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University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

Modern Languages

**Tertiary English Language Foundation Programme Quality Management: Case Study of
Learning Outcome Standards' Impact on English Language Teachers' Classroom
Instructional Practices**

by

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Abstract

Seeking quality in education is a recent trend that has emerged originally from the field of industry in the mid of the twentieth century in order to define, manage and later enhance quality of products and services. The success of quality management in industry and later in the services sector has been viewed as a fostering factor for the gradual adoption of its theorizations and approaches in general education and recently in second/foreign language education. The use of learning- outcome standards, as specifiers of the outputs of the educational process is an approach of quality management that has been increasingly utilized in different contexts in the globe as in Europe with the CEFR standards, in the USA with ACTFL standards and in some Arabian gulf states. In the context of Oman where this case study took place, the use of such learning- outcome standards for English language programme at tertiary level has been recently used as a tool for quality management by Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) for quality assurance purposes.

The pedagogical impact of such standard-based language programmes on what teachers need to do in classrooms in order to achieve such learning outcome standards is an area that is found to be under- researched, not only locally in the Omani context but also globally. Little research based on classroom empirical data has been conducted to illuminate the intersection between standards as specifiers of learning outcomes and teachers' real classroom instructional practices at the enacted version of an outcome-based curriculum. Therefore, this case study, adopting an interpretivist paradigmatic positioning, aims to further investigate the impact relation of OAAA's learning outcome standards on teachers' classroom instruction and the factors that foster or hinder such an impact in order to extend our understanding of this new phenomenon of quality management in language education.

To do so, this study was conducted in three phases. The identification of the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in the learning outcome standards developed by the OAAA was conducted first through the investigation of their external relations with the wider discourse of English language teaching (ELT) in phase one of this study. In phase two, classroom observations with four teachers (four cases) from an Omani tertiary English language institution were conducted to identify how the observed teachers' real classroom instructional practices intersected with two instructional assumptions of OAAA's EFP standards. That was conducted through the analysis of selected classroom discourse episodes transcribed from the classroom

observations. Later in phase three, the factors that have fostered and hindered such intersection were traced through the use of the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the observed teachers and their two course coordinators. Those interviews aimed to give the participants the opportunity to justify the observed classroom instructional practices in order to identify such factors.

Finally, three main findings can be reported out of the three phases of this study. First, the apparent reliance on principles derived from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Strategy- based Instruction (SBI) has been found to be directing the standards development in phase 1. Second, the complexity and variability of the observed teachers' instructional practices have presented a form of hybrid intersection between the teachers' classroom instructional practices and the standards' implicit instructional assumptions. In phase three, teachers- related and institution- related factors have apparently contributed to shape this hybrid intersection.

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

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Table of content

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 1 | Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.2 | THE STUDY | 2 |
| 1.2.1 | <i>The context: from access to quality of education</i> | 2 |
| 1.2.2 | <i>Research motivation</i> | 4 |
| 1.2.3 | <i>Statement of the problem</i> | 6 |
| 1.2.4 | <i>Research aims and questions</i> | 9 |
| 1.2.5 | <i>Significance of the study</i> | 10 |
| 1.3 | THESIS STRUCTURE | 10 |
| 2 | Chapter 2: Conceptual framework: standards as a tool for classroom instruction quality management | 12 |
| 2.1 | INTRODUCTION | 12 |
| 2.2 | HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT (QM) | 13 |
| 2.2.1 | <i>The rise of External Quality Monitoring (EQM)</i> | 14 |
| 2.3 | CONCEPTUALIZATION OF STANDARDS IN RELATION TO THE WIDER CONCEPT OF QUALITY | 17 |
| 2.3.1 | <i>What are standards?</i> | 17 |
| 2.3.2 | <i>What is quality? (Sallis' Framework)</i> | 18 |
| 2.4 | LEARNING- OUTCOME STANDARDS AS A TOOL OF INSTRUCTION QUALITY MANAGEMENT/ ENHANCEMENT | 22 |
| 2.4.1 | <i>Learning- outcome standards as an innovative tool to reform classroom instruction</i> | 24 |
| 2.5 | REVIEW OF RELEVANT STUDIES | 27 |
| 2.6 | CONCLUSION | 32 |
| 3 | Chapter 3: Theoretical framework: ELT between theorization and practice | 33 |
| 3.1 | INTRODUCTION | 33 |
| 3.2 | ELT IN THEORY | 34 |
| 3.2.1 | <i>Richards and Rodgers' framework</i> | 35 |
| 3.3 | CONTEXTUALIZATION OF ELT PRACTICES | 48 |
| 3.3.1 | <i>Contextualization of instructional practices</i> | 49 |
| 3.3.2 | <i>Contextual factors for contextualized classroom instruction</i> | 53 |
| 3.4 | CONCLUSION | 57 |
| 4 | Chapter 4: Research methodology and design | 58 |
| 4.1 | INTRODUCTION | 58 |
| 4.2 | DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH SETTING | 58 |
| 4.3 | REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS | 59 |
| 4.3.1 | <i>Phase one</i> | 60 |
| 4.3.2 | <i>Phase two</i> | 61 |
| 4.3.3 | <i>Phase three</i> | 61 |
| 4.4 | CASE STUDY APPROACH | 62 |
| 4.4.1 | <i>Why case study?</i> | 62 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 4.4.2 | <i>What is the 'case'?</i> | 62 |
| 4.4.3 | <i>Case study design</i> | 64 |
| 4.4.4 | <i>Paradigmatic stand of case studies</i> | 65 |
| 4.5 | PARTICIPANT SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES..... | 67 |
| 4.6 | DATA COLLECTION METHODS | 71 |
| 4.6.1 | <i>Phase one</i> | 71 |
| 4.6.2 | <i>Phase two</i> | 72 |
| 4.6.3 | <i>Phase three</i> | 75 |
| 4.7 | TRUSTWORTHINESS..... | 77 |
| 4.7.1 | <i>Credibility</i> | 78 |
| 4.7.2 | <i>Transferability</i> | 83 |
| 4.7.3 | <i>Dependability</i> | 85 |
| 4.7.4 | <i>Confirmability</i> | 86 |
| 4.8 | PILOT STUDY..... | 86 |
| 4.9 | ETHICAL ISSUES | 88 |
| 4.10 | CONCLUSION | 90 |
| 5 | Chapter 5: Analysis framework and procedures | 91 |
| 5.1 | INTRODUCTION | 91 |
| 5.2 | POSITIONING WITHIN ANALYSIS DIMENSIONS..... | 91 |
| 5.3 | ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES | 94 |
| 5.3.1 | <i>Phase one</i> | 94 |
| 5.3.2 | <i>Phase Two</i> | 98 |
| 5.3.3 | <i>Phase three</i> | 102 |
| 5.4 | CONCLUSION | 105 |
| 6 | Chapter 6: Phase one analysis findings..... | 106 |
| 6.1 | INTRODUCTION | 106 |
| 6.2 | STANDARD (A) | 107 |
| 6.3 | STANDARD (B) | 108 |
| 6.4 | STANDARD (C)..... | 109 |
| 6.5 | STANDARD (D) | 111 |
| 6.6 | STANDARD (E)..... | 112 |
| 6.7 | STANDARD (F)..... | 114 |
| 6.8 | STANDARD (G) | 115 |
| 6.9 | STANDARD (H) | 115 |
| 6.10 | STANDARD (I) | 116 |
| 6.11 | STANDARD (J) | 117 |
| 6.12 | CONCLUSION | 118 |
| 7 | Chapter 7: FonF v.s. FonFs (Phase two and three analysis findings) | 124 |
| 7.1 | INTRODUCTION | 124 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 7.2 | FOCUS ON FORM (FONF) VS. FOCUS ON FORMS (FONFs) INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES: FINDINGS FOR RQ2 | 125 |
| 7.2.1 | <i>FonF activities in the writing classes</i> | 126 |
| 7.2.2 | <i>FonFs activities in the reading classes</i> | 130 |
| 7.3 | THE FOSTERING OR HINDERING FACTORS: FINDINGS FOR RQ3 | 137 |
| 7.3.1 | <i>Fostering factors</i> | 138 |
| 7.3.2 | <i>Hindering factors</i> | 141 |
| 7.4 | CONCLUSION | 145 |
| 8 | Chapter 8: Reading strategy-based instruction (Phase two and three analysis findings) | 146 |
| 8.1 | INTRODUCTION | 146 |
| 8.2 | RQ2 FINDINGS..... | 147 |
| 8.2.1 | <i>Reading strategies instructional practices: the case of T3R</i> | 148 |
| 8.2.2 | <i>Reading strategies instructional practices: the case of T4R</i> | 157 |
| 8.3 | RQ3 FINDINGS..... | 166 |
| 8.3.1 | <i>Fostering factors</i> | 166 |
| 8.3.2 | <i>Hindering factors</i> | 169 |
| 8.4 | CONCLUSION | 172 |
| 9 | Chapter 9: Discussion | 173 |
| 9.1 | INTRODUCTION | 173 |
| 9.2 | DISCUSSION OF RQ1..... | 174 |
| 9.3 | DISCUSSION OF RQ2..... | 176 |
| 9.3.1 | <i>Hybridity in linguistic forms instruction activities</i> | 177 |
| 9.3.2 | <i>Hybridity in the instruction of reading strategies</i> | 178 |
| 9.3.3 | <i>Overall discussion of the hybrid intersections</i> | 180 |
| 9.4 | DISCUSSION OF RQ3..... | 183 |
| 9.4.1 | <i>Teacher-related (teachers' beliefs about language instruction)</i> | 184 |
| 9.4.2 | <i>Institutional related factor (extra institutional learning outcomes)</i> | 186 |
| 9.5 | CONCLUSION | 188 |
| 10 | Conclusion | 189 |
| 10.1 | PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS | 191 |
| 10.2 | LIMITATIONS..... | 192 |
| 10.3 | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH..... | 195 |
| 10.4 | PERSONAL REFLECTIONS | 196 |
| | List of References | 198 |
| | Appendices..... | 214 |

Table of Tables

| | |
|------------|--|
| Table 3.1. | Continuum of activities in CLT |
| Table 4.1 | Routs of the EFP at the LC at SQU |
| Table 4.2 | Background information of the four cases |
| Table 4.3 | Background information of relevant course coordinators |
| Table 4.4 | Summary of the observed lessons in the main study |
| Table 4.5 | Positivism/Naturalism four criteria |
| Table 4.6 | Debriefers' criteria vs. the employed debriefer's characteristics |
| Table 5.1 | Table of data sets and data analysis approaches used in this study |
| Table 6.1 | Summary of instructional assumptions of OAAA's learning outcome standards for EFPs |
| Table 6.2 | List of instructional assumptions/implications to be investigated in phase 2 |
| Table 7.1 | List of episodes for FonF vs. FonFs activities |
| Table 8.1 | List of episodes from ST's section |
| Table 8.2 | List of episodes from MO's section |
| Table 11.1 | List of appendices |

Table of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACTFL | American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages |
| CC(s) | Course Coordinator(s) |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for languages |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| CU | Curriculum Unit |
| DA | Discourse Analysis |
| EFP(s) | English Foundation Programme(s) |
| ELCF | English Language Curriculum Framework |
| EQM | External Quality Monitoring |
| FonF | Focus on Form |
| FonFs | Focus on Forms |
| FP(s) | Foundation Programme(s) |
| GFP(s) | General Foundation Programme(s) |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI(s) | Higher Education Institution(s) |
| LC | Language Centre |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| OAAA | Oman Academic Accreditation Authority |
| OAC | Oman Accreditation Council |
| PIs | Performance Indicators |
| PT | Placement Test |
| QM | Quality Management |
| RQ(s) | Research question(s) |
| SBI | Strategy- Based Instruction |
| SP | Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics |
| TA | Thematic Analysis |
| TBLT | Task-based Language Teaching |
| TQM | Total Quality Management |

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It could be inevitable to admit that states' policies are derived by states' interests, which are influenced mainly by political, economic and social factors. Policies are normally established to serve the ultimate aims of states. Therefore, selecting and teaching an additional language(s) in addition to the national language(s) are not an exception (Pennycook, 1990, 2017). English language in particular has been the most attractive foreign language in many countries in the world. The spread of English as a Lingua Franca (Altbach & Knight, 2007; MacKenzie, 2014), its agency role as an access to "power and fortune" (Ferguson, 2006, p. 111) and its importance as a source of employment and educational opportunities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012; Ferguson, 2006) have seemingly empowered this global trend of choosing English as an official foreign language and as a medium of instruction in education in what Kachru (1990, p.3) calls the "outer circle" countries, including the Sultanate of Oman (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012) where this study took place.

In the era of the spreading quality assurance systems in education and higher education (Campbell & van der Wende, 2000; Goldenberg, 2018; Kis, 2005), the dissemination of learning outcome standards for language education programmes seems to be a contemporary approach of language education quality management some countries have adopted to assure the quality of the outputs of the educational institutions under their supervision. The rise of the standards-based reform movement in the 1990s in the USA (ACTFL) (NCLRC, 2014) and later the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) by the Council of Europe in 2001 in the form of "can do" statements (Verhelst, Van, Takala, Figueras, & North, 2009) have both apparently paved the way towards this new international phenomenon of standards-based language teaching programmes quality assurance.

However, the washback impact of such learning outcome standards on teachers' classroom instruction (see section 3.2 for more clarifications of the concept of instruction) and the factors that mediate such an impact as a result of such quality management schemes in second language teaching programmes are relatively under-researched, which requires more investigation as indicated by different authors (A.Rahman, 2014; Glisan, 2012; Maldina, 2015) (more discussion in section 2.5). Traditionally, states' innovative language policies to reform teachers' instruction in classroom environment seems not to be a smooth process. Research from the area of top-down instructional reform (see section 3.3) have demonstrated that such instructional innovations at the policy level rarely impact teachers' instructional practices at

classroom environment. Policy implementation normally goes through layers of different players' reinterpretations, ending with various instructional practices by teachers and students in classrooms as revealed in a lot of studies (see section 3.3). Decisions made by teachers regarding what to do pedagogically in second language classrooms at the micro level of an enacted curriculum significantly determine not only whether such language policies are met or not (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), but also the nature of such learning outcome standards' impact, as initiated by top authorities for accountability purposes, on classroom instruction, which needs to be more empirically investigated.

Accordingly, the role of such learning- outcome standards to manage/ reform language teachers' classroom practices is an innovative area that is still under-researched in the field of quality management in language education generally and quality assurance in particular. It is an area that requires better understanding of any possible role such a tool of quality assurance, as specifiers of learning in language education programmes, might play in terms of reforming/ redirecting teachers' classroom instructional practices in post-secondary institution contexts. This study, therefore, can be viewed as an attempt to investigate empirically the boundaries of this relation between what is assumed theoretically through such learning- outcome standards and what is pedagogically practiced by English language teachers. In other words, it is an attempt to shed some light on the 'impact' nature of such an innovative approach of top-down quality management on teachers' classroom instructional practices.

1.2 The study

1.2.1 The context: from access to quality of education

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a clear increasing demand of higher education (HE) services in the Sultanate of Oman. This increasing demand seems to expand to the extent that it has encouraged the Omani government to allow privatization in the HE sector with subsidy schemes to encourage the private sector to invest more in this strategically important business (Al-Lamki, 2002). Just in three to four years afterwards, the number of the admitted secondary school graduates in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman and abroad has jumped from 14,362 in the academic year 2001-2002 to 20,737 in the academic year 2006/2007 (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010), which might give a clearer indication of such a growing market.

A lot of money was spent for the development of the educational system in the Sultanate before an increasing sense of dissatisfaction of the quality of the educational system outputs popped up to the surface (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). Additionally, other

forces like unemployment, Omanization¹, globalization and privatization (Donn & Al Manthri, 2010) have collectively led the Omani government to focus more on the quality of education outputs in order to tackle this increasing sense of dissatisfaction among local external stakeholders. Consequently, his majesty's royal decree (74/2001) to establish Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) was a remarkable reaction to the developing awareness of the Omani government of this strategic dilemma. OAC was assigned to prepare a national framework of quality for HE in general. In 2006, OAC prepared a draft of what is referred to as "The Quality Plan" whose general aim is to "give effect to His majesty's vision by building on current arrangements to establish and maintain an effective quality management system for higher education" (MHE & OAC, 2006, p.5). The Quality Plan has suggested a number of goals that have formulated a platform for what was called "a comprehensive quality management system" (p.13). One of these goals is the establishment of a national quality assurance system for the Foundation Programmes (FPs) provided by the HEIs in the Sultanate, including English language FPs which is the focus of this study.

The FPs are non-credit programmes provided by HEIs in the Sultanate for the newly joining undergraduate students before starting their bachelor-level credit programmes. They aim to assist those students to improve their English language, maths and IT skills. Prior to the development of the FPs quality assurance framework in 2008, these FPs fell under no supervision of any governmental external quality assurance system. Therefore, it was not clear to the government how effective these FPs were. To meet different stakeholders' concerns and after different initiatives proposed by different stakeholders in 2005, including three different conferences hosted by three different HEIs in Oman, the need for clear standards for the FPs was declared, representing an obvious national demand for a governmental external monitoring quality system (Carroll, Razvi, & Goodliffe, 2009). It can be argued that the establishment of such a standard- based quality management framework has been meant to fill in this quality assurance gap in the Sultanate for the sake of assuring quality of the outputs of the FPs. Afterwards, learning outcome standards for the FPs were developed and approved in 2008 after the issuance of a ministerial decision No. 72/2008 by the Ministry of HE and after consultation with different national and international academicians in the subjects of English language, Math, IT & Study Skills (Al-Mamari, 2012). The standards were disseminated to all HEIs in the Sultanate for implementation and the accreditation process of Foundation programmes was planned to be commenced in the academic year 2009/2010 against these standards. The main aim of setting these standards, as documented by Oman Academic Accreditation Council (OAAA), which has

¹ Replacement of the non-Omani employees with Omanis in the public and private sectors in Oman

replaced the old OAC, is to ensure that these FPs are of an appropriate quality (OAAA, 2007, p.

10). Additionally, other secondary goals of developing these standards are:

- To guide HEIs in the development of their GFPs.
- To provide information to the public about the learning outcomes of GFPs.
- To provide the benchmark against which OAC Accreditation Panels will assess GFPs for the purpose of program accreditation (OAAA, 2007, p.4).

Till this point, quality from the “output” perspective has been approached in the Omani context through the development and dissemination of OAAA’s learning outcome standards for English language teaching in HE to satisfy accreditation and accountability purposes. What needs to be done pedagogically in classrooms in order to actualize these standards in terms of classroom instructional practices has been left completely to the FP providers themselves to decide. This may arguably leave this approach of output-based quality management and its impact on teachers’ classroom instructional practices subject to contextual interpretations and classroom instructional practices that need to be further investigated for better understanding of this new quality management phenomenon.

1.2.2 Research motivation

The issue of quality of education improvement is not solely an Omani local concern. In fact, it is a shared international one, especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries (Heyneman, 1997). Chapman and Miric (2009) in their article *Education Quality in the Middle East* emphasize that the dilemma of education quality is a multi-faceted issue, which requires improvements at different levels. In order to overcome this dilemma of quality of education, the establishment of quality assurance agencies to assure the quality of education provided by educational institutions has seemingly become a national trend for some countries in the region including the Arabian Gulf countries where the Sultanate of Oman is located. This includes the Education & Training Quality Authority in Bahrain (BQA, 2019), the Commission for Academic Accreditation in the United Arab Emirates (CCAA, 2011), the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (NCAAA, 2018) and definitely Oman Academic Accreditation Authority in Oman (OAAA, 2019), which has triggered primarily my interest to start this research. Accordingly, the integration of OAAA’s learning outcome standards into the English Foundation Programmes (EFPs), I may argue, has been an innovative step towards satisfying the demands of the external stakeholders who are more interested in viewing quality of these EFPs from the learning outcome perspective as indicated by Baporikar and Shah (2012). However, it is not clear enough if it is influential enough to manage quality from language classroom instruction perspective, which is so crucial in academia for internal stakeholders. Classroom instruction reflects the actualization process of the state’s

national policies in terms of English language teaching in real classrooms, either in the Sultanate or in any other similar contexts in the Arabian Gulf or in the globe.

In the English Language Centre (LC), which is one of the EFP providers in the Sultanate of Oman and where I used to work before starting my PhD study, the dissemination of OAAA's learning outcome standards for the EFPs has been a demanding experience. There has been a lot to do to align the LC's official curriculum documents, courses structures, teaching and non-teaching materials and assessment related documents and materials with the new OAAA's learning outcome standards. A lot has been added, modified and even sometimes omitted. Such changes have been the core interest of this LC for the next three to four years after the dissemination of the OAAA's EFP learning- outcome standards, working for the purpose of being accredited by OAAA. This by itself has represented a significant indicator of the standards adoption process at the curriculum planning stage, as a newly modified version of English language syllabus has been planned and later has taken its place into classrooms for implementation.

However, such changes in curriculum documents and teaching materials in this LC have triggered my personal interest about the potential impact of this outcome-based quality management approach on what teachers really need to do pedagogically in their real classrooms in order to achieve these learning- outcome standards consequently. Based on my own teaching experience in this LC's EFP as a teacher and as an observer of my colleagues, teachers' own classrooms instructional practices are normally various and complex. They differ from one teacher to another and from one class to another. Therefore, such a variety of classroom instructional practices imposed this complication of my understanding of such a managing impact of learning-outcome standards on what needs to be done pedagogically in classrooms and consequently their effectiveness to make a significant difference on managing the quality of classroom instruction. According to Carroll, Razvi, and Goodliffe (2009), OAAA standards are viewed to be a tool of quality "enhancement" of the FPs in the Sultanate. Nevertheless, it is not explicitly stated in the official documents or related published papers how such enhancement should be like. In brief, its enhancing impact on classroom instruction was always a personal concern I was thinking about. Such a personal concern has been strengthened later after the beginning of my PhD journey as I have noticed that little research in relation to the washback impact of this approach of quality management on classroom instruction has been conducted as will be discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.5). All in all, the above sources of (1) my personal concern and (2) literature-based findings were collaboratively driving and motivating me to start this study, which aims to contribute in better understanding this relatively new phenomenon of quality management approach and its washback impact to manage teachers' classroom instruction.

1.2.3 Statement of the problem

What this research problematizes is that the establishment of a comprehensive quality assurance system, based on learning- outcome standards in Oman or in any other places in the world, might be an essential and useful step towards having a quality management system for language teaching programmes such as the EFPs in Oman (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe, & Al - Habsi, 2009). It informs the external stakeholders what these EFPs are striving to achieve at the end of the academic year, so it helps meeting their political and economic demands whose prime concern is the ‘outputs’ of the educational process (O’Sullivan, 2006). OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs (see appendix 1.1, page. A 1) are not a different case. They give a description to the EFP providers of what the minimum English language learning students are expected to achieve after completing the English language FP by which the accreditation process of these EFPs can be initiated.

However, despite its perceived importance for quality assurance purposes, such an approach, I may state, has a number of ambiguities in relation to its impact on what is instructionally practiced in real classrooms. Such an approach of quality management and outcome-based curriculum development concerns itself only with quality from its “output” perspective with relatively complete ignorance of quality of language instruction from its “process” perspective as classified by Cheng (1995a). The lack of a provided prescribed curriculum that informs more explicitly the syllabus designers and teachers about what to teach and how to teach is a common dilemma for such an outcome- based curriculum approach; not only in the Omani case with OAAA’s learning- outcome standards, but also globally in other similar cases like the CEFR (Coste, 2007; Little, 2006; Piccardo, 2010) in Europe, the ACTFL (NCLRC, 2014) in the USA and other similar cases in the Arabian Gulf states, which have established a number quality assurance agencies (BQA, CCAA and NCAAA) mentioned above (see section 1.2.2). Therefore, it is reported that this approach of quality management is limited in terms of its capacity to inform the internal stakeholders like the teachers themselves about what needs to be done pedagogically in order to achieve these top-down dictated learning outcomes, which might be seen as an innovative step towards reforming classroom instruction in the EFPs.

Locally, by referring to the very few relevant published articles, discussing the establishment of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs, such as the ones by Carroll, Razvi & Goodliffe (2009), Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe & Al-Habsi (2009) & Al-Mamari (2012), as well as my personal one- to- one talks with a number of specialists in the Sultanate, including OAAA’s administrators and university professors, I have learned that the establishment of these standards for EFPs has not been accompanied by any documented theorization of English language instruction by their founders. It was not clear enough that such a theorization of language

teaching has been explicitly documented before, during or after the development and dissemination of these standards. Not only that, it is interesting to know that a theoretical framing of English language teaching in the HE sector in general does not exist in the Sultanate from the first place. This lack of documentation can be probably referred to the very new experience of quality assurance in the Sultanate or probably the unintentional ignorance of having a clearer theoretical framing or theorizations of English language teaching as a main component at the tertiary level.

Nevertheless, it can be beneficial to state that such framing of English language teaching in the Sultanate of Oman is provided by the Ministry of Education in Oman for school level, which should assumingly function in harmony with the its non-existent counterpart at the tertiary level. In other words, this English language instructional framework developed for ELT for Omani school education can be utilized as the base for approaching English language teaching in the Omani context in a general term. This connection, I may argue, might give us a glimpse of the surrounding discourse of how English language teaching is viewed officially at the policy level in the Omani context.

In its published document “The English Language Curriculum Framework” (ELCF), the Ministry of Education in Oman identifies English language as “an international language and as a means of communication” (Ministry of Education, n.d., p. 8) whose curriculum is designed mainly in order to “provide students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that Oman’s youth need to succeed in this rapidly changing society”. It admits that English language teaching is essential for Omani students who need to increase their level of awareness in terms of knowledge of the outside world. The selection of English to be taught in the Omani schools has been supported politically, economically and legislatively by the Omani government as reported by Al-Issa (2006), which has found its way into the school and post-school education in the Sultanate. Part of this support is the development of the ELCF for grades 1 to 12, which aims to enable the Omani school students to:

1. Use English as in preparation for work or for further studies, and as a means of communication with the outside world.
2. Have functional skills for reading, writing, listening and speaking.
3. Use English as a medium for learning about their own culture and other cultures
4. Demonstrate awareness of learning strategies and study skills such as planning and organizational skills and to apply them for furthering their English learning.
5. Use English grammar accurately in a variety of contexts.
6. Use English to communicate accurately in a wide range of situations.

7. Use higher order thinking skills such as analysis and deduction (Ministry of Education, n.d., p. 12)

According to these aims of English language teaching in the Omani schools, it can be argued first that a more communicative view of language and language teaching is adopted in the Omani educational system as they all emphasize the ‘use’ of language in most of its aims. This communicative view of English language as a tool of communication seems to reflect what has been recommended earlier by a number of international experts who are Nunan, Tyacke and Walton (1987). In their report, known as the Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum Document to the Ministry of Education few decades earlier, Nunan et al (1987, p. 2) have indicated that English should be viewed as “a source for national development and as the means for wider communication within the international community” in the Omani context. They (1987, p. 2) also add:

The English language skills of the Omani nationals must be seen as an important resource for the country’s continued development. It is this recognition of the importance of English as a resources for national development and as the means for wider communication within the international community that provides the rationale for the inclusion of English in the curriculum

Al-Jadidi (2009) asserts that the ELCF developed by the Ministry of Education is logically an extended translation of the report developed by Nunan’s team, which has paved the way towards the integration of English language as a means of communication and as a means of interaction with the outside world.

Second, there is a pedagogical tendency to equip the Omani students with communicative functions and learning strategies thought to be necessary by the curriculum framework developers (see aims 2, 4 and 7 above). In his attempt to analyse the English language teaching ideologies embedded in Nunan’s team’s report mentioned above, Al-Issa (2006) declares that the Omani students need to be given the opportunity to use English in “a functional and meaningful way” in order to improve their communicative competence. In order to do so, improving students’ “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge of language is vital (see section 3.2.1.3 for more about such ‘declarative’ and ‘procedural’ knowledge).

Based on the above, it can be argued that there are some pieces of evidence from the local ELT policy discourse that the leading instructional philosophy of English language instruction in Oman is based mainly on the ‘western’ communicative approach of language teaching (Al-Issa, 2006) that aims mainly to improve students’ communicative competence and their ability to use it more meaningfully, accurately and purposefully in order to interact with their national and international contexts in order to meet their national goals. Accordingly, English language

teaching needs to be less dependent on “transmission- oriented modes of teaching”, and with “less emphasis on the linguistic ‘product’ as the outcome of every lesson”, as recommended in the ELCF itself (Ministry of education, n.d., pp. 8-9). This communicative view to language and language teaching at the school level might help us, to some extent, understand the overall discourse of English language teaching in the Sultanate, at least at school level, which can be a starting point for understanding its counterpart in the HE sector. Such a theoretical framing from the Ministry of education, despite its apparent dis-connectivity to the HE sector, can be a starting platform from which one can formulate a better understanding of the overall discourse of English language teaching in the Sultanate of Oman and consequently its instructional implications on what needs to be done pedagogically in English language classrooms by teachers too. This local communicative-based teaching discourse of ELT, in one way or another, might establish a stronger foundation for a better understanding of the establishment of OAAA’s learning outcome standards for EFPs and consequently their instructional implications, which will be a necessary step in phase one of this research (see chapter 6).

1.2.4 Research aims and questions

Based on the above, this research aims to shed some light on two main areas related to the use of learning- outcome standards as a tool for instruction quality management. The first one is related to better understanding the washback impact relation between learning- outcome standards, as a representation of language educational quality from the ‘outputs’ perspective on one hand, and teachers’ classroom instructional practices, as a representation of language educational quality from the ‘process’ perspective on the other hand. The second area is more related to the contextual factors that foster or hinder such an impact relation.

Accordingly, three research questions are going to be leading this research. The second and third research questions below correspond to the two areas mentioned above respectively. In addition to these two research questions, RQ1 will be added in order to identify what instructional assumptions can be inferred from these OAAA’s learning outcome standards. The more explicit identification of such instructional assumptions or implications will help provide a theoretical instructional foundation I can start from to examine EFP teachers’ classroom instructional practices against and accordingly the standards’ impact on classroom instruction. As a result, in the light of the description of the context, problem and aims of this research discussed above, I attempt to participate in answering the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: what instructional assumptions are implicitly embedded in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for the EFPs?

RQ2: Do EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards? If so, how?

RQ3: What contextual factors are fostering/ hindering such an intersection?

1.2.5 Significance of the study

This research is expected to be significant in different ways for different stakeholder locally (e.g. OAAA, EFP providers, EFP students, parents, employers etc.) and internationally (researchers, similar standards-based language programmes administrative and teachers) who are interested in understanding the washback impact of this recent phenomenon of learning- outcome standards on classroom language instruction, especially if they are developed under a QM scheme. The significance of this research may include:

1. Better understanding possible instructional implicit implications of such learning- outcome standards, which are not explicitly stated by their publisher (OAAA in this case). This understanding is based on the linguistic features of such standards and their discourse relations to relevant ELT discourse.
2. Contributing in better understanding this innovative phenomenon of standards-based English language programmes as a tool of top-down language quality management and its washback impact on managing/ reforming language teachers' classroom instructional practices, based on empirical classroom data.
3. Highlighting important pedagogical implications that different stakeholders in the Omani context or in any other similar contexts might need in order to take into their consideration while planning and implementing their language teaching programmes based in learning- outcome standards.
4. Shedding some light on some contextual factors that foster or hinder the impact of such standards on classroom instruction, which OAAA and EFP providers might need to work on with their EFP teachers, whenever applicable, in order to maximize the enhancing impact of such standards on classroom instruction.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of ten chapters. The first one is the introduction chapter where research context, motivation, statement of the investigated problem, aims, questions and significance are introduced. The second chapter aims to present the conceptual framework this research is situated within in terms of the identification of learning- outcome standards in the domain of quality management in general and standards' relation to the management of quality

in education from it process perspective including classroom instruction in particular (section 2.3 and 2.4). It also illustrates the research gap this research is attempting to bridge (section 2.5). Chapter three on the other hand dedicates itself to the discussion of the theoretical framework this study has adopted for data analysis in its three research phases in order to answer the three RQs.

Moving to chapter four, the discussion of the adopted research design, its paradigmatic stands and its implications on data collection methods and participants' selection techniques is provided. Additionally, related issues linked to building trustworthiness, pilot study and ethical considerations confronted in this study are all discussed too. The following chapter, chapter five, addresses the analysis process adopted in this study. It starts with the theoretical analytical parameters adopted in this qualitative study (section 5.2), followed by a detailed description and illustration of the analytical approaches and procedures followed to analyse data in every single phase of this study (section 5.3).

Chapters six, seven and eight are to report the findings of the data analysis for the three research questions in the three research phases of this study. RQ1 findings are reported in chapter 6, while RQ2 and RQ3 findings are reported in chapters seven and eight in relation to two different instructional assumptions/ implications derived from RQ1 findings in phase 1. Chapter 9 is the discussion chapter where establishing linkages between the findings in the analysis chapter (6, 7 & 8) and the wider field of quality management in language teaching programmes through learning- outcome standards and their impact on managing teachers' classroom instruction is demonstrated. Such an interpretive discussion is later followed by the conclusion chapter (chapter 10), where the pedagogical implications, limitations and finally recommendations for further studies that can be learned from this study, as well as my personal reflections after conducting this research are all discussed.

2 Chapter 2: Conceptual framework: standards as a tool for classroom instruction quality management

2.1 Introduction

Nowadays, it is not easy to deny the influence of globalization and open market policies at different domains in our daily lives, including education (Carnoy, 2014; Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). The drive towards knowledge-based communities, the need to feed workforce with certain “operational competence” (Blackmore, 2002), the industrialized view of education where learners are dealt as “customers” who are supposed to be delivered to not taught (Coffield & Williamson, 1997) and the view of higher education as a “market” (Gibbs, 2001) are all some examples of such an impact of globalization on education. Economy has always been a major drive for humanity development; not only at the level of goods exchange increase between countries and nations, but also at the level of using economy-based concepts, theories and models in other fields of knowledge. Concepts like quality management, quality assurance, quality control, benchmarks, standards and other more, which have been developed originally in industrial economy, appear to become more adopted in education in general and recently in language education in specific.

The utilization of learning- outcome standards to manage the quality of language education programmes is increasingly becoming an international trend or tool towards defining quality of language education as in the case of OAAA in Oman, CEFR in Europe and ACTFL in the USA. However, as indicated in the introduction (see section 1.2.3), it is not clear yet how such an output-based approach of quality, which is mainly serving accountability purposes for external stakeholders, is able to impact or manage quality in its process perspective, where a core element of education process, which is classroom instruction, is located (Mameli & Molinari, 2014; O’Sullivan, 2006). For the sake of investigating the washback impact of learning- outcome standards as a tool to manage quality of classroom instruction, this chapter aims to review literature related to learning- outcome standards from different perspectives. This review will include three main inter-related areas, including (1) a historical review of quality management in education and the role of learning outcome standards as a preferable approach for External Quality Monitoring (EQM) (section 2.2). This is later followed by the investigation of the boundaries of the concept of standards in relation to the multi-dimensional and complex nature of the concept of quality, more specifically the “transformational” one, which is more instruction-oriented (sections 2.3 and 2.4). Finally, (3) in relation to the impact of learning outcome standards on classroom instruction, a critical review of relevant previous studies conducted in different contexts will be discussed in order to highlight the research gap this study is attempting to make a contribution in (see section 2.5). By these three perspectives, I aim to critically situate the

phenomenon of learning- outcome standards and their impact on language teachers' classroom instruction within a wider discourse of quality management in language education and their role as a tool theoretically perceived to be managing classroom instruction. Such a theorization and perceived role of standards in language teaching programmes is later challenged with the limited empirical research in this area, which this study attempts to contribute in.

2.2 Historical overview of quality management (QM)

The use of standards as specifiers of the outcomes of education has been increasingly utilized worldwide in order to meet accountability requirements for governments and public bodies (Crabbe, 2003). This, in one hand, raises its prominence as a quality management tool in education from the accountability perspective, which is more concerned about the outputs of education and which meets the interest of external stakeholders (Finney, 2002; Katz & Snow, 2009; Killen, 2000; Murray & Christison, 2011) through what has been known later as External Quality Monitoring (EQM) (see section 2.2.1 below to learn more about EQM). However, on the other hand, it raises the prominence of the assumed impact of such learning- outcome standards on teachers' classroom instructional practices leading to the achievement of these learning outcome standards.

Historically, it might be possible to state that it is unclear when and by whom quality management movement has started. However, it is noticeable that many authors who wrote about quality management (QM) both in industry and education like Naidu, Babu, and Rajendra (2006), Bhat (2009), Johnson (1993), Bonstingl (1992) & Liston (1999) give this credit to a number of "gurus" in the field of QM in industry. These gurus have contributed remarkably in the industrial revolution after the Second World War by theorizing what we currently recognise as QM. The most remarkable gurus include Deming (1986), Juran (1988) and Crosby (1979) whose works have been viewed as revolutionary reactions to the dominant "Taylorist" approach of management, which "stifles people's willingness to be creative, motivated and committed to improving the quality of the work they produce" (Johnson, 1993, p. 3). Bhat (2009), for instance, believes that QM as a concept has gone through stages of development. It was mainly based on inspection in the early 1900s. Later in the 1940s, a more "statistical connotation" has been given to the concept as more statistical methods were used to control quality including statistical control charts. In the 1960s, the concept of quality management was extended to include every member in an organization in all of its internal functions.

Although QM, as a concept and operational approaches, has been developed in industry, such a development has paved its way in parallel in education too. Heyworth (2013, p. 281) refers this adoption of QM approaches in education to the Valencia Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities, which emphasizes that "the right to education encompasses the obligation to

rule out discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve QUALITY OF EDUCATION". He also affirms that some of its principles can be applicable in language education context, especially when it comes to defining what quality of language education is, type of standards that can be applied for different aspects of education like curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning and finally the methodologies and resources necessary for applying these standards. Accordingly, the role of standards at different educational processes including instruction is viewed to be a necessity to guarantee quality of education provision as in the case of the EFP in Oman.

As established in the literature of QM in education, Performance indicators (PIs), External Quality Monitoring (EQM) and recently Total Quality Management (TQM) are the most common approaches of quality management in education (Chung Sea Law, 2010). The theorization and application of PIs and TQM in education have been the core interest of many authors and researchers (Berry, 1997; Bolton, 1995; Bonstingl, 1992; De Jager & Nieuwenhuis, 2005; Dill, 1995; Felder & Brent, 1999; Fitz-Gibbon, 1996; Gartner, 1993; Houston, 2007; Kanji, Malek, & Tambi, 1999; Koch, 2003; Koch & Fisher, 1998; Kovrigaro, 2002; Sahney, Banwet, & Karunes, 2004). However, EQM, from which learning- outcome standard initiative stems from, as in the case of OAAA in Oman, is what some countries have adopted for managing the quality of their language education programmes, which will be introduced in more details in the following section.

2.2.1 The rise of External Quality Monitoring (EQM)

In response to the drastic development in HE in the globe, EQM has become increasingly a preferable model for accountability as one approach of QM (Chung Sea Law, 2010). Its broad international adoption is based on its premise to provide a change from quantitative indicators as with PIs to qualitative evaluations, which are theoretically meant to give priority to quality enhancement (Harvey & Knight, 1996). This, seemingly, has made it appear as a catalyst for internal improvement within institutions including instruction (Chung Sea Law, 2010). The existing literature (Dill, 2000; Harvey & Newton, 2004, 2007; Massy, 1997) inform us that there are three approaches or mechanisms by which EQM is operationalized in educational contexts, which are accreditation, assessment and audit. The implementation of these three approaches are done by quality assurance agencies that are supposed to work on the behalf of the public (Dill, 1995; Hoecht, 2006). Accreditation is typically meant to identify whether an institution or a programme is meeting predefined quality standards in order to possess a license to operate while assessment is more concerned to give "graded judgment about levels of academic quality". Finally, audit focuses on "the processes that are believed to produce quality and the methods by which institutions, faculties and departments assure themselves that quality has been attained" (Massy, 1997, pp. 251-253).

The case in Oman seems not to be an exception since quality enhancement is what OAAA is hoping to achieve through the dissemination of its learning- outcome standards (Carroll, Razvi, & Goodliffe, 2009). However, where such an expected quality enhancement should be in is neither explicitly described in OAAA's official documents nor in any other published sources, as indicated above in the introduction, especially when it comes to how classroom instruction in EFP classrooms should be enhanced by OAAA's learning- outcome standards. Instead, OAAA, at this stage, gives more of its attention to its EQM traditional quality assurance mechanisms (accreditation and auditing) rather than prescribing how such learning- outcome standards shall enhance or manage quality of classroom instruction (in section 2.3 below, the concept of quality enhancement will be discussed in relation to classroom instruction).

Relevant studies about of the impact of learning outcome standards as a tool of EQM on classroom instruction, based on my own readings, can be mainly derived from two domains. The first one is quality assurance literature that appears to pay more of its attention to the impact of EQM traditional three mechanisms (accreditation, assessment and auditing) on the 'transformational' learning perspective of quality. The second domain is from the area of standard-based language education programmes in the globe where learning- outcome standards are introduced as a starting point for curriculum development but not necessary under the umbrella of an EQM scheme, such as the CEFR and ACTFL. The following is a review of the research from the first domain, while the second one will be further discussed in section 2.5 below.

Based on my own readings in this study, the impact of EQM mechanisms (accreditation, assessment and auditing) on quality seems to be serving "compliance and accountability" purposes very dominantly more than quality enhancement from the process perspective (teaching and learning). Despite the complexity to establish cause-effect relationship, Harvey and Newton (2004), for instance, indicate that EQM has little impact on the "transformational" learning of students. They (2004, p.149) also found that "where changes to the student experience have taken place, this has arguably been the result of factors other than the external quality monitoring". Similarly, in her case study about the impact of quality monitoring on the improvement and enhancement of student transformational learning within two undergraduate degree programme in Auckland Institute of Technology in New Zealand, Horsburgh (1999) found that EQM had little impact on "actual teaching performance or on learning resources". In contrast, the most influential factors that have the greatest impact on students' learning, Horsburgh (1999) continues, were curriculum and teachers' instructional practices not the EQM mechanisms.

Such reported little impact of EQM traditional approaches on teaching and learning has been referred to different factors as it has been the central interest of different research studies. As listed by Kis (2005), for instance, three major reasons for such little impact can be articulated, which are (1) the difference of interests and conceptions of quality between stakeholders, (2) implementation gap and (3) the external ownership of quality assurance systems, which normally prioritizes compliance instead of improvement. In addition, some complaints or concerns against EQM have been raised and discussed by different authors like Harvey (2002, 2004), Anderson (2006) and Hoecht (2006), including (1) imposing an extensive bureaucratic burden on teachers, (2) its legitimacy or the extend teacher support its requirements, (3) its efficiency, and (4) its risk to educational autonomy. The failure to address these concerns or complaints have encouraged teachers to treat EQM processes as “game-playing” (Newton, 2002, p. 39) or perceive it as “a beast” that needs to be fed (Newton, 2000, p. 153), but not apparently as a starting point for teaching and learning management.

Based on the brief review above, it can be argued that research from the first domain of EQM generally tells little about standards’ impact on managing quality from its process perspective, including classroom instruction. Instead, more research in this area focuses on the impact of EQM three traditional mechanisms on teaching and learning and the perceived resistance to such EQM mechanisms by the concerned institutions and their staff members. Therefore, it is vital to assure at this stage that the impact of EQM three approaches on classroom instruction is not central in this study despite the fact that some of them are implemented in the Omani context. Rather, this research investigates how embracing learning- outcome standards, from an external quality monitoring agency (OAAA), by an EFP provider (LC) may provide a managing washback impact on EFP teachers’ classroom instructional practices, which can be a gap in EQM literature itself. Therefore, I had to refer to the second area for revealing what has been found in relation to the impact of learning- outcome standards on classroom instruction (see section 2.5), where such standards are used as a curriculum development starting point, but away from any EQM schemes as in the CEFR and ACTFL cases.

Before moving to this second area of relevant research, it is important at this stage to (1) conceptualize what we mean by standards within the wider concept of quality of education that includes the enhancement of instruction in its process perspective (section 2.3) and also to (2) theorize the role of standards as a perceived innovative tool for quality management in the domain of language instruction (section 2.4).

2.3 Conceptualization of standards in relation to the wider concept of quality

The use of learning- outcome standards to manage quality of classroom instruction seems to be linked theoretically to the wider concept of quality itself and its multidimensionality. Therefore, in this section, it is essential to articulate what we mean by the two terms of standards and quality, and how quality can be viewed as a multifaceted concept that prepares our understanding of quality management in language education. The identification of these concepts is essential to understand the boundaries of each one of them and the kind of relation that links them together before we move forwards to investigate the washback impact learning- outcome standards may have in enhancing classroom instruction.

2.3.1 What are standards?

The identification of what is meant by standards has been viewed as a challenging task as indicated in some publications as it is fundamentally interrelated with the wider concept of quality and as little publications has been devoted for theorizing this kind of relation. Ashcroft (1995, p. 25), for instance, indicates that the relation between the two concepts of quality and standards is problematic since they are sometimes used exchangeably as “synonyms”. In another case, standards are used to identify what is meant by quality itself. In their conceptual framework of quality, Harvey and Green (1993), for instance, use the term standards differently depending on every single definition of quality they list in their quality conceptualization framework. In one definition for instance, quality is achieved by exceeding high standards to achieve “excellence”, while meeting minimum standards is enough to achieve quality as “conformance to standards”, without giving an explicit and independent definition of what standards by themselves mean as a separate entity.

Historically, standards’ relation to quality has originated from the notion of quality control and the need to inform governments and the public that an acceptable level of output quality is achieved in educational institutions (Crabbe, 2003; Green, 1994; Magnan, Murphy, & Sahakyan, 2014). According to Murray and Christison (2011), the movement of the use of standards, which started in the USA, has been initiated mainly for meeting external stakeholders’ accountability purposes to know what their educational institutions are working on to achieve. Accordingly, quality, as “conformance to specifications or standards”, implies that these specifications or standards are possible to measure in order to achieve a level of accountability (Melia, 1994). Liston (1999, p. 1) refers the need to have measurable standards to the improvement of our ability to “understand the magnitude or scope of quality”, so “some sort of measure or level or standard is required to enable the potential user or consumer to form an opinion on the offering”. Harvey and Green (1993) similarly indicate that approaching quality through standards is based on the idea that standards are “objective” so they can be checked and measured by the product

users. However, this conceptualization of standards as being objective and measurable is criticized as it contradicts with other definitions of quality in education that prioritizes process over product like the “transformational” view of quality in education, which is seen to be more adaptive and developmental rather than being controlled by pre-defined specifications of the educational product (Ashcroft, 1995) (see section 2.3.2 below to know more about the transformational view of quality).

Based on the above, it can be argued that standards historical roots to satisfy accountability purposes has originated from the need to address quality of products, either in industrial or in educational contexts, through objective measurable standards. However, its limitation in the ‘transformational’ education, which is more concerned about the process of instruction and learning in education, seems to present a theoretical limitation in its ability to have such a managing force. The following section (2.3.2) is an attempt to investigate the notion of quality in education for better understanding of this relation between learning- outcome standards and quality in language education in its instructional ‘transformational’ perspective (process).

2.3.2 What is quality? (Sallis’ Framework)

“What the hell is quality?”

(Green, 1994, p. 13)

Defining what quality is, as a concept, seems to be a challenging task. No one single definition was chosen by scholars or theoreticians from different domains since different people look at quality from different perspectives. Therefore, different definitions from different domains of literature can always be found. This apparently has encouraged some authors to develop different frameworks to identify what they mean by quality, including standards as one element of these different quality conceptualizations.

To start with, a search for the meaning of quality in the field of industry and services where it has originally originated from has revealed a number of various definitions (Reeves & Bednar, 1994). Such definitions include “continuous improvement” (Deming, 1986), “fitness for use” (Juran & Gryna, 1988), “conformance to requirements” (Crosby, 1979), “conformance to specifications” (Gilmore, 1974; Levitt, 1972) and “meeting and/or exceeding customers’ specifications” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). A more comprehensive framework is later given by Garvin (1988, pp. 40-41) who outlines five different views of quality. The first one is “transcendental”, which claims that quality is not possible to define but it is only experienced. The second view is “product-based”, which is based on precise measurement of product variability so

quality is best achieved when variability of product is minimized. Third, quality is “user-based”. This means that the product or service that satisfies the customer most has got the highest level of quality. The fourth view is “manufacturing-based”. This approach views quality as the “conformance to requirements”, which is more linked to the process of product design and manufacturing based on pre-defined specifications. Finally, quality is “value-based”. This approaches quality from its cost prospective, which implies that quality of an expensive product, is viewed lower than a cheaper one but with the same ability to satisfy its purpose of use. Such various definitions of quality from its original place of birth (industry) implies that having one definition of quality is impossible. Quality means different things to different people with different purposes (Sahney et al., 2004), which encourages the understanding that having one global definition of quality is not possible, so “different definitions of quality are appropriate in different circumstances” (Reeves & Bednar, 1994, p. 440). Nevertheless, it also shows that meeting specifications or standards is one integral conceptualization of the concept of quality.

In education and higher education (HE), quality is not easy to define either. It seems to inherit the complexity of defining it from its original field, industry (Sallis, 2002). Quality as a concept is described as “elusive”, “value laden” (Green, 1994, p. 12), “not an absolute” (Perry, 1994, p. 31), “slippery” (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 10), “difficult to pin down” and “very subjective” (Heyworth, 2013, p. 286). Additionally, Chen, Sok, and Sok (2007, p. 130) describe defining quality in higher education as “a challenging task”, while Krause (2012, p. 285) addresses it as “the wicked problem”. Like Reeves and Bednar (1994) in industry, Liston (1999), Harvey and Williams (2010) and Heyworth (2013) affirm that giving one definition of quality in education, HE, and language education respectively is problematic since quality is related to the goals and context of each educational institution. Chung Sea Law (2010, p. 66), for example, states that “The concept of quality is found to be multifaceted and value-laden, and various stakeholders who represent key groups in society, including government, employers and the professions, students and staff, the management of the educational institutions and the general public, place emphasis on different dimensions of the concept.”

Like in industry, different attempts to develop frameworks of what quality is have been developed in education and higher education (HE) domains. Such frameworks include the ones developed by Harvey and Green (1993), which then has been adopted later by Harvey and Knight (1996) in HE and the ones by Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993), Cheng and Tam (1997), Bergmann (1996) and Sallis (2002) in education. Despite that these frameworks come from relatively two different educational domains, education and HE, they still share major quality conceptualizations. Therefore, in this review, I will only review one of them just to clarify how standards have been an integral part to formulate quality conceptualization, as derived from Sallis’ framework of quality in education. The reliance on such a framework from the domain of

education is the result of the lack of having a similar comprehensive conceptual framework of quality in the area of language education.

According to Sallis (2002, pp. 12-13), quality in education can be viewed as (1) an “absolute” notion or as (2) a “relative” notion (see figure 2.1 below). The first notion considers quality as an ideal term that is similar to other absolute notions like beauty and truth. It implies that quality is an integral attribute of a service or a product that has the highest possible standards. This “traditional” definition of quality is like other absolute concepts like perfection and excellence (Green, 1994, p. 13). According to Sallis (2002) & Harvey and Green (1993, p. 11), this “apodictic” quality, as an absolute notion, is only achieved by the “elitist” that most educational institutions and learners cannot afford. Accordingly, it might be possible to say at this stage that the “absolute” definition of quality by Sallis (2002) or “quality as exceptional” by Harvey and Knight (1996), targeting distinctiveness and inaccessibility is not practically relevant to what OAAA is aiming at with its EFP learning- outcome standards to enhance quality of instruction in EFPs. OAAA’s learning- outcome standards are meant to be achieved by all EFP providers in the Sultanate with all EFP students, not only the ‘elite’ ones.



Figure 2.1: quality identification framework (adopted from Sallis, 2002)

For more “technical” purposes, quality is defined as a “relative” concept too. Under this notion, Sallis (2002) specifies two categories: (2.1) the “procedural” concept of quality and (2.2) the “transformational” quality. Quality as a procedural concept is not viewed as an integral part of a product or service but their “ability to meet certain pre-specified criteria or standards”. Therefore, quality is achieved in the procedural category through giving focus on the procedures and systems of an organization that need to be operated efficiently and effectively to meet these pre-specified standards (Sallis, 2002). By this definition, it becomes clear that quality can be identified relatively by a pre- defined set of standards of the outputs of the educational process. The importance of this view of quality, according to Sallis (2002), is that it aims to redirect

organizations and systems towards achieving these pre-specified standards of the outcomes of education. Such a redirection of organizations systems includes instruction too as a vehicle for quality enhancement.

The ‘transformational’ view of quality, on the other hand, is more oriented to the educational process itself. It is accomplished through the two processes of “enhancing” and “empowering” learners. According to Harvey and Green (1993), learners are enhanced through what they have labelled as “value added”, which identifies quality as “the extent to which the educational experience enhances the knowledge, abilities and skills of students” (p.25). To empower students, on the other hand, four strategies including students’ evaluation, guaranteed minimum standards of provision, learning ownership and critical thinking development are necessary to be developed.

Based on these two complementary relative concepts of quality (procedural and transformational), standards are traditionally used to specify what learning to be achieved by learners are (outputs), while the transformational view of quality is more concerned about the teaching and learning processes necessary to facilitate ‘enhancing’ and ‘empowering’ the learners. The linkage between these two views of quality is described generally by Cheng and Tam (1997) who state that an educational institution is attributed as quality education provider if these goals or specifications are met. To meet these goals or specifications, educational institutions’ internal processes to change input into output are the central area of focus through effective teaching and fruitful learning. Cheng and Tam (1997) add that achieving quality at the process model determine quality of outputs and the extent educational goals are achieved. Therefore, a main assumption in this model is that “an educational institution is of high education quality if its internal functioning is smooth and healthy” (p. 25). Such an assumption of having healthy and smooth internal functioning of the internal processes of an institution, including instruction, I may argue, is where learning- outcome standards are supposed to be influencing in the case of standards-based language programmes to enhance language instruction. It is their ability to redirect the teachers’ instructional attention and practices towards (1) enhancing their students’ knowledge and skills or (2) empowering them with some learning strategies. In other words, if such learning- outcome standards target learning particular language knowledge or skills, teachers’ instruction is supposed accordingly to be redirected towards helping students acquiring those particular knowledge or skills.

