

## Reading Practices Of EFL Yemeni Students: Recommendations For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the reading practices of forty-five second year EFL Yemeni undergraduate students using the Four Resources Model of multiliteracy practices. The Four Resources Model of multiliteracy practices organizes reading practices into four key practices: code breaking, text participating, text uses and text analysing levels. Quantitative and qualitative methods, designed based on the Four Resources Model constructs, were used to collect data from a sample of students studying English as a Foreign Language at a university in Yemen. Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire, while qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interviews guided by the research objectives. The findings reveal that Yemeni students were medium users of the code breaker and text user practices whereas the meaning making and text analysis practices were reported to be used in low usage. On the whole, these early findings suggest that the reading practices and reading abilities of the Yemeni students are still limited even at the tertiary level and have not developed fully with regard to reading in English. This paper reports in detail, the use of the Four Resources Model as a tool to determine reading efficacy while examining the aforementioned findings. Discussion is put forward on the implications for teaching of reading and its approaches in a Yemeni context, especially in view of the students' reading needs at the tertiary level in Yemen.

**Keywords:** EFL reading practices; Four Resources Model; Multiliteracy Framework; tertiary academic literacies; Arab EFL learners

### INTRODUCTION

The wave of globalization that has swept throughout the world has brought about new ways of knowing and meaning making, which have been identified as the new literacies of the 21st century (Healy, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Inadvertently, this phenomenon has made reading the foremost essential skill for citizens of the era to access, comprehend and manage the substantial amount of text and information that is uploaded, shared and integrated in the networked system of social media, internet and

intranet. Consequently, the development of reading skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century becomes an important teaching and learning objective, where new ways of doing reading brought about by multimodal texts of information demand new understandings in multiliteracies and multimodal information processing. Coiro and Dobler (2007) who explored the nature of reading comprehension processes while reading on the Internet among young readers in the United States suggest that reading online as a set of new literacies introduces additional complexities in the process of reading. Meanwhile, in the context of New Zealand, McDowall (2011) illustrates how the capacity to break the code, make meaning, use and analyse texts provide opportunities for students to build the capacities needed for living and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, Anstèy and Bull (2006) argue that students need the resources, attitudes and strategies to adjust and develop responsive and appropriate practices in order to cope with changing times and changing literacies. This suggests the need for a classroom to attend to ways of operating with these challenges dealt by the globalized world. However, these demands for proficient literacy skills are especially daunting for second and foreign readers of English in non-native learning environments such as in Yemen.

The Internet world statistics (2010) recorded the English language as the top language used on the internet, followed by Chinese and Spanish. This fact makes it imperative for non-native speakers of the language to be proficient readers in the English language to be able to participate and contribute to the globalized knowledge based borderless world.

For many non-native speakers of English who are struggling to learn the target language in non-native environments, the challenges are not only complex but also complicated by the existing views of traditional teaching approaches and teacher and learner roles, as well as the socio-political issues of language identity. Nevertheless the situation among Arab EFL learners has become very serious to the point that many educators are now concerned and have advocated for the need to improve the state of teaching and learning EFL reading in the Arab speaking world. Research by Al-Brashdi (2003), Al-Mekhlafi (1995), Mourtaga (2006) and Yar Mohamed (1992) have highlighted the dire state of Arab EFL learners' reading ability at school and tertiary levels. In Yemen, researches by Al-Mekhlafi (1995), Albadri (2001), Alwalass (2000), Ba-Matraf (1997), Balfakeh (1999), Habtoor (2004), and Yar Mohamed (1992) have revealed very little progress and improvement in the reading performances of the Yemeni students populations since 20 years ago. These EFL learners have continuously demonstrated having poor word processing strategies, lack of relevant information processing skills and strategies, including more importantly, limited linguistic knowledge and competence (i.e. vocabulary knowledge, structure and content). Most of the time, these problems are associated with lack of effective instructional strategies and practices for teaching reading (Abdulhameed, 2012; Ali, 2007; Nabil & Patil, 2012). Meanwhile they also noted that findings from previous researches (Al-Mehwari, 2005; Al-Refa'ai, 2001; Bataineh, Thabet, & Bataineh, 2008) have concentrated on the lack of the aforementioned skills due to the grammar translation method that was employed to teach reading at almost all levels of the Yemeni students' English education. Moreover, the past researches have not considered the range of practices that cover and integrate a repertoire of textual practices needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's new economies and culture (Luke & Freebody 1999) especially by tertiary EFL students in Yemen which will in turn continue to impede their ability to cope with the demands of the changing times and changing literacies.

