reading a text.					
16	Making use of discourse markers in the text (e.g. however/for example/ In addition) to aid understanding.					
17	Distinguishing between facts and opinions in the text.					
18	Making use of the visual features of words (e.g. bold, italicized, in a different font size, style, or color) to find the required information.					
19	Reading a text quickly to get the most important information from it.					
20	Recognizing the purpose of sentences in the text (e.g. providing: a definition, a description, an apology or instructions).					
21	Recognizing the author's attitude and bias.					
22	Making use of transitional phrases (e.g. first, second, then, however, moreover) to find a specific information.					

	Item					
		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
23	Noticing (<i>before reading the text in detail</i>) names, numbers and italicized words to get a general understanding of the text.					
24	Rearranging scrambled sentences or paragraphs.					
25	Recognizing the type of the reading text (e.g. instructive/descriptive/ informative).					
26	Making use of key words or phrases in the text to answer a specific question.					
27	Looking (<i>before reading the text in detail</i>) at the first few sentences of each paragraph to understand the central idea of the text.					

PART (2) / To what extent do EFL teachers promote creativity in their reading classes?

	Item	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I provide my students with problem-solving tasks in my reading classes.					
2	In my reading classes, I use activities that inspire students' imagination.					
3	Mistakes are not tolerated in my reading classes.					
4	In my reading lessons, I try to facilitate different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal).					
5	I encourage students to read a wide range of texts.					
6	In my reading classes, I am aware of students' motivation and emotions.					
7	I vary my teaching methods in reading lessons.					
8	I use open-ended questions in my reading lessons.					
9	I ask my students to evaluate the texts they read (asking about source, author, audience, and purpose).					
10	I encourage my students to express their views and differences.					
11	I encourage my students to use any newly learned English expressions and constructs.					

PART (3) What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards collaborative reading?

Item						
Collaborative Reading:		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Motivates my students to do the reading tasks.					
2	Makes teaching reading enjoyable for me.					
3	Is boring for students.					
4	Improves students' comprehension of the text they read.					
5	Motivates students to be actively involved in the reading lesson.					
6	Makes me feel worried.					
7	Makes my teaching effective.					
8	Allows students to learn from my peers and share ideas.					
9	Makes me lose my self-confidence.					
10	Is a waste of time and efforts.					
11	Is useful in mixed-language abilities classes.					
12	Allows me to monitor students' understanding and assist them in their learning.					
13	Has a negative effect on the teacher's personal relationship with his students.					
14	Will be part of my future teaching.					
15	Makes me lose control of the class.					
16	Improves students' creative thinking.					

PART (4) / What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards creativity in their reading classes?

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Creativity is a vague concept to me.					
2	Reading lessons can improve students' creativity.					
3	Creative thinking skills are useless in reading classes.					
4	Creativity activities in reading classes are a waste of time.					
5	I intend to use creativity activities in my reading lessons.					
6	Using creativity activities improve my teaching skills.					
7	I want to incorporate creativity activities in my reading classes.					
8	Creativity activities are applicable in reading lessons.					
9	Creativity activities in reading classes have a negative influence on students' attitudes towards reading.					
10	Creativity activities are inappropriate in large classes.					
11	I dislike the idea of using creative thinking exercises in my reading lessons.					

Appendix I - Interview Schedule- Teachers/supervisors (pre-intervention)

**" To what extent do middle school EFL teachers teach reading skills to their students and
What are their perceptions of collaborative learning?"**

(Teachers)

- 1- هل تجد متعة في تدريس القراءة في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ما الأشياء التي تعجبك /لا تعجبك؟
- 2- كيف تنظر لواقع تدريس مهارة القراءة في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية في مدارسنا؟ ما مبررات وجهة نظرك؟
- 3- صف لي مجريات درس القراءة المعتاد من وجهة نظرك ؟
- 4- هل الأنشطة الموجودة في الكتاب كافية لاستيعاب الطلاب للنص المقروء وفهمه؟ اشرح رأيك بمزيد من التفصيل؟
- 5- على ماذا تركز عادة في تدريسك للقراءة؟ (لماذا؟)
- 6- من واقع خبرتك، هل تعتقد أن الطلاب مدربون بما يكفي لاستيعاب نصوص القراءة؟ وضح وجهة نظرك بأمثلة؟
- 7- ما الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب عند قراءة النص؟ (ما هو سببها من وجهة نظرك؟) (كيف تواجه تلك الصعوبات؟)
- 8- هل تقوم بتدريب الطلاب على كيفية القراءة الصحيحة؟ صف ما تقوم به لتحقيق ذلك؟
- 9- ماهو التفكير الإبداعي من وجهة نظرك؟
- 10- هل سبق أن قمت بتوظيف أنشطة تفكير إبداعي في دروسك؟ هل يمكن أن توضح ذلك؟
- 11- ما رأيك في توظيفه في دروس القراءة؟
- 12- هل تفضل أن يقرأ الطلاب النص الإنجليزي في الدرس بشكل فردي أم من خلال مجموعات؟ لماذا؟
- 13- هل سبق و أن طلبت من طلابك أن يقرأوا نصاً على شكل مجموعات؟ صف تلك التجربة؟ بماذا تشعر تجاهها؟

- 1- Do you enjoy teaching reading to your students? Why? (What do you like/dislike about it?)
- 2- How do you perceive the current situation of teaching reading in our schools? Can you justify your point of view?
- 3- Describe your typical reading lesson.
- 4- Are the activities/questions in the textbook sufficient for students to comprehend texts? Can you explain more?
- 5- What do you usually focus on when you teach reading? (Why?)
- 6- Do you think students are well trained to comprehend a reading passage? Can you explain with examples?
- 7- Based on your experience, what difficulties do students have when they read a text? (Why do they occur?) (How do you tackle those problems?)
- 8- Do you usually teach your students how to read? Can you describe what you do?
- 9- What is creative thinking in your point of view?
- 10- Have you ever provided your students with creativity activities? Can you illustrate on that?
- 11- Can creativity be incorporated in EFL reading lessons?
- 12- Have you ever asked your students to read in groups? (Can you describe this experience?) How do you feel about it?
- 13- Do you prefer that students read individually or in groups? Why?