However, how can such learning- outcome standards be a powerful tool for redirecting institutions and teachers’ efforts to enhance students’ learning in second language classes? In the following section, I will attempt to review what has been said regarding the role of learning- outcome standards in the era of quality management in general and in language education in

particular in order to clarify how such a role is still an area that requires more theoretical development.

2.4 Learning- outcome standards as a tool of instruction quality management/ enhancement

By moving to managing quality of classroom instruction through learning-outcome standards in language education, it could be possibly stated that very little has been said regarding theorizing this relation between learning- outcome standards and classroom instruction in the field of language education. Such a little theorization has formulated a big challenge to establish a clear linkage between such learning- outcome standards and what teachers need to do accordingly in their classrooms, especially at the “micro” enacted level of curriculum implementation (Van den Akker, 2003). Heyworth (2013), for instance, affirms that quality management procedures, including standards, are new in the field of language education in general and their impact on language pedagogy is little. Crabbe (2003, p. 12), additionally, views them as a useful tool for accreditation, curriculum development and assessment from the outcome perspective of quality, rather than an enhancement tool for process quality, including instruction. Quality in its process perspective, according to Crabbe (2003, 2007), should be mainly based on exploiting what he has labelled as “learning opportunities”, coming from a post-method era of language instruction. From both Heyworth (2013) and Crabbe (2003), it can be understood that learning- outcome standards can be important and influential for accountability purposes but not necessarily for managing quality of educational process, including classroom instruction.

Such an apparent separation of the two views of quality (procedural and transformational) can also be seen in some attempts to formulate coherent standard models, which do not only tackle quality from the output perspective but also from the instructional perspective (process quality) as proposed by Pearson (1993) and Heyworth (2013). It is observable that both standard- based frameworks by Pearson (1993) and Heyworth (2013) lack the establishment of a clear impact relation between learning- outcome standards and classroom instruction. Pearson (1993, pp. 465-466), first, suggests that seven categories of standards are needed in successful standard-based programmes. These seven categories include:

1. **Content standards** (also known as curriculum standards). They are set to identify what students should know and be able to do, so they tell what teachers should teach.
2. **Performance standards**. They are set to give description of the students' performance levels on specific tasks so their teachers can decide whether the students have met the standards or not and to what extent the standards have been met.

3. **Delivery standards** are set to assure that institutions teachers and students have the resources needed
4. **Opportunity standards.**
5. **Instructional standards** are set to give what is considered to be instructional ‘exemplary practice’.
6. **Assessment standards** are set to evaluate the validity of institutions’ assessment tools.
7. **Process standards** are set to give some kind of guidance of how to use standards document used to improve a profession.

Heyworth (2013) similarly stresses that to have a quality management system in language education, it is necessary to have coherent and comprehensive standards in four major areas, which are (1) Curriculum, learning and teaching, (2) Teachers (related to teachers’ training and development), (3) Examination and assessment to assure their reliability, validity and practicality and (4) Resources or materials.

From the above arguments by Heyworth and Crabbe and the two frameworks by Pearson and Heyworth above, it can be learned first that standards-based programmes theoretically are not limited to the “content” standards, which are representing quality from the learning output perspective as the case with OAAA’s learning outcome standards and which are meeting the “procedural” notion of quality discussed above. Different kinds of standards tackling other areas of educational quality including the “instructional standards” by suggesting exemplary instructional practices can be produced to theoretically facilities the achievement of the “content” standards and which can be matching the “transformational” perspective of quality discussed above too in Sallis’ framework. Such a latter type of standards is missing in the Omani case as explained previously. Second, such categories of standards are apparently dealt independently from each other. They do not show, for instance, how “content standards” may influence the formulation of “instructional standards” or any recommended “best” instructional practices needed to be adopted in real classroom instruction for the sake of learning- outcome standards achievement. In the Omani context, accordingly, OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs comply only with the “content” category of standards, which only describes what the Omani learners need to know or be able to do with language as defined by Pearson (1993). No “instructional standards” to exemplify what instructional practices are necessary to meet such ‘content’ learning- outcome standards are given explicitly, which extra complicates identifying what EFP teachers need to do to achieve OAAA’s learning outcome or “content” standards.

In such cases where no instructional standards or best instructional practices are suggested by the top authorities to achieve a number of targeted learning- outcome standards,

the answer comes from Crabbe (2003), who proposes that such learning- outcome standards, can function as “a common reference point” for language teachers to “reconcile their beliefs and practices against”. To do so, Crabbe suggests that the established literature from language teaching methods, Communicative approach in particular, is a rich source that can give the concerned teachers this prescription of the “best” instructional practices they need to perform to achieve such learning- outcome standards. Here, it can be possible to argue accordingly that despite the fact that the development of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards have been developed with no explicit instructional implications in OAAA’s official document, such standards’ theoretical linkage to common language “best” practices derived from language teaching methodology literature can be established as one way to materialize more explicit instructional assumptions or implications out of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for the EFPs. This theoretical linkage can depend on instructional practices suggested from language teaching methodology literature for teaching particular language knowledge, abilities or skills targeted by the standards themselves. In other words, some instructional “best” or “exemplary” practices can be borrowed from language teaching methodology literature for teaching particular language knowledge, abilities or skills targeted by OAAA’s learning outcome standards as will be demonstrated in phase one of this study (see section 4.3.1). All in all, a more discussion of such theoretical instructional foundations derived from language teaching methodology literature will be presented in chapter 3 (section 3.2). Such a theoretical instructional foundation based on the number of abilities, skills or knowledge targeted by the standards will be taken in this study as a cornerstone for better understanding what might be instructionally assumed by those learning- outcome standards themselves.

Finally, since this research is aiming to investigate the impact of the phenomenon of learning- outcome standards on classroom instruction, one might look at this approach of quality management as an innovative way for introducing a change or reform of classroom language teaching instruction as it is profoundly established in educational innovation or reform literature. This view in one way or another might drive us to the area of innovation management in language education where new attempts to make a difference in classroom instructional practices is one area of relevance to this research. The following section 2.4.1 aims to shed some light on this particular area and how such a perspective might be theoretically challenged but opens a new door for a better understanding of the possibility of having this model of quality management as an innovative way to reform or impact teachers’ classroom practices in similar cases.

2.4.1 Learning- outcome standards as an innovative tool to reform classroom instruction

‘Innovation’ in language education is defined as “an attempt to bring about educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by implementers as new or different” (Carless, 2012, p.1). Innovation is also used interchangeably with the terms ‘change’ or ‘reform’,

which gives an emphasis to “difference or novelty” as the ultimate goal of educational improvement in language education (Waters, 2009, p. 422), leading to changes in different aspects of the educational systems including classrooms, schools, districts and so on (Fullan, 2007). In other words, innovation is “an idea, artefact or practice which is new” to the context it has originated from (Ferguson, 1993, p. 27) in order to make it more ‘effective’ (Carless, 2012). In this research, the terminology variation is not a big issue, because what really matters is the core meaning of innovation, which is centralized around the idea of introducing a new thing to the context in order to make a developmental difference in education. The development and dissemination of learning- outcome standards and the investigation of their impact on classroom instructional practices are central in this study, which can be viewed as an innovative way to reform or change EFP teachers’ classroom instructional practices as stated above.

Ferguson (1993) informs us that ‘innovations’ in language education can be defined as a process and as a product too. As a process, innovations are divided into three phases, which are “initiation”, “implementation” and “institutionalization”. Respectively, a decision to make an innovation to overcome a problem is taken, resources and plans are allocated ready for implementation, and finally the incorporation of the new practices into the routines of the institution takes place at the final stage. Such innovations also can be defined as a product as they can be seen making changes in different areas such as 1. Administrative changes for instruction, 2. Technological changes (e.g. introduction of computers), 3. Materials change (introduction of new books or tests), 4. Behavioural change (what teachers do in classrooms), and 5. Change in teachers’ beliefs, attitudes or understandings (p.28).

Accordingly, from such an articulation of innovation identification by Ferguson (1993), one can state first that a clearly identified initiation of an innovative reform for a particular aspect for developmental purposes should be articulated as a prerequisite by its initiators to be called an innovation. Without such an articulation of initiation, it is hard to identify what that ‘new’ thing to be introduced to make a change/ reform is. Such a lack of initiation means that what can be an innovation leading to a change is not existing from the first place, which problematizes our understanding of something as an innovation. By this definition from Ferguson (1993), accordingly, the introduction of learning- outcome standards, in this study, under the umbrella of QA, which is meant mainly to achieve accountability purposes as discussed earlier (see section 2.2 above) is hard to be theoretically identified as an innovative attempt to reform or change EFP teachers’ language instructional practices, since such an attempt needs to be introduced more clearly and explicitly by their initiator, which is OAAA in this case. This actually supports what I have stated earlier (see sections 1.2.2 & 1.2.3) about the absence of the documentation of English language instructional theorization by OAAA for EFP teachers in order to know what they need to do pedagogically to achieve OAAA’s learning- outcome standards. Accordingly, it might be

possible to say that it is really challenging to view this study under the field of innovation management from its traditional perspective when attempts to reform or change are traditionally stated more explicitly by those who intend to make a difference or novelty in their educational contexts.

However, this study about the impact of learning- outcome standards on classroom instruction can still be viewed as an innovative way to reform or change classroom instructional practices even if it is not necessarily the main drive for their development. The study of the washback impact of such standards on classroom instruction in English language classrooms, I assume, is what make this approach of instructional reform or change through a quality assurance system innovative by its own. The absence of such an explicit and direct “behavioural change” initiation by OAAA should not be viewed as an obstacle to investigate the impact of such a phenomenon on teachers’ classroom instructional practices or “behaviours” and consequently its innovativeness to reform those practices or “behaviours”. Actually, it introduces an opportunity for studying its innovativeness from a different perspective as such standards might be investigated from their implicit impact to reform classroom instructional practices. In other words, it can be true to say that introducing new classroom instructional practices in EFPs is not what OAAA is aiming primarily at with the dissemination of its EFPs’ learning- outcome standards. Nevertheless, the development of these standards to be a theoretical curriculum development framework can be an innovative starting point for EFPs’ providers to redirect or reframe their classroom instructional practices in one way or another, as discussed by Crabbe (2003) above in this section, which encourages the point of view that the development of those standards can be an innovative step towards an implicit instructional reform or instructional change in ELT classrooms. In brief, the innovativeness of such standards is located within the concept of implicitness. It is their implicit and indirect power as a QM tool and as a curriculum development starting point to reform classroom instructional practices. In fact, this implicitness of classroom instructional reform in EFPs is what makes it even more innovative, I might state. Despite the fact that educational innovations, as stated earlier, are traditionally identified clearly and explicitly by their initiators before being introduced to the implementers for implementation, such standards can still be viewed as an innovative international phenomenon used by policy makers to reform, or change teachers’ instructional practices through the implicit triggering of their inner knowledge, skills, and experiences as ELT teachers leading to particular ELT practices.

Finally, the investigation of the impact of learning-outcome standards on classroom instruction in different contexts in the world shows an increasing interest about the capability of such standards in shaping or framing classroom instructional practices. Such an observation might indirectly carry a type of a theoretical assumption that such standards can possibly be influential enough to make a difference to improve or reform classroom instructional practices. The

following section (2.5) is a critical presentation of the results of research investigating the impact relation between learning- outcome standards and classroom instruction as derived from other non- Omani standard-based programmes.

It is also important to note at this stage that the success or failure of innovations is an important aspect of the study of educational innovations or innovation management. Such a dimension will be the focus of section 3.3 in chapter 3, which sheds some light on the contextual nature of classroom instruction and consequently the contextual factors/ forces that might lead to the success or failure of innovations. I will leave this aspect to chapter 3 to be discussed in more details when discussing the difference between theory and practice in ELT.

2.5 Review of relevant studies

The search for the impact of OAAA's learning- outcome standards on EFP teachers' classroom instruction in the Omani context, to the best of my knowledge, is a very new topic. No empirical research based on classroom observation was conducted to investigate (1) how such learning- outcome standards might impact, manage or shape EFPs' classroom instruction and (2) what factors might be playing a role in such an impact. Not only in the Omani context, the scarcity of such studies can also be noticed in the other quality assurance experiences in the region including the Education & Training Quality Authority in Bahrain, the Commission for Academic Accreditation in the United Arab Emirates, and the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This in one way correlates with the observation made by Heyworth (2013, p. 281) that there is very little research on the impact of quality management approaches on "learner achievement or teaching practice". Therefore, in this section, I will try to review the research conducted in other standard- based cases, derived mainly from the CEFR and ACTFL, which are not linked to any EQM schemes as discussed above in section 2.2.1. Before so, a general overview of both models of CEFR and ACTFL is presented first.

Published by the Council of Europe in 1996 (Little, 2006), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is intended to provide "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (Council, 2001, p. 1) in order to serve the Council of Europe's cultural, political and educational agenda (Little, 2006). Based on action-oriented approach, the CEFR is presented as a "descriptive scheme" of six levels or categories of communicative proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 & C2). Each of which represents a level of language achievement in the four language major skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), and are theoretically rooted in the principles of the communicative approach, learner-centeredness, and the council's interest in learner autonomy and self-assessment (Little, 2006). Its "can do" statements are attributed to be descriptive rather

than prescriptive in a way that they give no prescription of any particular teaching or testing methods (Coste, 2007; Faez, Majhanovich, Taylor, Smith, & Crowley, 2011; Piccardo, 2010).

As a fulfilment of the federal Goals 2000, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) with association with the American Associations of Teachers of French, the American Associations of Teachers of German and the American Associations of Teachers of Portuguese, on the other hand, have been funded to develop standards for foreign language education from Kindergarten level to Grade 12 in the USA. Like the CEFR, the ACTFL standards give no curriculum prescription (Lewelling & Rennie, 1998). Rather, they are content standards that only describe what the learners should know and be able to do with language at different levels of proficiency (NCLRC, 2014). ACTFL standards have been developed to cater five areas known as “the five Cs of foreign language education”, which are communication, communities, cultures, comparisons and connections. Instruction promoted by the ACTFL framework is based in a number of instructional assumptions. They are “(a) making learners the centre of instruction, (b) viewing language through communicative modes, and (c) merging communication and cultural content” (Magnan, 2017, p. 185).

Based on the two general overview summaries above, it appears that both models the CEFR and ACTFL differ from OAAA’s learning- outcome standards in terms of their general agendas. OAAA’s learning- outcome standards have been developed for accreditation purposes as a tool for external quality monitoring, while the above two models are not. However, they all share the fact that they all have been composed of a number of “content” standards, which indicate that their impact on classroom instruction is a common shared area of research interest. However, the CEFR and ACTFL are both theoretically rooted in the Communicative Language Teaching approach as indicated in relevant publications above and as argued by Duff (2014b), while such an explicit instructional theorization is absent in OAAA’s documents. Therefore, phase one of this research will attempt to investigate such a vague area (see chapter 6).

In my search of the impact of these two models, in addition to other international models, on classroom instruction, I have found that they have been investigated by different researchers from different perspectives, including (1) policy level and (2) pedagogical level. Maldina (2015) reports that the research in this area has indicated that CEFR standards’ impact was more visible in the level of language policies and language education reforms than in pedagogy, including the areas of language curriculum development and assessment (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). Such an impact on the first level has also been reported by different researchers, not only by research who have been studying the CEFR impact but also the ones interested in the ACTFL’s, including Little (2011), Martyniuk and Noijons (2007), Llosa (2011), Polikoff, Porter, and Smithson (2011), Lixun (2011), Jia-Ying and Wen-Hau (2012), Broek and Van den Ende (2013), Read (2014), Sharpley-

Whiting (1999), Kaplan (2016) and Glisan (2012). They have asserted that such standards-based models are influential in terms of curriculum planning, course design, assessment, teacher training and textbooks writing. This impact seems to vary from one area to another according to Little (2011) and Hulstijn, Alderson, and Schoonen (2010) who have reported that the strongest impact of the CEFR is on assessment, but least on L2 pedagogy.

At the pedagogical level, standards' impact on classroom instruction seems to be a newer area of investigation, so making claims about such an impact is something some scholars appear to be cautious to make. As a result, this has encouraged different calls for more investigation in this area in particular as indicated by Figueras (2012), Westhoff (2007) and Little (2011) from the CEFR experience, and Maldina (2015) and Glisan (2012) from the ACTFL domain. Therefore, I may argue that this study function as an extension of this new international trend of exploring the nature of the washback impact of the phenomenon of "content" standards on English language instruction through the Omani context. Such a washback impact of such "content" standards is more about what needs to be done pedagogically by language teachers in order to help their students achieve the targeted learning- outcome standards.

Generally speaking, in my search of the research conducted on the impact of these two standards-based models on classroom instruction, I have found that a number of studies to investigate this area were conducted. These studies can be classified methodologically into two major areas of research interest too, which are (1) teachers' perceptions of their classroom instruction in relation to standards and (2) teachers' actual instructional practices in comparison to predefined instructional practices dictated by standards developers. Research about teachers' perceptions of their own instruction towards achieving CEFR and ACTFL were conducted in a number of published studies like the ones by Faez et al. (2011), Moonen, Stoutjesdijk, Graaff, and Corda (2013), Gour (2015), Hehl and Kruczak (2011), Phillips and Abbott (2011), Allen (2002) and Harris (2012). In general, despite the importance to investigate teachers' perceptions of their own instructional experiences in alignment with a set of learning outcome standards, the studies listed above still present no clear interpretation of how the classroom teaching practices of the participating teachers were or were not aligned to the communicative language instructional principles the CEFR and the ACTFL standards were developed upon. In addition, these studies are more interested in teachers' perceptions of their practices rather than their real instructional practices themselves in classroom environment. Accordingly, they tend to be reliant more on quantitative methods of data collection like surveys, which give a big account of teachers' reports of their own instructional practices but did not help those researchers to have a deeper insight into teachers' real instructional classroom practices.

Moving to the second category of relevant studies, to the best of my knowledge, very few studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of standards based on real classroom instructional practices. I have found only three studies (A.Rahman, 2014; Kirby, 2012; Maldina, 2015), which have investigated such an impact of standards on real classroom practices. The observed scarcity of research in this area does not only inform how standards' impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices is still a new area of research, but also how more qualitative methods of data collection, including more classroom observation to investigate this new phenomenon are required.

In his PhD dissertation, Kirby (2012) investigated how five foreign language (Spanish) instructors in the Salt Lake metropolitan area perceived and implemented the national standards developed by ACTFL. The aim of this study is to "describe the degree of integration of the standards attained in the thinking (perceptions) and teaching practices" of the participating teachers regarding ACTFL standards. For the sake of answering research questions, a case study method was used, in which interviews, a questionnaire and classroom observations were utilized with five teachers. One of the main findings in this study is a lack of consistency between what teachers perceive they are doing and what they are actually doing in reality in their classrooms. Additionally, it has been found that there is a lack of knowledge and willingness to implement the standards at different levels. However, despite that Kirby's claim that classroom observations were used to investigate teachers' practices in classrooms, it was not clear how he managed to reach such evaluations as he gave no clear representations of classroom activities or classroom discourse. Kirby tended to classify the observed teaching practices based on teaching methods derived from foreign language methodology (see Kirby, 2012, pp. 60-63).

Another classroom observation-based study, from the CEFR sphere, was conducted by Maldina (2015). In her master's dissertation, Maldina investigates the role of the CEFR in Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics (SP) instruction where English and Spanish are taught as foreign languages in an Italian secondary school. A major finding of this study reveals that the CEFR and SP have little impact on the participating teachers' instruction. Instead, their impact is largely linked to exams and participants' knowledge and beliefs about the CEFR. In this qualitative study, Maldina used classroom observations, interviews and document analysis as data collection methods with four teachers and school administrator as the primary participants. In her analysis of classroom instruction, she used her field notes she collected during classroom observations as well as some excerpts of classroom discourse.

The last study in this review comes from Malaysia. It was conducted by A.Rahman (2014) in order to investigate the effectiveness of Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools on the development of students' communicative competence through interactive, learner-centered

teaching as a way for curriculum reform in primary education in Malaysia. A mixed method study was conducted, including semi-structured interviews, document analysis, classroom observations with 8 teachers, 2 curriculum trainers, 2 district education officers and an officer from the Curriculum Development Division of Ministry of Education in Malaysia. In this PhD study, the analysis of transcribed classroom discourses and video stimulated reflective dialogues were used. The major findings of this study is the observed congruence between what is planned by the curriculum policy makers and what is practiced in real classrooms by the teachers who were also found not to be fully understanding what is expected by the standards.

At the end of section 2.5, it can be stated that the impact of “content” standards on real classroom instruction based on empirical data derived from real classroom instructional practices appears to be a new area of investigation, not only in the Omani context with OAAA’s learning-outcome standards, but also in other standard- based language programmes in the globe. As discussed earlier in this section, more research about teachers’ perceptions about their own instructional practices in relation to fulfilling learning- outcome standards was conducted than the research about their own real teaching classroom practices. This in one way or another gives high prominence to conducting more research about the impact of standards on classroom instruction in ELT context to fill in this gap.

Additionally, relying on classroom observation as a tool for having an access to interpret such a phenomenon is vital this study will start from. This view of focus on what is happening in classrooms has been highly supported by different authors like O’Sullivan (2006) and Mameli and Molinari (2014). O’Sullivan (2006), for instance argue that what is happening in classrooms should be “placed at the top of the quality agenda”. Therefore, classroom observations are necessary for the development of education quality. Here, I may also argue that what is happening in classrooms should be the starting point for further research to investigate the washback impact of content standards on teachers’ classroom instructional practices in order to avoid any “ideological or anecdotal” claims about standards’ impact as described by Heyworth (2013, p. 310).

One final point to add at this stage is that none of the last three studies discussed above (A.Rahman, 2014; Kirby, 2012; Maldina, 2015) has tackled the area about the factors that mediate the impact of standards on teacher’ classroom instructional practices. Such an a absence of investigation in this particular area adds on the ambiguity of this innovative phenomenon and it innovative to manage/ reform classroom instruction. Therefore, this research can be a starting point for such an investigation in its third RQ, based on the participating teachers’ observed instructional practices, not the reported ones.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, three main areas related to the use of standards for quality management purposes were included. First, a historical review of standards within a broader scope of quality management was first discussed. It was found that little research about the role played by standards as an external quality management tool was conducted in comparison to the research about the impact of EQM mechanisms on learning and teaching. Later, the theorization of standards in relation of the broader concept of quality and its position as a quality enhancement tool were discussed. It was clear that standards traditionally adopt the output or “procedural” view of quality in education with the assumption that institution wishing to meet those standards need to redirect their own efforts towards the achievement of such standards either to enhance or empower (or both) learners through instruction. Such an assumption was linked later by Crabbe (2003) and Heyworth (2013) to the main domain of language teaching methodology as a broad source from which teachers need to refer to in order to align their own instructional beliefs and practices in favour of the achievement of targeted learning- outcome standards. Accordingly, studying the impact of particular learning- outcome standards, as in this study, should be based on some common or “best” instructional practices derived from the language teaching methodology literature, especially when such instructional “best practices” are not explicitly dictated by the learning- outcome standards developers as in the case of OAAA. Accordingly, the following chapter (chapter 3) aims to set out such (1) a theoretical foundation of language instructional practices as derived from different views of language and language learning in English language teaching domain. It also attempts to (2) investigate some of the common contextual factors that shape teachers’ instruction, which can be fostering or hindering the intersection between what is instructionally practiced and what is instructionally assumed out of such learning- outcome standards.

3 Chapter 3: Theoretical framework: ELT between theorization and practice

3.1 Introduction

The relation between the two views of quality, the (1) “procedural”, represented in meeting pre-defined standards and (2) the “transformational” (process-based including teaching), as clarified in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2), is important in this study. As discussed earlier, the washback impact of learning- outcome standards or the “procedural” conceptualization of quality on classroom instruction is based on an assumption that educational institutions are able to redirect their internal processes, including teaching, into the achievement of their targeted learning- outcomes in order to enhance students’ language learning of particular language knowledge, abilities or skills. Such an assumption establishes accordingly a theoretical broad linkage between such learning- outcomes on one hand and certain “best” classroom instructional practices on the other hand necessary to meet those learning- outcomes, as indicated by the “theoretical enquiry” by Crabbe (2003), which the concerned teachers need to take into consideration in their own classroom instructional practices. As discussed earlier (see section 2.4), Crabbe (2003) proposes that seeking language education quality in its process perspective through instruction can be theoretically derived from the domain of teaching methodology literature as a rich source from which “best” instructional practices necessary for the achievement of particular learning- outcome standards can be extracted. Such a suggestion by Crabbe is adopted in this study as a starting point for identifying some of such “best” instructional practices as derived from the wider domain of language teaching methodology when theorizing the instructional assumptions or implications out of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards in phase one of this research (see chapter 6).

As clarified earlier in the introduction (see section 1.2.3), OAAA’s learning- outcome standards are only listing what students are supposed to be able to do with language through their “content” standards (Pearson, 1993) in which a list of language knowledge, skills or abilities are described. They do not explicitly prescribe any instructional practices or principles to guide classroom instruction. However, despite the lack of such an explicit prescription of any “instructional principles” (Murray & Christison, 2011) or any “instructional standards” (Pearson, 1993) in OAAA’s official documents, I argue in this research that a kind of a theoretical linkage between OAAA’s learning- outcome standards and some assumed instructional practices can be extracted from the standards themselves as derived from the area of language teaching methodology literature for the different views of language and language learning they have been developed upon. Such a theorization of OAAA’s standards instructional assumptions/ implications

is viewed as a prerequisite as it will help establish possible instructional implications or assumptions necessary when it comes to investigate any intersection between what is instructionally implicitly assumed in OAAA's learning- outcome standards and what is really practiced by EFP teachers in their own classes in the second phase of this study.

Accordingly, this chapter generally aims to broadly unfold literature about language teaching from two main perspectives; (1) as theorized by theorists in terms of the leading teaching methods and approaches, which are aligned traditionally with some language instructional practices as derived mainly from the traditional three views of language and language learning (structural, functional and interactional) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) (section 3.2) and (2) as theorized as a contextualized process (section 3.3). The importance of the first area stems from its association with one of the aim of this research, which is linked to the necessity to theorize OAAA's learning- outcome standards into their instructional assumptions or implications (see section 1.2.4). OAAA's learning- outcome standards, I argue, have not been developed from vacuum. Instead, they have been built theoretically based on particular views of language and language learning by the standards developers, which assumingly encourage the stimulation of some classroom instructional tendencies leading to the achievement of such learning- outcome standards, based on the different kinds of language skills, abilities or knowledge they target. The second area (section 3.3), on the other hand, is more concerned about language instruction from real contextualized classroom practices perspective. It gives some insights on how teachers' instruction in practice is more context-based that is more complex, diverse (Hall, 2011) and less driven by one teaching methodology (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) in real classrooms. Such a diversity is a result of a number of multiple contextual factors, which will be discussed as well in section 3.3.2. Those two views of language teaching, as theorized by theorists and as contextually practiced by teachers in real classrooms, are essential for better understanding the relation between what is instructionally assumed out of such "content" standards and what teachers do in their classrooms in particular contexts accordingly.

3.2 ELT in theory

To help understand the relation between "content" standards like OAAA's learning- outcome standards and their possible assumed instructional assumptions or implications, language content targeted in those standards is used in this study as a mediating concept. In other words, the kind of language content (e.g. grammatical or lexical aspects, functions, skills, subskills etc.) targeted by each content standards of OAAA as their utmost learning- outcome(s) will be the starting point for identifying what theoretically "best" instructional practices are more likely expected to be seen in EFP classes by EFP teachers to enhance their attainment by the EFP students. This kind of relation between language content and "best" instructional practices, I may

argue, is fundamental as it establishes a theoretical linkage between what to be learned by the students and what be done pedagogically by the teachers to enhance such learning accordingly. Such a linkage between the two (language content and instruction) has been theoretically represented in the framework provided by Richards and Rodgers (1982; 2001), which presents a theoretical linkage between language content with (1) broad views of language and language learning theories on one hand and (2) particular instructional practices devoted for the delivery of that language content on the other hand. Accordingly, such a framework can be a reasonably practical starting point for establishing such a theoretical linkage between “content” standards like OAAA’s learning- outcomes standards and their underpinning instructional assumptions or implications as derived from the different language view(s) they have been established upon as given in ELT literature. The following section (3.2.1) aims to review this framework by Richards and Rodgers (1982; 2001).

Before so, since this research is mainly about the intersection between the implicitly embedded instructional assumptions or implications in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards and the enacted instructional practices in the EFPs, it is vital to indicate that what instruction means varies. According to Bardovi-Harlig (as cited in Maldina, 2015, p. 59), instruction refers to “any action undertaken by a teacher to facilitate acquisition”. On the other hand, Cohen and Ball (2000, p. 3) argue that instruction is more than that. It is the result of “interactions among teachers, students and content, in environments”. Accordingly, instruction is not only created by what teachers do or say in classrooms. Instead, it is created by the interaction of the “the connected work” of these elements all-together. For the purpose of this research, which is more oriented towards the impact of “content” standards on teachers’ classroom instructional practice, I find it more useful to restrict it to what EFP teachers only do or say in classrooms. Accordingly, the first definition by Bardovi-Harlig is adopted in this research in order to have a deeper focus on what EFP teachers are doing pedagogically in their classes in comparison to the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs.

3.2.1 Richards and Rodgers’ framework

In their framework of language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001) introduce the concept of “method” as a governing concept to link classroom teaching practices (procedure) to broad theoretical beliefs, assumptions and theories about language and language learning (approach). This linkage is mediated through the concept of “design”, which aims to represent these theoretical beliefs and theories of language and language learning not only in the form of instructional materials and activities (language content), but also in the way this language content should be taught. According to this framework, assumptions or beliefs about language (approach) has a theoretical linkage to what language content (design) to be taught and how this content teaching should be like.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 20-21) outline three main theories, sets of beliefs, or views of language that have traditionally an influential role in determining the nature of language instruction in language education. These three views are (1) the “structural” view, (2) the “functional” view and (3) the “interactional” view of language and language learning. Each of which is linked theoretically to a certain language teaching methods or approaches from which some classroom procedures have been suggested. In general terms, while the structural view is linked to the traditional structural language teaching methods like audiolingualism, which focuses on the teaching of pre-defined and pre-sequenced forms of language, the functional and interactional views are more linked to the communicative language approach, which represents a shift of the pendulum to the prime focus on meaning over forms. The following sections (3.2.1.1 to 3.2.1.4) attempt to present some major language instructional practices of these three views in order to facilitate the extraction of possible theoretical instructional assumptions or implications out of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards based on the language content each standard targets.

3.2.1.1 Structural view of language

The structural view of language is based on the belief that language is composed of a system of linguistic aspects, including phonological, grammatical and lexical aspects necessary for coding meanings, which are viewed classically to be the most important and basic things to teach. The target of language learning, according to this view, is the mastery of this system of aspects as a way to learn language as the ultimate goal (Carroll, 2015; Graves, 2014; Nunan, 1988b; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yalden, 1983).

The structural view of language has been traditionally linked to the structural or grammatical syllabus, which is considered to be the most common kind of syllabus (Krahnke, 1987; Murray & Christison, 2011; Rabbini, 2002). Describing it as a “synthetic” type of syllabus, Krahnke (1987, p. 16) comments that such a structural syllabus “requires the analysis of language (content), such as word frequency counts, grammatical analysis, and discourse analysis” first. It is also commonly associated with cognitive method of language teaching, such as Audiolingualism and Structural-Situational Approach, which reinforce that “languages are best learned through conscious knowledge of the forms of the language and the rules for their combination” (p. 17). Therefore, teachers’ role is central as they act as models and controllers of learning. They are responsible to provide explanations and drilling activities with careful attention to the learners’ performance and errors that need to be fixed. Described as a passive role by Kumaravadivelu (2003), teachers’ main role is to transfer knowledge from the experts to the learners. On the other hand, learners are viewed as beings that are supposed to respond to teacher’s stimuli until they get the correct form of language (Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

A common instructional practice that meets this “synthetic” type of syllabi is what is abbreviated as the PPP (presentation, practice, production) (Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the presentation phase, a new grammatical structure is introduced, normally orally by the teacher, to check students’ comprehension. That is followed by the practice phase where the students are given an opportunity to practice that new structure in a controlled context like in the drilling activities. Finally, the students are allowed to practice that new structure in different contexts, using their own information to develop fluency. Accordingly, if such a language content system is targeted by OAAA’s learning- outcome standards as their prime learning output, it could be possible to infer that some traditional instruction of language linguistic content based on the presentation and provision of controlled activities of such linguistic aspects are assumed as an instructional assumption or implication of OAAA’s content standards.

3.2.1.2 The shift of the pendulum: the focus on meaning and the emergence of CLT

Based on different authors who wrote about the history of language teaching methodology (Al-Humaidi, 2007; Banciu & Jireghie, 2012; Byram & García, 2009; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Littlewood, 2013; Nunan, 1988b; Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 1983, 2007), the movement of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has originated primarily as a reaction to the frustration of the traditional methods focusing on the structural aspects of language and the teaching methods that have been developed upon like Audiolingualism. Richards and Rodgers (2001), for example, give the credit of this reaction to the works of Chomsky and the European Council who have clarified that the focus on language grammar has failed to cater L2 learners’ learning needs to improve their language competence.

The development of the concept of “competence” by Chomsky, which has been later coined and developed by other scholar like Hymes (1972) Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Celce-Murcia (2007) has shown that the “grammatical competence” or “linguistic competence”, which is the main focus of the structural teaching methods, is only one part of language competence to be developed but not the only one. According to Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983, p. 6), communicative competence is formed of four dimensions, which are “grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence”. Therefore, its development, as stated by Littlewood (2011, p. 545), has “revolutionized language teaching”, not only by redefining the goals of teaching but also its methods. It has, in fact, led to dramatic implications about how language is viewed and consequently how it is taught, which has paved the way to the development of what is so-called the communicative language approach or communicative language teaching (CLT). This is actually where the functional and interactional views of language listed above take place, which both formulate what is known today as CLT. Therefore, before moving to the functional and interactional views of language and their instructional implications, I find it necessary first to

examine what CLT is (section 3.2.1.2.1) and how it has tackled the issue of language forms instruction as in the traditional structural methods (section 3.2.1.2.2).

3.2.1.2.1 What is CLT?

One implication of the functional and interactional views of language, based on the development of the concept of “communicative competence”, is the adoption of what is known later as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which has consequently been the motive of the development of different syllabus design proposals to meet CLT, including the Notional/Functional syllabus design, skill- based design and task-based syllabus design (Richards, 2006). However, the development of CLT has been confronted with a number of theoretical and practical dilemmas that have challenged its existence as an independent method (Harmer, 2003; Hunter & Smith, 2012; W. Littlewood, 2012; William Littlewood, 2013; Spada, 2007).

Theoretically, there seems to be a consensus among scholars that the core goal of CLT is the development of learners’ communicative competence through helping them to use their knowledge of a language to make communication (Banciu & Jireghie, 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Littlewood, 2012; Savignon, 2007). However, a number of them have indicated that defining CLT is not an easy thing. Littlewood (2011, p. 541; 2012), who admits that CLT has got “a problem of Identity”, states that “nobody knows what CLT is”, while Harmer (2003, p. 289) indicates that it means “a multitude of different things to different people”. A similar concern is shared by Spada (2007) who agrees with Littlewood (2011; 2013) that what we mean by CLT depends on whom we ask what it means. This uncertainty of what CLT is has not been limited to its identification, but also in its implications to classroom practices (Littlewood, 2012).

Part of this ambiguity of CLT identity is linked to what Littlewood (2011; 2012; 2013) has referred to as the two versions of CLT; the “weak” and “strong” versions. The former is more concerned about the communicative perspective of language, which is more focused on “what we learn”. According to this perspective, more attention is given to teaching language communicative functions instead of language structures (see section 3.2.1.3 for more elaboration about the functional view of language). On the other hand, the strong version of CLT is more concerned about the communicative perspective of learning, which pays its attention on “how we learn”. (See section 3.2.1.4 for more elaboration about interactional view of language). Each version is unique in terms of its instructional implications as will be discussed later.

Based on this vagueness of CLT identity, CLT has been considered to be an approach, not as a method by different scholars (Banciu & Jireghie, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2007). Banciu and Jireghie (2012, p. 94) for instance state, “Communicative Language Teaching is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices”. Hunter and Smith (2012, p. 431) similarly in their

attempt to unpack what CLT is, indicate that CLT has been “methodized” like the other classical teaching methods, while it should not be viewed as such. Additionally, in relation to what has been labelled as communicative teaching materials, Savignon (2007, p. 213) clarifies that CLT cannot be found in materials or textbooks. It is “properly viewed as an approach, or theory of intercultural communicative competence to be used in developing materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning”. Last but not least, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 172) state that “Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures.”

As a result of this conceptualization of CLT as an approach, a wide range of teaching activities is suggested in CLT as emphasized in the two frameworks of CLT classroom activities proposed by Richards (2006) and Littlewood (2004; 2011; 2013). Language learning in CLT, Richards (2006) indicates, does not only occur because of good habits formation through drilling activities targeting structural or grammatical aspects of language. Instead, he (2006) recommends that teachers should strike a balance between activities that focus on accuracy and the ones that focus on fluency in a way that accuracy-based activities facilitate the development of fluency. Accordingly, Richards (2006, pp. 16-17) suggests three types of classroom activities “mechanical, meaningful, and communicative”. The mechanical activities refer to the “controlled practice activity which students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using”, such as drilling activities targeting a grammatical item. The meaningful activities are those activities where “language control is still provided but where students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice”. An example of such activities is the use of different prepositions to describe locations of buildings. Finally, the communicative activities are where “practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable”.

This multidimensional altitude of activities and instructional practices in CLT can also be seen in the extended framework given by Littlewood (2004; 2011; 2013). Littlewood stresses that language learning experience in CLT should be represented in a very broad framework. Such framework is a result of a complementary relation between what is so called “analytic” and “experiential” dimensions. While the analytic dimension is more concerned about the learning activities that focuses on the structural and functional aspects of language, the experiential dimension is more oriented towards using such language aspects in natural real communicative experiences or practices to facilitate the transition from controlled to automatic processing of language. Based on this understanding of the complementary relationship between the analytic and experiential classroom activities, Littlewood (2004; 2011; 2013) proposes a comprehensive framework of classroom activities in CLT, which seeks to accommodate a continuum of activities

that ranges from “non-communicative” activities focusing on forms to the “authentic communication” activities that focus on meaning (see table 3.1. below), corresponding to the weak and strong versions of CLT discussed above. The inclusion of this wide range of activities has allowed CLT to incorporate an “unlimited” number of classroom activities and procedures, which makes it as an “umbrella term” (Harmer, 2007, p. 70).

| Focus on forms | | ← | → | Focus on meaning |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Non-communicative learning | Pre-communicative language practice | Communicative language practice | Structured communication | Authentic communication |
| Focusing on the structures of language, how they are formed and what they mean, e.g. substitution 'discovery' and awareness-raising activities | Practising language with some attention to meaning but not communicating new messages to others, e.g. 'question-and-answer' practice | Practising pre-taught language in a context where it communicates new information, e.g. information-gap activities or 'personalized' questions | Using language to communicate in situations which elicit pre-learnt language, but with some unpredictability, e.g. structured role-play and simple problem-solving | Using language to communicate in situations where the meanings are unpredictable, e.g. creative role-play, more complex problem-solving and simple problem- and discussion solving |
| 'Exercises' | ← | (Ellis) | → | 'Tasks' |
| 'Enabling tasks' | ← | (Estaire and Zanon) | → | 'Communicative tasks' |

Table 3.1. Continuum of activities in CLT, as taken from Littlewood (2004, p. 322)

Based on the above, one can understand that the theoretical complications of CLT's identification has resulted in incorporating a wide range of teaching activities as part of CLT's instructional implications that ranges from focus on forms activities to focus on meaning activities. This wide scope of CLT's relevant activities accordingly necessitates the need to make a balance between the focus on forms activities and the focus on meaning activities as indicated by Richards (2006). Accordingly, if such “content” standards as the ones by OAAA prioritize such more communicative aspects, such as communicative “analytical” or “experiential” aspects, the instructional implications should be more compatible to include more than just presenting and providing drilling activities. It is a more balanced process of integrating more communicative activities in addition to traditional structural ones.

The need to have such a balance has seemingly generated a side issue related to what has been later known as Focus of Form (FonF) (Long, 1998a), which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2.1.2.2 Focus on form vs. Focus on forms

The development of CLT with its new focus on meaning seems to cause a number of misconceptions. One of these misconceptions is articulated in the assumed absence of grammar teaching in CLT classes (Byram & García, 2009; Savignon, 1991). Thompson (1996) has highlighted

this issue by stating that such misunderstanding has never been part of CLT. A similar argument is given by Savignon (1991) who argues that grammar teaching importance stems from its being as one of the four communicative competences listed by Canale and Swain (1980). Grammar teaching, to Thompson, is necessary but the key question is how such grammar is taught.

According to Sheen (2002, 2003) and Fotos (1998), two traditional extreme positions have dominated the inclusion or the exclusion of grammar teaching in ELT, traditionally referred as “focus on forms” (FonFs) and “focus on meaning” respectively as represented in table 3.1 above. The advocates of grammar teaching (focus on forms) look at it from the traditional structural approaches that special attention is given to language as discrete items to be covered sequentially as discussed above in section 3.2.1.1 with the structural view of language. The other opposing view (focus on meaning) calls for minimal or no grammar teaching as it interrupts the fluency of communication. This debate about grammar teaching with these two extreme views, Sheen (2002, p. 303) continues, has been “encapsulated” by Long (1998a, 1998b) who has coined the concept of “focus on form” (FonF).

According to Long (1998b), FonF comes as a middle option to overcome the limitations of both extreme views(focus on forms & focus on meaning). It refers to “how attentional resources are allocated, and involves briefly drawing students’ attention to linguistic elements (words, collections, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication” (p.40).

Accordingly, focus on linguistic aspects is neither pre-planned and pre-sequenced to be taught as it is in FonFs perspective, nor neglected as in pure “focus on meaning” view. It is a selective focus triggered by incidental “students’ comprehension or production problems” (p. 40). Therefore, Long (1998b) argues that FonF is considered to be oriented towards learner-centeredness as it respects a student’s internal syllabus and it only occurs when a learner makes a communication problem.

It has been argued by FonF proponents (Ellis, 2002; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002; Norris & Ortega, 2000) that FonF is vital as learners typically do not achieve high levels of grammatical competence without instructional intervention in meaning-oriented instruction. The use of FonF to promote focus on meaning was discussed by Swain and Lapkin (2001) and Comeau (1987) who argue that FonF can be used to promote focus on meaning through collaborative dialogues (social interaction) among learners in order to help them promote language learning. On top of that, it was found by Fotos (1994) that FonF was successful to promote grammar consciousness- raising and L2 negotiated interactions among learners. Similar positive results have been found by Mennim (2003) in relation to the development of accuracy of students’ oral performances. However, such a positive argument about FonF is opposed and considered to be “a

myth" by Sheen (2003), while a middle position towards it was taken by Loewen (2011, p. 580) who concludes that FonF can be "a legitimate option in the L2 classroom".

The conceptualization of FonF has recently been redeveloped by Ellis (2016) who argues that FonF can occur in activities where focus on meaning is primary but attempts to attract learners' attention to certain forms are purposefully made. Second, FonF is not an independent approach by itself. Rather it is a set of procedures to tackle problems with forms either implicitly or explicitly in a communicative context. Additionally, FonF does not have to be only incidental as indicated by Long. Rather, it can be both pre-planned and incidental to whatever communicative or structural problems arising while learners are involved in meaning-based activities. Therefore, it can be "pre-emptive or responsive" (p. 410) to problems that normally occur during meaning-focused activities. It helps students "avoid rather than repair a linguistic problem" that could occur in the future while being involved in such meaning-focused activities.

Accordingly, the representation of language forms in OAAA's learning- outcome standards, I think, is a critical issue as it would show if forms are the starting point for EFP curriculum as explained in the structural view discussed above or as a secondary issue that might emerge from EFP learners' language production problems as suggested in the FonF. The representation of language forms in OAAA's learning- outcome standards will be analysed in phase one of this study in order to articulate more explicitly how they are viewed in those standards; as a starting point for language instruction as in FonFs or as a procedure to fix students' communicative language use problems when more communicative learning- outcomes are targeted.

After this brief introduction of what CLT is and its consequent argument about language forms instruction, the following two sections (3.2.1.3 & 3.2.1.4) aim to present the functional and interactional views of language and language learning and their language instructional implications in more details.

3.2.1.3 Functional view of language

The second view of language is the "functional" view whose development represents the initial step of the development of CLT against the centrality of the grammatical view of language and grammar teaching in language teaching and learning (Carroll, 2015; Yalden, 1983). It views language as a means for expressing functional meaning since language is seen as a complex system of smaller bits, skills or functional units with the hope that acquiring such a complex system comes after learning these functions or skills (Krahnke, 1987; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The specification of language content in terms of communicative functions or skills corresponds to the weak version of CLT as indicated by Littlewood (2011; 2012),

which has ignited the development of what has been later known as (1) the notional/ functional syllabus by Wilkins (1976) and (2) the skill-based syllabus as will be discussed below sequentially.

The notional/functional syllabus, according to Wilkins (1976) is another “synthetic” syllabus based on identifying language as a number of communicative functions, which can be classified into two categories. These two categories are (a) “semanticgrammatcal”, such as time, duration, frequency, quantity, space, and (b) “communicative function”, such as agreeing, greeting, approval, prediction, requesting and other more. Pedagogically, by presenting and practicing these functions like making suggestions then using them in communicative activities like in role plays, learners are expected to learn language (Littlewood, 2012). The presentation and the provision of controlled practice of such communicative functions adopts the PPP model used for teaching the structural aspects with the structural view discussed above (see section 3.2.1.1 above). What is different here is that instead of arranging language content based on its structural items (grammatical, lexical etc.), it is arranged based on its communicative functions as pre-planned units for language instruction. Targeting such communicative functions, accordingly, by OAAA’s learning- outcome standards, shall automatically imply the presentation and provision of controlled practice activities by the EFP teachers in order to help their learners learn the use of these functions.

In addition to teaching communicative functions, another “synthetic” communicative use of language has been represented in what is so called Skill-based syllabus. It is a kind of “synthetic” communicative syllabus that is based on targeting certain language abilities or skills necessary for language use in certain contexts (Rahimpour, 2010). It is common for language programmes that are given for learners who need certain language skills necessary to prepare them for situations they encounter in their daily life like in academia or work settings (Tollefson, 1986). Therefore, such programmes are normally entitled as “work-related” or “survival-oriented” language teaching programmes (Krahnke, 1987; Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), as such skills are used as a means for defining language content in such a kind of syllabi. Those survival skills can be viewed from two perspectives as indicated by Krahnke (1987), White (1988) and Richards (2006). The first one is dealing with the traditional major language skills that include the receptive and productive skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing), while the second view is related to the sub-skills or micro-skills composing the major four skills. White (1988) classifies those sub-skills into four categories: language skills (linguistic), cognitive skills (e.g. planning & organizing information), composition skills and study skills (e.g. skimming and scanning).

Pedagogically, targeting those language sub-skills or micro-skills finds seemingly its way to what has been called as Strategy- Based Instruction (SBI) necessary for the learners’ development

of such micro-skills. Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI), according to Cohen (1998, p. 81), is “a learner-centred approach to teaching that extends classroom strategy training to include both explicit and implicit integration of strategies into the course content”. Its importance stems from its role in developing students’ learning strategies for successful language learning in general and in reading comprehension in particular as indicated in various publications (Anderson, 1991; Block, 1986; A. D. Cohen, 1998; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Griffiths, 2003; Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; V. Harris, 2003; Kyungsim & Leavell, 2006; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Park, 1997; Pressley, 2002). SBI is based upon an underlying premise that “language learning will be facilitated if students become more aware of the range of possible strategies that they can consciously select during language learning and language use” (Cohen, 1998, p. 65). As with the structural and functional views above, targeting such language skills in one or more of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards can be viewed as an implicit invitation to instruct those skills related strategies accordingly.

In relation to the skill of reading, Afflerbach et al (2008, p. 368) and Chamot (2005) indicate that strategies are “deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader’s efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text”. Strategies, Afflerbach et al (2008, p. 368) continues, are necessary to develop reading skills, which are “automatic actions that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency, and fluency and usually occur without awareness of the components or control involved”. According to Grabe and Stoller (2014), Griffiths (2013, p. 39), Chamot (2005) and Harris (2001), SBI in reading is based on a metacognitive perspective of language learning, so learners are expected to be more engaged cognitively so both their “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge need to be developed. To improve their declarative knowledge means that learners should know both what strategy to use and how to use it, while practicing it is to improve their procedural one (Chamot, 2005, p. 124). Because of its nature developed from a cognitive perspective, it has been argued by different scholars that language learning strategies are possibly teachable (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; R. Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Pressley, 2002).

Different models of strategy- based instruction have been developed by different scholars (Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Harris, 2001; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). However, they seem to share common steps or phases as compared by Harris (2003), including modelling, practicing and finally evaluating the use of strategies. Effective SBI in reading skill seems to be relatively indifferent. According to both Griffiths (2013) and Pressley (2002), it aims to achieve two main elements to enhance learners’ reading comprehension or learners’ metacognition, which refers to learners’ knowledge of their thinking process. The first one is related to raising learners’ awareness of targeted strategy/strategies through teachers’ explanation and modelling. Rubin (1987) and Oxford (1989) indicate that the learners’ awareness of the available strategies to

be used puts them in a better position to make their own choices of strategies. The second aim of SBI, Griffiths (2013) adds, is linked to the provision of opportunities for practicing those strategies. According to Oxford (1989), such practice opportunities are vital since they encourage atomization of such strategies whenever needed.

A more detailed framework of “explicit” strategy-based instruction in reading is suggested by Pearson and Dole (1987). They suggest five phases that systematically offer a provision of what, how, why and when one reading strategy is used through modelling by reading teachers before giving gradual opportunities for their students to practice such strategies. These five phases are “modelling”, “guided practice”, “consolidation”, “independent practice” and “application”. Modelling is where teachers explain what strategy and how it is applied in a given reading text through load thinking. The second phase is called ‘guided practice’. In this phase, teachers work with their students to figure out how they experienced the previous modelling for a particular strategy. Teachers, in this step, are encouraged to share their feedback to their students’ own concerns. Next, the ‘consolidation’ of strategies applications is followed. Here, teachers are expected to check students’ understanding of what strategy to be used is and how it is applied. Teachers may also check with their students why or when a particular strategy is used. After these introductory phases of a reading strategy, teachers can give an opportunity for an independent practice where a worksheet is provided to the students with the assumption that they are nearly responsible enough to decide what strategy to be used and how it is applied. In this phase, teachers may discuss their student’ responses, either correct or incorrect, in order to prevent repeatedly occurring application failures. The final phase, application, is where the students are provided with a real reading text in order to apply all the reading strategies they have been introduced to and trained with in the previous lessons to apply.

At the end of section 3.2.1.3, it can be stated that targeting such “synthetic” language units of content, either as communicative functions or language subskills by OAAA’s learning-outcomes may add or trigger another implicit assumption or implication that explicit instruction of such communicative functions or related strategies is theoretically expected for the achievement of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards. As stated earlier, such instructional implications are derived consequently from language teaching methodology literature, which in one way or another might find its way to manage classroom instruction as enhanced by the language content units targeted by the learning- outcome standards themselves.

3.2.1.4 The interactional view of language

The third language view is the interactional one. It sees language, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.21), as “a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations” through interaction. It is more concerned about learning process through the provision of opportunities of participation in open ended meaningful interaction or talks (Alexander, 2006; Dagarin, 2004;

Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards, 2006). The centrality of natural interactions as a means for language learning is rooted in language learning theories as indicated by Rivers (1987, p. 4) who defines it as “Students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages”, which involves “not just expression of one’s own ideas but comprehension of those of others”. It is also linked to the strong version of CLT, according to Littlewood (2012; 2013) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), which is based on the premise that language is acquired through natural authentic communication with no direct or explicit instruction of language structures or communicative functions as explained above with the instructional implications of the different “synthetic” views of language discussed above in sections 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.3.

The interactional view of language is deeply rooted, according to Littlewood (2013), in the natural approach perspective of learning by Krashen and Terrell, which is based on the belief that effective language learning comes as a result of only natural acquisition processes. It is also rooted in what is so called “process-based syllabus” (Krahnke, 1987; Nunan, 1988b) or “process-based approach” (Richards, 2006), which prioritizes the process of learning over its products (either structural or functional) in order to create opportunities for language learning. Therefore, it is not based on pre-defined and pre-sequenced systematic language input. Rather, it is more concerned about the creation of the conditions that allow learners’ involvement in meaningful interactive activities (Kim, 2001; B. Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKinley, 2015). Based on this socio-constructivist perspective of learning, the effects of learners’ interactions with others is vital as it is believed that through active participation in classroom interaction activities, learners facilitate language development and become more autonomous learners in the process of making meanings through dialogic interaction (Yang & Wilson, 2006). Therefore, the quality of teacher-students classroom interaction is claimed to be vital in the development of learners’ communicative competence (Barnes, 2008; Fisher, 2006; S. Walsh, 2011) as it allows learners to “develop consciousness, learn control over internal mental processes” (Fisher, 2007, p. 616).

Pedagogically, to some scholars (Nunan, 2014; Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a representative articulation of such communicative interactional view of language learning in ELT context. TBLT is considered to be a teaching methodology that is focused on the classroom interactional processes (Richards, 2006) and teaching for communication (Littlewood, 2012), and as a further extension of CLT (Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2006). It is a pedagogical articulation of the process- oriented syllabus (Nunan, 1988b) or analytic syllabus (Krahnke, 1987) in language syllabus designs. Its prime pedagogical focus is not on what to be learned (content) as in structural or functional approaches of language teaching but the process of learning through negotiation and reinterpretation in real communications (Breen, 1984; Candlin, 1984; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Long & Crookes, 1992; Richards &

Rodgers, 2001) or what Littlewood (2013, p.5) has labelled as the “communicative perspective on learning”. Therefore, TBLT advocates argue that language learning is best achieved by being exposed to language and using it, through offering sufficient language input and output (Krahne, 1987) as well as language interaction (Skehan, 2003).

