CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review approaches to reading instruction, teachers' beliefs, and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction. The first section deals with three approaches to reading instruction—the text-based approach, the reader-based approach, and the interactive approach. The second section discusses the definitions and functions of teachers' beliefs. The final section reviews research on teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction, factors related to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction, and research on teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction in Taiwan.

Approaches to Reading Instruction

Dlugosz (2000) claimed that reading activities would facilitate learners in reading abilities development and language understanding and speaking. To help students develop better reading abilities and gain a better understanding of the text, teachers tend to employ various approaches in teaching reading. When it comes to teaching approaches, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), widely adopted by textbooks and curricula around the globe, has emerged as the mainstream in the field of English teaching in Taiwan (Huang & Huang, 2000). The principles of CLT are set as the standards of the current English curriculum, and new versions of English textbooks have been designed on the basis of these principles, focusing on communicative functions. However, since CLT requires English teachers to have competence in oral proficiency, teaching strategies, and sociolinguistic skills, many

teachers find it hard to switch from traditional form-focused instructions to this function-focused one. Hence, despite the increasing popularity of CLT, most teachers follow more traditional approaches in practice. The following are some frequently applied approaches to reading instruction.

Text-based approach. Gough's bottom-up model, published in 1972, is the most frequently cited example of the text-based approach. In Gough's (1972) model, the reader begins with letters, which are recognized by a SCANNER. The information obtained is passed to a DECODER, which transforms the string of letters into a series of systematic phonemes. This series is then passed to a LIBRARIAN, where it is recognized as a word with the help of the LEXICON. The reader then fixates on the next word, and proceeds in the same way until all words in a sentence have been processed, at which point they proceed to a component called MERLIN, where syntactic and semantic rules operate to assign a meaning to the sentence. The final stage is that of the VOCAL SYSTEM, at which the reader utters orally what has first been accessed through print. Gough's model of the reading process is a model of the reading aloud process (Urquhart & Weir, 1998).

Gough's bottom-up model is indeed a text-based one, which starts with the smallest unit, either letters or sounds. Then the reader learns to blend these sounds (phonemes) into words. It is believed that pronouncing words enables the reader to associate meaning with them. For instance, the reader learns the phonemes d/o/g, which are blended to form the word *dog*. After saying the word, the reader is expected to associate the printed word with the animal that barks. Besides letters and sounds, the reader is introduced to words and the rules as well as exceptions to rules for

decoding words. After decoding words in isolation, the reader learns to decode words in sentences. The reader then processes the text word for word, sentence for sentence, accepting the author as the authority. The reader reads just "for language," not "for content." (Williams, 1983) Reading is considered an extremely passive decoding process. The reader reconstructs the author's intended meaning by recognizing the letters and words and comprehends the text from the smallest textual units at the bottom to the largest at the top (Plaister, 1968; Rivers, 1968; Yorio, 1971).

The text-based/bottom-up approach lays emphasis on the language found in the reading, that is, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence patterns. Language forms are introduced as the basis for comprehension. Meaning resides in the reading passage, and the reading acquisition is based on the reader's "mastering and coordinating word-recognition and comprehension subskills, with each skill building on previously mastered skills." (Stoodt, 1989) The reader masters these skills and practices them so that he/she can fluently coordinate them. This way, the reader can get the meaning out of the reading passage. Teachers who emphasize comprehending by decoding and teach learners either phonics or lexical skills to deal with individual words in texts are said to adopt a text-based approach (LaBerge & Samuels, 1985).

Reader-based approach. Unlike the text-based/bottom-up approach, which focuses on forms and structures, the reader-based/top-down approach seeks to gain understanding from the written material, and the reader comprehends the text through the interaction between his/her background knowledge and the text, as is suggested by the schema theory. The top-down theory was first proposed by Goodman and published in 1967. Goodman (1967) referred to reading as a "psycholinguistic

guessing game." According to Goodman (1967), reading is a selective process, which involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. In this process, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected, or refined when reading progresses (pp. 127-128). To put it differently, reading involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all the elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right for the first time. The ability to anticipate what will be seen is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate what has not yet been heard is vital in listening.