This paper reports on a research investigating the reading efficacy of Yemeni students reading in English for academic purposes in tertiary contexts using a model couched within the multiliteracy framework that focuses on literacy abilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular the findings from the study provide insight into the non-native speakers' reading efficacy in English in non-native environments. The Four Resources Model developed by Freebody and Luke (1990) is used to describe the literacy practices students need to access information to

be literate in the globalized era: code breaking practices, text participating practices, text using practices and text analysing practices. Findings from this model will inform the field beyond functional skills of reading that previous researches have provided and contribute insights into the larger socio-cultural context for reading by the EFL tertiary students in Yemen.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN YEMEN IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

As globalization becomes more prevalent, Yemen aspires to improve the level of human development with its strategic vision (2000-2025). The main goal of the strategic vision is to give special importance to training and education, to raise the standards of the university education, to meet the requirements of the society, and be in line with developments in the fields of human and practical sciences (Ministry of Education, 2008). Hence, Yemeni students need to be empowered with the skills and strategies required for accessing new communities outside their classroom. This prevalent need has given prominence to the role of English Language in Yemen, in that it has been made a compulsory subject at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. It has also necessitated the need to improve on teaching methodologies towards developing highly proficient users of the language.

While English language teaching in Yemen has undergone a series of dramatic changes and developments since its reunification in 1990 (Nabil & Patil, 2012), these reformations have failed to deliver and the challenges and problems remain. The teaching of reading in Yemen, in particular, has been characterized by the domination of traditional teaching practices (Al-Tamimi, 2007; Azzan, 2001; Ba-Matraf, 1997; Balfakeh, 1999). Their research has shown that teaching practices at both school and tertiary levels in Yemen are characterized by the dominant teacher's role (teacher-centred), passive role of the learner, unauthentic tasks, and asking and answering questions with ready-made opinion, memorization, translation, focusing on pronunciation rather than skills and strategies. Consequently, the students' development of reading skills and strategies are limited and this impedes their development of analytical and critical reading wherein they are required to process knowledge from multiple sources i.e. texts, articles and journals online and off-line as demanded in the current networked world.

Interestingly these complex issues with regard to teaching and learning English are commonplace in the Arab World. Fareh (2010) and Khan (2012) have highlighted similar problems among Jordanian, Saudi Arabia, Sudanese, Egyptians, and Yemeni EFL learners. Their conclusions pointed towards the important factors that seem to impact on the learners' performance and desire to learn English which include poor teaching and methodology, students' low motivation and lack in schema knowledge, inappropriate materials and limited teaching facilities.

The challenges identified are however not limited to Arab world learners, as other non-native environments where English is taught and learned as a foreign or second language have also shown similar conditions. Japanese and Chinese EFL learners' difficulties in attaining high proficiency in English have been found by Goss (1999) and Cheng and Wang (2004) respectively, to be due to teacher and teaching quality, large classes, and inadequate learning facilities such as language labs and suitable language materials. In the Malaysian context, Hazita Azman (2009) reported that students were not motivated by the materials used by the teachers who were also not very proficient in the target language. She suggests that there is a need for creating a responsive learning environment, which encourages employing methods that are culturally sensitive and locally productive in the students' learning of English in the era of change.

Due to the prevalent problem with EFL methodology especially, a larger study of which this report is a part of, a proposal to introduce a multiliteracy based pedagogical approach (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005) to the teaching of reading in English at tertiary institutions in Yemen has been made. Towards this end, a multiliteracy framework as envisioned by the New London Group (1996) is proposed to provide a perspective on the new ways of being and new ways of knowing that embody the new literacies of the 21st Century (Coiro, 2003; Hazita Azman, 2009; Koo, 2008; Koo, Wong, & Kemboja Ismail, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; McDowall, 2011). The multiliteracy framework is also used as a tool to investigate the reading practices because it provides teachers with opportunities in developing students' reading practices to decode and encode texts besides to understand, critically evaluate and use texts for a variety of purposes. This paper will report this aspect of the aforementioned study.

## THE MULTILITERACY FRAMEWORK

Multiliteracies as a concept was first proposed by the New London Group (1996) and refers to the multiple forms of knowledge encountered such as print, image, video, and digital texts. Anstey and Bull (2006) describe the term as 'a concept that has evolved in response to concern about how literacy teaching can equip students for the changing world in which they live'. Similarly, students need the resources, attitudes and strategies to adjust and develop responsive and appropriate practices to cope with changing times and changing literacies. In transforming the multiliteracy framework into practice, Kalantzis and Cope (2005) and Cope and Kalantzis (2009) have designed a pedagogy guided by the processes and ways of knowing or understanding of a learner's experience. This reframed pedagogy which calls for a revision in literacy education is termed as Learning by Design. It comprises four orientations of learning: experiences, conceptualization, analysing, and applying as described below by Kalantzis and Cope (2005, p.74):

### 1. Experiencing

*The Known:* personal knowledge, evidence from learners' everyday lives.

