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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language is the definite capability of humans; through the language humans are distinguished from all other living beings (Abdullah & Patil, 2012). Moreover, through a language, human beings are able to convey and put across their ideas, concepts, and feelings since the language is the most important means of communication (Manivannan, 2006). Currently, the most familiar statement used by researchers is “*English is a global language*”, this statement is usually used while talking about the importance of English in the world (Crystal, 2003). The globalization of English is a fact because we hear English on television used by people from all over the world, we notice advertisements in English everywhere: in cinemas, restaurants, hotels, and even every time we travel we see English signs, and tourist and educational institutes brochures whenever we enter a cinema, a restaurant, educational settings or hotels (Tan, 2005; Crystal, 2003).

The wide extend of English all over the world has been discussed extensively and researchers (e.g., Crystal, 2003) explained that the globalization of English can be achieved through the process of acquiring it as a mother language “*first language*” or to be used by other countries around the world as “*second or foreign language*”, for the latest two ways of explanations were provided by Crystal (2003):

1. When the language is used as the official language of a country, thus it will essentially be used as a medium of communication in all formal situations such as governmental organisations, the law courts, the mass media and the educational systems. Thereby, for people to be involved in their societies, it is fundamental to master the official language as early as possible in their life. The term “*second language*” is often used because language is seen as complementary to a person’s first language.

2. When the language does not have any official status in the country; however, it has a priority position in the country educational system. Hence, it is taught from the first levels of students’ education programme at schools, even though this language has no official status. This type of language is referred to as a foreign language.

Practically, the first point has been illustrated by English; English has a particular status, which has not been achieved yet by any other language in the world, in more than seventy countries such as Nigeria, India, Ghana, and Singapore (Crystal, 2003); besides, one out of five of the world’s population speak English to some extent of perfectness (Graddol, 1997). However, many political decisions have been taken on this matter. For example a language policy of Rwanda in 1996, a multilingual country, intended to replace French with English as the official language. In 2008 English

completely replaced French, and Rwanda has two official languages, one of whom is English (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010).

Regarding the second point, a very vivid examples launch from Russian and Mandarin Chinese. Since among the former Soviet Union, Russian received a privileged status for ages, and Mandarin Chinese is a language which used to play a significant role in South East Asia for a long time (Crystal, 2003). Additionally, Crystal declared that English is the most widely taught language as a foreign language in more than 100 countries such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Middle East countries, and Brazil. Moreover, English is continuously used by over 300 million native speakers and between 400 and 800 million foreign users (Manivannan, 2006). Recently, there has been an increasing interest on the vital necessity of English among nations; through English people can build and generate constructive and successful relations in different fields such as cultural, political, and commercial fields (Hanumantharao, 2012; Ridge, 2004; Phillipson, 1992).

Over the past few years there has been a dramatic realization of the importance of English all over the world. Consequently, many non-English speaking countries (e.g. Algeria, India, Turkey, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Middle East) have proclaimed English as the most important foreign language that has to get the priority to be taught at the academic level. For example, in 1996 English substituted French as the first foreign language to be taught in schools in Algeria (Crystal, 2003). Previously in 1960s, the government of India identified English as an official language in association with Hindi. Currently, India has more people speaking English, it is the country with the largest English speaking population in the world followed by the

United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and New Zealand (Manivannan, 2006).

Nevertheless, the Republic of Korea does not have history of any colonial rule; South Korean government acknowledged the importance of English in all the world and announced that all English language classes have to be taught fully in English by 2010 (Snyder, 2009; Young, 2008). Currently, according to the International Herald Tribune in April 2008, among a huge number of students studying in the USA, the majority are from Korea (Young, 2008). We get one more example From Singapore; the role of English is vital in Singaporean everyday life even though they use Singlish, which is slightly different from the Standard English of the USA, UK, or Australia. While Singapore has four official languages (English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil), English language is considered the first language in schools (Young, 2008). The Singaporean government was unsatisfied with this form of English; consequently this encouraged the government to launch a *Speak Good English Movement* (SGEM) in 2000 to limit Singlish while promoting the use of standard English (Young, 2008).

Moving to the east north of Singapore to get another example from Japan; where the knowledge of English is vital to pursue higher education (Matsuda, 2000; Mckenzie, 2008). Lately, many universities required students to learn two foreign languages, English is usually one of them (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006; Kobayashi, 2000). In Malaysia, in 1980s, the Malaysian industrial sector was flourished. Subsequently, the government has given more emphasis on learning English in order to improve the knowledge-based economy (So'od & Yusoff, 2012).

Another example extracted from Turkey, where studying a foreign language is compulsory in many Turkish schools; the students have to choose one language among a number of languages are offered by their schools; however, many students prefer to study English as their compulsory foreign language (Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998). The importance of English has also received high concern in the Middle East countries. For example, in Gaza until 1994 English was taught in schools starting from grade seven. Lately, it has been decided English should be taught starting from grade one (Mourtaga, 2012).

### 1.1.1 Importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

From all the scenarios presented above, it is evident that the wide spread of English in all sectors of our lives is extensively recognized by nations and the first steps towards improving learning English have been taken systematically since then (Şahin, 2011; Porzig, 1971). However, at the tertiary level the students encounter many challenges regarding the huge amount of English academic materials (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2010). Lately, high demands to use specific English within different specific professional fields have been witnessed (Ghalandari & Talebinejad, 2012). Subsequently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is considered to be one of the most fundamental trends that have been developed since 1960s, to become the most essential trend of EFL teaching today (Anthony, 1997).

The principal cause behind the importance of ESP has been summarized in three points as follows: 1) Demands of a brave new world, 2) a revolution in linguistics, and 3) New focus on the learner (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters, (1987) mentioned that as a result of developing the English for specific purposes

(ESP) in education, the ESP courses and master in ESP have been offered in universities as well as establishing *English for specific purposes Journal* and *Asian ESP Journal*. For example, in 2006, the first ESP project was developed and applied in Taiwan. Moreover, the first ESP curriculum was established -instead of English for general purposes (EGP) by National Chung Kung University (Lo, 2012). Later on, in 2009, the first ESP academic journal was established while the first ESP-based Master's Program at the National Kaohsiung University of Applied Science has been offered by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2012 (Lo, 2012).