Goodman's top-down theory is actually a reader-based one, in which the reader is active in processing information. The reader predicts and samples only parts of the actual text, and everything in his/her prior experience or background knowledge plays an important role in the process (Clarke, 1979; Clarke & Silberstein, 1977; Coady, 1979; Eskey, 1970; Widdowson, 1983). The reader's background knowledge (schemata), as indicated by the schema theory, is activated when the reader sees titles, subtitles, photographs, graphs, text segments, and text organization. Then the reader uses the information to make predictions about the meaning of the text and the author's intentions. The greater the background knowledge a reader has of a text's content area, the better the reader will comprehend that text (Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979; Taylor, 1979; Stevens, 1980).

Comprehension rests mainly on readers' background knowledge and is a process of making sense of a text in the most cost-effective (but not necessarily the most

thorough) way. Smith (1973) argued that reading instruction should rely as little as possible on decoding skills. Readers derive meaning by activating their prior knowledge about the text and the world in general to recreate the author's meaning. Grellet (1981) further indicated that proficient readers do not concentrate on words or sentences. Instead, they start with global understanding and then work toward comprehension of detailed aspects of the reading. They constantly apply such skills as guessing, predicting, checking, and asking themselves questions to comprehend the reading passage. When they come across new words, they guess the meaning from the context rather than look them up in a dictionary. Furthermore, as they read, they predict what follows next and check if they are on the right track. They also ask themselves questions about the reading to gain a better understanding.

Interactive approach. The interactive approach is based on the notion that reading is a process involving both top-down/reader-based and bottom-up/text-based approaches. Reading is a meaning-driven process; meaning often enables readers to recognize specific words in the text. However, if they cannot recognize a word that is essential to comprehension, readers must apply the bottom-up/text-based approach to decode the word so that they can comprehend the text. As suggested by Faerch and Kasper (1986), in highly predictable contexts, the top-down/reader-based approach may be used more; however, in situations where little context is provided, learners tend to employ the bottom-up/text-based approach more. But overall, both are needed.

Some researchers proposed that language learners should be taught to alternate between top-down/reader-based and bottom-up/text-based processing to check and restructure their comprehension of the content as they read (e.g., Carrell, 1984b;

Silberstein, 1987). Reading comprehension lies primarily in learners' background knowledge, language proficiency level, motivation, strategy use, and culturally shaped beliefs about the reading (Carrell, 1989; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Eskey & Grabe, 1988; Levy, 1981; Sanford & Garrod, 1981; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Eskey (1988) also pointed out that the interactive approach refers to the interaction between information obtained by means of bottom-up/text-based decoding and information provided by means of analysis, both of which depend on certain kinds of prior knowledge and certain kinds of information-processing skills. Since there are individual differences among readers, the mix of skills and knowledge will naturally vary from one reader to another.

Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs are thought to make up an essential part of the prior knowledge through which teachers perceive, process, and act upon information in the classroom (Clark& Peterson, 1986; Munby, 1982). Researchers have given various definitions to teachers' beliefs. Clark and Peterson (1986) perceived teachers' beliefs as teachers' perceptions and implicit theories. Clark and Peterson (1986) also regarded teachers' beliefs as the knowledge that affects teachers' planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions. Kagan (1990) viewed teachers' beliefs as individual ways that teachers understand classrooms, students, the nature of learning, teacher's role in a classroom, and the goals of education. Pajares (1992) integrated diverse definitions of different researchers and depicted teachers' beliefs as "teachers' attitudes about education—about schooling, teaching, learning, and students." (p. 316) Pajares (1992) also described teachers' beliefs as personally held convictions about the subject matter

teachers teach, about their roles and responsibility, about their students, about the curriculum, and about their classroom. In sum, teachers' beliefs are the propositions consciously or unconsciously held by teachers, a combination of teachers' personality traits, learning experiences, teaching experiences, attitudes toward education, and teaching contexts.

Teachers' thought processes influence and even determine their actions. Richardson (1996) asserted that teachers' belief system is an important concern in realizing teachers' thought processes, classroom practices, change, and learning to teach (p. 102). Richards (1998) maintained that teachers construct their own belief systems through a period of time and apply the systems into classroom programs. Belief systems play a vital role in teachers' decision-making and action (p. 30). When it comes to foreign language learning and teaching, teachers interpret a teaching situation on the basis of their beliefs about foreign language learning and teaching, and then plan and create their own classroom from the result of this interpretation (Woods, 1996).