*The New:* immersion in new information and experiences.

### 2. Conceptualizing

*By Naming:* defining applying concepts.

*With Theory:* by putting the concepts together that makes discipline knowledge.

### 3. Analyzing

*Functionally:* Cause and effect, what things are for.

*Critically:* people's purposes, motives, intentions, points of view

### 4. Applying

*Appropriately:* 'correct' application of knowledge in a typical situation.

*Creatively:* innovative application of knowledge/transfer to different situation.

(Kalantzis & Cope, 2005)

Relatedly, the Four Resources Model scaffolds the reading process for the reader to comprehend and make meaning of the information from the multimodal texts. This model is especially useful for beginning readers such as the EFL Yemeni readers.

## FOUR RESOURCES MODEL

The Four Resources Model developed by Freebody and Luke (1990) outlines the four roles of the reader that students need to acquire i.e. code breaker, text participant or meaning maker, text user, and text analyst. It focuses on the practices of reading and on the resources readers need in these practices. It also offers a way of ensuring a balanced reading program where all

the practices are taught systematically. In addition, it promotes the teaching of literacy from a social-critical perspective that is responsive to change (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p. 52). In particular, the model focuses on the range of practices that cover and integrate a repertoire of textual practices needed in today's new economies and culture (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Hence employing the Four Resources Model within the multiliteracies framework introduces a reframed literacy pedagogy that is socio-culturally responsive to the situated contexts of the EFL learning. The list below depicts how the four resources are employed in an integrated way in the examined reading process.

1. **Code-breaking:** is the ability to break the code of written texts by recognizing and using the fundamental architecture of written language, including the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, structural conventions and patterns.
2. **Text Participant:** is the ability to understand and compose meaningful written, visual, spoken, digital and multimodal texts.
3. **Text-using:** is the ability to use written, spoken, visual, digital and multimodal texts in functional ways within and outside the school setting.
4. **Text-analysing:** is the ability to critically analyse written, spoken, visual, digital and multimodal texts and understand that texts represent particular points of view and influence people's ideas.

NSW DET (2009, p.18)

As far as reading is concerned, it is important to note that the Four Resources Model focuses on the practices of reading and on the resources readers need in these practices. Therefore, it is used to examine the reading practices that students use as outlined by the four repertoires of practices. It is also used to structure and guide our interpretation of what it means to break the code, make meaning, use texts, and analyse texts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The current study employed a mixed method design where both qualitative and quantitative data collection were conducted concurrently in an embedded mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2008). The mixed method approach was found to be useful in eliciting rich information that expanded from the quantitative responses retrieved through the questionnaires, enhanced by reiterating views from students' response in the interviews (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Creswell, 2008). This was proven in the study by the corroboration of results yielded from the students' perspectives.

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research elected for a purposive sampling where participants were selected using the homogeneous technique. Maxwell (1998) defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which, "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 87). This way, the students selected could provide the researcher with the desired information in giving their views on the use of reading practices from a sample of the same educational background.

For the study, 45 EFL second year undergraduate students from the Department of English Foreign Language, University in Yemen were selected using the homogenous technique. That is, the participants share similar characteristics as in age, English education background, and they were studying EFL at the Department of English where they received training to be English teachers. All participants spoke the same mother tongue (Arabic) and have had between five to seven years of English instruction as well as the same level of

Secondary Education. The conduct of the data collection phase of the study adhered to requirements of research ethics wherein the permission from the Department of English at Dhamar University was first attained and the intended tools for data elicitation were given prior approval.

#### **DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS**

Two main research instruments utilized in the study are interviews and student questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 32-items designed to investigate the Yemeni EFL students' reading practices. The questionnaire items were constructed based on the Four Resources Model (Freebody & Luke, 1990) where items were outlined to reveal the four main practices, namely code breaker; text participant or meaning maker; text user; and text analyst. A sample of 45 students of EFL respondents were asked to indicate frequency of occurrence on a 4-point Likert scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Always). During this session, the researcher explains in Arabic the instructions to make sure all students understood the items of the questionnaires.