An exemplary pedagogical framework that prioritizes learning of language through the natural use of language can be found in the framework given by Willis (1996). This framework is composed of three phases, which are (1) pre-task, (2) task cycle and (3) post- task. In the pre-task phase, a teacher may use different activities in order to help the students understand the themes or the task objective. Different tasks can be implemented at this stage including brainstorming Willis suggests. This helps learners get useful exposure to language input like new vocabulary, which will help them be more prepared in the following phase. In the second phase, teachers let the students do the task in pairs or in small groups, giving them the opportunity to express themselves with the language they have whether orally or in writing. Teachers at this stage monitor student performance without any intervention to fix their errors. Building confidence and fluency is a priority here. Later, a preparation for whole- class reporting is conducted in order to perfume the reporting of the discussions they have already performed in pairs or small groups to the whole class. This is all followed by a post- task phase where an overall evaluative discussion of how the task was implemented is performed. FonF can be also performed at this final stage too.

To sum up what has been discussed in section 3.2 (ELT in theory), language instruction has gone through different stages of theorizations, as led by the three major views of language and language learning. The instructional implications of such views are vast and overlapping. CLT as a comprehensive theoretical instructional framework or umbrella, with its “weak” and “strong” versions, seems to be a leading approach towards framing language instruction towards the development of learners’ communicative competence. Therefore, establishing theoretical linkages between the “content” standards of OAAA for EFPs and the overlapping instructional implications of the three views of language and language learning is arguably possible, at least at the stage of EFP curriculum planning. Such an establishment, I may argue, can be done through the identification of the kind of language content unit(s) targeted by each one of the learning-outcome standards of OAAA. The PPP can be an instructional option if “synthetic” units of language (e.g. grammatical, lexical, communicative functions) are targeted. Another option is the integration of SBI if micro- skills of language are targeted such as scanning or skimming in reading. However, if the focus is not on those synthetic units of language content but on being involved in authentic communicative communication, then, the provision of opportunities and the emphasis on language interactive use by the learners is what teachers are expected to pay their instructional attention to.

Accordingly, the “procedural” conceptualization of educational quality as discussed in Sallis’ (2002) framework through learning- outcome standards (see section 2.3.2) can be theoretically linked to particular “best” instructional practices in the “transformational” perspective of quality, which is more concerned about the process of education, including language instruction through language content targeted in those learning- outcome standards and the theoretical views of language and language learning they embrace as discussed by Richard and Rodgers (2001) above. This theoretical linkage can be an alternative replacement of a more explicit prescription of what teachers need to do pedagogically, depending on what is provided by language teaching methodology literature, especially when such a prescription of instruction is missing by the “content” standards providers. In other words, it can be supposedly an indirect and implicit way to manage instruction through learning- outcome standards, which might trigger EFL teachers’ own theoretical knowledge from ELT methodology literature, and accordingly their own classroom instructional practices. However, such a perceived role of such “content” standards requires a deeper investigation based on real classroom empirical data, which this study aims to investigate, in order to better understand their management role of learning-outcome standards.

As moving to the next section (section 3.3), it is highly fundamental to clarify at this stage that classroom instruction at the enacted curriculum level is more complex and diverse. As reported in different publications, neither one syllabus design based on teaching particular language content units is expected to be observed (Johnson, 2009; Reilly, 1988), nor one teaching method or approach is normally followed by teachers in their classrooms (Hall, 2011). The following section (3.3) aims to introduce this perspective of the nature of classroom instruction, linking it to the results of research borrowed from different studies where CLT with its instructional implications has been introduced by top authorities as an innovative model for instructional reform but confronted with various practical dilemmas. Such a presentation is necessary to set the floor for any investigation of classroom instruction management through top-down initiations, including the use of learning outcome standards in ELT context.

3.3 Contextualization of ELT practices

After the discussion of some instructional principles and practices in ELT in theory above (section 3.2), I attempt, in this section, to review some characteristics of classroom instruction as viewed in real classroom contexts. The importance of this section is to highlight the difference between what is planned and what is performed, between what is assumed to be seen by the developers of curriculum as “best” instructional practices as an innovative way for instructional management or reform and what is really happening pedagogically as contextualized practices in

particular settings. Such a differentiation is a vital aspect when a top-down attempt to manage or reform classroom instruction is initiated at the curriculum implementation phase as I am investigating in this study.

Accordingly, this section will include the discussion of the features of contextualization of classroom instruction from two main aspects, which I find them very important when talking about any top-down attempt of language classroom instruction management. The first one is concerned about the relation between teaching methodology literature as a source for seeking best instructional practices for language teaching as theorized by the experts and suggested by Crabbe (2003) on one hand, and real classroom instructional practices as practiced by teachers on the other hand. This will shed some light on the contextualization of classroom instruction as an important dimension that needs to be considered when investigating classroom instruction management/ reform by top authorities through pre-defined methodological implications, either explicitly as will be discussed in section 3.3.1 or implicitly as implied by “content” standards as the case with OAAA in Oman. The second area is concerned about the contextual factors that mediate such contextualization of classroom instruction, which might function as a fostering or hindering forces for the success or failure of top-down attempts to manage or reform classroom instruction (3.3.2).

3.3.1 Contextualization of instructional practices

Language instruction has traditionally been dominated by teaching methods for a long time, as seeking the best method for language teaching and learning was the main concern for language teaching theorists. Teaching methods has always been perceived to represent what teachers practice in classrooms in accordance to what theorists propose. However, in practice, language teaching has not been found as such, as emphasized by different scholars like Duff (2014b), Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2002; 2003, 2006), Hall (2011), Brown (2002) and Mackey (1965), and as exemplified in numerous studies, which have investigated the practical dilemmas of the adoption of certain teaching approaches like the CLT (see section 3.3.2 below).

A teacher’s classroom practices, according to Kumaravadivelu, are the result of his/her adoption or adaptation of some sets of pedagogical strategies indicated by theorists or syllabus designers, but not necessarily a particular method by itself. It is more of a “personal theory” developed by an individual teacher through the process of putting “professional theories” into the test of contextual practice (O’Hanlon, 1993). Such an individual teacher’s approach of language teaching has been defined by Brown (2002, p. 11) as “the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom. It is the cumulative body of knowledge and principles that enables teachers, as “technicians” in the classroom, to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful pedagogical techniques, and to assess the outcomes of those

treatments". Therefore, such a teacher's approach of teaching is not based on a "static" set of teaching principles or procedures as in the method era summarized in section 3.2 above. Instead, Brown (2002) continues, it is a "dynamic" process of teaching practices development as informed by the interaction between one teachers' approach and classroom practices.

In the EFP where this study took place, there has been lots of work to align the teaching and non-teaching materials to meet such learning- outcome standards as stated in the introduction (see section 1.2.2). Such a development of teaching and non-teaching materials have been used as an indicator for curriculum change to comply with the new learning- outcome standards for accreditation purposes. How teachers are using these teaching materials in classroom instruction is an area that is normally beyond the interest or capability of traditional approaches of EQM authorities, including OAAA. In this way, I may argue that the development of new teaching materials to meet OAAA's learning- outcome standards is a primary step towards achieving these learning- outcomes. However, this step by itself is not enough to claim that such learning- outcome standards are influential enough to enhance language instructional practices of EFP teachers. Teachers' daily instructional practices are of high importance in order to prove or disprove this kind of linkage between what is instructionally assumed as the best instructional practices leading to the achievement of the targeted learning- outcomes and the teaching practices that can be witnessed in EFP classrooms on a daily basis. Glisan (2010), Duff (2014b) and Donato (2009, p. 269), for instance, warn that relying on the alignment of teaching materials may give a false feeling of comfort that such materials are enough to think that the aims such materials have been developed for have been met, while it is only a "labelling" practice rather than real classroom instructional practice. In this study, accordingly, real instructional practices from real EFP classes are viewed to be what determines the impact relation of such "content" standards on teachers' instructional practice, not the teaching and non- teaching materials already developed to meet them by the LC itself.

Another common understanding of teaching to be more sensitive to the context where it occurs in has also been articulated as a central issue in language education as indicated by different scholars, opposing the imposition of a particular teaching method with particular fixed instructional assumptions or implications (Bax, 2003; Crabbe, 2003; Harmer, 2003; Holliday, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Such a consideration highlights an important area for any top-down instructional management initiative as well if the aim of it is the total control of teachers' instructional practices. Crabbe (2003) in his process quality framework, for instance, emphasizes that in addition to the theoretical methodological instructional "best" practices needed to achieve learning, understanding the context where teaching and learning occurs is fundamental in order to understand the cultural differences in terms of the values or roles that are more dominant in a particular institution. Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2001) indicates that "particularity" of pedagogy

is required in order to make it relevant. To be so, it has to be “sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context”. Therefore, Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that there is no one set of pedagogical principles or procedures conditional to achieve a set of pedagogical aims or objectives. This in one way resamples to some extent what Heyworth (2013, p. 294) states in relation to the need to identify “best feasible practice” to achieve targeted learning and set it as a targeted standard by itself. Just like Crabbe (2003), Heyworth (2013) warns that such an identification of such “best practices” should be context- sensitive as best practices in one context but not necessarily the best in other contexts.

Based on the above arguments, it is possible to say that any instructional assumptions or implications believed to be the “best practices” for language teaching in the EFP derived from language teaching methodology literature as recommended by Crabbe (2003) need to be investigated based on real classroom instructional practices in order to better understand the relation between the planned and the practiced, so accordingly the feasibility of the washback impact of the learning outcome standards as a tool for classroom instruction management on real classroom instructional practices.

A number of relevant studies have reported that instruction reform in larger curriculum change experiences, based on the adoption of one teaching method or one approach, like CLT (Littlewood, 2012), has confronted practical contextual dilemmas. The implementation of CLT principles at the elementary, secondary and university levels has been investigated in different contexts like in Libya (Orafi & Borg, 2009), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al Asmari, 2015), Yemen (Bataineh, Bataineh, & Thabet, 2011), Iran (Kalanzadeh, Mirchenari, & Bakhtiarvand, 2013; Mowliae & Rahimi, 2010), Turkey (Kırkgöz, 2008), Bangladesh (Ansarey, 2012; Rahman, 2015), Hong Kong (Carless, 2003, 2004), Asia-pacific area (Butler, 2011), China (Hu, 2002a, 2005a, 2005b), Thailand (Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2005; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007), Korea (Lee, 2014; Li, 1998), and Japan (Lochland, 2013; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). In none of these contexts, CLT’s implementation was found to be smooth or problem-free in relation to classroom instruction.

In their investigation of three teachers’ implementation of a new communicative curriculum in Libyan secondary school, Orafi and Borg (2009), for instance, have found remarkable differences between the new curriculum intentions based on CLT principles and the real classroom teaching practices of the observed three teachers. Such differences included witnessing more teacher-fronted question and answer patterns in activities where encouraging pair work activity among their students was intended. In another activity, it was also found that one of the teachers shifted the focus from the oral discussion about weather newspaper headlines into a session for translating those headlines into Arabic. Similarly, the integration of CLT principles in

Tehran schools was the interest of Mowlaie and Rahimi (2010) who have found that what is practiced by the participating teachers is a form of combination between Grammar-translation and CLT approach.

Another study by Kırkgöz (2008) investigated the impact of 32 Turkish teachers' understanding and training of Communicative Oriented Curriculum (COC) upon their teaching classroom practices in English classes for young learners in Turkey. A major finding of this study reveals that the observed teachers' own instructional practices ranged in a wide continuum between language knowledge transmission- oriented and interpretation-oriented teaching activities. Despite the training the teachers received for implementing such a communicative-based curriculum, some teachers were observed deviating "considerably from the principles of CLT" (p. 1867) as they were more emphasizing on delivering language knowledge rather than encouraging their pupils to participate in communication actively.

Such a limited impact of CLT principles to reform instruction in these different contexts can be referred theoretically to the common understanding by those researchers that CLT is a method rather than an broad umbrella concept or approach with a number of "methodized" principles or procedures as indicated above by Banciu and Jireghie (2012), Hunter and Smith (2012, p. 431) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) (see section 3.2.1.2.1). However, such a view, I may say, can be justifiable in such types of studies when the notion of quality control and strict management is adopted from the industrial sector where the variations of workers' practices is not tolerated or not expected. In other words, when instruction reform or management as in this study is investigated, a reference instructional practice is needed to be a starting point for investigating the quality of what is being practiced in the real classrooms so it informs the top authorities if their attempts to reform classroom instruction is making a difference or not.

Furthermore, as mentioned at the end of section 2.5, with the little existing research about the impact of "content" standards on teachers' classroom instruction, the contextual factors that mediate such an impact of standards on classroom instruction, based on teachers' classroom instructional practices, have been under-researched too. The following section is an attempt to review some of the common influencing factors that have mediated the success or failure of CLT integration in language education systems as a tool for top- down instructional reform. The importance of discussing such factors, I may argue, stems from their influence on teacher's own instructional practices, which determines why they teach what they teach in real classrooms, which is crucially linked to the third research question of this study. Consequently, it sheds some light on some possible contextual factors that might determine the success or failure of managing classroom instruction towards particular instructional tendencies as implied by "content" standards.

Finally, it might be important to remind the readers at this stage that the main focus of this study is the attempt to widen our understanding of the nature of the impact of learning-outcome standards on language teachers' classroom instructional practices as discussed earlier in sections 1.2.2- 1.2.4 above. Accordingly, in this particular study, I consider such classroom instructional practices as a starting point for better understanding this phenomenon. The contextual factors, including teachers' beliefs, that shape such instructional practices will be investigated in a later stage/ phase in this study after the investigation of the participating teachers' classroom instructional practices. The aim of such a research with its methodological stand necessitates an open mind to reveal various factors including teachers' own beliefs that will be discussed next as one of the contextual factors or forces that shape classroom practices (see section 3.3.2.2), but not as a main area of investigation, investigating the impact of such standards on teachers' own beliefs. In other words, this research does not aim to study the impact of the learning- outcome standards on shaping teachers' own beliefs of their own classroom teaching. Instead, it prioritizes classroom instructional practices as a starting point or as a genuine platform for understanding what is instructionally practiced by teachers in their classrooms against what is instructionally assumed from the learning- outcome standards. Teachers' beliefs, on the other hand, is viewed as one force that might play a role in shaping particular classroom instructional practices that intersect with what is instructionally assumed from the standards but not necessarily as an aspect being subject to the standards' impact.

3.3.2 Contextual factors for contextualized classroom instruction

The existing literature from the area of curriculum change or reform suggests various factors, which can mediate change/reform success or failure. Different taxonomies of such factors have been theorized and investigated in various publications, including teacher-related, student-related, classroom- related, institution- related (Adams & Newton, 2009; Al Asmari, 2015; Ansarey, 2012; Butler, 2011; Chang & Goswami, 2011; Richards, 2001) and culture-related factors (Butler, 2011; Hu, 2002a, 2005a, 2005b; Li, 1998). This may indicate the multiplicity of potential forces that might play possible roles in the intersection between EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices and the instructional assumptions or implications of OAAA's learning-outcome standards. In this section, institutional and teacher-related factors are only discussed in more details.

3.3.2.1 Institution-related factors

One source of top-down policy implementation conflict is related to pressures, which surround a particular institution or school and consequently limits teachers' ability to adopt creative communicative activities (Bantwini, 2010; Klein, 1994). As emphasized by Adams and Newton (2009), the institutions which curriculum change is introduced to need to be supportive enough to facilitate the change interpretation into classroom practices. Such a support can be

actually represented in the alignment of the institutions' syllabi and assessment activities to the targeted change or reform.

It has been frequently reported that classroom teaching is geared to fulfil exam requirements as a first priority rather than language learning as derived from a targeted methodological perspective. Therefore, it is argued that knowledge-based exams may hinder the implementation of communicative teaching initiatives. Such a concern was indicated by different authors in different contexts as the national grammar and vocabulary exam in China (Hu, 2002b; Qi, 2007) Hong Kong (Cheng, 2004; Chow & Mok-Cheung, 2004), Asia-Pacific region (Butler, 2011), Pakistan (Kausar & Akhtar, 2012) and Iran (Kalanzadeh et al., 2013). Orafi and Borg (2009), for instance, found that one of the reasons why Libyan teachers ignored teaching speaking (oral pair work) in Libyan schools as targeted in the newly introduced communicative curriculum is the exclusion of a speaking component in the assessment. In short, the exams were not aligned to meet the new curriculum outcomes, which made the Libyan teachers teach for the sake of the exams, but not necessarily to meet the aims of the new communicative curriculum. In another case in Korea, the lack of targeting communicative learning outcomes, but only the traditional knowledge-based ones, in the national exams of Korea is what has caused a washback effect on teachers' instruction. Teachers' instruction has been found consequently reverting to the traditional approaches of language teaching as found by Shim and Baik (2000). Another supporting research about the impact of assessment on the enhancement of traditional teaching of language knowledge over communication was done by Deng and Carless (2010), which reveals that one of the participating teachers in this study was focusing on language knowledge-based components over communication for the sake of meeting the demands of the external public examinations to preserve her school's national ranking.

In addition to the alignment of the assessment to the newly introduced communicative teaching approach, developing a matching school curriculum is another way institutions can support classroom instruction. Richards (2001) indicates that such an alignment can be done through the development of textbooks as the core of curriculum that fits with the targeted reform and by allowing teachers to supplement such textbooks whenever needed. Chang and Goswami (2011), in their investigation of the perceptions and experiences with eight Taiwanese English language teachers, found that one factor that impacts the proper implementation of CLT in Taiwanese college English classes is the availability of a matching curriculum that is not only focusing on teaching grammar and reading, but also listening, speaking and writing skills.

Based on the above, it becomes clear that institutions can play a major role in shaping the success of the targeted instructional reform. However, the alignment of classroom instruction by institutions is more complex even if such cultural, logistical or institutional factors are neutralized.

Teacher themselves can be a factor for curriculum change success or failure as will be discussed next.

3.3.2.2 Teacher-related factors

In addition to the factors discussed above, cognitive and psychological factors related to teachers themselves are also equally important. According to Hargreaves (1989, 1992), instructional reform cannot succeed without having crucial changes in the teachers themselves. Hargreaves (1989, p. 54) states “What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these things have powerful implications for the change process, for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into curriculum practice”. Such teacher-related factors may include teachers’ perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the new innovative reform (Bantwini, 2010; Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996), which can play a vital role to the success or failure of a curriculum change (Carless, 1997).

Different studies have been conducted about the impact of teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards new top-down initiatives to enhance classroom instruction. Such attitude studies include the ones conducted by Doyle and Ponder (1977), Carless (1997) and Karavas - Doukas (1995) who found that teacher’s perceptions of their new teaching roles derived from top-down innovations are influential in their success. Similarly, different authors like Carless (1997, 1998), Waugh and Punch (1987), Morris (1985) and more recently Mowliae and Rahimi (2010) argue that teachers’ attitudes towards a new curriculum innovation is vital to its success too. Such an innovation or change needs to be compatible with the teachers’ attitude towards it. Otherwise, resistance to its existence can be a possible consequence.

However, despite the importance of teachers’ own perceptions and attitudes towards curriculum change or innovation, such a role is criticized when it comes to explaining the cause and effect relation to teachers’ own practices. As noted by Loucks-Horsley, Love, Stiles, Mundry, and Hewson (2003) and Saad (2011), what informs peoples’ actions is what they know and believe in so curriculum change may not succeed if it fails to understand the beliefs of the teachers who are supposed to implement it. Belief, as identified by Borg (2001) is a “mental state” accepted by its holder with the recognition that alternative beliefs can be held by others. Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) also add that teachers’ attitudes towards change is not sufficient to explain their pedagogical behaviours. Therefore, they (1996) suggest an inter-relationship among (1) beliefs, which are a cognitive construct that reflect the knowledge we have about something, (2) attitudes, which are a person’s affective and evaluative response to something and (3) actions to explain teachers’ behaviours. Kennedy and Kennedy (1996, p. 355) elaborate this relation by stating “the strength of the belief about the outcome of any action, and the evaluation of that outcome interact to produce the final attitude towards the behaviour”, depending on internal

factors (e.g. teachers' own teaching skills) or external factors (e.g. time availability). Such teachers' beliefs are claimed to be gradually accumulated as stemming from different sources, which can be (1) personal experience of what practice works best, (2) established traditional practices accepted by school, (3) previous research-based findings, (4) scholarly contributions like models and theories, (5) the strategies and techniques that have been examined and determined as effective in the professions of teaching (Kindsvatter, Wilen, & Ishler, 1996).

The impact of teachers' beliefs on their language instructional practices has been investigated by different researchers, who have reached to different findings. Smith (1996), for instance, examined such an impact of beliefs with nine experienced ESL teachers. It was found that teachers' beliefs were crucial in terms of influencing how these nine teachers organized curricular, designed lesson tasks and more importantly how they approached instruction. It showed that teachers who regarded grammar as a core element of language teaching adopted such a view in their curriculum design and developed lesson activities accordingly. On the other hand, those teachers, who were less interested in language grammar but value the communicative view of language, designed their curriculum based on functional and topical themes and found emphasizing students' interactive use of language in class. In general, it was found that there was an "eclectic" use of theory by different teachers but with an internal consistency between an individual teachers' beliefs and practices.

However, this internal consistency between the impact of an individual teacher's beliefs and his/her instructional practices was not found as such in other studies. In their study to examine the "tensions" between three language teachers' beliefs and instructional practices regarding grammar teaching in a private English- medium University in Turkey, Phipps and Borg (2009) found that such beliefs and teaching practices are generally aligned. However, some inconsistencies or tensions were also found in terms of the provision of grammar presentation, grammar controlled practice and group-work for grammar practice. In one of the cases, a teacher had to present about past simple and past continuous, not because she was satisfied with it but because there was a test for those grammatical aspects. In another case, a teacher was observed giving controlled grammar activities to his students. Despite his doubt of their acquisition value, he justified such a practice by saying it is a useful class management tool as it keeps his students calm in the class. In a similar study by Hiep (2007), teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the implementation of CLT were investigated with three teachers in a university in Vietnam. It was found that there are some discrepancies between what teachers believe in and what they do in their classes. Despite their beliefs that align with and support CLT principles as the best teaching method, they were found to be reluctant to practice its teaching techniques such as pair and group work. This reluctance was referred to their feeling that such techniques were not successful

enough, especially with the impact of other external forces like having big class size and examinations.

With respect to curriculum reform in ELT and the study conducted by Orafi and Borg (2009), introduced above in section 3.3.1, some of the observed discrepancies between what is intended by the curriculum develops and teachers' own practices were influenced by the teachers' own prior beliefs about language teaching. One of the participating teachers, Eman, justified her ignorance to emphasize pair work as it was unworkable with her students who tended to use Arabic all the time instead of English. On the other hand, the teachers who believed that pair work was important for their students' learning, including Munir, did not reflect such a positive attitude into their teaching practices, simply because he believed that his students could not handle such pair work activities.

Finally, it could be stated that the investigation of the forces or factors that justify particular teachers' classroom instructional practices can lead to various complicated and overlapping factors that may work individually or collectively towards shaping individual teachers' instructional practices. They can be culture- related, student- related, institution-related or teacher-related as revealed in the studies discussed above in this section. Therefore, what could be actually stated at this point is that the investigation of the intersection between the instructional assumptions or implications of OAAA's standards and the instructional practices of EFP teachers in this study necessitates knowing what factors that mediate such an intersection. To do so, it should be based on a process of penetrating the minds of the EFP teachers themselves in order to understand why they teach what they teach in their EFP classes.

3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, seeking a better understanding of the theoretical relation between "content" standards like the ones created by OAAA for EFPs and EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices can be achieved through identifying the language content they target, which is theoretically linked to particular "best" instructional practices suggested in language methodology literature. This analysis of such language content of such content standards gives a theoretical foundation of their possible instructional assumptions or implications hoped to be seen as "best" practices in the enacted EFP curriculum. However, the previous research, derived from the area of curriculum change/ reform informs us that such top-down intentions, initiatives or plans to manage or enhance instruction are subject to contextualized real teachers' classroom instructional practices, influenced by various and interrelated contextual factors. Therefore, this kind of "tensions" between plans and practices imposes itself in this research as an opportunity for better understanding the impact relation of such an innovative phenomenon to manage teachers' classroom instructional practices.

4 Chapter 4: Research methodology and design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims mainly to provide a detailed description of the research design adopted in this study, which is mainly based on qualitative interpretive/ constructionist paradigm of research and its implications on differ related issues. In order to set out the grounds of such a discussion, I start first this chapter with the description of the setting where this study took place (section 4.2). This is later followed by revisiting the three research questions, which have been allocated in three different phases (section 4.3). In each one of them, a research question is introduced. Third, the discussion of the case study approach adopted in this study will be discussed thoroughly. This will include the discussion of the rationale for its adoption, the identification of the case in this study, the characteristics of the case study design developed to answer the RQs and finally the paradigmatic stand that this study is believed to be nested in (section 4.4). Next, the issues related to sampling (section 4.5), data collection methods used in this study (section 4.6), “trustworthiness” (section 4.7) will be discussed. Towards the end of this chapter, some issues related to the lessons learned from the pilot study (section 4.8), as well as some ethical issues encountered in my data collection trip (section 4.9) will be addressed too. Such a detailed description of such areas is aimed to give a thick description for the readers in order to facilitate their understanding of the backgrounds, thoughts and insights I have had while approaching my research questions and the field work conducted in this study.

4.2 Description of research setting

To start with, this study took place at the Language Centre (LC) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in the Fall semester of the academic year 2015/2016. SQU is the only governmental university in the Sultanate of Oman and it consists of nine colleges, which are (1) Agriculture and Marine Sciences, (2) Art and Social Sciences, (3) Economic and Political Sciences, (4) education, (5) Law, (6) Medicine and Health Sciences, (7) Sciences, (8) Engineering and (9) Nursing (SQU, 2018). The selection of this LC to conduct my study in is based mainly on my long experience as a language teacher in this institution which, I believe, will facilitate a better understanding of the studied phenomenon.

This LC functions as a service centre within SQU and it is responsible for the provision of the EFP for freshly admitted students in the university in order to help them improve their English language proficiency before starting their majors' academic courses. After being admitted to the university, those newly admitted students are given a placement test (PT) in order to determine

their language proficiency levels. Based on their results in this PT, they are allocated in one of the six levels that formulate the whole EFP if they do not score the passing mark. The following table (table 4.1) illustrates the possible routs these students may go through before finishing the whole EFP in less than two years.

In this LC's EFP, there are three main language courses: (1) reading, (2) listening and speaking and (3) writing and research skills. In each course, a number of learning- outcomes are used to be assumingly the starting point for teaching materials development, assessment and instruction. In each one of these courses, continuous and summative assessment occasions are demonstrated to make sure that the learning- outcomes of each course are met.

The majority of the LC's teachers are non-Omanis who are employed with renewable short-term contracts. Their nationalities vary as they come from different countries such as America, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Poland, India, Pakistan and some Arab countries, such as Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Iraq. No pre-service training is given to the LC's teachers targeting the achievement of OAAA's learning- outcome standards in particular as there seems to be a common assumption that they are professional enough to handle classroom instruction with the teaching and non-teaching materials provided by the LC itself. However, a number of optional in-service professional development opportunities are provided throughout their career journey, such as workshops, seminars and conferences that are held at the university itself or outside, but not necessarily in relation to the OAAA's learning- outcome standards in particular.

| Proficiency level | Fall | Spring | Summer | Fall |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | FPEL 0120 | FPEL 0340 | - | FPEL 0560 |
| 2 | FPEL 0230 | FPEL 0450 | FPEL 600 | Credit Courses |
| 3 | FPEL 0340 | FPEL 0560 | - | Credit Courses |
| 4 | FPEL 0450 | FPEL 600 | Credit Courses | |
| 5 | FPEL 0560 | Credit Courses | | |
| 6 | FPEL 603 / FPEL 604 | Credit Courses | | |

Table 4.1: Rout of the EFP at the LC at SQU, as adopted from (SQU, 2012, p. 1)

4.3 Revisiting the research questions

As discussed in section 1.2.2, my personal desire to understand this new phenomenon of standard- based quality management of language programmes to satisfy mainly external stakeholders was my initial motive to conduct this research as it was not clear to me how it is

supposed to enhance or manage the quality of the EFPs in general and the individual teachers' classroom instructional practices in specific. I started with this main idea about how such learning-outcome standards could shape or reform classroom instructional practices of the EFP teachers with their obvious different cultural, educational and teaching experience backgrounds as in the LC where I used to work. This concern was represented in forming the second RQ listed below as a way to identify ways of intersection between classroom instructional practices of individual EFP teachers and the assumed instructional implications by the standards developers. Later, throughout my PhD journey and after years of accumulative readings, such a personal motivation has been strengthened theoretically after recognizing that such an impact of standards is an area that still lacks theorization and research from other different perspectives as discussed above in section 2.5. Such areas included understanding the theoretical instructional assumptions or implications of such learning- outcome standards when no such assumptions are stated more explicitly by the standards developers. Such an enquiry resulted in the formulation of RQ1 below, which can be viewed as a necessary prerequisite before moving to the investigation of real classroom instructional practices of the EFP teachers. Not only that, it was interesting too that the exiting literature talks about the factors that mediate the impact of these "content" standards away from any concrete observed classroom practices. It tends to be based on teachers' personal reflections or reports. Therefore, I have decided to raise RQ3 to investigate such factors based on teachers' reports about their own classroom instructional practices recorded in my classroom observations. Accordingly, I have ended up with three sequential RQs as presented below. Each one of them will represent an independent phase of this research study.

4.3.1 Phase one

In phase one, I will attempt to answer RQ1: *what instructional assumptions are implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards for the EFPs?* As stated earlier (see section 1.2.4), OAAA disseminated a number of language learning- outcomes to the EFP providers in the Sultanate without prescribing to the them what EFP teachers need to do pedagogically in order to achieve these learning- outcomes. With the absence of such as an explicit prescription, this phase aims to identify these theoretical instructional assumptions or implications implicitly embedded in every single OAAA's learning- outcome standard. Relying on what has been discussed about language instruction in language teaching methodology (see section 3.2) for different types of language content, which is derived from the three different views of language and language learning, an indirect linkage between each OAAA's standard and particular "best" instructional assumptions or implications, as recommended by Crabbe (2003) (see section 2.4), will be established. The data used in this phase is OAAA's learning- outcome standards for EFPs themselves as text. This relation between OAAA's learning- outcomes as a text with quality from the instructional perspective as reviewed in section 3.2 will be operationalized or facilitated

through the concept of “intertextuality” borrowed from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (see section 5.3.1 for more elaboration of intertextuality).

4.3.2 Phase two

In phase two, I aim to answer RQ2, which states *Do EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning-outcome standards? If so, how?* In this phase, a systematic investigation of EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices will be conducted against a selected number of the instructional assumptions or implications extracted in phase one. It attempts to investigate how individual EFP teachers' classroom real instruction may intersect with what is instructionally assumed theoretically as the “best” practice of that language content in that particular standard. Such investigation of intersection will help better understand the washback impact of such “content” standards as a tool for classroom instruction management. During classroom observations, field notes and lesson audio recording will be administered. The analysis of classroom discourse episodes from the observed lessons, with the help of teachers' own reports of the aims of their pedagogical practices will be utilized to illuminate what is happening in real EFP classrooms and their possible intersection with what is instructionally implied by the standards in phase one above (see section 5.3.2 for more about classroom discourse analysis).

4.3.3 Phase three

In this phase, I try to answer RQ3: *What contextual factors are fostering/ hindering such an intersection?* Based on the findings of phase 2, I will try to move to investigate the factors that have fostered or hindered the incidents of the recorded intersections between the observed EFP teachers' instructional practices and the instructional assumptions/ implications extracted in phase 1. In phase 3, seeking the rationales of each individual teacher's own instructional practices observed in phase 2 will be the main focus of a number of recall semi-structured interviews with the observed teachers. Each one of them will be given an opportunity to explain why he/she did what he/she was observed doing in their classrooms. In cases where seeking further justifications are necessary to explain particular instructional practices, the relevant course coordinators (CCs) are invited to give their own input. Such a process will involve conducting a number of recall semi-structured interviews with the observed teachers as main participants who formulate the inner circle of curriculum implementation and the relevant CCs who represent the outer circle.

As indicated above, this study is taking real classroom instructional practices as a starting point for investigating the impact of such “content” standards. Therefore, it implies that the instructional practices of individual teachers (cases) will be fundamental for this study as it does not approach classroom instructional practices from teachers' perceptions of their own practices but from their real classroom practices. Accordingly, a multiple qualitative case study is adopted

as a broad approach for this research. The following section (section 4.4) will discuss in more details the case study approach adopted in this research.

4.4 Case study approach

4.4.1 Why case study?

Traditionally, different kinds of research approaches can be found under the umbrella of qualitative research, including ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, critical research and case study (Merriam, 2009). However, the selection of case study over other designs, Merriam (2009, p. 45) continues, depends on “what the researcher wants to know”. The selection of case study approach in this study comes as a result of its usefulness to establish a linkage between instructional practices of individual cases (EFP teachers) and understanding a broader phenomenon (standard-based language programmes) this study aims to investigate and make a contribution in. Duff (2014a, pp. 4-5), for instance, states “The main goal of case study research is to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied, of which the case is an exemplar”. Case study also helps gaining full understanding of “the case in depth” in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context (Punch, 2014, p. 120). It is preferable when “how” or “why” questions are raised (Yin, 2014, p. 4), and it is researchers’ choice when they “are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42).

Accordingly, the conduction of this research as a qualitative case study comes as a result of the aims of this research themselves, which attempt to investigate the impact of “content” standards on individual teachers’ real classroom instructional practices as a way to extend our understanding of the use of this type of standards as a tool to manage quality of language classroom instruction. In other words, individual teachers’ own instructional practices are of high importance to investigate such an impact on individual teachers. Accordingly, the need for “exemplar” cases (individual teachers) in their natural contextual settings is presumably a demand in such a kind of studies. As indicated at the end of section 2.5, few studies about the impact of such standards on teachers’ classroom instruction, based on teachers’ real instructional practices have been conducted.

4.4.2 What is the ‘case’?

In case study research, the identification of what we mean by case study is vital as “the torment of the case study begins with its definitional penumbra” (Gerring, 2007). Therefore, it is very essential to characterize the studied case (s) (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). While Stake (1995) defines it by pinpointing the unit of the study, Merriam (2009, p. 46) gives a broader

definition, stating that “qualitative case study can be defined in terms of the process of actually carrying out the investigation, the unit of analysis (the bounded system, the case), or the end product”. This multi-dimensional definition of case study is also emphasized in the work of Richards (2011, pp. 209-10) who defines a case study, depending on four main characteristics, which are (1) “case studies are bounded”, (2) “case studies are contextualized”, (3) “case are studied in their natural context” and finally (4) “case studies draw on multiple data sources”.

Richards (2011, p. 209) first states that all definitions of case study in relevant literature talk about its “boundedness”. Described as the most “defining characteristic”, Merriam (2009, p. 40) suggests that a case is a “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” that could be “a single person who is a case example of some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy”. Similarly, Yin (2014) lists individuals, organizations, processes, programs, neighbourhoods, institutions and even events as potential bounded cases. Briefly, a case is “a complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2) that we select to understand its “complexities” within its boundaries (Stake, 2005, p. 44). Therefore, Punch (2014, p. 122) emphasizes that a researcher needs to “identify and describe the boundaries of the case as clearly as possible”. In this research, this bounded unit, thing, or case accordingly is individual EFP teachers whose classroom instructional practices are to be investigated against the instructional implications of OAAA’ learning- outcome standards. The selection of individual EFP teachers as the cases comes from the understanding that each one of them is a unique case by itself with its own instructional practices that might share some common features with the other teachers’, but not necessarily the same.

Second, a case study, like other forms of social qualitative research, needs to be contextualized. In this regard, Richards (2011, p. 209) admits that studying a case needs to be done with a consideration to the context where the studied case is embedded in. It needs not to be an isolated entity but linked to “a particular geographic, political, and cultural space and time” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, pp. 119-20). In other words, the importance of a case stems from the role it could play in revealing about “ a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon” in a particular context (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Accordingly, the individual EFP teachers, who are the cases in this study, do not function in vacuum. Rather, they belong to an identifiable EFP provided by a well-known LC at SQU in the Sultanate of Oman.

However, Richards (2011) reports that such as a characteristic of case study is traditionally linked to the challenge of the extent a single case could represent a larger scheme of case family from which the chosen case originally belongs to and accordingly its ability to generate research findings generalization afterwards. In response to this argument, Stake (1995) and Merriam (2009) clarify that the real business of case studies is not actually making

generalizations but particularization instead. A case is chosen not to identify “how it is different from others but what it is, what it does” (p. 8). Not only that, Stake (2005, p. 448) warns that “Damage occurs when the commitment to generalize or to theorize runs so strong that the researcher’s attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself”. It is rather the responsibility of the reader to decide what to transfer from a particular case to his/her context from the thick description provided by the researcher (Erickson 1986; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000). More discussion about generalizability will be provided in section 4.7.2 below when talking about ‘transferability’ under ‘trustworthiness’.

The third tenet of case studies, Richards (2011) continues, is that they should be studied in their natural context or natural setting. In this study, therefore, the participating teachers’ own classroom instructional practices are investigated as they are performed in real EFP classroom environment. According to Richards (2011), this characteristic has two implications on two areas, which are (1) data collection methods and (2) ethical issues considerations in order to “do justice to the richness and complexity of the natural context”. These two areas will be discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter in sections 4.6 and 4.9 respectively. Finally, drawing on multiple data sources is the fourth characteristic of case studies in order to achieve the justice to the complexity of the natural context of the case study as derived from qualitative or quantitative data collection methods (Richards, 2011). In this study, different sources of data have been utilized as will be discussed in more details later in section 4.6.

4.4.3 Case study design

After the identification of research questions, Yin (2014) emphasizes on the importance of identifying the research case study design suitable for answering the research questions. Richards (2011, p. 211), in this regard, argues that taking decisions about the suitable design is one of the “puzzling decisions” in such case studies as no “definite map” is out there to offer. Instead, he suggests that researchers should make their own design decisions based on three types of case study categorizations, which are (1) number of cases, (2) orientation and (3) case type, depending on the aims of the study of course (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Regarding the number of cases, Richards (2011), along with Yin (2014), proposes two major types of case study designs; “single- case design” and “multiple- case design”. While the former is used to understand a unique or rare event, multiple - case design is useful when the aim of research is to compare between two cases or more in one context. Yin (2014) contends that the adoption of the multiple-case design is more useful as its findings are viewed as “more compelling”, which makes such a study regarded as “more robust” (p.57). It allows the researcher to identify areas of similarity or contradictions between the cases. However, conducting such a kind of research design, Yin continues, is more expensive and time consuming that goes

sometimes beyond the capability of a single researcher. As I am not interested on the practices of one particular EFP teacher as a unique case that deserves investigation for its sake, a multiple case study design will be adopted. Despite the demanding efforts I need to pay in a multiple case study, it is expected to give me a wider scope of the teachers/cases' instructional practices with different ways of intersection with the embedded instructional assumptions of the EFP's standards. Such various practices will also help me arguably to be more exposed to more factors that inform such a variety of classroom instructional practices.

Regarding orientation, Richards (2011) reports that there are two types of case studies; "intrinsic" and "instrumental" as informed by Stake (1995, p. 3). The intrinsic one is best used when the researcher has "an intrinsic interest in the case" itself for better understanding of the case, not to gain a better understanding of a more general phenomenon or to learn about other cases. On the other hand, the instrumental type is more concerned about developing a better and broader understanding of something through the study of a case, so studying a case is used as a means in order to gain a deeper insight of an issue or phenomenon. In this study, the main aim is to contribute in widening our understanding of the bigger phenomenon of standard-based language programmes and its washback impact on classroom instruction. It is not, therefore, an intrinsic orientation towards the instructional practices of a particular EFP teacher. Thus, this makes this study more instrumental than intrinsic.

Finally, Richards (2011, p. 211) again refers to Yin's (2014) work that case studies can be categorized based on their type to (1) "exploratory", (2) "descriptive" and (3) "explanatory". The aim of the exploratory case study is to "define parameters, refine research questions, test procedures etc. prior to the main study", which can be used as a pilot study. The descriptive case study, on the other hand, aims to "deliver as complete a description as possible of the relevant phenomenon in its context". Finally, explaining "how events happen, often linking cause and effect" is the major aim of the explanatory one. Out of these three types, this multiple case study can be situated as a descriptive and explanatory one. It is descriptive as it attempts to give a full account of the various observed instructional practices of all the multiple cases/ teachers in this study in order to identify how they possibly intersect with the instructional assumptions/ implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards. In addition, it can be attributed as explanatory as it sheds some light on the factors the mediate such intersections as derived from the teachers'/ cases' own reports of their own classroom instructional practices. Overall, this study can be characterized as a multiple, instrumental, descriptive and explanatory case study.

4.4.4 Paradigmatic stand of case studies

Case study, as the one in this research, is traditionally claimed to be a qualitative strategy that stems from the constructivist/ interpretive paradigm (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014), including case

studies in second language education (Duff, 2014a). In this section, I will try to outline the set of beliefs of the interpretive paradigm and the reasons why this case study can be allocated under its umbrella.

Different definitions of research paradigm are given by different scholars. However, there seems to be a consensus that a paradigm is a set or a framework of beliefs or assumptions. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) for instance define it as “a set of basic beliefs(or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles”, while Willis (2007, p. 8) identifies it as “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field”. The importance of having such sets of beliefs by researchers, as put by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107), stems from their representation of a “worldview” that includes “the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts”. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) continue that this representation of the worldview encompasses three fundamental and interrelated questions about (1) ontology (nature of reality), (2) epistemology (nature of relationship between the knower and what can be known) and (3) methodology (how the knower can find out what he/she thinks can be known). The adoption of a particular ontological beliefs or assumptions, as indicated by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) will strengthen a researcher’s epistemological stand about their relation to reality, which will result consequently in methodological implications regarding data collection methods. As established in some related publications, researchers can start their research from three main paradigms known as (1) positivism, (2) constructionism/ interpretivism and (3) the critical paradigm (Silverman, 1998; Taylor & Medina, 2013). Therefore, positioning a research project within one framework of beliefs/ paradigm is recommended as it helps the researcher to reflect upon his/her choices, especially in relation to the research methods used to collect data (Ponelis, 2015).

Unlike the positivist ontological point of view, which is based on the assumption that reality exists as an external entity and is controlled by “immutable natural laws and mechanisms” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109), the relativists emphasize that reality is relative and multiple (p. 11). It is understood through human experiences, so it is subjective and socially constructed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002). In positivism, the researcher and the researched are epistemologically viewed to be “independent entities”, so the researcher should stay neutral to prevent biases (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). On the contrary, this relation between the investigator and the investigated becomes “interactively linked” in interpretivism. The findings are constructed when interaction between the researcher and the researched is made. Finally, positivists are traditionally tied methodologically to quantitative methods of data collection, which seek numerical data to test a hypothesis, as reality to them can be identified through experiments and measurements due to its “observable, stable and measurable” nature (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). The

interpretivists, on the other hand, are more fond of qualitative methods that include interviews, observations and document reviews that allow more interaction with the researched (Bassey, 2002).

As stated above, this case study is located under the umbrella of the constructivist/interpretive paradigm assumptions or beliefs, which can be referred to a number of reasons. First, as discussed previously, this study aims to investigate the different instructional practices of different EFP teachers and their intersection with the instructional assumptions/implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards as a way for better understanding the impact of such "content" standards on classroom instruction. Such an investigation is believed to be achieved through the direct interaction between me as the researcher and the EFP teachers (the cases) in a particular context. Such particularity of the selected cases empowers the multiplicity of the reality of the impact of such "content" standards from one case to another, which aligns with one of the premises of the interpretive paradigm that reality is multiple. Second, my interaction with the observed teachers is vital in order to have a deeper but subjective understanding of such an impact of standards. Throughout the observation of the teachers' instructional practices and later the conduction of a number of recall interviews with them, meaningful findings of the impact of OAAA's standards can be socially constructed between me and every individual teacher/case. Those teachers/ cases will be allowed to express their own interpretations of their own instructional practices by which I can formulate a better understanding of the impact of such standards and the factors that mediate it. Finally, the data collection methods adopted in this study are not based on any particular tests or experiments to measure particular instructional practices in order to test a particular pre-defined hypothesis. Instead qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and observations, as will discussed in more details in section 4.6, are used.

4.5 Participant sampling techniques and procedures

After the identification of research questions and research design in a qualitative research, it is so important to specify the participants and the followed strategies for sampling (Merriam, 2009; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Based on the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, reality is realized through human experiences as discussed above (see section 4.4.4). Therefore, to answer the research questions, the people who are in charge of standards classroom implementation are to be necessarily considered as major participants in this research in order to observe their instructional practices and later understand their motives of such practices in classroom environment. In this regard, Creswell (2002, p. 194) states:

In qualitative research, you select people and sites that can best help you understand the phenomenon. This understanding emerges through a detailed understanding of the people

or site. It can lead to information that allows individuals to “learn” about the phenomenon, or an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard.

Therefore, EFP teachers in the LC where this study took place are my targeted population from which the participants were selected. Sampling from such a population is an integral component in any research; qualitative or quantitative. Its major concern is the selection of participants from a “wider population” so conclusions or “statements” can be made at the end of the research (Flick, 2014, p. 167). In this study, more qualitative sampling techniques will be used since the orientation of sampling differs from one research methodology to another. In quantitative research, representativeness of a wider population is the driving principle to help making generalizations so “statistical sampling” is dominant, whereas “substantial criteria” (Flick, 2014, p. 168) or “non- probability sampling” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77) is used in qualitative research where special features of the participants have a decisive power in the process of sampling. This is associated to what Patton (2002, p. 230) and Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28) have listed as “purposive” sampling strategies, which are based on the assumption that “the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Patton (2002) adds that such purposefully selected participants need to be “information-rich” so researchers can learn most from them. In alignment with the interpretive paradigmatic orientation of this study, which does not seek making broad generalizations, “purposive” sampling is utilized in this case study.

To start purposive sampling, Merriam (2009) recommends that researchers need to set some criteria for choosing the people to be studied. Such criteria, Merriam (2009, p. 78) continues, need to “reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information- rich cases”. Accordingly, three criteria for the purposeful sampling in this study have been set for the participants’ selection.

1. They need to be EFP teachers. To meet the aims of this study, the participating teachers (the cases) need to be current EFP teachers at the LC where this study was conducted. In this LC, some English language credit courses are provided too. Those teachers teaching only those credit courses should not be included.
2. They need to be teaching the exit levels of the EFP. OAAA’ learning- outcome standards are viewed to be exist learning- outcomes for the EFPs. Therefore, I assumed based on my experience in this programme that their impact on what is taught will be more visible at the top levels of the EFP. Therefore, the participating teachers should be teaching levels 5 or 6 but not the lower ones.
3. Balanced representation of the different courses provided in the EFP. As clarified above in section 4.2, the EFP in the LC consists of three courses, which are (1) reading, (2) writing and research skills and (3) listening and speaking. For a more balanced

selection of the participating teachers, teachers from those three courses need to be represented.

Within the purposeful sampling, Merriam (2009, p. 78) suggests different sampling techniques, including the “typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, and snowball or chain sampling” to be used. Merriam (2009, p. 79) states that the typical purposeful sampling is used “because it reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest”. In other words, it is not concerned about the extreme or highly unusual cases as in the “unique” one, nor the individual variations among the participants. Accordingly, in this study, EFP teachers were not approached in a way that only the unique ones, in any way, were sought after. On the other hand, considering all EFP teachers in the LC where this study took place as typical cases may ignore the fact that differences among them in terms of their cultural, teaching experience and qualification backgrounds do exist, which may impact their own classroom instructional practice in one way or another. Kuzel (1999, p. 39) comments that maximum variation strategy of sampling occurs when a researcher is looking for obtaining “the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of study” in order to challenge his own “preconceived understandings of the phenomenon under study”. Accordingly, in this study, the selection of the participating teachers adopts the maximum variations technique of sampling. Considering the variations among the EFP teachers was there in the back of my mind while selecting the participants. Accordingly, among the participants in this study, I managed to have 2 Omani and 2 non-Omani EFP teachers. Not only that, one of the non- Omani teachers is an Arab teacher, while the other one is a native speaker of English from America (see table 4.2 below)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Name² | T1W ³ | T2W | T3R | T4R |
| Teaching the course of | Writing and research skills | Writing and research skills | Reading | Reading |
| Nationality | Omani | Omani | American | Arab ⁴ |
| Qualification | MA in applied linguistics | MA in TESOL | MA in ELT | MA in applied linguistics |
| Teaching experience in the EFP at LC | 4- 5 years | 6 years | 4 years | 10 years |

² Participants' real name are coded for anonymity purposes

³ T1W stands for Teacher number one teaching writing course, while T3R stands for teacher number 3 teaching reading course.

⁴ The nationality of this Arab teacher was hidden in this table as few teachers from this Arab country work in the LC, which might impact negatively to the anonymity of this teacher's identity.

Table 4.2: Background information of the four selected cases

In addition to the sampling techniques, the size of the sample itself is another important issue that was addressed in this project. In qualitative case studies, it is recommended that the number of participants should be relatively small (Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; Ponelis, 2015) to allow more depth for every individual case (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, in this study, I believe that having one case only will deprive me of comparing between different teachers' instructional practices (Flick, 2014). On the other hand, having many cases will deprive me of having a deep investigation and representation of the analysis of every individual teacher's instructional practices. The existing relevant literature informs us that it is not clear how small the sample should be in case studies, as it all depends on different factors such as the research questions, the amount of data gathered, the available resources (Merriam, 2009), access and funding (Creswell, 2012). Alternatively, different suggestions for sample size are proposed by different authors like between four to ten (Eisenhardt, 1989), six to eight (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), or fewer than ten cases (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). In the same vein, four to six cases are suggested to be "ideal" for doctoral studies by Duff (2014a, p. 237). Based on the above, four cases (EFP teachers) have been selected in order to give more space for deeper analysis and representation of every individual teacher's instructional practices.

In terms of sample selection process, a number of steps were followed in the data collection trip. After gaining the access from the LC's administration and later from all level 5 & 6 CCs from six streams, all the EFP teachers from the top EFP levels, about 51 teachers, were sent invitation e-mails to participate in this project. In some cases, the teachers were visited in their programme meetings as a second opportunity to be informed more adequately about the research project. From the 51 contacted teachers, only 8 teachers replied, showing their interest to participate in this research project. Out of these 8 teachers, seven of them were included (3 for the pilot study and 4 for the main study). They all were informed that their participation includes two main tasks which are (1) giving me the access to attend their classes to perform classroom observations and (2) participating in recall semi-structures interviews in which they were expected to comment on their own instructional practices recorded in the classroom observations. The remaining teacher was excused with sincere apologies as I had had enough participants. The table (4.2) above shows the background details of the four teachers/ cases included in the main study.

Finally, as the observations and interviews with the four cases continued, it was noticeable to me that conducting extra interviews with their CCs, who worked as the academic managers of the courses the participating teachers worked in, was necessary for seeking a better and deeper understanding of some of the observed classroom instructional practices. The "purposeful" selection of these CCs is not a sampling matter from a wider population since each

one of them represents a leadership post occupied by themselves only. The prime aim of interviewing those “knowledgeable people” is not necessarily the representation of a wider community but “to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 115). The inclusion of those CCs was essentials as what is taught in EFP classrooms could not be solely and fully justified by the observed teachers themselves in a large institution like this LC. The table 4.3 below illustrates some background information of the two CCs who participated in this study.

| | 1 | 2 |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Name⁵ | CC1 | CC2 |
| Nationality | Omani | Omani |
| Qualification | MA of Education | MA in English for specific purposes |
| Teaching experience at LC | 17 years (including 6 years of being a CC) | 15 years (including 4 years of being a CC) |

Table 4.3: Background information of relevant course coordinators

4.6 Data collection methods

In qualitative case studies, there is no claim that particular data collection methods can be used (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 2009; Richards, 2011). According to Bassey (1999, p. 69), it is an “eclectic” process depending on whatever methods researchers find “appropriate and practical”. Accordingly, in alignment of the interpretive paradigmatic stand adopted in this case study, different qualitative data collection methods have been used in relation to the three RQs in the three phases of this research. In the following sections (4.6.1 - 4.6.3), I will describe and justify the data collection methods used to answer each research question in each one of the three phases of this case study.

4.6.1 Phase one

As discussed previously (see section 4.3.1), before the investigation of the washback impact of OAAA’s learning- standards on language instruction in EFP classes, it has been necessary to theorize what kind of instructional implications one can infer from these OAAA’s “content” standards, especially with the absence of any explicit prescription of what teachers need to do pedagogically in their classes as a way to manage classroom instruction. Accordingly, it was necessary to analyse these OAAA’s learning- outcomes as a documented text to answer RQ1, which attempts to find out more explicitly the implicit instructional assumptions or implications embedded in them.

⁵ Participants’ real name are coded for anonymity purposes

Such a theorization of OAAA's learning- outcome standards for the EFPs into their instructional implications has been found neither in the OAAA's published documents nor in the LC's where this study took place. Consequently, I had to go back to the standards themselves as a starting point to elicit some of their instructional implications, relying on what has been established in language teaching methodology literature as a general framework as recommended by Crabbe (2003) (see section 2.4). Such a referral aims to identify some "best" instructional practices for teaching particular language content targeted by every individual learning- outcome standard. In order to do so, I had to use some principles of the technical concept of "intertextuality" derived from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which will be discussed in more details in section 5.3.1 below.

4.6.2 Phase two

After theorizing the instructional assumptions or implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards for the EFPs, I was ready to move to phase two of this case study. In this phase, I use data collected from classroom observations with the four participating teachers/cases in order to answer the second research question, which states, *Do EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards? If so, how?* The selection of classroom observation derived data can be justified in two ways; (1) theoretically and (2) methodologically in relation to the already conducted research in this area of investigation.

Starting with the later, as discussed in the section 2.5, the previous research conducted about the impact of learning- outcome standards on classroom instruction tends to be relatively more interested in teachers' reports of their own instructional practices. That was useful to get access to different accounts of classroom practices, but not the practices themselves. This apparently what has encouraged Heyworth (2013, p. 310) to state that the claims of such an impact of standards as a QM tool tends to be "either ideological or anecdotal". On the other hand, based on my own readings in this area, very few studies were conducted using empirical classroom data to investigate such an impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices except the three studies discussed at the end of section 2.5. Accordingly, data derived from classroom observations is used in this research in order to bridge this gap and consequently answer RQ2.

Theoretically, observation has been viewed as an important source of data in social science research in general and in education in particular (Merriam, 2009; O'Sullivan, 2006; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Holliday (1992, p. 410), for instance, argues that "classroom observation 'in the widest possible sense', of lecturer and student behaviour, was the most effective way to find out what we need to know". Its prominence originates from its ability to provide the researcher with

“the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from naturally occurring social situations” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396). Also, observation is considered to be “sensitive to the contexts” in which observation occurs, which consequently increases the level of validity of research (Moyles, 2002) and aligns with the characteristics of case study discussed above (see section 4.4.2). Merriam (2009, p. 119) additionally presents a number of reasons why observation is a good method for data collection:

- An observer will notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context.
- Observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings
- Observation makes it possible to record behaviour as it is happening
- Provide some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviours, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews.
- Observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed first-hand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study.

Based on the above theoretical and methodological considerations, as well as to satisfy the aims of this research, classroom observations are conducted as they aim to enable me to investigate what EFP teachers really do pedagogically in their classes, not what they say about what they do. Accordingly, it is possible to investigate the common instructional practices by the EFP teachers against the instructional implications of the standards inferred in phase 1 before. The table 4.4 below provides a summary of classroom observations I conducted with the four EFP teachers/ cases who participated in the main study of this research.

| | Teacher | Courses | Approximate Numbers of observed students | Number of observed lessons (each lesson = about 90 minutes) |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Main Study | T1W | Writing and research skills | 17 | 7 lessons |
| | T2W | Writing and research skills | 12 | 8 lessons |
| | T3R | Reading | 20 | 6 lessons |
| | T4R | Reading | 17 | 6 lessons |
| Total | 4 teachers | 4 sections/ two skill courses | 133 students | 27 lessons⁶ |

Table 4.4: Summary of the observed lessons in the main study

As described in the participants’/ cases’ selection criteria (see section 4.5 above), four EFP teachers were selected in this study. Two of them were teaching the writing and research skills

⁶ 27 lessons (approximately 90 minutes for each lesson) = about 2430 minutes or 40.5 hours of classroom observations

course, while the other two were reading course teachers. After gaining the initial access from the “gatekeepers” (LC administrators and the observed teachers) (Creswell, 2012, p. 211; Merriam, 2009, p. 122), a discussion of how long to stay in classes to conduct observations was held with each and individual teacher as no specific minimum number of observations is suggested in literature (Merriam, 2009). Regarding the reading classes, it was primarily agreed between me and the reading teachers that covering two to three reading units would be acceptable for both reading teachers (T3R and T4R). However, more units later were attended, especially with T3R who was using two different textbooks, unlike T4R who was only using one in-house textbook. Accordingly, six lessons were attended with each one of them. The case with the writing and research skills teachers was more flexible as lots of diverse activities and tasks were covered in both writing classes. Therefore, there was a need to stay a bit longer. As classroom observation started, new things were popping up. With an average of two classes every week, I had to spend three to five weeks with each teacher, depending on some circumstances such as vacations and cancelation or rescheduling of some lessons by the observed teachers themselves.

Before starting observations, Merriam (2009, pp. 120-121) suggests that researchers need to decide in advance what to observe as it is not possible to observe everything. She continues to list a number of aspects that can be observed, including (1) the physical settings, (2) participants, (3) activities and interactions, (4) conversations, (5) subtle factors and (6) observer's own behaviour. In this study, the different types of the pedagogical activities provided by the participants (the four teachers) and the roles they played in these activities were the central aspects I was more interested in. Such aspects gave me a clearer idea of what the teachers were doing pedagogically in their classes in order to achieve the learning- outcome standards, not only in knowing what language content was taught in response, but also how that content was delivered. Additionally, a predesigned form for notetaking was used to help develop a more protocolled observation of the observed teachers' instructional practices as recommended by Creswell (2012) (see appendix 4.1, page B 1).

Another issue to clarify in this section is my role as an observer. In the relevant existing literature, the role of an observer is normally defined by placing it in a continuum, which ranges from a “complete participant”/ “participant observer” to a “complete observer”/ “non-participant observer” (Flick, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Yin, 2014). In this research, I played the role of a complete observer as my main aim in classroom observation was to monitor what the participants (the observed four teachers) normally do pedagogically in their normal classrooms with no interference or intervention from my side. However, in some cases, some of the observed teachers were trying to involve me in their lessons by raising me some questions or asking me to give my opinions about some issues they were discussing with their students. Other than that, I tended to be quiet, sitting always at the back of the classrooms. During classroom

observations, field-notes as well as lesson audio recording of what was going on in the observed lessons were performed concurrently in all of the lessons I attended with all observed teachers.

4.6.3 Phase three

Interviews are the main method of data collection for phase three in this research. They were utilized in order to collect enough data to answer the third RQ *What contextual factors are fostering/ hindering such an intersection?* Interview is defined as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in conversation focused in questions related to a research study” (DeMarrais 2004 , p. 55). It has been an important source of data in qualitative research in general and in case studies in particular (Yin, 2014). It is possible through interviews to “enter into the other person’s perspective” and “find out what is in and on someone else’s mind”, since interviews are based on an assumption that “the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Kvale (1996, p. 1), supported also by Silverman (2011), declares that “The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. Accordingly, using interviews with the participating teachers in this study has been found valuable as they allowed me to unfold the reasons or the forces that had shaped their own instructional practices directly from them. Periodically, almost after every two to three observed lessons, I had to arrange an interview with an individual interviewee in a quiet room, usually my office. Such short-time intervals between the interviews were necessary as it was important to me that those teachers were still able to remember what they did and why they did what they did in their classrooms. The interviewees were invited to explain or justify their own instructional practices I recorded in both my field-notes and by my audio recorder. Two to three interviews were conducted with every teacher. Each interview lasted for not more than one hour.

The interviews, conducted with the participants in this case study, were semi-structured since I find it more suitable to the fulfilment of the “research purposes” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 186) and the adopted constructive/ interpretive ontological and epistemological stand. Different authors like Yin (2014), Brinkmann (2014), Flick (2014) and Merriam (2009) encourage the use of “less structured” or semi-structured interviews in qualitative research as the interviewees’ viewpoints are more likely to be articulated than in structured ones. Brinkmann (2014, p. 286) for instance, comments:

Semi-structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewees, as well, the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide

This level of structuredness has allowed arguably a more flexible atmosphere for pursuing unexpected insights from the participants' point of view about their instructional practices since more "specific follow-up questions" were emerging as the interviews were going on (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 183). Such interactions between me and the interviewees helped me develop a meaningful construction of not only the pedagogical aims of the observed classroom teaching activities, but also indirectly the factors that mediated their own instructional practices.

The interviews were normally led by "protocol" questions (Creswell, 2012, p. 225) that were centralized around four main aspects. These protocol questions, apart from the first one, were used as starting points for further deep discussions between me and the interviewees as the interviews unfolded. They included questions about:

1. Background information of the participants, including their qualifications and work experience (normally done in the first interview with each teacher).
2. The pedagogical objectives of the observed activities.
3. The teachers' own justification of their own roles in these activities.
4. The source of the observed activities (own supplementation or provided by the LC).

After finishing all the classroom observations and interviews with the four teachers/cases, and after the initial analysis of the content of those interviews, it was clear to me that extra elaborations of the rationale of the provision of some of the observed teaching practices was needed to be explained by the two CCs who were in charge of the courses those four participating teachers were delivering. As I did with the four teachers, semi-structured interviews were arranged with both CCs. Three interviews with each one of them were conducted.

Finally, all the interviews conducted with both the observed teachers and their CCs were all conducted in English language. They were also audio recorded after getting the interviewees' consents. It is also important to say that during the interviews with both teachers and the CCs, it was obvious to me that they were occasionally referring me to some of the LC documents to justify the existence of particular classroom activities. Accordingly, I was collecting those documents all along as extra pieces of evidence and as a second source of data that can be used for triangulating findings from those interviews. The following section (4.6.3.1) is to shed some light on the importance of including such documents in the data collection and data analysis in phase 3 in order to triangulate findings from the interviews whenever applicable.

4.6.3.1 Document review

Documents are considered to be an important source of data in qualitative case studies too. They are "stable" as they can be frequently reviewed, "unobtrusive" as they are not created for the sake of the case study, "specific" as they contain specific information and "broad" as they

normally cover a wider range of topics, events and a span of time (Yin, 2014, p. 106). In this study, such documents have been used as a secondary source of data for different purposes.

First of all, it is important to note that the use of some EFP documents in this study is not to present them as an independent construction of reality of OAAA's standards actualization into classroom instruction, since this direct link between official texts and real classroom experiences is "problematic" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 17). Instead, they are useful and informative when it comes to support the explanation of the interviewees' justifications for particular observed instructional practices. Accordingly, it could be argued that the socially constructed reality of OAAA's learning- outcome standards implementation into real classroom instruction can be viewed, in this study, as the interaction between the "official reality" of the EFP as represented in its relevant documents and the "values and interest" of teachers (Kushner, 1996, p. 193) as represented in the context of real classroom instructional practices.

Bryman (2004) suggests that the selected documents need to be (1) not produced for the sake of this research, (2) well preserved for analysis and (3) related to the aims of this research. In this case study, a number of documents were collected during the classroom observations and the follow-up interviews. The selection of the documents is based primarily on (1) my own nomination, which is based on my work experience in this institution and my classroom observations from the pilot study and (2) what the participants referred me to during the interviews. The inclusion of document reviews is viewed as a secondary source of data that assist familiarizing myself with the observed courses, feed in or promote the interview discussions I conducted with the participants in a later stage and finally triangulate findings from the interviews. Such documents include the course descriptions, pacing schedules, EFP curriculum document, course textbooks, supplementary materials and marking criteria.

4.7 Trustworthiness

In both types of studies, qualitative and quantitative, building trust of their findings through the establishment of findings validity and reliability is a necessity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). In positivist research, the values of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity are central to satisfy the four criteria of "Truth value", "applicability", "consistency" and "neutrality" of a trustworthy research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Internal validity refers to the extent of what is investigated is actually what is claimed to be investigated, while external validity refers to the degree the findings of a research can be generalized to wider situations, cases or population. Reliability on the other hand is about the replicability of a research findings when the same research methods under the same conditions or situations by different researchers are implemented. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 146) indicate that in quantitative

research to be reliable, “it must demonstrate that if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context (however defined), then a similar results would be found”.

Finally, objectivity is the opposite of subjectivity. It is all about the extent to which the findings of a research are determined by the respondents and research conditions, not the researcher or the inquirer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the satisfaction of the four criteria of Truth value, Applicability, Consistency and Neutrality, as defined by quantitative positivist values (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity) is difficult or threatened in a qualitative research. Instead, they propose a set of four criteria to establish “trustworthiness” in naturalistic research that aligns with interpretive paradigmatic positioning adopted in this research. These criteria are “credibility”, “transferability”, “dependability” and “confirmability”, which correspond respectively with the positivist four criteria listed above (see table 4.5 below). Merriam (2009) refers this need to different values to the relative ontological stand about reality in qualitative research that does not fit with the ones from quantitative research. For each criteria, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a number of techniques a naturalistic researcher needs to follow and which have been adopted in this research purposefully.

| | <i>Positivism</i> | <i>Naturalism</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Truth value | Internal validity | Credibility |
| Applicability | External validity | Transferability |
| Consistency | Reliability | Dependability |
| Neutrality | Objectivity | Confirmability |

Table 4.5: Positivism/Naturalism four criteria

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is the counterpart of internal validity in positivist research, which is concerned about how “congruent” the findings are with reality (Merriam, 2009) or the extent a study is investigating what is really intended (Shenton, 2004). However, based on the notion of “multidimensional and ever-changing” constructed realities (Merriam, 2009, p. 213), having one single reality, as in positivist paradigm, is not applicable or “imperfect” for a naturalistic constructionist research. Here, reality is seen as “a multiple set of mental constructions” that are “made by human” who “make them”, so “the naturalist must show that he or she has represented those multiple constructions adequately” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 295-296). To operationalize credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have presented a number of techniques that have been used in this research.

4.7.1.1 Prolonged engagement

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301) insist that it is “imperative” for a naturalist researcher to spend enough time in the target context to achieve a number of purposes. This kind of sufficient investment of time serves the purposes of “learning the culture, testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust”. Merriam (2009) indicates that specifying how long such engagement needs to be is a difficult question. What is really more important is reaching a state where the researcher begins to see or hear the same things over and over again. In this research, I can say that my teaching experience at the LC where this study was conducted in is not restricted to the one semester of data collection I spent in it in spring 2016. I had been working in this institution since 2004 at different academic and administrative positions, which had allowed me to develop a better understanding of the cultural and pedagogical aspects of this institution. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the one semester time I spent collecting data in this institution has facilitated uncovering some extra dimensions of EFP’s management culture in terms of curriculum development and dissemination and the various classroom instructional practices from one teachers to another. It gave me enough time to monitor and hear about the variations of classroom instructional practices in the EFP.

Another aim of the prolonged engagement is building trust with the respondents. Building trust according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 303) is not a consequence of the personal characteristics of the enquirer. Rather, it is mainly a “developmental process to be engaged in daily” through demonstrating to the participants that the confidence they have granted to me will not be utilized against them and that the promise of anonymity is highly honoured and reserved. I have worked with many of the participating teachers and CCs for many years before I started my PhD. We had had reasonably good professional relationships including the CCs whom I worked with before starting my PhD study. However, it was noticeable to me that the discussion of the observed classroom activities, tasks or practices and the rationale behind them, in some cases, touched very important and sensitive issues, some teachers were reluctant to discuss with me. Keeping reminding them that the anonymity of their identities is highly honoured and would not be used against them, especially with the non-Omani teachers who apparently were more worried about their contract renewal if they said negative things about the EFP, has apparently encouraged a smoother flow of dialectical interactions between me and the interviewees. I always kept emphasizing that I am after a deep understanding of what is happening rather than evaluating it, which was also very fundamental to keep them continue talking about their own classroom instruction.

4.7.1.2 Persistent observation

Unlike prolonged engagement which provides scope of the contextual factors that “impinge” upon the studied phenomena, the aim of persistent observation is to provide depth in the knowledge of the inquiry. It helps identify the elements or characteristics that are relevant to the problem or issue being studied from those irrelevant. To satisfy this criterion, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 304) suggest that a researchers need to describe in details how they have carried out this process of “tentative” identification of such characteristics to avoid soon interpretations. Such a process is discussed in more details in section 5.3.

4.7.1.3 Triangulation

Another technique of developing credibility in a naturalistic research is triangulation. By referring to the work of Denzin, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 305) illustrate that triangulation can be achieved through the use of multiple and different modes, including “sources, methods, investigators and theories”. As reported by Silverman (2011, p. 368), what people say about their actions does not necessarily has a “stable relationships to how they behave in naturally occurring situations” In this study, triangulation is accomplished at two different levels or modes as different sources and methods were used.

Starting with the first mode “sources”, findings can be credible if “contextual validation” is met. Contextual validation means that one piece of evidence can be valid if it is compared to other pieces of evidence for the same point in order to evaluate any formulation of patterns. Such “source” mode of triangulation has been performed with classroom observation driven data (classroom discourse episodes) with the instructional practices of every individual participating teacher, as well as with the findings from the interviews with the participants. Merriam (2009, p. 2016), in this regard, states, “Triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross - checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people”. The observed teachers’ own instructional practices against a particular instructional assumption of OAAA’s standards were analysed and compared internally first with the same teachers’ own instructional practices and later with the other participating teachers’. In this way, it was possible to find out if particular patterns of instructional practices that interest with a particular instructional assumption or implication of OAAA’s learning- outcomes can be identified. The same process was applied with the data collected from the interviews with the participants too. Their own justifications of their individual practices were validated as the rationale of particular individual observed instructional practices was discussed with the same participant more than once at different occasions in the interviews. Not only that, teachers’ justifications of their own instructional practices were later compared with each other’s for the same patterned instructional practice observed in more than one teacher’s class.

In addition to the “source” mode of triangulation, the “method” one has also been performed. Triangulation by methods, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) implies the use of different data collection modes like interviews, observations, surveys to test the validity of a finding from one method against its counterparts from the other methods. This method mode of triangulation has been used in the third phase of this research where seeking the factors that mediate intersection between practices and assumptions is primarily based on the oral reports of the participants in the interviews. In cases where it was applicable, the findings got from the interviews with the participants were triangulated with the findings from the content analysis of some relevant official documents. Corbin and Strauss (2008), for instance, argues that what is said in interviews should not be taken for granted by the researchers. For example, the claim by both CCs that the FonFs activities in the reading textbooks are included in the EFP as a result of the attempt to meet extra learning- outcomes that target particular linguistic aspects, developed by the LC itself was triangulated with the content analysis of the learning- outcomes listed by the LC in its curriculum document (see section 7.3.2 for more details).

4.7.1.4 Peer debriefing

Another technique to building up credibility in naturalistic research includes exposing oneself to a disinterested peer known as “Peer debriefing” “for the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Patton (2002) argues that in the process of building meaning through the analysis process, a researcher may impose a world of meaning that reflects the researcher’ own conceptualization of the world but not the world under study. In this study, a debriefer was involved based on the criteria listed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) (see table 4.6 below). The debriefer in this study was involved in the construction of the themes that were arising from the interviews in phase three of this research in order to conceptualize the factors that mediate the intersection between the teachers’ observed instructional practices and the instructional assumptions/ implications of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards. This involved reading the transcribed interviews for the rationales of particular observed teaching activities and the roles played by the teachers before constructing their possible implied meanings.

| Debriefer’ criteria | The debriefer in this study |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Should be someone who: | |
| 1. Knows about the area of inquiry | Specialized in ELT with relatively a long experience in teaching English language as a second language |
| 2. Knows about methodology | a PhD student colleague in his final stages, as proposed by Merriam (2009) |

| | |
|--|--|
| 3. Should not be a junior nor a senior | Not applicable as we are colleagues |
| 4. Not in authority relationship with the researcher | Not applicable as we are colleagues |
| 5. Take this role seriously | He was interested to go through this experience as it helps develop his own research skills. |

Table 4.6: Debriefers' criteria vs. the employed debriefer's characteristics

4.7.1.5 Member checks

Another technique adopted in this study is based on “member checks” or “respondent validation” (Silverman, 2011, p. 371) with the participants in order to improve credibility of the findings of this research. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) consider this technique as the “most crucial” technique a researcher can use to establish credibility. It is based on the premise that if a researcher is able to construct adequately a representation of the participants’ own multiple realities, it is necessary to give the opportunity to the participants in order to react to this representation to avoid the researcher’s own biases (Merriam, 2009). Member checks, Lincoln and Guba (1985) continues, are advantageous as they provide a chance to access intentions of the participants, correct interpretation errors, promote additional information giving by the participants and assess adequacy of data for particular points. Additionally, they could be done formally or informally in daily interactions with the participants. In this study, such a technique was implemented informally with all the participating teachers and CCs through the different interviews conducted with them. After observing similar classroom practices or activities at different lessons, I tended to ask repeatedly about the aims or the rationale of having them, even it was asked in a previous interview. Not only that, even after starting the analysis of the interviews, I used to double check formally my understanding of the themes that were arising from the interviews with some of the participating teachers. That was really powerful as it helped confirming my own understanding of what the interviewees had reported about their own instructional practices from the interviews.

4.7.1.6 Researcher's position or reflexivity

In addition to the above credibility strategies, Merriam (2009, p. 2019) suggests that what is so-called “researcher’s positions” or “reflexivity” is another strategy a researcher can use. In this strategy, researchers are expected to “explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken”. The importance of this explanation stems from its effectiveness to give the readers a better understanding of how a researcher has arrived to

his/her interpretation of the collected data. Suh issues regarding analysis assumptions are discussed in chapter 5 (section 5.2) and the research limitation (section 10.2).

4.7.2 Transferability

As illustrated in table 4.5 above, transferability is the counterpart of the external validity in positivist research, which is concerned about generalizing findings of a research to other contexts and populations based on statistical representations of a population. Maxwell (1992, p. 293) defines this feature of generalizability as “the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times, or settings than those directly studied”. However, such a conceptualization of generalizability, as in positivist research, is “impossible” to implement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) in qualitative naturalistic research, which adopts the relativist view of reality, including case study designs (Flick, 2014; Ruddin, 2006). Case study designs are more concerned about particularity of the studied cases, which do not adopt “probability” strategy of population sampling (Payne & Williams, 2005, p. 297). Generalizability, in naturalistic research additionally, is instead more concerned in developing a theory, not theory testing, that does not only makes sense of the studied individuals or situations, but also shows that following the same research procedures or processes may lead to different findings if implemented in different situations or with different individuals (Maxwell, 1992).

Accordingly, this study is not aiming to make broad generalizations about the impact of “content” standards on teachers’ classroom instruction in second language education neither in the LC itself nor in the Sultanate or globally in a broader term. Rather, it aims to help the readers be exposed to a new, “heuristic” case (Merriam, 2009, p. 44), which can “illuminates” their understanding of the studied phenomenon, since it opens the doors for the “discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 44). This actually aligns with the main aim of this study, which is focusing on widening our understanding of the studied phenomenon of standard-based language programmes and its washback impact on teachers’ instructional practices. By which, the readers of this study can then make their own generalizations through what Stake (1995, p. 85) calls the “Naturalistic Generalizations”. Stake (1995, p. 85), in this regard, states:

Single cases are not as strong a base for generalizing to a population of cases as other research designs. But people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do that partially because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations.

Therefore, despite the impracticality of generalizations as conceptualized in quantitative research, Merriam (2009) points out that it can be used in another way that fits with the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research through Lincoln and Guba’s transferability.

Transferability of the findings of naturalistic research is based on two unique sets of responsibilities by the naturalistic researchers and their readers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that to achieve transferability in naturalistic research, a researcher only needs to provide a thick description that enables others who are interested in the same area of research to reach a conclusion about whether making such transfer possible or not. Accordingly, generalizability in naturalistic research, including case studies, is based on the idea of realigning this responsibility of generalizability from the researcher to the reader. Ruddin (2006, p. 804) comments on making generalizations out of case studies by stating:

the researcher's liability is to afford sufficient contextual information to facilitate the reader's judgment as to whether a particular case can be generalized to a specific field of practice. We could regard such views of generalization as empowering or democratizing

Accordingly, transferability in this case study does not aim to make generalizations about the studied phenomenon through the investigated cases to other situations or populations either in the Sultanate or in any other contexts in the world. Alternatively, it aims to give a full account to its readers of the studied cases by giving a detailed thick description of the investigated cases and the context where those cases belong to in order to empower the reader to transfer what can be possibly transferred to their own contexts. The thick description of the studied phenomenon in this multiple case study has been demonstrated in different chapters constituting this dissertation. Chapter 1 first gives a description the context where this study took place and the rationale and aims for conducting this study. Next, an overview of the conceptual relationship between the different perspectives of language education quality (1) "procedural" (learning outcome standards) and (2) "transformational" (classroom instruction) is theorized in chapter 2 in the era of EQM. A deeper investigation between what to be done pedagogically in order to achieve learning- outcomes as theorized by theorists, traditionally adopted by top-down curriculum innovative change initiatives on one hand and the reality of classroom instruction on the other hand is demonstrated in chapter 3, as well as, to the contextual factors that commonly interfere in the process of instructional reform success or failure. Chapter 4 and 5 later are dedicated to the description and justification of the research methodologies for data collection and data analysis approaches and the processes respectively adopted in this research that align with the interpretive/constructivist paradigm. Such a thick description accordingly is hoped to be clear enough for its readers so they are capable to transfer what they think can be transferable to other similar contexts.

In addition to the provision of the thick description discussed above, Merriam (2009) suggests that using the "maximum variation" in the participants sampling stage can be another strategy of generalizability that can be utilized in a qualitative research. Maximum variation strategy of sampling allows a possible wider range of applications by the readers of the research.

As discussed earlier in section 4.5 in this chapter, the participants in this study differ in terms of their nationalities, qualifications and experience in the EFP, which has driven me to choose maximum variations as my sampling strategy for selecting the participating teachers and which is hoped to give wider applications to the readers for wider possibilities for transferability.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is the qualitative counterpart of reliability in quantitative research, which refers to the “extent to which research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). However, the implementation of reliability in social science research adopting the relativist view of reality is problematic as human behaviours are not static and based not on the assumption that reality is single that can give the same findings if studied by different researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Wolcott, 2005). In this regard, Merriam (2009, p. 222) states:

Because what is being studied in the social world is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative study precludes a priori controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible

Therefore, Merriam (2009) argues that what is important to make reliability in qualitative research is not the replicability of findings but the consistency of the findings with the collected data. Such consistency can be achieved through making the research process more “transparent” in terms of its data collection and analysis methods and the theoretical stance from which the data interpretation took place (Silverman, 2011). In order to achieve dependability, different strategies are suggested like triangulation, peer examination, investigator’s position and audit trail (Merriam, 2009). The first three strategies are taken from credibility (internal validity) discussed above, which makes dependability achieved automatically by achieving credibility. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argues that this is a weak position so a direct solution to dependability needs to be taken. Therefore, audit trail is suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). According to Merriam (2009, p. 223), an audit trail in a qualitative research, like this study, can be done through a detailed description of “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” by keeping record memos and diaries on the process of conducting the research. In a PhD thesis, such a detailed description can be embedded in the methodology chapters, linked with relevant appendices. In this study, a full account of my thoughts, questions and problems in terms of data collection and data analysis, supplemented with some related appendices that describe the process of conducting this research, is presented in chapters 4 and 5. Additionally, Silverman (2011) recommends that to make a research more reliable, a researcher needs to provide observation transcripts and field notes available to the readers so they can formulate their own understanding of the people being

studied. In this study, as will be presented in chapters 7 and 8, transcribed episodes of classroom discourse as well as excerpts from the interviews with the observed teachers will be presented in the analysis chapters for the readers of this piece of research.

4.7.4 Confirmability

The last criterion of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability, which is meant to replace objectivity or neutrality in quantitative positivist research. The later conventionally exists when there is an isomorphism between data and reality, appropriate methodology is used that maintains a distance between the researcher and the researched, and inquiry is value-free. However, like the other values above, such quantitative objectivity is not possibly functioning in the social sciences as researcher' biases in such a kind of research is unavoidable. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure as much as possible that the findings of a research are "the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). In other words, confirmability is about ensuring that "data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but are clearly derived from the data" as stated by Tobin and Begley (2004, p. 392).

To actualize confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a similar audit trial as in dependability, but in terms of the of data findings, interpretations and recommendations. In addition, other strategies can be followed as well, as listed by Shenton (2004), such as triangulation to reduce the effect of researcher's bias, the admission of researcher's' beliefs and assumptions, the recognition of the used methods shortcomings and the thick description of the adopted methodologies. In this study, it is worthy to say that it is not appropriate to claim that the findings of this research are objective, so they are not contaminated with my own subjective interpretations of data. Rather, my subjectivity aligns with the paradigmatic position of this research that views reality as subjective and multiple but with a reduced degree of biases by involving peer debriefing (section 4.7.1.4), member checks (4.7.1.5), and triangulation techniques (see section 4.7.1.3), which collectively allowed the integration of others' voices, including the participants themselves, in the process of data analysis. Second, the shortcomings of data collection and analysis methodologies are admitted in order to address the pitfalls this study has encountered for studying standards' impact on classroom instruction in the limitation section (see sections 10.2).

4.8 Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted over almost two months, starting from the mid of February 2016 to the mid of April 2016. At this stage, the major concern was about the functionality of the data collection tools to explore the teachers' instructional practices in each EFP course (writing,

reading, listening and speaking) and the ways such practices intersect with the instructional implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards. The pilot study consisted of observing four listening and speaking classes, six writing and research skills classes and five reading classes in three different sections with three different EFP teachers from one stream. After a number of classroom observations, I arranged semi-structured interviews with the observed three teachers, and finally with their CC.

The pilot study was very important at different levels. First, despite the fact that I had taught in different EFP courses before starting my PhD study, the pilot study was an important stage to familiarize myself with the EFP context again after years of teaching credit courses. It helped me refresh my knowledge about the programme and its major teaching elements, which helped me a lot in identifying what instructional practices could be relevant to the instructional implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards.

Second, gaining access to classroom observations and interviews was another area of learning out of the pilot study. Going through the experience of contacting the teachers for the pilot study, I discovered a number of issues that I needed to take into my consideration for the major study. First, I noticed clearly that the teachers in the pilot study generally were hesitant to participate in a research project, which involves classroom observation especially if video recording is required as I was primarily planning to do. Second, the communication with the potential participants through e-mails was not enough to encourage a sufficient number of teachers to participate. Based on the above, I had to replace the video recording with audio recording, which seemed to be more convenient for the vast majority of participants. In addition, more face- to- face orientations were necessary to give the approached teachers a second opportunity to know more about the research project. Finally, the number of classroom observations necessary to do with the participants in this study was another concern the teachers raised in the pilot study. In my group orientation meetings with the potential participants, they tended to negotiate it as fully unlimited access was apparently not preferred. All of the above points, I presume, had informed the process of conducting the main study, more particularly in terms of participants' recruitment.

Third, the collection of observation field notes I took during classroom observations was a helpful practice in two different ways. First, they helped me map out the different kinds of the observed teaching activities and the different roles played by the observed teachers at the pedagogical level. Such mapping out of the observed instruction was practically helpful to allocate primarily ways of intersection between the instructional assumptions or implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards and what is practiced in real EFP classrooms by EFP teachers. Second, they were consequently, helpful to inform the following recall semi-structured interviews

with various topics or issues relevant to the observed instructional practices. Some of the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were reformulated primarily based on my classroom observation field notes, which were helpful to sharpen the focus of the discussion in each interview. This practice allowed better flexibility to investigate different aspects of the observed instructional practices, based on what is recorded from the observations not only on what is expected by me from my own long teaching experience.

The actual implementation of the interviews with the participants in the pilot study revealed that different issues needed to be taken into consideration in the major study. First, arranging and conducting interviews was time consuming and required careful preparations. It was not easy to arrange interviews with participants who had different timetables and commitments in a suitable place. There were occasional incidents when cancelations, rescheduling and changing rooms of meeting popped up suddenly, so quick reactions were necessary. Second, it was clear, while conducting the interviews, that different participants were different in the ways they were interacting with my questions. They varied in terms of their levels of openness and frankness of their own interpretations of their own instructional practices witnessed in classes. Not only that, getting off topic, being repetitive and sometimes losing focus to talk about personal interests or concerns were some of the issues I experienced in the pilot study with some of the participants. All of the above, therefore, had given me a better understanding of what might be the case with the interviews in the main study so I could be more prepared to make a balance between being flexible and managing the interviews' time more effectively.

4.9 Ethical issues

The discussion of the validity and reliability of research cannot not be segregated from the ethical issues that accompany it. Therefore, to strengthen validity and reliability of this research, a number of ethical issues related to the processes of data collection and findings dissemination (Creswell, 2012; Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2009) were taken into my consideration.

Having an access to classrooms to conduct classroom observations was the first issue that I encountered in my data collection trip. In order to get such an access, I had to go through a number of official procedures with the LC's administration first before contacting the potential participants. That included contacting the LC's head of the research committee, who was in charge of pursuing such research access applications. I was accordingly asked to fill in a form where I had to explain the aims of the research, the data collection methods used, the expected participants and the time span needed for conducting this study. After the application was

approved, I was granted the green light to contact the EFP's CCs and teachers directly in order to introduce my research project.

After getting the sufficient number of the participating teachers in this study (pilot and main studies), a consent letter (see appendix 4.2, pp. 189-191) was given to the teachers to sign, explaining their duties and rights. Not only that, I asked those teachers to introduce me to their students to take their consent as well, as I was accessing their classes for a period of time. The students were also given a consent letter to inform them with their rights and expected roles (appendix 4.3, pp. D 1- D 3). The anonymity of the identity of the participating teachers was guaranteed to encourage their participation so it does not impact negatively their classroom instruction or their participation in the interviews later on. In fact, even in my private talks with the participating CCs, I made sure that I did not reveal the names of the participating teachers from their programmes, just to avoid causing any future embarrassment.

After getting the access to attend the classes with the participating teachers, a number of ethical issues were also taken into consideration during the data collection journey in both classroom observations and interviews. First, in order to make my classroom attendance more acceptable to maximize natural classroom practices, I had to discuss the number of classes I was allowed to attend with the participating teachers themselves. Such a precaution was a result of my previous discussions with the pilot teachers when I first introduced the project to them. There was a reoccurring question about how long I needed to stay in their classes if they accepted to participate in this research project. Accordingly, that was alarming enough to me to consider this as an aspect that I needed to discuss with the participating teachers in the main study before starting attending their classes. Even after the beginning of classroom observations and when I felt that more observations were needed in some cases, especially with the writing teachers, I had to take their admission to extend my observations for a more couple of lessons. Another important ethical aspect I had to consider in classroom observations was the mode of classroom recording. It was my initial plan to video- record those lessons. However, there was a kind of consensus among the majority of the participating teachers and their students in both the pilot and main studies that videotaping was not an acceptable option. Accordingly, I suggested conducting audio recording alternatively, which was accepted by all the participating teachers and students. At least, no one showed a refusal as it happened with the video- recording. Finally, I was keen that I kept silent all the time I was observing, sitting in one corner at the back of the classes, away as much as possible from the students in order to give them the maximum possible sense of normality and security of being in regular classes.

Other ethical considerations related to conducting the recall semi-structured interviews with the observed teachers and later with their CCs were taken into consideration too. To

maximize the participants' interest and participation productivity in such interviews, I had to do two things. First, I made sure that each interview did not exceed one hour with every individual participant. The aim of doing so was to make sure, as much as possible, that the interviewees did not get tired or fed up of having long interviews. Second, I was keen to give the participants the opportunity to decide when to meet. That aimed to give them a kind of time flexibility that fits with their individual timetables so they did not feel over- pressured or overwhelmed by attending those interviews, which might consequently impact the quality of their participation and involvement overall. As a result, I tended to be flexible with the interviewees when requests to reschedule interview timings or venues were raised by the interviewees themselves. Such unplanned rescheduling was always appreciated by me as I did not want to make them feel that they need to stick to our previous agreements simply because they had to. Instead, I tried to make sure that such rearrangements were conducted smoothly in a friendly and professional manner. All the interviews were conducted in a quiet place, normally in my own office, to avoid disturbance or interference from outsiders.

Finally, an ethical issue related to the findings dissemination was also considered. The names of all participants (teachers and CCs) were hidden in this dissertation to guarantee the anonymity of their identities. The participating teachers and CCs' names were coded (e.g. T1W, T3R, CC1) as illustrated in tables 4.2 and 4.3 above in section 4.5. By doing so, there is hopefully no way that the participating teachers or their CCs are identified from this dissertation. Not only that, I made my best with the help of my peer debriefer (see section 4.7.1.4) that all views of all of the participants are included so my own presuppositions or biases did not interfere in terms of the representation of their own views in this dissertation as it is unethical to do.

4.10 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter is dedicated to address different issues relate to research methodology and design of this study. The selection of multiple, instrumental, descriptive and explanatory case study in order to investigate the new phenomenon of standards-based language programmes and its impact on classroom instructional practices was justified. Stemming from a relative paradigmatic stand, the ontological, epistemological and methodological implications of this case study have been discussed too. That was later followed by the discussion of the strategies adopted in this study to establish its trustworthiness. Last but not least, the lessons I learned from the pilot study I conducted before the main study, as well as the ethical considerations that were influential in shaping a number of steps in the process of conducting this research were finally addressed.

5 Chapter 5: Analysis framework and procedures

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the theoretical positioning, frameworks and procedures followed in this study to manage and analyse the collected data in this study. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first one (section 5.2), I will outline the analysis dimensions I started my analysis from, which align with the constructivist / relativist paradigm adopted in this research. The second part (section 5.3), on the other hand, will concern itself with the presentation and justification of the data analysis approaches and procedures adopted in each phase of the three phases composing this study. Such theoretical approaches of data analysis include principles of “intertextuality” from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for the first phase, discourse analysis (DA) for the second phase and inductive thematic analysis (TA) for the third one. In this way, the process of (1) seeking the implicit instructional assumptions or implications in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards (phase 1), (2) their intersection with the EFP teachers’ classroom instructional practices (phase 2) and (3) the factors that are mediating such intersection (phase 3) are systematically approached respectively.

5.2 Positioning within analysis dimensions.

In qualitative research in general and case studies in specific in which researchers are confronted with a huge amount of data, it is argued that there are no clear cut guiding rules and procedures for analysing qualitative data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Yin, 2014). Different approaches and techniques with different ontological and epistemological assumptions instead are suggested from which researchers can select to analyse their data, depending on the purpose of research (Punch & Oancea, 2014) and their “skills, knowledge, experience, creativity, diligence and work” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Accordingly, to comply with the adopted constructivist/ relativist ontological and epistemological stand in this research, an analytical positioning and frameworks of data analysis are purposefully selected to answer every research question in the three phases of this case study.

In qualitative and quantitative research, a researcher needs to situate himself/herself within a number of data analysis measures that align with the adopted paradigmatic view of reality. In this regard, Goetz and LeCompte (1981) and LeCompte and Preissle (1993) provide four dimensions or continuums for qualitative and quantitative researchers to fit within, which are (1) inductive-deductive, (2) generative- verificative, (3) constructive- enumerative and (4) subjective-objective. Quantitative research is traditionally viewed to be more deductive, verificative, enumerative and objective. On the other hand, qualitative research is conventionally attributed as

inductive, generative, constructive and subjective. Since this research is nested in the constructivist paradigmatic stand of reality, it can be argued that it is more directed towards the inductive, generative, constructive and subjective poles than the deductive, verificative, enumerative and objective ends of the continuums.

In the first continuum, Goetz and LeCompte (1981) differentiate between inductive and deductive analysis, which are concerned about the place of theory in a research study. In deductive research, researchers start their data collection and analysis by defining a theoretical system, propositions and concepts, and then try to match them to the collected data. On the contrary, a researcher in inductive analysis will collect data and then build up theoretical categories or prepositions from the relations that can be identified from the data itself. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further argue that deductive analysis aims to confirm or falsify a hypothesis defined right at the beginning of the research, while the inductive one starts from the analysis of the collected data in order to reach theoretical categories and relational prepositions. In this research, it can be argued that it is more inductive as it starts from the collected data from the classroom observations and interviews with the participants for a better understanding of the washback impact of “content” standards on teachers’ classroom instructional practice. Such an attempt to understand such a relation did not start with a pre-defined hypothesis or theoretical system by which data is matched to in general. However, in phase one of this research, the extraction of some instructional implications of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards is where I had to rely on a theoretical framework of language instruction adopted from Richards and Rodgers (2001) (see section 3.2), not necessarily to confirm or falsify a particular hypothesis, but to guide the analysis of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards into their instructional implications, based on the language views (structural, functional or interactional) targeted in each one of them. Accordingly, a kind of deductive analysis was performed in phase one in addition to the inductive analysis in phases two and three.

The second dimension is related to the generative- verificative continuum. It is more dedicated to the position of evidence within a research and the extent of generalizability a study attempts to demonstrate. While the verificative research aims to verify or test prepositions developed elsewhere and commonly targets making generalizations, the generative research, on the other hand, aims to discover such theoretical prepositions and constructs, based on collected data rather than testifying them. Therefore, making generalizations is not its prime aim. Goetz and LeCompte (1981) comments that generative research is normally inductive, while the verificative one is more deductive. Accordingly, this study can be claimed to be more generative as it aims to develop theoretical constructs of the washback impact of the phenomenon of standard-based language programs on classroom instruction based on empirical data collected from real classroom environment. Also, it does not aim to make generalizations from a

quantitative perspective as discussed previously in section 4.7.2 but to widen our understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Third, the ways in which units of analysis in one study are formulated is the prime concern of the constructive- enumerative dimension. In the constructive analysis, the analytical constructions and categories are derived from the “stream of behaviour”. In other words, it is “a process of abstraction” of units of analysis discovery (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 54). In contrast, enumerative analysis is a process by which units of analysis previously defined are used for systematic counting or enumeration. In phases two and three of this study, such systematic counting of predefined units of analysis is not a prime aim of this study. Instead, such units of analysis, as will be elaborated in the following sections (5.3), were developed from the collected data itself.

The final dimension, according to Goetz and LeCompte (1981) is the subjective-objective dimension, which is not related to the subjectivity and objectivity of the researcher, but the manner in which conceptual categories are reached, either by the researcher or the respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In subjective analysis, a researcher infers the cultural and behavioural patterns as viewed from the perspective of those studied participants so he/she uses categories that reflect their own experiences and worldview. The objective analysis, on the other hand, is based on applying “conceptual categories and explanatory relationships, readily visible to external observers, to the analysis of unique populations” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 54). In the second and third phases of this research, more subjective analysis of classroom observations and interviews derived data is used as all the conceptual categories are inferred from the patterns of the classroom instruction behaviours observed in real EFP classrooms and the participants’ own justifications of their own instructional practices. However, relatively more objective analysis is performed in phase one where extracting the instructional implications/ assumptions from OAAA’s learning- outcome standards were borrowed from language teaching methodology literature, neither from the participants themselves nor necessarily from me as a researcher and an analyst.

Based on the above, it can be argued that the analytical positioning in this qualitative case study is more inductive as it does not rely on a particular theory to explain the studied phenomenon, generative as it does not aim to testify a predefined hypothesis to make generalizations, constructive as units of analysis are more discovered from the collected data itself, not for counting purposes and finally subjective as it reflects the participants’ own views, perspectives and behaviours. With such analytical positioning, the following section (5.3) explores the analytical frameworks adopted in each phase of the three phases of this case study and the procedures followed to analyse the different collected sets of data.

5.3 Analytical frameworks and analysis procedures

In the flowing sections (5.3.1-5.3.3), I will describe the analytical approaches adopted at every phase of this study, including “intertextuality” in phase 1, classroom discourse episodes in phase 2 and inductive thematic analysis in phase 3 in order to answer RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 respectively. Side by side, an illustrative description of procedures of data analysis in each phase will be presented as well. The table 5.1 below illustrates the set of data used and the data analysis approach in each phase.

| | To answer RQ? | Data set | Data analysis approach |
|---------|---------------|--|---|
| Phase 1 | RQ1 | OAAA’s 10 learning-outcome standards for EFPs (see appendix 1.1) | Principles of “Intertextuality” from CDA |
| Phase 2 | RQ2 | Classroom discourse episodes | Principles of “Ad hoc” approach of classroom interaction analysis |
| Phase 3 | RQ3 | Excerpts from the interviews | Inductive thematic analysis |

Table 5.1: table of data sets and data analysis approaches used in this study

5.3.1 Phase one

As discussed in section 4.3.1, phase one in this research aims to theorize/identify the language instructional assumptions or implications that are implicitly embedded in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards to answer RQ1. This step is prominent in this research as it helps reveal the underpinning theoretical instructional implications of OAAA’s “content” standards as a text, which have not been explicitly stated by OAAA itself. In order to operationalize this process of instructional assumptions extraction, some principles of the notion of “intertextuality” as derived from the “relational approach” of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for text analysis by Fairclough (2003) are adopted.

To start with, according to Fairclough (2003), language, as viewed in CDA, is inseparable from its social life. Language texts (written or spoken) are part of discourse where a text is seen as a product while discourse is the process by which this text is produced (Fairclough, 2015). Therefore, texts are not seen neutral since they are influenced by broader factors that could be “political, social, racial, economic, religious and cultural” (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005, p. 369). Based on this “macroanalytical view of the world” (Baxter, 2010, p. 126), Fairclough (1993; 1995, p. 6; 2003) argues that texts are “social spaces” to represent the world and social interaction through “opaque” relations. From this standpoint, it might be legitimately possible to argue that OAAA’s learning- outcome standards as a text have not come into existence from vacuum. Instead, they should be seen as an extension from a wider social

space or social view(s) of language education in general and English language instruction in particular; more specifically ELT in the Omani context. In other words, the formation of such learning- outcome standards can be arguably influenced by certain global view(s) about language and consequently language instruction already discussed in section 3.2 and ELT in the Omani context in section 1.2.3.

In his “relational” approach to text analysis, Fairclough (2003, p. 36) indicates that a text can be analysed based on its “external” and “internal” relations. The internal relations of a text include the analysis of its semantic, grammatical, lexical, and phonological relations. On the other hand, the external relations of a text are more concerned about the external relations between a text and the social practices and structures surrounding it. One way to analyse such external relations of a text can be implemented through what is so-called “intertextuality”, which is concerned about the incorporation of other people’s external texts or voices in the original text to be analysed.

Intertextuality, which is also called “assumptions” (Fairclough, 2003) or “presuppositions” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 20), is concerned about the presence of some elements of other texts within the text to be analysed. It can be done through spotting direct speech such as quotations or indirect speech, including the assumptions implicitly built in the text itself. Therefore, intertextuality means “what is said in a text is ‘said’ against a background of what is ‘unsaid’, but taken as ‘given’” and “what is assumed has been said or written elsewhere, that one’s interlocutors have indeed heard it or read it elsewhere” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 40). From such external relations or intertextuality perspective of a text, OAAA’s learning- outcome standards accordingly can be viewed as a text that has external relations too, but not necessarily with direct quotations from other sources. Instead, they have been written by their developers against what has not been said regarding English language instruction internationally or locally but assumed to be shared by the producers and the implementers of the standards who are OAAA and EFP teachers respectively. In this regard, Fairclough (2003, p. 55) argues that a “common ground”, which is necessary for meaning construction in social communication should be shared” between the text producer and receiver, which can be triggered by “linguistic features of the text” itself (p. 56). In this study such linguistic features in the standards themselves will be highlighted to help identify what language and language learning underpinning theories these standards have been developed upon, leading indirectly to instructional implications as suggested in language teaching methodology literature as recommended by Crabbe (2003) (see section 2.4) and how English language and language teaching is viewed in the Omani context (see section 1.2.3)

Based on the above, analysing OAAA’s learning- outcome standards through exploring their external relations with the wider discourse of language instruction is adopted in this phase

of this study. Therefore, what has been discussed in (1) the literature review regarding the instructional implications of different classifications of language and language learning views (structural, functional and interactional) (see section 3.2.1) and (2) ELT in the Omani context (section 1.2.3) can function as the basis or the “common ground” I, as an interpreter, can refer to in order to infer what is “unsaid”, but implicitly assumed, about the missing prescription of language instructional “best” practices in EFP classrooms. In order to identify such an implicit relation between OAAA’s learning- outcome standards as a text and language instruction as discussed in language instruction literature as a wider social space, the language view targeted in each standard will be the starting point for triggering or making such instructional implications more explicit.

At this point, it is vital to highlight more explicitly that the findings of this CDA analysis is not claimed to be the only definite interpretation of those standards’ instructional implications/ assumptions, as will be discussed further in the limitation section (see section 10.2). Rather, it is viewed as a necessary pre-requisite stage to theorize OAAA’ learning- outcome standards into possible theoretical instructional assumptions/ implications based on what has been said in ELT literature internationally (see section 3.2.1) and locally (section 1.2.3). Such a theorization, in fact, is implemented in this study because it is viewed to be a necessary theoretical foundation or platform for further analysis in the second phase of this research where classroom observation data is investigated. The following is an example of such analysis.

5.3.1.1 Example 1: intertextuality in learning- outcome standard D.

The example selected in this section is taken from the analysis of OAAA’s learning- outcome standard D which states:

Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.

To analyse this standard based on the concept of intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992) and in relation to the three views of language and language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) discussed in section 3.2 and ELT in Oman in section 1.2.3, I try to look at the phrases that might give an indication to a particular language and language learning view listed above.

To start with, the phrase to “write a text of 250 words” is a verbal phrase in this standard that may suggest that the interactional view of language and language learning is adopted. In this particular phrase, this standard targets no “synthetic” units of language neither ‘structural’ (e.g. grammatical or lexical items), nor ‘functional’ (Wilkins, 1976) as its prime outcome. Accordingly, it can be stated that it adopts a more communicative approach to language instruction as no clear predefined list of grammatical and lexical items are targeted to be taught independently as discrete pre-planned lists of items as in the traditional structural language syllabi (Krahnke, 1987;

Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Such a view of language is seemingly resembling what has been stated by the “English Language Curriculum Framework” (ELCF), Nunan et al (1987) and AL-Issa (2006) in Oman that English language is viewed as “a means of communication” that should be used in “a wide range of situations”. Writing such texts assumingly can be seen as one situation where EFP students should be allowed to demonstrate such a communicative task by their teachers.

Second, from the second half of the standard, however, it could be inferred that any possible instruction of language structural aspects needs to be initiated based on the students’ performance mistakes/needs in their own attempts to write 250 word texts, not as a predefined and pre-sequenced list as in “structural” syllabi (Krahnke, 1987; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This instructional assumption can be justified in two ways. First, the emphasis on such liguisitic structures has been prioritized secondary after the completion of the communicative prime outcome of this standards, which is writing the 250 word texts. Such an inference can be subjectively justified as “showing control” over the grammatical and lexical items EFP students use in their written texts, as stated in the standard, has come as a complementary requirement after the completion of the first one, which is writing the 250 word texts. Such an instructional implication or assumption of when instruction of structural items occur in the EFP is made based on the theoretical discussion borrowed from relevant literature about FonF and FonFs in ELT by Long (1998b) and Ellis (2016) (see section 3.2.1.2.2) and the interactional view of language learning discussed in section 3.2.1.4. Second, some gestures regarding grammar instruction can also be found in the ELCF. As outlined earlier (see section 1.2.3), one of ELCF’s aims is to enable the Omani students to “use English to communicate accurately in a wide range of situations”. Such a statement seems to emphasize similarly the assumption that language use for communication is a prime outcome, while language use accuracy, including grammar and vocab can be instructed later in order to facilitate the achievement of the given communicative tasks or activities but not for their own sake as the ultimate goal of language instruction.

In this way, based on what has been discussed in ELT literature globally and locally, a list of subjective instructional assumptions can be formulated out of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs. Again, such a subjective analysis of OAAA’s standards is not claimed to be the only interpretation of the standards into their instructional implication. However, it is necessary to be formulated at this stage as it will be used later as a theoretical foundation when investigating how classroom instructional practices observed in the second phase of this study intersect with these instructional assumptions.

5.3.2 Phase Two

Since this research aims to investigate the impact of the instructional assumptions embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards on teachers' classroom instruction in EFPs, my analysis in the second phase is drawn mainly from the analysis of the data I collected during my classroom observations in phase 2, which is represented in the form of transcribed classroom discourse episodes out of my audio recordings. The analytical process in this phase consists of four steps adopted mainly from LeCompte (2000) in order help me select representative classroom discourse episodes of the observed teachers/cases' own instructional practices.

5.3.2.1 Step one: tidying up data

After data collection, LeCompte (2000) recommends that arranging the collected data neatly is a necessary step in order to facilitate data analysis. Accordingly, I worked to group all the different sets of data from one teacher's section into one folder. Each folder includes all the field notes, classroom observation audio recordings, interviews, and teaching and non- teaching materials collected from each observed teacher.

5.3.2.2 Step two: finding items/ units of analysis

The second step, LeCompte (2000) continues, is finding units of analysis. In regard to the second phase of this research, investigating the standards' impact on classroom instructional practices in this research, as discussed in sections 2.5 and 4.3.2, is based on real classroom practices not teachers' reports of their own practices. Accordingly, the representation of such real practices in this study is vital through what is so-called classroom discourse episodes, which will be explained in more details later in this section.

Seeking quality of instruction through the analysis of classroom discourse has been encouraged and practiced by different authors and researchers interested in classroom interaction like Mameli and Molinari (2014), Walsh (2002, 2006, 2011), Nystrand (1997), Skidmore (2000; 2006), Mercer (2004, 2008, 2010), Black (2007), Kiely and Davis (2010) and Hardman et al (2003). Walsh (2011, p. 3) for instance, states

Communication in the classroom is so important because it underpins everything that goes on in classrooms. It is central to teaching, to learning, to managing groups of people and the learning process, and to organising the various tasks and activities that make up classroom practices.

Therefore, what is implemented through classroom communication/ discourse is vital to investigate any possible intersection between what is instructionally practiced in real classrooms in this phase and what is instructionally assumed in the standards as revealed in phase 1. According to Wells and Arauz (2006, p. 389), "episode of discourse" is utilized as a unit of analysis

to dig deep into the micro level of the enacted syllabus. Therefore, it is adopted in this phase for two important reasons. First, an episode is traditionally linked to the intended pedagogical goal(s) to be achieved throughout a particular activity. Nystrand (1997, p. 35) defines it as “a coherent classroom activity centering around a particular objective or purpose”. This linkage between a certain activity/episode to a certain aim/objective is highly important in this research as it theorizes a direct link between what is instructed by teachers and what is intended to be achieved by such instruction, which can be for the sake of achieving a particular learning- outcome standard. Second, at the micro level, the analysis of episodes of discourse allows a more detailed focus on what is enacted rather than what is planned (Kiely & Davis, 2010), which this research is also trying to reveal or bridge as a gap in a standard-based language programme research. Real classroom instructional practices are the starting point for investigating learning- outcome standards’ impact as discussed above, not what has been planned for in order to meet them.

The existing literature offers different approaches for analysing classroom discourse. Walsh (2011, 2006), for instance, presents two main analysis approaches for classroom interaction analysis; (1) system- based approaches and (2) the ad hoc approaches. The former is based on analysing classroom interaction through the use of instruments based on pre-defined categories of classroom interactions like the IRF (initiation, response, feedback) offered by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). However, such approaches are criticized of being limited to fixed analysis categories which are not necessarily sufficient to “fit” all events or interactions (Walsh, 2011, p. 77). In this research, such system-based approaches seem to be inappropriate to use as the nature or modes of classroom interactive communication, such as teacher- students or students- students’ interaction is not my prime focus, but the pedagogical dimension of classroom instruction performed by the EFP teachers through classroom interactions and their intersection with the instructional implications of OAAA’s standards as discussed before.

Unlike the system-based approaches, the “ad hoc” approaches, alternatively, are attributed to be a more flexible and less structured instrument to suite a particular context and aim in mind, which I find it more suitable and compatible with the aims of this study. Its main advantage, according to Walsh (2011, p. 80) is that

it allows us, as observers, to focus on specific details in the interaction that we can then describe and attempt to explain. The whole process is much more from the inside looking out and less from the outside looking in. In other words, an ad hoc system is more likely to promote understanding and generate explanations than the system-based approaches

In this study, principles of ad hoc approach to the analysis of classroom discourse episodes is used. This means that instead of approaching classroom discourse episodes in this study in order to categorize them into predefined classroom interactional categories that might

serve best the studies that investigate the nature of classroom interaction between teachers-students or students-students, those classroom discourse episodes, instead, are used to reveal the instructional practices performed by the EFP teachers at the pedagogical level. They are analysed to investigate what EFP teachers are really doing pedagogically in their own EFP classes in comparison to the instructional assumptions or implications implicitly embedded in OAAA's "content" standards that only give account to particular pedagogical tendencies, such as FonF vs. FonFs as extracted in example 1 above (see section 5.3.1.1). Accordingly, letting evidence of such instructional practices, emerging inductively from those classroom discourse episode, will be more appropriate for meeting the main aim of phase 2 of this study. This will allow me as an analyst to focus more on specific details of the selected episodes; more related to the instructional assumptions from phase 1 rather than following pre-defined categories of utterances in the selected episodes.

5.3.2.3 Step three: creating stable items

The third step of analysis, according to LeCompte (2000), is linked to the creation of stable sets of items. Thus, after the identification of the unit of analysis, the researcher is asked to organize the items into groups or categories in order to identify the items that are exactly alike or slightly different based on a set of "taxonomies" (p. 149). The purpose of doing so is put together the items/ episodes that are alike, slightly different or completely different from each other. In order to collect such items or episodes, both my field- notes and transcriptions of recorded lessons with the consultation of the participants' input in the interviews were collaboratively used for episodes selection and compiling as described in the following steps:

1. I started first by cross-checking the field notes collected during the classroom observations against the audio recordings. This initial step was necessary as it helped me add extra details and modify any of my misconceptions I had during classroom observations. This step was helpful to extra validate my field- notes that would be used next to navigate the various instructional practices performed by the observed teachers.
2. Later, by using my field- notes, I worked on allocating the instructional practices of every individual observed teacher in relation to a particular instructional assumption/implication from phase 1. The allocation of such observed instructional practices was performed by coding them manually in the field- notes as illustrated in appendix 5.1 (pp. E 1- E 2), which was used as a way to map out the relevant instructional practices to particular instructional assumptions or implications from phase one. In relation to the instructional assumption illustrated in example 5.3.1.1 above, for instance, all the grammar teaching practices noted down from all the four teachers were allocated and coded as significant instances that can be further

investigated in the following step. This step was performed side by side with reviewing the pedagogical aims teachers were trying to achieve through these instructional practices as reported in my interviews with them. In this way, I was able to link an observed instructional practice to its pedagogical aim.

3. After the allocation and coding of such instances of instructional practices as significantly related to a particular instructional assumption, the transcription of such episodes from the audio recordings was the next step. By doing so, I was able to build up a “stable” bank of classroom episodes/ items of what was pedagogically done by the observed EFP teachers in relation to a particular instructional assumption from phase 1.

This step of de-contextualization of data segments from their original context is necessary in the analysis of qualitative data as long as they are maintaining their original meaning (LeCompte, 2000; Tesch, 1990). Therefore, in the analysis chapter, I will try to contextualize these selected episodes before the analysis of each episode takes place.

5.3.2.4 Step four: creating patterns

The following step of analysis, according to LeCompte (2000), is concerned about identifying or creating patterns from the set of the items/episodes identified in the previous step. The aim of this step is to reassemble the items/episodes being studied in order to give “a coherent explanation or description of the program, event, or phenomenon under study” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 150). Out of the selected transcribed episodes in the previous step, a careful analysis of each individual episode and its contextual characteristics from each teacher was performed in order to identify any shared features among them that shows areas of intersection with the instructional assumption they were grouped under in the previous step.

By referring to the instructional assumption in example 1 above (section 5.3.1.1), for instance, different episodes from the four observed teachers were put together in order to identify any possible patterns in relation to teaching linguistic structural aspects from the FonF perspective against its counterparts from the FonFs perspective. The following example is taken from T1W’s class who was checking the grammatical problems her students made in their written essays in a writing and research skills course (refer to appendix 5.2, page. F 1 to get the transcription key).

5.3.2.5 Example 2: an episode about how language forms are addressed in a writing class

1. T: “Nowadays (1) *english*” (2)>> [reading the first sentence of the introduction]
2. S: <<“*is a*” [proposing that the article “*a*” is needed after the verb to be “*is*” and before the noun “*global language*”]
3. T: anything attracted your attention? *english, english, english* >> [repeating the word *english* to attract their attention to a problem in it]
4. S: <<capital
5. T: English should be capitalized. (.) First letter should be in capital. (1)

6. | S: | After “nowadays”, comma >> [suggesting that a comma is needed after “nowadays”]

The short excerpt above is taken from a classroom discourse episode from one of the essay discussion activities that followed essay writing by the students in T1W’s class. The teacher T1W presents an essay written by a group of her students on an overhead projector and then reads out the essay to help the students spot out some of the mistakes (including grammatical and lexical mistakes) in the displayed essay. In turn 1, T1W reads the phrase “nowadays english” to attract the students’ attention to the capitalization problem with the word “english”. From the student’s response in turn 2, it seems that the student does not get it yet. This has encouraged T1W to use a more direct technique by asking a direct question to the student by saying “anything attracted your attention?”, repeating the word “english” three times in turn 3. By this way, it seems that a student realises that the word “english” needs to be written with a capital E in turn 4. As a given feedback, T1W reminds her students that the first letter in the word English needs to be capitalized all the time. After that, a student realizes that a comma is also needed after the word “nowadays”.

What can be found out significantly from this episode is that the focus on language forms (grammar and lexical items) in this writing course is based on students’ own writing performance problems. Such grammatical and lexical items were not taught as predetermined aspects as in traditional FonFs. Instead, they were allowed to pop up from the performance mistakes the students made while writing their own essays, which gives a possible indication of intersection with the instructional assumption from standard D, which prioritizes FonF over FonFs in EFPs as clarified in example 5.3.1.1 above. Such a finding from this individual writing teacher is later compared with what was practiced by the other writing teacher and the two reading teachers in relation to the instruction of linguistic structural items or forms in order to identify any possible particular patterns about forms instruction in the EFP classes.

5.3.3 Phase three

In this phase, I aim to answer research question 3, which is directed to the investigation of the factors that foster/hinder the intersection identified in phase 2 as exemplified in example 2 (see section 5.3.2.5). Revealing such factors is mainly based on the analysis of the interviews I conducted with the participants from a qualitative inductive thematic analysis perspective in order to seek the interpretations of the participants’ practices and experiences (Alhojailan, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006) in this study.

Seen as a qualitative analytic method (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. The usefulness of a theme is that it “captures

something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82) and the studied phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). Unlike content analysis, which is more concerned with the quantification of data (Mayring, 2000), thematic analysis provides a qualitative analysis of data, which is more important in this research rather than counting or measuring certain themes, patterns or categories in this phase.

As derived from the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), the steps for conducting thematic analysis were followed in this phase of this study. First of all, after transcribing the interviews with all participants and later double-checking these transcripts against the original audio recordings, I had to immerse myself repeatedly in these interviews transcripts in order to familiarize myself with the meanings they carry. Such self-immersion required "careful reading and re-reading" (Liampattong Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258) of the interviews with all the participants during the analysis process.

Second, I started generating initial codes inductively in order to include the different insights of all the participants about their observed instructional practices and the rationales behind their demonstration through the use of NVivo software to facilitate the analysis process. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Mayring (2000), coding depends, to some extent, on the nature of the themes themselves, whether they are data-driven or theory- driven. In the deductive/ top-down analysis, an analyst is driven by predefined theoretical aspects in the process of codes and themes formation. On the contrary, inductive/bottom up analysis is data- driven, where codes and later themes rise from the researchers' engagement with the data so coding process in this approach is not systemized to fit predefined coding frame or analytical preconceptions. Since I do not rely primarily on a theory/ theoretical framework of predefined themes of the factors that mediate the impact of the instructional assumptions of learning- outcome standards, an inductive analysis approach is adopted in this phase, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter (see section 5.2). However, it is important to indicate that my interpretation of what is stated in these interviews was, to some extent, influenced by the factors discussed in relevant literature (see section 3.3.2), at least in terms of naming the themes later on. The coding process was facilitated by using the 'nodes' feature from NVivo software that was helpful to highlight parts of the interview texts that are interesting to explain particular instructional practices observed in phase 2 in relation to a particular instructional assumption investigated in this research. The screenshot 5.1 below illustrates a number of codes I made by NVivo.

The screenshot shows the NVivo Pro software interface. The main window displays a table of codes with columns for Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The table is organized into sections: Nodes, Sources, and Reports. The 'Nodes' section contains codes like 'Course of reading', 'Course of writing and research skills', and 'FonF v/s FonFs'. The 'Sources' section contains codes like 'FonF in the writing and research skills course', 'selected pre-planned grammatical and lexical aspects', and 'FonF in the reading course'. The 'Reports' section contains codes like 'Increasing demand for more grammar teaching', 'Reading', 'Explicit strategy instruction', and 'Implicit strategy instruction'. The sidebar on the left shows a tree view of 'Nodes' (Cases, Relationships, Node Matrices) and 'Sources' (Nodes, Classifications, Collections, Queries, Reports, Maps, Folders). The bottom status bar shows '129 Items' and the date '05/06/2018'.

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Course of reading | | 0 | 21/03/2017 10:54 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Course of writing and research skills | | 0 | 21/03/2017 19:21 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| FonF v/s FonFs | | 1 | 21/03/2017 10:56 | K | 31/01/2018 13:34 | K |
| FonF in the writing and research skills course | | 4 | 17/20/2017 13:51 | K | 31/01/2018 14:16 | K |
| selected pre-planned grammatical and lexical aspects | | 4 | 31/01/2018 12:02 | K | 31/01/2018 16:43 | K |
| FonF in the reading course | | 5 | 20/03/2017 13:33 | K | 12/02/2018 14:51 | K |
| Increasing demand for more grammar teaching | | 2 | 21/03/2017 19:34 | K | 31/01/2018 14:37 | K |
| Reading | | 0 | 27/09/2017 13:57 | K | 27/09/2017 13:57 | K |
| Explicit strategy instruction | | 2 | 31/01/2018 14:07 | K | 12/02/2018 14:51 | K |
| Implicit strategy instruction | | 2 | 12/02/2018 12:23 | K | 12/02/2018 14:52 | K |
| KH (about reading) | | 0 | 27/09/2017 13:07 | K | 05/06/2018 10:48 | K |
| MO's class | | 0 | 27/09/2017 11:42 | K | 05/06/2018 10:49 | K |
| STs class | | 0 | 26/09/2017 09:52 | K | 05/06/2018 10:49 | K |
| ZB (reading) | | 0 | 27/09/2017 13:56 | K | 05/06/2018 10:19 | K |
| Standard A discussions | | 3 | 20/03/2017 14:13 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard B Paraphrasing | | 3 | 16/03/2017 19:08 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard C presentations | | 2 | 16/03/2017 19:19 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard D essays | | 1 | 20/03/2017 12:02 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard E report | | 2 | 16/03/2017 19:33 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard F note-taking in listening | | 3 | 20/03/2017 17:42 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard G listening to instruction | | 0 | 22/03/2017 12:54 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard H listening to two or more | | 0 | 22/03/2017 13:02 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard I reading for main and specific ideas | | 1 | 20/03/2017 17:43 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |
| Standard J reading for analytical skills | | 1 | 21/03/2017 13:17 | K | 24/03/2017 17:26 | K |

Screenshot 5.1: codes from interviews

The third step, according to Braun and Clarke's (2006), is the development of themes from the codes developed in step two. The different justifications the observed teachers gave for their classroom instructional practices were coded and then sorted out in a way they formulate overarching themes. To do so, such themes generation was done at two levels; themes generated from (1) the participating teachers and from (2) their CCs. The codes collected from the teachers were first listed on a table in relation to a particular pattern of instructional practice found in phase 2, such as the FonF and FonFs observed activities observed in the four teachers' classes. The content of these codes were then compared with each other to identify any kind of possible patterns of justifications of their similar instructional practices such as their own beliefs or the impact of teaching materials. From such similarities or differences from those justifications, it was possible to reach overarching themes. Later, in the cases where teachers gave no clear idea of why certain language aspects were instructed, I moved to the codes from the CCs to formulate further justifying explanations (themes) for those instructional practices. For instance, one of the observed reading teachers justified giving FonFs activities in their reading classes simply because of their existence or integration in the reading in-house textbooks given to her. The CCs, on the other hand, gave a different justification for such integration from the first place (see section 7.3 for more details).

Finally, in this process of themes development, the peer debriefer mentioned in section (4.7.1.4) was involved in the coding reorganizations and themes building. The following is an example of an extract from one of the writing teachers, justifying why students' language structural problems such as grammar and vocab were discussed starting from the students' own actual written productions as exemplified above in example 2 (see section 5.3.2.5), which, in one

way or another, intersects with one of the instructional implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards illustrated in example 1 above (see section 5.3.1.1).

5.3.3.1 Example 3: interview extract analysis

The extract in this example is taken from an interview with the writing teacher T1W who justified such an instructional practice by saying:

I am trying to make them aware of all of the criteria we look for when we mark their writing or compositions so when it comes to writing themselves they are aware of what is expected from them. You see what I am saying? I mean I just want to keep them within the picture and the loop of what is happening what are the things we look for so that everything is clear in their head.

In this extract, the teacher justified the focus on such grammatical and lexical aspects based on the students' own written essays to her belief that the students needed to be aware of the assessment criteria developed by the EFP for the 250-word report essays. Such criteria are used by the teachers themselves while marking the students' essays in the final exams. Accordingly, it was necessary, according to T1W, that her students got aware of the existence of such criteria and what it meant to them when they used such grammatical and lexical items in their real writings. The analysis of the content of such marking criteria was later demonstrated to triangulate what the teacher claimed (see section 7.3.1 for a full discussion of this justification).

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter dedicates itself to address two areas related to data analysis in this study. This includes (1) the analytical positions I have adopted as analytical parameters in the process of the data analysis in a qualitative case study adopting the constructivist/ relativist paradigm of reality. This was later followed by (2) the presentation and justification of the analytical approach adopted in each phase of this study along with an illustrated and exemplified steps I followed to analyse my data. Finally, the findings of the three RQs in this study will be reported in the following three chapters. The next chapter (chapter 6) is oriented totally towards reporting the findings for the first research question in phase one of this research.

6 Chapter 6: Phase one analysis findings

6.1 Introduction

As clarified in the introduction (see section 1.2.3), OAAA's learning- outcome standards for EFPs have been developed to identify what EFP students are able to know and do with English language. However, OAAA has not prescribed any instructional principles or "best" practices for the EFP teachers in order to guide their classroom instruction leading to the achievement of those learning- outcomes. Therefore, before the investigation of the intersection between what is instructionally assumed, on one hand, and what is practiced, on the other hand, in the second phase in order to investigate the washback impact of such "content" standards on teachers' classroom instructional practices, it is fundamental first in phase one of this research to theorize such instructional assumptions or implications more explicitly.

To make such implicit instructional assumptions more explicit, principles of the notion of "intertextuality" from CDA has been adopted by establishing the external links between OAAA's learning- outcome standards as a text and the wider discourse of English language teaching literature as discussed in section 5.3.1 and as recommended by Crabbe (2003) in standard-based language programmes (see section 2.4). As discussed in section 5.3.1, "intertextuality", according to Fairclough (2003), refers mainly to the investigation of incorporation of others' voices in the original text to be analysed. It is based on the idea that "what is said in a text is 'said' against a background of what is 'unsaid', but taken as 'given'" (Fairclough, 1992; 2003). In this chapter, the external relations between individual OAAA's learning- outcome standard as a text and the wider discourse of language instruction (see section 3.2), which functions as a "common ground" between the standards developers and interpreters, are attempted to be revealed to articulate more explicitly what has not been said regarding what to do pedagogically for the achievement of OAAA's learning- outcome standards. Such an attempt has been mediated through the established different views of language and language learning in ELT literature internationally and locally (see section 3.2.1 & 1.2.3 respectively), which implicitly embedded in each one of OAAA's learning- outcome standards and the instructional practices that are associated to such views as "best" instructional practices. The linguistic features indicating such views of language and language learning, as exemplified in section 5.3.1.1 have been highlighted with every learning- outcome standard to facilitate revealing such implicit views of language and consequently their theoretical instructional implications.

Such linguistic features will be subjectively linked to a wider discourse of language teaching derived from literature locally (see section 1.2.3) and globally (see section 3.2). As discussed in section 3.2, there are three main views of language and language learning, which are

viewed to be leading language instruction in theory. These three views are the “structural”, “functional” and “interactional” views of language and language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), from which various instructional implications considered to be “best” instructional practices have been established. Additionally, in section 1.2.3, the English language and language teaching philosophy in Oman has been discussed, which has been found to be based mainly on the communicative approach of language teaching with an emphasis on the communicative use of language and the instruction of language learning strategies (Al-Issa, 2006). Based on these two sources of language teaching discourse, findings of phase one to answer RQ1 in this study will be reported. The following sections (6.2- 6.11) are to report the findings of the analysis of each individual learning- outcome standards listed by OAAA for the EFPs and the instructional implications they implicitly carry in order to answer RQ1, which states *what instructional assumptions are implicitly embedded in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards?*

6.2 Standard (a)

“Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions”

From standard A, it can be argued that two instructional assumptions from the interactional and functional views of language and language teaching are adopted in this standard. First, the verbal phrase to “actively participate in a discussion” at the beginning of this learning- outcome standard gives an indication that language is viewed as a tool for ‘interactional’ communication among participants who are expected to be active participants in discussions (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Students seem to be expected to be fully involved in such discussions where they do not only respond to their teachers’ prompts or questions mechanically but also take the responsibility to develop themselves through their fully independent active participation. That is why their participation has been expected or described to be active. Therefore, this may give an indication that language learning occurs through the natural use of language rather than the formal instruction of language structures or communicative functions. This view is seemingly linked to the strong version of CLT as given by Littlewood (2012; 2013) as it encourages students to “actively participate in a discussion” with no clear specifications of what language units to be used. Accordingly, teachers are expected pedagogically to give opportunities for natural interactive use of language among the students as indicated by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011). In addition, this standard may find its root in the ELCF in the Omani context too, which views English mainly as a means of communication (Al-Issa, 2006), which necessitates more interactions among students themselves or between students and their teachers, especially with

the ELCF's aim that encourages the Omani students to "use English to communicate accurately in a wide range of situations".

However, the developers of this learning- outcome standard continued to list a number of communicative functions necessary seemingly to handle such natural interactions in the second half of the standard. The specification of those language communicative functions, which are "asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions" at the end of this standard may also suggest that some direct instruction of those functions is needed whenever the active participation by students in such discussions is challenged, as it is provided in the communicative 'functional' view of language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The existence of such a list of such communicative functions after the active participation phrase may indicate that those communicative functions are essential for students' learning in order to facilitate more active participation. Thus, EFP teachers might be expected to interfere, whenever needed, to provide direct instruction of such communicative functions to facilitate the students' main aim to "actively participate in a discussion". By referring to the existing literature about teaching communicative functions, teachers are expected first to introduce such communicative functions and then give controlled practice activities in which such functions are used before more natural discussions are provided as represented in the PPP model (Krahnke, 1987; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) (see section 3.2.1.3). Such a theoretical functional foundation from ELT literature intersect with the need to introduce the Omani students to opportunities to use English in "a functional and meaningful way" as indicated by Al-Issa (2006) who insists that the need to improve students' declarative and procedural knowledge of language is vital to improve their communicative competence. Accordingly, providing them with opportunities to know about these communicative functions and then use them later in particular situations might be another instructional implication of this standard.

6.3 Standard (b)

"Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data"

The core outcome of standard B is apparently the study skill of paraphrasing, as the utmost outcome expected in this standard is to "paraphrase information" from one form to another. The developers of this standard seem to be interested to emphasize that this study skill is so important for EFP students to the extent that they have spared an independent standard for

it despite the fact that paraphrasing is also integrated as one study skill in standard E that will be discussed later in section 6.6.

The focus on paraphrasing in this standard seems to propose that the “reductionist” view of language, which views language as a reduced set of language skills or subskills, is emphasized (Krahnke, 1987). Unlike the interactive and possibly functional views of language in standard A above, language, in this standard, is apparently viewed as a number of discrete units, including paraphrasing skill. Accordingly, one might infer that language learning in this standard appears to be best performed by acquiring these individual skills, including the study skill of paraphrasing. By acquiring the skills of paraphrasing, language learning is hoped to be achieved.

Accordingly, it can be argued, based on Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI) literature, that teachers are pedagogically expected to help their students develop their own “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge (Chamot, 2005) of some strategies needed for the development of students’ paraphrasing study skill (see section 3.2.1.3). The declarative knowledge, therefore, necessitates developing students’ knowledge about what paraphrasing and its techniques are more explicitly. Second, EFP teachers are also expected to provide texts or graphs to their students in order to provide a necessary and sufficient practice of paraphrasing to their students in order to decode meanings in the given texts and then code them in a new format either in a spoken or written format (Grabe and Stoller, 2014; Griffiths, 2013; Chamot, 2005; Harris, 2001). The provision of such paraphrasing practice opportunities are to satisfy the students’ “procedural” knowledge, where such taught paraphrasing strategies are used. Such an emphasis on empowering students with language learning strategies is also found to be emphasized by both Al-Issa (2006) and the ELCF’s document discussed in section 1.2.3. In ELCF’s fourth aim, the Omani students are expected to “demonstrate awareness of learning strategies and study skills” in order to “apply them for furthering their English learning”. Such an emphasis on empowering students with such learning strategies and study skills in the ELCF provides a clear indication of encouragement to integrate such instruction in ELT classes in Oman, not only at school level but also at the tertiary level where EFPS are located.

6.4 Standard (c)

“Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions”

Standard C seems to adopt two different views of language and language learning: (1) language as a tool for authentic oral communication and (2) language as a number of oral

presentation skills necessary for improving the quality of the delivery of the oral talk itself. Each one of these two views theoretically reinforce different instructional assumptions or implications accordingly as will be discussed next.

First of all, starting with the verbal phrase “prepare and deliver a talk” and then ending the learning- outcome with the verbal phrase “respond confidently to questions” appears to adopt an ‘interactional’ view of language and language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, having a monologic talk by a presenter followed by a more dialogic interactional talk between a presenter and their audience through responding “confidently to questions” by audience suggests that interactive language use is expected in this standard like standard A above. No linguistic ‘structural’ aspects, such as grammatical and lexical predefined items are prioritized as the starting point for language learning in this standard. Rather, it is the provision of a meaningful oral use of language by individual students followed by more dialogic interactions between the presenter(s) and their audience. This emphasis on ‘authentic’ interaction accordingly is more likely proposing the natural acquisition of language through natural language use (Kim, 2001; Swan, 2005). Consequently, EFP teachers are expected primarily to facilitate the flow of interactions between the presenters and their audience by giving opportunities first for monologic talks for the presenter(s), followed by more dialogic talks where the audience are allowed to raise their own questions about the given presentations (Skehan, 2003). Accordingly, it can be argued that facilitating learner- learner interaction can be considered as a possible “best” practice, which needs to be more emphasized than teacher-led instruction (Dagarin, 2004) of pre-defined structural items as in classical structural instruction. Such a view of language intersects with the overall view of language and language learning in the Omani context (Al-Issa, 2006; Al-Jadidi, 2009) as outlined in standard A above. It intersects also with the merits of the ELCF (Ministry of Education, n.d., p. 8), which encourages “less dependence on transmission-oriented mode of teaching”.

The second half of the standard, on the other hand, appears to reinforce the development of some presentation skills. In addition to “deliver a talk”, performing certain presentation skills like “speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas” is emphasized in this standard as well. This may show that after the preparation stage, the quality of delivery of such presentations represented by the listed presentation skills is vital as viewed by the developers of this standard who seem to be considerate about the presentation skills of the presenters themselves in order to enhance, or “support” the quality of the talks delivery as dictated in the standard itself. Such an interest of developing presentation and study skills intersect with one of ELCF’ aims (aim 4, see section 1.2.3) already mentioned in my analysis in standard B above. Therefore, it might be possible to infer that the inclusion of such presentation skills in this standard may possibly imply a more “reductionist”

view of language to a number of smaller skills or subskills (Rahimpour, 2010; Wilkins, 1976). Such a view, according to SBI literature (see section 3.2.1.3), may necessitate accordingly the development of the students’ “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge (Chamot, 2005; Cohen, 1998; Al-Issa, 2006) of such presentation strategies as discussed in standard B above with paraphrasing strategies.

6.5 Standard (d)

“Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary”

In this standard, two possible instructional implications might be outlined too. Starting first with the verbal phrase “write a text of 250 words”, this standard is targeting the communicative use of language through the production of a 250-word written text. Based on this learning- outcome, it can be argued that the ‘interactional’ view of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) is implicitly emphasized, which appears to prioritize no “synthetic” units of language for language instruction as classified by Littlewood (2004; 2011; 2013) (see section 3.2.1.2.1 above). Such a view of language is seemingly resembling what has been stated by the ELCF’ document, Nunan et al (1987) and AL-Issa (2006) that English language in Oman is viewed as “a means of communication” that should be used in “a wide range of situations”. Writing such texts assumingly can be seen as one situation where EFP students should be allowed to demonstrate such a communicative task by their teachers. This view of language implies accordingly that teachers are expected primarily to focus on giving their students the opportunities to compose meaningful written texts throughout a process of negotiation of what such texts should be about and what they need to be like with no pre-defined linguistics aspects to be taught independently in advance necessarily as it is dictated in the strong version of CLT (Littlewood, 2013; Richards, 2006).

However, the second half of the standard, which starts with the verbal phrase of “showing control” over structural and text organization requirements, including “punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary” seems to bring the instruction of those linguistic structural items into the surface for the first and only time in OAAA’s learning- outcome standards. From such a position, the debate about how language forms are addressed in EFPs seems to impose itself to be tackled accordingly. It can be argued, based on the analysis of this standard and its external relation to the wider discourse of language forms instruction; more specifically FonF v.s. FonFs (Ellis, 2002; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002; Long, 1998b; Norris & Ortega, 2000) (see section 3.2.1.2.2), that any possible focus on such linguistic aspects needs to

be linked directly first to the communicative aim of the learning- outcome standard D itself. The main aim of this standard focuses on producing written texts as discussed in the paragraph above. Therefore, it adopts a more communicative view of language and language teaching rather than the conventional ‘structural’ one as discussed previously (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Second, the students are expected to be “showing control” of the linguistic aspects they already use or may use in such written texts. Having such a phrase immediately after the first one targeting writing pieces of writing can be considered as an indication that such “control” needs to be oriented primarily to the structural items (grammar, vocab) already used by the students themselves, not in general terms as in conventional ‘structural’ syllabi with pre-defined and pre-sequenced items to be taught as independent items (Carroll, 2015; Graves, 2014; Nunan, 1988b; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yalden, 1983). Therefore, it is hard to say that the instruction of such linguistic aspects is delivered in the traditional FonFs way, as in conventional structural syllabi with predefined and pre-sequenced items to teach. Rather, it could be possible to say that this standard prioritizes a more communicative view of language that such linguistic aspects can be the pedagogical focus of teachers when such linguistic problematic issues pop up according to the students’ needs or based on their real communicative performance problems in their writings. In other words, it can be argued that such linguistic aspects should be tackled selectively and purposefully by the teachers whenever the communication of meaning in such written texts is influenced to enhance their sense of “control”(Long, 1998a). As derived from FonFs and FonF discussion (see section 3.2.1.2.2), this standard appears to be more oriented towards tackling such linguistic structural aspects of written texts as they arise from students’ real compositions rather than being pre-defined and pre-sequenced beforehand as in traditional structural syllabi. As discussed earlier (see section 1.2.3), one of ELCF’s aims is to enable the Omani students to “use English to communicate accurately in a wide range of situations” (Ministry of Education, n. d.). Such an aim seems to emphasize similarly the assumption that language use for communication is a prime outcome, while language structural aspects, including grammar and vocab can be instructed in order to facilitate the achievement of the given communicative tasks or activities but not for their own sake as the ultimate goal of language instruction in the Omani educational system. Such an analysis can be actually supported by the overall analysis of all of OAAA’s standards for EFPs, which are tending to be more communicatively oriented.

6.6 Standard (e)

“Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references”

Like standard D above, Language in this standard, and therefore its implications on language instruction, can be seen from two different perspectives. First, to “produce a written report of a minimum of 500 word”, based on “research”, can be viewed as ‘a process’ (Krahnke, 1987; Nunan, 1988b) that is not based on the view of language as predefined linguistic content system (structural, functional or skills). Rather, it is more focused on the process of learning through the completion of the given task itself through natural negotiation and communication between EFP students and their teachers. This interactive, more probably ‘authentic’, negotiation is emphasized by the requirement of “showing evidence” of the work progress of the different phases of the report in which negotiation of task progress is performed (Kim, 2001; B. Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKinley, 2015). Such phases or stages have been outlined explicitly, which are “research, notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarizing, use of quotations and use of references”. In each phase, negotiation of progress through showing evidence is expected, which reinforces the ‘interactional’ nature of language use between EFP students as the doers of the task and their teachers as the guides or facilitators of such progress, not as fully transmitters of language knowledge (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Long & Crookes, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This communicative perspective of language teaching seems to be linked to the strong version of ELT (Littlewood, 2013) as its prime focus is on the process of learning but not necessarily the language units or items to be learnt at the end of the day; either structural or functional. Accordingly, teachers are expected pedagogically to provide such opportunities where such interactions are demonstrated. Locally, this implication might intersect with the what the ELCF (Ministry of Education, n.d., p. 12) is aiming at by enabling the Omani students to use English language to communicate in a “a wide range of situations”.

However, the explicit inclusion of the list of research and study skills “notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references” in this standard might also imply the direct instruction of some relevant strategies necessary for the development of such research and study skills as possibly implied previously in standard B above (see section 6.3). Study skills like notetaking, paraphrasing, summarizing, and research skills like revisions of work, use of quotations and use of references are all suggesting bringing such subskills and their relevant strategies into EFP students’ metacognitive knowledge, as rooted or principled in the Strategy- based Instruction (SBI) (Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Harris, 2001; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Like in standard B above, which is targeting the study skill of paraphrasing, the integration of these research and study skills into students’ ‘declarative’ and ‘procedural’ knowledge through the explicit instruction of some relevant strategies necessary for the development of such study and research skills can be pedagogically expected (Al-Issa, 2006). Therefore, the direct instruction of such techniques or strategies and giving the opportunity for practicing them by EFP teachers can be another possible instructional assumption or implication

of this standard whenever found to be necessary by the EFP teachers (Griffiths, 2013; Oxford, 1989). As stated earlier in standard B above, the development of such declarative and procedural knowledge of the Omani students is seen to be an important element to improve their language communicative competence as dictated in the fourth aim in ELCF document and as encouraged by Al-Issa (2006) in his own analysis of the Omani policy of English language teaching in the Sultanate (see section 1.2.3).

6.7 Standard (f)

"Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g. lecture, news broadcast)"

This standard seems to concern itself with the academic study skill of note-taking. Like paraphrasing in standard B above, notetaking is spared an independent learning- outcome standard despite its integrated existence in standard E above. In this standard, however, it is situated as a subskill under the development of the skill of listening as its development comes as a pre-step to develop other listening sub-skills, which are to "respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments". Starting with the verbal phrase "take notes" followed by the verbal phrase "respond to questions" might indicate that the development of the study skill of note-taking from a listening text needs to be purposeful. Targeting such a particular study skill seems to reinforce the 'synthetic' view of language that views language as a number of smaller skills that needs to be acquired individually as with paraphrasing in standard B above (Wilkins, 1976). The skill of note-taking, like paraphrasing in standard B, is a study skill that stands as a necessary skill to be developed by EFP students in order to be able to answer comprehension questions out of a listening text.

Therefore, one possible instructional assumption that can be derived from this standard can be represented through the development of students' "declarative" and "procedural" knowledge (Chamot, 2005) of some note-taking strategies before using these notes for answering such given comprehension questions. In the former, EFP teachers are expected to give explicit instruction about what note-taking techniques or strategies are, while in the later, they are expected to promote their students' procedural knowledge by giving them enough practice opportunities of those note-taking strategies (Griffiths, 2013). Accordingly, this does not differ from what has been said regarding the improvement of the Omani students' communicative competence through improving their declarative and procedural knowledge of some learning and study skills strategies in the Omani context as indicated by Al-Issa (2006) (see the analysis of standards B, C and E above) and as targeted by the ELCF document (Ministry of Education, n.d.),

which aims to enable Omani students to “demonstrate an awareness of learning strategies and study skills” in order to “apply them for furthering their English learning”.

6.8 Standard (g)

“Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages”

First of all, to “follow spoken instructions” indicates that listening skill is targeted for the second time in addition to standard F above. Second, the aim of listening in this standard is to “carry out a task” through following “spoken instructions” unlike standard G, which aims to develop students’ comprehension through answering related comprehension question. It can be argued that the nature of this task is not defined clearly as it could be a task of any kind, done in any format. This standard specifies no particular “synthetic” language content system(s) to be targeted (Krahnke, 1987) either ‘structural’ or ‘functional’ (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that it is more likely adopting an ‘interactional’ view of language, which reinforces natural interactionS between the “instructions” giver, who is more probably EFP teachers, and the receivers of the “instructions” who are EFP students as a means for language learning (Kim, 2001; B. Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKinley, 2015). As in standard A, it can be assumed in this standard that EFP teachers are expected to be more like facilitators of natural interaction between themselves and their students. While EFP students are “carrying out” the given task, EFP teachers can be there to negotiate the meanings of the given instructions with their own students with no pre-planned pedagogical focus necessarily on any language content units (grammar, vocab, etc.) (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

6.9 Standard (h)

“Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, register (e.g. formal or informal)”

In this standard, the listening skill is targeted for the third time as EFP students are required to “listen to a conversation”. However, it is arguably different from standard G in its view of language and consequently in its instructional implications. First, listening in this standard comes to develop EFP students’ ability “to answer relevant questions”. This purposive use of listening to develop students’ listening comprehension comes to develop their ability to answer a number of comprehension questions as a final product of learning as described in this standard. Accordingly, it is not clear enough that this standard reinforces the ‘interactional’ view of language and language learning as a prime concern (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) as in standard G above. It is not clear either that it reinforces the emphasis on the ‘structural’ view where linguistic

aspects or units are prioritized. Instead, it might be possible to say that it is led by a “reductionist” view of language (Krahnke, 1987) that views language as a number of communicative skills or subskills that need to be targeted independently like paraphrasing in standard B above. Answering questions that are “in relation” to a particular text, including listening texts, can be one of the listening subskills that are targeted in this learning- outcome standard.

Therefore, unlike standard G which emphasizes the natural learning of language through ‘natural’ interactions, the focus on students’ ability to “answer questions” seems to be leading pedagogically to the instruction of listening strategies necessary to help EFP students answer those related questions from a listening text. As discussed previously in standards B, C, E & F, students’ ‘declarative’ and ‘procedural’ knowledge (Grabe and Stoller, 2014; Griffiths, 2013; Chamot, 2005; Harris, 2001) about such listening strategies need to be emphasized by EFP teachers through the explicit integration of such listening strategies in the listening course in order to help them handle such comprehension questions more successfully as discussed in SBI in section 3.2.1.3. Accordingly, the introduction of such strategies and giving opportunities for practicing them is arguably a legitimate instructional implication in this case. Such an instructional implication to promote the Omani students’ declarative and procedural knowledge can be viewed aligning with Al-Issa’s (2006) interpretation of the Omani ELCF in the Omani educational system, which necessitates the development of Omani students’ declarative’ and ‘procedural’ knowledge in order to facilitate the development of their communicative competence of English language (see section 1.2.3).

6.10 Standard (i)

“Read a one to two page text and identify the main idea(s) and extract specific information in a given period of time”

Standard I, as starting with the verbal phrase “read a one to two page text”, indicates that the skill of reading is its main focus. Like standard H above, the aim of reading in this standard is to develop EFP students’ mastery of particular subskills, which are “identifying the main ideas and extract specific information”. Accordingly, the purpose of reading is apparently limited to developing these two reading subskills since such a purpose immediately followed the verbal phrase starting with the verb “read”. Based on this clearly defined purpose of reading, it might be possible to argue that this standard adopts the “synthetic” view of language (Krahnke, 1987) that views language as a number of smaller skills and subskills that need to be introduced and learned individually unlike the ‘interactional’ one, which prioritizes the process of learning through natural authentic communication rather than focusing on teaching particular language skills or subskills (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011; Littlewood, 2013; Richards and Rodgers, 2011).

Pedagogically, in order to help EFP students develop such reading subskills (identifying main ideas and extract specific information), it can be argued that in addition to the provision of such reading texts with such reading questions targeting such reading subskills, EFP teachers might be expected to provide a direct instruction of necessary relevant reading strategies for those two reading subskills, as derived from SBI literature (Afflerbach et al, 2008) (see section 3.2.1.3) and from the ELCF from the Omani context that encourages the development of students' learning strategies (Al_Issa, 2006) (see section 1.2.3). Such instruction is provided to help EFP students' 'declarative' and 'procedural' knowledge that facilitate their learning or such reading subskills as dictated in SBI literature (Grabe and Stoller, 2014; Griffiths, 2013; Chamot, 2005; Harris, 2001). The provision of such strategy instruction is based on the assumption that reading comprehension can be facilitated if such strategies are brought to the metacognitive knowledge of the students. Accordingly, EFP teacher need to give direct instruction of what relevant strategies are useful to promote such reading subskills followed by enough opportunities for practicing them (Al-Issa, 2006; Chamot, 2005; Griffiths, 2013; Pearson and Dole, 1987).

6.11 Standard (j)

"Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student's area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g. prediction, deduction, inference"

The last standard, standard J, shares a lot of similar features about its view to language and language learning and consequently its instructional implications with standard I above. Like standard I, it targets the skill of reading as EFP students are expected to "read an extensive text". Similarly, the purpose of reading in this standards is "to respond to questions". Unlike the questions that focus on "identifying main ideas and specific information" in standard I, the questions targeted in this standard need to be checking EFP students' "analytical skills", such as "prediction, deduction, inference". Accordingly, despite the fact that it targets a different set of reading subskills, the main view of language and language learning can be arguably the same as it stems from the same 'synthetic' view of language that approaches language as a number of smaller skills or subskills (Krahnke, 1987).

Based on this similarity, it can also be possible to say that one instructional implication that can be derived from this standard is the provision of direct reading strategy instruction necessary to help EFP develop their reading analytical skills in addition to the provision of such reading texts and questions. Based on SBI literature, as indicated in standard I above, includes the development the students' 'declarative' and 'procedural' knowledge of these strategies (Al-Issa, 2006; Chamot, 2005; Griffiths, 2013; Pearson and Dole, 1987), so EFP students are introduced to

what these strategies are and later given the opportunities to practice them in order to develop such reading “analytical skills”.

6.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the analysis of each one of OAAA’s ten learning- outcome standards presented above (sections 6.2- 6.11), it can be stated that the instructional assumptions/implications, which can be elicited from these standards, are various but can be summarized into four main points, which are:

- (1) The focus on natural interactive use of language in communication (**interactional** view of language learning),
- (2) Potential direct instruction of communicative functions (e.g. agreeing, disagreeing) (**functional** view of language)
- (3) The explicit instruction of language subskills and study skills strategies as specified in some standards (**reductionist** view of language)
- (4) Prioritizing FonF for language forms instruction over FonFs (language forms related issue in more communicative approaches)

Such an analysis of these implications has been based on the theoretical framework of English language teaching derived from ELT literature discussed in section 3.2 above, which are mainly based on (1) the ‘structural’, ‘functional’ and ‘interactional’ views of language and language teaching from Richards and Rodgers’ framework representing an international view of language education (see section 3.2) and the English language literature in the Omani context (see section 1.2.3), representing a more local view of ELT.

The table 6.1 below presents a summary of these four main findings for every individual standard in phase one of this research (see column B in table 6.1 below). Additionally, such instructional implications/ assumptions of OAAA’ learning- outcome standards can be categorized into three main classifications; (1) **interaction- focused**, which prioritizes language interaction as its utmost target (2) **strategy instruction- focused**, which concerns itself to teaching language and study skills strategies and (3) the **combined**, which mainly gives an emphasis to both language interaction and focus of teaching strategies/ functions in one standard (see the column C).

| A | B | C |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| OAAA learning-outcome standards | Implicit instructional assumptions | Category of instructional implication |
| Standard (a) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on interactive use of language Possible provision of direct instruction and practice of communicative functions (e.g. agreeing, disagreeing) | Combined (interaction and functions-focused) |
| Standard (b) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of direct instruction of strategies necessary for developing paraphrasing skill | Strategy-focused |
| Standard (c) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on interactive use of language (monologic and dialogic talks) Potential provision of direct instruction of some strategies to facilitate the development of presentation skills | Combined (interaction and strategy-focused) |
| Standard (d) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on interactive use of language Prioritizing Focus over Form (FonF) | Interaction-focused |
| Standard (e) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on interactive use of language Potential provision of direct instruction of some strategies to facilitate the development of the listed research skills | Combined (interaction and strategy-focused) |
| Standard (f) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of direct instruction of some strategies to facilitate the development of note-taking and answering listening comprehension questions. | Strategy-focused |
| Standard (g) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on interactive use of language | Interaction-focused |
| Standard (h) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of explicit instruction of listening strategies to facilitate the development of listening subskills | Strategy-focused |
| Standard (i) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of explicit instruction of reading strategies to facilitate the development of reading subskills | Strategy-focused |
| Standard (j) | | |

Table 6.1. Summary of instructional assumptions of OAAA learning outcome standards for EFPs

Overall, from the individual analysis of OAAA's learning-outcome standards, two major conclusions can be outlined at the end of this chapter. First, a careful analysis of the external relations of every individual standard has relatively revealed that different OAAA's learning-outcome standards have different views of language and language learning, ranging in a continuum from purely reductionist/ 'synthetic' orientation to purely interactional/ 'analytic' orientation of language curriculum development perspectives (Wilkins, 1976). Standards G, for instance, gives no kind of attention to any language "synthetic" specification system, as their

prime focus is on the process of task accomplishment rather than the mastery of any linguistic items, communicative functions or language subskills for its own sake. On the other hand, the standards B, F, H, I and J are more oriented solely towards the development of particular subskills such as note-taking, paraphrasing, and identifying main and supporting ideas. In between, there are a number of standards that prioritize the interactional nature of language and language learning with some possible emphasis on particular functions or subskills like in standards A, C, D and E. Overall, it is possible to say that OAAA's learning- outcome standards are not based on the conventional 'structural' view of language and language learning that prioritizes language instruction from its classical perspective. Instead, they appear to be mainly rooted in the principles of CLT (weak and strong versions), which prioritize the communicative use of language (functions, skills or natural interaction) (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In other words, none of the standards is primarily developed for the development of particular grammatical, lexical or phonological aspects of language for their own sake as represented in the 'structural' view of language and language learning.

The implications of such non-structural view of language and language learning is more dependent on the communicative-oriented teaching approaches like communicative functions instruction, strategy-based instruction (SBI) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) that prioritize language interaction and language use. While the last one prioritizes the natural learning of language through the provision of authentic communication, the first two give a special attention to the development of EFP learners' metacognitive capacities by employing more attention to the direct instruction and demonstration of communicative functions or strategies necessary for the development of particular functions (e.g. agreeing, disagreeing), study skills (e.g. paraphrasing in standard B), research skills (e.g. use of quotation and referencing in standard E) or language subskills (e.g. identifying main and supporting ideas in standards I & J).

Second, the overall non- structural orientation of viewing language and language learning in all of the ten standards gives a subtle indication that language forms instruction needs not to be the starting point for language syllabi design and consequently language instruction in EFP classes. As indicated in all the ten standards above, learning a particular linguistic unit (e.g. grammatical, lexical) has not been found to be the prime interest for language instruction as implied in OAAA' learning- outcome standards. Accordingly, it can be stated that language forms, including grammar and vocabulary can be more arguably approached from the FonF perspective as theorized by Long (1998b) rather than the FonF perspective (see section 3.2.1.2.2 for more details about these two concepts), as a more communicative view of language is adopted holistically in all of the ten standards.

Finally, before moving to chapter 7 and 8 to report the findings from the second phase of this case study, it is important to clarify at this stage that the investigation of the intersection between all of the listed-above instructional assumptions and the instructional practices in EFP real classroom to answer RQ2 is going to be limited to two instructional implications or assumptions from phase 1 findings. These instructional assumptions will be investigated independently in the following two chapters, as clarified in table 6.2 below.

| | Instructional assumptions/ implications to be investigated in phase 2 and 3 of this study | From standard | Discussed in |
|----|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Prioritizing Focus on Form (FonF) over Focus on Forms (FonFs) | Standard D | Chapter 7 |
| 2. | Explicit instruction of reading strategies | Standards (I & J) | Chapter 8 |

Table 6.2: list of instructional assumptions/implications to be investigated in phase 2

The limitation of the investigation in phase 2 of this study to these two instructional assumptions/ implications can be referred to three main reasons; theoretical, context- related and collected data- related.

The selection of the first assumption from table 6.2 above related to prioritizing FonF over FonFs can be referred to the three reasons listed earlier. Theoretically, the debate about teaching grammar in ELT has always been a turning point in ELT history (see section 3.2.1.2). It has always been viewed as the starting point of the shift from the traditional way of language teaching, which is based on teaching language forms as predefined and pre-sequenced items to a more communicative approach with the focus on meaningful and interactive use of language. Such a big shift has been the motive for a number of attempts for curriculum and instruction reform in the world to be more communicative (see section 3.3). Such a theoretical shift in addition to the worldwide trend to move to more communicative approaches to language teaching has encouraged me to select the first assumption in table 6.2 above to be investigated, especially that instructional implications/ assumptions from OAAA's standards, as analysed in this chapter above, seem not to encourage FonFs as a prime cornerstone for curriculum development in EFPs. Accordingly, the investigation of this aspect, in one way or another, might be an additional attempt to contribute to the general worldwide stream of research that investigates the success of this theoretical shift or reform in ELT but in the Omani context under the umbrella of quality management systems.

This theoretical justification of the selection of the first assumption in table 6.2 above has been strengthen by a similar debate about the teaching language forms, more particularly

grammar, in the EFP in the language centre where this study took place. Having grammar as a list of predefined and pre-sequenced items being integrated in the EFP syllabi has always undergone through a continuous historical debate within the institution itself. Over ten years ago, we tended to have a grammar book that was covered systematically throughout the different levels of the EFP. That was changed later on to be up to EFP teachers' own decision to integrate such grammatical aspects based on the students' needs. By the time I was collecting my data, some strong voices to revive the old approach of teaching language grammar where grammatical items are pre-planned and pre-sequenced to be taught systematically throughout the EFP in this institution had already started again. Such an institutional voice, I believe, was an important aspect to understand classroom practices and definitely the institutional force(s) that shape such practices as will be illustrated in more details in chapter 7 next.

This contextual debate, in addition to the historical debate in ELT literature, has later been supported by the rich data I have collected from my data collection trip. A lot of various practices related to teaching language forms have been observed and recorded, which in one way or another has revealed a significant contribution to the role such standards might play to manage or reform real classroom instructional practices in relation to this aspect in particular. Chapter 7 below will illustrate those findings.

In relation to the second instructional assumption in table 6.2, theoretical and data-related reasons have encouraged me to select it as a second assumption to be investigated in this study. Theoretically, the development of students' language skills and subskills has led to the instruction of language strategies or what has been identified as Strategy-Based Instruction (see section 3.2.1.3 about SBI). Again, such an integration has been confronted with some complications in real classroom teaching like the shift from the traditional structural teaching to the more communicative one. Accordingly, the investigation of such an implicit assumption from OAAA' learning- outcome can be viewed as another perspective for studying these standards' impact on what is being instructionally practiced by EFP teachers and consequently widening our own understanding of the impact of such learning- outcome standards as a contemporary phenomenon of QM on classroom instruction. Second, like the first assumption, I managed to record remarkably diverse instructional practices from the observed teachers/ cases regarding teaching reading strategies. Such a diversity similarly has revealed another significant contribution to the field as will be illustrated in chapter 8.

Accordingly, based on these different reasons; theoretical, contextual and data- related, I have made my decision to select these two instructional assumptions to be investigated in the following two phases of this study. It is also vital to state at this point that the findings of both

RQ2 and RQ3 are going to be reported altogether in each chapter of the two coming chapters 7 and 8 in relation to each one of these two instructional implications listed above in table 6.1.

7 Chapter 7: FonF v.s. FonFs (Phase two and three analysis findings)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is one of two chapters (7 & 8) to report the findings for RQ2 and RQ3, which are:

RQ2: Do EFP teachers' instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards? If so, how?

RQ3: What contextual factors are fostering/ hindering such an intersection?

The findings reported in this chapter are mainly derived from the data collected from the four observed teachers in this case study (T1W, T2W, T3R and T4R) in relation to the instructional assumption derived from standard D as one finding from phase one of this research. This instructional assumption is mainly concerned about when structural forms (grammatical, lexical, etc.) are taught. It has been found from the analysis of the external relations of this standard in particular and the other standards in general that FonF, rather than FonFs as in traditional structural syllabi, is more prioritized (see section 6.5). As derived from literature review (see section 3.2.1.2.2) about the difference between Focus on Forms (FonFs) and Focus on Form (FonF), Long (1998a) proposes that in CLT, grammar teaching should not be abandoned, but should not be taught as it is done in traditional structural methods as pre-planned and pre-sequenced items. Rather, it should be tackled as such accuracy issues pop up incidentally in students' own language productions.

As discussed in section 4.4.4, it is vital to restate here that this analysis is based on the constructivist paradigm where reality is viewed as relative and multiple (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, it is approached through my understanding as a researcher and as an analyst through my interaction with the researched teachers and the data collected from them, including my field notes, transcription of classroom discourse, transcription of interviews and some teaching and non-teaching related materials. The findings reported in this chapter are divided into two sections. The first one (section 7.2) is dedicated to revealing the ways the observed teachers' instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumption or implication mentioned above to answer RQ2, while the second one (section 7.3) is concerned about the contextual factors that have fostered/ hindered such an intersection to answer RQ3.

To report the findings for RQ2 first, five representative classroom discourse episodes (see table 7.1 below) chosen from the different observed instructional activities conducted for the

sake of teaching structural aspects in all of the four teachers' classes are included in section 7.2. The usefulness of utilizing classroom discourse episodes to analyse classroom observation data in this study is based on their capacity to represent what is enacted in the classroom (Kiely & Davis, 2010; Wells & Arauz, 2006) rather than only what is planned to be taught. Therefore, the oral classroom discourse of both (a) the observed EFP teachers and (b) their own students is treated as a rich contextualized source of empirical data that reflects the reality of what is happening in EFP classes in relation to linguistic forms instruction. This is later followed by reporting the findings of RQ3 (see section 7.3), which are derived from the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the observed teachers, and their CCs who were given the opportunity to justify the observed classroom instructional practices in relation to linguistic forms instruction in the observed classes. The findings derived from such interviews were later triangulated with the content analysis of some instructional and non-instructional course materials whenever applicable.

7.2 Focus on Form (FonF) vs. Focus on Forms (FonFs) instructional practices: findings for RQ2

As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this chapter, the intersection of the FonF as an instructional assumption has been investigated in phase 2 of this research to answer RQ2 through the analysis of representative classroom discourse episodes related to the instruction of language forms. In this section, five representative classroom discourse episodes have been selected to exemplify the two ways by which language forms instruction was approached by the four observed EFP teachers (see section 5.3.2 to learn how such representative episodes were selected). The first two episodes, as table 7.1 below illustrates, have been selected to shed some light on the first way or category of FonF activities, which are based on students' own written production problems with the two writing teachers T1W and T2W (see section 7.2.1). The remaining three episodes (3, 4 & 5) have been included to represent the FonFs activities introduced in the reading classes I attended with the two reading teachers, T3R and T4R (see section 7.2.2).

| Episode # | Teacher | Course? | Pedagogical focus | FonF / FonFs |
|-----------|---------|---------|--|--------------|
| 1. | T2W | Writing | Oral discussion of structural items in essay written by students | FonF |
| 2. | T1W | Writing | Oral discussion of structural items in essay written by students | FonF |
| 3. | T3R | Reading | Passive voice presentation | FonFs |
| 4. | T4R | Reading | Passive voice presentation | FonFs |
| 5. | T4R | Reading | Passive voice controlled practice | FonFs |

Table 7.1: List of episodes for FonF vs. FonFs activities

7.2.1 FonF activities in the writing classes

To contextualize the FonF activities found in both writing teachers' (T1W and T2W) classes, it is fundamental to state that one of the requirements in the writing course of the EFP includes writing a number of essays for different rhetorical functions (e.g. cause and effects, compare and contrast, opinion essays, etc.). In order to guide EFP students in the process of essay writing, EFP students were observed to be given sample essays to analyse and discuss with their teachers first in order to identify the outline or the components of each type of essay before they were asked to write their own essays in small groups (3-5 students in each group). After making students write their own essays, both teachers T1W and T2W were observed and recorded initiating teacher-students' discussions about different aspects of the students' own written essays, including structural aspects (e.g. grammar, lexical items, and punctuation). Such discussions were mainly conducted in order to correct the mistakes made by the students themselves in their own essays before they were instructed to redraft them accordingly. The following two episodes have been taken from T1W and T2W to illustrate how incident FonF (not pre-planned and pre-sequenced by the teachers), based on students' language written production problems was demonstrated in both writing teachers' classes.

7.2.1.1 Evaluation of effects essays from T2W's class

The classroom discourse episode (episode 1) presented below has been taken from the writing teacher T2W's class. After asking his students to write their own essays about the effects of decreasing prices of oil in small groups (3-5 students in each group), T2W displayed one of the essays written by one of the groups, using classroom LCD projector, as a word document in front of the whole class. T2W started a discussion with his students in order to help them spot out any kind of linguistic structural problematic issues that they could identify in that particular essay to correct. In this episode, the discussion of the first sentence of an essay introduction written by a group of students (see figure 7.1 below to see the introduction) is presented to illuminate how FonF was demonstrated in this class.

Currently, most of countries around the world are using oil for increasing the country's budget actually Oman is one of them. Nowadays, the oil's prices is decreasing in Oman. The three main effects of the decreasing prices of oil on Oman are increasing unemployment, stopping project and increasing prices of commodities.

Figure 7.1: introduction of an effect essay.

7.2.1.1.1 Episode 1, from 8th observed lesson, (recording timing, 00:39:55- 00:41:42)⁷

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | T: | Now, let us come to grammar (2) We are not going to focus on every bit and piece of grammar here, but we will focus on some general grammatical mistakes. (2) ahh first sentence? (1) This sentence, any grammatical mistakes here? (1) Is it a full sentence first? (1) Does it have a subject and a verb? |
| 2. | SS: | [unclear] |
| 3. | T: | Yes, it is a full sentence. So it has the subject here and “ <i>are using</i> ”, this is the verb and then what comes after it. (1) Now, any mistakes in grammar? (2) |
| 4. | S: | “ <i>most</i> ” [indicating that there is a problem in the use of the word <i>most</i>] |
| 5. | T: | “ <i>most</i> ”, Do we say “ <i>most of countries</i> ” or “ <i>most</i> ” countries is enough? [suggesting a correction] (1) |
| 6. | S: | ‘ <i>most countries</i> ’ [agreeing with the teacher’s suggestion] |
| 7. | T: | ‘ <i>most countries</i> ’. (4) what about the word “ <i>most</i> ” here? (2) now let us now not talk about grammar specifically but about word choice, 91) Is it true “ <i>most countries</i> ” >> |
| 8. | S: | <<A lot of [suggesting an alternative] |
| 9. | T: | Yeah, so what is a better word that is more logical? (.) |
| 10. | S: | Many [suggesting to replace “ <i>most</i> ” with many] |
| 11. | T: | Yeah. You can say ‘many’ countries, ‘many’ countries [typing the changes], because we tend to exaggerate in writing. Try to avoid this especially when you go to college, (1) here maybe the focus on content is less but when you go to college, they focus on content maybe more, Ok? (1) so if you say “ <i>most</i> ” you will be judged upon it. If you say “ <i>most</i> ”, is it <i>most</i> or not? (2) So “many countries around the world are using oil for increasing the country’s budget” [reading the first sentence after making the amendment], any mistakes? (1) |

From this episode, it can be seen that T2W started a whole- class discussion with his students after presenting the essay introduction in front of the whole class, inviting them to spot out any possible grammatical problem in it by first saying “Now, let us come to grammar” (Turn 1). T2W continued by making it clear from the beginning that this grammar discussion is not going to be about the use of a particular predefined grammatical aspect but “on some general grammatical mistakes” (Turn1) made by the authors of this essay. As recorded in my field notes, which were cross-checked with the audio recordings, T2W moved throughout the introduction sentence by sentence as a way to help his students spot as many problematic issues as possible. The structural aspects discussed, in this episode, were solely from the mistakes they managed to identify and discuss in the first sentence of the displayed introduction, which states, “*Currently, most of countries around the world are using oil for increasing the country’s budget actually Oman is one of them*”. As the teacher-students’ discussion in this episode shows, two linguistic problematic issues were identified and corrected in the first sentence by the students. The first one is grammatical about dropping the proposition “*of*” after the quantifier “*most*” in the phrase “*most of countries*” (Turns 3-7). The second one was related to word appropriateness of using the word “*most*” itself. T2W questioned if using “*most*” is an appropriate choice by asking “is it true” (Turn 7). In response, two suggestions by two different students were proposed, which are “a lot of” (Turn 8) and “more” (turn 10), which was accepted by T2W himself as a better option (Turn 11).

⁷ Refer to appendix 5.2 to get the transcription key

Out of episode 1 above, it can be stated that the different linguistic structural aspects discussion by T2W and his students in this episode, from the first sentence of the introduction were a result of their real written communication problems. These linguistic issues were allowed to pop up from the written text itself rather than being pre-planned as in traditional structural FonFs. Not only that, linking such structural issues to improve meaning communication was also evident as T2W was observed to link some of those structural issues to the meaning they carry. In Turn 11 and after a student proposed “many” to be replacing “most” in turn 10, T2W was keen to explain to his students why “many” was more appropriate than “most” in this context. Such a decision was justified by the teacher himself who directed his students to avoid exaggeration implied by “most”, which is something that credit course lecturers would consider as a negative point for expressing meanings. Accordingly, it can be articulated that such instructional practice of T2W as a writing teacher intersects with what is instructionally assumed or implied by the instructional assumption of standard D that prioritizes FonF over FonFs, where meaning is a priority in communicative activities even when structural item related problems are tackled. This gives a representation of a possible intersection between the enacted instructional practice as in this case and the instructional assumption or implication being investigated in this chapter.

A similar FonF instructional practice was also observed in the other writing teacher’s class T1W too, which will be exemplified in the following episode (episode 2).

7.2.1.2 Evaluation of a written opinion essay from T1W’s class

This episode was taken from an activity conducted by the other writing and research skills teacher (T1W). T1W first asked her students to write an opinion essay about studying English and whether it is a waste of time. After allowing them to write their own essays in small groups of three to four students, T1W presented one of them (see appendix 7.1, p. G 1) on an overhead projector to allow the rest of the class to discuss any structural aspects that needed to be amended. As T2W did in episode 1 above, T1W was reading the essay, sentence by sentence, asking her students to spot any possible issues to be corrected or improved.

7.2.1.2.1 Episode 2, from the 4th lesson, (recording timing, 00:24:55- 00:26:10)

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 1. | T: | “Nowadays (1) <i>english</i> ” >> [reading the first sentence of the introduction] |
| 2. | S: | <<“ <i>is a</i> ” [proposing that the article “ <i>a</i> ” is needed after the verb to be “ <i>is</i> ” and before the noun “ <i>global language</i> ”] |
| 3. | T: | anything attracted your attention? <i>english, english, english</i> >> [repeating the word <i>english</i> to attract their attention to a problem in it] |
| 4. | S: | << capital |
| 5. | T: | English should be capitalized. (1) First letter should be in capital. (1) |
| 6. | S: | After “ <i>nowadays</i> ”, comma >> [suggesting that a comma is needed after “ <i>nowadays</i> ”] |
| 7. | T: | << Yes, very good. After “ <i>nowadays</i> ” ‘comma’. (2) “ <i>English is global language</i> ”. Marwa is saying Mrs we need ‘a’ [referring to the response in turn 2 above]. Very good Marwa. Thank you. “ <i>English is a global language</i> ” [with a verbal stress on the article <i>a</i>]. (2) Aha, “ <i>it is a very required language in the world in different domains</i> ” (2) [moving to the following sentence] (4) |

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 8. | S: | Mrs, there is no need for the comma [meaning the comma written between the first and second sentences] |
| 9. | T: | Yeah, I think full stop. (1) Finish your sentence >> |
| 10. | S: | << After “ <i>global language</i> ”? (.) |
| 11. | T: | Yeah, after “ <i>global language</i> ”, full stop (1) Start a new sentence. (3) “ <i>It is very required</i> ” >> [reading the second sentence in the introduction]. |
| 12. | S: | << “ <i>it is a required language</i> ” [suggesting to add the article ‘a’ and deleting “ <i>very</i> ” before the phrase “ <i>required language</i> ”] |
| 13. | T: | Yes, “ <i>it is a required language in the world</i> ” [admitting the amendments]. (3) Delete “ <i>very</i> ” and put ‘a’ (2). Very good. (2) “However, some people believe that learning English is waste of time and no benefit from it” [reading the third sentence]. (2) “Learning English is waste of time” or “a waste of time”? (1) [suggesting a correction by adding the article ‘a’ before the phrase “waste of time”] |
| 14. | SS: | “ <i>a waste of time</i> ” [shouting out the second option] |
| 15. | T: | You can say “ <i>a waste of time</i> ”. You have also another option, (1) can you think of it? |
| 16. | S: | is wasting time [suggesting another way to communicate the meaning] |
| 17. | T: | Yeah, it ‘is wasting people’s time’ [admitting the suggestion and adding ‘people’ to it] |

From episode 2, it appears that the students spotted a number of structural aspects independently or with some stimulation from their teacher T1W from the introduction mentioned above. Such aspects include the addition of the article “a” before “global language” (turns 1-2), capitalization of “english” (turn 3-5), adding a comma after “Nowadays” (turns 6- 7), deleting a comma (turns 8-11), adding an article “a”, and deleting “very” with the phrase “very required language” (turns 12-13). All of which are various structural aspects that had emerged from the first two sentences of this introduction. However, it was not clear enough that the teacher in any of these attempts tried to explain how such changes would improve meaning of communication. In other words, T1W was more encouraging the allocation of those structural issues and seeking for corrections without making it more clearly or explicitly to the students how making such changes would make communicating meaning better.

However, there are some other occasions where such a focus on meaning, while tackling structural items, was evident from time to time. The turns 13- 17, for instance, give an example of such attempts to connect forms instruction with the meaning they carry. At one point of the discussion of the statement “*However, some people believe that learning English is waste of time and no benefit from it*”, T1W was interested to know if the students could rephrase the sentence while keeping the meaning as it is (turn 15), stating “*You can say “a waste of time”. You have also another option, (1) can you think of it?*”. Here, this interfering question form the teacher seems to suggest that adding the article “a” to the original statement was one way to improve meaning, but there are always other ways to communicate meaning in different ways. This invitation for making more suggestions by the teacher seems to trigger a student’s creativity to suggest changing the original phrase “a waste of time” from a noun phrase to a verbal one “is wasting time” (Turn 16), which was approved by the teacher (Turn 17).

The significance of the finding in this episode from T1W’s class can be articulated in two main points. First, all the structural issues discussed in this activity were merely initiated out of

the written production of a group of students as found in episode 1 above with T2W. They have been tackled based on students' real production problems not as pre-planned structural aspects as in conventional FonFs. This by itself arguably gives a stronger indication that such structural aspects are tackled from the FonF perspective when EFP students are allowed to produce language in meaning- focused activities as in writing essays. Second, establishing such a focus on language forms from the FonF perspective, based on episode 2 above, shows that the teacher was selectively focusing on the relation between forms and meaning but not necessarily with every single structural item as explained in the previous paragraph. T1W made this linkage more clearly only when it came to replacing the phrase "a waste of time" (Turn 15) but not with the other aspects like adding the article "a" before "global language" in turns 1-2.

All in all, it can be stated at the end of section 7.2.1 that FonF as an instructional practice was observable in the two writing classes I attended with the two teachers T2W and T1W. After their students finished writing their own essays, they both conducted teacher-students' discussions to highlight linguistic items use problems as emerging from students' real language production (Long, 1998a). Such a kind of teacher- students' discussions tend to be observed with every rhetorical essay presented to the students in both sections. Those essay discussions seem to show no clear sign of pre-planning of targeting those structural aspects in advance as in classical FonFs. Instead, they tend to be more done incidentally as they popped up from the students' own written productions, which can be viewed as a way of intersecting with the instructional assumption of standard D, prioritizing FonF over FonFs. However, the establishment of a direct and explicit linkage between these tackled structural items and their role to improve the communicative meanings they carry appears to be contextually fluctuating from one structural aspect to another as exemplified in both episodes 1 and 2 with both teachers (T1W and T2W).

Finally, such intersecting instructional practices by the writing teachers T1W and T2W was only one observed way or approach by which linguistic structural items were tackled pedagogically in the whole EFP. The following classroom discourse episodes from the reading teachers' classes will present another pedagogical way of how some other structural aspects were approached. It was not clear enough that they were based on students' real problems in communication of meaning as discussed above, but more likely as pre-planned items with presentations followed by controlled activities to introduce and rehearse particular structural aspects. The following three episodes have been chosen to represent such an approach as provided and observed in the reading classes I attended with both reading teachers T3R and T4R.

7.2.2 FonFs activities in the reading classes

The second way or category of classroom instructional practices in relation to the instructional assumption or implication being investigated in this chapter was observed in the

reading classes I attended with both reading teachers T3R and T4R. It has been recorded in my field-notes, which have been cross-checked with my classroom recordings that some activities focusing on presenting and practicing particular grammatical and lexical aspects in controlled practice activities were regularly provided at the end of each reading unit with both reading teachers. Such activities were supplemented in the reading in-house textbooks after the pre-, while- and post- reading activities they provide. The following three episodes have been selected to exemplify how the active/passive voice structure, as one example of those linguistic structural items, was first introduced to and then practiced by the students in controlled practice activities, despite the fact that both teachers were using two different in-house reading textbooks to teach reading for two different groups of students.

7.2.2.1 Presentation of active/Passive from T3R's class

The following episode (episode 3 below) has been taken from T3R's reading class while covering task 4, page.38, at the end of unit 3 titled *what is law* (see appendix 7.2, p. H 6). In this "task", the students were introduced to six independent statements describing two pictures. The first picture is for a book, described with three statements formed in the passive voice, while the second one is for a sewing machine, which is described with other three statements formed in the active voice. T3R started this "task" by using these six passive/active voice statements to introduce the passive voice and check her students' schemata about it through a number of elicitation questions.

7.2.2.1.1 Episode 3, from the 2nd lesson, (recording timing, 01:12:17- 01:16:52)

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | T: | Now, for the next few minutes of the class, I want you to look at page 38 ⁸ and we are going to look at active and passive sentences and the difference between them. (11) Ok, so all sentences you write can be written in two different forms. There is the active form [writing the phrase of "active form" on the white board], and there is the passive form [writing the phrase of "passive form" on the white board] (3) Anybody learned the active passive sentences before? |
| 2. | SS: | yes |
| 3. | T: | Yes, so this should be a review, Ok? (3) The best way to remember which is which, active sentences show action, there is action happening in them. Passive sentences, the action already happened in the past, ok? So looking at the two pictures on page 38, (4) all right. (5) " <i>This book was published in 2002</i> " [reading a sentence from the book, page 38], all right (3) Is this an active or passive sentence? |
| 4. | SS | passive |
| 5. | T: | Ok, how can we tell? (2) Although besides it happened in the past? (2) the action (2) ok, active sentence (7) [writing the sentence on the board]. Ok (2) sorry they switched the order of sentence structure. Ok, " <i>This book was published in 2002</i> " [reading the sentence from the book again]. All right? So we have ahh what is the subject of the sentence? |
| 6. | SS | book |
| 7. | T: | Ok (3) I am confusing myself now, I am going to confuse you (2) all right (2) " <i>it was read by many people</i> ", " <i>this book was published in 2002</i> " [reading two sentences from the book again] is passive or active? |
| 8. | SS: | passive |
| 9. | S: | active |
| 10. | T: | Active, (1) how do we know? |
| 11. | S | Because the subject>> |

⁸ Referring to the page number in the reading book

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 12. | T: | << Because the subject comes first (2) “ <i>This book was published</i> ” [writing the sentence from the book on the whiteboard]. All right, so we have ahhh the subject and the verb. Ok? ahhh forget what I said about action and past because that is going to confuse you. I will give you a different explanation in a minute but the biggest difference between active and passive is the order of the words in a sentence. With active, we have general sentence order with subject, verb, object. In passive, the object and subject switch positions. Ok? (.) or what happens is the object is acted upon (.) all right? (2) “ <i>it was read by many people</i> ” [reading another sentence from the book], what is the subject?>> |
| 13. | S: | <<“ <i>people</i> ”>> |
| 14. | T: | <<“ <i>People</i> ”. Ok, where is the subject? |
| 15. | S: | with the end>> |
| 16. | T: | <<at the end. Ok? (.) so if we want to rewrite this sentence to include the object, what is the object? (2) |
| 17. | S: | “ <i>Book</i> ”>> |
| 18. | T: | << the book, ok “ <i>the book (3) was read (3) by many people</i> ” (4) [writing the sentence in the white board] so we have the object coming first (3) all right (2) and the subject (2) coming last because we switched the order of the object and the subject, we call this passive sentence (2) all right? We are not seeing the subject do the action, Ok? (2) “ <i>it is sold in all bookshop</i> ” [reading another sentence from the book], is this active or passive? |
| 19. | SS: | passive |
| 20. | T: | Ok, all right so what is ‘sold’? |

As this episode illustrates, T3R in this “task” directs her students to move to page 38 in the book, explaining to them that this task is mainly to identify the difference between the active and passive voices since all sentences they write in English need to be either passive or active (Turn 1). Next, T3R started to elicit her students’ knowledge about the passive voice through the use of the given statements in the book as examples to analyse, despite the fact that her students confirmed to her at the beginning that they had already been introduced to this grammatical structure before (Turn 2). T3R assured them that this “task” accordingly “should be a review for” them accordingly, which gives an indication that such an activity was pre-planned by the book designers, not necessarily initiated as a result of the students’ own language production problems, which had been identified by the teacher herself. T3R, in different spots in the episode, tried to present to her students the difference between the active and passive voices, which is mainly about switching the places of the subject and object in a statement (Turns 3, 5, 12 & 18). Side by side, T3R was using some of the given statements in the book in order to stimulate her students’ schemata about active and passive voices by asking “what is the subject?” (Turns 12) and “what is the object?” (Turn 16) in the two different sets of the passive and active statements provided in the book under each one of the given pictures, and whether these statements are passive or active (Turns 7, 18).

What can be learned from episode 3 above is that the provision of this presentation of the active and passive voices was simply initiated because of its integration in the textbook, not as a reaction to the students’ own production problems as in episodes 1 and 2 above in the writing classes. Accordingly, the significance of this finding can be articulated in its representation of the adoption of a conventional approach to linguistic items instruction as pre-planned aspects in the reading course in addition to the approach already discussed in episodes 1 and 2 with the writing

teachers. This finding, in one way or another, shows that such a second approach of language structural item instruction is approached in the EFP, which may not theoretically intersect with the instructional implication of standard D being investigated in this chapter, but practiced in the enacted curriculum of the EFP.

As noted on my field notes, this presentation of the active/passive voice, displayed in episode 3, was later followed by a controlled practice activity where such a grammatical aspect was practiced by changing 5 passive voice statements from the reading text to the active voice (see appendix 7.2, p. H 7). This controlled activity was assigned as a homework by the teacher but was not checked during my following classroom observations. However, it gives another indication that language forms instruction as viewed by the conventional FonFs is adopted in the reading course of the EFP, which is based on presenting about a targeted structural aspect (grammatical or lexical) first, and then by providing a controlled practice activity for the students by which such a grammatical aspect is practiced.

The presentation and the provision of a controlled practice activity about the active and passive voices, in addition to other structural aspects, has also been observed in the other reading teacher T4R's class. The following two episodes (4 and 5) are to illustrate how active/passive structure was first introduced to and then practiced by the students in a controlled practice activity in T4R's class. While episode 4 illustrates how such a grammatical aspect was first introduced, episode 5 shows how such an aspect was practiced through the teacher-students' discussion of the items of this controlled practice activity.

7.2.2.2 Presenting about and practicing active and passive voices in T4R's class

On page 118 from the reading unit: *The Gulf Cooperation Council* (see appendix 7.3, p. I 9), the students were provided with an activity (activity A), targeting the transformation of a number of statements from the active voice to the passive voice or vice versa. Before asking the students to do the activity, T4R started the activity by eliciting what his students knew about the passive voice, asking them when passive voice is used, how passive and active statements are formed and the difference between active and passive voices as episode 4 below will illustrate.

7.2.2.2.1 Episode 4, from the 5th lesson (recording time, 00:24:18- 00:27:32)

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 14. | T: | Very good, this is passive sentence. (1) They are passive (.) Do you know passive? |
| 15. | SS: | Yes |
| 16. | T: | Ok, passive forms (1) when do we use passive forms? |
| 17. | S: | If we do not know the subject >> |
| 18. | T: | << 'If we do not know the subject'. Ok, 'if we do not know the subject' (.) This is one possibility or (3) is it only all the time when we do not know the agent? (1) Agent means the subject, the person who does the action (.) Is it only all the time we use the passive when we do not know the agent? |
| 19. | S: | No |
| 20. | T: | 'No', when do we also use the passive? (1) |
| 21. | S: | When the object is [unclear] |
| 22. | T: | Very good, 'when the object is' more im-(1) |

| | | |
|-----|-------|---|
| 23. | SS: | important |
| 24. | T: | ‘important’ than the subject, you understand? (2) Ok what matters the most is the object is very important so we put more focus on the object so that is why we use it as the subject. (1) Number 3, when do we also use the passive voice? (3) so we said when we do not know the agent (1) when the object is more important and then number three (1) also when the subject is not im- (2) |
| 25. | S: | important |
| 26. | T: | ‘important’, do you know ‘important’? Ok, it is not important when I say the council was founded in Abu Dhabi, it is not important to know who founded the council. All right? (2) Now, I would like you to move to the next exercise on page 118. Read the question Riam [asking student called Riam to read the instruction for the activity on page 118] |
| 27. | Riam: | “use active or passive structures to rephrase the sentences below (1) use the words given to begin the new sentences (2) make sure you keep the same meaning in the new sentences” [Riam reads the instruction of the activity A] |
| 28. | T: | Ok good, remember here it is passive (1) Ok, so from these two sentences, ok before we start the exercise (1) from these two sentences (1) how can we form the passive? |
| 29. | S: | object |
| 30. | T: | ‘object’ |
| 31. | S: | verb |
| 32. | T: | Plus verb to be |
| 33. | SS: | Plus past participle |
| 34. | T: | ‘Plus past participle’. Ok, and the verb to be should be what? (1) Should be the same? (2) same what? (1) |
| | S: | Tense |
| | T: | ‘Tense’ (2) as? (1) as what? (1) |
| 35. | S: | Past participle |
| 36. | T: | No, as the (2) active verb. You know active verb? (2). This is passive verb, if we change the sentence to the active, so let us ahh (4) “ <i>the council was founded in Abu Dhabi</i> ” [reading one sentence from the reading text in this unit], so who founded the GCC council? (2) who? (3) Who? |

As in the case with T3R’s class (see episode 3 above), this episode illustrates how T4R presented the passive voice to his students despite the fact that he was covering this activity from a different in-house textbook from the one used by his colleague T3R. Each one of them was using a different reading in-house textbook, but still covering this particular grammatical aspect. This, in one way or another, gives an indication that such a grammatical structure is purposefully targeted by the EFP teaching materials all across the board as also witnessed before in T3R’s class in episode 3 above.

The presentation of the passive voice by T4R in this episode includes two relevant areas; (1) when to use the passive voice and (2) how it is formed in contrast to the active voice through a number of elicitation questions. Regarding the former area, a student replied that it is used when the subject is not known (Turn 17), while another student explained that it is also used when the object is more important (Turns 21-23). In relation to the second area, T4R started to check how the passive voice is formed (Turn 28). Again, the students started to indicate what comes first in a passive voice statements, by suggesting that object comes first (Turn 29), followed by a verb (Turn 31). Here, T4R continued this description of the passive form structure by emphasizing that a verb to be is necessary before the action verb (Turn 32). Immediately, some students followed that by suggesting that a past participle verb comes after the verb to be (Turn 33), which gives an indication that those students had already been exposed to this structure before. T4R, at this

point, wanted to make sure that they knew the issue of the verb tense and its consequence on shifting the verb from its active format to the passive one (Turn 34-36).

Based on this interactive discussion between T4W and his students, it can be argued that it is clear that a presentation of the passive voice, as a grammatical structure, was demonstrated by T4R and his students through the teachers' elicitation questions before moving to the controlled practice activity supplemented in the in-house textbook (see appendix 7.3, page 19). This presentation or representation of the passive voice seems not to be initiated in the first place as a result of the students' own problems of their use of the passive voice as also witnessed in episode 3 above with T3R. Rather, it was more likely performed as a preparation stage before starting the controlled practice activity that is supplemented in the in-house textbook. Accordingly, it can be stated again that such an instructional practice of presenting such a grammatical aspect in the reading classes with the supplementation of controlled practice activities with both T3R and T4R was a common practice, which in one way or another represents the FonFs approach of tackling linguistic structural aspects in the EFP, different from what has been observed earlier in the writing classes in section 7.2.1 above. The following episode illustrates what T4W did later after asking his students to do the controlled activity for the passive voice supplemented in the in-house reading textbook.

7.2.2.2.2 Episode 5, from the 5th lesson, (recording time, 00:53:20- 00:54:37)

After the presentation of the passive voice illustrated in episode 4 above, T4R asked his students to do the controlled practice activity (see activity A, page 19, appendix 7.3) individually, which is mainly asking the students to transform passive statements into active voice format or vice versa. After finishing the activity individually, T4R started a discussion with his students to check their answers. Episode 5 below is an illustration of the discussion that occurred between T4R and one of his students called Sara after she managed to transfer the first statement in this activity from the passive to the active voice structure.

| | | |
|-----|-------|---|
| 1. | T: | Ok time to look at your answers (.) Whose turn is it? (2) Sara I think, yes Sara, number one? (2) I first would like you to read the sentence then your answer. |
| 2. | Sara: | <i>“The economic agreement between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council was signed on 11 November 1981 in Abu Dhabi”</i> [reading the original statement in the activity as it is] |
| 3. | T: | Ok, what form is the sentence here? (1) Active or passive? |
| 4. | Sara: | Passive |
| 5. | T: | It is passive (1) How did you know it is passive? (1) |
| 6. | Sara: | <i>“was signed”</i> >> [referring to the verb to be in the original sentence] |
| 7. | T: | << Yes, “ <i>was signed</i> ”. (1) You are going to change the sentence into active (.) It becomes what? (1) |
| 8. | Sara: | The countries of the gulf cooperation council signed>> [transforming the original passive sentence to active] |
| 9. | T: | << ‘signed’, very good>> |
| 10. | Sara: | << the economic agreement [completing her answer] |
| 11. | T: | Why here ‘signed’? (.) Why did you choose simple past? |
| 12. | Sara: | Because “ <i>was</i> ” >> [referring to the verb to be in the original sentence] |

13. | T: | << Because in the passive, it “*was signed*”, so “*was*” is in the past so the active verb should in the past (1) Ok, good, Abeer, number two. |

As illustrated this episode, T4R checked the answer provided by one of his students called Sara who managed to transform the first statement from the passive voice to the active voice in the supplemented controlled practice activity. As read by Sara (Turn 2), the original passive statement says, “*The economic agreement between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council was signed on 11 November 1981 in Abu Dhabi*”, which is formed in the passive voice format. Here, T4R seems to be keen to make sure that Sara was aware of the voice in this statement by asking her how she managed to identify the statement as a passive voice one (Turns 3- 6). Not only that, even after she transferred the statement to the active voice (Turn 8), T4R asked her why she had chosen past simple tense to transfer the original statement to (Turn 11). Despite the fact that this activity is mainly to help the students practice active/passive voices in a controlled practice mode, the teacher was keen to deeply investigate the meaning behind the structure chosen by Sara. T4R, in turn 11, asked why she chose the past tense of the verb “*signed*” to transfer the original passive sentence to the active voice. Such an investigation of this relation between form and meaning was demonstrated as it was performed in episodes 1 and 2 earlier with the writing teachers. This accordingly might indicate that establishing a discussion of the link between meaning and forms can also be performed either in FonF activities or in FonFs activities as well.

Accordingly, it can be argued that this activity in episode 5 represents an opportunity for the students to do a controlled practice of the active/passive voices as the second phase of the PPP model of language forms instruction (see section 3.2.1.1 for more explanation on what PPP is) where the students are provided with a controlled practice activity for the passive/active voice after it was presented or, more precisely, represented to them by their teacher as illustrated in episode 4 above.

At the end of section 7.2, the findings for RQ2 regarding the intersection between the observed teachers’ instructional practices and the instructional assumption of standard D, which prioritizes FonF over FonFs can be summarized as follows. The instructional practices performed by the four observed EFP teachers show a hybrid mode of linguistic forms instruction in the EFP, which has implied areas of intersection in some cases but not in all. FonF as an approach to language forms instruction in ELT was observed in the writing classes where the students were asked to produce written essays from which both writing teachers started open discussions about the linguistic problematic issues that were emerging from the written texts themselves. That was clearly represented in the first and second episodes above, which illustrate how FonF was initiated based on the students’ real written essays not as pre-planned aspects. This in one way or

another represents an intersection between the writing teachers' classroom instructional practices and the theoretical instruction assumption being investigated in this chapter. On the other hand, some pre-planned controlled practice activities of some structural items were also found to be provided in the reading course of the EFP in both reading classes with T4R and T3R. In these two reading classes, structural aspects, including passive and active voice, were introduced to the students as pre-planned activities that have no clear relation to students' real language use problems in the reading course, but supplemented at the end of each reading book unit. The presentation of structural aspects followed by controlled activities by which those grammatical aspects were practiced, as in episodes 3, 4 & 5, were repeatedly observable in the reading teachers' classes after finishing the pre-, while- and post- reading activities. Accordingly, the intersection between the instructional assumption in standard D and the instructional practices in these two reading classes can be considered missing except the cases where those reading teachers tried to establish a kind of linkage between forms and meaning in its narrow definition. Considering the writing and reading courses as integral components of the whole EFP, it can be stated that a more hybrid approach to language forms instruction appears to be more adopted than being restricted to one theoretical orientation or approach.

In the following section (7.3), I attempt to report the findings for RQ3, which is dedicated to reveal the factors that have caused this hybrid intersection between the observed teachers' instructional practices and the instructional implication from OAAA's learning- outcome standard D.

7.3 The fostering or hindering factors: findings for RQ3

In this section, I attempt to report the findings for RQ 3, which is concerned about the factors that have led to the hybrid intersection between the implicit instructional assumption about forms instruction in standard D and the instructional practices observed in the EFP classrooms with the four teachers/ cases T1W, T2W, T3R and T4R as discussed above in section 7.2. Such factors have been identified inductively based on the thematic analysis (TA) of the interviews I conducted mainly with the four teachers and occasionally with their course coordinators CC1 and CC2. The importance of the use of TA stems from its ability to capture important patterns in data, which are relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (see section 5.3.3 for more explanation of coding and themes building process). Accordingly, factors as inductive themes are highlighted and presented in this section. These findings have been later triangulated by the findings of the content analysis of some non-teaching materials whenever applicable as emerging from the interviews.

The factors in this section are organized based on the two ways linguistic forms were approached in the EFP as discussed in section 7.2. The factors that have fostered the integration of FonF activities in the writing course with T1W and T2W will be presented first in section 7.3.1 as the fostering factors that had led to the intersection. That is later followed by the factors that hindered such an intersection by tracing the factors that had encouraged the integration of the FonFs activities in the reading classes in section 7.3.2.

7.3.1 Fostering factors

From the interviews I conducted with both writing teachers T2W and T1W, I have found that what has fostered the implementation of such essay evaluation discussions (episodes 1 and 2) can be referred to one major factor. This factor appears to be mainly related to both writing teachers' own belief for the need to encourage their students to edit and redraft their own essays, based on the essay marking criteria provided by the assessment unit. I have found that both teachers were keen to express this issue when asked about their rationale for conducting such teacher-students' discussions about the students' written essays. T2W, referring to these oral essay evaluation discussions in episode 1 above, states

Extract 7.1.

*That was not something required, not something that is prescribed by the programme.
It was a self-initiative and just to draw the link between the two activities and to help the students see their own writings and to get feedback from other students and make it more interactive and help students have this analytical level of their writing and the writings of others*

Here, T2W explains that this kind of essay editing discussions were not something that has been "prescribed" by his programme leadership. Rather, it is something that he initiated himself in order to help his students get feedback from each other in a more interactive way, with the hope that this will improve their own "analytical" skills (meaning editing skill) of essays written either by themselves or by their classmates.

As confirmed by T2W himself in a different stage of my interview with him, teaching grammar systematically as discrete pre-planned units is not the main aim of the writing course, as students at this level are expected to be able to use grammatical aspects properly. He comments, "*I do not really teach grammar but there are some grammatical items that students by this level are expected to know and to apply*". Based on these quotation, it can be understood from T2W that teaching grammatical items as discrete pre-planned units, as in FonFs, is not a prime goal in his writing course. Rather, T2W assumes that those discrete grammatical items should have been taught earlier so the students are here in this course now to use or "apply" them properly, not to be taught to them again.

A similar justification, based on her own belief, was found in the case of T1W too who was observed demonstrating similar essay evaluations or editing discussions with her students (see episode 2). T1W expressed a similar concern for the need to help her students edit what they wrote by saying:

Extract 7.2

I was trying to teach them how to have the eagle eye of spotting things mistakes that are not appropriate in writing and I keep saying this ah these you know a new generation students they do not write well they do not punctuate and they do not spell right so we have to teach them how to do this and it is happening even in their daily lives when they write their emails, they write their text messages or WhatsApp messages even in Arabic it happens in their own language mother tongue.

As extract 7.2 above indicates, teaching or training her students to have the “eagle eye” in order to spot the mistakes they make in their own writings is what concerns T1W. Their ability to identify their mistakes in writing, T1W thinks, is a skill that needs to be developed in order to overcome a problem in this “generation” of students who keep making the same mistakes over and over again without going back to correct them. It is a common problem, according to T1W, that her students suffer from, not only in their classroom writing activities but also in their writings in real public life. Therefore, giving them this opportunity to edit their own and their peers’ essays is viewed by T1W as a necessary practice to equip them with this “eagle eye”.

Based on the two extracts 7.1 & 7.2 above, it appears that what has led to such a practice that intersects with the instructional assumption prioritizing FonF is rooted in both teachers’ own beliefs regarding the development of students’ editing skills. Accordingly, paying their attentions to linguistic structural issues as popping up from the real written essays can be viewed as a consequence of this aim. In other words, part of developing the students’ editing skills is their ability to identify and correct their own mistake (e.g. grammatical or lexical) in their essays as emerging from the texts themselves.

It is also interesting to add that such a belief seems to be supported by both teachers’ desire to meet the essay marking criteria developed by the assessment unit of the LC. It was observable, as recorded in my field notes, that both T1W and T2W were briefly listing and describing the four major areas of the marking criteria used for assessing essays to their students before they started these essay editing discussions. By looking at these marking criteria (see appendix 7.4, page J 1), it is clear that they are categorized into four main areas, which are (1) *Task response*, (2) *Coherence and Cohesion* (3) *Lexical Resource and finally (4) Grammatical Range and Accuracy*. The introduction of these marking criteria to the students before the essay oral editing discussions was justified by T1W who commented:

Extract 7.3

I am trying to make them aware of all of the criteria we look for when we mark their writing or compositions so when it comes to writing themselves they are aware of what is expected from them.

Increasing students' awareness of these marking criteria used for assessing their written essays before starting the editing discussions was an important target to T1W. Therefore, such assessment criteria needed to be communicated to the students as a general marking framework before they started editing each other's essays. T2W similarly confirmed that referring to these marking criteria came from his understanding that they are the "*marking criteria of the final product*" of the written essays. Therefore, he justified such a strategy by saying that "*these are the things that we look at, and students should be aware of*". Accordingly, both teachers T2W and T1W showed a similar interest towards presenting and discussing these marking criteria with the students before starting the editing discussions about the students' written essays.

A general overview of the content of these essay marking criteria shows that they tend to be written in general terms. A descriptor from the fourth area "*Grammatical Range and Accuracy*", under the "*Excellent*" descriptor (see appendix 7.4, p. J 1), where grammatical forms are the focus, for instance, says:

Extract 7.4

Text has a significantly wider range of structures than is expected for the level and task. Core structures for the level are consistently used accurately and appropriately. There may be occasional errors where more complex structures are attempted but communication is not affected. Most sentences are error-free and allow for the accurate expression of ideas.
Punctuation is well managed and effective.

As it appears in this descriptor, there is no direct targeting of particular grammatical aspects the teachers should consider looking for in the students' essays. Instead, it provides a number of generalities about the targeted structures as expressed in some of its phrases, such as "*wider range of structures*", "*core structures*", "*occasional errors*", "*complex structures*" & "*error-free*". It tells nothing about what core or complex structures expected to be used by the students. Instead, it appears that what really matters in this descriptor is that "*communication is not affected*" even if there are some occasions where students make structural errors. Accordingly, it can be argued that the general nature of the essay assessment criteria, which are not listing any particular core linguistic items (grammatical or lexical) or structures have seemingly supported the observed common trend towards language forms instruction observed in the writing classes in episodes 1 and 2 above that stems from a FonF perspective.

Accordingly, both teachers' own beliefs about the necessity to help their students develop their own editing skills for redrafting purposes, supported by the generalities of the essay marking criteria itself about grammar and accuracy appear to be what encouraged tackling language

structural item instruction from a FonF perspective as witnessed in episode 1 and 2 above, which intersects with the instructional assumption being investigated in this chapter.

7.3.2 Hinder factors

The investigation of the hindering factors in this section is mainly related to the factors that have led to the integration of the presentation and structural controlled practice activities (grammatical and lexical) observed in the reading courses with both reading teachers T3R and T4R that were traditionally given after the pre-, while- and post- reading activities. As exemplified in the episodes 3, 4 & 5 with the active/ passive voice, these controlled activities were given in the reading classes with no obvious linkage to clear students' use problems in the reading classes. Therefore, the rationale(s) behind their provision are dealt as hindering factors for the intersection between the classroom instructional practices and the instructional assumption in standard D, which is implicitly prioritizing FonF over FonFs.

In general terms, this factor, as will be clarified next, is linked mainly to the adoption of a structural view of language and language learning by the LC itself against the more communicative one implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards. Such a structural view has been rooted in the LC's curriculum document and apparently found its way into the in-house reading textbooks and consequently in what teachers teach in the reading classes.

The process of tracing back the rationale(s) for having the observed FonFs controlled practice activities, as exemplified in episodes 3, 4 & 5 above has led me to different justifications first from both the observed reading teachers T3R and T4R, and later from their course coordinators; CC1 and CC2. According to the reading teacher T3R, these FonFs activities are provided in her class simply because they are there in the in-house textbook and skipping them is not an easy decision for her as she does not know what to do next if such activities are neglected by her. Describing the overall structure of chapters in the reading book she used, T3R says:

Extract 7.5

using the law book each chapter has a section for the reading and then it is the vocabulary and then they have the grammar section and they have the dictionary part. This is the way this book is set up, so for example this particular chapter was looking at the people in the court room or something and so they added in a reading activity to do with the question words then for the next one that we did today they had the one that discussed the law from different perspectives and then they jumped to active/ passive which is useful I suppose when you are writing about law. I do not think it is necessary in the reading.

Here, T3R explains that each chapter of the reading book, called as the "law book" by her, is basically structured in the same way. Each chapter has a reading text with some

comprehensions questions, which are followed later on by a number of activities targeting a number of grammatical and lexical items, including the passive/active voice as stated in the extract above. In this extract and in other spots in the interviews, T3R expresses her discomfort or disagreement of having such controlled practice activities in her reading in-house textbook as some of them are more related to the writing course such as the passive voice activity, which make her feel that they are like "*a filler*" in this book. T3R emphasizes that having these grammar activities "*are not very prominent to what they are doing*" in a reading class, which means that "*there is no purpose of it being in that*" book from the first place. However, she reports that she has to cover them as she has been instructed by her programme leadership to do so, so they are there to be covered. She further questions "*if I skip this part of the chapter and do not do the grammar exercise then what would I do for the rest of the class?*". T3R here explains that despite her personal disagreement with the integration of these controlled practice activities in the reading in-house textbook, she feels that she has to obey what is instructed to her by her programme leadership. Accordingly, the coverage of these activities seems to be driven mainly by the textbook that has been provided to T3R despite her personal negative attitude towards having them in the reading course textbook.

On the other hand, the second reading teacher T4R seems to have developed a more positive attitude of having such controlled practice activities in his class unlike T3R. Despite the fact that all the controlled practice activities observed in his class come totally from the reading in-house text book, T4R seems to have accepted their existence in his reading class unlike T3R. Commenting on why a lexical controlled practice activity where students had to find out the different parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective and adverb) for a list of words was important to provide to his students, T4R proposes that:

Extract 7.6

being able to know the different parts of speech at this level is very important. I mean such type of exercise you cannot find them in level 1, 2 or 3 because students in level 1 and 2 they have to know the word itself and what it means then this is gradual focus because learning objectives differ from one level to another. One of the requirements of level 5 and 6 they should be able to know the different parts of speech and how they can use these words

Here, T4R further explains his own personal justification of the importance of these lexical controlled activities by explaining that this activity, which requires the identification of the different parts of speech of some selected words is something important for his students who are at higher levels of the EFP (levels 5 and 6) as such lexical aspects are not taught in the lower levels. T4R stresses that these activities are important to check students' understanding of these lexical items. Additionally, T4R assured that he does not think that those lexical items targeted in this controlled activity had to be linked to the comprehension of the reading text, as these words

are important to be learnt for their own sake so later can be used in different contexts. T4R declares, *“because the students once they know the meaning of the words they should be able to use these words in other situations in different contexts. It should not just be linked to the comprehension”*. Accordingly, it can be inferred that teaching such lexical items, according to T4R, was done for their own sake not because of students’ own language use problems. Generally speaking, it is clear that T4R is in favour of the delivery of such controlled practice activities, which might explain partially why he covered them in his reading class.

Overall, regardless of the personal justifications or attitudes of each one of the two observed reading teachers about the usefulness of those supplemented structural controlled practice activities, it can be argued that their provision was apparently dictated by their integration in the in-house teaching textbooks provided to the two teachers in the first place. The integration of such controlled activities in the in-house reading textbooks has led to the integration of language forms instruction that focuses on the instruction of such linguistic forms as predefined units to be taught, not as incidentally arising from the students’ own communicative performance problems as practiced in the writing course in section 7.2.1. In this way, it can be argued that the lack of the total alignment of the activities in the reading teaching materials to the more communicative instructional implication adopted from OAAA’s standards can be considered as a fostering factor for the provision of such FonFs activities in the reading classes but as a hindering factor towards the intersection with the instructional assumption of standard D prioritizing FonF over FonFs.

However, since the reading in-house textbooks used by both T4R and T3R were provided by their CCs, it was important for me to learn why such controlled practice activities were integrated in those reading in-house textbooks from the first place. The further investigation of the provision of such structural aspects in the reading course with the course coordinators CC1 and CC2 has led me to another reason why such structural aspects either grammatical or lexical are integrated in the reading textbooks. Both CCs indicated separately that these structural controlled activities are there to help meeting or achieving extra learning- outcomes particularly composed to target particular grammatical and lexical items listed by the Curriculum Unit (CU), which has an overall authority over the specification of the learning- outcomes to be achieved in this EFP.

CC2, for instance, justifies the integration of these structural controlled practice activities by saying, “grammar is one of the LOs”, while CC1 confirms such importance of linguistic forms instruction by saying *“Of course, we do not have a learning outcome on the reading course but we have some grammar elements specified by the CU so we thought the best place is in the reading”*. CC1 here explains that grammar learning- outcomes are not necessarily linked to the reading

course as part of its learning- outcomes, but he admits that there are some other learning-outcomes in the EFP in general, which have been developed for targeting such particular structural aspects for their own sake. To be more specific, CC1 also affirms that such structural items are “*specified in the learning outcomes in the CU document*”. The CU document refers to the curriculum document created by the CU where all the learning- outcomes of the EFP for all of its three main courses (reading, listening and speaking and writing and research skills) are listed.

By having an overview at the content of the CU document and more specifically the learning- outcomes it targets, I have found that such learning- outcomes targeting such grammatical and lexical items do exist under the subheading of “*Language and Grammar Syllabus*” (see appendix 7.5, pp. K 1- K 3). In addition to the OAAA’s learning- outcome standards, it has been found that the CU has added its own Learning- outcomes, including some learning-outcomes that target particular grammatical and structural items throughout the EFP different levels. In the format of an individual table in the CU document, a number of structural items are listed to be targeted in certain levels of the EFP, so completely covered by the end of the EFP. This list includes:

- (1) sentence structure (e.g. SOV structure, compound sentence, complex sentence),
- (2) verbs (e.g. present tense, past tense, future, passive voice, etc.),
- (3) clauses (e.g. relative clauses, contrast clauses),
- (3) adverbs (e.g. frequency),
- (4) nouns (countable, uncountable),
- (5) pronouns (e.g. personal, possessive and relative),
- (6) adjectives (e.g. comparative, superlative),
- (7) prepositions (place and time),
- (8) articles (definite, indefinite and zero article),
- (9) connectors (e.g. basic and subordinate conjunctions), and
- (10) lexical items (e.g. cohesive devices, collocations).

By the end of the EFP, as in the case of T3R and T4R’s classes, this list of structural aspects is supposed to be completely targeted. Accordingly, the integration of those FonFs controlled practice activities in the in-house reading textbooks appears to be the result of their authors’ attempts to target these listed linguistic structural items in the CU document for their own sake. As confirmed by both CC1 and CC2, targeting such linguistic aspects is not necessarily because

they are related to the aims of the reading course but because there is more time capacity in the reading course than in the writing and listening and speaking courses. Accordingly, having this list of learning- outcomes targeting such various structural items (grammatical and lexical) appears to be the starting point for the development of those controlled practice structural activities in the reading course. This, in one way or another, has contributed to not only the lack of alignment between the teaching materials activities and the instructional implications of OAAA's learning- outcomes regarding language forms instruction, but also it appears to propose a more structural orientation or view of language that has resulted in having those controlled practice activities as witnessed in the reading teachers' classes as in episodes 3, 4 and 5.

In summary of section 7.3.2, it can be stated that a main factor has been found to be hindering the intersection between the instructional assumption of standards D prioritizing FonF over FonFs and the instructional practices in the reading classes. This factor is related to the adoption of a more structural view of language and language learning by the LC itself. Such a view has been translated into the formulation of extra learning- outcomes targeting a list of linguistic structural items which have found their way to the development of teaching materials in terms of a number of controlled practice activities in the reading course and consequently to classroom instruction.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has dedicated itself to answer RQ2 and RQ3 in relation the instructional assumption elicited from standard D from phase one of this research. This instructional assumption prioritizes the view that forms are to be taught as they are emerging from students' language production (FonF) rather than being as predefined and pre-sequenced items as in the traditional FonFs approach. The analysis of classroom discourse episodes, representing the common practices of language forms instruction in the EFP, has revealed that both FonF and FonFs practices can be seen in the EFP, resulting in a more hybrid mode of linguistic forms instruction in this programme. Different factors have seemingly led to such a hybrid intersection between what is instructionally assumed and what is instructionally practiced in real classrooms. Such factors include (1) teachers' own beliefs and (2) the adoption of a more structural view of language as represented in extra learning- outcomes targeting particular linguistic items by the LC itself.

8 Chapter 8: Reading strategy-based instruction (Phase two and three analysis findings)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second chapter, along with chapter 7, to report the findings for research questions 2 and 3, which are:

RQ2: Do EFP teachers' instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards? If so, how?

RQ3: What contextual factors are fostering/ hindering such an intersection?

Regarding RQ2 findings, this chapter is to report (1) the results of the investigation about the intersection between (a) the instructional assumption derived from standards I and J in phase 1 (see sections 6.10 and 6.11), which implies that explicit instruction of reading strategies is one possible instructional assumption to be performed in EFP classes with (b) the instructional practices of the two reading teachers T3R and T4R (see section 8.2 below). Based on what has been established in the relevant language teaching literature regarding teaching reading strategies in section 3.2.1.3, explicit instruction of reading strategies involves the development of students' "declarative" and "procedural" knowledge of such reading strategies (Chamot, 2005; V Harris, 2001). After this investigation of the intersection between what is instructionally assumed in standards I and J and what is really instructionally practiced by those two reading teachers, this chapter continues to report the findings about the factors that have fostered and hindered such an intersection in order to answer RQ3 (see section 8.3 below).

Different sets of data collected from the two observed reading classes with different analytical theoretical frameworks were utilized to answer RQ2 and RQ3 in this chapter. In relation to RQ2 findings, the analysis of selected episodes of classroom discourse (Walsh, 2011; Wells & Arauz, 2006) representing the two reading teachers' own instructional practices in their reading classes have been used (see section 8.2). As discussed in section 5.3.2, classroom "episodes of discourse" are used as a unit of analysis in phase 2 of this research as it does not only establish a link between such episodes as activities and the objectives or aims planned to be achieved through them, but also reveals what is happening in reality in a reading classroom environment (Irvine - Niakaris & Kiely, 2015). Therefore, what the observed teachers T4R and T3R said to their students, in the form of classroom discourse in this phase, has been used as a rich contextualized source of empirical data for understanding any possible intersection between the implicit instructional assumption of standards I and J on one hand and the observed teachers' real classroom instructional practices on the other one. It is important also to restate that principles of

the “ad hoc” approach of classroom discourse is used in this study as no predetermined function categories of classroom interaction were found to be useful in this research (Walsh, 2006, 2011). Accordingly, this positioning has reinforced a more inductive approach of classroom discourse analysis. This approach has given me a more flexible framework for analysing the selected classroom discourse episodes in relation to the instructional assumption being investigated rather than relying on classifying classroom discourse interaction to pre-specified interaction functions (see section 5.3.2.2 above for more explanation about the selection of the “ad hoc” approach). In the second half of this chapter (section 8.3), the findings for RQ3 are reported. In this section, the factors that have fostered and hindered such an intersection are reported by focusing on the reported motives that have shaped each individual reading teacher’s instructional practices. In order to do so, a thematic analysis of the interviews with the teachers themselves was conducted as it captures important data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which are the factors in this case. For a more detailed description of the process of data analysis in phases 2 and 3, please refer back to sections 5.3.2 & 5.3.3 respectively.

In the following section 8.2 below, I will report how both the two observed reading teachers’ own classroom instructional practices intersected with the theoretical instructional assumption being investigated to answer RQ2.

8.2 RQ2 findings

As found in phase one of this research, the two OAAA’s learning- outcome standards, I and J, target the development of a number of while- reading subskills. Such reading subskills include “identifying main ideas” and “identifying specific information” in standard I, and “analytical skills” such as “inference” in standard J (see sections 6.10 & 6.11). The explicit specification of such while-reading subskills in these two learning- outcome standards has raised the importance of their implicit instructional implications on what EFP reading teachers need to do pedagogically in order to help their students develop such while-reading subskills. As derived from reading pedagogy literature, more specifically from Strategy- based Instruction (SBI) (see section 3.2.1.3, it has been found that one instructional assumption that can be intertextually inferred, is the integration of reading strategy instruction needed for the development of students’ mastery of such targeted reading subskills (see sections 6.10 & 6.11). In other words, reading teachers are assumed to enhance their students’ “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge of such reading strategies by the explicit instruction of these strategies and giving opportunities for practicing them (Chamot, 2005; Irvine - Niakaris & Kiely, 2015; Nuttal, 1982; Paris et al., 1991) in order to equip them with these listed reading subskills. According to Keer (2004) and Pearson and Dole (1987, p. 8), explicit instruction of reading strategies includes the instruction of “WHAT, HOW, WHY, and WHEN a comprehension strategy ought to be used”

through “modelling”, “guided practice”, “consolidation”, “independent practice” or full “application” of the strategies (see section 3.2.1.3 for more elaboration of SBI). Accordingly, such an instructional assumption derived from SBI literature has been used as a theoretical foundation in this chapter for the investigation of any possible intersection between what is instructionally assumed in the standards I and J, and what is actually practiced by the observed reading teachers in order to study the washback impact of these two “content” standards on teachers’ classroom instructional practices. The findings from each observed reading teacher T3R and T4R will be discussed separately in the following two subsections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 respectively.

8.2.1 Reading strategies instructional practices: the case of T3R

In T3R’s class, six full lessons were attended in which almost five book units from two different textbooks were covered in my classroom observations. The first one was a commercial textbook, titled *Active Skills for Reading 3* from which three units were covered, which are:

Unit 3: *Disappearing Animals (Endangered Animals)* (see appendix 8.1, pp. L 1 – L 7)

Unit 4: *Big Money (Lottery Winners: Rich... but happy?)* (See appendix 8.2, pp. M 1- M 6)

Unit 5: *Celebrations around the World (Wedding Customs)* (see appendix 8.3, pp. N 1- N8)

The second textbook used in T3R’s section was an in-house reading textbook, titled *Academic Reading for Law Students*. From this textbook, two units were covered, which are:

Unit 3: *What is Law?* (See appendix 7.2, pp. H 1- H 9)

Unit 4: *Branches of Law* (see appendix 8.4, pp. O 1- O 13)

Out of the six observed and recorded lessons, three classroom discourse episodes were selected to represent T3R’s instructional practices in this analysis chapter (refer to section 5.3.2 to know how such representative episode were selected). These three episodes attempt to represent T3R’s instructional practices in relation to her reading strategy instruction in her class in these lessons I attended in order to trace any intersection with the development of the students’ declarative or procedural knowledge of reading strategies. Generally speaking, in these observed six lessons I attended with T3R, it can be stated that T3R’s own instructional practices can be characterized as providing modelling once, lots of provided practice and selective consolidation of reading strategies by the teacher. The table 8.1 below outlines these three classroom discourse episodes and their pedagogical focus in relation to reading strategies-based instruction before starting the analysis of the episodes later.

| Episode # | Strategy instruction phase targeted | From | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------|
| | | Unit activity? | Page(s)? ⁹ | Appendix |
| 1 | Modelling and practice | 2 | H 2- H 3 | 7.2 |
| 2 | Selective consolidation | A | L 5 | 8.1 |
| 3 | More selective consolidation | A | M 4 | 8.2 |

Table 8.1. List of episodes from T3R's section

8.2.1.1 Modelling and practice of scanning strategies

The first classroom discourse episode from T3R's class was taken while covering "Task" 2 on pages 34-35 from the unit *What is Law?* (See appendix 7.2, pp. H 2- H 3). This episode has been selected as it illustrates the only time a kind of modelling of strategies (what? When? How? to use a strategy) was provided by T3R in all the observations I attended with her. It also illustrates how she reacted to consolidate her students' use of such a strategy after giving them the opportunity to practice it in this given while- reading activity.

After the warm up questions at the beginning of this unit, T3R asked her students to answer the five questions/ items of this activity in order to practice the subskill of scanning based on the reading text given in this chapter. According to this activity, the students are instructed to "*scan the text and answer the following questions*". Instead of asking her students to do it straightaway as she was traditionally doing in other while- reading activities, T3R started the activity by eliciting what the students knew about scanning and how it should be done. Later, she gave them about 4 minutes and 30 second to answer the five questions in this activity to practice the skill of scanning before she stopped them to start checking their answers.

8.2.1.1.1 Episode 1, from the 2nd lesson (recording time, 01:00:10 - 01:07:29)

| | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1. | T: | Ok, so (2) what is going to happen is you first are going to scan the reading on page 35 to 36. Then, you are going to answer the questions on pages 34 to 35 (.) There are five questions (1) Now what happens when you scan? (3) When you scan a reading, what do you do? (1) |
| 2. | S: | Read fast (1) |
| 3. | T: | Read quickly, what do you>> |
| 4. | S: | <<details |
| 5. | T: | Looking for specific information (.) Ok, so you should first read the questions so you know what information you are looking for. Then, scan the short reading a couple of times, looking for the answers to the questions (1) ok? (1) I am going to give you >> |
| 6. | S: | << 15 minutes |
| 7. | T: | No not 15 minutes, you are scanning (1) I am going to give you about five minutes. Ok so read the five questions, then scan the reading to find the answers. Ok, so take about five minutes (.) it is about one minute per one question, and go. |

⁹ All page numbers are representing the thesis page numbering system not the original reading textbooks

| | |
|-----|--|
| 8. | [after about 4 minutes and 30 seconds of silent scanning] |
| 9. | T: Ok, so number one “ <i>can we have any society without laws?</i> ” (.)[reading Q1] |
| 10. | SS: No |
| 11. | T: “ <i>Why?</i> ” [complete reading Q1] |
| 12. | S: “ <i>There will be no control of the behaviour of the people and the society will be in a state of chaos</i> ” [quoting from the text, p. 35] |
| 13. | T: “ <i>chaos</i> ” (.) Yes (.) so the society will be in a state of chaos (.) Ok (1) “ <i>what is law according to society?</i> ” [reading Q2] |
| 14. | S: “ <i>justice, reason</i> ” (.) [quoting from the text, p. 35] |
| 15. | T: Ok, “ <i>justice, reason, order and rule</i> ” [quoting from the text too, p. 35] (1) “ <i>What does law mean in a judicial sense?</i> ” [reading Q3] |
| 16. | S: “ <i>Set of rule</i> ” (1) |
| 17. | S: “ <i>Set of rules</i> ”? |
| 18. | T: Ok (1) “ <i>a set of rules of conduct, action or behaviours of a person</i> ” [completing the answer as written in the text] (1) Ok, “ <i>what is jurisprudence?</i> ” [reading Q4] |
| 19. | S: “ <i>Principle of</i> ” |
| 20. | S: “ <i>Principle of</i> ” |
| 21. | T: Ok so “ <i>principle of science of law</i> ”. So jurisprudence is the science of law, and “ <i>who enforces law</i> ”>> [reading Q5] |
| 22. | S: << governments |
| 23. | T: The governments. Ok. |

As the instruction of the activity shows, this activity is designed in order to give the students that opportunity to practice the skills of scanning as it requires the students to “scan the text and answer the following questions” as indicated in the textbook and also directed by the teacher herself (Turn 1). As long as the students’ “declarative” knowledge development is concerned, it can be stated that T3R paid some of her pedagogical attention to the declarative knowledge of scanning strategies at the beginning of the activity through modelling what scanning is and how it is performed. T3R was concerned about explaining to her students what they needed to do in this activity before doing it. She started the activity by notifying to her students what scanning requires (Turn 1). This was later followed by T3R’s attempts to instruct them how to scan by asking them to focus on “specific information” to answer the given 5 questions, explaining some steps to perform scanning like reading the question first and then scanning the text to find the required piece of information (turn 5). Accordingly, the students’ declarative knowledge about what scanning is and how it can be performed seems to be slightly touched by the teacher at this stage of this while- reading activity as it does not show how that focus on “specific information” can be performed.

In addition, it is important to state that such modelling instruction about what to do in order to perform scanning seems to be performed through elicitation question technique, which

might give an indication that explicit instruction of what scanning is and how it is done has been already instructed to the students before. T3R, in turn 1 asks “When you scan a reading, what do you do?”. In response, a student replies “read fast” (Turn 2), in order to look for “details” (Turn 4). These student’s responses give an indication that there is a kind of background knowledge or “declarative” knowledge about scanning, which had been communicated to them in the past. Accordingly, it can be argued that this instructional practice strengthens the view that such a practice of modelling strategies to develop students’ “declarative” knowledge is performed either in this class or even before in the lower levels of the EFP, which is intersecting with the instructional implication of standards I and J being investigated in this chapter. However, it needs to be stated that such modelling of reading strategies has been only witnessed once in my observations in T3R’ class. T3R tended to start similar while-reading activities without having such explicit modelling of particular reading strategies as she did in this activity and as represented in episode 1 above.

In relation to the “procedural” knowledge, which is linked to giving the students the opportunity to practice such a strategy and later consolidate such use, T3R was found to be generally selective to provide such consolidation generally in her instruction as this episode and the following ones show. As indicated in turn 7 in this episode, the students were instructed to practice scanning through answering the given five questions. After that, T3R started checking her students’ answers (starting from turn 9). In only 15 interactive turns (turns 9-23), between her and her students, T3R managed to check the answers of the five given questions/items. She read the questions one by one (turns 9, 11, 13, 15, 18 and 21), giving her students the opportunity to give their own answers (10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, and 22) before moving to the following items. From the feedback made by T3R to these students’ answers, it appears that all the answers were correct. So far, such a discussion informs that the students were apparently offered the opportunity to perform or practice scanning in a relatively short time of about 4.5 minutes. However, it does not show the teachers’ role to check how the students used scanning strategies in those 4 minutes and 30 seconds. In other words, the teachers’ attempts to check his students’ answer after finishing scanning does not show a sign of an explicit consolidation discussion of the strategies used by the students themselves in order to improve their procedural knowledge in the future. T3R was only checking the students’ answers without further investigating how they managed to get these answers or why. Is it because all answers were correct? The following two episodes (2 and 3) will reveal a pattern of how T3R generally was found to be consolidating the use of strategies selectively, depending on the correctness of her students’ answers when it comes to improve their “procedural” knowledge of reading strategies.

8.2.1.2 Selective consolidation of reading strategies

The second episode from T3R's class was taken while doing activity A on page 43 (see appendix 8.1, p. L 5) from the unit *Disappearing Animals (Endangered Animals)*. In this activity, the students are given five comprehension questions for the reading text in this unit. Under each question, there are three multiple choices, from which the students are asked to choose the correct answer, based on their understanding of the reading text. Before coming to this lesson, T3R asked the students to do this activity as homework in the previous lesson. As a result, no more time was given to the students to reread the text and redo the activity in this lesson. T3R immediately started checking the students' answers.

8.2.1.2.1 Episode 2, from the 2nd lesson (recording time 00:15:55- 00:17:27)

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | T: | Looking at the reading comprehension questions for your homework, you had to answer these (.) so let us look at the top of page 43 (1) " <i>According to the passage, what happened between the 18th century and now?</i> " (2) [reading item 1] |
| 2. | S: | A [meaning the answer is option A] |
| 3. | T: | Ok (1) " <i>The amount of human activity increased</i> " [reading option A], do you agree? (.) |
| 4. | SS: | Yes (.) |
| 5. | T: | Yes, ok (2) Number 2 (1) " <i>why have many whale species become endangered?</i> " [reading item 2] |
| 6. | S: | B [indicating that the answer is option B] |
| 7. | SS: | B (.) |
| 8. | T: | Ok, " <i>they have been hunted in great numbers</i> "? [reading option B in a questioning tone] |
| 9. | S: | yes |
| 10. | T: | Yes, Ok (1) " <i>Which is not mentioned as a cause of species endangerment?</i> " [reading item 3] |
| 11. | S: | A (.) [indicating that the answer is option A] |
| 12. | S: | A (1) [indicating that the answer is option A] |
| 13. | T: | Ok (.) so there was no mention of the " <i>spread of diseases?</i> " [quoting option A] |
| 14. | S: | yesss |
| 15. | T: | All right, " <i>which animal is native to the everglades swamp?</i> " [reading item 4] |
| 16. | S: | A (.) |
| 17. | S: | C (.) |
| 18. | S: | C (.) |
| 19. | T: | So what does "native" mean? |
| 20. | | (6) |
| 21. | S: | Place where they live! |
| 22. | T: | Ok, 'place where they live' but not just live (.) it is where they (3) come from. You are native of (1) where? |
| 23. | S: | Oman |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 24. | T: Oman, right, so what animal is native to the Everglades?>> |
| 25. | S: << B? (.) |
| 26. | S: C (.) |
| 27. | T: C, alligators, alligators. The snakes, the anacondas and the pythons were introduced to the Everglades (1) Ok “ <i>what is the main idea of the final paragraph?</i> ” [reading item 5] |

T3R started the activity by directly asking the students to give their answers as this activity had been assigned as homework (turn 1). For the first three questions/items (turns 1- 15), the students managed to give correct answers as they did in the previous episode (episode 1). T3R, again in these three attempts, continued to give short positive feedback to confirm their correct answers like “yes” (turn 5), “ok” (turn 8) and “all right” (turn 15). Each individual question did not take more than three to four turns before the teacher moved to the next one, especially when more than one student agreed on one answer. For instance, in turns 6, 7 & 9, a number of students individually agreed that the answer for item 2 was “b”, so T3R immediately moved to the following item, item 3 (turn 10). However, this practice of being apparently satisfied with the correct answers by T3R seems to continue until the students started to disagree with each other by giving different answers as it appears in the answers for the fourth question/item (Turns 15- 27). After reading the fourth question, “*which animal is native to the everglades swamp?*” (Turn 15) by T3R, three students gave two different answers “A” and “C” (turns 16, 17 & 18). In this occasion, T3R seemed to be doubtful about her students’ understanding of the meaning of the word “*native*”, which is one word consisting the question (turn 19) and which might have effected their understanding of the question itself. Accordingly, T3R started eliciting what “*native*” means (turns 22-24), giving an example of Omanis as the natives in Oman (Turns 22-24). By asking about the meaning of the word “*native*”, it appears that T3R wanted to demonstrate to her students how this question can be answered by knowing first the meaning of the word “*native*” as a key word in the item. However, two different answers instantly popped up by two students (turns 25, 26) without any clear indication that they referred to the text to deduce the answer by using the right understanding of the word “*native*” for answering this item. In fact, these instant responses did not take them longer than a second to respond to the teachers’ attempt to guide them to the right answer through the strategy of guessing the meaning of the word “*native*”. This disagreement among the students seems to encourage T3R to finish the discussion at this point, emphasizing that the answer was “C”, so both anacondas and pythons are not native to the Everglades swamp but the alligators in option C (Turn 27). From this interaction with incorrect answers, it shows that T3R’s reaction was clearly different. She was stimulated to demonstrate to her students one reading strategy, which is basically based on understanding the meaning of the key word “*native*” in order to identify “*which animal is native to the Everglades swamp?*” as the

item requires. However, the apparent failure of the students to grasp what the teacher was trying to lead them to by continuing giving prompt different answers (Turns 25 and 26) seems to lead to the end of the discussion by T3R herself who gave the correct answer, which is option C (turn 27). Overall, it can be stated that T3R was observed to be interested to consolidate reading strategies only when her students failed to give or agree on one correct answer, which illustrates that her instructional practice with what is instructionally assumed by standards I and J is more contextualized in a hybrid mode, depending apparently on the correctness of the students' responses to the given comprehension questions/ items. The following episode (episode 3 below) is another opportunity to shed more light on this pattern of selective consolidation by T3R.

Episode 3 below was taken to shed more light on T3R's instructional practice to consolidate reading strategies, especially when her students failed to give correct answers or when they did not agree on one correct answer. It was taken from the classroom interaction between T3R and her students after they were given some time to do the while- reading activity A, page 75 from the book unit *Lottery Winners: Rich... but happy?* (See appendix 8.2, p. M 4). In this activity, the students had five comprehension questions with no focus on one only particular reading subskill like scanning in episode 1 above. Under each question, there are three multiple choices to choose the right answer from. T3R started this activity by instructing them to do the activity in 20 minutes silently and individually. After almost 20 minutes, T3R started checking and discussing their answers. This episode covers part of the discussion of the students' answers for the items 2, 3, 4 & 5 from this activity.

8.2.1.2.2 Episode 3, from the 3rd lesson (Recording time 01:27:25 - 01:29:36)

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 11. | T: | Ok, "what do lottery counsellors do?" (1) [reading Q2] |
| 12. | SS: | C (1) |
| 13. | T: | C (.) C (1) "they help lottery winners cope with their sudden wealth" (1) [reading answer C]. What does "cope" mean? (1) |
| 14. | S: | To know how (1) |
| 15. | T: | To know how what? (1) |
| 16. | S: | To know how to do something (1) |
| 17. | T: | To know how to do something (1) It also means deal with>> |
| 18. | S: | << give them instructions |
| 19. | T: | 'instructions', suggestions, yeah. Ok (1) "The word fortunes in line 15 does not mean"? [reading Q 3] |
| 20. | S1: | C (.) |
| 21. | S2: | C (.) |
| 22. | S3: | B (.) |
| 23. | S4: | C, C (1) |
| 24. | T: | Let us look at the line 15. (5) "Take a look at the fortunes of two very different lottery winners">> [reading line 15 from the text, page M 2] |

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 25. | S: | << C |
| 26. | T: | Which word can we not put in the sentence?>> [referring to line 15] |
| 27. | SS: | << Luck (1) |
| 28. | S: | Money (1) |
| 29. | T: | Money (.) money (.) money (1) We are not going to look at their money (1) we are going to look at their luck or the outcome of the money (1) |
| 30. | S5: | Luck luck luck |
| 31. | T: | No B, money. It does not mean money, ok! (1) |
| 32. | S5: | Miss, I mean the answer (.) |
| 33. | T: | The answer is money (1) |
| 34. | S5: | Money?! |
| 35. | T: | Yes (.) What word does it not mean [rephrasing the question/item 3] (1) In this sentence, it does not mean money (1) |
| 36. | S5: | Not mean! |
| 37. | T: | Yes, make sure you are reading the question (.) It says it does not (1) <i>“According to the passage, what should lottery winners do?”>> [reading Q4]</i> |
| 38. | S: | <<B (.) |
| 39. | S: | B (.) |
| 40. | S: | A (.) |
| 41. | T: | Good B (.) “ <i>pay their credit card bills</i> ” [quoting option b]. The advice at the bottom of the passage says, “ <i>pay all debts, such as home mortgages, car loans, and credit card bills</i> ” [quoting from the reading passage, line 55, page M3]. Ok (1) should they quit their job immediately? (2) [referring to option a] |
| 42. | S: | No (.) |
| 43. | S: | No (1) |
| 44. | T: | No, why? (1) |
| 45. | S: | Because (2) because maybe because of the money>> |
| 46. | T: | << maybe they lose the money, maybe they do not have enough money |
| 47. | S: | Yeah |
| 48. | T: | Maybe they will need more money |
| 49. | S: | Yes |
| 50. | T: | Ok (.) “ <i>what could be another title for the passage</i> ” [reading item 5] |
| 51. | SS: | B |
| 52. | T: | Good B. all right. |

In this episode, the discussion of the answers to questions/ items 2 (turns 11- 19), 3 (turns 19- 37), 4 (turns 37- 50) and 5 (turns 50-52) of this while-reading comprehension activity is included. With items 2 and 5, the students managed to get correct answers from the first attempts. As in episodes 1 & 2 above, T3R similarly neither asked her students how they had managed to get these correct answers nor demonstrated herself any strategy to be used with such items. With item 5 (turns 50-52), T3R read the question (turn 50), a number of students shouted “B” (turn 51) and finally T3R gave her feedback “good B, all right” (turn 52). The same

thing occurred with item 2 discussion where some students answered "C" (turn 12). T3R repeated after them "C, C", confirming that it is the right answer (turn 13).

Moving to the items where the students did not agree on one correct answer (items 3 & 4), T3R behaved differently as she did in episode 2 above where some consolidation of reading strategies was demonstrated to show how they could use them to answer such questions. In item 3, the students were asked to choose one word from three options (luck, money, & outcome) that does not mean the word "fortunes" as it is used in context in line 15 from the reading text. After getting two different answers by a number of students (turns 20-23), T3R asked them to refer back to line 15 in the text (turn 24). This was like an opportunity to discuss how an answer can be reached by checking the suitability of each option in the targeted sentence in line 15. Here, T3R instructed her students implicitly to replace the word "fortunes" from the text with one of the three multiple choice words as a way to identify the word that does not mean "fortunes" by asking "*Which word can we not put in the sentence?*" (Turn 26). However, that was immediately followed by two different answers; "luck" (turn 27) and "money" (turn 28) by two students, which was followed by a decisive confirmation by T3R that "money, money, money" (turn 29) is the answer. Accordingly, despite that the students could not get to the right answer after T3R's attempt to demonstrate to them how such a question can be answered, it still shows that T3R was trying to demonstrate to them that placing all the multiple choice words in the original sentence, one by one, can be one strategy to reach the word that does not mean "fortunes".

Moving to the discussion of item 4 answer (turns 37- 50) shows another example of T3R's patterned instructional practice when her students did not agree on one correct answer. As usual, T3R read the item, which asks "*according to the passage, what should lottery winners do?*" (Turn 37). Three students gave two different answers "B" (turns 38-39) and "A" (turn 40). Immediately, T3R replied that option "B" was the answer (turn 41). However, she continued by giving a demonstration of the strategy of excluding the incorrect answers to show them how option "B" can be got. To do so, she asked whether the other options, other than option "B", are correct. She questioned, "should they quit their job immediately?" referring to option "a" (turn 41). Not only that, she asked them why such an option was not the right option (turn 44), which has encouraged a student to justify her own conclusion (turns 45).

Overall, from the three episodes above taken from T3R' class, it can be argued that T3R's instructional practices regarding the provision of explicit instruction of reading strategies can be summarized in three main points. First, despite the fact that one occasion of modelling a strategy was witnessed in my classroom observation with T3R, it was noticeable that the students had had a kind of "declarative" knowledge about the subskill of scanning and how it should be handled as illustrated in episode 1 above. This incidence, in one way or another, may indicate that such

students' declarative knowledge has been developed earlier and the elicitation questions by the teacher was only to refresh their own schemata. Second, it appears that the students were offered opportunities to practice their own strategies while doing the while-reading comprehension questions. Such questions were always provided after the reading text in every unit as recorded in my field notes and as represented in the comprehension questions being discussed in the three episodes above. However, the consolidation of these reading strategies by T3R to reinforce students "procedural" knowledge of these reading strategies, third, has been found to be selectively varying according to the correctness of the students' answers, which represents a form of hybridity of SBI integration in T3R's class. When correct answers were provided by her students, either by individuals or groups of them, T3R tended to give a positive short feedback without checking why or how such answers were reached by these students. The opposite is done when incorrect answers were provided as illustrated in episodes 2 and 3 above. Accordingly, based on the instructional practices of T3R represented in the three episodes above, it can be argued that the intersection between what is instructionally implied by the standards I and J and what is really practiced by this teacher can be observed from time to time, but not necessarily sequenced as SBI literature proposes. Such occasional intersection seems to present a more hybrid mode of such intersection.

The following section reports the findings of the analysis of the instructional practices of the second reading teacher, T4R, as exemplified in the analysis of the following episodes (4, 5, 6 and 7).

8.2.2 Reading strategies instructional practices: the case of T4R

T4R is the second reading teacher I observed in this study. Six full lessons were attended in this section too. In these six lessons, two full textbook units were covered from an in-house textbook titled *Academic Readings*, which is the only reading textbook used with this group of students by this teacher. These covered units are:

Unit 9: *Currency: An Early History* (see appendix 8.5, pp. P 1- P 10)

Unit 10: *The Gulf Cooperation Council* (see appendix 7.3, pp. I 1- I 10)

Out of these attended lessons, four classroom discourse episodes (see table 8.2 below) are presented in this section to report the findings for RQ2 in relation to the instructional practices of T4R (refer to section 5.3.2.4 in order to identify of the process of how these episodes were selected). Generally speaking, it has been found that T4R was recorded to model a number of reading strategies with his students for a number of comprehension questions in one of the two covered units as will be illustrated later in episode 4. Such a practice was not observed or recorded again in the comprehension activities that were covered in the other reading unit I

attended with him. On the other hand, a sort of consolidation of some strategies was observed and recorded while checking student's answers for given comprehension while-reading activities. Therefore, the coming four episodes, as summarized in table 8.2 below, are to illustrate how T4R's own instructional practices have been found intersecting with the instructional assumption of standards I and J.

| Episode # | Strategy instruction phase targeted | From | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------|
| | | Unit activity? | Page(s)? ¹⁰ | Appendix |
| 4 | Modelling | C | P 6- P 7 | 8.5 |
| 5 | | C | P 6- P 7 | 8.5 |
| 6 | Consolidation | A | 15 | 7.3 |
| 7 | | A | 15 | 7.3 |

Table 8.2. List of episodes from T4R's section

8.2.2.1 Modelling

Episode 4 is included to exemplify the only incident where a kind of modelling was observed in T4R's class before allowing his students to do the while-reading activity C (see appendix 8.5, pp. P 6- P 7). In this episode, T4R discussed with his students some possible reading strategies that can be used to answer each and every one of the ten multiple-choice items that constitute this comprehension question activity. This classroom discourse episode is to illustrate how such a kind of modelling of a reading strategy for the first question/item, which states "*What is the main idea of the text?*", was performed by T4R.

8.2.2.1.1 Episode 4, from the 2nd lesson (recording time, 00:01:47-00:03:08)

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 5. | T: | so before I give you time to answer these questions, so let us go through them very quickly (1) For question number 1, ok here what do you have to do? (1) |
| 6. | S: | What is the main idea (1) |
| 7. | T: | So you have to identify the main>> |
| 8. | SS: | <<idea |
| 9. | T: | Main idea of the text (.) Is it clear? (1) |
| 10. | S: | Yes |
| 11. | T: | And what kind of questions is it? (2) is it WH question? (.) |
| 12. | SS: | Yes |
| 13. | T: | Ok, what else can you say about this? (1) what type of questions is this? (1) |
| 14. | S: | Multiple choice (1) |
| 15. | T: | Yeah (.) it is multiple choice so be careful here guys because sometimes there are some words which are misleading, you understand? (1) all right (.) so pay attention to what? (1) to? (2) |
| 16. | S: | Key words (1) |

¹⁰ All page numbers in this table are representing the thesis page numbering system not the original reading textbooks

| | | |
|-----|----|--|
| 17. | T: | 'Key words'. You understand? (1) and what strategy do you have to do here when you have four answers? (.) How can you make your answer obvious and easy? (1) What do you have to do? (1) |
| 18. | S: | delete (.) |
| 19. | T: | Very good, cross out answers, which are not I mean plausible (.) which are not correct, you understand? (1) so you will be left with how many? (.) with two (1) among these two of course, you will have to choose, is it clear? |
| 20 | SS | yes |

As this episode shows, T4R started this while-reading activity by bringing to the attention of his students the importance of using particular strategies right from the beginning for different kinds of comprehension questions. Talking about item 1 as in this episode, T4R started a discussion with his students by making elicitation questions about (1) what item 1 is looking for (turns 5-10), its type of question (turn 11-14), and finally a proper strategy that can be used to get the answer by (turn 17-19). T4R explicitly asked his students about what strategy they needed to answer items 1 (Turn 17). In response, a student said "delete" (turn 18), meaning that they should delete the incorrect answers. T4R praised that student's answer by saying "very good, cross out answers" (Turn 19) before he proceeded to elicit the strategies to answer the following items with the same way of elicitation questions. In this way, T4R was apparently able to inform his students about the strategy of deleting the other options to get the correct answer for item 1, which is looking for the main idea of the text. Accordingly, the modelling of the reading strategy of deleting the incorrect given multiple choices might be considered as one way T4R's instruction intersects with the instructional assumption of OAAA's learning- outcome standards I and J.

It is important to state that, as this is the only observed incidence of modelling of reading strategies in six consecutive classes, it is hard to make a general conclusion that there is a systematic modelling practice of reading strategies in this class. It has been observed to be practiced only once for the comprehension questions attached to one reading text in one of the two units covered during my classroom observations. However, even with this single observed incidence of modelling, it still shows that these reading strategies are not new to the students themselves. They might have been taught to the students either in the EFP or even before in schools as a student in turn 18 proposed the strategy of excluding the incorrect answers. Such a response by this student gives an indication that some reading strategy instruction took place earlier. Not only that, the elicitation technique used by T4R who was checking what his students knew, not teaching them what strategy to know about, gives another indication that strengthens the existence of prior modelling instruction of such reading strategies. Such modelling, nevertheless, seems not to be performed or elicited all the time as discussed above.

The following episodes will show how such reading strategy instruction is demonstrated throughout strategy consolidation discussions between T4R and his students when discussing the students' answers for the given comprehension activities. The next three episodes will illustrate how such consolidation practices of T4R's were more various and contextualized with less patterned instructional practices than T3R whose consolidation was found to be more linked to the correctness of her students' answers.

8.2.2.2 Consolidation of reading strategies in reading comprehension activities

After T4R and his students finished the elicitation of what relevant strategies can be used for the ten items in activity C as exemplified in episode 4 above, T4R asked his students to first read the text individually and then do the comprehension questions in 20 minutes. After about 20 minutes of reading and doing the ten items from this activity, T4R started checking and discussing their answers in a whole class discussion mode. Episode 5 below illustrates the discussion of the first two items where correct answers were given by two students.

8.2.2.2.1 Episode 5, from the 2nd lesson (recording time, 00:28:26- 00:30:34)

| | | |
|-----|-----------|--|
| 1. | T: | Ok guys, so time to check your answers (3) Ok so we start one by one, we start with ladies (.) Ok, everybody has to participate (.) Ok so I start with ladies, Shariefa (3) |
| 2. | Shariefa: | Number one (.) <i>"what is the main idea of this text?"</i> [reading item1](1) C, <i>"currency can be defined in many ways depending on its historical context"</i> [reading option C as the answer] |
| 3. | T: | All right, do you agree with Shariefa? (.) |
| 4. | SS: | Yes (.) |
| 5. | T: | Yes or no? (.) |
| 6. | SS: | Yes (.) |
| 7. | T: | Yes (.) right (1) Why do you think this is the best answer, why not A, why not B, why not D? (2) If I look at D for example, <i>"many forms of currency have been used since 2000 B.C."</i> (.) [reading option D] |
| 8. | S: | It focuses on one detail>> |
| 9. | T: | << yes, this is a detail (.) It is one of the details in the text. Ok, what about A? (.) <i>"currency can be defined in several ways and it is used for many purposes"</i> [reading option A] |
| 10. | S: | Not mentioned there>> |
| 11. | T: | >> yeah, they did not mention what? (1) |
| 12. | S: | Purpose>> |
| 13. | T: | << sorry? (.) |
| 14. | S: | Purpose |
| 15. | T: | Very good (.) ok, B, <i>"currency has an old history and it was used thousands of years ago"</i> [quoting option B] |
| 16. | SS: | [unclear] |
| 17. | T: | What is this? This is also a (1) |

| | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| 18. | SS: | Detail (.) |
| 19. | T: | Detail, right, very good (1) Next, Fatima [asking Fatima to give her answer for item 2] |
| 20. | Fatima: | <i>"the word paper in line 3 is used as"</i> an adjective [indicating that option C is the answer] |
| 21. | T: | Ok, let us look at the sentence here line 3 (.) go back to line 3 (2) read the sentence (2) start the sentence (1) <i>"nowadays"</i> [pointing to one of the students to read the sentence] |
| 22. | Fatima: | <i>"Nowadays, the definition refers especially to circulating paper money"</i> [reading lines 2-3 from the text] |
| 23. | T: | Ok "paper money" (.) so we have "paper money" (.) so Fatima said that "paper" is an adjective, do you agree with her? (.) |
| 24. | SS: | Yes (1) |
| 25. | T | Yes (.) why? (1) why is it an adjective? |
| 26. | Fatima: | Because it can be formal (1) |
| 27. | S: | Because it come before a noun>> |
| 28. | T: | <<Yeah, because it preceded a (1) |
| 29. | S: | noun |
| 30. | T: | Yeah, a noun |

In this episode, the discussion of the answers of the first two items from the activity mentioned above are included; item 1 (Turns 1-19) and item 2 (Turns 19- 30). The students Sharifa and Fatima were selected by T4R to give their answers for these two items individually. They both managed to get initial correct answers for both items. In both cases, T4R seemed not to show satisfaction of the simple short answers provided by both students. He tended to check with the whole group why and why not the other options were or were not the answer, which in one way or another illustrates how deleting incorrect answers can be a strategy to answer such a kind of questions. Starting with item 1, Sharifa read the item 1, which questions *"what is the main idea of this text?"*. Sharifa immediately gave her answer, which was option C *"currency can be defined in many ways depending on its historical context"* (Turn 2). T4R then double-checked with the other students who collectively agreed with the answer provided by Sharifa (turns 3-6). Instead of moving to the following item, T4R decided to go deeper to make sure why C was chosen to be the answer but not the other options, starting with option D (turn 7), then with option A (turn 9) and finally with option B (turn 15). In all of the three cases, the students gave their own justifications for choosing none of them as the main idea of the text. Their justifications were based on their understanding that options D and B are only details (turns 8 & 18) while the option A talks about the purposes of using currency, which is not mentioned in the text itself at all (turn 10). Here, it can be said that despite the fact that T4R did not ask them directly how they managed to identify C as the main idea of the text, he managed to demonstrate with his students that the strategy of

crossing out the other incorrect options in order to get to the right answer can be used as a way to identify the main idea of the text as he demonstrated in episode 4 above.

T4R continued with this instructional practice during the discussion of the answer of item 2 as well, which is asking about the part of speech of the word “*paper*” as it is used in line 3 in the given reading text. Fatima, the student selected by T4R to give an answer to this question, gave a correct initial answer (turn 20), which indicates that “*paper*” is used in line 3 of the reading text as an adjective. As he did in item 1 above, T4R double- checked with the other students who agreed with Fatima’s answer before he continued to ask them “*why is it an adjective?*” (Turn 25). By raising this question, T4R showed that he was not satisfied with only having the right answer before moving to the next one. He wanted to demonstrate to the rest of the students how such a kind of questions can be answered, by identifying the word’s part of speech as it is used in the text itself, not as it is commonly known as a noun. The answer was given by a student who stated, “*because it come before a noun*” (turn 27). Accordingly, T4R, for the second time in one activity, demonstrated that even with correct answers, he managed to dig behind such answers in order to check why a certain answer was chosen as the right answer, and consolidate to the rest of the students how such questions can be dealt with by using the strategy of referring back to the text itself and identifying the part of speech of a word from its location in relation to other surrounding words in the original sentence.

In these two consecutive items, T4R was, in one way or another, consolidating how certain strategies can be used to identify the main idea as in item 1 with Sharifa and identifying the part of speech of a word as it is used in the text as in item 2 with Fatima. Such an instructional practice represents an apparent intersection between what is practiced by this teacher and what is assumed by the standards I and J, which encourages the direct instruction of reading strategies. However, this consolidation of those reading strategies was not always the norm in T4R’s instructional practices. There were some other occasions where he was found intentionally or unintentionally selecting to neglect such a practice, as it will be exemplified in the following two episodes (6 & 7).

8.2.2.3 Selective consolidation of reading strategies

The following episode (episode 6) was taken while covering a while-reading activity from the book unit *The Gulf Cooperation Council* (see appendix 7.3, p. I 5, activity A). In this activity, the students are given a list of seven main ideas for the seven paragraphs constructing the reading text in this unit. They are instructed by the book to “*skim the passage and match the main ideas and the paragraphs*”. To do so, they had to match the paragraph number from one column to the most appropriate main idea from the other column based on their comprehension of the main idea of each paragraph of the given reading text. After giving them about 5 minutes to do this

activity individually, T4R started a whole class discussion to check his students' answers. The following episode is to illustrate how T4R's instructional practice differed this time in terms of consolidating the use of particular reading strategies.

8.2.2.3.1 Episode 6, from the 4th lesson (recording time, 00:14:48- 00:15:48)

| | | |
|-----|-----------|---|
| 64. | T: | Good (.) Alrubaia [calling a student by her surname to match the main idea in option G with one of the text paragraphs] |
| 65. | Alrubaia: | Paragraph four [answering that option G is the main idea of paragraph four] |
| 66. | T: | Yes (1) |
| 67. | Alrubaia: | <i>"The GCC countries plan to cooperate in many fields"</i> [reading option G] |
| 68. | T: | <i>"fields"</i> (1) Any different answer? (1) Do you agree? |
| 69. | SS: | yes |
| 70. | T: | Yes, good, all right. Fatima [asking Fatima to do the following item] |
| 71. | Fatima: | Paragraph 5, E, <i>"there are future plans for a common currency called khaleiji"</i> |
| 72. | T: | <i>"called khaleiji"</i> (1) ok, do you agree? |
| 73. | S: | yeah |
| 74. | T: | Yes (1) ok, Atharee [asking Atharee to do the following item] |
| 75. | Atharee: | Paragraph six, D (1) <i>"The GCC states are rich because of their natural reserves"</i> |
| 76. | T: | All right, do you agree? |
| 77. | S : | yes |
| 78. | T: | Yes(1) Ok (.) Wafa, the last one [asking Wafa to do the following item] |

In this episode, three correct answers for three different items were presented by three different students who are Alrubaia (turn 65), Fatima (turn 71) and Atharee (turn 75). T4R's pedagogical attentions, on the other hand, appears to be more focused on double-checking these answers with the rest of their classmates without asking why such answers were the right answers or how they managed to get them as he did in episode 5 above. In all of the three occasions, T4R was asking the rest of the students "do you agree?" (Turns 68, 72 & 76) after every time each one of the three students gave her correct answer. As soon as the rest of the class declared their agreement with the answerers, T4R tended to move to another student to report her answer for the following item. Accordingly, in comparison to his instructional practices in episode 5 above, T4R's instructional practice in this episode appears to be completely different. Despite the fact that the initial answer by the three students (Alrubaia, Fatima and Atharee) were correct, just like the two cases in episode 5 where the two initial answers were also correct, T4R did not show the same interest to consolidate how, or even why, to use certain strategies to get to the right answers for these three questions in this activity. This different practice appears to show a kind of a contextualized variety of strategy consolidation by T4R. It shows that T4R may consolidate the use of certain strategies for some items, even if the students' answer were correct, but not necessarily with every individual item. In this way, it can be argued that the intersection between what is practiced by T4R and what is instructionally assumed by standards I

and J is happening in a more contextualized hybrid mode, just like modelling such strategies, clarified above in episode 4 above.

Not only that, this hybridity of reading strategy instruction was not only observed when correct answers were presented by some of T4R's students. Rather, it was also recorded in some occasions when initial incorrect answers were provided by his students too. Episode 7 below exemplifies such an instructional practice by T4R when covering some other items from the same activity episode 6 above was taken from.

8.2.2.3.2 Episode 7, from the 4th lesson (recording timing, 00:11:42- 00:13:29)

| | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| 27. | T: | Yes (3) Fatima (.) paragraph 2 (1) [asking Fatima to match a main idea with paragraph 2] |
| 28. | Fatima: | D (.) |
| 29. | T: | 'D', what is 'D'? (2) [asking Fatima to read option D] |
| 30. | Fatima: | <i>"the GCC states are rich because of their natural reserves"</i> (1) [reading option D] |
| 31. | T: | Ok (.) go to paragraph 2 and show me if it shows that the GCC are rich because of their natural reserves. (2) Any idea that refers that the GCC countries are rich because they have natural reserves? (.)[directing this question to the rest of the class] |
| 32. | SS: | No (.) |
| 33. | T: | No (.) so paragraph 2 (.) what is the best idea or the main idea for paragraph 2? (.) [directing the question to the whole class] |
| 34. | S1: | E (.) |
| 35. | S2: | A (1) |
| 36. | S3: | D (1) |
| 37. | T: | What do you think? (1) |
| 38. | S2: | A (1) |
| 39. | T: | It is? (1) |
| 40. | S4: | A (1) |
| 41. | T: | A (1) what is A here? (4) What is A? (2) yes [giving his permission to one of his students to read option A] |
| 42. | S4: | <i>"The Gulf Cooperation Council consists of six gulf states at the moment"</i> [reading option A] |
| 43. | T: | Good. So ok paragraph 2 ok refers to <i>"The Gulf Cooperation Council consists of"</i> or GCC is made up of. You can say consists of or is made up of. If you want a synonym of consists of, do you know consists of? or past participle is made up of [writing the two synonyms on the white board]. GCC consists of six countries or the GCC is made up of six countries. All right, next (3)? next question? |

In this episode, T4R asked his student Fatima to match one main idea from the given list to paragraph 2. Fatima immediately answered "D", indicating that the main idea for paragraph 2

is D, which says, “*the GCC states are rich because of their natural reserves*” (Turn 28). T4R, in response, asked Fatima to show him any evidence from paragraph 2 that proves that option D can be matched to paragraph 2 as its main idea. Such a question was an opportunity for Fatima to explain how she reached to her answer. However, T4R waited for only two seconds before he followed that request with a question to the whole class “*Any idea that the GCC countries are rich because they have natural reserves?*” (Turn 31). Immediately a number of students shouted “*NO*” (turn 32). At this moment, T4R did not go back to Fatima to ask her to go to the text and justify her initial answer or demonstrate how she got her answer. Instead, he asked the whole class for the correct answer again as if he was restarting from the beginning (turn 33). Consequently, different answers were proposed by different students (34, 35 & 36). From the three later answerers, T4R picked one student to read option A (turns 37-43) as if he was preparing to end this discussion in this way. After this student read option A (Turn 42), T4R confirmed that the main idea of paragraph 2 is option A, which says, “*The Gulf Cooperation Council consists of six gulf states at the moment*” (Turn 43).

This kind of instructional practice by T4R seems to be completely different from his own practice in episode 5 above as it seems to deprive the whole class from a deeper discussion of the answer given by Fatima or the answers from S1 and S3 who did not have time to know why their answers were incorrect or how they could have got the right answers instead through particular reading strategies. In contrast, a diversion of the pedagogical focus was recorded at the end of this episode. As illustrated in turn 43, while T4R was reading option A himself as a way of confirming that A is the right answer, T4R suddenly stopped in the middle of the sentence with the word “*consists*”. He started explaining its meaning by giving a synonym “*made up of*” before he asked to move to the next item.

In summary, the intersection between T4R’s instructional practices and the instructional assumption of reading strategy instruction, as implied from standards (I and J), can be described as a hybrid intersection too. First, in six lessons I attended with T4R, two reading units with two reading texts were covered. A kind of modelling of some reading strategies through elicitation was initiated in only one unit as clarified in episode 4 above. Despite the fact that such a direct modelling was not seen in the other unit, the elicitation itself with the kind of informative feedback by some of the students in class indicate that such modelling had been performed at one stage before the observations I conducted with them took place (see episode 4 above). Second, some selective reading strategy consolidation was observed in the teacher-students’ discussions, which was conducted during the discussion of the students’ answers to the given comprehension questions (see episode 5). As found above in episodes 4, 5, 6 and 7, such consolidation tends to be variant from one activity to another and from one item to another even within the same activity (see episodes 5, 6 & 7).

Finally, based on the analysis of both T3R and T4R's instructional practices in relation to reading strategy instruction in both subsections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 above, a hybrid mode of intersection between what is instructionally practiced by both reading teachers and what is instructionally assumed is what appears to represent this relationship. Nevertheless, what makes this hybrid relation different from the one in chapter 7 above is that it is visualized more in the instructional practices of the same individual teacher.

The following section of this chapter (section 8.3) is to report the findings of RQ3, which is concerned about the factors that have mediated this hybrid intersection between both reading teachers' (T3R and T4R) instructional practices and the instructional assumption in the standards I and J.

8.3 RQ3 findings

In this section, I report the findings for RQ3, which is oriented towards the factors that had mediated the hybrid intersection between the instructional assumption implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards I and J and the instructional practices of the two observed reading teachers T3R and T4R as discussed in section 8.2 above. These findings have been inductively generated from the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with both reading teachers who were allowed to express themselves to justify the motives of their own instructional practices about reading strategy instruction.

As has been illustrated in episode 1 with T3R and episode 4 with T4R, both teachers were observed modelling some reading strategies before allowing their students to perform them with some while-reading activities. Additionally, both teachers were observed giving a kind of reading strategy consolidation by demonstrating how particular strategies could be used to answer particular types of comprehension questions. Accordingly, it was important to know why such instances of explicit instruction of reading strategies happened at the first place. The factors that led to such observed explicit reading strategy instruction will be presented first in section 8.3.1 as the factors that have fostered the existence of these highlighted instances of intersection discussed in section 8.2 above. On the other hand, the factors that led to the incidences where such explicit instruction of reading strategies was ignored by the observed teachers will be reported in the following section (section 8.3.2) as the hindering factors.

8.3.1 Fostering factors

By tracing the motives behind the observed explicit instruction of reading strategies with both teachers in the interviews, different justifications were presented by T3R and T4R. However, it seems that both teachers relatively agree that such explicit instruction of reading strategies,

including the modelling and the consolidation practices, is informed originally by their own beliefs as experienced reading teachers that such reading strategy instruction is necessary in a reading course. When asked about the modelling and consolidation of some reading strategies T4R demonstrated in episode 4 above, he states:

Extract 8.1:

there are some individual differences between students. Some students are able to understand questions some students are unable, some are in between so I make sure that they understand the questions. Number two, they should be empowered with some strategies, some techniques they should know for example ok how they can answer this question what strategy they should use and why they should use this and not that and of course also we are preparing them for the exams because with my experience I have noticed that students lose marks because they lack and do not know strategies and techniques which enable them to find answers.

Here, T4R explains that the strategy instruction he performed with his students was mainly initiated because he believes he needed to do so as a reading teacher. According to him, there are “individual differences” among his students, which are linked mainly to their abilities to identify what each reading comprehension question is looking for and what kind of reading strategy is needed to apply in order to get the right answer for such comprehension questions in reading exams. Therefore, it appears that he referred first to such an explanation to justify why he had to go through the comprehension questions one by one and explained to his students what strategies to be used for each one of them as illustrated in episode 4 above. Such a belief about individual differences among his students was further explained by T4R later when he stated,

Extract 8.2:

it is very important I mean because some students when you ask them answer this question of you stay for five six minutes and then when you try to check it, you say why you did not answer this question? Out of ten questions, you find they answer 6! Why did not you answer this? They say I do not understand; I do not know how to answer this question so with my experience I do believe that students or teachers should interfere in some situations to make students understand the task

In this quotation, it appears that his belief to interfere by teaching some reading strategies is based mainly on his own previous experience with his students whom he had found lacking such strategies to deal with certain questions, which resulted in wasting their time given for answering such while-reading comprehension questions. Out of ten given comprehension questions for instance, 6 of them might be only answered by some of his students, simply because they did not understand the questions itself or they did not know how to answer them. Such a thing is viewed as a drawback by T4R as it effects their performance in their reading exams as

indicated in extract 8.1 above. Accordingly, such a personal experience of T4R seems to have encouraged him to believe that this role of introducing such reading strategies is part of his job as a reading teacher. Therefore, this gave me a primary impression that such instruction of reading strategies originated right from the teacher himself, not something that was dictated or prescribed upon him, which was confirmed by him later on when he said “it is my own” in one of the interviews. T4R continues to defend his belief by adding:

Extract 8.3:

Some teachers may say now we have to let students figure out everything by themselves. I do not believe so. I believe that students for some time they should be given some coaching until you are sure that they can work on their own and they can become independent learners.

Here, it becomes clearer that T4R identifies himself as a teacher who believes that his role should not be restricted only to the provision of the reading texts and their comprehension questions as they are presented in the textbooks, as done by some of his colleagues. Instead, his role, he continues, should be extended to the provision or “coaching” of reading strategies necessary to facilitate their expected mastery of the targeted reading subskills unlike some other teachers who are not taking such an initiative. The collectiveness of the three extracts (8.1, 8.2 and 8.3) above shows that T4R’s own belief about his own role as a reading teacher towards his students, based on his own teaching experience, is what has encouraged him to incorporate such instruction of reading strategies in his reading class. Such an explanation, on the other hand, puts the impact of the standards on T4R’s own beliefs as a reading teacher in a vague area as such instructional practices have been initiated apparently based on his own beliefs as an experienced teacher but not necessarily to meet the pedagogical consequences of OAAA’s reading learning-outcome standards.

Similarly, T3R’ beliefs appear to be what drove her to teach reading strategies in her class. She was also observed modelling what and how scanning can be performed (see episode 1 above). Additionally, she was observed to perform a kind of consolidation of some strategies when her students tended to give incorrect answers (see episodes 2 and 3). She justified the integration of such explicit instruction of the subskill of scanning by saying:

Extract 8.4:

these are things we do automatically in any language when we start to read we look at the title; we judge the book by its cover. If it does not have a nice picture or a nice title, we are

not going to pick it up so it also helps them in test taking because sometimes especially as they are getting into more in depth studies they do not have time to read word by word everything

To T3R, teaching such a reading strategy seems to be something “integral” that should be done “automatically” for the sake of developing students’ reading fluency. It appears that T3R does not consider such a practice as something new in a reading class but something that should be done by reading teachers whenever the aim of its integration is the facilitation of students’ reading fluency. Reading a book from its title is an example used by T3R to indicate that such a strategy is used commonly in daily reading not only in classroom assigned reading. Out of this extract, it can be argued that, even in T3R’s case, the integration of such reading strategy instruction in her class did not happen because it was dictated by her programme leadership. Rather, it is more apparently originated from her own inner belief that this is something that should be done in any reading class in order to help her students do well in reading tests.

In summary of this section, it appears that all the observed reading strategy instructional practices in both observed teachers’ classes have been stimulated apparently solely by the observed teachers’ own beliefs of the necessity to integrate such reading strategy instruction in their reading classes. This belief seems to be strengthened by different sources such as teachers’ previous experiences with individual differences among students, importance of strategy instruction for students’ performance in their reading exams and the consideration of strategy instruction as an integral part in any reading course. However, how such beliefs are influenced by the reading standards themselves is not evident in the talks of both teachers, which may suggest that such instances of intersection were more probably based on personal and contextual motives, but not necessarily by OAAA’s learning- outcome standards I and J as a general curriculum development framework.

8.3.2 Hindering factors

As found in phase 2 of this research with both reading teachers (section 8.2), the instruction of reading strategies, either by modelling or consolidation was found to be contextually variant from one activity to another or from one item to another (see episodes 3 from T3R’s class and 6 and 7 from T4R’s class in section 8.2). The investigation of such instructional practices from both teachers has led to a set of various reasons believed by the teachers themselves to be the causes of this variety.

T3R, who tended to limit her consolidation instruction of reading strategies with the items where the students failed to agree on one correct answer (see episodes 1, 2 and 3), referred to the time limit she encountered in her reading classes to justify her practice. T3R justifies this practice by stating:

Extract 8.5

There are many aspects to cover in a reading unit, and there simply isn't time to go over the process for each question. This is especially the case for questions that most students have answered correctly

T3R believes that time is a constraint that prevented her from going deeper into the process of investigating the strategy(s) her students used to answer those comprehension questions with. T3R claims that there are many “aspects” to cover in the reading course, which are equally important enough to pay some of her pedagogical attention to in addition to reading strategy instruction. This, in one way or another, indicates that despite its believed importance by the teacher herself (see extract 8.4 above), reading strategy instruction, according to T3R, is not the only thing this reading course is all about.

On the other hand, T4R justifies his variant instructional practices of reading strategy instruction to his own concern that having constant modelling and consolidation of reading strategies can be negative to his students’ motivation. T4R states:

Extract 8.6

I normally try to give them new strategies to answer certain types of questions but I will not repeat it over and over again because you know it is going to be boring. I think I can do it sometimes but not with every single question, with every single answer. I do not think that will be motivating to my students, you understand? This sounds so mechanical.

To T4R, students’ motivation is a concern that seems to stop him from giving consistent instruction of reading strategies with every single comprehension question/item. Despite his own commitment to teach reading strategies throughout the course as he stated earlier (see extracts 8.1, 8.2 & 8.3), teaching certain reading strategies over and over again is a “boring” and “mechanical” practice believed to be deteriorating his students’ motivation. Accordingly, such a concern seems to draw a line between T4R’s own belief about his commitment to teaching reading strategies and his sense of practicality of its consistency with every reading comprehension activity or with every question/ item within one activity. Such a belief about practicality issues is apparently powerful enough to deviate the teacher’s own pedagogical attention in order to sustain his own students’ motivation.

In addition to both teachers’ own beliefs about the contextual constraints that have apparently led to the hybrid mode of reading strategy instruction in both teachers’ class, the fluidity of language learning can be another believed factor that hindered the intersection with the explicit instruction of reading strategies. In both reading classes, it was found occasionally that the diversions of the pedagogical focus of both teachers to random linguistic aspects highlighted

by the teachers themselves while discussing their students' answers functioned seemingly as another way of minimizing reading strategy instruction with both observed teachers. Such diversions appeared to redirect the teachers' pedagogical focus to random linguistic areas like checking the meaning of a word, asking for a synonym of a word or checking the pronunciation of a word on the expense of the consolidation of reading strategies used by the students' themselves as illustrated above in episodes 3 (Turns 13-19) and 7 (Turn 43). By asking both teachers about the rationales of such diversions, it has been found that both teachers T4R and T3R believe that these diversions were important for their students' learning of such structural aspects. T3R justifies her diversions by saying:

Extract 8.7

I think learning is really fluid and whenever a moment present itself for sharing information or learning something from someone I think that is the time that is appropriate even if we are in the middle of reading class

T4R similarly states:

Extract 8.8

learning a language is a combination of so many factors which involves speaking, pronunciation, reading, writing so that is why and you have noticed that also in my reading class I also cover some grammatical points, structures, synonyms, antonyms. This is language. It is not cut into parts. It is a whole package.

Based on these two extracts (8.7 & 8.8), it appears that both teachers seem not to have a rigid division of their pedagogical focus while teaching reading. They both believe that they can alter their pedagogical focus whenever needed since language teaching, according to them, is not only about teaching one aspect, including the instruction of reading strategies. Therefore, for better language learning, they think that they need to follow an "*eclectic approach*" as stated by T4R and exploit any learning opportunity "*whenever a moment present itself for sharing information*" as stated by T3R. Accordingly, this belief about what to teach in such reading activities, where the assumed primary focus is on how to develop certain reading subskills through the instruction of certain reading strategies, has strengthened my overall finding that both teachers' various beliefs about what to teach in English language classes, in one way or another, can also be various and interactive based on the context they encounter. This makes intersection with what is instructionally assumed from standards I and J is more practically variant and hybrid.

In summary of section 8.3, it can be argued that a major factor has mediated the intersection between the instructional assumption derived from standards I & J, which is

concerned about the instruction of reading strategies (see sections 6.10 and 6.11 from phase 1 findings) and the real instructional practices of the observed reading teachers in this research (see section 8.2 above). This factor appears to be mainly linked to the different set of beliefs both reading teachers T3R and T4R have got regarding reading strategies instruction in particular and reading as a major skill in general. Despite the fact that both reading teachers have been found delivering some reading strategy instruction as a result of their own personal beliefs of the importance of integrating such instruction in their reading classes, they also have been found carrying a different set of beliefs that have collaboratively shaped this hybrid instruction. Those different sets of beliefs are more linked to contextual constraints, such as time limit, students' motivation sustainability, as well as the necessity to have a wider pedagogical scope of what to teach in reading comprehension activities. Such believed contextual constraints have worked seemingly to result in having a more variant or hybrid intersection with what is instructionally assumed by standards I and J.

8.4 Conclusion

The investigation of the intersection between what is assumed in standard I and J, represented in the explicit instruction of reading strategies, and the instructional practices of the two EFP reading teachers (T4R and T3R) has been the focus in this chapter in order to report the findings for RQ2. This investigation has led to various instructional practices performed by the two observed teachers, which have been found to be intersecting with this assumption in a hybrid mode, in which some elements of SBI were evident in some occasions but not necessarily consistently in others. In relation to the findings of RQ3, it has been found that such contextual hybrid intersection was stimulated apparently by the teachers' own belief that views reading strategy instruction as an integral part in a reading class. On the other hand, the teachers' own beliefs about contextual factors, such as time constraints, students' motivation sustainability and variability of what to teach in a reading class have been found to be functioning as vital forces causing the observed various and hybrid practices.

This conclusion above, in addition to the hybridity of language instruction found in chapter 7, seems to strengthen an overall conclusion of hybridity of intersection between what is instructionally practiced in real classrooms and what is instructionally assumed from the standards. More discussions of the findings from the three phases in this study in relation to the washback impact of "content" standards on teachers' classroom instruction is going to be more elaborated in the following chapter (chapter 9).

9 Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1 Introduction

In the discussion chapter in a qualitative research, as in the case of this study, the interpretation of research findings is a core element. According to Creswell (2012, p. 257), “interpretation” is the stage where the researcher “steps back and forms some larger meaning about the phenomenon based on personal views, comparisons with past studies, or both”. In the era of quality management in language education, the impact of learning- outcome standards on teachers’ classroom instructional practices is still globally an under-researched area as discussed earlier in chapter 1 (section 1.2.3) and illustrated in the literature review chapter 2 (section 2.5), from which this study has developed its main aim to widen our understanding of this new phenomenon of QM in language education. Such an attempt has been based on the findings from the Omani context with OAAA’s learning- outcome standards for EFPs, more specifically from the instructional experiences of four EFP teachers in EFP classrooms. Accordingly, an attempt to situate the findings of this study in the wider context of language education management and learning- outcome standards’ washback impact to manage teachers’ contextualized classroom instruction is discussed in this chapter in order to articulate more clearly the possible contributions of this study.

The interpretation of the findings of this study will include the discussion of the findings in three main areas related to the three RQs of this study. In relation to RQ1 findings, (a) the instructional assumptions/ implications of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards (chapter 6), when no instruction standards or prescription is provided by the learning- outcome standards developers, are first discussed. This is later followed by discussing the (b) the potential impact of such instructional assumptions on real classroom instructional practices through the incidences of intersection between the standards theoretical instructional implications and the teachers’ real classroom instructional practices, which have led to a more hybrid systems of intersection. The found hybrid nature of this intersection leads us later to the discussion of (c) the contextual factors that have mediated such an intersection (chapters 7 and 8). To operate this discussion more fruitfully, the findings reported in the analysis chapters 6, 7 & 8 above will be discussed on the light of (1) the theorization of the relation between learning- outcome standards and teachers’ instructional instruction (see section 2.4), (2) the theorization of language instruction from language teaching methodologies literature as suggested by language teaching scholars (see section 3.2), and the teachers’ classroom contextualized instruction, which is more dynamic and contextualized (see section 3.3). This discussion will attempt to draw a clearer view of the relation between “content” standards that tackle language education quality from its “procedural” perspective and teachers’ real classroom instruction, which is representing one aspect of

language education quality from its “transformational” perspective. The discussion of the findings of this research will be organized according to the three RQs of this case study in the following subsections (9.2, 9.3 & 9.4). In each subsection, the findings of one RQ will be discussed separately.

9.2 Discussion of RQ1

As outlined earlier, RQ1 states ***what instructional assumptions are implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning- outcome standards?*** The aim of RQ1 is to identify some instructional assumptions OAAA's learning- outcome standards are implicitly encouraging for classroom instruction in the EFP, based on language teaching methodology literature as recommended by Crabbe (2003) (see section 2.4 above). The significance of such identification is represented in its ability to make such instructional assumptions, which are missing in OAAA's documents, more explicit before investigating their impact on real classroom instruction in the EFP. In order to make such implicit instructional assumptions more explicit in phase one of this research, the external relations of OAAA's learning- outcome standards as a text were investigated with the wider discourse of English language education literature discussed in sections 1.2.3 and 3.2, which has been utilized as the shared common foundational ground of English language instruction in order to analyse OAAA's standards. This investigation was mediated through the use of principles of the concept of “intertextuality” borrowed from Fairclough's relational approach of CDA. Intertextuality is mainly based on the understanding that what has been said in a text was said against what has not been said but taken as given based on shared background knowledge between the sender and the receiver of the text (Fairclough, 2003). Therefore, making such implicit instructional assumptions more explicit based on what has been discussed in language teaching literature was purposefully targeted as a prerequisite in order to provide a theoretical foundation before investigating any possible intersection with classroom instructional practices in the EFP in the second phase of this research.

Out of the ten learning outcome standards developed by OAAA for the EFP, as found in phase one (chapter 6), various instructional assumptions were identified and grouped in four major instructional assumptions/ implications (as illustrated in table 6.1 above in section 6.12). According to these four main instructional assumptions/ implications, it can be argued that OAAA's learning- outcome standards have been developed to enhance more dominantly the communicative approach of classroom instruction in the EFP as derived from the principles of CLT. Such encouraged instructional assumptions have been found to be derived from the communicative views of language (functional and interactive) that do not take language structural forms as a starting point for classroom instruction as in traditional structural syllabi. Instead, the first three instructional assumptions listed above can be viewed as directly derived from the

domain of CLT, emphasizing more on meaningful language use than language forms. The fourth one is rooted more directly in the domain of Strategy-based Instruction (SBI) in language programmes, which aims to raise students' metacognitive knowledge about a number of strategies for better language learning.

Accordingly, such a communicative orientation of OAAA's learning- outcome standards goes in harmony, in general terms, with the reports that standards, as in similar cases like ACTFL and CEFR, are mainly developed based on principles derived mainly from CLT (Little, 2006; Magnan, 2017). Accordingly, it can be argued that standards- based language programmes, including the case of OAAA's learning- outcome standards for EFPs, originate from the same global desire of top educational authorities that students' communicative competencies, not only the "grammatical" one (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980), is what needs to be promoted or enhanced in language education programmes, and what classroom instruction accordingly needs to be directed towards to achieve.

However, what can be constructively contributed with in this study is that a closer look at these instructional assumptions/implications of each one of OAAA' learning- outcome standards, as summarized in table 6.1 above, shows that these standards are not equally similar even if they are all stemming from the wider umbrella of CLT. They can be classified according to their instructional implications into three main categories, based on their unique views of language and language learning. These three categories are (1) interaction-focused, (2) strategy-focused or (3) combined. The first category includes standard G and D that focus on language learning as a result of authentic use of language through interaction (see sections 6.5 & 6.8). Standard G, for instance, targets no language communicative functions, study skills (e.g. summarizing, paraphrasing), research skills (e.g. use of library resources, referencing) or language subskills (e.g. answering questions about main ideas) as in the strategy-focused standards. The strategy- based ones, on the other hand, are those standards that imply primarily the explicit instruction of strategies necessary to perform targeted study skills or language subskills, such as paraphrasing in standard B, note-taking in standard F and answering comprehension questions based on given listening or reading texts as in standards H, I and J. Each one of these standards B, F, H, I & J has been developed to target a particular language subskill or study skill as its ultimate outcome (see subsection 6.3, 6.7, 6.9, 6.10 & 6.11 respectively). The interactive use of language among the learners is not primarily emphasized as it is in standard G, D and the combined category standards. Finally, the combined category includes the standards that imply both the interactive use of language in addition to possible direct instruction of particular language functions or strategies. The combined learning outcome standards A, C & E encourage the natural interactive use of language in different formats, including participating actively in discussions (standard A, see section 6.2), delivering monologic and dialogic talks for at least 5 minutes (standard C, see

section 6.4) and producing pieces of writing (standards E, see subsection 6.6 respectively). However, targeting particular communicative functions (standard A) and research and presentation subskills (standard C and E) in these standards has extended their possible instructional implications to include the direct instruction of some communicative functions (e.g. agreeing and disagreeing) or strategies in addition to the natural interactive use of language and language learning.

Accordingly, the analysis of the instructional assumptions/ implications of each individual standard from OAAA, based on what has been discussed in language education literature, shows that such learning- outcome standards may implicitly suggest different instructional assumptions or implications, depending on the language view or content they individually target. Such language content includes one or more of (1) communicative functions (e.g. agreeing, disagreeing etc.), (2) language subskills (e.g. identifying main ideas, identifying supporting details etc.), (3) study skills (e.g. summarizing, paraphrasing), (4) presentation skills (eye contact, body language), (5) research skills (e.g. referencing) or (6) focus on interactive language use (e.g. participating actively in discussions). Therefore, the more language contents or language views an individual learning- outcome targets, the more instructional implications one can infer from that particular standard. How such instructional implications are functioning to manage teachers' classroom instructional practices is discussed next in section 9.3 based on phase 2 findings.

9.3 Discussion of RQ2

In this section, the discussion of the findings of RQ2 is presented. RQ2 states ***Do EFP teachers' instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions implicitly embedded in OAAA's learning outcome standards? If so, how?*** As discussed previously (see section 4.3.2), this question has been developed to investigate how the observed teachers' own instructional practices intersect with the instructional assumptions or implications implicitly embedded in the learning- outcome standards developed by OAAA for the EFPs. The aim of this investigation is to seek a better understanding of the washback impact of such "content" standards on teachers' classroom instructional practices as a tool for quality management of language instruction through tracing the areas of intersection.

As notified at the end of chapter 6 (see section 6.12), the second phase of this study is directed towards the investigation of the intersection of the real instructional practices of the observed EFP teachers with two instructional assumptions from phase one. These two assumptions are (1) the instruction of language structural items from the FonF perspective over FonFs perspective investigated in section 7.2, and (2) the explicit instruction of reading strategies investigated in section 8.2. The findings in this phase were based on the analysis of episodes of

classroom discourse relevant to the two listed instructional assumptions. Principles of the “ad hoc” approach of classroom discourse analysis was adopted as it does not limit the analyst to predefined categories of discourse interactional functions as it is used in the “system-based” approach (Walsh, 2011). Therefore, principles of the “ad hoc” approach has been viewed more practically useful by the analyst in this study for the analysis of episodes of classroom discourse for pedagogical purposes (see section 5.3.2.2 to know more about these two approaches). In the following two subsections (9.3.1 and 9.3.2), the implications of such findings are discussed individually for every one of the two instructional assumptions investigated in this research in order to highlight the hybrid nature of intersection between what is assumed and what is practiced. The individual discussion in each one of these two sections will be extended in section 9.3.3 in order to shed some more light on the implications of the discussions in both previous sections for the sake of extending our understanding of the role of this phenomenon to manage teachers’ classroom instructional practices in language education programmes.

9.3.1 Hybridity in linguistic forms instruction activities

Regarding the first instructional assumption prioritizing FonF, it has been found in this study that a wide range of forms instruction activities adopting both FonF and FonFs perspectives were practiced in the classrooms of the four observed EFP teachers, resulting in a hybrid approach of forms instruction in the whole EFP in this LC where this study took place. Such a variety of forms instruction activities were found to be distributed distinctively between the writing and reading classes. FonF activities were remarkably practiced in the two writing classes with T1W and T2W (see section 7.2.1), while FonFs instruction was observed in the reading classes with the two reading teachers T3R and T4R (see section 7.2.2).

Based on this wide range of form instruction (FonF and FonFs), it can be argued that what is practiced in real EFP is more various and more related to different views or theoretical approaches of language forms instruction in English language classes. The inclusion of these two distinctive views of form teaching (FonF and FonFs) in those four EFP teachers’ classes, I may argue, has led to have a more flexible or hybrid approach of form instruction rather than relying only on the more communicative FonF approach as implicitly implied generally from OAAA’s learning- outcome standards and from standard D specifically. The reading teachers’ presentations of the passive voice, followed by controlled practice activities to practice such a grammatical structure, where they asked their students to practice their knowledge to transfer active sentences into passive ones or vice versa, show that the traditional FonFs approach of language instruction, as represented in the PPP model, is still shaping classroom instructional practices, which are not only limited to FonF as implicitly implied by the standards (see episodes analysis in section 7.2).

Accordingly, this wide variety of activities may imply two important things. First, this hybrid mode of linguistic forms instruction is more acceptably accommodated by the EFP teachers rather than been driven completely by the focus on form (FonF) notion from the communicative language approach. This shows that the transition to full communicative FonF as instructionally prioritized by the external relations of the standards in phase one of this study (see chapter 6), and discarding the traditional language forms teaching (FonFs), which is based on teaching language structural items, one by one as discrete pre-defined and pre-sequenced items, is not the only option that EFP teachers can solely rely on. A middle contextualized option that accommodate both approaches seems to be more acceptably selected instead.

Therefore, the use of or reliance on learning- outcome standards, developed based on CLT principles, secondly, reveals that it can be a starting point for integrating some of CLT instructional practices, as in relation to langauge forms instruction, but not to impose a full control of what is being taught. This apparently goes to a different direction from what the proponents and theorists of FonF like Long (1998b), Ellis (2002), Ellis et al. (2002), Norris and Ortega (2000) and Ellis (2016) call for. The observed classroom instructional practices of the four EFP teachers may indicate that the partial adoption of FonFs, in addition the more communicative one, is still needed to achieve quality of language forms instruction in this EFP. Therefore, top-down managing classroom instruction attempts by governmental external bodies like OAAA through learning- outcome standards seems to be practically limited or challenged, as real classroom practices show that a recall of past structural instructional practices are still followed to teach linguistic structural items (e.g. grammar and vocab). This in one way or another briefly shows that classroom real practices are not limited to one language forms theoretical instruction approach, but rather a more hybrid one.

A relatively similar form of hybridity of intersection between what is instructed and what is implied from the standards has also been found in relation to the explicit reading strategy instruction in the reading classes investigated in this study. The following section is to discuss its findings.

9.3.2 Hybridity in the instruction of reading strategies

Moving to the second investigated instructional assumption linked to the explicit instruction of reading strategies has shown another form of hybridity of teachers' instructional practices, but more observable within the same teachers' own instructional practices. The instructional practices of each one of the reading teachers T3R and T4R were more various and complex in a way that their instruction of reading strategies were observed to be variant from one lesson to another and from one while-reading activity to another (see section 8.2). The explicit instruction of what, how, why and when certain reading strategies as theorized in relevant

literature by different authors like Keer (2004), Pearson and Dole (1987), Pressley (2002) and Griffiths (2013) (see section 3.2.1.3) was not observed in both reading teachers' classes in the same way it is suggested in the relevant literature.

Therefore, two things can be interpreted in relation to this more teacher-related form of hybridity. First, the hybridity of intersection between what is instructionally implied from OAAA's learning- outcome standards and what is practiced by the two reading teachers shows that such hybridity can be noticeable within the instructional practices of the same individual teacher, not necessarily linked to a particular language skill course as discussed above with language forms instruction (see section 9.3.1). An individual teacher's own instructional practices can be complex and diverse to the extent that it might show a kind of fluctuating intersection with what is theoretically established in language teaching literature, and consequently implied by particular learning- outcome standards. Both teachers T3R and T4R were observed to be giving some of their pedagogical attention to the instruction of some reading strategies to their students necessary to help them answer particular comprehension questions. However, it was not clear enough that such instruction followed systematically a particular theoretical orientation of reading strategy instruction as suggested in relevant literature as illustrated in the episodes in section 8.2.

Second, this hybrid intersection within each one of the two reading teacher's instructional practices suggests that the teachers' own conceptualization of what needs to be taught, when to be taught and how long time and effort is needed to spend on reading strategies instruction is more contextualized than being the result of following a pre-set theoretical model of reading strategy instruction that includes different stages like "modelling", "guided practice", "consolidation", "independent practice" and "application" as suggested by Pearson and Dole (1987). Here, it can be argued that this variety of instructional practices of reading strategies is more contextualized than being dictated fully by the theoretical voices of scholars as indicated by Kumaravadivelu (1994; 2002). T3R, for instance, was more dedicated to consolidate strategies use when her students failed to give or agree on one correct answer (see episode 2 & 3 in chapter 8), while T4R's instructional practices, on the other hand, were more various and complicated as he was able to shift his pedagogical attention from consolidating particular strategies used by his students to checking whether they know a synonym of a particular lexical item in one of the questions (see episode 7 in chapter 8). This fluctuation of intersection , in one way or another, resembles what other researcher like Dole (2000) and Keer (2004) have reported about the common ignorance of strategy instruction integration in reading classes or courses. In the case of T4R and T3R, I presume, it was not clear that they were intentionally ignoring such a thing, as it was not clear to me that such reading strategies instruction was integrated in their two reading pre-planned teaching materials from the first place. Based on my long experience in this

programme, teachers tend to cover what is given to them in the textbooks. Therefore, the absence of a clear-cut integration of such reading strategies in the in-house reading textbooks has apparently left the integration of such observed reading strategy instructional practices observed in these two reading teachers' reading classes up to the teachers themselves who did not ignore it completely, but also did not take it as a prime pedagogical aim in every class. Both reading teachers T3R and T4R gave such a pedagogical attention to reading strategy instruction because they believed it was necessary in their reading classes, not because they were directed to do so as revealed in the interviews with them (see section 8.3.1). However, they apparently customized such instruction based on other contextual factors that will be discussed more thoroughly next in section 9.4.

9.3.3 Overall discussion of the hybrid intersections.

Hybridity of the intersection between the instructional practices of the observed teachers in this study, as discussed above in sections 9.3.1 & 9.3.2 above, and the theoretical instructional implications or assumptions of learning- outcome standards seems to draw a genuine middle line where instructional implications of learning- outcome standards on one hand and real classroom instructional practices on the other hand might meet. It strengthens my understanding that this hybrid intersection relation is as complex as classroom teaching itself, which is described to be more diverse and complicated (Hall, 2011), disconnected to one particular teaching methodology but more of a mixture from various methodological orientations (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; O'Hanlon, 1993). Therefore, the use of learning- outcome standards as a tool for quality management or as an approach to manage language instruction, I believe, is practically challenged if the aim of the use of such standards is to fully managing teachers' classroom instructional practices through their implicit instructional implications or assumptions. The observed teachers' own classroom instructional practices, in this case study, were found to be more variable, customized and contextualized, so they were seemingly untied to fixed predefined instructional practices theoretically tied to particular top- down instructional principles or assumptions rooted in language teaching methodology literature. On the contrary, such classroom instructional practices have shown a more contextualized view of language teaching that can be based on some traces of language teaching methodological theories, but also more sensitive to the contexts where they took place. As discussed above in section 9.3.1, for instance, FonF practices, in addition to FonFs controlled practice activities, were adopted by the four EFP teachers, which indicates that language forms instruction in this EFP is not limited to one particular methodological positioning prioritized implicitly by OAAA's learning- outcome standards. The same contextualized instruction was observed in consolidating reading strategies too (see section 9.3.2). Therefore, based on this hybrid intersection relation, the whole discussion

of the learning- outcome standards' washback impact or their role to manage language teachers' classroom instructional practices needs to be redefined as I will explain next in this section.

The role of learning- outcome standards, as a theoretical innovative framework to reform teachers' own practices, based on what has been said in relevant language teaching methodology literature, as proposed by Crabbe (2003), has been traditionally challenged, as found in this study and in the existing relevant studies (see sections 2.5 and 3.3). The findings from previous research on the impact of standards on instruction conducted by Maldina (2015) and Moonen et al (2013), and the reports by Little (2011) and Hulstijn et al (2010) indicate that the impact of such learning- outcome standards on pedagogy is little. Furthermore, some other empirical research by Kirby (2012), and A.Rahman (2014) have also found a level of inconsistency and incongruence between what teachers' real classroom instructional practice are and what is expected from them by the policy makers who have developed such learning- outcome standards (see section 2.5). Such findings, in one way or another, apparently resemble the findings in this study where incidences of intersections between the instructional assumptions/ implications of OAAA's learning- outcome standards and EFP teachers' classroom instructional practices were possible to identify as discussed above (see sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.2). However, such conclusions about the impact of such learning- outcome standards need to be revisited based on the findings of this research.

Such a view of the role of such learning- outcome standards to manage, reform or redirect classroom instruction, I may argue, have been misrepresented. First, recording incidents of intersection between what is instructional practiced and what is instructionally assumed from such learning- outcome standards have been viewed, in the previous studies, as a direct or linear natural consequence or impact of such standards. Such a view is problematic and lacking, I may argue, as it approaches such incidents of intersection as a direct result of the existence of such standards, ignoring other external factors that might have led to such incidences of apparent intersection other than those standards. This view actually lacks a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that have led to such inconsistent or incongruent incidents of intersections as none of these related studies, discussed in section 2.5, investigated the contextual factors that led to those incidences where intersections happened or did not happen. Based on the findings of this study in its phase three, the recorded incidents of intersection either in language forms instruction or reading strategy instruction were enacted because of the observed teachers' own beliefs as experienced teachers who have found that such instructional practice were useful for their students' learning, but not necessarily initiated because of the development and dissemination of such standards (see sections 7.3.1 and 8.3.1). The lack of investigation of the contextual factors leading to the incidences of intersections in these previous research, I presume, has contributed to this relative misleading interpretation that such incidents of intersection, even

if inconsistent, represent a valid case of standards' impact on teachers' own classroom instruction, while in reality could be something else if investigated.

Second, this view of standards' impact seems to start from an evaluation perspective of language instruction research that views instruction as a mechanical process that can be managed or redirected fully by learning- outcome standards. Describing instructional practices as inconsistent or as incongruent, I may argue, seems to ignore that each teacher is a unique case, teaching a unique group of students with unique backgrounds, competencies and needs, which separately or collectively may lead to observe inconsistent or incongruent instructional intersections. Teachers' own classroom instructional practices, I believe, are partially a reaction to such variables that seem to necessitate various instructional practices that appear to be inconsistent with what theoretically should be done, but normally based on teachers' own understanding of what needs to be done with that particular group of students in a particular situation. This is actually what has been found in both reading teachers' instructional practices, which did not follow a particular theoretical model of reading strategy instruction but was more eclectic based on contextual factors. This conceptualization of language instruction is characterized to be less "methodized" (Hunter & Smith, 2012, p. 431) as teachers do not follow strictly a number of pre-identified instructional steps, but based on teachers' own "personal theory" of their own instructional practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 553) as they function contextually. It is, of course, important to note at this stage that this argument is not to claim that such standards have zero impact generally on pedagogy as such a claim needs to be tested methodologically before and after the dissemination of such standards. Rather, it is a call to deeply investigate the factors that have contributed in the formation of such instructional intersections before making generalizations about the impact of such standards on teachers' classroom instructional practices. In brief, being able to allocate areas of intersection between the theoretical instructional implications of learning- outcome standards and teachers' classroom instructional practices should not be seen as the only way to prove or disprove such standards' impact on teachers' classroom instruction.

However, in the best condition, it can be stated that this hybridity of the observed classroom instructional practices, as a key finding in this phase, may give an indication that such learning- outcome standards may carry this inner potentiality to encourage particular teaching tendencies wished to be seen by the policy makers and commonly shared in the teaching community or language teaching methodology literature. It can be possible to say that they are capable to partially direct teachers' own instructional attention and practices but not necessarily fully dictating what should be done pedagogically by teachers at all stages of a lesson or a course, ignoring other instructional possibilities derived from other different theoretical backgrounds. The hybrid nature of the observed instructional practices shows that it is a more two-directional

relation where top authorities' dictations give a kind of overall theoretical instructional frameworks that are hoped to guide teachers' classroom behaviours in order to satisfy their own accountability purposes, while teachers' real classroom instructional practices show a kind of fluctuating intersections with such theoretical frameworks in order to achieve practicality and what suits their students' "transformational" learning needs in particular contexts.

The following section is to discuss the findings of RQ3, which is oriented towards the investigation of the contextual factors that led to the incidents of intersection between what is theoretically implied and what is instructional practiced by the observed EFP teachers.

9.4 Discussion of RQ3

In this section, the findings of RQ3 which says ***what contextual factors are fostering/hindering such intersection?*** are discussed. To restate, the aim of this research question is to identify the contextual factors that have fostered and hindered the intersection between the instructional assumptions investigated on one hand and the relevant instructional practices of the four observed teachers in this research on the other hand in phase 2. Accordingly, the discussion of the factors that have resulted in the hybrid intersection discussed in section 9.3 above will be demonstrated in this chapter. The findings for this RQ were approached through the inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) of the interviews conducted with the four observed teachers and their two CCs who have been given the opportunity to justify the observed classroom instructional practices. This inductive analysis was not based on pre-determined theoretical framing, as I was open to various explanations or justifications about the observed instructional practices from the interviewees. Therefore, such findings are supposed to be an additional contribution of this research in this area as such contextual factors, to the best of my knowledge, have not been apparently an area of focus in the previous research based on real classroom practices (see section 2.5).

Based on the findings of RQ3 (see sections 7.3 & 8.3), a number of factors were revealed to be involved in shaping such hybrid intersections. Generally speaking, these contextual factors can be classified into two main categories. The first category is teacher-related, more specifically linked to the teachers' own beliefs of why they taught what they taught. The second category can be attributed as institutional factors, represented in the adoption of a structural view of language and language learning in addition to the communicative one suggested implicitly by the standards. Each category will be discussed individually in the following two subsections in order to shed some light on the forces that have formulated the hybridity of classroom instructional practices discussed above in section 9.3 and the possible role of OAAA's learning- outcome

standards as a theoretical framework for teachers to redirect their own instructional beliefs and practices towards their achievement.

9.4.1 Teacher-related (teachers' beliefs about language instruction)

Starting with the first category, part of the hybridity of the observed instructional practices discussed above in section 9.3 was a result of the teacher's own beliefs about what to teach. In this research, teachers' beliefs were found to be functioning alternatively as (1) a fostering and as a (2) hindering factor of the intersection between the teachers' instructional practices and the two investigated implicit instructional assumptions as they were found to be informing various classroom instructional practices. According to this dual function of the teachers beliefs, the learning- outcome standards' role as a framework to redirect teachers' own instructional beliefs, as proposed by Crabbe (2003), is still a hoped claim that needs to be investigated more based on empirical research as the rest of this section will attempt to illustrate.

First of all, the instructional beliefs of the four observed teachers were found to be fostering such intersections in two ways; (1) the introduction of FonF essay discussions in the writing classes with T1W and T2W (see section 7.3.1) and (2) the fluctuating explicit instruction of reading strategies by T3R and T4R through the occasional modelling and consolidation of a number of reading strategies (see section 8.3.1). In the writing classes, the FonF practices represented in the whole class essay discussions (see section 7.2.1) were found to be apparently conducted because of the two writing teachers' own belief that such discussions were necessary in such writing classes. Such a necessity was originated from their own belief to empower their students to be able to redraft their own essays for the improvement of the linguistic forms use in the following drafts. They both were conducting such FonF essay discussions because they personally believed that such discussions were needed to serve this pedagogical goal, not because it was prescribed by the EFP coordinators or any other top authority bodies (see section 7.3.1). The case with teaching strategies in the reading classes by the reading teachers T3R and T4R was not that different. They were seemingly driven by their own beliefs that some instruction of reading strategies was also necessary in their reading classes. T4R, for instance, expressed that the provision of some modelling of reading strategies was necessary because he noticed that his students tended to lose marks in the reading assessment because they lacked such reading strategies (see extracts 8.1 & 8.3, section 8.3.1). Therefore, it was his duty as a reading teacher to interfere and introduce such "coaching" as he labelled it.

However, some other beliefs of some of those teachers were also found to be a hindering factor of such intersection in this research, which resulted in having this hybridity of intersection. By referring to the explicit instruction of reading strategies in the reading classes with T3R and T4R, the direct instruction of reading strategies, as found in section 8.3.2, were contextually

fluctuating from one activity to another either at its modelling or consolidation phases due to a number of contextual and pedagogical constraints believed by both T4R and T3R to be legitimate enough to cause such fluctuation of intersection. Such believed constraints included time limit (see extract 8.5), students' motivations (see extract 8.6) and the fluidity of language learning (see extracts 8.8 and 8.9). Despite the fact that this research has not tested the truthfulness of such reported external factors, it still shows, at least, that they are believed by the teachers themselves to be powerful enough to shape their own instructional practices, which consequently have determined the hybrid nature of intersection investigated in this study.

Based on these two roles of teachers' beliefs, I may argue first that teachers' beliefs, either as fostering or hindering intersection, are functioning as a major factor that has played a mediating role between what is really practiced by the teachers in classrooms and what is assumed to be practiced by the top authorities. Teachers' beliefs about what to teach in a particular lesson or activity has led to occasions of intersection and lack of intersection with the instructional assumptions of OAAA's standards as discussed above. Such a finding supports different theoretical and CLT research-based publications about the influence of teachers' beliefs on classroom teaching practice in general like Hall (2011) S. Borg (2003), Carless (2004), Orafi and Borg (2009) and Walsh and Wyatt (2014). Accordingly, the case in this study is not that different as what the observed teachers believed in appeared to be influential to cause fluctuating occasions of intersection between what is instructionally implied by the standards and what is instructionally practiced by the observed teachers.

However, it is not clear yet whether these instructional beliefs of the observed teachers were fully initiated or redirected by OAAA's learning- outcome standards from the first place. In other words, it is not clear enough if the existence of the learning- outcome standards has been powerful enough to make the EFP teachers able to redirect consciously their own teaching beliefs in a way that helps them align their own instructional practices with the implicit instructional assumptions of OAAA's learning- outcome standards. For instance, the reading teachers' belief that reading strategy instruction was necessary was seemingly initiated based on the teachers' own long teaching experiences, not necessarily the standards, which have helped them to integrate such instruction in their reading classes. Not only that, despite the fact that they both reading teachers have had this positive belief about reading strategy instruction, the observed fluctuation of such reading strategy instruction in their own classes was also a result of their own beliefs of the impact of other external factors like time limit and students' motivation as indicated previously, which have seemingly refrained them from continuing such a kind of instruction in some recorded occasions (see section 8.2). This, accordingly in one way or another, raises a considerable question about the success of such learning- outcome standards as a starting point or framework for teachers to align their own beliefs first before aligning their own classroom

instructional practices as proposed by Crabbe (2003), especially when other contextual factors as the ones listed above are believed by the teachers themselves to be considered while teaching. Therefore, such an assumed function of standards as a starting framework for shaping or redirecting teachers' own instructional beliefs is still an ambiguous area that may require further investigation. It might be important to remind the readers that this study is not focusing on this area as its prime concern. It is more oriented towards the impact of such standards on teachers' instructional practices. However, it addresses the finding that the impact of teachers' belief is central when it comes to understand teachers' instructional practices. Accordingly, further studies of the impact of such standards on teachers' beliefs can be an area for future research.

9.4.2 Institutional related factor (extra institutional learning outcomes)

The impact of teachers' beliefs were influential, as discussed above in subsection 9.4.1, in initiating some of the observed intersecting classroom instructional practices. However, there were other occasions where the teachers' instructional practices were apparently influenced by an external force led by traditional philosophies of language instruction rooted in the institution itself. Such a traditional teaching practices was found to be actualized in the FonFs controlled practice activities supplemented in the reading in-house textbooks, which were provided to the reading teachers T3R and T4R (see episodes 3, 4 & 5 in subsection 7.2.2).

Those FonFs controlled practice activities provided in the reading classes were found to be given by the teachers as they came originally from the two reading textbooks, which were not developed by the teachers themselves but delivered to them by their CCs. As found in phase 3, the aim of having such FonFs activities in these reading in-house textbooks was to meet extra learning- outcomes developed by the institution itself targeting a list of particular grammatical and lexical items in the EFP in addition to OAAA's learning- outcomes (see section 7.3.2). Despite the fact that both reading teachers were using two completely different in-house reading textbooks in their reading classes, such a type of FonFs activities were clearly occupying remarkable sections of every unit of both reading in-house textbooks to meet these extra learning- outcomes. The integration of such FonFs controlled practice activities of a number of structural language aspects (grammatical and lexical) encouraged the reading teacher to make review presentations of such structural aspects before asking their students to do the supplemented controlled practice activities from the reading textbooks. Such a supplementation of such controlled practice activities was seemingly enough to bring traditional structural teaching practices like the PPP (presentation, practice, production) to the surface again in the EFP classes, as predefined and pre-sequenced items, which apparently represented a more structural view of language and language instruction unlike the more communicative one implicitly found in the standards themselves. Such an integration was reported to be a reaction to meet the

achievement of a number of extra learning- outcomes focusing on a list of linguistic items listed by the CU of this LC as reported by both CCs who participated in this study (see section 7.3.2).

As found in CLT- based instruction reform literature (Ansarey, 2012; Butler, 2011; Hu, 2005b; Li, 1998; R. Walsh & Wyatt, 2014), other sources of constraints of CLT driven instructional reform attempts, other than teachers' beliefs or cognition, can be institutional. Such institutional factors include the adoption of a different rooted philosophical instructional view and teaching materials that adopt different instructional principles from the newly introduced approach of CLT. Such a finding from such previous research agrees with having these extra learning- outcomes in this LC's EFP as they are approaching language learning through targeting a pre-defined list of structural and lexical items unlike OAAA's learning- outcome standards, which are prioritizing language communication. Despite the fact that the EFP in this LC has integrated OAAA's learning- outcome standards into its own curriculum document, it has been also found that it still keeps its own old learning- outcomes it used to have before the introduction of OAAA's learning- outcome standards (see section 7.3.2). Therefore, in its efforts to reflect such extra learning- outcomes into its in-house teaching materials, such FonFs activities were kept integrated in the reading in-house textbooks. The observed reading teachers accordingly were more focused on presenting such linguistic aspects (see episodes 3, 4 & 5, section 72.2), simply because they were covering what was given to them in these in-house teaching materials regardless of their conflicting instructional implications derived from a different language view from the more communicative ones OAAA's learning- outcome standards have been based on as found in phase 1.

Accordingly, an additional contribution that can be derived from this study, based on the finding summarized above, is that having these extra learning- outcomes, targeting particular linguistic structural items in this LC' EFP puts the success of OAAA's learning- outcome standards as a theoretical framework with their implicit instructional implications to manage or align teachers' own practices in a critical condition. Therefore, it can also be argued that this finding shows that the alignment of teachers' instructional practices with the instructional assumptions of OAAA's learning- outcome standards through the alignment of every individual teacher's instructional beliefs as discussed by Crabbe (2003) is not sufficient to witness aligned classroom instructional practices, intersecting with the instructional assumptions or implications from the standards. It can be argued that the alignment of the instructional beliefs of those who are in charge of the development of the institution official curriculum documents and teaching materials is a valid requirement as well. Those who have participated in the inclusion of such extra learning- outcomes were, in one way or another, encouraging the development of those FonFs activities in the reading in-house textbooks, which did not only consequently find their way to the development of such activities, but also stimulated the direct presentation or stimulation of such linguistic structural aspects by both reading teachers (see episodes 3 & 4 in section 7.2.2).

Accordingly, it can be argued that such learning- outcome standards from OAAA appear to be challenged again in redirecting not only the EFP teachers' own beliefs and practices, as discussed above in section 9.4.1, but also the beliefs of those who are developing curriculum and teaching materials for those EFP teachers. Their insistence to keep the old structural- oriented learning- outcomes in the CU document apparently indicates so.

Last but not least, it can be possible to state that the inclusion of such extra structural oriented learning outcomes by this LC problematizes the sufficiency of such standards provided by EQM bodies such as OAAA as a comprehensive framework of students' learning- outcomes for language programmes from the first place. As stated by both CCs (see section 7.3.2), those extra learning- outcomes come originally from the curriculum document where all the learning- outcomes targeted in this EFP are listed by the CU. The sustainability of such old learning outcomes that have been developed even before the introduction of OAAA's learning- outcome standards gives an indication that the reliance on OAAA's ten learning outcome standards is not apparently sufficient, not only at the curriculum development level in terms of the specifications of the outcomes of such EFPs, but also at the instructional level where controlled practice activities for particular redefined and pre-sequenced linguistic items were supplemented and demonstrated in EFP classes.

9.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aims to discuss the main findings of the three RQs of this study in relation to the use of learning- outcome standards in the era of language programme quality management. It has been notified in this chapter that the instructional implications or assumptions of the studied standards from OAAA for EFPs are various as they can be rooted in CLT as a comprehensive language teaching methodological framework. However, the teachers' real classroom instructional practices were more diverse and sophisticated to the extent that they intersect with those instructional implications in a hybrid mode, which might indicate that the whole issue of such standards' impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices stands on shaky grounds. Such an understanding is supported when it was revealed that the fostering factors that have led to the intersection between instructional practices and instructional assumptions are basically dependant on the teachers' personal teaching beliefs, with no clear indication that such standards have contributed to reshape or redirect the teachers and materials developers' beliefs, which were informing the teachers' observed classroom instructional practices.

10 Conclusion

Quality management in language education has been an area of interest for policy makers in the globe (Finney, 2002; Katz & Snow, 2009; Killen, 2000; Murray & Christison, 2011). Their interest to make sure that their educational institutions are doing what they are supposed to do has seemingly encouraged the development of quality assurance (QA) schemes for accreditation purposes (see section 2.2). In order to do so, learning- outcome standards have been developed in order to provide a theoretical framework for identifying what is meant by quality in language education (Heyworth, 2013) (see section 2.3), as a starting point for curriculum development for the involved educational institutions (see section 2.4) and as a theoretical framework to redirect or reform teachers' own beliefs and practices in their classrooms (Crabbe, 2003). Such an innovative step towards assuring quality of education has raised an increasing interest towards their impact on different educational aspects, including classroom instruction, which has been attributed as an under-researched area, more particularly in language education (see section 2.5). Such an impact of learning- outcome standards on what teachers do pedagogically in their classrooms can be seen as an innovative approach to change or reform classroom instruction (see section 2.4.1), but it has been found in literature to be lacking theoretically and practically as discussed in sections 2.4 & 2.5 above. Accordingly, it can be arguably claimed that this case study has attempted to contribute in bridging this gap in order to widen our understanding of this phenomenon/ tool of quality management and its impact on classroom instruction. In other words, it has attempted to dig deeper in the nature of the relation between the intentions/ assumptions of policy makers through the use of learning- outcome standards and the instructional practices of language teachers under the era of QM in language education. The contribution of this study can be summarized in three main points.

First of all, in order to understand the impact of learning- outcome standards, as a tool of QM under the umbrella of QA schemes, on teachers' classroom instructional practices, it is important to theorize those learning- outcome standards into their instructional implications/ assumptions from the surrounding discourse of language education, especially if such a theorization is not provided by the standards' developers. This includes what has been said globally and locally regarding language instruction for teaching particular language content units (structural, functional or interactional), targeted in each one of those standards. Such a theorization is expected to set the floor as a theoretical foundation for any future attempt to investigate classroom instructional practices in order to understand the impact relation of this phenomenon (see section 9.2 for more details). Accordingly, this study, in its first phase, has constructively contributed to widen our understanding that the more language content units targeted in each learning- outcome standard, the more theoretical instructional implications can

be subjectively inferred/ implied from it (see table 6.1 in chapter 6). Despite the subjectivity of such a theorization, it helps different stakeholder, including researchers or teachers, reveal what is ‘unsaid’ about language instruction but assumed based on shared body of knowledge (Fairclough, 2003), embedded in relevant bodies of literature.

More importantly, the impact of learning- outcome standards through their implicit assumptions or implications on teachers’ instructional practices can be viewed as a starting framework for a linear cause-effect relation if the aim of using such standards is a total control of those practices in QA regimes. However, what has been found in this study reveals a different formula of intersections between what is assumed and what is practiced based on the analysis of the empirical data collected in this study (see sections 7.2 & 8.2 above). Accordingly, it is this hybrid nature of intersection where practices are so complex and diverse to the extent that incidences of intersection/ alignment can be seen occasionally with those instructional assumptions. This hybridity of intersections can be viewed as a genuine contribution of this research in its second phase, which has introduced a redefinition to or a new understanding of this relation between “content” standards and classroom instruction. Hybridity in this study has shown (1) an apparent limitation of the power of such learning- outcome standards to redirect/ reform classroom instructional practices of individual teachers/cases. Second, this hybridity has emphasized/ re-emphasized that (2) a more ‘post-method’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) view of classroom instruction as it is performed contextually in real classroom settings, with no rigid worship of language instruction from the method era to achieve one particular learning- outcome needs to be taking into consideration when investigating the impact of such “content” standards on classroom instruction. It actually has emphasized a form of tension between quality from its “procedural” and “transformational” perspectives (Sallis, 2002), where learning- outcomes with their instructional implications, leading supposedly to innovative classroom reform, are practically challenged as their impact is subject to the relatively contextualized reality of classroom instruction (see section 9.2 above for more discussion of this redefinition). Such a redefinition of this relation has drawn a middle line between intentions of reform and classroom practices in standard- based language programmes and consequently the standards’ ability to be an influential framework to redirect teachers’ classroom instructional practices.

Third, this redefinition of this hybrid ‘impact’ relation of learning- outcome standards has been strengthened through the investigation of the contextual forces that have led to the incidences of intersection between those standards’ instructional assumptions and teachers’ classroom practices. This investigation has revealed that the existence of such incidences of intersections did not necessarily lead to a clearly linear impact relation as it might be assumed through their ability to redirect teachers’ beliefs and practices (Crabbe, 2003). Rather, the investigation of these forces have led to a deeper understanding that such incidences might

happen because of other contextual forces as instruction takes place in classrooms. Such an understanding of those forces does not only contribute to widen our understanding of this ‘impact’ relation of learning- outcome standards, but also reveals relatively the possibility of having such an innovative, top-down approach to successfully reform instruction from the first place. It is our understanding that witnessing incidences of intersection between what is instructionally implied from the standards and what is instructionally practiced by teachers does not necessarily imply a direct impact power of the standards simply because they have been brought into existence by their founders. Rather, it is a more complex process involving other contextual forces, including teacher- related and institution- related factors (see section 9.4 for more details).

In the following sections (10.1- 10.4), I end up this study by reflecting on the pedagogical implications, limitations, recommendations for future research and my self-learning experience, which can be developed out of this study.

10.1 Pedagogical implications

Based on the findings of this case study, a number of pedagogical implications can be suggested in order to maximize the impact of OAAA’s learning- outcome standards as a tool for quality management of language classroom instruction. First, the management of English language programmes as a second language through the development of a number of learning-outcomes can be suitable for achieving quality from the quality assurance perspective for external bodies like OAAA, who are more interested in the outputs of the educational process. However, from the instructional perspective, the development and dissemination of more explicit instructional implications of these learning- outcome standards is vital for seeking better understanding of what needs to be done by the teachers in terms of their instructional classroom practices to meet these learning- outcome standards. The explicitness of such instructional implications or assumptions, I assume, will provide a clearer instructional foundation for guiding EFP teachers and teaching materials developers, who will be more oriented towards meeting these instructional assumptions, leading more probably to the achievement of the learning-outcomes themselves. The development of such explicit instructional implications/assumptions needs not to be only documented in OAAA’ EFP relevant documents but also in all the institutional curriculum documents developed by EFP providers, including teachers’ handbooks. Such a suggested implication is not meant to limit classroom instruction to pre-determined rigid instructional practices or suppress other instructional practices. Rather, it is suggested, I assume, in order to guarantee the minimum availability of particular “best” instructional tendencies viewed to be vital for the achievement of the targeted learning- outcome standards.

Second, after the documentation and dissemination of such instructional implications/assumptions of OAAA's learning- outcome standards, the integration of such instructional implications into EFP teachers' pre-service and in-service training can be another recommended implication. As far as I know, no such training oriented to the achievement of OAAA's learning- outcome standards or their instructional best practices is given to the EFP teachers, either the Omanis or non-Omanis. As discussed in section 4.2, EFP teachers are mostly non-Omanis with short-term contracts, coming from various educational and cultural backgrounds. They undergo no official pre- and while- service training programmes oriented towards what needs to be done pedagogically to achieve OAAA's learning- outcome standards, at least in the institution where this study took place. Therefore, their own previous teaching beliefs, experiences and training can be, in one way or another, factors that shape their own instructional practices in their own classes in a way that is not necessarily aligned pedagogically with what is instructionally assumed by the standards' developers. The case with the Omani teachers seems not to be in a better condition. Their post-service education, provided either by local or non-local HEIs, is not oriented specifically towards the instruction of OAAA's learning- outcome standards as well. Therefore, this in-service training more strategically aligned to the achievement of such standards and their instructional implications, I may argue, is a legitimate suggestion.

Third, systematic classroom observations, if applicable, by external bodies like OAAA or internal bodies within the EFP providers themselves are to be conducted after the realization of the first implication above. Such a practice is to allow a more classroom-based source of data for OAAA and EFP providers to make sure that what is instructionally practiced by EFP teachers in real classrooms aligns generally with what is theoretically expected. However, such an implication, in fact, should not neglect that each class is a unique case by itself with various instructional practices. Therefore, such classroom observations are to seek no rigid, intervening step-by-step interpretation of such instructional implications. Rather, it is an attempt to monitor, study and maximize, but not to limit, the intersection between what is taught in EFP classes with what is instructionally assumed by the OAAA's experts as much as possible.

10.2 Limitations

As discussed earlier (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2), this study aims to investigate the implicit instructional assumptions OAAA's learning- outcome standards have been developed upon in order to investigate their intersection with the enacted classroom instructional practices of the EFP teachers in real classrooms. Therefore, a qualitative case study approach based on classroom observations and classroom discourse analysis was adopted. However, a number of limitations confronted its administration, namely the (1) subjectivity of the use of intertextuality

from CDA in phase one, (2) multiplicity of the instructional assumptions/ implications from OAAA's learning- outcome standards, (3) participants' sampling and (4) limited access to data.

First of all, the use of intertextuality from the CDA in phase one of this case study can be viewed as one of the limitations of this study as it is based on my own subjective interpretation of the external relations of the standards with the wider discourse of English language instruction. As indicated by Sheyholislami (2001), one of the critiques of using CDA is that a text can be interpreted differently by different audiences. Fairclough (2003, p. 14) himself admits that "objectivity" in text interpretation does not exist as it is all dependant on our own subjective knowledge about reality. As being one of the subjective interpreters, it is true to say that I have based my subjective analysis of the instructional assumptions of OAAA's learning- outcome standards on the wider discourse of English language instruction literature as the foundation of my analysis. Therefore, it can be argued that a different approach of reaching such instructional assumptions was possible such as conducting interviews with the developers of the standards themselves. However, this alternative suggestion may not offer a better option in terms of eliminating subjectivity of standards interpretation. The subjectivity of the developers' interpretation of the standards in terms of their instructional implications/ assumptions, I presumed, will remain as each one of them might give their own individual interpretations. Second, such an alternative approach is practically challenged. As far as I know, the development of OAAA's learning- outcome standards was conducted with the collaboration with international experts who were invited to accomplish this task with some national ones. Considering the limited time of data collection period granted to me and the multiple phases I had to conduct in this research within this limited time, reaching those international experts was not a practical option as the findings in this phase were a prerequisite for conducting the following two phases.

The second limitation of this research is related to the multiplicity of the instructional assumptions of OAAA's learning- outcome standards as found and listed in phase one (see chapter 6). Such a multiplicity of the instructional assumptions with the limited scope of focus in one PhD thesis has been a reason for restricting the investigation of intersection between only two of them with the instructional classroom practices by the observed teachers as demonstrated in chapters 7 & 8. The limited number of words in one PhD dissertation, as well as the use of the micro-level classroom discourse approach of classroom data analysis were influential in not including the investigation of the remaining instructional assumptions. Accordingly, the findings of phases 2 & 3, answering RQs 2 & 3, are only bounded around the investigations of those two instructional assumptions, but not necessarily the whole experience of managing instruction through standards with a full account of their instructional assumptions as found in phase 1.

As far as participants' sampling is concerned, it can be argued that only four cases (four observed teachers) do not represent the teachers' population of the EFP teachers, not only in the EFP providers in the Sultanate in total but even within the institution where these four cases were selected from. Such a limitation can be referred to two main reasons. First, as explained in section 4.2, the EFP, in the institution where this study took place, consists of six proficiency levels. The four observed teachers were purposefully selected from the upper two levels (levels 5 & 6) only, based on my initial personal assumption before and during data collection that OAAA's learning-outcome standards function as the exit benchmarks for higher levels. Therefore, the impact of their instructional assumptions on classroom instruction should be clearer in the higher levels than in the lower ones as the students are reaching to the end of the EFP. However, based on the findings I got from chapter 8 about reading strategy- based instruction (SBI), as one of the instructional assumptions, I have reached to the understanding that such findings were relatively influenced by this restriction of selecting my participants or cases from the higher levels of the EFP. Throughout the analysis of episodes related to this particular instructional assumption with the two reading teachers from the higher two levels, it was relatively clear to me that there were some signs that the students had been introduced to some instruction of some reading strategies prior to the upper levels, especially when the reading teachers were modelling some reading strategies through elicitation techniques. It could be possible that reading strategy instruction started earlier in the lower levels and the students were only allowed to practice them in the higher levels. Therefore, restricting the investigation of the intersection between such an instructional assumption to the real classroom instructional practices of the upper level teachers was theoretically justifiable as it targets where in the EFP the standards can be more influential. Nevertheless, it is seemingly insufficient to fully investigate their instructional impact that can fluctuate from one proficiency level of the EFP to another or be extended throughout the whole EFP, but not only in its upper levels. The second reason can be referred to the instrumental aim of using case study approach itself. As discussed in section 4.4.3, "instrumental" case study in qualitative research is used to study a phenomenon through individual cases. In this study, the impact of learning- outcome standards, viewed as a tool for quality management in language education, is a new phenomenon that requires further investigation under the lenses of the instructional practices of individual teachers. Therefore, the adoption of qualitative analysis of four teachers' instructional practices is methodologically acceptable in a qualitative case study as making generalizations from a quantitative perspective is not a prime aim of such an approach. However, this qualitative approach, based on the micro level of classroom discourse analysis of the enacted curriculum, seems to deprive me as a data collector and data analyst from including more teachers from the different six levels of the EFP with their own instructional practices in this study.

The fourth limitation of this case study is related to the limited access to classroom observations and interviews and its impact on the findings. Despite the fact that all the participating teachers in this study had granted me their consent to observe and audio-record their classes, there was this conservative attitude of accepting my presence for longer periods right from the beginning of my data collection trip. In my research project briefing to the potential participating teachers, there was always this question about how long I was planning to attend their classes and for how many hours I would need to meet with them afterwards for conducting the post-observation interviews. For instance, I had to negotiate the number of the classes I needed to attend in the reading classes, from classes enough to cover four book units to only two units. Despite that the anonymity of their identities was promised constantly by me in all of my talks to the teachers either in groups or even when we had one to one talks, there seems to be a kind of hesitation by some of the teachers to accommodate my presence for a longer period. Similar questions were also raised by the two CCs who were usually very busy so I had to reschedule some of my interviews with them from time to time. Such concerns by those teachers and CCs have collectively generated me a kind of feeling that my classroom observations need to be minimized as much as possible. Such a limited access, I presume, has deprived me of witnessing more incidents of intersection between teachers' instructional practices and the instructional assumptions of the OAAA's learning- outcome standards.

10.3 Recommendations for further research

On the light of the findings and limitations of this research, a number of suggestions for future research can be made at the end of this thesis.

1. The investigation of best instructional practices suitable for each individual learning- outcome, either developed by OAAA or any other similar cases, needs to be conducted. Different stakeholders, including teachers, students, EFP administrative, academic undergraduate programme administrative and employers can be involved in this investigation. The importance of such investigation emerges from its ability to minimize subjectivity of what "best" instructional practices or instructional assumptions are expected to be seen in classes in order to achieve such learning- outcomes. Additionally, such an investigation can function as a reference document for all stakeholders, like OAAA, EFP providers and researchers when it comes to identify what needs to be taught in the EFP classes as a consequence of the issuance of such learning- outcome standards.
2. Conducting more research based on classroom observations and classroom discourse analysis is needed to investigate more of the instructional assumptions/implications

of such learning- outcome standards in order to further extend our understanding of such a phenomenon of quality management and its impact on classroom instruction. In this study, only two instructional implications were investigated.

3. Longitudinal studies of the impact of particular instructional implications are also needed in order to reveal if such a managing impact of learning- outcome standards can be seen at the different stages of multi- proficiency level language programmes like the EFPs in Oman. Such longitudinal studies, I may argue, give a clearer credit of such an impact right from the beginning of the EFP with its lower levels until the higher levels. The investigation of reading strategy-based instruction, for instance, will be monitored more systematically if started right from level 1 rather than being limited only to the top levels as in this study.
4. The investigation of (1) the impact of learning- outcome standards on shaping the instructional beliefs of different stakeholders involved in the instructional process, including teachers, course coordinators, and teaching and curriculum materials developers, and (2) the reflection of such an impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices can be another area for further investigation.

10.4 Personal reflections

At the end of this study, it is essential to report some reflections regarding areas of learning I have developed throughout my PhD journey. Being involved in such a focused area of research for four years has contributed remarkably in my deeper understanding and learning in three areas namely (1) teaching, (2) quality management through learning- outcome standards and (3) research skills.

Being involved in understanding the potential impact of OAAA's learning- outcome standards on EFP teachers' instructional practices has been a constructive opportunity for extending my understanding of my own profession as an English language teacher. This study has allowed me to better understand the different theoretical stands regarding managing classroom language teaching. Such stands include the theorization of language teaching management through the traditional language teaching approaches that are so grounded in language teaching methodology literature, such as CLT and their relation to language curriculum design literature from their theorists' perspectives. In addition, expanding such an understanding to the contextual real classroom practices that are normally performed by the teachers in their classes has been a considerably valuable addition into my professional knowledge, experience and conceptualization of my profession as I have always been taught, lectured and trained about those teaching theoretical principles but not their contextual implications on classroom instructional

implementation. In brief, this research study in addition to the numerous empirical studies I have been exposed to throughout this journey has revealed such an interesting relation between language teaching in theory and in reality.

In addition to widening my understanding of my profession as a teacher, I believe I have taken my first steps towards developing my understanding of the impact of learning- outcome standards on classroom instruction, which was my first motive to initiate this study. Despite the fact that such standards are used to comply mainly for the accountability purposes of EQM institutions such as OAAA, their impact to manage classroom instruction has been a fruitful experience I have undergone through those four years of my PhD journey. Being able to reach this understanding of hybridity of classroom instructional practices has contributed constructively in building up my professional confidence, which will help me initiate further research in the same area in my Omani context, which will be hopefully a source of continues process of future development in the era of EQM in the Sultanate and in other similar contexts globally.

Finally, my research skills have been effectively developed as I have been exposed to different sources of research skills and training. After the extensive reading of the different kinds of publications and empirical studies, I have developed this skill of critical academic reading. At the early stages of my readings in my study, I had a difficulty of identifying what I needed to know out of the articles and books I was reading. I had a problem of direction and focus as QM has been a wide area with overlapping concepts and ideas. Situating my study within a solid QM grounds was a big challenge at the early stages along with situating my research interest within QM field. In addition, the scarcity of empirical research in my area of investigation has provided me with a big research gap in my research area, but also has presented me methodological dilemmas of how to conduct this research. My extensive reading in other similar areas such as instructional reform literature has equipped me with a productive alternative source to overcome this issue. In addition to the development of critical reading skills, I have been granted a constructive access to a number of research- related training workshops and seminars provided by the university and other external bodies. These training opportunities were helpful to formulate my own theoretical knowledge and real-life experiences of research data collection and data analysis methods and approaches. This was also supported by my endnote software training experience, which was supportive enough to organize my collected references more effectively to produce a well referenced piece of writing. My data analysis practical skills through the utilization of NVivo software in my analysis trip of my interviews data in particular has been another technical and analysis- related area or skill I have added into my personal research skills.

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Appendices

| List of appendices | Pages |
|---|--------------|
| Appendix 1.1: OAAA learning outcome standards for EFPs. | A 1 |
| Appendix 4.1: Classroom observation template | B 1 |
| Appendix 4.2. Consent Letter for EFP teachers | C 1 - C 3 |
| Appendix 4.3. Consent letter for EFP students | D 1 - D 3 |
| Appendix 5.1. Manual coding of instructional practices from field notes | E 1 - E 2 |
| Appendix 5.2. Transcription key for classroom discourse episodes | F 1 |
| Appendix 7.1. Opinion essay written by T1W's students | G 1 |
| Appendix 7.2. Reading unit: What is law? | H 1 - H 9 |
| Appendix 7.3. Reading unit: The Gulf Cooperation Council | I 1 - I 10 |
| Appendix 7.4. Essay marking criteria | J 1 |
| Appendix 7.5. Curriculum document LOs for linguistic structural items | K 1 - K 3 |
| Appendix 8.1. Reading Unit: Disappearing animals (Endangered species) | L 1 - L 7 |
| Appendix 8.2 Reading Unit: Big money (Lottery winners: rich... but happy?) | M 1 - M 6 |
| Appendix 8.3. Reading Unit: Celebrations around the world (Wedding customs) | N 1 - N 8 |
| Appendix 8.4. Reading unit: Branches of law | O 1 - O 13 |
| Appendix 8.5. Reading unit: Currency: An early history | P 1 - P 10 |

Table 11.1: list of appendices