Teachers' beliefs not only serve as the background of teachers' decisions and actions (e.g., Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnson, 1994; Lynch, 1989; Woods,1996), but they also function as "intuitive screens," providing novice teachers with an orientation point from which they make sense out of the activities and ideas presented to them (Goodman, 1988). Some researchers argued that teachers' beliefs act as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made (e.g., Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares, 1992; Shavelson, 1983; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Teachers' beliefs play an essential role in shaping teachers'

perceptions and behavior. Richards (1996) suggested that teaching involves "a cognitive, an effective, and a behavioral dimension." (p. 29) This view derives from the idea that what teachers do is a reflection of what teachers know and believe, and that teachers' knowledge and beliefs provide the underlying framework or schema which guides teachers' classroom actions. Just as indicated by Johnson (1999), "beliefs have a cognitive, an effective, and a behavioral component and therefore act as influences on what we know, feel, and do." (p. 30)

From the above literature review, definitions of teachers' beliefs vary from one researcher to another. Whether consciously or unconsciously held by teachers, teachers' beliefs work as a guide to teachers' thought processes and behavior. Teachers' thoughts, instructional planning, instructional decisions, and classroom actions are shaped and affected by teachers' beliefs.

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Reading Instruction

Clark and Peterson (1986) stated that the process of teaching would be fully understood only when teachers' actions and teachers' thought processes are brought together and examined in relation to each other. Numerous studies in the field of reading support the notion that teachers do possess theoretical beliefs toward reading and that such beliefs tend to shape the nature of their instructional practices (e.g., Blanton & Moorman, 1987; Brophy & Good, 1974; Harste & Burke, 1977; Kamil & Pearson, 1979; Kinzer, 1988a; Leu & Misulis, 1986; Rupley & Logan, 1984). Consistency and inconsistency were reported to have existed between teachers' beliefs and their practices (e.g., Deford, 1985; Duffy & Anderson, 1986).

Research on teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction. On

investigating teachers' beliefs, actual classroom teaching behaviors should be taken

into consideration. The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is

interactive and inseparable. Graves (2000) provided some good examples to illustrate

the close relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. For example,

a teacher who considers language to be meaning-based may believe that language

teaching should be relevant and meaningful to the learners. As a result, the teacher

may provide students with more activities aimed at getting meaning across (Woods,

1996). On the other hand, a teacher who regards language as rule-governed tends to

believe that language learning means learning to use it with no grammatical errors.

Consequently, the teacher may conduct activities mainly focused on analyzing or

correcting grammar errors (Johnson, 1994).

While many researchers reported consistency between theoretical orientations

toward reading and actual instructional practices (e.g., Deford, 1985; Feng &

Etheridge, 1993; Gove, 1981; Harste & Burke, 1977; Johnson, 1994; Olsen & Singer,

1994; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991), other researchers contended that

at times inconsistency occurs between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (e.g.,

Duffy, 1982; Duffy & Anderson, 1986; Duffy & Ball, 1986; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982;

Lampert, 1985; Levande, 1989; Schon, 1983). Teachers' classroom behaviors may be

influenced not only by teachers' beliefs but also by other variables since teachers can

follow similar practices for different reasons. Duffy and Anderson (1986) found that

reading teachers' actual instructional practices are governed by a number of

contextual factors during instruction, although they are able to articulate their beliefs

about reading outside the classroom. That is to say, even though teachers are aware of

their beliefs about reading instruction, they may implement practices inconsistent with their beliefs under the influence of certain factors.

   Factors related to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction. Researchers have proposed a host of factors related to the inconsistency between reading teachers' beliefs and classroom practices (e.g., Brown & Rose, 1995; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Duffy, 1982; Feng & Etheridge, 1993). Brown and Rose (1995) suggested that staff development opportunities and graduate courses are influential in guiding teachers' selection of instructional alternatives. Clark and Peterson (1986) asserted that teachers' actions are often constrained by the physical setting or by external influences, such as the school, the principal, the community, or the curriculum. Duffy (1982) listed three major factors affecting teachers' practices: the nature of the students (i.e., income level, year level, and ability level), the commercial reading material used in the school, and the desire or need to maintain a smooth activity flow. Duffy (1982) also listed demands of teacher peer pressure, pressure from the principal, and applicable accountability mandates. Feng and Etheridge (1993) reported that teachers perceive their own classroom experience as the single most important influence in what they believe about reading and reading instruction.

   To sum up, the major factors related to the inconsistency between reading teachers' beliefs and classroom practices include the teacher, the student, the school, and the reading material. Although the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices is not expected, it always appears between what professionals say they believe and the ways in which they act (Schon, 1983). The inconsistency between

teachers' beliefs and classroom practices may constrain teachers from conducting

their ideal reading instruction. As a result, how to decrease the inconsistency and

improve teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes is worthy of discussion.