Meanwhile, rich qualitative data was revealed through semi-structured interviews which were conducted on 10 participants from the total sample. Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The information and knowledge gained through the voices of the students provided a deeper insight and better understanding of the reading problems they encounter and of their reading practices as the interviewer can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation. A primary advantage of the semi-structured interviews is that they provide responses and options that participants may select expediently, while acknowledging that a response sometimes may fall outside the fixed options (Stolovitch, Keeps & Pershing, 2006). These semi-structured interviews included questions about reading practices students do before/during/ and after reading in English, their expectations of the reading experiences in the classroom, and the difficulties they face when reading in English. The participants were given a matrix of reading practices, designed based on the Four Resources Model, to provide them with a set of response choices in addition to unrestricted responses so that the participants may answer the questions using their own words.

The data collected for use in the analyses included: the questionnaire data and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire data were analysed descriptively using SPSS. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed, categorized and analysed in keeping with Bogdan and Biklen's (1982, p. 145) description of qualitative data analysis which incurs "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (in Hoepfl, 1997). Students' responses were categorised into themes and subthemes based on the predetermined guiding themes. Meanwhile, the qualitative data which were collected through interviews to expand from and support the quantitative data were systematically analysed and coded using Nvivo 9.20. All the results were then analysed by categorizing them according to the Four Resources Model (Freebody & Luke, 1990). The reliability and validity of item responses were examined using Rasch analysis. The test raw score Cronbach- $\alpha$  register a reliability of 0.95 which allows further analysis of the instrument. The items measure reliability is 0.95, and the person measure reliability is 0.92. This result indicates a high acceptable level of reliability. The instrument has a small measurement error of +/-0.12 logit and capable of yielding a good person separation 3.20. Besides, the item and person infit MNSQ (Mean-Square) and z-std (standardized Z) values are close to the ideal 1 and 0 respectively giving the indication of the goodness of fit of the instrument gauging what is to be measured in the underpinning theory hence validity.

Further, peer debriefing also ensures the trustworthiness and add credibility to a qualitative data. In the current study, peer debriefing was used to “confirm interpretations and coding decisions including the development of categories” (Foster, 2004, p. 231). Towards this end, the work had been discussed with two colleagues who are experts of the learning environment at the end of the initial stage of the analysis. They were also asked to review the analysis of the qualitative data to validate the findings.

## FINDINGS

The present paper investigates the use of reading practices among EFL Yemeni students and their reading efficacy using the Four Resources Model framed within the multiliteracy pedagogical framework. Overall, the mean score of the reading practices used by the EFL Yemeni students are summarized in Figure 1. It can be seen that code breaker practices and text use practices were found to be within the same range attaining mean scores of  $M=2.3$  for code breaker practices, and  $M=2.2$  for text use practices, respectively. Similarly, text participant practices and text analyst practices were used within the same range with mean scores of  $M=1.9$  for both text participants practices and text analyst practices.

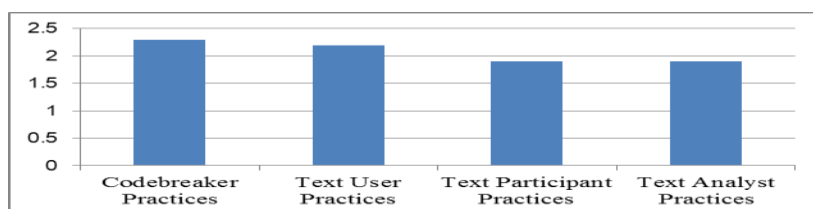


FIGURE 1. Summary of mean scores of students' reading practices use

In this study, Oxford's (1990) 5-point Likert scale for measuring reading strategy use was statistically converted to 4-point to avoid respondents reporting an opinion of neither agreement or disagreement. Furthermore, the midpoint may be harmful to measurement validity (Tsang, 2012). Thus the 4-point scale was deemed appropriate for use in the questionnaire based on the ranking scale in the present study. The modified scale defines the practices that fall between 1.0 and 1.9 as low compared to Oxford's 1.0 and 2.4, 2.0 and 2.7 as medium strategy use as compared to Oxford's 2.5 and 3.4, and 2.8 and 4.0 as high strategy use as compared to Oxford's 3.5 and 5. The following table illustrates the modifications.

TABLE 1. Scale definition

Oxford's (1990) scale definition 5-point Likert scale	Adapted definition 4-point Likert scale
1.0-2.4 low use	1.0-1.9 low use
2.5-3.4 medium use	2.0-2.7 medium use
3.5-5.0 high use	2.8-4.0 high use

Hence, based on Oxford's definition as depicted above, it can be concluded that the code breaker practices ( $M=2.3$ ) and text user practices ( $M=2.2$ ) are found to be used in medium as they fall between the range of 2.0-2.7 on the adapted scale as shown in TABLE 1. Concurrently, text participant practices and text analyst practices can be categorically determined as low in use falling between 1.0-1.9 on the scale. In addition, the cooperative reading guideposts (MyRead, 2002) provide a useful assessment tool based on how individual guides integrate the Four Roles of the reader. The guidepost indicators help teachers focus on the particular needs of their students. In this study, low use will indicate students being at the beginning

stages of reading, while medium use will indicate developing abilities, and high use will be indicative of achieving the targeted reading levels. TABLE 2 below provides the patterns of reading practices by the four categories.

TABLE 2. Mean score for students' reading practices

S	Statement	Mean
<b>Code breaker practices</b>		
14	I create a list of new words for the reading topic.	3.2
8	I decode new words while reading	3
12	I identify and follow teacher's modelling of key points (e.g. compound words, punctuation, contractions, verbs etc.).	2.2
9	I define the main concepts before interpreting text.	2.1
17	I categorize words based on their word class (e.g. noun, verb, adverb)	2
20	I practise what has been defined/ modelled (grammar points and structures explicitly).	2
5	I write key words of connection to the text before I read	1.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Text User Practices</b>		
6	I use Arabic when I do not have the appropriate English.	3.3
27	I summarize and state the main ideas using titles, topic sentences, illustrations and headings	2.8
32	I use what I have learned in my reading class to improve my personal and social skills.	2.6
1	I decide what I will do while I am reading (i.e. I set a purpose for reading)	2.2
19	I compare the features of different text types (i.e. writing styles, structure, and organization).	1.9
21	I identify the text type and its social purpose	1.9
16	I draw a concept (idea) map to organize ideas as I find them.	1.7
22	I identify the audience a text is aimed at	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>Text Participant Practices</b>		
13	I identify the main ideas.	2.9
3	I bring my background knowledge to the text	2
7	I read to check my predictions and make new prediction while reading	2
10	I ask myself questions.	2
11	I find answers to questions I have asked myself.	2
2	I make predictions of the content.	1.9
4	I link my the text I read with similar experiences of reading similar texts	1.9
15	I make literal and inferential meanings.	1.9
24	I make Flow-Chart and diagrams to show a sequence of events.	1.9
23	I connect one idea of the text to another (e.g. link cause and effect/ problem & solution)	1.8
25	I deconstruct the structure of a text and name its parts.	1.8
18	I use and interpret maps, diagrams, tables, and graphs to construct meaning.	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>Text Analyst Practices</b>		
26	I discuss with my partner and share ideas about the author's choice of words	2
30	I link reading this text to other similar texts	2
29	I identify the author's point of view.	1.9
31	I write a similar text applying my understanding of the text I read.	1.9
28	I explain the form of the text in terms of its expected reception.	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.9</b>

The following sections will discuss the findings as categorized into the four categories of reading practices. As shown in the above TABLE 2, the mean score for each statement is presented in rank order.

#### CODE BREAKER PRACTICES

Code breaker practices are practices that readers use to recognize and engage in reading texts, including creating a list of words of the text, decoding new words, identifying grammar



points, defining concepts and categorising words. The mean scores of the code breaker practices used by the sample when reading in English fall between 1.9 and 3.2, that is ranging from low to high use. Two types of reading practices, namely creating a list of words and decoding words were found to be highly used (S=14, M=3.2 and S=8, M=3 respectively). Whereas four types of practices were found to be averagely used. These are: practicing teachers' modelling and defining main concepts (S=12; M=2.2 and S=9, M=2.1 respectively), categorizing words (S=17; M=2) and practicing grammar structures explicitly (S=20, M=2). However, writing key words related to the text before reading the statements is low in use (S=5; M=1.9). Responses from the interview sessions echoed the same types of reading practices. The patterns are represented in frequencies (F) where the frequency is ranked between 1 (the lowest frequency) and 10 (the highest frequency). Hence, the frequencies that fall between 1- 4 is considered low since they are clearly lower than average which is 5, 4-7 is medium since they are in the middle of the distribution which represent cases that are very close to average for the total participants, and 8-10 is high since they are in the top three of the distribution.

- 1) Decoding new words while reading (N=10, F=10)
- 2) Identifying key points (e.g. compound words, punctuation, verbs etc.) (N=10, F=5)
- 3) Practicing what has been defined or modelled (grammar points and structures explicitly) during class. (N=10, F= 5)
- 4) Categorizing words based on their word class (N=10, F=2)
- 5) Defining concepts (N=10, F=1)
- 6) Creating a list of new words (N=10, F=6)

Majority of the participants reported that they decoded new words and created a list of new words when they read the text in English (S4 and S5). Similarly, S6 noted that she identified difficult words by underlining the difficult and new words, followed by memorizing these words (I underline the new words and look their meaning in dictionary and memorize meaning). These findings suggest that students' limited vocabulary causes problems when reading due to time spent on decoding new words and frequent referencing to the dictionary to translate new words. It is possible, therefore, that students need more instructions at the word level to promote the code breaking practices.

Generally, participants recorded medium use of the code breaker practices at M=2.3. However, considering the importance of code breaking practices as the operational part (linguistic dimension) of the reading process, this level of use as depicted in the results above is not sufficient for students to successfully engage in a variety of reading texts. For these students to be considered achieving in terms of their use of reading practices, their use should fall between 2.8 and 4.00 mean score and frequency higher than 7 out of 10. These practices entail the code breaking practices, in which students recognize and decode texts they read. This suggests that the practices are limited and insufficient for students to be able to recognize and engage effectively in reading texts in English. As seen above, it is found only one practice is reported in high use and medium use on certain types while low on other types. This suggests that these students are not proficient readers.

### **TEXT USER PRACTICES**

Text user practices are manifested in the form of the ability to use texts in functional ways in the school context or outside the school. This includes summarising ideas, improving personal and social skills, setting a purpose, organizing ideas, and identifying audience. As shown in Table 3, the mean scores of the text user practices used by the sample when reading in English range between 1.7 and 3.3. Within these intervals, it was found that use of Arabic

(S=6, M=3.3), identifying main ideas by using contextual clues skills (S=27, M=2.8) and applying what is learned from reading for personal and social skills (S=32, M=2.6) are highly used. However, the data revealed low use of important practices such as awareness of text genres (S=19, M=1.9), recognizing text types and purposes (S=21, M=1.9), and ability to organize ideas and identify target audience (S=16 and S=22, both M=1.7). Similarly, the interview data revealed similar patterns of text user practices by students as in:

- 1) Using Arabic (N=10, F=10)
- 2) Setting a purpose for reading (N=10, F=6)
- 3) Summarizing and stating the main ideas (N=10, F=7)
- 4) Using what have been learned to improve personal and social skills (N=10, F=7)

Interestingly, functional and strategic use of Arabic was reported by the majority of the participants. S1 acknowledged the use of Arabic to express previous experience and background knowledge when they do not have the appropriate words in English. S4 also reported that they use Arabic to translate new words before they read the text in classroom (Well, I always prepare my lessons at home and translate new words to become easy for me to take part in classroom). This indicates that students view the use of Arabic as a learning strategy (i.e. to bring their background knowledge, translate new words) in the EFL classroom. Pedagogically, students noted that the use of Arabic by the teacher facilitates their learning English. S2 believed that teachers should use Arabic to decipher difficult words, and especially to explain the grammar (I think if there is difficult vocabulary and when we have difficult points, especially grammar, teacher should use Arabic.) Moreover, students noted that using Arabic is useful in literature (Sometime like literature. Because some words are difficult and I can't find the meaning in dictionary.) These findings suggest that teachers should use Arabic (L1) in the EFL classroom as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate students learning.

Overall, the average use of text user practices was medium as in M=2.2 among the research sample. These findings indicate that the students' level of use of text user practices is still limited as they are only able to conduct fundamental skills of decoding such as translation, identifying main ideas, and are still impeded by low ability in organizing ideas effectively and in reading different types of genres efficiently. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that most of the respondents and those interviewed were enthusiastic about applying and using what they can learn from reading to their daily life.

### **TEXT PARTICIPANT PRACTICES**

Text participant practices are manifested in the form of comprehending and making meaning from the text. This includes bringing prior knowledge to the text, identifying main ideas, making predictions, asking and answering questions, and making inferences. Based on Table 2 above, the mean scores of the text user practices used by the sample when reading in English fall between 1.7 and 2.9 range. Only one statement (S=13) about identifying the main theme is highly used (M=2.9). Whereas practices that uses schema knowledge, informed guessing and retrospection as illustrated in statements 3, 7, 10, and 11, are ranged as medium use (M=2). The remaining practices ranging from statements 2, 4, 15, 24, 23, 25 and 18 which include making predictions of the content, linking personal experience with text, making inferences, connecting ideas, and analysing texts are low in use, ranging from M=1.9, M=1.8 and M=1.7 respectively. This finding indicates that student participants may have difficulties when they are required to identify themselves with the text and make meaning from it. A parallel finding is evident in the qualitative data which also found students reporting similar patterns of text participant practices in terms of:

- 1) Asking questions (N=10, F=8)
- 2) Answering questions (N=10, F=8)
- 3) Linking personal experience with the text (N=10, F=5)
- 4) Bringing background knowledge to the text (N=10, F=1)
- 5) Identifying the main ideas (N=10, F=6)

Data above show limited use of meaning practices by the participants (five participants). They linked their personal experience to the information in the text they read whereas only one participant reported bringing her background knowledge to the text. These findings suggest that this limitation will affect students' comprehension of texts because such practices are essential for meaning making. Therefore, students should be encouraged to bring their background knowledge including their personal experience by writing words they know about the topic on a piece of paper and answering some questions before reading in order to make meaning from texts.

The overall mean score achieved for text participant practices is only  $M=1.9$  which is low use. Like the trend of practices before, these findings suggest that students' use of text participants' practices is limited indeed. Conversely, they need to be able to make inferences and transform information into different forms to construct new meaning to be an effective contributor to the web of knowledge beyond the classroom boundaries (Ludwig, 2003).

### **TEXT ANALYST PRACTICES**

Text analyst practices refer to the ability to critically analyse texts. This includes understanding the author's choice of words, the author point of view, and explaining the form of text in terms of its expected reception. These practices include discussing and sharing ideas about the author's choice of words, linking reading text to other similar texts, and identifying the author's point of view. Majority of the respondents were found to fall in the category of medium and low users of these practices as their mean scores were  $M=2$  for sharing with another student about the reading and for integrating information read from different reading materials. Other practices that include identifying author's point of view, expressing views of the text, critiquing the texts are low in practice, scoring  $M=1.9$  and  $M=1.7$  respectively. The overall mean score for text analyst practices is only 1.9 on the scale.

Similarly, the qualitative data revealed that students reported the use of the text user practices in terms of:

- 1) Linking reading a text to other similar texts that have been read (N=10, F=3)
- 2) Discussing and sharing ideas about the choice of words (N=10, F=1)

Three participants reported that they linked the information they read from the text to what they read in other similar texts. Only one student (S10) reported discussing and sharing ideas and choice of words with her partners in the classroom. These findings suggest that the students' ability to analyse texts critically are limited to two practices. This limitation can be overcome by teaching analysing practices such as identifying author's point of view, expressing views of the text, and critiquing the texts as they are important to read texts critically and to understand that texts represent particular points of view.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The main objective of the current paper was to investigate the reading practices of the EFL Yemeni tertiary students when reading in English using the Four Resources Model, guided by the multiliteracy framework. The general findings show that the reading skill, strategy

practices were low to medium as the mean score falls between 1.9 and 2.3. The findings reveal that the Yemeni students were medium users of the code breaker and text user practices, whereas the meaning making and text analysis practices were reported to be low in usage. Overarching analysis suggests that the EFL reading practices of the Yemeni university students is still limited to high dependency on rudimentary skills at the word and paragraph levels with dependence on translation into the Arabic language being foremost (M=3.3). Additionally, responses from the interviews confirmed this rudimental view of reading amongst the students whose expressed expectations of or purposes for doing reading revolve around "...understanding and learning new words" (S2 and S4), expecting "...to learn new words and new structures and answer questions" (S3), and as echoed by S8, "I expect to learn pronunciation, and meanings, and vocabulary and how to elicit main ideas". Other similar quotes in response to what is learned in the reading classroom are:

"We have learned many vocabulary and many stories" (S1), "I learned to read paragraphs. I learned new words. I learn how to elicit information" (S2), "I learned words, vocabulary, opposites and sentence structures" S6 reports, while S8 says "The major thing I think I have learned is pronunciation and vocabulary". These excerpts further denote the routine classroom practices when doing reading in English which focuses on teaching of vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure. They inversely demonstrate the students' expectations for learning in the reading class are limited to learning new words in English as the main purpose for EFL reading.

The evident preference in the use of such rudimentary practices reflects the prevalent dogmatic teaching of reading methodology adopted in the Yemeni classroom where the traditional teaching approach is practiced as previously highlighted by other researchers too (Al-Tamimi, 2007; Azzan, 2001; Ba-Matraf, 1997; Balfakeh, 1999). These limited reading practices cannot equip the learners with 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills in this globalized world where students must learn to make meaning from the texts, to break the code of texts, to use texts functionally, and to analyse and understand a variety of multimodal texts.