In the history of ESP, the importance of ESP appeared as obvious in many situations, one of which is when the South Korean President Lee Myung-bak was elected in the beginning of 2008 and promised to set English as the main medium of instruction in all Korean public high school by 2010 (Young, 2008). In addition, in 1994 the Japanese Ministry of Education handed over the control of the university curricula to the universities themselves, which established different ESP courses in place of the traditional courses (Anthony, 1997). Furthermore, students in India who graduated from Hindi medium schools and English medium schools have complained about their language need mismatch during their education. To this end, the vital need for ESP in India has emerged. However, in various Asian countries, ESP still in its infancy phase (Shrivastava, 2009).

The spread and importance of ESP has been extended into many countries such as Iran, where universities included ESP as a compulsory course in their curriculum although with some deficiencies (Ghalandari & Talebinejad, 2012). In Oman, since the establishing of Sultan Qaboos University, the essential necessity of proficiency in

English for its students' success in science based colleges has been acknowledged, thus, it has been realised that ESP is the best course to be offered to the students since then (Mahrooqi et al., 2011). Technically, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) divided ESP into three branches: a) English for Science and Technology (EST), b) English for Business and Economics (EBE) and c) English for Social Studies (ESS). In any academic setting, the ESP programme might include at least one of those ESP branches.

One observer has already drawn attention to the paradox in the role of a language; as language is the tool for understanding messages in the spoken or the written topic, but sometimes it can be the cause of some misunderstanding (Porzig, 1971). Reading problems are usually related to the misunderstanding of the reading process itself; Weaver (1988) defined reading as "The process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction [transaction] among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language and the context of the reading situation" (p. 161).

Statistically, it was found that English is ranked the first in the top ten languages (Weber, 1999) and the majority of the world's library resources and published works such as books, textbooks, journals and newspapers are written in English; therefore, English ranks number one as a library language of the world (Rahman, 2007; Graddol, 1997). In addition, Graddol (1997) found that 28% of the world's annual books production is in English language. Additionally, English language is also needed in obtaining information from the Internet. In February 2007, a count of web pages reached to 29.7 billion web pages on the World Wide Web. And lately, a survey

conducted by the Net craft Web Server Survey (2009) found that there are approximately 108 million websites in English (Sidek, 2010). It has become somewhat impossible to pursue higher education successfully without reading in English (Rahman, 2007) because the students' success at university level is based on understanding the essential references written in English.

### 1.1.2 The Importance of Reading for Academic Purposes

Reading is considered the main gate to every personal development, and to social, economic, civic life, and academic achievements (Holden, 2004) as it provides people with the opportunity to know about everything they need regardless of its field such as nations' recent and historical background, science, mathematics, and many content subjects in academic contexts. Moreover, reading is essential in both academic and vocational success (Lesnick et al., 2010). Krashen stated that reading is the only way to become good readers and spellers, develop a good writing style, a suitable vocabulary, and advanced grammar (Day, 1998). According to Moore et al.

“Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read can be crucial” (1999, p.3).

Debate about the importance of reading in achieving nations' educational and social involvement has been widely discussed; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, London (2003) declared that "people cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read. Reading is a prerequisite for almost all cultural and social activities" (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Consequently, reading skill has received incomparable status in the elementary schools because reading comprehension provides the basis for a considerable amount of learning in secondary school (Guthrie et al., 2004; Alvermann & Earle, 2003). It has been acknowledged that in higher education programmes at the university level reading becomes the pioneer and the most vital skill among all other language skills (Carrell, 1988a).

Although, the proficiency in the four skills is important for tertiary students, in ESP courses the proficiency in reading comprehension skill is the cornerstone of the student's academic success (Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė, 2010). For example, Korean students start learning English from level three in elementary school; however, they are rarely exposed to reading in English outside the classroom. As a result, Korean Universities declared that students' English proficiency is prerequisite to achieve their academic and career success and, they took different approaches to ensure their students' high level of English proficiency during their education (Park, 2010) given that for student's academic and career success there is an urgent need to comprehend reading texts. One of the most significant current discussions is that despite the increased interest in teaching and learning EFL/ESL in general and particularly in reading in English, students still face huge amount of challenges in reading. For example a study conducted by Mourtaga (2012) found that the Palestinian's EFL

students encounter many difficulties while reading; because of that they find reading in English is a very complicated task.

At all faculties of education in Yemen, English is taught as a compulsory subject. While in other faculties such as faculty of medicine and engineering, the materials taught are written in English and the language of instruction is English, too. Abdullah and Patil (2012) declared that the situation in Yemen is almost the same as in all other developing countries given that in several specialised fields, college professors tend to use English textbooks that were designed for native English speakers. Thus, the students must be skilled in both English language and content areas in order to achieve the desired success (Huang, 2006); however there are many challenges facing both learners and teachers of English in all stages of educational system. These challenges are extension of the weakness of secondary school in Yemen in all English skills (Abdullah & Patil, 2012).

Actually, since the last four decades, reading in English has been received an extensive importance because of the enormous demand for it all through the world, particularly in Yemen (Almahedi, 2008). To this end, the Yemeni context has been chosen by the researcher to be the ground of the study for two reasons; personnel and general. The personnel reason is related to Yemen as a developing country in nature and needs new projects as well as constructive and instructive contributions in all over the academic programs. As such development, the Government of Yemen will be promoted educationally and scientifically. The second reason is related to realizing that many challenges take place in reading in English such as comprehension problems related to readability and the limited exposure to English through the reading

materials at schools. Such those problems and many other have been significantly proven by recent literature in different Arabic countries (e.g. Mourtaga, 2012; Fareh, 2010; Malcolm, 2009; Balfakeh, 2009; Almahedi, 2008; Al-Tamimi, 2006; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004; Bell, 2001; Bamataf, 1997) at both secondary and university levels. Those studies looked after improving reading comprehension skill among the students and examining the reasons of such challenges. Those studies stimulated the researcher to examine the Yemeni learners' problems in reading in English, however by investigating new variables as discussed in the following sections.

### 1.1.3 Importance of English in Yemen

It has been commonly believed with the importance of English language in the world, as it is the language of science and technology, trade, business, politics, the language of research as well as the language of translation of many written works, and the language of mass media and law courts (Lauder, 2008; Nunan, 2003). Accordingly, in the present time, English has been spread in the Arabic world (Zughoul, 2003). It is widely used as an instrumental language for various purposes than it was in the past. According to Zughoul (2003), English is needed in the Arabic world for the purposes of dealing with the external world, education, and development in different fields. He claimed that English is associated with the success of different facets of life such as trade, tourism, science commerce, political issues, and many others. Therefore, peoples' ability to read, to write and to speak is top requirements in many of the above mentioned fields.

Given that Republic of Yemen is currently paying more attention to sustaining and retaining its relations to the world, teaching EFL has got more consideration and

English has been taught as a compulsory subject in all Yemeni schools. Moreover, a number of private English language centres have been established all over the country (Al-Tamimi, 2006). Therefore, the need for English language has been increased. Furthermore, English is used in Yemen in some weekly TV programs, daily news programmes and in the print media such as The Times Newspaper and Yemen Observer Magazine in which different topics are discussed by educators and professional writers in different fields in order to improve the Yemeni learners' awareness about the importance of English (Hassen, 2009). Thus Yemeni people need to be able to read and comprehend the written materials to be involved in the educational and social events.

According to Hassen (2009), the need for teaching and learning English in Yemen has been dramatically increased due to the important role of English in the world on one hand and as a result of the Republic of Yemen development level since Yemen is still a developing country. However, English will help the Republic of Yemen to build up international relationships and communication networks in the world. Besides, due to the important strategic location of Aden (the commercial capital of Yemen and also a free zone), into which many ships arrive to Yemen from all over the worlds, Yemeni citizens will get the opportunity to practice the language with great number of foreigners in the fields of trade and commerce. Moreover, the expansion of the higher education project in Yemen which stimulates Yemeni students to go abroad to countries like USA, India, Malaysia and many other countries for higher education, which in turn requires high level of proficiency in English.

However, some of the aims behind teaching English in both stages; preparatory and secondary schools in Yemen can be summarized based on past studies in the Yemeni context (Al-Shamiry, 2005; Al-Zubeiry, 2004; Al-Mekhlaffi, 1999) as follows: a) To enable learners to read and understand printed materials written in simple English for the purpose of getting the information they need, b) For the students to practice scientific language vocabulary and sentences which might be useful in studies at the university level and to meet the requirements of efficient reading comprehension skill.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the previous section, it is worthy to mention here that the Yemeni educational policy and curricula have been passed in many eras as Yemen historically was divided into two parts (South and North regions of Yemen). The Northern region was ruled by Imam Regime from 1918 to 1962, the revolution on 26th November 1962 that overthrew the Imamate rule and replaced it by the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). While, the British colony occupied the Southern region from 1839 to 1967; the independence was gained on the 30th of November 1967 (Hassen, 2009).

Recently, on the 22nd of May 1990, the unification between Northern and Southern parts took place and Yemen became one country called the Republic of Yemen (RoY). All the ideological differences changed and consequently, a new educational system incorporating both systems of south and north was implemented (Kefaya, 2007). The basic of Republic of Yemen educational system consists of two levels: 1) The school level which consists of pre-basic stage (4-5 years old), basic stage (6-15 years old), secondary stage (16-18) and 2) The higher level (university

level) (Hassen, 2009). The Secondary stage Education consists of three schooling years, the 2nd and the 3rd years comprise a scientific stream and a literary stream. At the end of the 3rd year of the secondary stage a National Examination is administered as a gate way to join the university level (Al-Tamimi, 2006).

Since 2001, a pass rate of 70% in the secondary school national examination is required for university admission (MoE, 2008). While administering placement tests by some faculties in order to be extremely selective in accepting the students (National strategy for the development of higher education in Yemen, 2005). At the university level in Yemen English is the language of instruction in some faculties such as faculty of medicine and faculty of technology; and it is a required compulsory course in the 1st year for all other faculties (Al-Tamimi, 2006).

Few years after unification of south and north of Yemen a modern series based on the Communicative Language Teaching Approach called *Crescent English Course for Yemen* (CECY) were introduced; (O'Neil et al., 1999). However, CECY has been widely criticized as a theoretical-practical mismatch was found in addition to the differences found between the topics of *Crescent* and the real situation of Yemen in terms of the level of English proficiency among the Yemeni students (Na'ama, 2011; Al-Ahdal, 2010; Hassen, 2009), which is the interest of the current study. Furthermore, in the secondary school English classroom instruction focuses more on the grammatical rules (Na'ama, 2011; Al-Ahdal, 2010).

Previously, in Yemen there were only two universities; University of Aden and University of Sana'a. During 1990 to 2000, as stated by Al-Mansoori (2008), higher

education in Yemen had witnessed excessive changes; more than 15 public and private universities, many two-year colleges, and a number of post-secondary institutes were found. However English language is a compulsory subject in all majors at all Faculties of Education, other subjects are taught in Arabic. As a result, a weak level of proficiency in English among the students in these departments was found (Al-Mansoori, 2008). For faculties such as medicine and engineering, the materials of all subjects are written in English and the language of instruction is English, too. Thus, students need to be very skilled not only in content areas subjects, but also in English language in order to be able to cope with their studies and attain the desired success (Abdullah & Patil, 2012).

Moreover, many students choose to study English for their degree because they recognize the instrumental feature of English mainly in finding high status and well-paid jobs (Nofal, 2011). Besides, previous research showed that the most dominant language in both academic and professional contexts of the engineering studies is English language (Hui, 2007; Venkatraman & Prema, 2007; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004; Pendergrass et al., 2001; Basturkmen, 1998). Therefore, English has been received great importance in Yemen; although with many problems and challenges at all levels of educational (Abdullah & Patil, 2012). For example, at Hadhramout University for Science and Technology (HUST) in Yemen, the petroleum engineering students were found to have low level in English language (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2010 / 2009). They did not success to get suitable jobs after their graduation; most of the oil companies have rejected their job application. In this regard, the former Minister of Oil and Minerals, Mr. Khaled Mahafoudh Bahah, advised these graduates to improve their

English skills in order to increase their opportunities in getting well-paid job (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009).

In the academic context, reading ability of both English as Second Language (ESL) and EFL students in general or specific domains is considered one of the most important language skills that should be acquired for successful academic studies (Levine et al., 2000). Realizing that English reading skill has been received very high concern in the globalized world, thus questions have been raised about the preparation of Yemeni teachers, learners, educators, and text books for reading in English. The thing that might not be known by majority of people is that in Yemen (particularly South of Yemen, prior unification in 1990). English language was taught as a compulsory course starting from level five (students age 11-12 years old), but after unification in 1990, it was deteriorated to be taught from level 7 (Abdullah & Patil, 2012).

To date there has been little satisfaction on the students' level of proficiency in reading English, which resulted from the researcher's experience as an English teacher at English language centres in Malaysia to EFL learners, who chose Malaysia to study English after their secondary school in Yemen. This conclusion came in line with the results of Azzan's study (2001) in which he declared that Yemeni secondary school graduates lack for any practical and training sessions to read effectively despite of all the importance that English language has been received at university education level (cited in Al-Tamimi, 2006).

From the researcher's personal experience, as she is a product of the Yemeni educational system, she totally believes that it is becoming increasingly important to deal effectively with the learners' needs to learn how to comprehend and interact effectively with the ideas given in the written text. Yemeni students are encouraged to repeat literal ideas from the text and thus unconsciously build memorization skills other than reading comprehension skills (Banatraf, 1997). Moreover, research has consistently shown that English Reading teachers in Yemen focus on understanding word meaning and answering grammatical questions, while neglecting and skipping any reading for pleasure passages that may train them to build up comprehension skills (Al-Tamimi, 2006).

Consequently, students at the secondary school level fail in adjusting their reading processes to their reading purposes; to them every reading task calls for careful reading from the beginning to the end of the reading text focusing on the correct pronunciation and meaning of each single word (Balfakeh, 2009; Paris et al., 1999; Bamatraf, 1997); however, it is totally different from definition of reading stated by linguists (such as Moore et al., 1999; Weaver, 1988). Despite the increasing importance of English in the global world, the standard of English in Yemen has not been received its strong desired foothold yet (Ali, 2007). This weak level of English in Yemen might be due to the mismatch between the lofty aims of English and all of the teachers' qualification, students' preparation, or the syllabus adopted at all stages of education (Abdullah & Patil, 2012).

Moreover, it has been clearly confirmed by teachers that many factors are negatively affect learning and teaching English in Yemeni secondary schools such as

the overcrowded classes, lack of time, intensive teaching load; the effect of these factors obviously appears on the low level of secondary school graduate students in English language which in turn affected the students' performance at their university level (Abdullah & Patil, 2012). Generally, family's background, lack of teachers, government poor planning, and the education system have been stated as the most crucial factors affect English language teaching (Thapaliya, 2010). Past studies examined the reading problems in English in Yemen both at the secondary school and university level (Balfakeh, 2009; Almahedi, 2008; Albadri, 2001; Al-Tamimi, 1999) and (Azzan, 2001; Alwalss, 2000; Bel-Fagih, 1999; Bamataf, 1997; Al-Mekhlafi, 1995; Yar Mohamed, 1992 as cited in Al-Tamimi, 2006) showed that Yemeni students' level of achievements in English was poor. Those studies found that Yemeni students have problems in English language in general and in reading comprehension in particular. Such problems were attributed to many factors such as the teaching materials (Al-Fatimi, 2009; Al-Mansoori, 2008; Al-Refa'ic, 2001), the background knowledge (Al-Mekhlafi, 1995), the focus on grammar and the lack of explicit instruction on reading comprehension skills (Azzan, 2001 cited in Al-Tamimi, 2006), and the lack of extensive reading strategy on reading comprehension (Almahedi, 2008).

Specifically, in 1996, Bin Taya'a examined the language needs of students of faculty of medicine, Sana'a University, Yemen. She found that reading skill was reported by the majority of the students to be the most important skill for their academic studies. Reading comprehension problems at tertiary level in Yemen have been widely recognized and examined (Alwalss, 2000; Azzan, 2001; Al-Mekhlafi, 1995; Yar Mohamed, 1992; as cited in Al-Tamimi, 2006; Almahedi, 2008; Albadri,

2001; Bin Taya'a, 1996). For example Albadri (2001) found many reading comprehension problems encountered by the first-year medical students in the faculty of medicine, Aden University, Yemen. Hence, he suggested patterns of lessons for improving the medical students reading skills necessary for their specialisation. Similar problems were found by Yar (1992), who analysed the reading problems faced by 100 tertiary level Yemeni students in faculties of education and engineering. Besides, Al-Mekhlafi (1995) investigated the reading comprehension problems in English language encountered by students of English at Sana'a University in Yemen. Furthermore, Alwalss (2000) examined the reading comprehension skills adopted by 126 Yemeni students at Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education, Sana'a University.