Research on teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, a number of studies have been conducted to probe into the relationship

between language teachers' beliefs and practices in EFL teaching, including grammar

instruction, reading instruction, and writing instruction (e.g., Lai, 2004; Liao, 2004;

Wu, 2006). Researchers have explored the consistency and inconsistency between

teachers' beliefs and practices. Many researchers have revealed factors related to the

inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices, and the factors can be classified

into five categories: the teacher (Chang, 2003), the student (Chang, 2003; Liao, 2004;

Lin, 2002; Nien, 2002; Wu, 2002), the school (Chang, 2000; Lin, 2002; Nien, 2002;

Wu, 2002), reading materials (Chang, 2001), and examinations (Chang, 2003; Nien,

2002; Wu, 2002).

However, few researchers studied teachers' beliefs and practices in reading

instruction (Liao, 2004; Wu, 1999; Wu, 2002). To elicit technological-institute (TI)

English teachers' beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction at TIs, Wu (1999)

conducted a research by using two open-ended interviews, which consisted of 13 and

12 questions respectively. The interview questions were based on five major

categories—the subject matter, students, pedagogy, the context, and teachers

themselves. Eight English teachers from four TIs participated in this study. Based on

the results, four major themes were identified to constitute TI English teachers' beliefs

and knowledge about reading instruction: (a) teaching learners with particular needs,

(b) bridging and extension, (c) striving for recognition, and (d) pedagogical

Inter-Actionism. Inter-Actionism refers to a system of thoughts and actions directed

toward the instruction in which both the teacher and students are active and both act

in response to the needs and expectations of each other. Two elements were identified

of this perspective: "activation" and "managing learner-centeredness."

To investigate EFL trainee teachers' theoretical beliefs and to examine the

relationship between beliefs and practices, Wu (2002) conducted a two-phase study

with a multidimensional method, using a questionnaire, a lesson plan choosing task,

an interview, and classroom observations. This two-phase and multi-source data

collecting method was adapted from Johnson's (1992) and Kinzer's (1998a) studies.

In Phase I, a questionnaire and a lesson plan choosing task were applied to

characterize the beliefs of 57 EFL trainee teachers as text-based, reader-based, or

interactive. In Phase II, two trainee teachers representing each distinct belief were

interviewed by giving 11 questions and their responses were transcribed, coded, and

analyzed. Each trainee teacher was observed for three randomly chosen periods. Their

instructional practices were videotaped, and a checklist consisting of 56 statements

was used to determine their theoretical orientations, and thus explore the relationships

between their beliefs and practices. The results indicated that three trainee teachers'

classroom instructions were consistent with their beliefs, two inconsistent, and one

partially consistent. Several non-methodological factors, such as time, mentors,

school exams, students, and school equipment, were reported to influence the trainee

teachers' endeavors to provide instructions consistent with their beliefs.

To examine elementary school English teachers' beliefs and actual classroom

practices in beginning reading instruction, Liao (2004) developed a questionnaire

containing two parts: close-ended questions and open-ended section. The major

sources for developing the questionnaire were the questionnaire design and interview

questions from Wu's (2002) thesis. The close-ended questions were made up of four

sections, including teachers' background information, teachers' beliefs about

beginning English reading instruction, teachers' classroom practices in beginning

English reading instruction, and factors that may influence practices of beginning

English reading instruction. To deal with the close-ended questions, descriptive and

correlation statistics were conducted to analyze frequency, percentage, mean score,

variance, standard deviation, Pearson Correlation Coefficients, and two-tailed test of

significant correlations. The open-ended section was intended to invite questionnaire

respondents to provide other insights related to beginning English reading programs.

The results showed that elementary school English teachers' beliefs about beginning

English reading programs were congruous with their practices. Still, some factors

were reported to have impeded teachers from conducting their ideal practices, such as

students' multi-level English abilities, excessive number of students in a class, and

limited instruction hours.

　　As the reviewed literature indicates, it is obvious that in Taiwan, although a

growing body of research continues to probe into the relationship between language

teachers' beliefs and practices in EFL teaching, few investigations have extended this

research to reading instruction, in particular to the reading instruction in senior high

schools, where reading instruction is deemed as a primary concern. Thus, it is

necessary that this study be conducted to explore the relationship between senior high

school English teachers' beliefs and practices in reading instruction, and the factors

that lead to the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices.