Reading Assessment: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Evaluative Practices

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Abstract
Research has revealed that teachers' thinking processes highly influence their instructional and evaluative behaviors. Understanding teachers' beliefs and theoretical orientations about reading are more than necessary to rethink reading instruction and assessment. The present paper reviews a case study conducted at the Department of English, Tlemcen University, Algeria. The study looked at teachers' beliefs and theoretical orientations regarding reading assessment and its effect on EFL learners' comprehension ability. It examines the correspondence between reading teachers' theoretical orientations and classroom reading assessment. This study included 20 teachers and 120 students. Data collection procedures included questionnaires and classroom observations. Data analysis exposed the congruence between teachers' beliefs about reading and classroom reading assessment. Moreover, standardized classroom reading assessment negatively impacted learners' comprehension ability and reading motivation. The discussions underscored the importance of alternative reading assessment methods such as portfolios, which represent genuine and effective language learning strategies according to modern research.

Keywords: alternative assessment, evaluative practices, reading assessment, reading models, teachers' beliefs, Tlemcen University

Introduction

The necessity to understand the beliefs and thinking processes, which are at the root of teachers' classroom practices, has resulted from all the constructivist investigations attempting to explain how teachers cope with the teaching process. Beliefs are often mistakably considered as judgments, attitudes, values, opinions, and ideologies. Accordingly, Pajares (1992) and Kunt (1997) see that the term "belief" encompasses all these commonly used designations. Teachers' beliefs about the content and process of teaching are deeply embedded in teachers constituting a solid background for their instructional behaviors (Fang, 1996; Faour; 2003; **Pajares, 1992;** Richards, 1994; Yook, 2010). Teachers' set of general knowledge and context-sensitive beliefs direct their thinking and ground their problem-solving and decision-making processes, enabling them to make instructional choices and manifest personalized behavior (Borg, 2003; Carlsen, 1999).

Research in the field of reading has greatly helped in the disambiguation of the relationships between teachers' beliefs and instructional behaviors (Fang, 1996). Studies in the field of reading reported that teachers' beliefs toward reading instruction are theory-based (Asselin, 2000; Chou, 2008; Kuzborska, 2011; Longberger, 1992; Olson & Singer, 1994; Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006; Richardson et al., 1991). Teachers' orientations and approaches to reading instruction come from their theoretical conceptions about how learners process reading and how to check their comprehension.

Existing research on teachers' belief systems and their relationship to their instructional behaviors has treated assessment somewhat superficially (Chang, 2014; Rueda & Garcia, 1996). Regardless of its nature and its context, assessment has often been descriptively studied as a practice, with little consideration for the psychological aspects wherefrom it emerges. Therefore, a constructivist approach attempting to highlight the correspondence degree between teachers' conceptions of reading assessment and their evaluative practices has been adopted. Despite the scarcity of research that has addressed teachers' beliefs about reading assessment, it stands to reason that their classroom evaluative practices are likewise influenced by their understanding of what constitutes genuine and appropriate reading assessment. In this sense, it is crucial to consider these beliefs, mainly with the increasing need for some changes, or reform, to guarantee an intelligible expression of learners' reading proficiency and raise their reading motivation. Beliefs held by teachers usually reflect the strengths and weaknesses of a given teaching context, mainly because the teaching strategies, teaching material, and evaluative practices are determined by these beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

This study emphasizes teachers' beliefs about reading by exploring their consistency with classroom evaluative practices. These different beliefs highly influence teachers' theoretical orientations and approaches to teaching and assessing reading. It is, thus, important to identify teachers' theoretical propensities and to define the extent to which these influence reading assessment, concentrating attention on its nature, function, and impact on learner's comprehension ability. The heart of the issue is that some teachers still draw on traditional and conventional reading assessment, despite its measurable ineffectiveness. These belief systems particularly influence teachers' understandings of the reading process, which, in turn, form and typify the nature and function of reading assessments designed afterward. Defining the impact of these

evaluative behaviors on learners' reading comprehension ability is crucial to conclude whether or not a shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment is necessary.