Creative Circles Programme



Lesson 1

Word Attack Skill I (Using Grammatical Function of a Word as a Structural Clue)

Time: 45 minutes

Task A: Read this is a summary of English language parts of speech with your teacher:



	function or "job"	example words	example sentences
Verb	action or state	(to) be, have, do, like, work, can, must	Jeddah is a great city. I like it.
Noun	thing or person	pen, cat, work, music, London, teacher, John	This is my brother . He lives in my house . We live in London .
Adjective	describes a noun	a/an, the, 2, some, good, big, red, well	I have two cats. My cats are big . I like big cats.
Adverb	describes a verb, adjective or adverb	quickly, silently, well, badly, very, really	My cat eats quickly when it is very hungry.
Pronoun	replaces a noun	I, you, he, she, they, it	Ahmad is Indian. He is smart.
Preposition	links a noun to another word	to, at, after, on, in	We went to school on Monday.
Conjunction	joins clauses or sentences or words	and, but, when	I like cats and birds. I like cats but I don't like dogs.

Task B: Consider this sentence with your teacher and try to do the tasks:



The <u>urdle</u> arrived at 7:00 a.m.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make as many questions as possible about the sentence. 2. Think of two words that might replace <u>urdle</u>. 3. Think of two words that <u>CANNOT</u> replace <u>urdle</u>. 4. Discuss your answers with other groups. 5. Discuss your answers with your teacher.




Task C: Consider this sentence and try to do the tasks:




Ali opened a <u>sark</u> door.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make as many questions as possible about the sentence. 2. Think of two words that might replace <u>sark</u>. 3. Think of two words that <u>CANNOT</u> replace <u>sark</u>. 4. Discuss your answers with other groups. 5. Discuss your answers with your teacher.




Word Attack Skill II (Using the Internal Structure of a Word as a Structural Clue)

Task D: Read the following table silently. Try to find the root and affixes in each row. 

Words	Root	affixes
action- enact- active – react		
powerful- empower- powerless		
endanger- dangerous		
effective- effectiveness- ineffective		

Task E: Study the following table together and match the **prefix** to its meaning. 

prefix	examples	Meaning
(1) anti-	<u>anti</u> -freezer,	opposite of , against (1)
(2) auto-	<u>auto</u> biography,	two- twice (___)
(3) bi-	<u>bi</u> weekly,	inside, not (___)
(4) co-	<u>co</u> -write,	between, among (___)
(5) inter-	<u>inter</u> net,	with, together (___)
(6) re-	<u>re</u> -open, restart	not (___)
(7) in-	<u>in</u> put, <u>in</u> correct,	self (___)
(8) un-	<u>un</u> cover, unhappy, unlucky	again (___)

Task E: Study the following table together and match the **suffix** to its meaning. 

Suffix	Example		Meaning
(1)-able	break <u>able</u> , excit <u>able</u> , port <u>able</u>	v ⇨ adj	can be.... (1)
(2)-al	centr <u>al</u> , educat <u>ional</u>	n ⇨ adj	full of (___)
(3)-ation/-tion	comple <u>tion</u> , creat <u>ion</u> , narrat <u>ion</u>	v ⇨ n	The one who.... (___)
(4)-er	driv <u>er</u> , play <u>er</u> , teach <u>er</u>	v ⇨ n	condition of , state (___)
(5)-ern	west <u>ern</u> , north <u>ern</u>	n ⇨ adj	action or process (___)
(6)-ful	thank <u>ful</u> , use <u>ful</u>	v ⇨ n	relating to (___)

Suffix	Examples		Meaning
(9)-ous	danger <u>ous</u> , delici <u>ous</u> , famo <u>us</u>	n ⇨ adj	full of (9)
(10)-ing	eat <u>ing</u> , fast <u>ing</u> ,	v ⇨ n	cause, become (___)
(11)-ize	general <u>ize</u> , special <u>ize</u>	adj, n ⇨ v	state or quality (___)
(12)-less	care <u>less</u> , help <u>less</u>	n ⇨ adj	in what manner (___)
(13)-ly	bad <u>ly</u> , nice <u>ly</u>	adj ⇨ adv	action, process (___)
(14)-ness	shy <u>ness</u> , happi <u>ness</u>	adj ⇨ n	without (___)

Task F: Study the following table together and match the **root** to its meaning.



Root	Examples	Meaning
(1) Geo-	<u>Geo</u> logy, <u>geo</u> graphy	sound (____)
(2) -logy	Ge <u>ology</u> , arche <u>ology</u> , phon <u>ology</u>	far, distance (____)
(3) phon	Phonology, tele <u>phone</u> , micro <u>phone</u>	earth (____)
(4) tele	<u>Tele</u> phone, <u>tele</u> vision, <u>tele</u> scope	study (____)



Task G: Choose the correct answer




1. (<u>restart</u>) means: a. to start again b. to stop c. to start quickly	2. (<u>unhappy</u>) means: a. twice as happy b. not happy c. very happy	3. (<u>drinkable</u>) means: a. made of water b. full of drinks c. can be drunk
4. (<u>player</u>) means: a. without footballs b. the one who plays c. can be played	5. (<u>helpless</u>) means: a. with little help b. with a lot of help c. can help others	1. (<u>telescope</u>) is a tool that looks at: a. far objects b. cold objects c. large objects



Lesson 2


WORD ATTACK SKILLS- MAKING INFERENCES FROM CONTEXT

Time: 45 minutes

Task A: Discuss these sentences with your teacher to identify the meaning of the word tock: 


1. She poured water into a tock.
2. Then, she lifted the tock to drink.
3. The tock fell on the ground and broke.


2. What possible meanings can the word "tock" have?
3. Did the context help? How?

Task B: Choose the correct answer and complete the table below. Ask your teacher for help. 

	What word(s) helped you choose?		
1. <u>Devises</u> such as TVs, radios, computers consume a lot of electricity. <u>Devises</u> mean: a. machines b. animals c. people	examples <input type="checkbox"/>	synonyms <input type="checkbox"/>	antonyms <input type="checkbox"/>
2. The book is very <u>obscure</u> . I cannot understand anything. The book is: a. easy b. difficult c. beautiful	examples <input type="checkbox"/>	synonyms <input type="checkbox"/>	antonyms <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Computers have bad effects on children, but they have many <u>salutary</u> effects too. <u>Salutary</u> means: a. good b. dangerous c. long	examples <input type="checkbox"/>	synonyms <input type="checkbox"/>	antonyms <input type="checkbox"/>

2. Discuss the table together and with your teacher.

Task C: Choose the correct answer and complete the table below. Ask your teacher for help. 

Examples as Cues	
1. Today I had a few <u>mishaps</u> . I forgot my books, I lost my car keys and my computer did not work. <u>mishaps</u> mean: a. accidents b. questions c. emergencies	
2. Some animals have amazing <u>longevity</u> . For example, an elephant can live up to 80 years. <u>Longevity</u> means: a. size b. ears c. length of life	

Task D: Find the synonym of the underlined word in each sentence.

Synonyms as Cues	
_____	1. The house I bought is in Jubail. This <u>dwelling</u> has 7 rooms and a garden.
_____	2. Real Madrid football <u>club</u> is very famous. This team is based in the capital of Spain.



Task E: Find the antonyms of the underlined word in each sentence.



Antonyms as Cues	
1. Lions can be very <u>aggressive</u> animals. They are not friendly at all.	
<u>aggressive</u> lions:	
a. may attack people	b. eat vegetables
	c. easy to handle
3. I <u>loathe</u> going to the lab. I really hate Chemistry lessons.	
When you <u>loathe</u> something, you:	
a. break it easily	b. do not like it
	c. do not finish it



TEXT ATTACK SKILLS - INTERPRETING PRO-FORMS AND DISCOURSE MARKERS

Task F: Discuss the following sentences to identify what words are blocking your understanding.

	Words blocking understanding
1. He took the money from the box and threw it.	
2. The second was more beautiful.	

Task G: Read the following sentences and choose the correct referents.



Last week, Ali had an accident. <u>His</u> youngest son, Yasser was at home when it happened. <u>He</u> was playing with his new toy car. His father gave <u>it</u> to him as a gift.		
1. <u>His</u> refers to:		
a. Ali	b. Yasser	c. son
2. <u>He</u> refers to:		
a. Ali	b. Yasser	c. son
3. <u>It</u> refers to:		
a. accident	b. toy car	c. home

Task H: Discuss the sentences in column **A** and decide the function of the underlined word from column **B**.



A	B
_____ a. My friends arrived. <u>Then</u> we started playing.	1. examples
_____ b. There are many Arabic speaking countries. <u>For instance</u> , Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Oman.	2. cause and effect
_____ c. He drove the car very fast. <u>As a result</u> , he had an accident.	3. time or list

Task I: Discuss the following table about discourse markers with your teacher.

Contrast	Addition	Cause and Effect
<i>but, while, on the other hand, unlike, although, however</i>	<i>and, in addition, moreover, as well as</i>	<i>because, as a result, consequently, so that, in order to</i>
Condition	Time	Example
<i>if, unless, even though, otherwise</i>	<i>First, Next, Then, after that, Finally, meanwhile, as soon as</i>	<i>For example, For instance</i>
Conclusion / Summary	Emphasis	List
<i>In conclusion, in summary, to summarize, in short</i>	<i>in fact, indeed, actually</i>	<i>First, second, third, fourth....</i>

Task J: Fill in the space with the appropriate **discourse marker**.



for instance - however - if - in order to - actually - although
1. He can play quite a few games, _____, basketball, tennis, volleyball and football.
2. I am going to Makkah next year _____ do the Hajj.
3. _____ you study really hard, you will succeed at school.
4. _____ the film was a little boring, we still had a nice time together.
5. Manchester United did not play very well yesterday. _____, they won the game 2: 0 against Liverpool.
6. Saudi Arabia is an important Muslim country. _____, it is home of the holiest Muslim places in Makkah and Madinah.

LESSON 3

TEXT ATTACK SKILLS -UNDERSTANDING DISCOURSE I (FUNCTIONAL VALUE + TEXT ORGANIZATION)

Time: 45 minutes

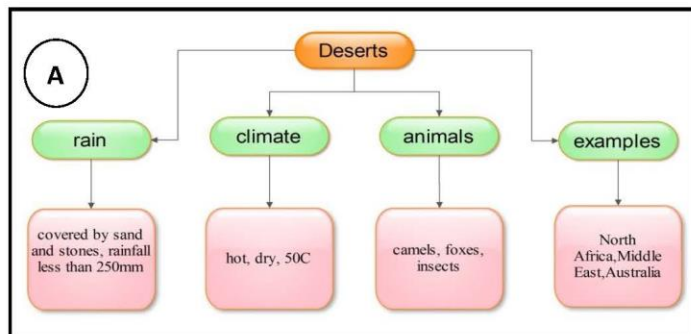
Task A: Study these sentences and match the function value with the appropriate sentence.

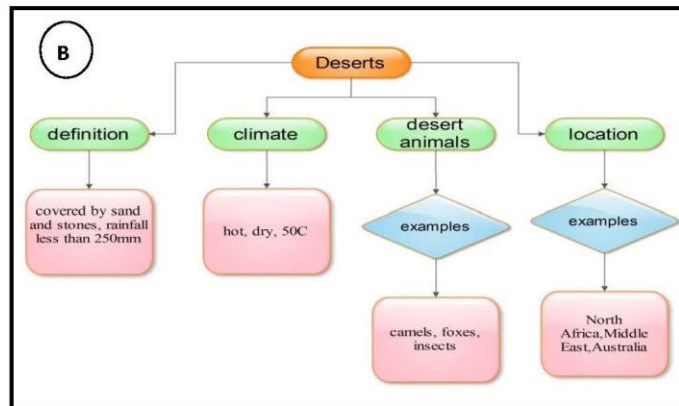
Sentence	Function Value
_____ The south of Saudi Arabia is a mountainous area.	1.Definition
_____ Large waves coming from the ocean are called "Tsunami".	2.Description
_____ A mechanic is a person who fixes cars.	3.Naming
_____ Woman live longer than men.	4.Generalizing
_____ Water is made of two Hydrogen atoms and one Oxygen atom.	5.Classifying

Sentence	Function Value
_____ There is a great danger to wildlife because of water pollution.	6.Exemplifying
_____ If you eat a lot of food, you will become sick.	7.Asserting
_____ There are many kinds of soft drinks such as Pepsi, Coca Cola, 7 Up and Miranda.	8.predicting
_____ Write with a black pen.	9.Instruction
_____ I am sorry I cannot meet you tomorrow.	10.apologizing

Task B: Read the paragraph. Which Diagram describes the paragraph best, **A** or **B**? Why?

Deserts cover about one-fifth of the Earth's area. They are defined as regions covered by sand and stones where the rainfall is less than 250mm a year. The desert climate is dry and the temperature can rise up to 55° C. Deserts. Few animals live there such as camels, foxes and some insects. There are large deserts in North Africa, the Middle East, Australia, and South Africa.





Task C: Study the following paragraphs and put them in the correct order.



_____ At the weekend, he is also busy but with his family and friends. He shops for food at the local supermarket, visits relatives, and spends time with his family.

_____ Omar is an English teacher. He teaches in an intermediate school in Dammam. The school is near his home, so he usually walks to work.

_____ In the summer, he travels to Taif to enjoy the good weather there. He likes to stay in Al-Hada. It is close to Makkah and he can perform the Umrah.

_____ He arrives at work at 7 o'clock in the morning and he leaves school at about 2:30 in the afternoon. In the evening, he marks homework and prepares lessons for the next day.

Task D: Put the following sentences into the correct order.

_____ He goes to his first class at 8 o'clock.

_____ First, Ali wakes up and eats his breakfast.

_____ After that, he goes to the football ground in the afternoon.

_____ Then, he gets to school at about 7.00 a.m.

_____ At 11 o'clock, he has another class. This is Math.

Task E: Read the following passage. Identify the **causes** and the **effects** of Sami's bad day.





A really bad day

Yesterday Sami had a really bad day. It started early in the morning. First, when he was having breakfast his milk spilled on his thobe. As a result he had to change clothes. Because of this spill, he was really late to school.

Once I got to school, his teacher was really angry with him because he forgot to do his homework. During the break, two boys hit him with a football and as a result he had a really bad headache for the rest of the day.

At the end of the day he walked home. It started to rain heavily, therefore he got very wet. The next day he got sick with the flu!

Cause	Effect
1. Spilled milk on his thobe	a. Change his clothes b. late for school
2.	
3.	
4.	

TEXT ATTACK SKILLS - (MAKING INFERENCES AND PREDICTIONS)

Task F: Study the following sentences and discuss the table with your teacher.



Sentence	I forgot to set my alarm clock last night.
Inference	I was late for school.
Evidence	Forgot to set the clock

Sentence	Ali plays tennis for 2 hours every day.
Inference	
Evidence	

Task G: Read the paragraph and choose the character it describes.



1. I begin the day with my small tools to clean my patient's teeth. I placed the paper bib on her and shined a light down so I could see. I found one cavity! After all the teeth were cleaned, I gave her a toothbrush.	<input type="checkbox"/> cashier <input type="checkbox"/> clown <input type="checkbox"/> teacher <input type="checkbox"/> dentist
2. When I get to work I pass out papers and set up a game for the kids to play. When everyone arrives, we read a story and discuss it. The bell rings and it is time for lunch. I correct some papers and prepare the next lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> teacher <input type="checkbox"/> doctor <input type="checkbox"/> actor <input type="checkbox"/> pilot

Task H: Read the sentences and predict the best continuation.



<p>1. Riyadh is the biggest city in Saudi Arabia.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. It occupies an area of 1,000 km².</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. It is very hot in summer.</p> <p>=====</p> <p>2. I am so hungry.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a. I will stop and eat at the nearest restaurant.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b. I will take my bike to the repair shop.</p>
--

Why did you choose your answers?

Lesson 4

TEXT ATTACK SKILLS -EVALUATION

Time: 45 minutes

Task A: Study the following sentences and discuss the table with your teacher.



Statement		Why?
1. Makkah is in the western region of Saudi Arabia.	FACT	It can be proven correct .
2. Lexus is the best car in the world.	OPINION	It is what someone thinks. It can NOT be proven correct.

Task B: Read each statement and then circle whether it is a fact or opinion.



Statement		
1. The fastest land animal is the Cheetah.	1.Fact	2.Opinion
2. Pele is the greatest football player of all time.	1.Fact	2.Opinion
4. The Holy Quran has 114 Suras.	1.Fact	2.Opinion
5. Oranges contain both calcium and vitamin C.	1.Fact	2.Opinion
6. I think it is going to rain tomorrow.	1.Fact	2.Opinion
8. Smoking is bad for your health.	1.Fact	2.Opinion



Task C: Discuss the text with your teacher and underline words and expressions that show the writer's **bias**.



Today everybody knows what a TV is. Television brings beautiful Saudi programmes into our homes. It also brings us news from all over the world. It tells us wonderful stories from other countries.

Six Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, work together to make great TV programmes. This group is called Gulf Vision. Gulf vision makes films about the amazing Arab traditions and modern life.

Task D: Decide which sentences are more biased and whether they are biased **for** or **against**.



Sentences	More Biased	For	Against
a. All people listen to Arab music.	a	✓	
b. Some people listen to Arab music.			
e. Al Jubail is a city located in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia.			
f. Al Jubail is one of the most important cities in Saudi Arabia.			
g. Lionel Messi, the Barcelona striker, scored 15 goals last season.			
h. Lionel Messi, the short Barcelona striker, only scored 15 goals last season.			
i. That car is too expensive. I cannot buy it.			
j. That car costs 350,000 riyals.			



TEXT ATTACK SKILLS -SKIMMING

Task E: Decide the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The main idea in this passage is:

- a. How people read
- b. Places where people read
- c. Understanding magazines



Reading

People read in many different places, for example in the park, in the restaurant, or in the car. This is because books, newspapers, magazines and do on, are easy to carry. We also read in many different ways, and at different speeds.

Sometimes we read quickly. We just want to get the general idea from a newspaper article, a report, or a book in bookshop. We do this to know what it is about, or if it interesting or important. We call this type of reading "**skimming**".



We also read quickly to get a specific piece of information, such as a date, a telephone number, or the name of a restaurant. This is called "**scanning**". We scan timetables, telephone directories, dictionaries and web pages.

At other times, we need to read more carefully. For example, we read a textbook, an article, or a report to understand everything. This is called "**intensive reading**" or "study reading". Then we read slowly and check the meaning. We take notes and use our dictionaries a lot to help us.

Task F: Which of the following helped you in answering the previous question?

	✓	X
The title/ subtitles		
Any pictures/ diagrams		
The first paragraph		
The last paragraph		
The first line of every paragraph		



** Discuss the following table with your teacher:



Skimming	To read something very quickly just to get an idea of what it is about.
How to Skim	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find out what kind of text it is. 2. Look at the title/ pictures 3. Read the first sentence of each paragraph 4. Read quickly (don't read every word) 5. Keep thinking about the general meaning

Task G: Choose the correct TV channel for each group of programmes.

Al-Jazeera 	- Saudi Sports 1 	- National Geographic 	- MBC3 
1.....	2.....		
- Teletubbies (9:00 a.m.) - Blazing Teens (9: 35 a.m.) - Spider-Man (11: 35 a.m.) - Tom and Jerry (12: 30 p.m.)	-News (9:00 a.m.) -Witness: Gaza Hospital: Beirut (10:00 a.m.) -The Frost Interview (1:00 p.m.) - Inside Syria (11.35 p.m.)		
3.....	4.....		
-Explorer (9:00 a.m.) - Wild Cats (10: a.m.) - Snakes (11:00 a.m.) - Sea Life (12:00 p.m.)	- World Cup match: Spain. vs. Italy (4:00 p.m.) - Water sports (6:00 p.m.) - The Olympics (8:00 p.m.) - WWE / RAW - SmackDown		



TEXT ATTACK SKILLS - SCANNING

Task H: Read the passage quickly and find the required information.



Find:

- A City in Saudi Arabia**
1. _____
- Three popular sports in Saudi Arabia.**
2. _____

Many boys like playing and watching football. We have one of the best football teams in the Middle East. Large stadiums, like the one in Riyadh, encourage people to go to matches.

Volleyball has become popular recently. Swimming has also become popular, because we now have many good pools.

2. Discuss the following table with your teacher:



Scanning	Locating specific information quickly, e.g. names, dates, numbers, examples & definitions.
How to Skim	1. Keep in mind what you are searching for. 2. Let your eyes run quickly over several lines. 3. If the text is long, you can skim to find which part to scan.

Task I: Scan to answer the following questions:



1. Where is Taj Mahal?	a. India	b. Iran	c. Qatar
2. Who built this Taj Mahal?	a. Mumtaz	b. Shah Jehan	c. Taj
3. When did Mumtaz die?	a. 1654	b. 1631	c. 1931
4. Near Taj Mahal there is a :	a. sea	b. desert	c. river



The Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal is located in Agra, in the north of India. Many people think it is the most beautiful building in the world. It is situated in gardens just outside the city, so it is a very quiet place. Nearby there is a river. The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 and 1654 by Shah Jehan. It was a tomb for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. It is built in an Islamic style. It symbolizes Shah Jehan's love for his wife. In the centre of the building is the tomb, which is made of white marble. The rest of the building is made of sandstone. Around the tomb there are four tall minarets.

Task J: Scan the flight schedule and choose the correct answer:

1. At 9:00, there is a plane going to:	a. Chicago	b. St Louis	c. Nashville
2. Which flight is going to Miami?	a. BA7779	b. BA6725	c. AA4598
3. Which gate is the flight to Atlanta?	a. C6	b. C4	c. D8
4. What is the date on the monitor?	a. December 26	b. March 23	c. October 28

Arriving From	Time	Remarks	Flight	Gate
Minneapolis-St. Paul	8:25p	Cancelled	AA 4598	C6
Raleigh-Durham	8:25p	Cancelled	BA 8852	C2
Toronto, ON	8:35p	Cancelled	BA 7902	C4
Chicago O'Hare	8:40p	Cancelled	BA 6615	D8
Dallas Fort Worth	8:40p	Cancelled	BA 6719	D3
Houston George Bush	8:40p	Cancelled	AA 742	D3
Dallas Fort Worth	8:55p	Cancelled	BA 6725	D5
Detroit	8:59p	Cancelled	AA 4486	C5
Nashville	9:00p	Cancelled	AA 4624	D4
Miami	9:05p	Cancelled	BA 7779	D1
St Louis	9:25p	Cancelled	AA 1016	D6
Chicago O'Hare	9:29p	Cancelled	BA 6609	D10
Kansas City	9:29p	Cancelled	AA 350	D10
Atlanta	9:35p	Cancelled	XL 6278	C4
Raleigh-Durham	9:45p	Cancelled	AA 4604	C3
Sunday	7:04PM		October 28	

Lesson 5

The Eiffel Tower

Time: 45 minutes

Organization: Group work activities.

Task A: (ENGAGEMENT / C.A.)

1.



List all the possible ways that the Eiffel Tower can be used for?

--

Task B: (EXPLORATION)

1. Name some of the most famous places:



Saudi Arabia	Around the world
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

2. This passage was probably taken from a:



- a. story book
- b. science magazine
- c. newspaper article

3. Decide the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The main idea in this passage is:

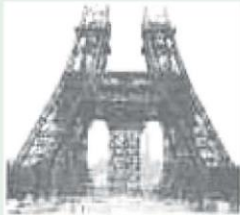
- d. History of Eiffel Tower
- e. Design of Eiffel Tower
- f. Gustave Eiffel

Task C: (EXPLANATION I)

1. Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced.

Eiffel Tower

The Eiffel Tower in Paris is one of the most popular places in the world. Every year, more than two million tourists visit this iron tower. It was built in 1889 by a French engineer, Gustave Eiffel. It is 300m high, which is nearly 108 stories, and weighs up to 7000 tons. It was the tallest building in the world until the Empire State Building was built 40 years later.



Before the Tower was built, some French men did not like Eiffel's design and called it "an eyesore". They also predicted that it would cost too much and would not be ready in time for the Paris Festival. Eiffel knew better, his crew not only finished the work in twenty-one months but also completed it in time for the festival's opening day. This earned Gustave Eiffel the nickname "Magician of Iron".



The Eiffel Tower is now loved by the French citizens, and has become the symbol of Paris.

Task D: (ELABORATION)

1. Scan the text to find the following:

Locations	People's names	Dates	Numbers

2. From the passage, find a word which has the same meaning as:

Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2	Paragraph 3
"Well known"	"a group of people working together"	"a sign"

3. Read each sentence and decide whether it is a "**fact**", or an "**opinion**":



Sentence	Fact	Opinion
a. The Eiffel Tower was built by Gustave Eiffel.		
b. The Eiffel Tower is now loved by the French citizens.		
c. The Eiffel Tower is 300m high, and weighs up to 7000 tons		

4. The writer's general attitude towards "**the Eiffel Tower**" is:




a. Positive b. Negative
<i>What in the text supports your answer?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

5. Is the following sentence "**True**" or "**False**":




Gustave Eiffel did a good job in building the tower.	True O / False O
<i>What in the text supports your answer?</i> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Task E: (EXPLANATION II)

1. Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced. 

Task F: (C.A.)

1. List all the possible ways you can think of that helps you become a better planner 

In what way(s) is the Eiffel Tower like you ?	In what way(s) is the Eiffel Tower like a cat ?

مدونة الطالب

اسم الطالب:	التاريخ:
<input type="checkbox"/> ما رأيك في درس اليوم؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا تعلمت؟	
ما الذي نجحت في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي نجحت فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما الذي لم تنجح في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي لم تنجح فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما هو شعورك تجاه درس القراءة اليوم؟ وأيضا تجاه عملك داخل مجموعتك؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا ستعمل حتى تحسن أدائك في درس القراءة؟ وكذلك داخل مجموعتك؟	

Lesson 6

Time: 45 minutes

Organization: Group work activities.

Task A: (ENGAGEMENT / C.A.)

1.

How can you be a teacher in 2 years? Make as many ideas as you can.



Task B: (EXPLORATION)

1. What do you want to become in the future? List, in order of preference, the jobs you like.



—
—
—
—
—

2. This passage is a:



- a. short story
- b. letter
- c. e-mail

3. Decide the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The main idea in this passage is:

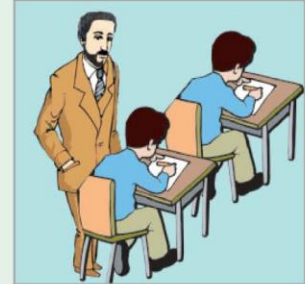
- g. How to be a good teacher
- h. Schools in my country
- i. My dream job

Task C: (EXPLANATION I)

1. Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" I've been asked this question many times.

The first time I thought about it seriously was during high school. My teacher asked the class to write an essay about our future plans. I didn't know what to write! There I was, sitting in the classroom, staring blankly at the page.



That's when I began to think about what I wanted to do. After a lot of thought, I realized that I wanted to go to college and major in elementary education. I found myself writing that I planned to teach first graders, because the early years of a child's life shape her/his personality.

In my essay, I wrote about how I wanted to become a great teacher. My wish was for my students to enjoy learning and love reading. I wanted to make reading fun for them. My dream was for them to remember me every time they read a book. I wanted to leave a mark on their lives.

Task D: (ELABORATION)

1. Scan the text to answer the following question:



a. What did the writer want to be in the future?

.....

b. Why did he choose that job?

.....

2. In paragraph 3, line 3, the pronoun "them" refers to:



- a. Students
- b. Teachers
- c. books

مدونة الطالب

اسم الطالب:	التاريخ:
<input type="checkbox"/> ما رأيك في درس اليوم؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا تعلمت؟	
ما الذي نجحت في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي نجحت فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما الذي لم تنجح في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي لم تنجح فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما هو شعورك تجاه درس القراءة اليوم؟ وأيضاً تجاه عملك داخل مجموعتك؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا ستعمل حتى تحسن أدائك في درس القراءة؟ وكذلك داخل مجموعتك؟	

Lesson 7

YOUR RUBBISH PLEASE!

Time: 45 minutes

Organization: Group work activities.

Task A: (ENGAGEMENT / C.A.)

1.



In what way(s) is <u>recycling</u> like <u>wind</u> ?	In what way(s) is <u>recycling</u> like a <u>lamp</u> ?

Task B: (EXPLORATION)

1. Do you think recycling is important? Why?



--

2. Consider this sentence and try to do the tasks:



"Your <i>rubbish</i> please"
1. Make as many questions as possible about the sentence. 2. Think of two words that might replace <i>rubbish</i> . 3. Think of two words that <u>CANNOT</u> replace <i>rubbish</i> . 4. Discuss your answers with other groups. 5. Discuss your answers with your teacher.

3. Decide on the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The main idea in this passage is: a. Different types of rubbish. b. Solutions for the problem of rubbish. c. European countries and recycling.
--

Task C: (EXPLANATION I)

1. Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced.

Your Rubbish Please



Each year people throw millions of tons of trash, such as; bottles, grass clippings, paper, boxes, books, clothing and much more. Gradually, this has led to major problems: pollution, overuse of resources and lack of landfills.

In the 1970's, European countries began to recycle because glass, plastic and aluminum became very expensive. Recycling became a solution for both pollution and overuse of resources. Today, almost all developed countries have their own system for collecting and recycling their garbage.

However, there are many countries that do not have a recycling system. Saudi Arabia is a very rich country. People still throw away materials that can be recycled because there aren't any waste banks. These products go to landfills to create a new problem. Cities are running out of places to put their trash.

What can be done?

We should all keep the 3 R's in mind. They provide practical solutions to the trash problem.

Reduce	Reuse	Recycle
Reducing is about two things. It is about thinking before buying. Ask yourself if you really need to buy an item. It is also thinking about what is the purpose of the packaging of the item.	Reusing is taking an item you're planning to throw away and using it again for something else, or giving it to someone else who needs it.	Recycling is a great way to turn rubbish into new material. You can take products such as plastic, glass, aluminum cans, magazines and newspapers to the nearest recycling unit.

The message is simple: think before you throw things away. It's not all just RUBBISH.

1. Scan the text to answer the following question:



a. Why is recycling important ?

.....

2. Find a sentence that does not belong to the passage.



3. "However" in line 6 means:



1. and
2. but
3. now

مدونة الطالب

اسم الطالب: _____	التاريخ: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> ما رأيك في درس اليوم؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا تعلمت؟	
ما الذي نجحت في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي نجحت فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما الذي لم تنجح في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي لم تنجح فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ما هو شعورك تجاه درس القراءة اليوم؟ وأيضا تجاه عملك داخل مجموعتك؟	
<input type="checkbox"/> ماذا ستعمل حتى تحسن أدائك في درس القراءة؟ وكذلك داخل مجموعتك؟	

Lesson 8

SCHOOLS

Time: 45 minutes

Organization: Group work activities.

Task A: (ENGAGEMENT / C.A.)

1.



Where does the "Z" go? Explain your answer.

A				E	F		H	I		K	L	M	N					T		V	W	X	Y	
	B	C	D			G			J					O	P	Q	R	S		U				

Task B: (EXPLORATION)

1. Do you like/dislike going to school? Why?



2. Decide on the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The best title for this passage is:

- a. Courses and credits
- b. Going to school in the U.S.A.
- c. American Universities
- d. Homework and sports.

3. Decide on the main idea of the passage after you read the passage quickly.



The main idea in paragraph (2) is:

- a. subjects at high school
- b. lunch time at high school
- c. the schoolday at high school

4. In line 3, the pronoun "they" refers to:




a. schools	b. books	c. teachers	d. students
------------	----------	-------------	-------------


Task C: (EXPLANATION I)

Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced.

They graduate at 18.



P.E. is compulsory.



Every child in the U.S.A. must go to school from the age of six to sixteen, but most stay at school until they graduate at eighteen. Between those ages, they attend three different schools. From six to twelve, children go to elementary school. From twelve to fifteen, they attend junior high school. Finally, from fifteen to eighteen, they go to high school. 5

At high school, the day usually begins at about 8:30 a.m. and ends at about 3:30 p.m. Lunch lasts an hour and is usually from 12 to 1 o'clock. There is homework every evening. Pupils (called "students" in the U.S.A.) may choose some less important subjects at high school. But, in general, everyone takes English, maths, one foreign language (often Spanish), history, geography, the sciences (physics, chemistry and biology) and P.E. until they leave at eighteen. 10

In general, students do not take exams when they leave school. Instead, they collect credits for every course which they attend. They do this until they have enough credits to graduate. For example, a student may need 120 credits to graduate. If he takes an English course, he will get 10 credits. If he takes three English courses, he will get 30 credits. So he will need 90 more credits to graduate, and so on. When a student collects all his credits, he can graduate with a high school diploma. About 50 percent of American students go on to university. 15

20

Task D: (ELABORATION)

1. Complete each sentence with the correct ending. A-D :



1- Students go to junior high school when they	A. can leave school.
2- High school students need to collect 120 credits before they	B- study English.
2- High school students do their homework every day and they must	C- are 12 years old.
	D- go on to elementary school.

2. Read this sentence and decide whether it is a "fact", or an "opinion":



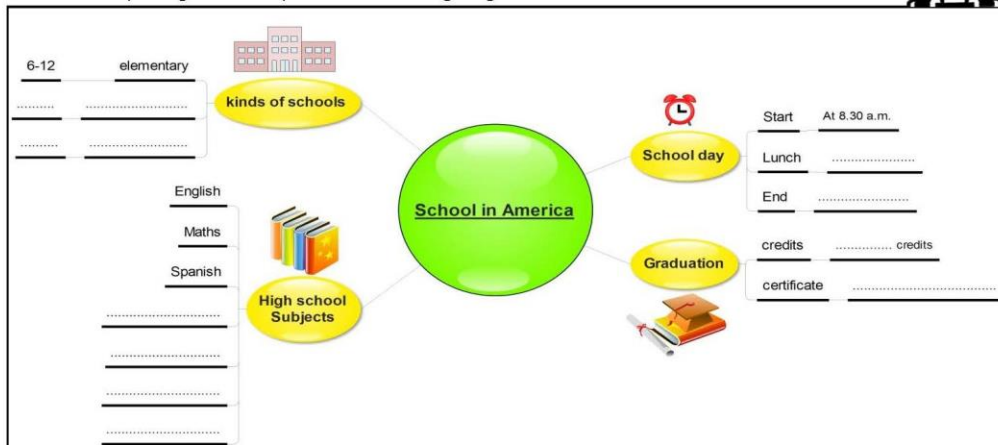
Sentence	Fact	Opinion
<i>Every Child in the U.S.A. must go to school from the age of 6 to 16.</i>		

3. Is the following sentence "True", "False" or "not mentioned":



1. Breakfast starts at 9:00 a.m.	True <input type="checkbox"/> / False <input type="checkbox"/> / Not mentioned <input type="checkbox"/>
2. All students take P.E.	True <input type="checkbox"/> / False <input type="checkbox"/> / Not mentioned <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Read the passage and complete the following diagram:






Task E: (EXPLANATION II)

1. Discuss with your teacher the skills that you have practiced.

Task F: (C.A.)

1. Write as many questions as you can about the picture below.

مدونة الطالب

اسم الطالب: _____	التاريخ: _____
<p>ما رأيك في درس اليوم؟ <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>ماذا تعلمت؟ <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>ما الذي نجحت في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي نجحت فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟</p>	
<p>ما الذي لم تنجح في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي لم تنجح فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟</p>	
<p>ما هو شعورك تجاه درس القراءة اليوم؟ وأيضاً تجاه عملك داخل مجموعتك؟</p>	
<p>ماذا ستعمل حتى تحسن أدائك في درس القراءة؟ وكذلك داخل مجموعتك؟</p>	

Appendix K- Group Contract

GROUP CONTRACT

Do's

- Do my share of work.
- Express myself in my group because my opinions do count.
- Turn to my teammates for help immediately if I find any problems.
- Encourage my teammates.
- Help my classmates and teammates when they need me.
- Respect the differences between my classmates and me.
- Do my best to make the group work a joyful experience.

—

•

•

Don'ts

- Be late to turn in my homework.
- Laugh at my teammates when they make mistakes.
- Sleep in class.
- Chat with teammates during group discussion.
- Shout at my teammates when I am talking to them.
- Take things from other teammates' desk without permission.
- Kick others' feet under the table.

2

—

-

Signed by members of Group ()

Name

Signature

1- _____

2- _____

3- _____

4- _____

5- _____

6- _____

Appendix L – Student Journal

STUDENT JOURNAL	
Name: _____	Week _____
Thoughts about today's Lesson	
-What did you learn?	
-What went well in the reading tasks / in your group? Why?	
-What went wrong in the reading tasks / in your group? Why?	
- How did you feel about the reading tasks/ working with your group?	
-What can you do to improve your performance in the reading tasks/ within your group?	

مدونة الطالب

اسم الطالب: _____ التاريخ: _____	
ما رأيتك في درس اليوم؟	ماذا تعلمت؟
ما الذي نجحت في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي نجحت فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
ما الذي لم تنجح في عمله في أنشطة القراءة؟ ما الذي لم تنجح فيه عمله داخل مجموعتك؟ ولماذا؟	
ما هو شعورك تجاه درس القراءة اليوم؟ أيضاً تجاه عملك داخل مجموعتك؟	
ماذا ستعمل حتى تحسن أدائك في درس القراءة؟ وكذلك داخل مجموعتك؟	

Appendix M- Teacher Reflective Sheet

Lesson: _____	Date: / /	Week: _____
- What is your impression of today's lesson and students' overall progress in reading?		
- What did you try to achieve in today's lesson about reading? Do you think you have achieved your objectives?		
- Have you observed any positive aspects today about students' reading skills in groups?		
- Are there any problems you noticed today about students' reading in groups? How did you address them?		
- What changes would you like to make to develop students' reading skills further?		
- What changes would you like to make to improve students' performance in their groups?		

مدونة المعلم

الدرس رقم ()	العنوان	التاريخ/
ما هو انطباعك عن درس اليوم و عن تحسن مستوى الطلاب في القراءة ؟		
ما الذي حاولت إنجازه في درس القراءة اليوم ؟ هل تعتقد أنك حققت أهدافك ؟ لماذا ؟		
من خلال عمل الطلاب في مجموعات، ما أوجه التحسن التي لاحظتها على مهاراتهم في القراءة ؟		
ما المشاكل التي لاحظتها على الطلاب أثناء القراءة في مجموعات ؟ كيف تعاملت معها ؟		
ما التغييرات التي تود إجراؤها على درس اليوم لتحسن من مهارات الطلاب في القراءة ؟		
ما التغييرات التي تود إجراؤها على درس اليوم لتحسن من أداء الطلاب داخل مجموعاتهم ؟		