Based on the cooperative reading guideposts (MyRead, 2002), it can be concluded that the research population were found to be 'beginning' and 'developing' readers and none have reached the achieving level as illustrated by TABLE 3.

TABLE 3. Rank of mean scores of students' reading practices

Range	B	D	A
	Low Use (1.0- 1.9)	Medium Use (2.0 – 2.7)	High Use (2.8-4.0)
Code breaker		2.3	
Text user		2.2	
Text participant	1.9		
Text analyst	1.9		

*B = Beginning D = Developing A = Achieving*

It can be interpreted that these students do not draw upon (or do not know how to) all the resources they need to decode and encode texts as well as to understand, critically evaluate and use texts for a variety of purposes when reading in English. Hence, it could be concluded that the use of reading practices is under developed and the students need more instruction to achieve the desired reading outcome.

The code breaker practices followed by text user practices were found to be used more than other practices. Comber (2002) as cited in Shaddock, Haren and Vervoorn (2006) reiterated that while the use of code breaker practices are necessary, they are not sufficient to understand the codes of a variety of text while reading in English. They must be

complemented by a range of skills, including making meaning, text use and text analysis through critical literacy. Hence, in an increasing globalized society in which knowledge management, information and information transfer are becoming more important, access to the range of literate practices which focus on more than mere code breaking skill development or knowledge transmission is imperative (Shaddock, Haren and Vervoorn, 2006).

Pedagogically, students' have identified teacher's practices in the classroom as compounding the problem. The following excerpts illustrate this point.

S1: "Teachers only explain notes. They did not explain everything and more things are left for us to do and cannot do that"

S3: "Sometimes I don't understand some words and....mm...(Focus on translating these words and I can't follow the teacher)"

S7: "We can't answer difficult questions...also some words are difficult".

Therefore, it is evident that the EFL Yemeni students are experiencing serious reading problems attributed by limited reading practices that are a direct impact from the current teaching of reading methodology employed in Yemen. Therefore, it is important to review the teaching methodology and to build on the current repertoire of practices by adopting new ways in order to teach skills and strategies that will enable the learners to engage in a variety of and complex multimodal texts.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the use of reading practices among the Yemeni EFL students using the Four resources Model developed by Freebody and Luke (1990) as a guiding framework to compare with the literacy practices required of the 21st century. The findings revealed that on average the code breaking and text user practices were used moderately, while higher skills of text participant and text analyst practices were used even less. Generally, this suggests that the students' ability to cope with the demands of literacy in the changing times and changing literacies will be impeded.

The current study has some implications for EFL reading and literacy research. By examining the use of reading practices with the lens of the Four Resources Model, this study identifies the students' readiness and needs to read in English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by revealing the disparity between what students should be able to do with what they are still unable to do because of the traditional teaching practices, which fail to teach them literacy skills needed for the current knowledge based era. Hence, the Four Resources model can be used by teachers to develop a range of reading skills in context and through texts and strategies which ensure engagement, challenge and intellectual quality as espoused by Van Haren (2005).

And to reiterate Anstey and Bull (2006), this model is significant as it provides a guiding framework for planning or evaluating reading programs as it addresses all four practices and resources which the readers need to engage in, and explore all types of texts-live, paper, and electronic. The study has shown how the model can be implemented in the Yemeni classroom and used to guide the teacher to scaffold the teaching of literacy skills from the fundamental levels to the application levels that employ critical thinking skills and transformative knowledge generation rather than merely transmission of information.

However, several limitations of the study must be noted. An important one is that the sample of participants is not representative because of purposive sampling as the study was conducted on only one classroom which limits the generalizability of the findings to classrooms in much different contexts and with much different characteristics. Another important limitation is related to the data collection methods that are often determined or

circumscribed by practical considerations (Pawar, 2004). Such considerations include the nature of the research problem, the cost in terms of time and money, as well as institutional and interpersonal realities that allow (or not), the availability of the data and researcher access to it. Moreover, it should be noted that the study exclusively focused on a student sample as a result of the environmental limitation. Even though this research was conducted on one classroom, it nevertheless provides useful insight into the Yemeni EFL reading practices. Finally, it is necessary to note that this article reports on a part of a larger study and has only focused on the use of the Four Resources Model to identify the current reading practices of the EFL students' at a university in Yemen.

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