Despite all the educational reforms that were adopted, the Algerian educational system is still based on traditional assessment approaches. These practices also take place at the level of the Algerian universities, where it was observed that some reading comprehension teachers focus closely on the assessment of the quality of the language sample carried out during the instruction. A lack in assessment literacy may result in assessments that are not authentic and do not demonstrate an actual level of proficiency. Teachers' beliefs about reading may be at the origin of these sustained evaluative practices, particularly when beliefs and reasoning are not formally or informally questioned. Traditional assessment has a very unconstructive impact on learners' reading skills development in general and learners' reading comprehension ability in particular. To constructively discuss a shift from traditional to alternative assessment in the Algerian universities, reflective practices should be promoted, including the development of teachers' awareness about their teaching beliefs. The strengthening of teachers' assessment literacy is also crucial to yield improvement.

According to the previously expressed problem, the following questions were raised:
1-   What beliefs about the reading process underlie teachers' evaluative practices?
2-   What kind of impact does formative reading assessment have on learners' comprehension ability?

This study contributes to the body of knowledge about teachers' beliefs. It particularly adds up to the different studies upon which the consistency and inconsistency theses are debated. Its general aim is to look at the manifestation and correspondence of beliefs and practices. It also aims at the development of the local teaching context by raising awareness about beliefs and promoting reading assessment theory.

Literature Review
Teachers' beliefs
Teachers' beliefs have been defined as teachers' subjective and experience-based knowledge, forming their views and arguments concerning teaching and learning (Ford, 1994; Khader, 2012; Pehkonen & Pietilä, 2003; Raymond, 1997). Despite the productivity of research in the field of teacher education no standard definition for what the term belief means (Pedersen & Liu, 2003; Skott, 2015). The term belief subsumes all the commonly used designations, such as attitudes, judgments, opinions, and values (Burns, 1992; Kunt, 1997; Pajares, 1992; Richards & Lockhart; 1994; Wang, 1996).

Teachers make instructional decisions based on their theoretical beliefs about teaching and learning (Attardo & Brown, 2005; Fang, 1996; Faour; 2003; Jones & Fong, 2007; **Pajares, 1992;** Palak & Walls, 2009; Richards, 1994; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Yook, 2010). According to Hapsari and Kusumawardani (2017), these beliefs lay the foundation for teachers' "goals, procedures, materials, classroom interactions patterns" as well as "their roles, their students, and the schools they work in" (p. 3).Teachers have personalized conceptions of learning which provide a framework for their approach to language instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Teachers'

actions are framed by what they know and believe. Usual tasks, such as selecting learning activities and checking students' understanding, can reveal the consciously or unconsciously held assumptions.

Extensive research in the field of reading indicated that teachers, consciously or unconsciously, adhere to a set of theoretical principles and that such principles will manifest in their teaching (Asselin, 2000; Chou, 2008; Kuzborska, 2011; Longberger, 1992; Olson & Singer, 1994; Powers et al., 2006; Richardson et al., 1991). Reading theories have impacted significantly on the teaching approaches, textbooks, and reading assessment. Teachers' orientations and approaches to the teaching of reading are mostly characterized in their theoretical beliefs about how learners process reading and its corollary comprehension (Fang, 1996; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Harste & Burke, 1977; Kuzborska, 2011; Paris et al., 1991; Powers et al., 2006).

Attempts to investigate teachers' beliefs in connection to reading instruction have mostly relied on reading models – theories that systematically explicate the reading process in terms of what it is, how it takes place, and how it interfaces with memory and other cognitive abilities (Kuzborska, 2011; Powers et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 1991). Research on teachers' beliefs in the field of reading, and other fields of literacy instruction, have shown that teachers possess definable beliefs which consistently reflect one dominant methodological approach. In other words, teachers perceive teaching through the filter of their theoretical beliefs, shaping instruction, classroom interactions, and affecting students' perceptions of literacy learning. Teachers' observable approaches to reading instruction were found to be consistent with the theoretical beliefs that they were revealed to possess. Moreover, research has brought evidence about classroom interactions and how they diverge according to teachers' belief systems (Bisland et al., 2009; Faour, 2003; Khader, 2012; Saengboon, 2012; Wang, 2006).

Conversely, the close relationship between the beliefs upheld by teachers and their instructional practices is sometimes unconvincing, varying from consistent to inconsistent, and indicating low positive correspondence. The main cause of inconsistency in research on teachers' beliefs is methodological. Research has shown that findings of low positive correspondence, in some cases, may have been due to teachers' unfamiliarity with terms, their difficulty to articulate their beliefs, in addition to the methodology of investigation and comparison (Fang, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Skott, 2015). Studies that revealed inconsistencies relied on written research instruments, limited to teaching reflections (what teachers said they do) instead of concrete teaching (what teachers do). Teachers' beliefs and practices need to be examined in classroom contexts. In this sense, researchers have overcome the limitation mentioned above by using classroom observations, stimulated recalls, think-aloud protocols, and focused interviews. Several studies have supported the inconsistency thesis between teachers' beliefs and practices (Basturkmen, 2014; Breen et al., 2001;Harcarik, 2009; Judson, 2006).

The methodological issues in research on teachers' beliefs had emerged when researchers attempted to employ the concept of beliefs in educational research. The crux of the problem is that the very nature of beliefs, being tacit (Johnson, 1994), complex (Richards & Lockhart, 1996), and mostly unconscious (Pajares, 1992), has led to many methodological difficulties. Construct validity, for instance, appears to be a recurrent issue, as Fang (1996), Richardson (1996), and Skott

(2015) argued. Besides, contextual factors, social or institutional, may also have significant influences on teachers' beliefs and/or instruction; thus, they need to be carefully considered during the collection and analysis of data (Borg, 2003; Jamalzadeha & Shahsavar, 2014; Lee, 2008; Phillips, 2009; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Research has reached a consensus on the many factors that shape teachers' beliefs (**Abdi &** Asadi, 2011; Bean & Zulich, 1991; Guotao & Xiaoming, 1997; Johnson, 1994;**Li**, 2012; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Teachers' general knowledge about teaching is at the core of their beliefs (Carlsen, 1999; Cherniak et al., 1983; Shulman, 1987). Teachers' belief systems are made slowly over time, involving subjective and objective sources (Knowles, 1992; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Not always observable in the classroom, they begin to take shape in teachers' minds initially due to their education and experience as learners (Johnson, 1994; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Richards, 1991; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). The range of beliefs embodied in the teaching of literacy is solidly supported by the different existing language approaches (Froese, 1990); Johnson,1992). In this sense, "teachers must learn to question why they are using specific instructional practices and how these practices relate to current theories of literacy development" (Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990, p. 63). Classroom instructional and evaluative practices can be improved by teacher educators whose central objective is to help teachers develop a theoretical orientation that is reflective of current and pertinent research in the field (Burgess et al., 2000; Busch, 2010; Cummins et al., 2004), mainly because beliefs are sometimes incompatible with educational perspectives. It is important to address teachers' beliefs in connection to assessment since their relationship has not been fully elucidated. Such investigations can contribute to the consistency versus inconsistency debate. Moreover, they have the potential to bring about positive changes, especially in contexts where such investigations have never been conducted.

Reading Models
Reading is a complex and multifaceted skill that could be defined as the ability to process a text through decoding, interpreting, and understanding it (Douglas, 2003). Reading comprehension is universally considered as the level of understanding of written texts. Anderson (1985) defined reading as the process of constructing meaning from texts. In this sense, he considers that a skilled reading activity should be:
- Fluent: the automaticity of basic processes –cognitive and psychomotor capacities.
- Strategic: considering the purpose, use of the appropriate strategies.
- Constructive: using prior knowledge and schemata to build new knowledge.
- Motivating: maintaining attention and interest.

Comprehension process consists of two essentially imperative items: the reader and the text. For a reader to build meaning from a given text, he must be equipped with a certain range of capacities. Attention, memory, and inferring are all instances of the cognitive capacities a reader should possess. Moreover, a reader should have an objective underlying his reading activity, a concern, or an interest in the text being read. In other words, a reader must be motivated. Finally, a reader needs linguistic capacities and various types of knowledge to achieve understanding after his reading activity.

On the other hand, texts also have an outsized impact on comprehension. Comprehension does not depend on the reader only; the surface code of a written text and its content also play a major role in achieving meaning. Both reader and text are interrelated in a dynamic way that influences the reading experience and comprehension. Hence, fluency in reading could be considered as a prerequisite and, at the same time, a consequence of reading and understanding. Two primary barriers must be cleared to become skilled readers:

- Being able to master bottom-up strategies for processing separate sounds, letters, words, phrases, and symbols.
- As part of the top-down approach, second/ foreign language readers must develop appropriate format schemata —background information and socio-cultural experience— to carry out the inferences and interpretations effectively.

Reading models represent a systematic and operative way of explaining certain aspects of reading: what it is, how it is taught, how reading relates to other cognitive and perceptual abilities, how it interfaces with memory. "A reading model is the theory of what is going on in the reader's eyes and mind during reading and comprehending (or miscomprehending) a text" (Davies, 1995, p. 159). Reading theories have significantly impacted on the teaching approaches, textbooks as well as reading assessment (Alderson, 2000). Therefore, these models are of a capital importance in exploring of teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading. Generally, teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading correspond to one of the four principal models. Given the chronology of the most significant contributions in the field of reading, reading models can be classified as being: (1) Top-down / Goodman's Psycholinguistic model (1970); (2) Bottom-up / Laberge & Samuel's Serial model (1977); (3) Interactive / Rumelhart & McClelland's model (1977); (4) Interactive-Compensatory / Stanovich's model (1984).

Reading Assessment

Assessment is the process of observing, analyzing, gathering, and measuring data about learners' abilities, needs, difficulties, and achievements. Moreover, it provides insights and evidence about the teaching and learning experience. The evidence formative assessments produce could be used reflectively to make informed and consistent judgments to improve the teaching-learning experience.

Reading is a skill of dominant significance, especially when assessments of general language ability are to be designed. Traditionally, information about the development of students' reading comprehension ability and reading skills was only gathered through testing during the course or after. Testing is one form of assessment; it determines a student's aptitude to perform certain tasks or display mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. Formative reading assessment includes a several reading activities that can be tackled before, during, and after reading.

On the other hand, recent research on students' achievements underscored "over-reliance on standardized tests" (Navarrete et al., 1990, p. 1). The standardization process of summative reading assessments has also been influenced by the abundant research findings in reading and reading theories. Summative assessments usually take the form of tests, including a set of activities meant

to develop a picture of what students know and how they can apply their knowledge to conclude their educational experiences (Huba& Freed, 2000).

All reading assessment is normally carried out by inference. Strategic pathways to full understanding are often important factors to include in assessing learners, particularly in the case of formative reading comprehension assessments which take place in the classroom. In other words, the assessment of reading ability does not end with the measurement of comprehension. Reading tests are meant to measure a reader's comprehension ability, knowledge, and/ or performance through a set of structured explicit techniques or procedures. These techniques must specify a form of reporting measurement. Otherwise, they cannot be considered as tests. Depending on the type of reading and the reading model at its core, standardized reading tests generally include the following tasks: (1) reading aloud; (2) non-contextualized multiple-choice vocabulary/ grammar questions; (3) contextualized multiple-choice vocabulary/ grammar questions; (4) multiple-choice cloze vocabulary/ grammar; (5) vocabulary matching; (6) selected-response fill-in vocabulary; (7) multiple-choice vocabulary/ grammar editing; (8) sentence completion; (9) open-ended comprehension questions; (10) true/ false statements; (11) summarizing. The majority, if not all, of the previously described tasks are very standard, conventional and predictable, since they have been overly used by teachers. Moreover, they are summative in nature, norm-referenced and product-oriented. Assessments based only on these tasks are usually used to nuance learners.

Research has defended the idea that alternative assessment methods focus on developing skills that will lead learners to observe, think, question, and eventually test their ideas in real life. For a comprehensive description of students' abilities, reading assessment should fall in between traditional and alternative assessment techniques, combining the best of both. Standard reading assessments are less time-consuming, very practical, and easier to score than alternative assessment. However, alternative assessment provides useful feedback to students, develops the potential for intrinsic motivation, and ultimately grants a more comprehensive description of a learners' ability.

Formative and summative reading assessments share the same tools; therefore, they may have the same impact on learners' comprehension abilities and reading motivation (Valencia, 1990). Alternative approaches to formative assessment provably offer more effective solutions to reading problems concerning motivation. Portfolio assessment is a type of alternative assessment consisting of systematically and purposefully collecting learners' work that shows their progress and achievements as well as the efforts they had put into them. Portfolio reading assessment approaches permit to evaluate learners' products and to collect evidence of their progress and the achievement of their learning targets. Valencia (1990) defends that a portfolio approach to assessment assumes that developing readers deserve no less. In addition to providing an alternative to conventional and very common formative reading assessments, portfolios stand as an authentic, systematic, and purposeful approach to assessment (Porter & Cleland, 1995). Table one shows the main differences between traditional reading assessment and alternative reading assessment:

Table 1. *Comparison of traditional v. alternative reading assessment*

Traditional assessment	Alternative assessment
Standardized and scheduledtests	Nonstandard and continuous assessment
Timed	Untimed
Multiple-choice format	Free response format
Decontextualized test items	Contextualized communicative items
Scored feedback	Individualized feedback
Norm-referenced scores	Criterion-referenced scores
Focuses on the correct answers	Focuses on creative answers
Based on recall/recognition	Based on construction/application
Product-oriented	Process-oriented
Non-interactive	Interactive
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation
Summative	Formative

Research Design
Methods
According to Morrow, Strickland, and Woo (1998), learning to read and write is arguably the most complex task a learner can face. Despite the complexity of the reading process, existing theoretical understandings provided teachers with approaches to shape their reading instruction and reading assessment practices. It is somewhat difficult to investigate these abstract theoretical beliefs since they are likely to be unnoticed, while they are at the source of the decisions made by teachers (Fang, 1996; Kostopoulou, 2005; Pajares, 1992; Paris et al., 1991; Skott, 2015). It is in this sense necessary to employ a variety of appropriate research instruments which will make available both the qualitative and quantitative data needed to answer the research questions (Chang, 2014; Palak & Walls, 2014; Skott, 2015). A mixed-methods exploratory case study was designed to answer the research questions.

Population
Probability sampling techniques would have been much favorable to the full objectivity of this research. However, the researcher could not adopt these techniques because of the encountered difficulties, which were in sum inconvenience issues, such as teachers' schedules and availability. To surmount this limitation, the researcher has opted for a different sampling approach: convenience sampling. The study population comprised 20 teachers and 120 First (LMD1) and Second (LMD2) Year students: Department of English, Tlemcen University, Algeria. Based on convenience sampling methods, three participant teachers were selected for observation during Discourse Comprehension sessions.

Instruments
Inconveniences also limited the researcher in the choice of research instruments. Consequently, stimulated recalls, thinking-aloud protocols, and focused interviews, could not be employed for a more contextual examination of the beliefs upheld by teachers. Data collection procedure involved three research instruments: two questionnaires and classroom observations. The first questionnaire and classroom observations provided the researcher with relevant data, so that the link between teachers' beliefs about reading and its impact on the instructive and evaluative behaviors could be

examined. Finally, the role of the second questionnaire was to help the researcher answer the last research question.

Both questionnaires were anonymous, comprising cloze and open-ended questions, in addition to Likert scale items. The questionnaires were anonymous, comprising cloze an open-ended questions, in addition to Likert scale items. The first questionnaire addressed the novice and experienced reading teachers of the department. To answer the research questions, another questionnaire was given to the LMD1 and LMD2 EFL students. Teachers' questionnaire sought to explore teachers' beliefs and theoretical orientations in connection to reading. Learners' questionnaire looked at the impact of reading assessment on learners' comprehension ability and reading motivation. Structured, uncontrolled, and non-participant classroom observations aimed at providing the researcher with more observable evidence to verify the results of the questionnaires.

An undisguised, non-participant, and structured approach to classroom observation was adopted. The observed teachers were informed about the observation procedures and solicited for consent. Each of the sampled teachers was observed accordingly with his availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate in the research by authorizing the observer to take place inside his classroom to witness and record data. Teachers were observed two times each. Observations aimed at gathering data about teachers' instructive and evaluative classroom practices in connection to reading. Data-keeping forms included an observational-checklist and note-taking. The checklist exclusively targeted teachers' instructional and evaluative practices.

Findings

Teachers' questionnaires comprised Likert scale items of 1-4. Figure one exposes the six items responded by teachers. The feedback collected on scales (4=strongly agree) and (3=agree) were considered positive. Responses received on scales (1= strongly disagree) and (2=disagree) were considered negative.
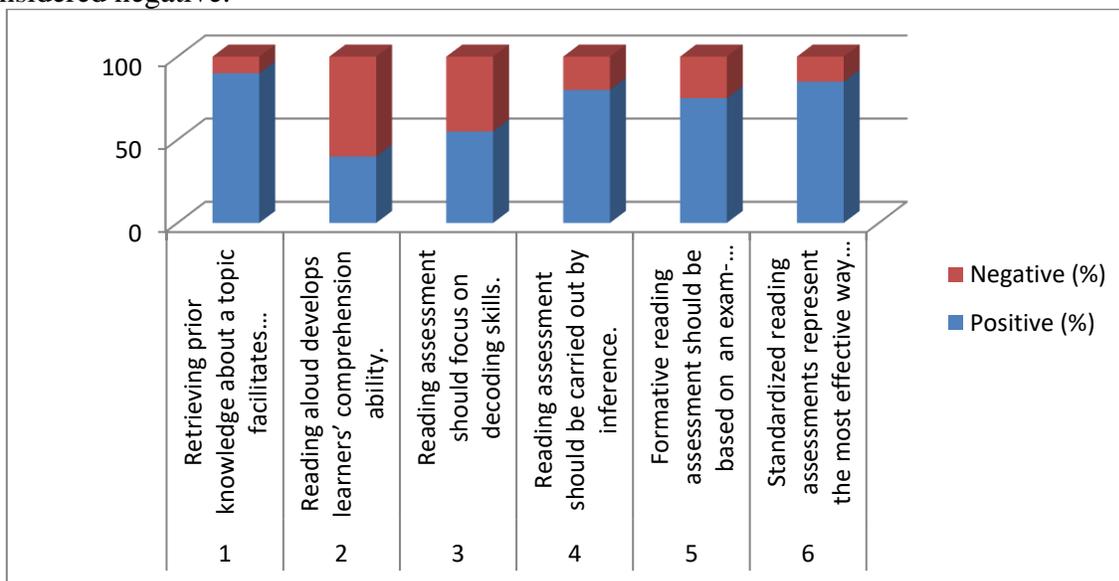

Figure 2. Teachers' theoretical orientations in connection to reading

The observational-checklists focused on the teaching material and reading instruction stages. Moreover, they particularly targeted classroom reading assessment procedures. It had been noted that participants used standardized reading material, authentic with similar surface structure. The pre-reading section showed that teachers used the same instructional activities: semantic mapping, questioning and predicting. It is noteworthy to mention that students were asked to read the text silently, which is a while-reading instructional activity and never asked to scan or skim. The pre-reading stage was somewhat short, and most of the students were engaged in the while-reading stage prematurely.

Each of the sampled teachers implemented both reading-aloud and silent-reading to his reading instruction. It is also noteworthy to mention that these were the two only while-reading tasks that had been observed, at the expense of other interesting while-reading instructional activities such as jigsaw reading. Post-reading activities included the use of vocabulary tasks, which did not take the aspect of a task, but more of a mere explanation, which at its best required the students to use their dictionary. The participants emphasized spelling and pronunciation. Participants preferred to ask learners to write the general and sub-ideas of the reading material as a post-reading activity.

Writing summaries was used as a reading comprehension assessment technique and not as an instructional practice. The post-reading stage did not include the three-level guide activity. It had been noticed that teachers implement almost the same tasks to assess their students' comprehension. Indeed, all of the observed teachers used: true-or-false tasks, vocabulary matching tasks, and open-ended comprehension questions, in addition to exact-cloze tasks and selected-response fill-in tasks which did not only emphasize vocabulary but grammar too.

Discussions

To order to interpret the findings and answer the research questions, the discussions below took place.

Teachers' Beliefs in Connection to Reading Comprehension

Evidence about teachers' bottom-up orientation was recorded through the process of data collection. The use of reading-aloud tasks during the instruction and assessment of reading is one major indicator. 75% of the respondent teachers had admitted to employing this task in their instructional and evaluative practices. To that, the strong emphasis on phonological and morphological aspects of new vocabulary can be added. On the other hand, the collected data also revealed that none of the observed teachers had omitted to instruct students to read silently. 90% of the teachers agreed on the necessity of activating prior knowledge and schemata.

An overwhelming majority of the teachers who, on the one hand, were presumed to be bottom-up oriented were revealed to hold an observable top-down orientation too. The juxtaposed use of these two opposed models suggests that the teachers have an interactive theoretical conception of the reading process, which is at the root of their interactive approach to reading instruction and assessment.

Reading models were of paramount importance in the exploration of teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading. Tlemcen University EFL teachers conceive reading as an interactive process.

They believe that it is good to mix both bottom-up processing and top-down processing to develop reading skills and achieve comprehension. These interactive representations of reading were all observed in the reading instruction. The evaluative processes were principally aimed at measuring students' comprehension. Data analysis and strict comparison of the results showed that teachers' evaluative practices are influenced by their reading beliefs. The length of cloze tasks that students were administered is, in fact, a characteristic of an assessment that is founded on a top-down conception of reading, in addition to the true-or-false tasks and open-ended comprehension questions as well.

Furthermore, the fact that students were asked to perform reading-aloud tasks at the end of each session point out their parallel bottom-up theoretical conception of reading. The findings show that teachers' evaluative practices are influenced by their beliefs about reading, which indicates a high positive correspondence that aligns with other research findings (Asselin, 2000; Bisland et al., 2009; Chou, 2008; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Kuzborska, 2011; Longberger, 1992; Olson & Singer, 1994**;** Powers et al., 2006; Richardson et al., 1991; Saengboon, 2012; Lau, 2008; Wang, 2006). In effect, Tlemcen University EFL teachers have an interactive conception of the reading process, which influences their classroom instructional and evaluative practices.

The Impact on Learners' Comprehension Ability
Teachers who responded to the questionnaire, as well as those who were observed, showed their orientation toward an interactive model of the reading-comprehending process. Experienced teachers seemed to rely more on top-down processes, contrary to novice teachers, who appeared to draw more emphasis on bottom-up processes. Novice teachers' observation revealed that the written stimuli, used during the instruction and reading assessment, are somewhat short, focusing on the surface structure and literal meaning. Experienced teachers were revealed to be more top-down oriented when it comes to reading assessment, emphasizing the interpretative and inferential skills of students.

Moreover, the investigation of teachers' classroom evaluative practices connected to reading showed that these practices are conventional and exam-oriented. 55% of LMD1 students admitted to finding these exam-oriented evaluative practices challenging, whereas 45% of them agreed on the opposite, underscoring their lack of reading motivation. Over and above, 75% of them confirmed their disinterest in reading long texts. Besides, only 33% of them reported engaging in extra-reading activities regularly. It is also a fact that 25% of the LMD1 students estimated that their comprehension ability is clearly under the average.

These statistics highlight the impact of exam-oriented classroom assessment on students' reading motivation and comprehension ability. Classroom reading assessment was very similar to training that focuses on the skills that students need to pass their biannual examinations. These classroom evaluative practices were influenced by teachers' theoretical orientations, sometimes emphasizing the bottom-up processes at the expense of top-down inferential processes. Moreover, 40% of responding teachers had agreed on the incorrect assumption that reading-aloud tasks are beneficial to learners' comprehension ability. It is also important to call attention to students' unfamiliarity with the scanning and skimming strategies.

This research brought evidence that information about the development of students' reading skills and reading comprehension ability was only gathered through testing, focusing on student's ability to complete certain tasks or to display mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. Exam-oriented classroom evaluative practices certainly impact students positively, given their participation in developing reading skills and comprehension to a certain extent. However, it is logical to think about the inadequacies that the present investigation revealed. Thus, it would be practical to reconsider teachers' reading classroom evaluative practices. This does not mean that it is indispensable to change, since data had shown a certain positive impact on students' reading skills and inferential abilities.

However, data analysis also exposed a negative side to these exam-oriented evaluative behaviors. Quite a consequent number of respondents affirmed lack of reading motivation and their habituation to a particular type of written stimulus. Eventually, students are simply taught how to score in the exam because no information would eventually be grasped or memorized. During the exam, students will probably be given a different text and asked to perform the same tasks to demonstrate their skills, preferably the critical, interpretive and inferential ones. Classroom reading comprehension assessment is supposed of a formative nature, focusing mainly on the learning process, and the learners. Ideally, it should reflect on learners' needs to adapt the instruction consequently. This type of assessment should put forward opportunities to improve for all the learners, providing them with challenging and motivational tasks to properly and effectively track their achievements.

Nonetheless, the findings revealed inconsistencies between teachers' classroom reading evaluation and the nature of formative assessment. Classroom evaluative practices were found to be extremely exam-oriented, impacting negatively on students' reading motivation by strongly emphasizing the very same skills they have been training since secondary school. The instruments used for checking learners' comprehension are conventional, undermining their critical thinking and decreasing their reading motivation. Furthermore, the standardization of the reading material, in terms of length and type, and the comprehension tasks constitute a real issue. The exam-oriented classroom assessment has formative intentions and aims. Still, it is designed as summative, often presented to students as a post-reading test-like series of tasks, focusing on the product and the outcome rather than the process and the motivation. Moreover, this standardization was revealed to limit learners' comprehension ability and hinder their interpretive and inferential abilities, especially when students are presented with different written stimuli in terms of length and type or when the tasks aim at inferential and implied comprehension levels.

It is, nevertheless, possible to improve the situation by focusing on the development of students' comprehension ability and the revival of their reading motivation through the enrichment of their reading experiences. The initiative of improvement should be taken by teachers who will need to document and learn about reading theory. Expectedly, these teachers would not exhibit instructional or evaluative behaviors founded on dysfunctional beliefs (Wilson, 1990), such as the commonly received idea that reading-aloud tasks raise learners' inferential abilities. Well-informed reading comprehension teachers would put a strong focus on the teaching of inference instead of fluency. Teachers would proceed to the activation of learners' prior knowledge and schemata by creating familiarity with the basic structure and content of the text, which can raise

learners' motivation in reading and identifying the text either through scanning or skimming. Ultimately, the purpose is to equip learners' with reading strategies and to train them to infer, predict, verify, extrapolate, synthesize, and apply ideas based on information contained in the text.

Theoretical awareness of teachers is supposed to help them select or design tasks that are adequate to their students' needs and the objectives already set. The three-level guide is a post-reading task that engages students in a focused-reading by providing clear purposes and directions. This task supports the learners to use their bottom-up and top-down strategies to test some given sentences. It is called the three-level guide because it draws attention to the three levels of comprehension: the literal level, the inferential level, and the applied level. Motivating and challenging, it could embody a real asset, particularly because it does not belong to the list of conventional reading tasks.

The assessment process should be carried out to make available information about students' thinking, achievements, and progress. Reading assessment should also be a process that leads up to better learning conditions, focusing on learners and their motivation. Charvade, Jahandar, and Khodabandehlou (2012) affirm that there are innovations in reading assessment procedures. Unconventional views on assessment have generated novel approaches like portfolios: a self-assessment approach that serves as an effective learning strategy to promote motivation and autonomous language learning, encouraging language learners to assess their learning progress (Chen, 2005; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). According to Oscarson (1997), engaging in self-assessment can help students become skilled judges of their strengths and weaknesses and establish significant and manageable goals for themselves, thus developing their self-directed language learning ability. By systematically collecting works and monitoring development over time, portfolios enable learners to make reflections, confirmations, and adjustments of their learning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Portfolio assessment develops learners' creativity, gives them more independence, and helps them develop higher-order thinking skills and metacognitive strategies (Charvade et al., 2012).

Conclusion

Despite the scarcity of research that addressed teachers' beliefs about reading in relation to reading assessment, it is maintained that their evaluative practices are likewise influenced by their conceptions of what constitutes effective classroom assessment. The present study looked at the correspondence between teachers' beliefs about reading and their classroom-evaluative practices. The research aimed at providing insights on teachers' theoretical orientations and approaches to the evaluation of reading. The study has shown that teachers' interactive conception of reading influenced their evaluative practices. Some of their dysfunctional beliefs were also observed during reading instruction and assessment. Theoretical propensities directly impact the teaching context, resulting in strengths or weaknesses in students' comprehension ability and reading motivation.

This work outlines the literature related to teachers' beliefs and puts up a theoretical background for both reading and reading assessment to establish the environment of the study. The research design and methodology present the tools that permitted the researcher to conduct this investigation, including the sampling procedures and data collection instruments. Future research

in teachers' beliefs and literacy instruction has to anticipate the methodological issues and contextual limitations, for even more close investigations, by adopting mixed-methods approaches and using appropriate and context-adapted research instruments. Theories, such as Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, can also provide the researcher with systematic approaches to the investigation of beliefs and their structure (Bullock, 2010; Haney et al., 1996; Smarkola, 2008; Underwood, 2012).

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