As mentioned in Hassen (2009), recent research (e.g., Al-amri, 2007; Mahfoodh, 2007; Al-Shamiry, 2002;) investigated the reasons behind the English teaching and learning problems in Yemen through examining the English language curriculum of high school in Yemen for all language skills. They examined the Yemeni EFL curriculum because curriculum is one of the strategies used by educators to achieve the desired educational goals of nations, the product of each curriculum reflects the curriculum effectiveness (Mutebi, 1996). Precisely Mutebi declared:

“The effectiveness of each curriculum is determined by the performance of its products, using the curriculum aims and the nations' goals and expectations as indicators. If the performance of the curriculum products falls short of the national expectations, efforts usually made to identify the causes and problems. These may be the curriculum itself in its totality or one of its components of objectives, content, methodology or evaluation. The problem may also be identified in the implementation strategies.” (Mutebi, 1996, p.1).

Most of the studies presented above were only carried out to analyse the curriculum of the Yemeni secondary school. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, far too little attention has been paid to examine English for specific purposes (ESP) reading curriculum, particularly English for Science and Technology (EST) for 3rd grade (senior level) of secondary school. In addition, no research has examined EST reading curriculum for 3rd grade (senior level) of secondary school in relation to its label as CLT curriculum and how this curriculum prepares the Yemeni students for reading in English at the university level. Thus, analysing the EST curriculum of 3rd grade of Yemeni secondary school is necessary to improve the reading comprehension of Yemeni learners in their secondary level, because the secondary level is the corner stone on which students step on to move to higher education and has a direct impact, either positive or negative (Abdullah & Patil, 2012).

### 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducting a critical analysis for the 3rd grade of Yemeni secondary school EST reading curriculum in order to offer suggestions on how to improve Yemeni learners in EST reading comprehension at the university level. Consequently, the results obtained from this study might be applicable in three dimensions:

#### 1.3.1 Ministry of Education (MoE)

The results would add to the required database to evaluate and develop the 3rd grade Yemeni secondary school English language curriculum in general and the 3rd grade Yemeni secondary school reading curriculum in particular. It would open the window for curriculum designers to re-evaluate the ESP reading curriculum for the

3rd grade Yemeni secondary school; this evaluation could be extended to involve the whole series of English curriculum for secondary school as well as primary school levels in Yemen. Moreover, it will help authorities and curriculum designers to draw a development plan in view of improving and developing more effective teaching methods and a more comprehensive educational philosophy with regards to the English language subject. Not that only, but the importance of this study results would motivate the MOE to maintain teaching the reading skills in ESP as compulsory subject throughout all years of undergraduate studies in all faculties in order to guarantee the development of students' reading skills and to continuously build and polish the students' reading comprehension skills required for their academic success as well as their career success afterwards. Moreover, this study would be one of the references help the National Secondary Educational Strategy (NSES) in achieving its goal of developing the Yemeni curricula.

### 1.3.2 English Language Teachers

The findings of current study have a number of implications for ESP courses in general and EST in particular. The first implication lies in the role of EST teachers' capability in preparing the secondary school students with the EST reading comprehension skills in alignment with the skills that students are expected to have when reading in content areas at the university level. This implication would appear as an automatic step in response to the implications of MOE in evaluating and developing the 3rd grade Yemeni secondary school English language curriculum. Thus, this study will help in training the teachers to realize the need for preparing secondary school level students for university level.

### 1.3.3 Other Researchers

The findings of this study do not only have their implications within the ESP Yemeni setting, but also in other ESP settings. The findings of this study may help the Ministry of Education in other ESP settings to develop ESP reading curriculum with regards to preparing secondary school students to learn and acquire the reading comprehension skills they need at the tertiary level. Additionally, the replication of this study might exceed the reading comprehension skills to all other reading skills and language skills in a broad picture of curriculum analysis and then their development.

### 1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine (1) the overarching approaches to Second Language (L2) reading instruction reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum; (2) to find out how well this curriculum prepares the Yemeni students for reading comprehension in English at the University level. This is to determine if the 3rd grade English language reading curriculum is in alignment with the communicative language teaching approach as it was labelled on one hand, and to find out if the 3rd grade English language reading curriculum prepares students for the reading comprehension level required for reading at the tertiary level. Through this examination some recommendations on improving and revising the current EST reading curriculum for the Yemeni 3rd secondary school were provided in Chapter Six. From the above purpose, the current study examined the following:

1. Theories and instructional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and L2 reading theories as reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction?
2. Learner roles as reflected in the EST curriculum documents and reading classroom instruction.
3. Teacher roles as reflected in EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction.
4. The emphasis of ESL reading skill compared to other ESL skills to achieve the learning outcomes in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school curriculum documents.
5. Types of reading tasks as reflected in the EST reading curriculum documents for 3rd grade secondary school and classroom instruction.
6. Reading passages in the EST course book of the 3rd grade of Yemeni secondary school in terms of readability, types and length.
7. The cognitive demand level of the reading tasks as reflected in the EST reading curriculum for 3rd grade secondary school documents and classroom instruction.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF STUDY

The present study aims to achieve its objectives through investigating the following research questions in two PARTS:

### 1.5.1 Research Questions for PART ONE:

**To Determine The Overarching Approaches To Second Language (L2) Reading Instruction Reflected In The Yemeni EST 3RD Grade Secondary School Reading Curriculum:**

1. What second language acquisition (SLA) and second language (L2) reading theories and instructional approaches are reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction?
2. What learner roles are reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction?
3. What teacher roles are reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction?

### 1.5.2 Research Questions for PART TWO:

**To Find out How Well The Yemeni EST 3RD Grade Secondary School Reading Curriculum Prepares The Yemeni Students For Reading Comprehension In English At The University Level:**

4. How explicitly is the reading skill used to achieve the learning outcomes in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school curriculum documents?
5. What types of reading tasks are reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade of secondary school reading curriculum documents and classroom instruction?
6. What readability level, types and length of reading passages are reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade of secondary school textbook?
7. What level of cognitive demand of reading tasks is reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school curriculum documents and classroom instruction?

## 1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

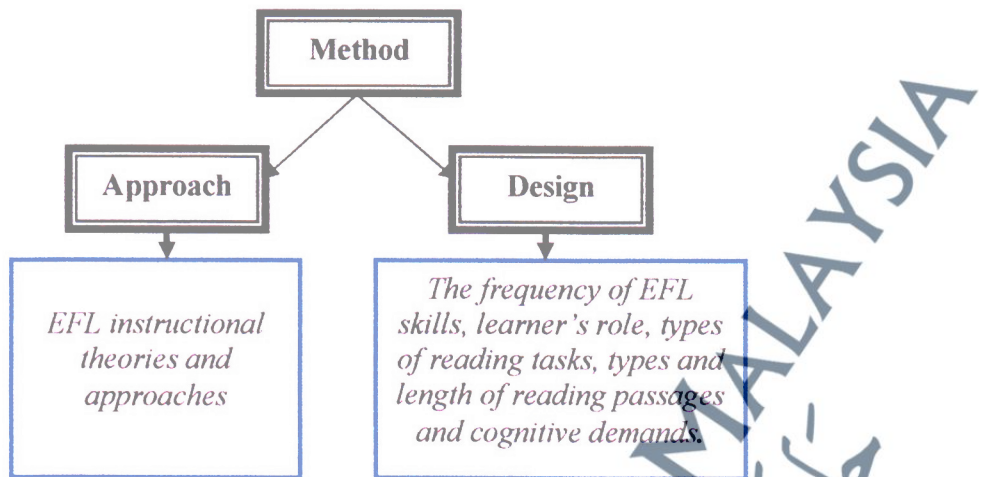
The main two aims of the present study are (1) to examine the overarching approaches to Second Language (L2) reading instruction reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum and classroom instruction; (2) to find out how well this curriculum prepares the Yemeni students for reading comprehension in English at the university level. These purposes correspond with the main aim of Sidek's (2010) study conducted in the Malaysian context. It is worth mentioning here that this study to somehow is a replication of the study by Sidek (2010). Thus, this study used the same theoretical framework used in analysing the Malaysian EFL reading curriculum for secondary school in analysing the Yemeni EST reading curriculum of the 3rd grade of secondary school.

Consequently, the theoretical framework of current study is based on a revised model of language teaching by Sidek (2010), which is the revised of the language teaching model developed by Richards and Rodgers (2001). Sidek's (2010) model explains that any EFL curriculum can be analysed in terms of two organizational levels:

- I. *Approaches*: refers to SLA theories and instructional approaches, and
- II. *Design*: refers to types of tasks and reading texts, the required level of cognitive demands, learner's role, text length, and the frequency of EFL skills.

Examining the types and length of reading passages as well as the level of cognitive demands was a modification by Sidek's (2010) to the original model of Richards and Rodgers (2001) (See Figure 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1: Sidek's (2010) Model



Although, Sidek's (2010) model is a revised of Richards and Rodgers' (2001) model, she did not use the entire framework of the original model of Richards and Rodgers (2001) because of the irrelevance between some of the original model's components and Sidek's research purposes. The original framework of Richards and Rodgers (2001) of second language teaching, which is developed based on Edward Anthony's (1963) original model, describes any method in terms of three organizational levels:

- I. *Approach*: represents the assumptions about the theory of second language acquisition and language learning.
- II. *Design*: refers to a definition of linguistic content, a specification for the selection and organization of content, and a description of the role of teacher, learner, and teaching materials, and
- III. *Procedure*: concerned with techniques and practices takes place in classroom and can be analysed through teacher interview, observation for classroom activities, materials used, and feedback provided (See Figure 1.2).

FIGURE 1.2: Richards and Rodgers' Model (2001)

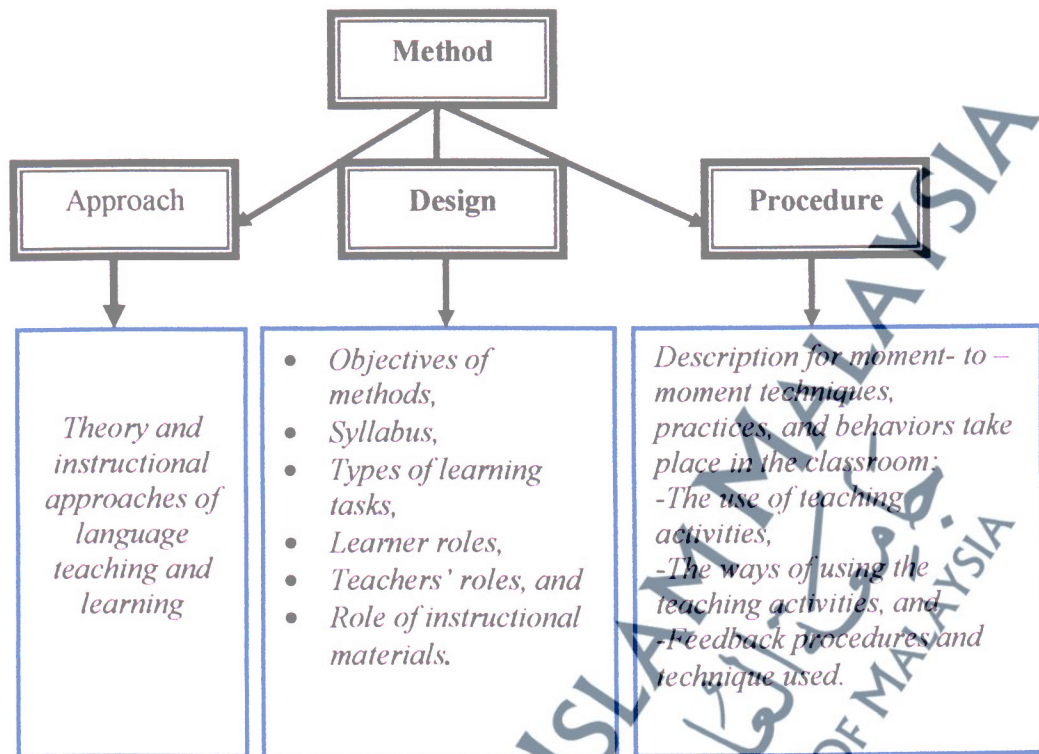


Figure 1.2 shows that the procedure component was excluded in Sidek's (2010) model; because Sidek's study did not require examining the real classroom context. Since this study is the replication of Sidek's study and based on a revised model of Sidek (2010), most of the elements in Sidek's (2010) model are applicable to the present study, although with some modifications as explained below:

- I. *Approach*: this level helps in analysing the Yemeni EST 3rd secondary school reading instructional approaches in terms of SLA theories and L2 reading theories.
- II. *Design*: in this level, all components in Sidek's (2010) model are applicable in present study. Thus the design level provides a tool for analysing types of reading tasks and texts, length of passages, learner role, teacher role, the

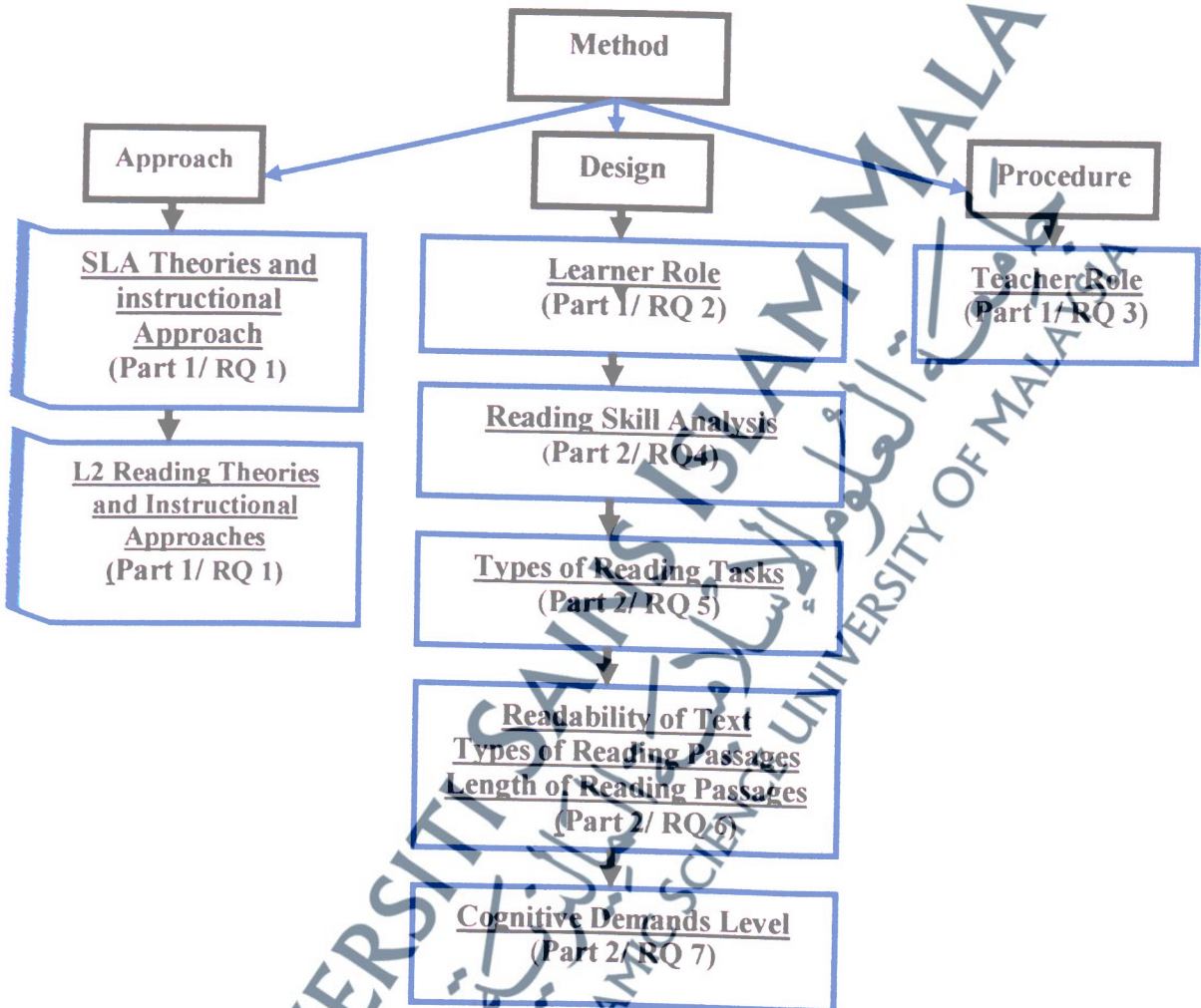
frequency the reading skill explicitly mentioned in the Yemeni EST 3rd secondary school reading curriculum, and the levels of cognitive demand of reading tasks.

Nevertheless the present study examines the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum as all texts are supposed to be expository; this study examines the types of passages because the researcher's preliminary review for the reading passages in EST 3rd grade course book showed that the reading texts consist of different types of passages such as letters, stories, experiments, and magazines extracts. Besides, under the design element, the present study examines the readability level of texts. Examining this variable has been chosen because it is one of the textbooks' features affects the students' reading comprehension (Miller, 2011;Rottensteiner, 2010).

Moreover, in addition to applying the two levels of analysis a method under Sidek's (2010) model, the present study included the third level (procedural level) from Richards and Rodgers' (2001). Through this level, the moment-to-moment techniques, practices, and behaviours that take place in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading classroom were examined. The researcher of the current study included the procedural level because the success of any method depends upon to what extent the teacher can provide content and creates an environment contributing to successful learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Examining the procedural level means examining the classroom technique, practices, and activities. Figure 1.5 below shows the theoretical framework of the current study. Examining both of the readability level of texts and the teachers role represent the contribution of the current

study to Sidek's (2010) study. Figure 1.3 represents the theoretical framework of the current study.

FIGURE 1.3: Theoretical Framework of the Current Study



## 1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

### 1.7.1 Curriculum Analysis

Throughout this thesis the term *Curriculum Analysis* was used to refer to a research method in education. Through curriculum analysis, educators systematically separate and analyse features of interest in the curriculum (Porter, 2004).

### 1.7.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

The term of *English for specific purposes* in this work refers to a language teaching approach in which learning content and method are based on the learner needs and requirements (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). In other words, in this term all the attention is paid to the learners' needs.

### 1.7.3 English for Science and Technology (EST) Curriculum Documents

Throughout this work the term *EST Curriculum Documents* refers to the Crescent English Course curriculum documents authorized by the Yemeni Ministry of Education to the secondary school, science stream. These documents are represented by the course book, the work book and the teacher's book.

### 1.7.4 EST 3rd Grade Reading Curriculum Documents

This term refers to reading skill materials included in the EST 3rd grade curriculum documents.

### 1.7.5 EFL 3rd Grade Curriculum Specifications

This term refers to educational curriculum of 3rd grade secondary school. It is consisted of few pages allocated at the initial section of the EST 3rd grad teacher's book (page 1- page 23).

### 1.7.6 Reading Tasks

This term refers to the reading related statement found in the EST course book, workbook, teachers book, and reading classroom implementations. Through these statements the reading comprehension skill of 3rd grade EST learners was examined.

### 1.7.7 Reading Comprehension Skills

Throughout this work the term *reading comprehension skills* refers to the ability of the learners to read a text and process its information. This ability is influenced by applying complex cognitive processes such as analysing, integrating, generalising, evaluating and making inferences.

### 1.7.8 Reading Skills

Throughout this work the term *reading skills* refers to the basic and the general skills of reading such as reading fluency skills, reading comprehension skills and critical reading skills.

### 1.7.9 Instructional Approaches

Throughout this work the term *instructional approaches* refer to the teachers' practices on teaching reading comprehension skills in reading classes. Teaching approaches are selected and implemented by the teacher based on the theoretical

framework of the designed curriculum; for example the teaching approaches can represent the grammar translation method, the audio lingual method, the content based instructional method ...etc. Thus in this work the term *instructional approaches* are used interchangeably with the term *instructional methods*.

#### 1.7.10 EFL in Yemen

English language in Yemen is a foreign language, thus, the term EFL is most effective to represent the situation in Yemen. However, the term ESL also applicable because in content based areas the materials taught are designed for native speakers and native like speakers of English. Moreover, the SLA theories and L2 reading theories were examined due to the absence of any theories for EFL or reading as a foreign language. Thus throughout this work the term ESL and SLA represent the Yemeni EFL context.

### 1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study aims at determining the overarching approaches to L2 reading instruction reflected in the Yemeni EST 3rd grade secondary school reading curriculum, as well as to investigate the preparation of this curriculum for EST learners for reading comprehension at the university level; however, EST stage comprises 2 grades, the 2nd and the 3rd grade, being restricted this study to the EST 3rd grade curriculum can be considered as one of its limitations. Therefore, the aim of this study might be best achieved by analysing the EST 2nd grade reading curriculum as well.

Although, the findings of this study showed an explicitly emphasis of reading skill throughout the EST 3rd grade curriculum to achieve the listed learning outcomes, examining only the EST reading curriculum can be considered as one of the limitations of current study. To the advantages of EST 3rd grade learners to be prepared for higher studies by analysing the four EST skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) that are required for their success at upper secondary and tertiary level.

Due to the political situation and the cultural constraints in Yemen, the data were collected from only four secondary schools in Crater district and Khur Maksar district in Aden governorate, one of 22 governorates in Yemen to observe the reading classroom implementations. This procedure can be considered one of the current study limitations. Collecting data from a broader number of schools in all parts of Yemen rural and urban (south, north, middle, east and west) would embody the authentic setting of the EST 3rd grade reading comprehension instructions in the Yemeni context.

### 1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The followings are the delimitations of the study:

1. EST 3rd grade (senior level) secondary school reading curriculum embedded in EFL 3rd grade secondary school curriculum (course book 6, work book 6 and teacher's book 6).
2. Classroom observations were conducted only in 4 public secondary schools in Aden governorate, Republic of Yemen.
3. Classroom observations were conducted only for the period of three months (September to November, 2013) of the school year 2013-2014.

## 1.10 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS:

This thesis comprises 6 Chapters and its organization is as follow: Chapter1 shows the background of the study, the problem statement and the significance of study, the purpose and the research questions of the study; in addition to the theoretical framework, definition of terms and the limitations and delimitations of the present study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the current study. First, SLA theories and then L2 reading theories and underlying instructional approaches were reviewed supported by large body of past studies in relation to the purpose of the study; then, issues about the Yemeni educational system and studies examined reading comprehension problems among the Yemeni EFL learners were reviewed as well. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description on the methodology used in the current study in terms of the research approach and design, research context, instruments, participants, data collection and analysis as well as the reliability procedures. In Chapter 4, the findings are clearly presented in relation to the seven research questions supported by Tables and Figures. While in Chapter 5, a detailed discussion is provided with regards to the obtained results. And Finally Chapter 6 provides some suggestions to revise the current curriculum in order to achieve its learning objectives successfully. In addition, recommendations and suggestions for further studies are also provided in chapter 6. Figure 1.4 below presents a summary for the organization of the current thesis.

Figure 1.4: The Organization of the Current Thesis

