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**The Leisure Reading Habits of
First-year, Female Emirati University
Students:
an investigation**

by
Celine Kamhieh

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Abstract

Educators the world over are concerned about a perceived lack of interest in leisure reading among tertiary level students, particularly in the Gulf Arab states where indigenous cultures have always been predominantly oral. This thesis provides the first in-depth exploration of the leisure reading habits of a convenience sample of first-year female university students in the United Arab Emirates, using data which was gathered through interviews, journal entries, snapshot surveys, questionnaires, conversations and emails and analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Its contribution to the research is that it provides a better theoretical understanding of many key factors related to leisure reading among this particular group. We find their reader identities shaped by their reading *habitus* which readers are continually developing, in a Bourdieuan sense.

It was found that while there is a keen interest in reading the Holy Qura'n, there is a generally low incidence of reading in Arabic, which has serious implications for the current policy on the teaching of Arabic in the region. Two distinct subcategories of reasons for reading were also found, which I refer to as purposes and *qana'a*. Readers regularly refer to what I labeled *qana'a* for reading, which are distinct from attitude in that they do not appear to stem from reasoned action or purposes for reading. It is one key factor which distinguishes readers from non-readers. Other findings include:

- a three-stage reading journey showing how students become readers;
- an expansion of our understanding of encouragement as two distinct factors;
- the conditional element of attitudes toward reading whereby attitudes which were previously considered negative or positive are really conditional;
- an exploration of the importance of affect vis-à-vis beliefs in bringing about reading.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

I and the shapes were alone together, revealing ourselves in a silently respectful dialogue. Since I could turn bare lines into living reality, I was all-powerful. I could read (Manguel, 1996, p.6).

Whenever we think of reading we may choose from a wide range of memories and meanings. Some, like Manguel above, may recall learning to read while others may think about the last book they have read, a book they are currently reading, or their favourite authors, sitting by the fire or in bed with a good book, reading on a train or preparing for exams. Away from the written or printed text we find that we are constantly reading our worlds (Freire, 1983) in what may be “the most natural activity in the world” (Smith, 2004, p.2). Native Americans used to read war or peace into various smoke signals, babies read their mothers’ faces and toddlers read expressions of disapproval, caution or consent on an adult’s face (without ever learning the names of the “22 pairs of facial muscles”, Smith, 2004, p.3), people sometimes claim to read each other’s minds and farmers have always read the signs in the evening sky that would portend the next day’s weather. Indeed Baynham (2001) found an Australian teenager doing just that in what he refers to as a multi-modal understanding of reading, which also included reading the weather reports and recording rainfall, all of which take reading beyond the “conventional written-text-oriented” (ibid, p.307) view or the “traditional print-based conception” (ibid, p.311). These fit Freire’s (1983) description of reading the world which we must do before reading the word; we become familiar with our world by reading it:

Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world ... this movement from the world to the word and from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world (ibid, p.10).

In carrying out my research, I plan to read the reading worlds of my participants as they read and report it. Taking a qualitative approach allows me to read their world while also reading their words. Although “writing a new text must be seen as one means of transforming the world” (Freire, 1983, p.5), I do not believe for one minute that my new research text will “transform the world” for others, but it will provide an understanding of leisure reading among a particular group of female Emirati university students.

1.2 My topic and research questions

If our schoolchildren don't learn to read thoughtfully, critically, with joy, and with their whole personalities, then everything else we might hope to do for them will be more or less hopeless (Kline, 2002, p.xix).

When we as educators say about our students: “they are not reading”, we are referring to their reading habits or lack thereof and, although the construct of “we” may be imaginary, my readers will recognize the authenticity of the statement as one that has been made by many who believe it to be true, particularly in the field of ESL/EFL. Based on their daily contact with students, teachers the world over believe that many of their students do not have a reading habit, without ever concerning themselves with the meaning of a reading habit. Therefore, the statement “Our students do not read” refers to teachers’ specific knowledge about their own students expressed collectively wherever teachers meet. However, claims that “Arabs do not read” refer to reading habits of over “270 million people spread over 22 countries” (Rogan, 2004, p.68) ranging from some of the oldest literate cultures to those which have almost leap-frogged the printed text directly to reading electronic text, all of whom are united by a language that has many variations.

When otherizing, as both statements above do, we carry an implicit belief that we (the speakers) are different to others as readers and that in contrast, we read regularly for leisure. Committing the same “offence” as my imaginary construct of educators, I will take researcher license and suggest that, as educators, “we” often struggle to be the readers we would like to be whether professionally (Jordan and Roland, 1999; Zaid, 2003) or privately (Powell-Brown, 2003/2004). As Zaid (2003) points out, our concern as academics is not that we read the writings of others but that others read us. Following on from the claims above, Aronson’s (2000) rhetorical questions force us to examine our assumptions and what we do with them:

If we have not been able to pass on the culture of reading, why have we failed? If we haven’t failed, why are we so worried? ... if we are so worried, why are we so resigned? (p.9).

In other words: if we believe there is a problem, our task is not to wonder why students are not reading but to ask why we are not doing anything about it. I responded to Aronson’s (what could be termed) Socratic reasoning by investigating the leisure reading habits of female students who are in their first year at a government-sponsored university in the United Arab Emirates(UAE) and the following questions guided my data gathering:

1. What are female Emirati university students’ leisure reading habits in any language?
2. How do those habits evolve?

According to Fitzgerald (1999) teachers need to pass on to their students three types of knowledge about reading: (1) local knowledge, which refers to phonological awareness and word identification; (2) global knowledge which refers to understanding, interpretation and word meanings; and (3) love of reading which refers to feelings about and attitudes toward reading along with “the desire to read” (p.102), all of which are interconnected. My research pertains to the third category, yet remains mindful of its interconnectedness with the other two, with an as yet loosely defined understanding of leisure reading as reading that is not assigned and that is done as a form of leisure.

My main purpose for doing this research is to provide some theoretical insights into why some students read for leisure and others do not in the belief that informed educators are in a better position to make better decisions for their students and that they are more likely to encourage and facilitate them in their reading. US high school teacher, Reynolds (2004), echoes the belief of many educators when she writes:

I came to realize that the greatest gift I could offer my students ... was the gift of a reading habit (p.4).

As educators, we have the power to pass on that gift. Are we doing something wrong when we do not use that power? Listen to how one student, the author himself, mentally accorded such power to his favourite teacher:

I would have jumped through burning hoops for my math teacher, Mr. L. I would have likely even read a book or two had he asked me to or had he suggested a title that was one of his personal favourites. But Mr. L. was a math teacher, not a literature teacher. He never once talked about books nor did he ever give me the slightest inkling that he himself was a reader (Bouchard, 2001, pp.7-8).

There are many “Mr and Ms. L”s among us and they do not all teach mathematic.

1.3 Setting and participants

Qualitative research settings are difficult to control, and we have to capitalize on those which are available to us... Opportunism is therefore of the essence of the qualitative research (Holliday, 2002, p.24).

1.3.1 The broader setting

My research is set on the Arabian Peninsula in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a state which has been thrust, as forcefully as it must by its position atop countless oil gushers, into the 21st century as one of the richest countries in the world, a far cry from its pre-1950s subsistence on pearl diving and fishing (BBC News Country Profile, 2007). While most of the world’s nationalities come to live and work here,

approximately 50% of the population comes from south Asia, many of whom have only very basic levels of literacy and are employed as construction workers, taxi drivers or domestic helpers such as, housekeepers, cooks or drivers in the homes of its citizens (locals). This means that young locals grow up listening to a combination of Arabic, broken English, Urdu and or Tagalog being spoken in their homes. It is a very tolerant society which enables multitudes of people from different cultures to co-habit peacefully while still maintaining its own cultural and religious traditions. The need to generate non-oil related revenue to sustain the economy in the future has resulted in a keen interest in tourism, for example, which is now offered as an undergraduate degree program in many universities. If the local shiny malls are any guide to shopping tastes, locals are heavy consumers of Western products from movies to music, cars to technology and fashion to fast food, and many also shop annually in London or Paris where they frequently holiday (Bristol-Rhys, 2010).

Locals make up less than 20% of the total population of the UAE with men outnumbering women 2.7 to 1 at university-going age (*The World Factbook*, 2009). However, female literacy rates of 97% for 15-24 year olds are higher than males at 94% (UNESCO, 2010) and more females are registered at university. Such literacy rates are impressive by any standards but especially when we realize that the first schools in this setting opened in the early 1950s. Of course further education has led to a rise in the average age of first marriage (and first birth) for women from late teens to about 23 years (Walters, Quinn and Walters, 2003). Locals are generally very well provided for by the state which places great value on educating its young. They are entitled to free education from K-12 and, through third level if they satisfy the required criteria.

The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people (*Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan – A Special Tribute*, p.20).

The state's founding ruler considered the education of the country's future mothers to be one of its greatest potential investments and established a university for that purpose, in which my research is set. In what is largely considered a patriarchal society, one that recognizes the authority if not "the supremacy of the father or male" (Cherryholmes, 1999, p.59), its ruler outlined clearly with reference to Islam, the role that women must play in the development of their country as future graduates, particularly as the nation moves towards the nationalisation of its workforce:

Women have the right to work everywhere. Islam affords to women their rightful status, and encourages them to work in all sectors, as long as they are afforded the appropriate respect. The basic role of women is the upbringing of children, but, over and above that, we must offer opportunities to a woman who chooses to perform other functions. What women have achieved in the [this country] in only a short space of time makes me both happy and content ... We praise

God for the role that women play in our society. It is clear that this role is beneficial for both present and future generations (*Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan – A Special Tribute*, p.20).

In other words, while underlining their rights to an education as espoused in Islam, the ruler urges female citizens to continue to value their primary roles as future mothers while at the same time availing of education and work opportunities. He is also, perhaps, ensuring that women's religious rights would not be subservient to cultural mores and such a public statement empowers women to avail of those rights with the full support of the state.

This philosophy underpins all government-sponsored tertiary-level education and generous study scholarships also enable both men and women to study in the West without discrimination. Many third-level institutions from around the world have also set up satellite campuses in the UAE which is particularly convenient for young women, most of whose families prefer not to send them abroad, unaccompanied. Therefore, college-age local students of both genders may choose from an impressive array of Western-accredited, free, segregated, government-sponsored or fee-paying, co-educational, private third-level institutions on their own doorstep, or they may apply for a scholarship to engage in undergraduate or graduate studies abroad.

1.3.2 Institutional (university) setting

At the time of my research the university at which my participants studied accepted only female nationals, in line with the vision of its founder, but it has since become co-educational (occupying segregated spaces) and international. Most students lead more protected lives than their Western counterparts with most living at home until they marry and some sharing their homes with extended families, which can limit the amount of personal space or privacy often associated with leisure reading. They also require the written consent of male guardians if they wish to leave campus early or go on a field trip, but, an increasing number now drive themselves to and from university and elsewhere. When outside their homes, most female students dress like the other females in their family in a long flowing black robe (*abaya*) and headscarf (*shayla*), but, some opt for modest Western-style dress while others choose to cover everything except their eyes. When choosing a future career, students usually take into consideration their family's (particularly their fathers') preferences. The university library is viewed mainly as a place to complete assignments and print papers, rarely as a place to borrow a book for leisure reading. Around campus, students are more likely to be seen engaging with their electronic gadgets than reading a book.

Among the university's stated learning outcomes are critical thinking and proficiency in English and Arabic. Students who satisfy all other entry requirements but whose English falls short of the required minimum level must attend the university's English foundation program until their English improves. With the exception of Arabic and Islamic, English is the medium of instruction in the university with the use of texts which were written for native English speakers. All students start their four-year undergraduate program in a compulsory general education program where they acquire a lot of the core skills and knowledge that will help them in their degree courses. These include research skills, computing skills, quantitative reasoning, and composition writing in Arabic and English but there are no reading courses per se. While a number of students already know what they want to study and often talk about their future careers, they do not declare their chosen degree subject until after their first year in the general education program. They then go on to choose degree programs from Business, Communication and Media, Information Technology, Education or Arts and Sciences. Students are generally anxious to graduate as quickly as possible and often cannot see the benefit of taking a general education program.

It is interesting to see that when students are given a chance in their undergraduate studies many of them are able to become critical readers both of their world and of the word (Freire, 1983) in such a way as to meet the challenges that their country faces. An example comes from the ethnographic work of Bristol-Rhys (2010) who got her third-year students from the College of Arts and Sciences to critically evaluate a museum display in the country's capital city. Based on their reading of the literature they decided that the display lacked authenticity and representation (p.40). A comment from a foreigner visiting the museum that she did not think that women in the "desert" were educated (p.39) prompted the following comments from two second-year university students:

Maybe inauthentic is in fact ... authentic. We are brand-name conscious because we think that means authentic good taste and we import designers and planners to build our cities because we don't want to look authentic. We want to look modern and Western (p.40).

But, now, we want tourists to come and spend money here and so we are being packaged as Bedouins even though that is far from authentic (p.40).

Who says that our students are not reading and reading their world!

1.3.3 My participants

I use the word *participants* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.74) as opposed to subjects because that is how I view them; I am studying their reading habits, not them. I chose my research participants from among my own students in the general education program because they have reached the required entry-level of

English to be accepted into university and are, therefore, better able to speak and express their ideas in English than students who are in the English foundation program. They also presented a convenience sample, allowing me regular access which is vital for an in-depth study such as this. I recognize that “the pressure on students to participate in these situations is great” (Ferguson, Yonge and Myrick, 2004, p.5) and I address this question in great detail in the ethics section of chapter 3 (ch.3.2). Some of my participants are the first generation of their families to attend university while others have fathers who studied up to Masters’ level, both regionally and abroad. The transition from secondary into tertiary level education marks a major change for most students who are suddenly required to read and study copious amounts of texts independently which also made this an appropriate stage at which to carry out my investigation. Readers among them are likely to have established some reading habits by this stage while, for others, there is still time for any positive effects of my research to take root before they graduate.

My participants have received their secondary education in either government-sponsored public schools or private international schools. In the public schools Arabic is the medium of instruction and English is taught as a subject. The method of teaching relies heavily on rote learning and memorization with all learning geared toward passing exams. The teacher transmits the knowledge students require and if a text is not going to be examined it is considered unimportant. School libraries are largely non-existent or are poorly organized and under-resourced (McNally, 2003), teachers rarely read aloud to their students and do not serve as reading role models. Students are rarely encouraged by the school to read for leisure, are not required to engage in critical thinking and are often kept from touching any library books that do exist in case they would spoil them (IN306-10:05). Reading is intensive rather than extensive and students take turns to read aloud from a common class text with great emphasis on grammar and pronunciation (Mustafa, 2002). The end result is that most public school students leave school having learned to strongly dislike if not hate reading and they are largely unable to cope with the reading demands of university.

Private international schools teach through English and Arabic is taught as a subject. They usually offer a range of mainly Western-style education systems particularly GCEs and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Learning is more student-centred, literacy takes pride of place, individual reading is encouraged, stories are read aloud in class and students have access to interesting reading materials in both classroom and school libraries which are well resourced. Many private schools also run book clubs from the UK, the US and nearby Dubai, so as to augment students’ choice of reading materials. Teachers serve as reading role models by regularly discussing books and sharing their love of reading with their students. While

most of the graduates of such schools learn to love reading in English they find themselves largely unable to cope with the reading demands of their Arabic and Islamic classes at university.

1.3.4 The reading environment surrounding my participants

In addition to the university library, reading materials are available to my participants in the city's one public library - which was founded in 1984 - and in an ever increasing number of bookshops. At least one of the local bookshops holds regular book readings and signings by invited well-known authors, such as Paulo Coelho, and co-operates with schools and colleges to run a book club similar to those mentioned above, which I ran twice on-campus. Students throughout the university responded with great interest and excitement and many continued to enquire about it later. Another source of reading materials is the annual book fair which usually sets aside days for ladies only, and for which a member of the royal family provides free sizeable book tokens to all students.

The Internet is also a convenient source of reading material and most of my participants are expert at accessing a wide variety of texts from electronic books to online forums, chat-rooms to emails to poetry sites and more. Indeed, the UAE has been described as “‘the most wired’ and the most media-rich country in the region” (Ayish, 2003, p.77) but, its Internet service is provided through a nation-wide proxy server which “prevents access to sites on the banned list” (Horovitz and Ohlsson, 2005, p.165). In a quantitative study of media usage by students of this university Walters, Quinn & Walters (2005) found that many “spend as much time on the Internet as they do in the combined activities of reading magazines, newspapers and books” (ibid, p.64) and that they are fast becoming a highly educated, computer-literate generation of women” (ibid, p.80n).

A number of daily newspapers and periodicals is published in both Arabic and English (Ayish, 2003), while many more are imported in various languages representing the melting pot of nationalities present in the country. One daily broadsheet in English prints a weekly educational supplement which is distributed freely to tertiary level educational institutions. It proved very popular with my students, particularly when I brought a copy for everyone to class and allowed them time to read and discuss what they read. (Since the supplement became electronic it has not had the same appeal for students or teachers). The university library also subscribes to some of the better known Western and Arabic newspapers. Locally produced magazines include the highly visual English-language *Ahlan*, a more affordable, localized version of *Hello*, and the Arabic-language *Zahrat Al Khaleej* which has been in circulation for many years. These are usually available in beauty salons and are also provided by the university in its library coffee shop. The university also produces two refereed academic journals, an

online newsletter and a student-produced magazine which carries general news about students' various clubs and activities, interviews with faculty and other items of interest such as, where to go for the most lavish bridal gowns, for example. The local cooperative supermarket also produces a monthly magazine in both Arabic and English which is usually given freely with purchases of a certain amount. It contains items about local people and the environment, including an article about a local historian who has carefully collected books by various Arab authors over the years and now has a well-stocked library in his home.

Concerted efforts are being made by many key Emirati figures to promote reading among their fellow citizens. For example, the widow of the founding ruler of the country (often affectionately called “the mother of the nation”) sponsors the annual Cultural or Literacy Passport scheme throughout the public schools which requires students to agree to read a certain number of books (up to a maximum of sixty) after which they are interviewed and awarded gold, platinum or silver passports according to the number of books they have read. Another member of the royal family provides sizeable book tokens for students of all ages to spend at the annual book exhibition as a means of encouraging reading, and the majority of my participants regularly avail of these. The Ruler of Dubai and Vice President of the UAE is a patron of the Emirates Airline annual Festival of Literature which is run annually in partnership with Dubai Culture and Arts Authority. This comes under his stated vision of eradicating illiteracy from the Arab World. Abu Dhabi’s Education Council (ADEC) has promised to improve resources in school libraries and include places for recreational reading, as part of its *Strategic Plan for P-12 Education (2009-2018)*. In one of his poems Emirati author Wael Al Sayegh (2007) urges his compatriots to read and shares his own story of how he became a reader as a way of encouraging others: “We Arabs must reawaken our passion for reading for a nation that does not read is one that will never succeed” (p.109). Finally, as if to underline William Wallace’s (1865) claim that “the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world”, the following extract comes from a talk delivered at the university where my research was set, by the commander-in-chief of the Dubai police:

When I was a child there was no television, therefore reading was my entertainment. I advise you as mothers of the future to make reading a habit for your children (Dhahi Khalfan Tamim, May 6th, 2006).

Who says that Arabs do not care about reading!

1.4 The researcher

The impression is “out there” that our Arab students do not read, and so, as a teacher living in the Arab world, I simply could not walk on by what I perceived to be a challenge. As my chosen approach to my research is qualitative, which is “fundamentally interpretive ... the product of the researcher’s subjective interpretation of the data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.38), the “I” who responded to a perceived challenge and who presents her findings in the researcher narrative which follows, is obliged to embody herself and some or her own values, beliefs and personal history. “I” should not hide behind “the spurious authority of an ‘objective commentator’” (Clark and Ivanic, 1997, p.170) but should acknowledge that how and what I see (or interpret from my data) is determined by where I stand in relation to it, my distance from or proximity to it, my pre-knowledge of the research setting and more. Therefore, I need to position myself through my narrative which is a composite of the stories of the many other people in my life.

1.4.1 My connection with the Arab world

My connection with the Arab world began when I married my Palestinian husband, lived in Kuwait for twelve years and continued teaching primary school full time while helping to raise our children. Coming from the “land of saints and scholars” I realized my ignorance on many major subjects (including religion, world history and more) in contrast with my husband’s vast knowledge gleaned from his extensive reading. What privileged background did he have that he became so well read? While still a baby in his mother’s arms the family had to flee for their lives from Haifa to Nablus where, in one room in the old quarter, seven children were raised. All were educated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and studies were done by the dim light of a gas lamp. He studied medicine and later gained a Fellowship from the highly prestigious Royal College of surgeons in the UK. What struck me as an ‘outsider’ was the way in which all members of the Palestinian families I grew to know and love proudly looked at their own and their siblings’ academic achievements. Even today, when they introduce someone, for example, she/he is introduced as “engineer so-and-so” or “doctor so-and-so” and such a title encapsulates a story of financial hardship, familial sacrifice, co-operation, love, and yes, pride in their family’s achievements. This stood in stark contrast to the educational ethos I had left behind where to excel in education in my generation was something you almost hid or which you reluctantly owned up to; you did not celebrate or advertise it.

Here was an Arab people who, even in exile, valued education very highly and made sacrifices so that their children could go to the best universities where brothers supported brothers in turn until the youngest had graduated. I identified immediately with this common narrative of education, as my own mother had supported her siblings through university on her teacher’s salary in the days before free

tertiary level education was introduced in Ireland. I had not travelled to a foreign land but had reconnected with values that have been held high for generations in my homeland, even long before the days of the hedge schools. Making sacrifices for education was a privilege in an era when so many are deprived of education, and reading was one major part of the education so prized by my new family. This consisted mainly of the English classics and science in both Arabic and English, volumes of which could usually be seen in home libraries. My brother-in-law delighted in quoting from Shakespeare (in fact, Arabs often express an affinity with Shakespeare, sometimes referring to him as Shaikh Zubair) and lent me books by Shaw and others. If I were obliged to categorize the type of reading in English carried out and aspired to by the educated Arabs I met, I would refer to it as the Western canon (Bloom, 1995) which is subjective, constantly being reviewed and always open to interpretation. They delighted in discussing with someone from the West their own reading choices in English, hoping, no doubt, to find a kindred spirit with whom they could find common ground. What could be referred to as light popular fiction did not feature among their treasured tomes. Reading was and is delighted in, valued, highly respected, encouraged and shared.

1.4.2 My own story of reading

All but seven years of my teaching career have been spent in the Middle East but I do not claim to be an insider in my research setting (Richards, 2003, pp.14-15); perhaps nobody really is one or the other but we are all shades of both. I must view my participants as insiders, however, privy to the knowledge which I seek. Yet, I acknowledge that my participants and I are outsiders to each other and that in order for them to communicate their knowledge to me we must negotiate aspects of each other's lives. When asking my students to write their own reading stories as a source of data I brought them inside my own reading story by giving them the following paragraph which I wrote specially for them and which I reproduce here unchanged, as my reading story:

I remember my grandfather reading to me from a book with pictures, just once, and I remember longing for someone to read to me again or to find the same book. I used to spend my pocket money on Enid Blyton books whenever I could and loved to read her mystery stories. The first book I got as a gift was Hans Christian Anderson's Fairy Tales from a next door neighbor; I loved reading it. My father bought a set of children's encyclopedias and I used to spend hours reading them, even about topics I didn't like, just to have something to read. When I went to secondary school I was aware that many other students had read much more than I had and that was a horrible feeling; it doesn't go away. When my children were young, I always made sure to

have lots of books for them to read and I still buy them books. The first kind of adult book I read was "A town like Alice" by Nevil Shute, which I read half-way through secondary school. I felt Shute must be a good author because my older sister had read some of his books. My father used to read the newspaper every day from cover to cover and my mother liked to do the crossword puzzle. I never really saw my mother reading a book; there was no time as she was always busy. My grandmother used to talk about books a lot. Now, I like to read books that make me laugh or that talk about people in situations like mine. One I enjoyed reading recently was The Irish male at home and abroad. Now, I am reading Travels with my aunt, by Graham Greene, my first Graham Greene book, and I am enjoying it. I read one or two pages before I fall asleep most nights.

Bringing my participants inside my reading world does not make me any less of an outsider but it makes my participants more of an insider in my research. I was an outsider to the knowledge they have about their reading habits and they were outsiders to my research data requirement - as was I, for much of the research process. We were both outsiders and so met in a third space created by my research. Therefore, if as Richards (2003) claims, my research perspective moved "from that of outsider to insider" (p.128), I became an insider to that third space, only, which reflects parts of my participants' reading worlds to varying degrees as they represented them to me. This resulted in this thesis which will in turn be read by some of my readers as partly insiders and partly outsiders and only my readers will know to which group they belong.

Looking back from the vantage point of my research and the copious amounts of reading I have done during it, I can identify the effects of my aforementioned lack of reading. For example, I believe that story is a vital part of our existence and the ability to tell a story must surely stem from hearing or reading stories when younger. I lack that and I feel at a constant disadvantage. I also believe that I am less able to follow complex texts than, perhaps, many of my colleagues, which means that I must reread many times in order to get their meaning. My trajectory which includes a feeling of being less than others in my class (at an acute age) due to the lack of reading in my life enables me to empathize with those who have difficulties in reading. It is also interesting to note how this gap affected my behavior and way of talking when others would discuss books – particularly Joyce and the English classics, for example, which often signify a well-read person. I quickly learned not to advertise such lack of erudition no matter how left out I felt, a skill I had started in school as one classmate discussed the *Kon Tiki Expedition* and another discussed the works of Jean-Paul Sartre with the French teacher. The school's library did not help as it consisted of one small wall-mounted cabinet in a highly regarded fee-paying boarding school. (Many

Irish kitchens, even in those days had more hanging cupboard space). Here I was, the product of an excellent education system who had received a scholarship from primary school, the daughter and granddaughter of teachers, but I could not call myself a reader. Why?

On the professional side, I became a primary school teacher and have always loved it but because my teacher training college issued diplomas in those days, I had always wanted to do a degree. Placing raising children and working full time first on my list of priorities, my opportunity came years later when we lived in the UAE and I did my Masters' degree with a British university on the topic of what makes a good teacher. My personal journey is to go as far as I can, hence my wish to study for a doctorate. My interest in my students' learning and in their reading in particular, has been more than "twenty years a-growing" (O'Sullivan and Forster, 1983) from my experience teaching all age groups, but perhaps it is anchored in the years I spent teaching first-graders to read. Whether in private international schools in Jordan or the Arabian Gulf or in government schools in Ireland, the thrill is still the same. Whether students read about Billy Blue-Hat in an Arabic accent or from Ginn 360 or other reading schemes in a more neutral, international accent, starting them along the path to reading must be one of the most exciting and rewarding privileges accorded to a teacher, second only to developing their love of reading. As a mother I shared the responsibility for teaching our children to read but my children taught me that they know best when they are ready to read. With my Masters', I went to teach English at the university in the UAE where, six years later I was to start this research. It was there that I started to hear instructors talking about how students do not read and how they struggle to read academic texts in English as a second language.

1.4.3 Focusing on reading: providing reading experiences for my students

There is something pitiful about a fully grown male eighth grader or first-year university student struggling to read a text in English, particularly when they are studying through English. Such scenarios tug at the heart of every teacher, who sees challenges where others may see only obstacles or failure and who finds a way to give of her time voluntarily to do instinctively what is needed to ensure that these young students' self-esteem and academic standing slip no further. I have always taken a keen interest in the reading well-being of my students and delight in whetting their appetite by reading aloud snippets from my own reading which I think they might find interesting. I recorded audio-tapes of whole texts for them to play while following the text as they take long bus journeys to and from campus every day. I brought in books from home to my English Foundation classroom and included extensive reading times and discussions in class, delighting in the joy on some students' faces as they ran to get the latest *Archie* comics. Our Reading Coffee Shop (so named by a student because we also had refreshments while we

read during break time) resulted in me reading many online book excerpts to choose a suitable one for us to read together. As do many teachers, when promoting reading I work instinctively but have always felt confident that if asked I could make the all important link to the prescribed curriculum. For example, in promoting reading at the university, I was helping to develop some of its stipulated learning outcomes: critical thinking and languages.

When teaching first year students in the general education program, I distributed reading journals to my second-semester students called *From my reading and thinking*, in which they were encouraged to write about their response to something they had read in their free time – not just keep a reading diary. To my first-semester students I distributed a ten-section journal, which included a section called Reading: now and looking back, in which they were encouraged to record their challenges and experiences as they settled into life at university. They submitted these whenever they wanted to and I read their entries and responded. In this way, having got their written consent beforehand, I was able to gather data while at the same time placing their overall academic progress first. The optional aspect of these journals, however, was difficult for my students to grasp as they were used to studying for exams and if it was not going to be graded, many could not see the point of writing in them. Realizing this, the following semester I allocated a ten percent teacher’s discretionary course mark as a reading mark for which students had to devise and submit their own reading-related assignments, after having the plan approved by me. This resulted in a range of reading-related activities including a comparative visual study of people in a bookshop and people in the university library with written commentary, researching and compiling information about World Book Day, and a presentation about *The Guinness Book of Records*. I usually make a space in my daily classes for my students’ reading and reading interests by asking at the start of each class if anyone wants to talk about something which they are currently reading in any language, no matter how short, thus developing a “literacy club” (Smith, 1987) (see ch.2.1), in which all feel they can take part and in which they encourage each other. Sometimes, they may not have read more than the blurb of a book which they intend to read. It was interesting that when asked if they were reading something, some students would answer almost apologetically that they were reading “but in Arabic”, which shows how our students often perceive us to value one literacy more than another and so may exclude their own practices as being of no importance.

I share the above as a way of giving an insight into some of my values, assumptions, beliefs and instinctive knowledge about reading because I believe that nothing tells more about a person than her actions. This was brought home to me by some of my participants who said: “You love reading, right, Miss?” I had never set out to establish that because I held that my research was about my participants’

reading and that neither I nor my interest in reading was important in the grand scheme of my research. However, both my students and the rigors of doing qualitative research think otherwise, obliging me to elucidate the “I” of my research narrative. Students read their teachers’ dispositions through their behavior, and it seems that when a teacher takes a keen and genuine interest in her students’ reading they read their own meaning into that for that is what I did, always putting their needs before my own pressing needs, as researcher.

My personal and professional narratives come together in my studies for a PhD together with a desire as a teacher to be able to guide my students through their own graduate studies, eventually. Part of a university’s role in society is to lead the way in carrying out research and, as a member of this university, it is my responsibility to contribute to its overall research aims, particularly on the subject of students’ reading habits, because I have an opportunity to do so. It is also a personal challenge and a chance to be a source of inspiration to others. My students have been encouraging me since the day I started and are already thinking beyond their undergraduate degrees to their own further studies, responding to my belief in them that: “if I can do it, you can too”. My research will add considerably to that which is currently being generated both in leisure reading and in the field of L2 reading in general and it will, undoubtedly, spawn further research by our current students in the future. I am on the spot and I am doing this research because I can.

1.4.4 A justification for my research: the importance of reading

Reading, almost as much as breathing, is our essential function (Manguel, 1996, p.xix),

My rationale for doing this research is based on the importance of reading and, by extension, the need to explore our students’ independent reading habits. Being a habitual reader helps college students succeed because, as Gallagher (2003) points out: “The more you read, the smarter you’ll become” (p. 27). He offers further evidence of the need for greater reading ability to cope with large amounts of texts:

The amount of information available to human beings doubles ever six months, and in the last 400 weeks of human existence 500 million computers worldwide have been plugged in. We are in the infancy of an information age, and weak readers will be left behind (p.36).

Perry (1997) stresses that to succeed in any subject, whether science, math or others, students need to be able to read well and often: “Reading is the core to all subject areas!” (p.7). According to Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw and Rycik (1999): “Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write

more than at any other time in human history ... their ability to read will be crucial” (p.3). Students should find reading interesting, not just beneficial, according to Meek (1995) and they should also enjoy it, according to Warrican (2006):

the ability to read provides more than access to information. It also provides a means of gaining pleasure and relaxation. This goal is not less worthy than the former one mentioned, especially as our lives become more stressful daily (p.42).

Reading goes to the heart of what learning is all about, and is “the core of the syllabus”, according to Bright and McGregor (1970, p.52).

In tertiary level education, learning is highly specialized and professors know only their own subjects, which usually require independent reading and learning, but, unfortunately, they are not really interested in their students’ reading abilities or practices. If the (often unstated) goal of teachers is to empower their students, not just as learners but as people in general, so that they can take charge of their lives, one way of doing that is to make sure that they can read for whatever reasons they need or want to. Krashen (2004) expounds the power of ‘free reading’ both by the effects of its presence in which “good things will happen” (p.ix) and by its absence:

those who do not develop the pleasure reading habit simply don’t have a chance – they will have a very difficult time reading and writing at a level high enough to deal with the demands of today’s world (p.x).

Add to that the power of the confidence that wide, free reading gives students, enabling them to take their place in any classroom, safe in the knowledge (1) that they know at least as much as everyone else and maybe even more; (2) that they can enter into discussions with teachers and other students; (3) that they have self-worth and that they matter; their lives have value, at a critical age where most are struggling with their self-identity and the big question of “Who am I?” Such confidence travels beyond the classroom door. The importance of reading is such that it is sufficient to merely suspect that it is absent in order to investigate it. It is too important to be left to chance. In the information era, where there is more information than anyone could ever hope to access and use, there is a greater need than ever for very sophisticated reading skills; for ownership of the ‘power of reading’. Our students have the right to that power; we should not keep it to ourselves.

Stemming from that, a second consideration is the perceived decline in leisure reading among young people (Aronson, 2000), what Kajder (2006) calls: “a crisis in adolescent literacy” (p.6). In my research setting I regularly hear comments such as, “Our students don’t read” and “They are not readers”. Aronson argues that we should not take such comments “as if they were total and final truths” (p.5). He recalls

how, as a publisher, he used to attend management meetings and often hear the statement: “Blacks don’t buy books” (p.4):

This was astonishing. Important people running large companies were living in a myth-suffused haze in which prejudice defined perception. Something like that stops you in your tracks. It is so far from reality, yet it is expressed with complete authority. And these beliefs matter (p.4).

Now, they say it about the Arabs: “Arabs don’t read”. ‘They’ is loosely defined and includes some non-reading Arabs themselves. Does that make it any truer?

A third issue and one that should be the hottest is the question of non-readers and how education systems may create them. Bouchard (2001) charges that universities want their students to become: “world leaders in technology” at the expense of literacy, while the public is “crying out for literate graduates” (p.12).

There are non-readers who have gone through the system but whose stories seldom reach academic journals because they should not exist, in theory at least. One example is an eighth grade student named Steven who describes how he got by during reading class:

I watch the kids in the classroom – the smart kids and the ones that are more like me. I look down at the page, but not far enough so that I can’t see where they are. Once they turn the page, I tap my foot eight beats, and then turn my page. If I went faster or slower, that would call attention to where I was. This way, I look like I’m reading, but I’m really counting (Kajder, 2006, p.8).

How many Stevens are there among our classes? Other examples include Bill Martin, Jr., a well-known children’s author who read his first book when he was in college (Bouchard, 2001, p.6) and Johnny Corcoran whose book title tells it all: *The teacher who couldn’t read* (Corcoran and Carlson, 1994).

In the absence of solid information about our students as readers, as teachers we resort to such catch-all phrases as “students have no motivation to read” (Mustafa, 2002, p.78). Mustafa’s small study of the teaching of English in UAE government schools similar to those attended by many of my participants, shows that most of the teachers perceive reading as a pronunciation exercise (p.77) and one teacher said:

In the secondary level, reading is not very important. Grammar is the most important especially for the exam (p.78).

Teachers explain that there is no time for reading because they have to get through the curriculum and that their students have mostly negative attitudes toward reading which they blame on television and modern technology:

Some of them hate reading because they cannot read (p.80)

None of the nineteen teachers had taken their class to the school library claiming that there is nothing in it and that they are not expected to deviate from the curriculum. Mustafa (2002) concluded that “the students’ school community and the society as a whole are not playing a good role in promoting reading

among students” (ibid, p.79). He interviewed some English teachers in a tertiary level college to ask how such students cope when they join the Foundation English Stage and found that, while their communication skills in English are good, most are weak in reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. In spite of the limitations of his research it gives a valid account of what I and others have heard during conversations with teachers and students and have witnessed during classroom observations in some of those schools.

At the time of Jazzar’s (1991) small-scale investigation into the effect of their literacy home environments on six Emirati university students’ achievements, research on literacy up to the early 1990s was scant. I believe that it is still scant. Viewing my students as the best source of information with regard to my research questions, I can justify spending time with them, talking and listening to them. No survey could single-handedly plumb the depths or capture the breadth of knowledge that such conversations can yield. Jazzar’s study focused more on the *What* and *How* questions; I add the *Why* questions. He cautions that “...no one factor by itself is important” (p.145) which resonates with my belief that the answers to my questions are complex and need to be uncovered through gentle, patient probing over time.

1.5 Summary of justification for my research

The dearth of studies on reading habits and attitudes in the specific context of EFL instruction in higher education indicates that considerably more research is warranted (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001, p.149).

There have been few studies of the reading habits of college students in an ESL/EFL setting and even fewer of Arabs as readers: “The present state of the system of knowledge and its acquisition in the Arab world, especially when it comes to reading and book production, suffers from a great shortage of verified data” (Hanafy, 2007, p.1), and none that have generated theory in the area of college students’ leisure reading habits, or those of readers in general (Moyer, 2007, p.67). This study combines all three by investigating the reading habits of female Emirati university students in order to replace anecdotal claims with strong empirical evidence which can help to inform best practices. A combination of this paucity of research (Gallik, 1999) and the fact that: “as students get older, the amount of reading they do decreases” (Cullinan, 2000, p.2) views first-year university students as a critical group because university represents the student’s last stage of formal education; it is the teacher’s last stand.

The main needs in research on college students’ reading habits are:

1) a sensitive explorative approach which aims to capture as wide a range of factors as possible, which appear to impact students' reading habits. Many studies set out to investigate a selection of factors identified from the outset which risks the exclusion of other key variables. As Greaney (1980) discovered, the factors affecting reading are more complex than he had anticipated, our current understanding of them is inadequate, and "if we are to throw further light on our present inadequate understanding of the variables affecting leisure reading" (p.355), we have much more work to do.

2) There is a need for a more theoretical understanding of the key factors, many of which are referred to repeatedly in the literature, to show how they relate to each other. Several concepts, such as encouragement, reasons for reading, attitude, and more, are frequently investigated in various studies of leisure reading but few studies have explained them in ways that are helpful to teachers who want to make a difference.

The emergence of many Gulf Arab states as rapidly developing economies creates an urgent need for a highly educated national workforce, both male and female, who will contribute to the development of their country. Not only does such a workforce need to be educated but they need to *feel* educated and smart in a world where literacies are constantly evolving in step with new advancements in all fields.

It is imperative that Emirati students develop reading skills to be able to engage in the written word so that they can make sense of the complex and rapidly evolving social, political and economic environment of the Middle East (Beatty, Hyland, Hyland and Kelly, 2009, p.101).

Students need to be mature readers who know what they like and want in a text because they will have to sift through a plethora of reading materials whenever they wish to read and, although we may wish to deny it, they will not acquire such reading skills simply by attending regular classes.

In spite of the money and foreign expertise that has been ploughed into the teaching of English in state-run schools in this Gulf country: "tertiary level institutions are having to dedicate considerable resources to equip students with the language skills necessary for coping with academic life" (O'Sullivan, 2005, p.1). There is little evidence that such students are arriving in undergraduate classes ready to study through the medium of English. In other words, students who have already come through the compulsory education stages need to be able to improve their language, independently, and, one tried and tested way to do that is through leisure reading (Tomlinson, 2000; Krashen, 2004). In parallel, the country's private international school graduate students are better prepared to study in English at third level but, at a huge cost: the loss of their own, native language and so, they need to be able to improve their Arabic language, independently. Again, one tried and tested way to do that is through leisure reading, and the following comment can be applied to all languages:

The student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it, unless he can move into an English environment. He must substitute imaginary for actual experience (Bright and McGregor, 1970, p.52).

We may wonder how this happens; why imaginary experiences can make a reader live the experiences she is reading about, as did Manguel (1996), for example, who claims to have had his first experiences of most things in his life, in the books he read (p.8). Joseph (2004) explains that it is because we meet such experiences through language alone that they appear more real to us because they are described and portrayed using language alone:

Perhaps the people whose identity we feel we most fully comprehend are the great literary characters, the Lear and Emma Bovarys and, close to earth, the Harry Potters. Their authors have captured something even more remarkable than the inner essence of an actual human being. Using language alone, they have created persons in whom readers find a resonance of their own inner being – persons in a sense more real than any actual individual. On account of being strictly linguistic in make-up, they are more knowable (ibid, p.1)

As there is a shortage of studies of reading habits in both L1 and L2 (Moll, 1992) this investigation into the reading habits of female Emirati university students in whatever language they are reading, is necessary.

Like many other educators, I believe that the question, “How can I get my students to read?” is best answered by students and teachers working together (Ramsay, 2002; Burns, 2003; Reynolds, 2004; Bokhorst-Heng and Pereira, 2008). Study after study concludes with the importance of teachers investigating their students’ reading interests and practices so as to more successfully effect the desired changes. Burns (2003) claims that most people agree that teaching should be student-centred but that few explore students’ reading practices *outside* the classroom. One of the teachers in her study cautioned that “assumptions cannot be made about the reading needs of students” (Lahoud, 2000, p.11) and the students in Mustafa’s (2002) UAE study of the teaching of English “*demand*ed more variety, more respect, and *more involvement*” (p.127, emphasis added) in their English classes, which suggests that they wish to be heard. Having taught many such students at university for a number of years I was in the privileged position of being close to a potential source of rich data, and the opportunity of becoming teacher-turned-researcher could not be missed.

Although my respondents are members of larger groups such as Arabs and college students, the very collective identities which make them the target of such phrases as, “Arabs don’t read” or “our students

don't read; it's an oral culture", there may be readers among them whose stories may yield valuable insights into our whole outlook on our students as readers, because:

Mere membership in an ethnic group may involve too broad a categorization for meaningful social norms to affect beliefs (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995, p.952).

Therefore, I aim to uncover the reading habits and practices of the individual, the smallest social unit, situated as she is within the slightly larger social units of family and friends. Finally, I wish to avoid the risk, for my research setting, of having solutions imposed from without for, as Dewey (1922) reminds us:

What cannot be understood cannot be managed intelligently. It has to be forced into subjection from without (p.3).

It is neither my wish nor my intention that solutions would be imposed from outside.

CHAPTER 2

It is important to note here that although my literature review is presented in chapter 2 ahead of my data analysis, it was written after my data analysis was completed. Therefore, it should not be allowed to detract from the element of discovery which runs through my thesis. In addition to printed texts, my literature review also includes an occasional reference to what I call oral literature, such as conversations with colleagues, for example. It starts with a brief overview of a perceived issue related to literature reviews today, followed by a close look at leisure reading and some key factors related to it, including a critical look at its separation from academic reading, a brief investigation of the concept of habit and my working definition of a leisure reading habit.

2.1 Introduction

Maxwell (1996) calls the literature review a conceptual context which we must construct ourselves, not merely look for in the literature. Before carrying out my research, in keeping with a grounded theory approach, I reviewed a limited sample of the existing research on the leisure reading habits of college students and young adults to justify my study and, after my analysis was complete, I carried out a more complete review to set a theoretical backdrop for my findings from my research. I aimed to avoid painting a merely “presentist” view (Camic, 1986, p.1077) of my topic and go beyond the “rolling history” lamented by Herber (1994) which is prevalent in so many literature reviews, today:

Researchers and practitioners should familiarize themselves with the antecedents of the endeavors on which they focus their professional attention, tracing these antecedents across as many generations as possible. Researchers and practitioners who choose to write about their work should share with readers the evolution of theory and practice that has contributed to their own thinking (Herber, 1994, p.13).

Herber uses the term “rolling history” to describe a phenomenon whereby references in many current scholarly articles mostly date from within a twenty-year span, a claim he verified by studying the works cited in seven reading-related journals between 1983 and 1990. He found that 80-85% of the references were less than fifteen years old and that, overall, there was a “rolling history syndrome” (p.13) of twenty years. His concern is that:

This rolling history ... seriously jeopardizes the development or maintenance of professional connections among pioneers and contemporaries (p.12),

and that, professionals risk being set adrift from “the knowledge base that constitutes their heritage” (Herber, 1994, p.15). Our thinking is not distinct from that which has gone before and so we must reach

as far back as we can and interpret anew what went before, while at the same time meeting the demands of our profession:

Pressures to be on the cutting edge of one's field, to be current, up to date, and original in one's thinking, can lead one to draw only sparingly on the richness of the past (Herber, 1994, p.15).

One way to attempt to resist such pressures is to follow curiously, the various threads that run through the tapestries of relevant literature, which the novice researcher, in any case, feels compelled to do. It is a conspiracy against which she is defenseless, where text after text refers to key sources until they seem like long-lost relatives that she simply has to meet. Before I read Herber (1994) I had felt drawn towards what would be termed old literature, attempting to lay out flat the "rolling history" to see as far as my scholarly eye could see, in my quest to make sense of the current literature on reading. When I found original sources, having worked my way backward in time, I then worked my way forward again and reread those which had cited them to further inform my interpretation of those older sources. Older sources include a sample of work by James (1890), Andrews (1903) and Dewey (1922) on habit, and by Huey (1908), Gray (1924) and others on reading which were also selected by various reading experts as key sources on literacy (Herber, 1994; Robinson, 2007).

Robinsons' (2007) top-ten list contains names of sources which are over fifty years old but which "often read as if they were written yesterday" (ibid, p.214):

This list is not intended to be "something to get through" but rather an opportunity to sample some of the best writing and thinking that has been done in the teaching of reading. If we as educators want to go beyond the merely contemporary trends and issues, we will want to know something of the thinking that has laid the foundations of what we are about in today's literacy world (p.213).

Such "classics" are reread frequently by many educators, including Atwell and Mayher (2006) who selected Frank Smith as the one educator whose work continues to inspire them. Atwell tells colleagues annually: "I'm reading Frank Smith again" (ibid, p.462), in what she refers to as "an August ritual", because after teaching for thirty years she still comes away from his writing "challenged, refreshed, stimulated, determined, and reminded of the possibilities" (ibid, p.462) for her students. Mayher describes Smith as a "most practical theorist" (Atwell and Mayher, 2006, p.464) who coined the phrase "joining the literacy club" (Smith, 1987) to describe becoming a reader just by being in the company of readers. In a way, my research is about students who have joined the literacy club and, to a lesser extent, those who have not.

Those are some of the giant scholars on whose shoulders I stand in order to develop my new knowledge. In the days prior to planned obsolescence and disposable commodities, items of quality endured and were

treasured, and so it is with quality scholarly writing. Taking a backward glance also helps us to trace the roots of certain taken-for-granted aspects such as silent reading and spaces between the words which are integral to all the reading we do today and which have their roots in the Middle Ages. Combining old and new references, from Antiquity to the second millennium and from east to west, signals a desire to view reading holistically rather than as the splintered concept it has become today. Could it be that “to remember things past about reading is, in truth, to see the future”? (Katz, 2001, p.3). I will now look at some of the “things past” and the things more recent of leisure reading.

2.2 Leisure reading

Asking reflexively, “What is leisure reading?” led me to search for sensitizing concepts in the written and oral literature which would help guide my data collection. These include personal and spiritual reading (interview with colleague), the belief that leisure reading does not have to be enjoyed per se but that enjoyment may come in the use of what one has read (Simpson, 2004) and the belief that leisure reading is, simply, reading fiction (Simpson, 2004) – even a certain type of fiction (Nell, 1988b). We know that the factors which affect leisure reading are not discreet but form “an interlocking complex of habits, attitudes, and interactions” (Johnson, 2000, pp.606-607) so that it is often impossible to tell which factors act to bring about reading. Allen, Moller and Stroup (2003) for example, found that the four key motivating factors identified by Gambrell (1996) were present in Stroup’s fifth grade classroom but were not sufficient to bring about reading and they decided that “the realities are much more complex” (p.248). We also know that as “a unitary process” (Goodman, 1994, p.25) reading has a two-way relationship with the factors that give rise to it, whereby they sustain each other and so, any factors which are seen to affect reading are in turn affected by it. I will first look at the antecedents of reading, then review some of its appellations, followed by a sample of some of the key factors which affect (leisure) reading.

2.2.1 Antecedents of (leisure) reading

In 1984, two small clay tablets of vaguely rectangular shape were found in Tell Brak, Syria, dating from the fourth millennium BC ... All our history begins with these two modest tablets. They are...among the oldest examples of writing we know (Manguel, 1996, p.27).

The concept of reading spans at least 5,000 years in Crete, more than 7,000 years in Egypt and as much as 8,000 years in Babylon (Huey, 1908, p.187) and was largely oral in Antiquity (Hendrickson, 1929; McCartney, 1948; Knox, 1968; Gavrillov, 1997; Burnyeat, 1997; Achtemeier, 1990; Slusser, 1992; Saenger, 1997; Demeter, 1999; Johnson, 2000; and Benediktson, 2006). Wealthy slave owners used to hire trained *lectores* (Starr, 1991) or *anagnostes* (Schenkeveld, 1992) to read aloud to them for the

purpose of entertainment. Many scholars believe that the first recorded silent reading event was Augustine's observation of Bishop Ambrose of Milan (Manguel, 1996) reading in such a way that "his eyes followed the pages and his heart pondered the meaning, though his voice and tongue were still" (Saint Augustine, 384 A.D, I:272). However, others believe that the silent manner in which we read for leisure today was also known in Antiquity (Knox, 1968; Gavrilov, 1997; Burnyeat, 1997) and use as evidence the fact that silent reading "is an essential element of reading aloud" (Gavrilov, 1997, p.59), a point which is echoed by Smith (2004, p.34).

Silent reading became more common with the improvement of punctuation and the introduction of word spaces into what used to be continuous script - *scriptura continua* (Saenger, 1997, p.20) or, *scriptio continua* (Cavallo, 1999, p.74), by both Irish monks in the 7th and 8th centuries (Saenger, 1997; 1999) and the Arabs in tenth century Europe:

Thus, the separated Arabic translations of *scriptura continuous* Greek texts became models for the Latin West, which is indebted to the Arab world for the transmission of the text format as well as for the content of Aristotelian and other scientific works (Saenger, 1997, p.124).

Saenger (1997) believes that this was "the most critical change in the relationship of the reader to the book" (p.20) and that by about the 11th century silent reading was widespread. No doubt, the change in the form of a book from a scroll to the bound pages of a codex as we know it today, from around the 4th century (Manguel, 1996, p.147) also made a great difference in the relationship of the reader to the book. The scholastic era which ensued from around the twelfth century and to which I refer later in relation to academic reading (ch.2.3), ended just after the introduction of the printing press in Europe in 1450. One more interesting comment from the antecedents of reading comes from Lyons (1999, p.314) that by the last decade of the 19th century, general literacy rates across Europe were close to 90% and they tended to *precede* rather than *succeed* the spread of free compulsory primary education in both Britain and France!

2.2.2 Leisure reading by any other name

Today, leisure reading may best be described by reference to its many labels, which include: reading for pleasure (Gray 1924), consulting books at leisure (Hendrickson, 1929, p. 183), "cultural and recreational reading" (Lyle, 1941, p.193), sustained silent reading (SSR) (Petrimoulx, 1988; Pilgreen, 2000), not "reading that is assigned" (Mellon 1990), private reading (Brusch, 1991), extensive reading (Day and Bamford, 1998), non-course book reading (Hodgson, & Thomson, 2000), "reading for its own sake" (Jackson, 2001, p.50), "reading for fun outside the school setting" (Kazelskis, Thames and Reeves, 2004, p.113), reading for self and recreational reading (Manafy, 2005), "just reading" (Ivey and Fisher, 2005,

p.9), independent reading, spare-time reading and self-selected reading (Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007), “out-of-school reading” (McKool, 2007, p.111) and “extra-curricular reading” (Chen, 2007). Greaney (1980) calls it, “reading of any kind, excluding school texts and other materials assigned at school” (p.344) and, leisure-time reading (Greaney and Hegarty, 1987). These suggest that leisure reading is associated with enjoyment in contrast with academic reading implying that there is little enjoyment associated with the latter.

Krashen (2004) describes leisure reading as free voluntary reading as (FVR) which is “reading because you want to ... no book report, no questions at the end of the chapter, and not looking up every vocabulary word ... putting down a book you don’t like and choosing another one instead” (p.x). This voluntary aspect of leisure reading is inferred in all descriptions (e.g. Weinreich, 2000; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001) and Manafy (2005) believes that it includes listening to audio books and can be for any purpose including learning, as long as the reader plays a role in deciding what to read and gets some enjoyment from it (p. 12). Lesesne (2006) refers to it as “naked reading”, “to reflect the abandoned and oblivious joy” (p.8) experienced by her young daughter while reading. It appears therefore, that leisure reading is commonly viewed as reading that is done because a person wants to, where “reading is its own reward. There are few if any follow-up exercises after reading” (Day and Bamford, 1998, p.8), it is not related to school or studies and it is usually expected to give pleasure and enjoyment to the reader. The common denominator in all descriptions appears to be that leisure reading is not assigned by teachers or required for academic purposes and that it is enjoyable which suggests a very clear distinction between it and academic reading, with no expectations of enjoyment from the latter.

2.2.3 Some of the factors which affect (leisure) reading

Some of the factors that are likely to set the conditions which may result in someone reading include being read to as an infant (Jennings, 2003), having an enjoyable ‘first book’ experience (Trelease, 2006; Von Sprecken, Kim and Krashen, 2000; Kim and Krashen, 2000) and access to interesting reading materials (Krashen, 2004). “The look of a book is incredibly important to a child” (Jennings, 2003, p.45) as is the right story (ibid, p.34). Carter’s (1986) review of the studies carried out in the UK between 1971 and 1984, of the reading habits of young people, from pre-school age through to sixth-form, found that the main reasons the 7-9 year olds read were because it is (a) easy, (b) interesting and (c) useful (p.5) while the overall reason for not reading was reading difficulty. I will now look at students’ reading ability, attitude, reasons for reading, encouragement to read and access to interesting reading materials.

2.2.3.1 Reading ability

Slow readers do not read much, and if they do not read much, they do not understand. If they do not understand, then they cannot enjoy reading (Taguchi et al, 2004, p. 73).

Children who engage in leisure reading become better readers (Greaney and Clark, 1975; Elley, 1992; Krashen, 2004; Allington, 2001) which results in them reading more - because they find it enjoyable - which further improves their reading ability (Whitehead, 2004; Greaney, 1980; Walberg & Tsai, 1984; Stanovich, 1986; Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1988; Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Harris and Sipay, 1990; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1990; Guthrie and Greaney 1996; Krashen 2004; Trelease, 2006; Smith, 1996; Elley, 2000; Allington, 2001; Everhart, Angelos and McGriff, 2002; Guthrie, 2002; Mellard, Patterson and Prewett, 2007). Walberg and Tsai (1983) refer to this as the “Matthew effect”¹, where, according to the Gospel, XXV: 29, those who have shall receive plenty and those who have not will lose the little that they have. In short, good readers become better readers (Baker, 2003, p.89) and poor readers become weaker.

In what is also referred to as the “beginner’s paradox” (Hunt and Beglar, 2005, p.27), EFL/ESL learners’ lack of vocabulary which is “fundamental to reading success” (Tankersley, 2003, p.107), discourages them from reading, which results in minimal growth in vocabulary, because acquisition of a new word requires repeated encounters (Nation and Wang, 1999; Saragi, Nation and Meister, 1978). Such implications are very important because of the potential for students to increase their vocabulary and overall language competency independently if they have sufficient reading ability (Pigada and Schmitt, 2006). A twin factor of reading ability is students’ self-efficacy whereby they are likely to select the tasks they know or believe that they can do well (Schunk, 2003, p.159) which is why it is essential that students believe in their ability to read if they are to develop a reading habit: “If we want children to feel passionate about reading we need to help all of them believe they are supremely suited to it” (Calkins, 1997, p.1). However, factors relating to reading are very complex and there are always exceptions whereby, for example, reading ability has not always resulted in reading for leisure (Kadar-Fulop, 2000; Dungworth, Grimshaw, Mcknight and Morris, 2004). Mikulecky (1978) refers to such cases as alliterates, which I will look at in chapter 2.3.4.

2.2.3.2 Attitude toward reading

It is supposed that attitudes influence behavior (van Schooten and de Glopper, 2002, p.170).

¹ The term was coined by Merton (1968) to describe how the reward system in science works to accord more credit and fame to those who are already prominent in science, while neglecting those who are relatively unknown.

Reading attitudes are defined as “a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation” (Alexander and Filler, 1976, p.1). They are learned (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; van Schooten and de Gloppe, 2002), gradually, over time and are influenced by “social factors and expectations” (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995, p.935). These influences include seeing parents and others reading (Harris and Sipay, 1990, p.49; Campbell, Voelkl and Donahue, 1996), reading ability (McKenna & Kear, 1990; Yamashita, 2004), students’ self perceptions as readers (Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004), instructional practices (Day and Bamford, 1998) and gender (Diamond & Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Millard (1997) believes that the main influences on reading attitudes of adolescent readers are family, friendship groups and peer groups in school. This underscores the importance of the environment and the people in students’ lives.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) view attitude as stemming from three types of beliefs: descriptive beliefs which would refer to when a student believes that a particular book will be interesting, inferential beliefs whereby a student would think that because the first book was interesting other books might also be interesting, and informational beliefs whereby a student gets information about a book from someone. McKenna and Kear (1990) also shows that a student’s reading attitude develops over time based on her beliefs about the outcomes of reading, including whether or not she will enjoy it, her reading experiences and her normative beliefs – how her friends and family view reading. They built on the work of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and others and added the previously overlooked component of a student’s decision whether or not to continue reading once she has started. Using their instrument for measuring attitudes - the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (ERAS) (McKenna and Kear, 1990) – they found that reading attitudes become increasingly negative as students get older and as their reading ability deteriorates, which suggests a clear correlation between attitudes and reading ability, and that attitudes toward academic reading become progressively worse regardless of a student’s reading ability (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995, p.952). Similarly, Bintz (1993) and Worthy and McKool (1996) also found that academic reading generates more negative attitudes than leisure reading as students go through the higher levels of primary school and Bokhorst-Heng and Pereira (2008) found that secondary school students had negative attitudes toward both types of reading.

It is usually easy to detect students’ attitudes toward reading and measuring them often does little to help educators understand how they are formed (McKenna and Kear, 1990, p.626), which is a much more important consideration. However, I question McKenna and Kear’s (1990) view that attitudes stem from beliefs because students may hold positive beliefs about reading but negative attitudes toward it (Lewis

and Teale, 1979, p.144) and, as Yamashita (2004, p.1) points out, “merely thinking that reading is beneficial to oneself” is unlikely to generate the positive feelings or attitudes that are required to bring it about. A child may get great delight at being read to or when handling picture books but is unlikely to have formed beliefs about reading. Lewis and Teale (1979, p.144) and Day and Bamford (1998), view reading attitude as consisting of belief (cognition), feelings (affect) and intent to act (conation) and suggest that affect has an indirect effect on beliefs. In fact, Day and Bamford (1998) believe that attitude grows within “affect: the secret garden of reading” (p.vii) which is an important reminder of the importance of attitude in reading (Auerbach and Paxton, 1997). Studies of tertiary level students’ reading in EFL/ESL usually have too strong a “cognitivist tendency” (Ridgway, 2003, p.118) or focus on skills transfer, with less emphasis on students’ affect or reading attitudes (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001, p.149). Other factors which directly affect students’ attitudes toward reading in an L2 include previous second language reading experiences, attitudes toward the second language, culture and people and second language classroom environment (Day and Bamford, 1998, p.23). Some of these factors were also confirmed by Yamashita (2004), Aebersold and Field (1997, p.116). Crawford Camiciottoli (2001) believes that positive attitudes toward reading in English among EFL Italian university students may be due to their positive experiences in English as a result of “the growing Anglo-Saxon influence on the Italian culture” (p.147).

Another factor which may impact negatively on students’ attitude toward reading in L2 is requiring them to read in L2 before they are ready and Tomlinson (2000) suggests that they wait until they have developed a sizeable vocabulary as they would in L1 reading (p.531). Day and Bamford (1998) disagree and suggest that students be encouraged to read specially written, simplified texts. This brings us back to the circularity of vocabulary acquisition and extensive reading without solving the issue. While Tomlinson’s suggestion is a valid one, it overlooks a key precursor to independent L1 reading: children’s positive attitudes toward reading are generated by being read to before they can read, and in an ESL/EFL setting, this must happen in the classroom. Supporting this view, tertiary level Emirati students identified being read to by their teacher as the number one factor which would improve their attitudes toward reading (Gobert, 2009, p.55). Leung’s (2002) case study would also appear to counter Tomlinson’s suggestion, because it tracks a student who formed positive attitudes toward reading in the target language while learning the language, as a result of having access to interesting and appropriate reading materials:

I think if reading teachers can somehow help students find what they are interested to read and encourage them to read extensively, students will want to learn not just to pass the class, but also to use the language as a vehicle to learn/read whatever interests them (ibid, p.75)

This was also confirmed by Cho and Kim (2004) who found that, after reading independently for 40 minutes per week for sixteen weeks, sixth-grade Korean EFL students had higher attitudinal measures than did those who did not participate.

I also question McKenna and Kear's (1990) view of attitudes as ranging from negative to positive because it does not explain the way in which even the most ardent reader will avoid reading certain items. Would we still refer to that as a positive attitude toward reading? If left unchecked, negative attitudes may persist at tertiary level education, become "deep-rooted" (Nash, 2007, p.85) and result in a "loss of an earlier *capacity* for pleasure in reading" (ibid, p.78, emphasis added) due to the demands of academic reading (ibid, p.79). This makes the question of attitude more serious than we may have thought. Therefore, it is important that we try to understand students' attitudes toward reading (Ridgway, 2003; Yamashita, 2004) but we need a better, clearer conceptualization of the construct to do so (Lewis and Teale, 1979, p.142). The good news is that, if attitudes toward reading have been conditioned by previous reading-related experiences, it should follow that future attitudes can be affected positively by future reading-related experiences (Day and Bamford 1998; Elley, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Cho and Kim, 2004). The even better news is that it may take as little as one book, the right match between reader and book (Reynolds, 2004) to trigger that difference. This is often referred to as a "home run" book (Von Sprecken, Kim and Krashen, 2000; Ujiie and Krashen, 2002), after a similar phrase used in baseball by Fadiman (1947, p.369).

2.2.3.3 *Reasons for reading*

Williams (1981) claims that all reasons are internal and, with Smith's (1995) help, I interpret this to mean that a student has a reason to read in a particular situation if she would desire to read were she fully rational (p.117). Smith (1995) explains it as an advice model, whereby the desirability of a student reading is determined by the advice her fully rational self would give her less-than-fully-rational self, in the same circumstance (p.129). I use this very simplified version of what is a highly complex concept to show that, students' reasons for reading may be expressed as fully rationalized decisions or as non-rationalized decisions - although they may be based on earlier rationalizations.

The first category would include purposes for reading such as environmental, occupational, informational, recreational (Gray, 1924; Goodman, 1994) or ritualistic purposes (Goodman, 1994), or for passing exams (Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007) and gaining information (Gray, 1924; Farris, 1992; Chaudry and Low, 2009). Similarly, Greaney and Neuman (1990) found a "multifunctional nature of reading experiences" (p.193) among young people in many countries, who read mainly for enjoyment, utility, and escape. They

concluded that reading for young people “may serve similar functions across a range of cultural settings” (p.172). While the males in Chaudry and Low’s (2009) study were more likely to read for cognitive reasons the females read mainly for enjoyment and escape (p.42). Such reasons can be seen as purposes for reading if they are identified by students from the start as their intentions for reading.

A second category of reasons for reading relates to attitudes such as liking and enjoying reading, which, as we saw earlier, are likely to result in reading (Schutte and Malouf, 2004; Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007). The most common reason given for reading by 132 fifth-grade students in the UK was that it was enjoyable, thus making readers feel less bored, more restful and relaxed, particularly before sleeping (Dungworth et al, 2004, p.174). Mature Australian university students also read for those reasons and because of interest in the experience of reading itself (Schutte and Malouf, 2004, p. 288), while mature female students in the UK also identified relaxation as their main reason for reading (Jarvis, 2003). All of these reasons appear to have an underlying theme of liking to read. I understand Williams’ view of internal reasons to mean that in such situations a reader may have rationalized about any of these reasons for reading at some earlier point so that each time she faces a decision to read it takes place at a subconscious level but, it would be approved by her rational side if she were to check in with it. Some of the reasons expressed here, such as to relax, for example, could also be understood as purposes if the reader sets out with the intention of reading to relax. In most cases in this category, readers read without specifying any particular purpose but with the subconscious knowledge that she will feel good while reading.

Very roughly, then, the basic idea of Williams’ internal reasons thesis is that we cannot have genuine reasons to act that have no connection whatever with anything that we care about” (Chappell, 2010).

Is it possible that we have here, a reason for students not reading the assigned texts and, by extension, not reading for leisure? Reasons for not reading for leisure do not pertain only to non-readers because many readers also identify reasons as to why they have not read for some time. Among tertiary-level students these include a perceived lack of time, a lack of recommendations to read and difficulties accessing books (Hodgson and Thomson, 2000; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001) or simply having too much other kind of reading to do (Berthelsen, 2008-2009), referring to academic reading. The pressures of studying, being too tired to read when they get to bed and needing to rest their eyes by engaging in leisure activities which do not involve reading, were also reasons cited by medical students for a drop in leisure reading since joining university (Hodgson and Thomson, 2000). Reasons may differ between the genders with males citing boredom and females citing a lack of time (Burgess and Jones, 2010). Teenage students also cite a

lack of interesting reading materials, eye strain, disturbance and a preference for spending time with friends or for doing other activities, such as, playing video games for example (Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007, p.25).

We can claim, like, Carter (1986) that “questions concerning the reasons why young people like to read *per se* do not seem to have been explicitly asked by many researchers” (p.5). However, I believe that very young children are not able to rationalize much of their behavior, a point that is not often acknowledged in the literature. They usually know their feelings but not the reasons for those feelings, something that Early (1960) refers to in the next section, while older readers are better able to articulate their reasons for reading. We may agree for now, that “it is perhaps best to regard the issue of why young people actually like to read as unresolved” (Carter, 1986, p.5) or, perhaps, liking reading does not need to be explained; it may be a sufficient reason in itself.

2.2.3.4 Encouraging and promoting reading

The challenge to reading teachers is to ensure that students learn not only *how* to read but also *to* read: that they develop into lifelong readers. In an interview with Hall (2004) as then director of the UK’s National Literacy Strategy, Anwyll urged primary schools to:

do everything they can to provide that inspiration for children to read and make use of their skills.

The whole purpose of developing reasonable attainment is to give children the opportunity to enjoy books; the two things should go together (p.120).

In other words a teacher has not successfully taught her students to read if they have not developed a keen interest in books or have not become readers (Sibberson and Szymusiak, 2003). Combining both, many children simply learn to read by reading extensively (Smith, 2004; Grabe, 1991; Krashen, 2004; Zaid, 2003; Strickland and Walker, 2004; Meek, 2004) whereby reading is “caught, not taught” (Nuttall, 1996, p.230). Fitzgerald’s (1999) approach combines both and describes a love of reading as one of three types of knowledge - alongside decoding and meaning-making - which students must acquire from various experts who have it, including other readers in the class, teachers and other adults (p.120).

Other than Fitzgerald (1999), few if any studies explain how encouragement works or the role of the concerned adult vis-à-vis the student she is attempting to encourage to read. The teaching of reading is concerned with students progressing through various stages from learning to read to reading to learn, with little mention of enjoyment or reader identity. O’Donnell and Wood’s (1999) stages start with children wanting to “mimic real readers” (p.48) before they start school but, sadly, there is no further reference to

such enthusiasm once students have learned how to read. Could it be that “real reading” and academic reading do not meet?

Little has been added to the literature to show how students become readers or develop a reading habit, since Early (1960) lamented that “we have so little research to guide our thinking and teaching” (pp.161-162). This prompted her to draw on introspection and relevant studies to present for discussion her “theoretical understanding of growth in literary appreciation” (p.162) in three stages: 1) Unconscious enjoyment where “the reader knows what he likes but doesn't know why” (ibid, p.163) and the teacher does not make any demands but “feels the pulse of pupils' enjoyment of many pieces of literature so that he can select wisely more and more stories, poems, and plays that delight them” (ibid, p.164). Her assumption is that the student has been reading for some time and has had “an allowance of years in which to live and to read” (p.162). 2) Self-conscious appreciation (ibid, p.164) where the student willingly struggles to comprehend more challenging texts, begins to enjoy certain aspects of language in addition to enjoying the overall reading experience and requires “guidance, both direct and informal, from his friends who read and talk about their reactions, from librarians, teachers, authors, and critics” (ibid, p.165). 3) Conscious delight (ibid, p.166) where readers become more mature and the role of the teacher is:

to get out of the way as soon as possible. For his role, unlike that of the critic, is not to interpret literature for his students, though he can and may upon occasion, but rather to let them meet literature directly, prepared to be delighted (ibid, p.167).

Early (1960) cautions that some students will continue to read at the first stage (p.164) and that they should not be forced before they are ready to move on, and that few are expected to reach the third stage (p.166). While this theoretical understanding helps to illustrate the role of the teacher in encouraging readers, albeit in literary appreciation, if we apply it to more general reading it leaves some questions unanswered regarding, for example, what happens before stage one and why every student cannot in theory reach stage three. Her stipulation that the teacher should not get in the way of the would-be reader is rarely stated so clearly in the literature but it is important to note that it comes at the final stage. We must expect that at the other stages the teacher has much to do in order to encourage her students to read, the least of which is to ensure that they have access to interesting reading items.

2.2.3.5 Access to reading materials which reflect students' interests

Children who are allowed to self-select to read and who have access to varied sources of print materials ... read more and read more widely, both for pleasure and for information. ... Children become fluent readers when they have opportunities to practice reading. Without appropriate

access to books, children will be taught to read, but will not develop the habit of reading

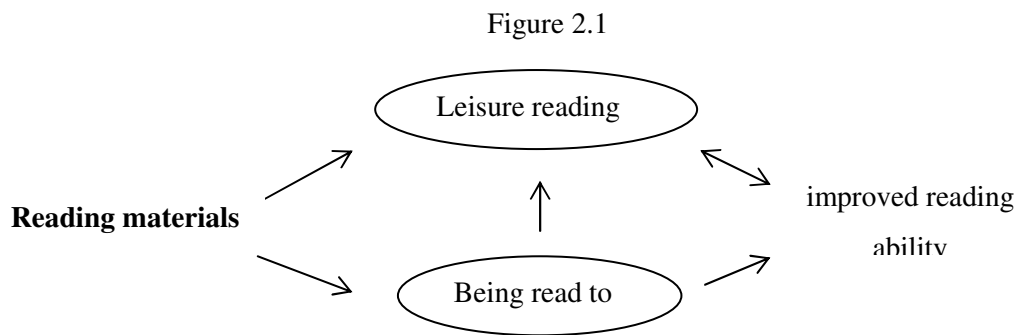
(International Reading Association, 2000, p.2)

Access to interesting reading materials plays a major role in promoting an interest in books and reading among students (Elley and Mangubhai, 1979; Elley, 1991; Krashen, 2004, 1995b; McQuillan and Au, 2001; Worthy, 1996; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999), at the pre-school stage (Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan, (2001), elementary stage (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, and Mahoney, 1997; Morrow, 1992), adolescent stage (Rucker, 1982; McQuillan and Au, 2001) higher education stages (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001) and for second language readers (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Krashen, 2004; Day and Bamford, 1998). While a well resourced environment does not guarantee that a student will read, a lack of access to books prevents reading. The statement made by Warncke (1953) sixty years ago that “Children to whom no books are available do not read” (p.116) will still be true in another sixty years time. Books in the environment simply “ask to be read” (ibid); they “*create* interest” (Worthy et al, 1999p.15, emphasis added). Crawford Camiciottoli’ (2001) study indicates a connection between “past access to English books” (p.148) and reading frequency: “access (both past and present) may continue to have an important role at the level of higher education, and perhaps deserves more attention” (p.148). Access to different types of reading materials also enhances reading ability. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Lutkus, Rampey and Donahue, 2005) has found that “more types of reading materials in the home were associated with higher average reading scores” (p.140).

Busy college students are likely to find time to read when they have access to magazines, newspapers (Chen, 2007; Gallik, 1999; Scales and Rhee, 2001; Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007) and comics. Noting the popularity of Japanese graphic novels with students, Allen and Ingulsrud (2003; 2005) found that *manga* reading in Japan has resulted in an improvement of students’ reading skills and engagement in reading. Students read them while traveling to and from school but they are banned in schools because “many parents and teachers believe reading *manga* is too easy and may have adverse effects” (Allen and Ingulsrud, 2003, p.674). Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) refer to a similar situation in the UK where preteens enjoy reading *Archie* comics, for example, finding them engaging and interesting to talk about, but yet they are frowned on by adults, many of whom enjoyed reading them as children. Although the *manga* craze has not yet caught on in the Arab world, most of its consumers in the UAE are aged 15-30, suggesting heavy interest among college-age students. The first Arabic *manga*, *The Gold Ring*, was published in 2009 by Qais Sedki (Nair, 2009) and, exemplifying the value of access to interesting reading materials, a young girl wrote that, thanks to his *manga*, her brothers were now reading for the first time (ibid). The benefits of reading comic books or “light reading” (Krashen, 2004, p.92) have been well

documented (Greaney, 1980; Krashen, 2004; Trelease, 2006; Bracey, 2008) and include an increase in vocabulary of “over a half million words a year”, according to Krashen (2004, p.97).

As we saw earlier, reading for leisure is likely to result in better reading ability and the only possible link between reading materials in the home and improved reading ability is leisure reading and being read to (See Figure 2.1).



2.2.3.6 *Choice of reading materials*

One of the most important reading lessons of all is developing confidence in one’s ability to choose books, being willing to sample something new but also being able to put a book down without finishing it. The librarians quoted from the library literature of the past 100 years seem, in hindsight, to have been overconfident in their ability to know better than the reader what choices are best. Readers reject this presumption (Ross, 1995, p.232-3).

Students’ reading choices are very varied and show very few underlying patterns. Indeed Tessitore (1995) suggests that the college graduates of 1995 could be described as a generation without a text because of the diversity of their reading tastes. This may be due to the exponential growth of book titles in recent years (Zaid, 2003) and the availability of “too many types of media for students to latch onto a single book” (p.1). This makes choosing a book to read exciting but also challenging for students and it makes their choices resistant to categorization. Many reading choices show a strong social component (Lewis, 1999), such as, the desire to fit in with peers (p.12). This could include the choice of series books, which also have benefit for students (Cho and Krashen, 1994) because despite some librarians’ reservations about them they often provide readers “an essential stage in their development as powerful literates” (Ross, 1995, p.201). Recommendations by others are also influencing factors in the choice of reading materials. A participant in Ross’ (2000) study was unable to find something to read when she had stopped talking to other readers about reading. Kragler’s (2000) study found that most fourth-grade students’

reading choices were accounted for by: recommendations by peers, family and teachers, followed by the look of the book, and a preference for a familiar series (p.136) and that interest outweighed a book's reading level (pp.136-7).

Students' moods are also likely to dictate their reading choices so that when they are feeling stressed they tend to choose familiar authors or reread favourite books, only venturing to try more adventurous, risky choices when their mood is better (Ross and Chelton, 2001, p.52). Students are also likely to give careful consideration to catchy book titles or attractive covers, to the effort required in time and money to access a book and to the reading options available in their immediate environment (ibid). Hodgson and Thomson (2000) found that medical students in the UK chose books for leisure reading based on their effects on the reader, such as awareness of life outside medical school, inspiration, introspection and understanding self, various emotional responses such as humour or enjoyment and "books which perpetuated an interest in reading" (p.625). Links were found between personality types and choices of reading materials (Schutte and Malouf, 2004) and between gender and race whereby females and Asians liked to read the Bible than males and Whites, respectively, more females than males like to read magazines and more Whites than Asians liked to read novels (Scales and Rhee, 2001, p.184). Finding books in the immediate environment or being given books by family members often decides a reading choice (Jarvis, 2003, p.269). This includes being tempted by books which are placed on display in a library or bookshop (Ross, 2000).

Unfortunately, students' reading preferences are seldom taken into consideration when it comes to stocking school libraries or selecting class texts, the latter of which often contain "diluted English" (Flesch, 1955, 1986), the "kind of flat, simplistic language found frequently in texts for new readers but never heard in real speech" (Weibel, 1992, p.3). This does not engage the reader and amounts to no more than "an exercise in reading" (ibid). Some of today's adults recall a feeling of disconnect between their desire to read and the texts they were expected to read when younger. Reynolds (2004) avoided reading assigned high school texts until years later when her soul was big enough so that they could speak to her (p.42), and a student in Ramsay's (2002) class recalls that when he was younger many literary works were lost on his "unfocused and impatient pint-sized brain" (p.6). This points to the importance of the reader in all reading choices.

Student input is essential in the classroom if educators wish to produce lifelong readers (Bokhorst-Heng and Pereira, 2008, p.299) and Jordan (1978) believes that we have a lot to learn about what students like to read in English as a foreign language (ibid, p.143). She found that the preferred reading choices of 1,080 ten to thirteen-year-olds in Sierra Leone were different to the titles which were recommended by

their English teachers who had not made “any attempt at assessing what the children themselves wanted to read.” (p.144). Similarly, Cavazos-Kottke (2006) found that the only overlap between the ninety books chosen by the boys in her study and the three recent International Reading Association’s Young Adults’ Choices were the names of two authors on the 2003 list (p.144). The overwhelming evidence indicates the importance of educators finding out what students like to read and how they choose those items so as to better support their reading interests.

While students’ reading choices resist categorization, one factor appears to be critical in all their reading choices and that is their personal interests (Warrican, 2006; Allington, 1994) which are expressions of their identities (Jarvis, 2003). Being allowed to search for the right match with those interests “is a crucial part of the enjoyment of reading” (Ross, 2000, p.6). This underscores the importance of the ability to choose and it cannot be taught but must be learned by choosing, starting from childhood (ibid, p.9)

Each successful book choice makes it more likely that the beginning reader will want to repeat the pleasurable experience by reading something further. Each book read contributes to the bulk of reading experience that enhances the reader’s ability to choose another satisfying book.

Conversely, each unsuccessful choice decreases the beginning reader’s desire to read (ibid, p.9).

There are no reports of students choosing to read academic texts for leisure which adds to the evolving picture of a divide between academic and leisure reading, which I will look at next.

2.3 Problematizing the leisure / academic reading divide

It is clear from the literature review that reading is divided into academic and leisure reading so that ‘never the twain shall meet’. I shall now look to see if this divide is working. Were it working students and teachers would have a common understanding of what reading is, students would be competent readers who would read the assigned texts for class and have a keen interest in reading for themselves, the terminology used to describe both types of reading would fit and, as a result, teachers would not have to worry about bridging the divide. In this section I will see to what extent these pertain.

2.3.1 What does reading look like, anyway?

To completely analyze what we do when we read would almost be the acme of a psychologist’s achievements, for it would be to describe very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind, as well as to unravel the tangled story of the most remarkable specific performance that civilization has learned in all its history (Huey, 1908, p.6).

A full analysis of reading – “the most natural activity in the world” (Smith, 2004, p.1) - remains “firmly beyond our grasp” (Nell, 1988b, p.267) and it may still be “the acme of a psychologist’s achievements”

(Huey 1908, p.6) to define it, over one hundred years later. In its simplest form it is viewed as decoding, word recognition and comprehension while, as a highly complex phenomenon, it lacks clarity and simplicity (Johnson, 2000, p.606), is viewed as a “psycholinguistic guessing game” (Goodman, 1967), p.1) and defies explanation: “it is what we are” (Smith, 2004, p.1). The advent of graphic novels and digitized reading machines (Bracey, 2008, p. 57) further challenges our “stereotyped print-based notions of text” (Baynham, 2001, p.312),

If educators and scholars are challenged to comprehensively define reading it may not be surprising that students, too, struggle to explain it. When Sara Kajder (2006) asked one of her tenth grade students to bring to class a photograph of whatever reading meant to them, Rai brought her a photo of a bulldozer, explaining that “reading was about tearing things apart, and only rebuilding once he had plans from a teacher or more skilled reader” (Kajder, 2006, p.4). It turned out that he had been compiling a comic book, depicting the school, but: “he felt that his modes of expressing and making meaning weren’t valued in the one class that’s about making a space for authentic and engaged reading and writing” (Kajder, 2006, p.4). Straight away, we see a lack of a common understanding of reading between school and student, and the student’s realization that certain types of reading either do not count or are not important in the grand scheme of education. Similarly, Love and Hamston (2003) found that Paul, one of their 15-year old research participants, viewed the “texts made available through his male youth culture ... as ‘not reading’” (p.173). Pitcher, Albright, DeLaney, Walker, Seunarinisingh, Mogge, Headley, Ridgeway, Peck, Hunt, and Dunston (2007) also found that some of their adolescent participants, who had earlier reported that they either didn’t like to read or found it boring, described at length in their interviews the extensive reading they were doing outside school, including magazines, hobby-related books, emails, stories written by them for their friends, and other ‘stuff’. This led the authors to conclude that “students may be defining reading and readers only in an academic context, and this context is often not inclusive of the types of reading and writing they are engaging in outside of the classroom” (p.394).

In other words, many students have the view that reading does not include their out-of-school literacy practices and as Beatty et al (2009) point out: “the image of a reader and the types of materials that constitute reading creates barriers for students” (p.101). Students therefore view themselves in a weak position whereby only the school can decide what reading is; they are deprived of the power of reading (Krashen, 2004). When Cosgrove (2001), an educator, observed a young girl reading a *Harry Potter* book to a friend in a bookshop she complemented her on her wonderful reading, to which the girl replied: “That’s not reading.” Cosgrove asked her: “Then what *is* reading?” The response was: “Reading is for school work. This is fun” (p.191). Gus, another tenth-grader, in Kajder’s (2006) class, listed all the

different kinds of out-of-school texts he was reading, from the newspaper in the morning to his car manual to online blogs, but he firmly believed that it was not ‘the real thing’. Teachers did not approve of it because they never discussed it or assigned it and so, he said: “It’s not reading. I don’t know what to call it” (p.5) and in desperation asked: “What does reading look like, anyway?” (Kajder, 2006, p.5).

2.3.2 Many students struggle to read

There have been concerns about a perceived lowering of students’ reading standards in the UK (Mullis, Kennedy, Martin, and Sainsbury (2006) and in the US (The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 2007, p.94). The National Education Goals Panel (1999) found no improvement from the previous study in the reading ability of 4th and 8th graders in the US and a decline in the reading ability of twelfth graders. It seems clear that if students do not acquire adequate reading ability in the primary school they continue to struggle into their senior years: “It is unfortunate that we continue to have a large number of secondary students who are not proficient readers” (Archer, Gleason and Vachon, 2003, p.99).

Many EFL/ESL students also struggle to read in English. Hellekjær (2009) found that approximately one third of his EFL undergraduate and graduate respondents at the University of Oslo experienced reading difficulties when reading their texts in English: “Norwegian EFL instruction at upper-secondary schools fails to develop the academic English reading proficiency needed for higher education” (p.198). He suggests that EFL reading instruction which is “heavily textbook dependent with little emphasis on extensive reading” (p.213) may be a contributing factor. Therefore, in view of the link outlined earlier between reading ability and leisure reading, it is fair to say that if students struggle to read, they are unlikely to read for leisure and that they will struggle academically.

2.3.3 Academic reading

Academic reading refers to all school-related reading, and, when referring to tertiary level academic reading I will use the phrase college reading as it is used in the literature. College reading may have its antecedents as far back as the advent of scholasticism in the late 12th century when reading was done primarily in schools and universities for the purpose of gaining knowledge (Hamesse, 1999) rather than for meditation or for gaining wisdom. Many academics “no longer read for pleasure” (ibid, p.118) and reading was controlled by rules and regulations:

The scholastic method consisted in little more than training the students to consider a text according to certain pre-established, officially approved criteria which were painstakingly and painfully drilled into them (Manguel, 1996, p.74).

Rapid retrieval of knowledge, often in a fragmented form, became “the prime goal of reading” (Hamesse, 1999, p.110). This sounds similar to some reading classes today, particularly in ESL/EFL, where students preparing for high stakes exams, such as TOEFL, for example, are taught to identify the main points of a paragraph or to find the answer to a comprehension question without ever reading the whole text.

Much of the literature on college reading refers to a lack of interest on the part of students, resulting in low compliance rates whereby very few students actually read the assigned texts for class. In a sixteen-year study in the US, for example, Burchfield and Sappington (2000) found that college “compliance rates have declined dramatically since the early 1980s” and that “on average, about a third of the students will have completed their text assignment on any given day” (p.59). In at least one Arab country, the compliance rate is even lower (Hanafy, 2007). In all cases college reading spikes just before exams (Burchfield and Sappington, 2000; Clump, Bauer and Bradley, 2004), demonstrating students’ lack of interest in reading and their purely functional purpose for it. Suggesting a reason for this poor attitude, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes academic reading as a form of reading in which students:

tend to have little choice about what they have to read, and the content of the books is usually alien to their past experiences or future concerns. Textbooks are usually chosen because they illustrate abstract principles, in conformity with the theoretical orientations of the curriculum designers, not because they relate to students’ interests, goals, and abilities (p.135).

In other words, students are required to spend time out of school reading assigned texts that they did not choose, on subjects which may not interest them, for reasons which often escape them. Perhaps it is not so surprising therefore, that the rate of reading compliance among college students is so low. It is very worrying because students’ success in class depends on them doing the readings (Gallik, 1999; Burchfield and Sappington, 2000; Ryan, 2006).

In many schools, a reading class often consists of intensive reading of short segments with emphasis on grammar and other aspects of language followed by “mind-numbing, interest-killing and clock-watching activities” (Cloer and Pearman, 1992, p.12) that, at primary levels, focus on skill, drill, and fill-in-the-worksheets. The exam-oriented focus of most formal schooling means that “students are not likely to learn that reading can be pleasurable and exciting” (Decker, 1986, p.56): “Consequently, the joy of reading is never discovered, for there is no time left for the reading activities that lead to a true literacy” (ibid, p.56). This may serve as the antecedent to the purely functional approach to reading mentioned above. More worryingly, as Hamesse’s (1999) earlier comment suggests, such approaches to reading also result in students missing out on the wisdom of the text and the chance to think about their reading. Similarly, many EFL reading classes in most government schools in the UAE are seldom about reading

for enjoyment (Mustafa, 2002). Once students have learned to read, their 'reward' is to struggle to read 'heavy' texts in order to learn.

The current stage of academic reading, therefore, is that it is done for the specific purposes of covering the curriculum and preparing for exams, it is disassociated from enjoyment of reading or gaining wisdom and is likely to have turned many students off reading before they reach university. The same pattern continues at university where "reading is scarcely taught as a pleasure, in any of the deeper senses of the aesthetics of pleasure" (Bloom, 2001, pp.22-23), teachers show little interest in their students' out-of-school reading (Bouchard, 2001) and many students show little interest in reading the texts which their teachers assign. In setting up academic reading as the only type of reading which teachers and schools value, reading has become problematic, depersonalized and external to students, something over which they have little or no choice or control. They are rendered semi-powerless with regard to reading. While academic reading may have helped to produce many well-educated readers it may also have contributed to a large number of non-readers or alliterates.

2.3.4 Aliteracy: a growing concern

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them (Mark Twain).

The term aliteracy (Mikulecky, 1978) was coined in America to describe a phenomenon whereby "increasing numbers of capable readers are regularly choosing not to read" (p.2), something that the International Reading Association's (IRA) *Literacy Dictionary* (Harris and Hodges, 1995) refers to as the "lack of the reading habit in capable readers" (p.6). Aliteracy affects over 50% of Canadian adults, according to Bouchard (2003) which shows that it is a growing concern (Decker, 1986; Wile, 2007). It may even overshadow concerns about illiteracy, particularly in the US:

Aliteracy already has replaced illiteracy as the major threat to our society. Illiteracy tends to be a problem predominantly of the lower class, but aliteracy affects all socioeconomic and educational levels (Decker, 1986, p.55).

In a longitudinal study of leisure activities of almost 3,500 male and female college students in the US, Hendel and Harrold (2004) found that in the last three decades of the twentieth century, the greatest decline in leisure activities was in students' reading. Therefore, it is important to determine the extent of the aliteracy problem.

However, it is not always easy to determine aliteracy levels because, as Hodgson and Thomson (2000) point out: "there is no established method for assessing how much a person reads" (p.623), at least none

that can be verified by the researcher. Some studies have set the aliteracy bar at reading for less than twenty-five minutes daily (Greaney, 1980; Anderson et al, 1988). These studies found that 44% of students had not read a book on the days the data was gathered in Ireland and the US, respectively. Gallik (1999) found that almost two thirds of college students in her study read for two hours or less on average per week and this consisted of mainly reading newspapers, magazines and letters/email/chat rooms. Chen's (2007) study showed students reading more than their US counterparts but also reading mostly newspapers and magazines. Worryingly, many pre-service teachers, also, fit the description of aliteracy as many read even less than other college students (Applegate and Applegate, 2004; Chen, 2007; Gupta, 2004; Powell-Brown, 2003/2004; and Gomez, 2005).

Aliteracy also affects ESL/EFL students who "do little reading in English that goes beyond required course textbooks, according to Crawford Camiciottoli (2001, p.136). She found that reading frequency in English of 182 Italian EFL college students was low and that their attitudes toward reading were inversely related to the number of years they spent learning English. This dislike of reading in EFL is consistent with Auerbach and Paxton's (1997) findings that students' hatred of reading in English prevented them from reading for leisure as "they could not "feel" when they read in English" (p.244). This shows that a love of reading is specific to a particular language and that we cannot simply transfer that love to reading in another language by means of will alone. Pandian (1997) describes as "disturbing" the high aliteracy rates in ESL reading among female pre-university students in Malaysia where reading is done mainly for exams. He believes that:

the structures and value systems of society have also to be revisioned to ensure that reading, especially for knowledge and leisure becomes a core component of our cultural landscape. It is inadequate for only one site to embark on inculcating active reading in isolation when the formation of reading is closely interconnected with a range of factors such as social values of their society, school family and environment (ibid, p.17).

Focus is turned to reasons for aliteracy in the Gulf Arab countries where there is an assumed lack of reading habits (Shannon, 2003; Al-Sayegh, 2007; Gobert, 2009). Referring to a study of the reading habits of 5,000 adults in nine Arab countries (NextPage, 2007), Wile (2007) maintains that the results show that parents do not provide their young children with books (p.9), that respondents' reading habits are constrained by their reading ability but that the Arab reader can be inferred as valuing reading, being "well-educated, with sufficient disposable income and personal time to devote to reading" (p.15) but impervious to book promotion media. Founder and director of Kotobarabia – the first Arabic language e-book publishing house in the Middle East - Habeeb (2007), suggests that the reason why many Arabs are

not reading more on the topics they enjoy, other than religious topics, is that they are not available: “The market simply does not have the titles that readers are interested in” (p.4) and that those which do exist are not well advertised or easily found. In a study of its own, Kotobarabia found that Egyptians like to read not only religious books but also about politics in newspapers, magazines and in online e-books: “From my own experience as an e-Publisher, I can testify whereas there is an abundant supply of novels, poetry collections and religious texts, books of a more erudite nature do not exist in surplus” (p.4). This suggests that Arab readers have standards and prefer to read books of a more erudite nature.

Hanafy (2007) found that only one fifth of the 800 students in his English and Mass Media classes in an Egyptian university, read their assigned English texts for class and a very small number have read a novel by Naguib Magfouz, an award winning Egyptian writer. He therefore finds it incredulous that, according to the NextPage (2007) study, 88% of Egyptians in the study identify as readers. His recommendations include defining more clearly the term reading and points out that “private education and public education will most probably produce different kinds of readers” (p.7).

In the UAE, Taylor (2008) found that just over 40% of college students reported doing no leisure reading in English during the period of data gathering, which is consistent with findings of Greaney (1980) and Anderson et al (1988). Jazzar’s (1991) study lists some possible factors that may block literacy in the homes of Emirati university students, including, large families, limited numbers of books in the home library, limited use of print media in English and the discomfort of a hot climate. He cautions that “no one factor by itself is important” (p.145) which is consistent with much of the literature (Greaney, 1980). Also in the UAE, Khoury and Berilgen-Düzgün (2009) found that 60% of their respondents had been read to as children, which would counter Wile’s (2007) claim above that parents do not provide books for their children. Some students suggested the following reason for aliteracy among their friends: “You learn from the environment. I mean if your father reads and people in the house read, you read. My sister reads all the time and she makes me read too.” Another said that she likes reading because her mother read to her “a lot” while her friends “do not like it because their parents didn’t read to them”. Such insights are consistent with the literature on reading and are they show us that if we take the time to investigate our students’ leisure reading habits we may learn a lot.

Aliteracy, therefore, needs to be tackled on all fronts and “schools must emphasize the development of positive reading habits and attitudes among future parents” (Mikulecky, 1978, p.10), the choice being “between preparing our young for literate thoughtful involvement or letting them become easily manageable pawns” (ibid). Beers (1996) believes that pushing students to read for academic purposes

before they read for themselves contributes to the high levels of aliteracy (p.23). Ramsay (2002) believes that otherizing our students - which I referred to earlier in chapter one (ch.1.2) - does not enable us to help them but that we need to see ourselves as a part of the problem rather than apart from it. We need to “challenge our culture's mental models of what aliteracy is and how it works” (p.53). Changing our perspective will at least result in us asking more helpful questions, in his view: “If we are going to help our students, we must think of these differences between us, the literate, and *them*, the aliterate, as bridgeable differences of degree, rather than as insurmountable differences of kind” (ibid).

2.3.5 The perceived need to investigate students’ out-of-school reading

At all levels of education growing numbers of educators feel the need to place a greater importance on their students’ out-of school literacy practices (Gallik, 1999; Burns, 2003; Cosgrove, 2001; Strommen and Mates, 2004) because they are anxious to restore reading to what it should and can be in their students’ lives. At tertiary level, however, this is mostly evident in the ESL/EFL field (Burns, 2003; Crawford Camiciottoli, 2001) where reading is viewed as an essential component of language acquisition. Crawford Camiciottoli (2001), for example, recommends that instructors look at ways of incorporating extensive reading time into their schedules and have students discuss the books they read. Burns (2003), too, recommends that teachers investigate their students’ out-of-school reading experiences: “Taking time through classroom activities to explore students’ reading practices and preferences offers numerous insights” (p.23). Paulson and Armstrong (2011, pp.499-450) believe that we should not assume a homogeneity in our students’ conceptualizations of reading but we should strive to get to know our individual students as readers as they transition from secondary school to college because of the potential mismatch between them and the demands of college literacies. They got their college students to describe reading using metaphors which helped to show how they view the role of the reader and their attitudes toward reading. Some metaphors indicated a transmission model of reading over which the reader has little or no control where “the reader is situated in a position of receiving something” (p.501).

The perceived need for teachers to engage students and make their interests pivotal in their literacy classes echoes Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) view that, based on the Latin, *educare*, which means to “lead out”, in order to encourage our students to read or learn we must meet them where they are, *as* they are, and get to know about their goals, interests and skills (p.136). The current division between academic and leisure reading appears to be preventing that from happening.

2.3.6 The problem with some names

Some of the names mentioned earlier to describe leisure reading do not match everyone's view of what they do when they read. For example, some reject Nell's (1988b) use of the term *ludic* reading to refer to the reading of fiction and storied non-fiction for the purpose of escape, to avoid consciousness and to become *Lost in a book*. While it may capture what many readers do some of the time, its prescriptive approach of laying out what and why someone reads appears to go against what are understood to be the main tenets of leisure reading: that readers read for their own reasons – or for no reason at all – and that they choose what they read. The term pleasure reading, which works for some (*Reading for purpose and pleasure*, 2004; Clark and Rumbold, 2006), is questioned by others. When interviewed by Rowan (2006), for example, Ohanian wondered whether her current choice of reading material - *Reading The One Percent Doctrine* by Ron Suskind - could be called pleasure reading because although she gets pleasure from the author's writing style she plans to use the information in it which could make it 'functional reading' (p.30). Similarly, Simpson (2004) identifies the source of pleasure in her leisure reading: "I derive no pleasure in the act of reading the information, but I do enjoy putting the information I consume to good use" (p.8). Similarly, pleasure could also be got from using content from an academic text, perhaps, which further blurs the division between the two. Shukin (2007) questions the attachment of the word pleasure to reading and describes it instead as a form of labour which we in the professional fields try to parade as pleasure reading.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) explanation of pleasure and his distinction between pleasure and enjoyment (p.132) help our understanding of why the label, pleasure reading, may be problematic in some cases:

Pleasure ... is homeostatic: pleasurable experiences like resting when tired ... do not require complex skills and can be repeated over and over without losing their rewarding quality. For this very reason, pleasure does not drive us to develop new potentialities and thus does not lead to personal growth (1990, p.132)

In contrast, reading requires the use of complex skills and is likely to lead to personal growth; it demands the use of more skills than those involved in simply quenching our thirst or resting when tired:

When reading is enjoyed, it is active reading, which involves choosing the book, identifying with the characters, trying to recreate visually the places and the events described, anticipating turns of the plot, and responding with empathy, yet critically, to the writer's craft (ibid, p.132).

Therefore, we can see how the phrase reading for pleasure may be a misnomer for leisure reading.

2.3.7 We need a new perspective on (leisure) reading

The current separation of leisure reading from academic reading is not working because the criteria I outlined at the start of this section can now be addressed: students and teachers do not have a common understanding of reading, many students struggle to read, do not read assigned texts and lack interest in reading for leisure, some of the terminology used to describe leisure reading is problematic and teachers feel an increasing need to bridge that divide. If we look at a similar divide between work and leisure Aguiar and Hurst (2006) caution that “any definition that distinguishes “leisure” from “work” is a matter of judgment” (p.34). Could our view of what constitutes leisure reading as distinct from academic reading also be a matter of perspective? The current definition does not, for example, explain why some students appear to have time for reading while others, with similar demands on their time do not and it does not help a teacher to understand the whole phenomenon of her students’ reading behavior. A different theoretical construct is needed. Again, I refer to Csikszentmihalyi (1989), who followed 78 workers for a week in Chicago to see if the quality of an experience was greater while at work or at leisure and found that neither was the determining factor but something he called “flow”. He describes this as the feeling of being carried along with whatever activity we are doing so that we find it enjoyable and the doer and action become one (1990, p.127): “Flow requires the use of skills and depends on gradual increments of challenges and skills so that boredom or anxiety will not take over” (p.132). He suggests that educators spend more of their time “trying to stimulate their students’ enjoyment of learning” (p.116) rather than trying to impart information. To achieve enjoyment or flow in an activity requires three things:

A matching of challenges and skills, clear goals, and immediate feedback, resulting in a deep concentration that prevents worry and the intrusion of unwanted thoughts into consciousness, and in a transcendence of the self, are the universal characteristics associated with enjoyable activities (1990, p.131).

Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow” concept reminds us that what is important is the quality of the reading experience and that the perceived divide between assigned reading and leisure reading need no longer exist if students are engaged in what they are reading. Dividing reading into neat, discreet parts makes it almost impossible to promote it to our students because academic reading has been bled of enjoyment leaving it a pale, anaemic version of what it could be, while leisure reading is allocated no importance or value whatsoever in the classroom. As educators, we function within boundaries which have made us lose sight of the joys and potential of reading and so, we should look anew to what reading *can be* to all, rather than struggle to define what it *is* to a few in this ever widening divide. We know better and our students deserve better. Miller (2009) sums it up best:

The fact that educators coined the terms real reading, authentic reading, and independent reading to differentiate what readers do in school from what readers do in life is part of the problem. Why does it have to be different? Why is the goal of reading instruction disconnected from reading in the rest of a student's life? When did reading become such a technocratic process that we lost the books and the children in the debate? (p.4).

2.4 Sociocultural views of reading

2.4.1 Culture

“Culture has us before we have it” (Garrison, 2002, p.11S).

The world which is transmitted to us by our parents is “a given reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.77), where habitual ways of doing and thinking have become institutionalized and seemingly external to all players (ibid, p.78). Rather than being external, however, Street (1993) believes that culture is “an active process of meaning making and contest over definition” (p.25). It is a dynamic, ongoing process but it is not a causative agent (Holliday, 2007). It is “constituted in and only exists in action in doing” (Hester and Eglin, 1997, p.20) and is “a means of investigating and describing groups of human beings that can in some way be described as cohesive” (Anderson, 2002, p.36). We function within and across many different cultures, simultaneously, which appear as, “not discrete cultures so much as a variegated multicultural landscape” (Wallace, 2008, p.62), some of which are more evident than others at different times. Many of the roles we play in society are largely determined by our many cultural allegiances.

Holliday (1999) uses the term “large culture” to refer to a particular race, country or other large entity which is vulnerable to derogatory stereotyping or “culturist reduction” (p.237) and “small culture” to refer to “any cohesive social grouping” (ibid. p.237) such as school culture, for example, which transcends national boundaries and which is not in any way contained within or subservient to large culture. Small culture is “the composite of cohesive behaviour within any social grouping” (ibid. 1999: 247) whose properties are allowed to emerge during research rather than being imposed from the start and is more to do with activities than with the nature of a group (ibid. 1999, p.250).

I renamed those same concepts as prescribed and negotiated culture, respectively, as a means of highlighting the main properties of each. However, within prescribed cultures we find some negotiation taking place and, similarly, negotiated culture has some prescriptive elements. Prescribed cultures are often accorded a homogeneity which they do not have through such statements as: “Arabs” and “Emiratis don't read, it's an oral culture” (ch.1.5), “Blacks don't buy books” (Aronson, 2000, p.4) (ch.1.4.4); and

the tourist who thought that Emirati women (“women in the desert”) were not educated (Bristol-Rhys, 2010, p.40) (ch.1.3.2). They are accorded a sense of strangeness or foreign-ness outside the ethnic and religious boundaries by which they are determined, they may have certain prerequisites for membership or alignment and may not be easily negotiated. For example, Arab cultural identity requires proficiency in Arabic, according to AlQasmy (2010). Negotiated culture, on the other hand, is not so easily reduced to stereotypes, because it knows no ethnic or national boundaries. An example of negotiated culture is reading culture.

2.4.1.1 Reading culture

I view reading culture as negotiated culture which contains elements of many other cultures such as gender, which is largely prescribed. Graduate students in the US investigated the reading culture of fourth grade students by looking at the way in which students and staff created and maintained an “integrated pattern of reading behavior, practices, beliefs, and knowledge” (Behrman, 2004, p.24). Within the class’s reading culture they found other cultures at play, significantly that of gender which I refer to as prescribed culture because it scripts members’ ways of talking, believing and doing. Children stated that certain books were either “boy” or “girl books” (ibid, p.26) and explained why. At the same time, demonstrating the negotiated property of reading culture, some of the boys were actively involved in shaping certain aspects of their reading culture by negotiating their own meaning of reading distinct from that of their parents. They spoke of how they “read” the pictures in cartoons and video games as well as the comic books, but their parents do not consider it reading. The gendered nature of leisure reading habits of young people has been widely documented (Greaney, 1980; Smith and Wilhelm, 2002; Dutro, 2002; Hamston and Love, 2005 and OECD, 2011).

2.4.2 Identity

While cultures are more group related and based on common beliefs and values, identities are individual and unique.

2.4.2.1 Identity is personal

Identity is personal in that it involves answering questions about what constitutes the self, such as, “Who am I?” (Fearon, 1999) or Ivanic (1998) asking in her book: “Who are you, the reader?” (p.1). Identity also refers to who and what a person is *not* (Clarke, 2009, p.147). A reader’s choice to reject a certain book in favour of another one is an expression of her identity and she may identify with or differently to an author and his topics. We see an example of this in my data when Nehaya (#15) identifies with a particular author, the topics he writes about and the manner in which he deals with them (ch.5.4.4). Identity is

cultural in that it is “the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world” (Norton, 1997, p.420) but it does not prescribe a homogeneity in ways of thinking and doing among members of the same community. Identity includes how we position ourselves “vis-a-vis others” (Mishler, 1999, p.16) as either similar to or different from them (McCarthy and Birr Moje, 2002, p.230). While a Muslim reader may identify with a Muslim protagonist in a text, she may separate herself from certain aspects of his character (Nehaya, #15, ch.5.4.4). A reader is likely to choose texts which either challenge or reflect her views on different topics (ch.5.2) which counters a passive view of identity.

We read ourselves and others into certain identity categories (Joseph, 2004, p.40), based on our classification systems by which we are in turn, classified (Bourdieu, 1989, p.19). These come into play as forms of identity, whenever we wish to read a text:

Identity allegiances, linked to gender, social class, or religion, come into play both in what we opt to read in the first place and how we process text. What is salient for a reader is in part related to the identities invoked (Wallace, 2008, p.64).

Our categorization systems or the ways in which we view the world are determined by our culture and experiences which constitute a large part of what we as readers bring to a text and they are an essential part of our reading of any text (Iser, 1978). Some educators-as-readers, for example, may identify with other professionals who enjoy reading Frank Smith (Atwell and Mayher, 2006) but, perhaps, may not identify with the Alberto Manguels (1996) or Anna Quindlens (1998) of this world. Smith’s (1987) description of readers as members of “the literacy club” is a widely cited example of such collective identity, one that is denied to non-readers. The construction of such systems of identification – whether social (Ivanic, 1998, p.12; Fearon, 1999), cultural, religious or political (Atay and Ece, 2009, p.26) - is facilitated through language (Canagarajah, 2004; Norton, 1997; Leung, Harris, and Rampton, 1997). For example, language and identity constituted two of four identity strands found in the literacy-related talk of four multilingual students in a London school (Wallace 2008). Indeed, language, literacy and identity “breathe life into each other” (Birr Moje, Luke, Davies and Street, 2009, p.416) so that, while our identities guide our choice of reading matter they are in turn, affected by our reading choices in the circular nature of the factors related to reading.

2.4.2.2 *Reader identities*

Each reader has a different identity (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.353).

Meek (1982a) assures us that: “not all the electronic media in the world will replace what happens when a reader meets a writer” (p.4), a meeting that is facilitated through the written text. Reader response

criticism (Iser, 1978; Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1994) rejects the idea that meaning lies solely within a text in favour of the view that meaning lies in the interaction (Iser, 1978) or transaction (Rosenblatt, 1995) between reader and text. Rather than passively taking meaning from them, a reader actively and subjectively “draws on a residue of past literary and life experiences” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.350) to construct meaning from and interpret texts as an individual. No two readers read the same text in the same way (Ivanic, 1998) because there is “no such thing as a generic reader” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.24) and the student of literature should not be limited to one interpretation of a text (Iser, 1978, p.22). Reader response criticism, therefore, also helps to explain why many readers choose to reread certain texts:

the total potential can never be fulfilled in the reading process, but it is this very fact that makes it so essential that one should conceive of meaning as something that happens, for only then can one become aware of those factors that precondition the composition of the meaning (Iser, 1978, p.22).

Reader response criticism also helps to explain the sense of freedom which is accorded to the reader by a literary text (ch.6.2.1.7):

the literary text ... opens up a freedom that everyone can interpret in his own way. Thus, with every text we learn not only about what we are reading but also about ourselves and this process is all the more effective if what we are supposed to experience is not explicitly stated but has to be inferred (Iser, 1993, p.29).

The concept of learning about ourselves when we read can be seen throughout my data as students’ identities are activated when they choose the manner in which they wish to receive advice or information from a text, for example (ch.5.2.3). When reading, certain social roles and cultural affiliations are called forth (Scott, 1994, p.471), such as, for example, a student who is hurt by her classmates’ insensitivity at the death of her grandmother, an Emirati citizen who is knowledgeable about her country’s history, or a Muslim whose views of sin are challenged by those which are presented by an author in a thought-provoking way, to name but a few which emerged from my data.

Readers learn to recognize different "voices" within a text, identify with one or several of them, and adopt those that are most internally persuasive to guide future behavior. We might even say that readers use these fictive voices to create themselves, with each reader being understood as composed of a multiplicity of voices at any one time (Scott, 1994, pp.471-472).

Although Scott’s comment above refers to a reader’s response to advertisements it also applies to reading in general. In responding to a text a reader takes a particular stance somewhere on a continuum between aesthetic (emotive or affective) and efferent (cognitive) and it determines her reading of the text. Her stance is usually predominantly one or the other though with elements of both and it determines a reader’s selective attention while reading (Rosenblatt, 1982, p.269). Hall (2012) refers to reader identity as the

value one places on reading, the ability to comprehend texts and an understanding of “what it means to be a particular type of reader within a given context (p.369). The importance of reader identity is often overlooked by teachers who tend to label students as either good readers or poor readers, and ignore “the multiple, and differing, characteristics that make up any reader” (Hall, 2010, p.1825). Teachers seldom realize that for students to change from being poor readers to better or good readers requires not only the acquisition of skills but also a change in their identities:

As students are being instructed to engage with texts in particular ways, they are also being told to rethink and change who they are and reconfigure themselves to institutionalized norms (Hall, 2012, p.369).

In other words, a reader’s many identities are partly shaped by the texts she reads, which highlights the importance of students having successful reading experiences.

In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes but it is still I who see ... I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do (C.S. Lewis, 1961, p.141).

Readers’ selection of texts varies in accordance with some or all of their constantly evolving identities. In Ross’ (1999) study of the reading habits of avid adult readers in the US, for example, students felt that the texts they were reading were secretly about themselves (p.793) and so they often found advice where none was explicitly offered. It was as if their identities acted subconsciously as filters, guiding them to select texts which addressed certain aspects of their lives (ibid, p.795; Howard, 2011, p.53). Discovering that they are not alone or unique when they read about other people experiencing problems which are similar to their own, readers’ social identities are activated. Similarly, when readers trust the choices and recommendations of friends and family in recommending books to them (Ross, 1999) their social identities are also activated. In other words, readers read in order to engage with reading rather than purely to achieve specific goals or purposes and if, while reading, some of their many identities are engaged, they are likely to continue reading. This engagement is often denied to students in their efforts to read many academic texts.

Further examples of the role of identity in students’ choice of reading materials come from Richardson and Eccles’ (2007) investigation in the US into the connection between thirty-five adolescent students’ identities and their leisure reading choices. All are readers who possess sizeable collections of books that they have read which is consistent with Norton’s (1997) view of identity as a desire for and possession of material items. When Margorie read about successful African-American women she took pride in being similar to them and made her reading choices accordingly. Another student, Clarence, read *The Economist* to which his father subscribed, as well as the *Wall Street Journal*, suggesting his identification

with his father. His choice of mostly academic-type texts shaped “the way he perceived himself in relation to others” (Richardson and Eccles, 2007, p.349) and guided his future reading choices. We could say that his *habitus* expressed through his identity or self-perception, helped to shape his reading choices. A third student, Antoinette, aligned her career choice with “the role model of her own English teacher together with her love of reading and writing fiction” (ibid, p.351) to the extent that she could see herself impressing on her students that reading is “funnn-damental” (p.352). She had initially wanted to be a lawyer but her identity as a reader was so strong that she could not see herself poring over legal tomes which did not interest her. It did not fit her identity in the same way that a future career as a teacher sharing her love of reading with her students did.

Reader identities can be gender-based, as evidenced by Richardson and Eccles (2007), above, and by Smith (2004) who found that the non-fiction reading habits of young boys in the UK reflected their socially constructed masculine identities “that includes being a reader” (p.15). These were greatly influenced by their fathers and included a strong interest in reading about football. A distinction which is overlooked in the literature on habits and, to some extent on reading, is the distinction between roles and identities. When we habitually identify with certain cultures – negotiated or prescribed - we take on and play certain roles and it is these roles which are witnessed by others, not the underlying identities. These roles may or may not accurately reflect underlying identities, a fact that is borne out by thespians everywhere. Hence, we talk about the need for role models rather than identity models, particularly in reading. The salience of this distinction is that as teachers, we see merely the roles our students play as readers in our classrooms. Therefore, we cannot determine the readers from the pretend-readers as the latter may play the role of impostor (Lendrum, 2005) pretending to have read the assigned texts or pretending to be able to read. We recall how Steven acted as an impostor, for example (ch.1.4.4). If we do not try to probe beyond such role-playing and come to know our students as readers we continue to be accomplices to and enablers of their deception. Attempts to alter students’ reading behavior require that we gain a better understanding of habit and habit formation, which I will in the next section (ch.2.5).

2.4.2.3 Arab identity

The Arabic language is “the major component of the Arab identity” (Al Qasmy, 2010) so that an Emirati student’s choice to read in Arabic both reflects and strengthens her Arab identity while another Emirati student’s choice never to read in Arabic may bring into question her Arab identity. In any setting “social signals are communicated that suggest what identities are valued or devalued” (Hall, 2010, p. 1795). Therefore, an Emirati student’s preferred literacy identity is shaped by the signals she receives within her

environment and which appear to suggest that, in the UAE, the English language is more highly valued than Arabic. A member of the Federal National Council (FNC), for example, states:

We're responsible for marginalizing the Arabic language ... I sent my children to English schools because I want them to learn English while I talk here about national identity, that's why I say we are the problem (Habboush, 2009).

This fits with Hall's (2010) description of identity capital which "often results in individuals being respected and having more power and advantages" (p.1795) than those without it. The FNC speaker is not alone in his desire to provide such identity capital for his children, a fact he recognizes with the use of the inclusive "we".

In view of the perceived threats to Emirati identity from globalization, there are calls by the FNC for it to be tackled within the school curricula (Khalaf and Habboush, 2009) and school principals highlight the need for students to be reminded of their culture and heritage. It may be more beneficial to differentiate between identity and culture because the former is changeable, always "evolving" (Canagarajah, 2004, p.117) and susceptible to influence by the environment, according to South African students attending an English medium university while, the latter, culture, is fixed, being "who you are and where you come from" (Parkinson and Crouch, 2011, p.88). This suggests that Emirati (prescribed) culture is present whenever an Emirati wishes to revert to it or to identify with it as evidenced on National day, on sporting occasions and in the carrying out of time-honoured traditions. However, there is every reason to be concerned about Emirati literacy identity in view of the strong emphasis on learning and speaking English in the country because, as Norton (1997) points out: "An investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, which changes across time and space" (Norton, 1997, p.411).

2.4.3 New Literacy Studies

People are literate if they can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in their group and also for enabling them to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for their own and the community's development (Muthwii, 2004b, p.40).

Down through the centuries literacy has come to mean various things including 'a learned person' in Cicero's time (from the Latin *litteratus*), the ability to read in Latin or "to read and write in one's own native language" (Wagner and Venezky, 1999, p.24), and a measurement of time spent at school, according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Wickens and Sandlin, 2007, p.283). It is no longer viewed in the singular (Wallace, 1992, p.22; UNESCO 2005) or as an autonomous, general or "self-contained ability to write and read" (Gee, 2000, p.1). It can be better understood within the framework of the "New Literacy Studies".

New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Barton, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005) has been inspired by investigations of “what literacy events and practices mean to users in different cultural and social contexts” (Street 2003, p.87). It questions the view that:

literacy ... will in itself lead to, for example, higher cognitive skills, improved economic performance ... irrespective of the social conditions and cultural interpretations of literacy associated with programmes and educational sites for its dissemination (Street 1984, p.417).

Instead, NLS favours a more ethnographic approach to studying and researching literacy that views it as ideological (Street, 1984), socially situated (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Barton, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005) within multiple sociocultural practices in and out of schools” (Gee 1999, p.358) which are “caught up with mind, body and soul as much as language” (ibid, p.359), “embedded within home, work, or educational settings” (Burns, 2003, p.19) and thus dependent on the social context for its identity: “what the particular practices and concepts of reading and writing are for a given society depends upon the context” (Street, 1984, p.1). Increasingly, reading is being seen as “a complex mix of decoding skills, cognitive processes and social experiences” which is “inherently contextual, relative and pluralistic” (Burns, 2003, p.19). Texts demand to be understood with regard to their “broad cultural and social roles and purposes” (ibid, p.19).

Cultural models are everyday theories... about the world that people socialized into a given Discourse share. [They] tell people what is typical or normal from the perspective of a particular Discourse (or ... set of them) (Gee, 2001, p.720).

Discourse is described as “a socio-culturally distinctive and integrated way of thinking, acting, interacting, talking and valuing connected with a particular social identity or role” (ibid, p.33) within which literacy and language are embedded. For example, three distinct sociocultural models of reading were identified by Brice Heath (1983) in three communities in the US where one (in Trackton) viewed and used literacy as a social activity. This represents a view in which “meaning resides not in the text, but in the consensus arrived at through community negotiations” and printed texts were often read aloud to others on a front porch, giving them an oral format.

NLS positions reading as: “part and parcel of ... specific social, cultural, institutional, and political practices” (Gee 1999, p.356) and the acquisition of literacy as “a socialization process” (Street, 1984, p.180) in which,

the words on the page do not carry independent meaning ... the literacy events ... are part of a larger literacy practice that includes local/state relations, and broad ideological assumptions about the ‘power’ of the written word (p.175).

Literacy can transform whole societies, cultures and nations (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005, p.xiii). The effect of the spread of English literacy in the UAE, for example, is certainly an example of such transformation, but, in many cases, it is happening at the expense of its Arabic literacy. Being literate is about “being able to actively recruit distinctive oral and written social languages for learning within socioculturally recognizable and meaningful academic Discourses” (Gee 1999, p.3) and such Discourses are acquired through “enculturation” (Gee, 1991, p.33) by communities or groups who have mastered them (Rogoff, 1990). This suggests that those who were educated through English will find it increasingly difficult to master meaningful Arabic Discourses if English continues to dominate.

An ideological model of literacy “concentrates on the overlap and interaction of oral and literate modes rather than stressing a ‘great divide’” (Street, 1984, p.3), examples of which come from Street’s (1984) study of literacy practices in Iran. He identified “commercial literacy” (ibid, p.40) which was acquired by generations of fruit producers and consisted of “a set of social practices deeply associated with identity and social position” (Street, 2000, p.23). He identified as “*maktab* literacy” the skills in critical thinking, discussion and analysis which were acquired in the Quranic schools (or *maktabs*) “long before western-style and state interventions” (Street 1995, p.41):

In the *maktab* the mullah would provide basic knowledge of the Qura’n, mostly through rote learning for younger pupils, although even here the process was not as one-dimensional and mindless as many western caricatures of it have suggested. At one level the students were learning many of the hidden conventions of literacy ... In this sense, then, *maktab* students cannot be deemed ‘illiterate’, although they may well appear so in government and formal school tests (ibid, p.41).

He reminds literacy teachers of the importance of acknowledging indigenous literacies which are mostly acquired outside of formal education (Street 1995, pp.108-111), of understanding people’s “beliefs and values and local perceptions of literacy rather than simply imposing them from outside” (Street, 1995, p.40) and of realizing that “literacy is not being introduced entirely fresh to ‘illiterate’ populations” (ibid, p.42). These points are often overlooked in the rush to raise literacy levels in developing countries (e.g. Greaney, 1996) without investigating existing literacies. Attempts by the Iranian state schools to replace the so-called backward literacy of rural communities with “modern literacy” in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in many young men being illiterate in the former and so unable to work on the farms when promised jobs did not materialize (Street, 1995, p.40). Academic literacy which focuses on enabling students to pass reading tests often fails to prepare them for life outside the classroom or “to think critically about social and political affairs” (Gee 1999, p.358).

2.4.3.1 Western literacy as imperial force

Wherever “Western conceptions of literacy [were forced] onto other cultures” (Street, 2005, p.417) indigenous peoples have been turned into “subservient subjects ... whose *identity as subjects* made them malleable to the dictates of the crown” (Collins and Blot, 2003, p.123):

Schooling for the subject population entails the acquisition of the language and literacy of the colonial power ... in the face of the imperial power, the language and literacy of the conquered peoples counted little, or not at all, save as obstacle to or means for the evangelizing and colonizing efforts of the conquerors (ibid, p.122).

Such an autonomous model of literacy “disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it and that can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal” (Street 2005, p.417). Literacy has been used to seal conquests by conquering powers (through the use of legal documents, for example) who both wrote the history of their subjects and interpreted their actions “in the framework of Western knowledge and belief” (ibid, p.129), so that indigenes were *represented* to themselves through the dominant Western literacy (ibid, p.130). It is interesting to see how the terminology of such literacy imperialism often lives on in the historic subconscious as exemplified by a student’s reflection on the weaker position accorded to Arabic in her private international school (ch.5.3.1): “It wasn’t powerful like the English, it was very weak; English took over, colonized it (IN301- 7:35)

2.4.3.2 Western influence on literacy practices in the UAE

Throughout the UAE’s rapid development, the influence of the West has been increasingly evident in all areas, with the prevalence of English which takes on the appearance of Arabic’s conjoined twin:

Almost all written information, both foreign and locally produced, from road signs to electricity bills to menus, appears in both English and Arabic (Peel, 2004, p.82).

The presence of English language TV stations, newspapers and magazines, movies, music and other forms of entertainment ensure that English remains popular in the UAE. Bookshops display the latest book titles almost as soon as they are published in the West from J. K.Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books to Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series. Western influence on literacy is also evident in young people’s use of the Internet. Peel (2004) found that third-level female Emirati students use English mainly for academic purposes, for sending emails and for shopping, games and movies but that they used Arabic for culture-related activities (ibid, p.156).

Dominant “Western” literacy has long been the desired literacy of the elite in most Arab countries, as exemplified by French literacy in Lebanon and Morocco and English in the Gulf countries, for example. Families are ready to pay very high fees so that that their offspring can study through English (Godwin,

2006) in schools and universities, most of which have adopted Western curricula. In some government schools Emirati children, as young as five, are being taught by native English teachers from North America – who do not speak Arabic.

Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that Arabic literacy is perceived to be marginalized (Troudi, 2007), both as a result of globalization and because of the dearth of quality texts in Arabic (Yaqoob and Abdullah, 2011). One parent asks: “When will we see the Arabic *Harry Potter*? ... *Harry Potter* should have been created in this region, not thousands of miles away” (Al Noman, 2011), a reminder of earlier days when Arabs were famous for their stories such as, *Alf Laila Wa Laila*, (*A thousand and one nights*). Al Noman has failed to find young adult literature in Arabic for her daughter and, referring to the more recent Vampire series, she asks:

Why is it that my children can read about vampires, werewolves and warring gods in English; but not in Arabic? And how would we get our children to enjoy Arabic and be proud of it if we think they should only read about a regular girl or boy in a regular neighborhood? Whilst there is of course a market for the mundane, what we need first is to get that foot into the door – through fantasy and science fiction in Arabic (ibid).

Here, we see the concept of culture remaining unseen until called on whereby “a claim to culture is itself a part of the process rather than a given” (Street 2000, p.19). Here, the parent is claiming Arab culture and some of its related literacies but she also wishes to acquire Arab cultural capital to pass on to her children. When Hussaim Fadel, an Arabic language publisher, announced that he had bought the rights to translate the Vampire books into Arabic it was heralded by a local newspaper (Khalaf, 2009) and prompted immediate interest from Arabs all over, many of whom had read them in English but were very keen to read them in Arabic, also.

Another literacy trend attributable to Western influence is the quest by many UAE establishments to be accredited by Western institutions and systems², a phenomenon I refer to as ‘accreditation culture’. Standards for procedures are prescribed in all areas of client service, involving extensive paper work and mandatory form-filling in English before any service can be provided. Indeed, it has been remarked that medical practice in the UAE has now become more like that in the US where doctors may spend less than five minutes talking to a patient and twice as long on the obligatory written literacy.

² Recent examples include: the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) which is the world's largest developer and publisher of International Standards. Universities need to be accredited by Western accreditation boards if they are to successfully compete to attract students.

Unofficially, the UAE adopts a “linguistic dualism whereby English is associated with business, modernity, and internationalism and Arabic is associated with religion, tradition, and localism” (Clarke, Ramanathan and Morgan, 2007, p.584). This *suggests* an alignment of each language according to distinct ways of doing certain cultures where Arabic appears to be associated with what could be described as predominantly prescribed cultures and English with predominantly negotiated cultures. However, both languages are used interchangeably within and across the different cultures, according to users’ preferences and linguistic abilities, which means that this alignment is not absolute. Students may choose to treasure and align themselves with some of their prescribed cultures such as Islam and Emirati heritage while continuing to be members of many global and “digital cultures” (Levy, 2007, p.6) where they surf the Internet in either language, depending on the purpose, content and context.

Picowye (2003) concluded about female Emirati university students’ use of the Internet that they “consciously chose what elements of global cultures they wish to appropriate while they simultaneously insist on preserving their own cultural values and practices” (p.1). I believe that while the UAE is a prescribed culture its young citizens are actively involved in doing negotiated Emirati culture whose future nobody can foresee. Rather than blindly adopting all things Western, third-level students in the UAE appear to claim what they want, reject what does not appeal to them and continue to shape and remake their many negotiated cultures, including reading culture.

2.5 Problematizing habit: making strange the ‘familiar’ concept of habit

Human engagement in the world is largely regulated by habit (Clark, Sanders, Carlson, Blanche and Jackson, 2007, p.7S).

The word habit was largely absent from the social science literature from the early 20th century as the social sciences sought to establish its own field of study separate from that of psychology (Camic, 1986), the latter of which viewed habit from a largely behaviourist perspective. According to Burkitt (2002) “few have taken the concept of habit or *habitus* seriously” (p.220), apart from Dewey (1922) and Bourdieu (1990) and even today, very few college sociology textbooks “mention habit ...and none discuss it extensively” (Swartz, 2002, p.61S). Severed from its scientific roots, the word is habitually used in everyday speech in a taken-for-granted meaning as regular, almost routinized behavior Therefore, my sources date from both before and after the split and include some of the more recent work on habit which is to be found in the field of occupational science.

The complexities inherent in forming research questions (ch.3.3.2) revealed themselves as colleagues wondered what I meant by habits and whether my participants *had* any reading habits. The first question demanded that I problematize the concept of habit, while the second would be answered by my research. Therefore, to check and minimize bias in my research question, I questioned this “most taken-for-granted aspect of human life” (Cutchin, 2007, p.50S) and eventually discovered how prevalent and powerful it is in all aspects of our lives. A view of habit as a common-sense concept (Blumer, 1931), suggests a sensed rather than an analyzed understanding, “sufficient for the crude demands of ordinary experience” (ibid, p.523). The phrase ‘reading habit’ is generally used in this manner in the literature with little reference to it as a scientific concept. Thanks to Blumer and other scholars, I was able to go beyond this common-sense view to find that all aspects of human behavior can be further understood by having a better knowledge of habit. For example, I could see a reading habit as situated in the environment (Dewey, 1922), institutionalized behavior (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), custom and ritual (Clarke et al, 2007), disposition to act, being of the body (Mauss, 1973), and, what I expected to be the most important, character (Dewey, 1922) affected by *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1989).

Here, I present a sample of the literature on the construct of habit and habit formation and end with my working definition of a leisure reading habit which guided my data gathering, keeping in mind that:

any slicing of a particular section of “reading” within a culture is necessarily not a clean cut, and that this is but an analytic tool for describing one part of an interlocking complex of habits, attitudes, and interactions (Johnson, 2000, p.606).

2.5.1 What is a habit?

The term habit generally denominates a more or less self-actuating disposition or tendency to engage in a previously adopted or acquired form of action (Camic, 1986, p.1044).

We know that “habits are patterns of human behavior” (Dunn, 2000, p.7) and that they can be simple or complex. We are told that “people acquire their habits from their habitats” (Garrison, 2002, p. 13S), particularly the social habitat, and that we share certain habits with animals with the difference that humans respond to the *meanings* in signs, rather than merely to signs as stimuli. A habit is a *propensity* to behave in a particular way in a particular class of situations (Hodgson, 2004, p. 652) which has been established through repeated behavior. It is much more than repeated behavior, however, and much more all-encompassing of our behavior than we might have thought. It has a strength or force (Swartz, 2002) whereby people do not choose to carry out the actions that they may have been doing for years but “are impelled to these acts, even though they lead them to their doom, by a force which is greater than they” (Murdoch, 1919, pp.599-600). Could it be a protean force, perhaps?

To describe the force of habit, Clark et al (2007, pp.8S-15S) use a metaphor of Proteus, a Greek mythological god of the sea who lived in a vast ocean, changed his shape frequently, aged as time went by and had predictive powers in foretelling the future. Similarly, our habits live in the vast subconscious side of our minds, often present themselves in different forms, become more entrenched with age and are able to predict future behavior because “repetitive habitual actions can lead to powerful, enduring patterns of behavior” (ibid, p.9S). Writing from the field of occupational therapy, Clark et al (2007) identify nine habit types, merely as a heuristic to enable us to study their features. In chapter 8 I will show how most habit types can be applied to many aspects of reading but here, I will focus on habit as *habitus* and as character or identity.

2.5.2 Habit as *habitus*

Clark et al's (2007) ninth habit type *habitus*, “permeates all aspects of a person's being” (Clark et al 2007, p.14S), forms the basis of our character (Burkitt, p.226), operates at both the individual level and at the level of social relationships and casts the deciding vote when both pull the individual in different directions. In other words, *habitus* determines how other personality factors influence particular modes of action (Camic, 1986, p. 1046). It is the non-reflexive part of ourselves which “we are forced to partially reflect upon whenever we want to refine or reconstitute the self (Burkitt, 2002, p.219). A student's *habitus* is her personal history acted out at any moment. It predisposes her to act in a certain way, as it consists of:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53).

Myrberg and Rosen (2009) describe it thus:

a system of shared dispositions that generates perceptions, appreciations, and actions such as literacy practices. *Habitus* is generated by experience but it is also a generating principle that shapes further experience (p.696).

Therefore, *habitus* conditions us so that it almost predetermines our behaviour and serves as a mechanism for cultural reproduction as it “shapes further experience” (Myrberg and Rosen, 2009, p.696). Yet, it equips us with the tools – abilities and capacities – to help us shape our own environment; while it predisposes individuals toward certain ways of behaving it also allows for individual agency. Reason alone cannot change a person's behavior; we need to also change their *habitus* (Burkitt, 2002).

Habitus embodies cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 2002) which can be described as sets of skills and knowledge which give people a code which enables them to appreciate other people's cultural capital – as in the case of appreciating certain authors and books (Myrberg and Rosen, 2009, p.697)., for example. It is formed by the *habitus* of a family in their daily interactions and by the class to which an individual belongs, and it changes as the individual's position within a field changes. Parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge that are needed to succeed in school and students whose parents are uneducated may lack a certain cultural capital. In one of the few studies which look at a reader's *habitus*, Hamston and Love (2005) look at the leisure reading habits of reluctant adolescent Australian boys in relation to those of their parents. Although the boys had inherited a lot of cultural capital from their parents they used their structured structures as re-structuring structures to alter their reading *habitus* in resistance to parental reading choices, reminding us that *habitus* and cultural practices are not predetermined but dynamic (p.198).

Accrual of capital is exemplified by formal education and having a university degree is one way of guaranteeing educational capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Capital requires the know-how of the *habitus* to convert it in the social field and this requires that the players in the field would have a similar *habitus* so that they can recognize it as capital, otherwise it lacks meaning. It is a valuing process “founded on cognition and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.22) by others. Students' reading ability is recognized in the classroom which gives them cultural capital but, we may wonder if students' *habitus* recognize academic reading so that it becomes cultural capital and whether their leisure reading is recognized by their teachers so that they can convert it into cultural capital.

2.5.3 Habit as character or identity

In a previous section (ch.2.4.3) I explored the concept of identity, looked at how our many identities serve as classification systems which guide how we view ourselves and others and how we think and act, and presented some examples of reader identities. Identity closely resembles the view of habit as character (Dewey, 1922) acted on by *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1989). When we talk about students' reading habits, we are really referring to who they are as readers and their specific personality characteristics which guide their reading-related decisions. Linking identity and character together, Erikson (1968, p.19) refers to the following extract from a letter by William James, as the best description of a sense of identity:

I have often thought that the best way to define a man's character would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply

and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says:
“This is the real me!” (James, 1920, p.199).

Character or identity is primarily concerned with individual qualities – which have been shaped by *habitus* (Clark et al, 2007, p.13S) and it is “the whole manner, turn, cast, or mould of the personality” (Camic, 1986, p.1046). A student who identifies herself as a reader, for example, thinks, speaks and acts as a reader at certain times and in certain situations. I use the term identity or identities to refer to the concept of habit as character as it is more widely used in the literature. I believe that our habitual ways of doing (Fearon, 1999) stem from our habitual ways of thinking and that the mental images we create have the power to shape our identities, which, in turn, affect our behavior. The preventative power of such habitual ways of thinking drive home very strongly the effect of habit in our lives because the inability to see ourselves doing a certain action is likely to result in behavior-avoidance. A student who has habitually thought of herself as a weak reader, for example, is unlikely to see herself as a potential reader and so avoids reading. Such conceptualizations or ways of thinking always start with our actual experience, because, as Dewey (1922) points out, we cannot conjure up the idea of something if we have not experienced it. This brings us full circle to the importance of successful or positive reading-related experiences in determining our ways of thinking about reading which in turn determine our reading behavior and reading identities. Character is largely formed in childhood but is open to modification later on because the habits on which it is built are not merely mindless, repeated actions but come with tools or “arts” (Dewey, 1922, p.15) - such as skills, order, discipline and more - which can be used in their own reshaping.

2.5.4 Forming and changing habits

If we consider the formation of a reading habit to be a desirable one, there is a sense of urgency about it as habit formation should preferably happen under the age of twenty-five (James, 1890; Andrews, 1903, p.144), before the adult mould is cast. It requires four conditions: “repetition of the mental processes involved, attention to them, the intensity of the experience, and plasticity of the nervous system” (Andrews, 1903, p.148). In other words, both acquiring a new habit and changing an old one requires having a strong desire for that change (James, 1890; Murdoch, 1919), using intelligence to convert that desire into systematic plans (Dewey, 1922, p.255), not allowing an exception to happen until the change has been well established (James, 1890) and exercising the new habit as often as possible (James, 1890, p.124). Desire to form a new habit as an idea, depends on prior actual experience of elements of the targeted habit (Dewey, 1922), as I mentioned above, which means that a student is unlikely to wish for something which she has not experienced in some way. When Murdoch (1919) used to teach her student-

nurses to form a new habit using James' advice above, she insisted on two conditions, both of which are relevant to leisure reading: (1) the planned action (habit) must have intrinsic interest for the person where the student feels a need for it and wants to form the habit, and she must engage in "*interested and attentive repetition*" (ibid, p.506), not merely any kind of repetition: "Attentive interest, with the consequent attendance of satisfaction upon performing the habit, is an essential element of the best type of voluntary habit formation" (ibid, p.506). (2) Students must also analyze the planned new habit in terms of situation and response with regard to the habit it is replacing, whereby a previous situation which regularly produced a certain response or action is examined closely and a different action is planned to be repeated in each upcoming instance of the situation.

An example of a reader who developed a reading habit by using some of the above maxims is Emirati author, Al- Sayegh (2007), who describes how, as a student in the UK, he used to watch commuters reading "fat books" and when he tried to emulate them, he failed. When a friend suggested that he select a topic that he found interesting and read about it, he followed the following sequence of steps, which are similar to those outlined in Murdoch (1919): he had a strong desire to acquire a reading habit, he adopted an intelligent plan to make it happen, "I ... chose a topic I fancied. I read booklets first" (Al-Sayegh, 2007, p.109) and exercised the activity as often as possible: "Now I read all the time, I always have a book by my side" (ibid, p.109). Where a student has developed a habit of avoiding reading because she needs to use a dictionary all the time when she reads, for example, the situation is that the book is too difficult and a required response would be to find a book at an easier level, or, to read through and guess the word meanings from context.

Our habits are formed within the constraints of our actions so that even when those constraints are removed, very often our "habits dispose us to act or think in the same old way" (Hodgson, 2004, p.656), as exemplified by reaching for a light switch when we know that the electricity has been cut. This suggests that, for students who do not read for leisure because of a perceived lack of reading ability, for example, when that ability is improved, their reading habits need to be readjusted; they will not simply adjust themselves. In order to change habit we must attempt to better understand how habit and environment intersect and work to change both so that we do not use a purely rational approach, according to Swartz (2002) in the field of occupational therapy. Instead, changing or forming habits requires "long periods of practical training to internalize particular dispositions" (p.68S). In other words, we cannot turn our students into readers simply by explaining how beneficial reading is. We must provide many positive reading experiences so as to bring about internal dispositional change which is at the core

of reader identity because, as Hardy (2008a) points out: “even if reading behaviour changes, the reading construct remains the same, so the individual still thinks of herself as a non-reader” (p.13).

2.6 My working definition of a leisure reading habit

Reading habits are the measures of how often, what, and how well adults read (Scales and Rhee, 2001, p.176).

In contrast with Scales and Rhee (2001) above, I was not concerned with how often, how well or what students read for leisure, but approached my research with a loosely shaped working definition of a reading habit as having an interest in reading a variety of texts for a variety of reasons. As we will see in chapter four, this was later reshaped from the empirical ground, as my research progressed.

Based on my review of the literature, I draw a definition of students’ reading habits as students whose dispositions toward reading have been generated by their *habitus* acting on and being acted on by her identity as-reader. Such dispositions make it likely that they read whenever they get the opportunity to do so and that their choice of reading materials is guided in by their identities as-readers in a circulatory relationship whereby their identities, in turn, are continually shaped by their reading choices. Leisure reading is reading in its holistic sense that does not acknowledge a firm dividing line between academic and leisure reading but where acknowledges that students may read any text which interests them, as their reading habits are defined by their wanting to read as opposed to having to read. They may combine enjoyment with a purpose in reading, echoing an Ofsted report in the UK: (*Reading for purpose and pleasure*, 2004):

Although some schools were successfully raising reading attainment and were teaching pupils the skills they needed to read with accuracy and understanding, few were successfully engaging the interest of those who, though competent readers, did not read for pleasure. Schools seldom built on pupils' own reading interests and the range of reading material they read outside school (p.4).

The best summary of a definition of a reading habit from the literature is a reversal of Csikszentmihali’s (1990) description of academic reading so that a leisure reading habit is where students spend time both in and out of class reading texts that they choose on subjects in which they are interested for reasons of their own.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the problem of a rolling history in many literature reviews, I looked at the antecedents of both leisure reading and academic reading and the problematic divide between the two and some of the key factors related to leisure reading. I also explored sociocultural views of literacy and reading together with the importance of identity, I looked at the concept of habit and focused on two of Clark et al's (2007) nine habit types as being most relevant to my study, ending with my working definition of a leisure reading habit. In chapter three I will present my research methodology.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction: research topic, aims and theoretical setting

My data analysis was guided mainly by a grounded theory approach which includes coding or conceptualizing from data, identifying emerging categories and their properties through constant comparison, saturating those categories, identifying a core category and writing the theory. Here, I present the topic and aims of my research, I outline the intricacies of writing a research question, give a comprehensive overview of ethical procedures as a backdrop to my own, explain my choice of research approach or methodology and describe how my data was gathered and analyzed.

3.1.1 Research topic and aims

My research topic is an investigation of the leisure reading habits of female Emirati university students. The aim of my research is to learn about my participants' leisure reading habits and practices, including what they read and how they choose their reading items, why they read, why some do not read, when and where they read, and what form of encouragement they are given to read and by whom, so as to present theoretical insights into ways of promoting reading among our students.

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective of the larger research setting

I view the larger setting for my research, namely the conservative Arabian Gulf countries, as having elements of modern functionalist sociological theory within it, as described by Kendall:

The social world exists as a whole unit or system consisting of interrelated, functioning parts. The parts of a system have meaning only in relation to the whole ... In terms of individuals and families, functionalism emphasizes the role of the individual in maintaining the functioning of the family and the role of the family in maintaining the functioning of the greater society (Kendall, 1999, p.744).

The role of the individual is to maintain family and society as static and orderly units so that when major decisions are being made, about where to study, which degree program to choose or whom to marry, for example, the family's wishes and preferences are considered. This is particularly true of the females as "the family" is often represented by fathers, husbands or older brothers.

Functionalist theory is inherently "normative, evaluative, and conservative" (Kendall, 1999, p.744), one which usually rejects the idea that there could be any abnormalities within it. Only recently in my research setting, do we see children with special needs being recognized as having a right to education,

for example, as evidenced by a Ministry of Education ruling to include them in regular classes in government schools. Functionalist theory also presents a picture of a more orderly social life than that supported by empirical evidence. This is certainly true to some extent about my research setting but, one could ask, “How can one tell if there is no empirical evidence – especially in a fairly ‘closed’ society?” Living and working in a society for fourteen years allows one to witness and learn, to some extent, particularly when working closely with students but, yet, by its definition, a closed society keeps its secrets.

Symbolic interactionist theory (Blumer, 1969, drawing on the work of Dewey and Mead) challenged functionalist theory resulting in a focus on the meaning that things have for people. The Blumer-Mead model holds that:

human beings act toward the physical objects and other beings in their environment on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them ... these meanings derive from the social interaction (communication, broadly understood) between and among individuals ... these meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process (Blumer, 1969, p.233).

I see my participants’ lives and their activities, including their reading, as moving somewhere within and between functionalist theory and symbolic interactionism, where life is viewed as being more fluid and dynamic. Blumer sees symbolic interactionism as a research approach, where the researcher uses interpretation to try to understand the meaning-making processes used by his participants by “understanding a situation from the participant’s point of view” (Jeon, 2004, p.250). This describes to a great extent my approach to my research.

3.2 Ethical considerations

Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm ... the protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative (Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., and Wynaden, D., 2001, p.93).

3.2.1 Concerns about ethical behavior in academia

The following statement can be found under the heading, Ethics, in an unpublished 2005 doctoral thesis “Informed consent was obtained ... The students remained anonymous ... All results were honestly reported”. It is not clear if such brief accounts signify a drifting away from serious ethical considerations, but there is concern in academia about possible lapses in this area, as evidenced by such phrases as, “ethics failure” (Bruhn, 2008, p.18), “ethical slips” (Alsmadi, 2008, p.158) “ethical infractions” (Ferguson, Masur, Olson, Ramirez, Robyn & Schmalin, 2007, p.189) and misbehaving or “sinning”

(Wadman, 2005). These are often caused by a rush to publish (DeVries, Martinson and Anderson, 2006) or by what Bruhn (2008) calls “value dissonance”, where the researcher’s values may clash with those of colleagues or administrators.

Flyvbjerg (2006), also, expresses his concern at what he sees as a sidelining of ethical behavior, pointing to the curious fact that of the three intellectual virtues identified by Aristotle (350 BC/1976), *episteme* (scientific knowledge), *techne* (technical know-how) and *phronesis* (ethics), only *phronesis* does not have a modern-day equivalent. To him, this indicates that science may have side-lined ethics in its quest for scientific and technical knowledge. Alsmadi (2008) suggests that standards in Arab “institutionalized ethical conduct in research, especially with respect to researcher’s obligations to human subjects in data collection” (p.158) do not compare well with those upheld in “various western contexts” (p.158). In my particular research context, the Arab world, the following accounts from researchers with a ‘Western perspective’, who carried out research in Arab or Muslim communities, may add a different perspective to that suggestion.

3.2.2 Unethical behavior or cultural perspective?

In a paper delivered to the British Educational Research Association on doing research with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Education (MOE), Harold (2005) describes how she planned to follow the same ethical procedures she had practiced throughout seventeen years of research in a Western-type education system: “Using the protocols with which I was familiar, I developed an information sheet and consent form for participants in the MOE project” (p.3) only to be told that it would not be necessary to get Ministry of Education teachers’ signatures for her research. Later, on reading Clyne’s (2001) interpretation of a similar event in a Muslim community in Australia, she realized that she had witnessed something which could not be governed by any ethics committee or, perhaps, which needed to be recognized and written into all documents dealing with ethical procedures in doing research with human subjects:

Muslim culture is high context valuing the relationships of trust and personal interactions more than formal documents. ... They would be offended to fill in a consent form, which implied that more than their presence was required. University ethics committees are rather mono-cultural and do not seem able to accept that each culture has different ways of operating (Donohue Clyne, 2001).

I, too, followed “the protocols with which I was familiar” and requested my (Muslim) participants’ written consent, although they viewed their cooperation with me as a gesture of support and friendship and not as signees to a contract. This was exemplified by their repeated inquiries of, “How is your

research going, Miss?” and comments such as, “If you want my help I am ready at any time, really, Miss”. Such ethical considerations may or may not partially account for what Alsmadi (2008) casually observed above; after all, concerns about increases in unethical and unprofessional behavior in academic institutions (Bruhn, 2008, p.17) know no geographical boundaries. The concern expressed in the literature is followed by calls for researchers to pay increased attention to ethical behaviour in all areas of their research. Such increased attention could address the question: can a one-size ethics uniform fit all contexts and should we insist that it does?

Insistence on written consent can interfere with researcher-participant rapport (Janovicek, 2006, p.164) or can be “contentious” (Louw and Delpont, 2006), especially in areas where literacy levels are low, which prompts suggestions for the acceptance of verbal consent in certain cases (Bakker, 2006). In the Arab world, widely known as an oral tradition, should ethics committees, therefore, honour oral consent as it is culturally honoured? Does my participant’s written consent give me more authority as a researcher to take seriously the data she gives me than if she had given me that permission orally? I agree with Guillemin and Gillam (2004) that the real consent lies within the interactions between researcher and participant,

In these interactions lie the possibilities of respecting the autonomy, dignity, and privacy of research participants and also the risks of failing to do so ... It is in these interactions that the process of informed consent really occurs - not on the pieces of paper that an ethics committee peruses (p.275).

We may never have a consensus on how informed consent should be given, as, “there are no hard and fast rules about written versus oral consent” (Bakker, 2006, p.25) but, we may agree to accept that it could be given differently in different situations. Two more important points on informed consent are: (1) that it should be just that, informed (Banister, 2007; Alsmadi, 2008) and (2) that it should be ongoing (Haverkamp, 2005) to cover situations as they arise. In my situation, I frequently sought ongoing consent verbally. In the next section, I will outline my ethical procedures and explain how two ethical issues had a direct bearing on my research, namely: the added ethical challenges of doing qualitative research and the researcher-participant relationship.

3.2.3 My ethical approach

I secured my institution’s Human Subjects Committee’s permission to carry out research and followed their guidelines on ethical procedures which included securing my participants’ written permission to access and use anonymously various types of written or spoken data (See Appendix 1). I used pseudonyms and numbers to protect my participants’ real identities in my report.

Researcher-participant fiduciary relationship

When teachers involve their students in their research, as I did, they have “double agency ... fulfilling two roles simultaneously in relation to the same individuals” (Ferguson, Yonge and Myrick, 2004, p.5). It is a fiduciary relationship where students (in this case the less powerful group) believe that their teacher will not put her own needs before their best interests. It raises ethical issues such as, trust, imbalance of power and students’ rights to withhold consent, should they wish to do so. There is a constant tension between a researcher’s need to gather data and the participants’ rights to privacy, and the authors caution that use of such a “captive population” (ibid, p.9) might be unethical. In my research setting, most of my participants were at one time, my students, either before or during my research. Although I tried to avoid any possible breach of ethics and minimize “perceived” pressure to participate in my research by stressing the voluntary nature of my students’ participation in my research, I concede that my relationship with them as their teacher probably did prevent some from opting out. In my last cohort (Spring 2009) five students decided not to fill in the snapshot surveys, which reassured me that they felt so empowered. Interestingly, it started with one student declining, which then encouraged four more to do the same. I tried to further minimize this perceived teacher-researcher pressure by occasionally distributing the Yesterday Snapshot Survey as my students were leaving my class or during the last five minutes of class time, which allowed them to complete the surveys later on in their own time, and drop them into my office when they were ready. This gave them a silent, invisible right of refusal. Similarly, my interviewees “came willingly” having either volunteered or agreed to my request to be interviewed.

My participants and I came to respect each other in our respective roles. They saw someone who took a genuine interest in not only *investigating* but also *encouraging* their leisure reading. Apart from the five who dissented to take part, the only pressure that was evident could be called ‘good pressure’ as exemplified by the comment: “*I feel guilty when I see this survey because I did not read anything*” which was said both in my office and in the classroom, the implication being that some students would read so as to have something to write in the survey. This information was volunteered by a student watching another student hand in her survey in my office. A more important implication of this statement is the level of honesty at which my participants and I interacted with each other within the research setting. In other words, my participants felt that they could tell me exactly what was going on in their lives as readers or as non-readers, which was the aim of my study. Student honesty has also been noted by many other faculty members. Another student asked if it would help my research if she were to start using the university library (which she had never used before) so that I could get data from her borrowing records. With a wish not to purposely disturb the research setting – and it would not have added much to her

reading experiences as she was already reading avidly without the help of the university library - I explained to her that I would not like her to alter her reading behavior just for me³.

My research helped to generate what Ferguson et al (2004) call “a learning environment ... facilitative of student learning and conducive to the promotion of critical reflection” (p.2). It resulted in students reflecting on their reading practices with honesty and openness, a desirable outcome for both teacher/researcher and student/participant.

3.2.4 Ethical dilemmas inherent in doing qualitative research

Qualitative research raises “recurring ethical dilemmas” (Janesick, 1998, p.41) because of its fluid design and live interactions with people, to the extent that some *quantitatively* trained researchers consider qualitative research *itself* to be an ethical dilemma! (Haverkamp, 2005, p.147-8). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) expound on the unexpected difficulties that a qualitative researcher can face in the field, referring to them as “ethically important moments” (pp. 262; 265). They claim that neither ethics committee approval (“procedural ethics”), nor the actions of the researcher in the field (“ethics in practice” p.263), can deal with such difficulties, and they suggest engagement in ongoing reflexivity to bridge the two. I see this as an example of Aristotle’s *phronesis* (ch.3.2.1), which ensures the wise or judicial use of both knowledge (*episteme*) and action or know-how (*techne*): *Phronesis* is a sense or a tacit skill for doing the ethically practical rather than a kind of science (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.372).

Reflexivity brings an essential sensitivity to the ability to deal with problems as they arise, what Bakker (2006) refers to as casuistic thinking, or the ability to weigh various ethical issues (p.17). Reflexivity played a big role in my ethical considerations, particularly because of the fiduciary relationship I had as teacher-researcher with my students-as-participants. One “ethically important moment” came at the end of an interview with participant #63, when she said that her English was not very good and I hastened to assure her that it was. Her response, ever honest, was, “No, miss, I know myself, it is not good”. I repeated my praise twice more to be greeted by her honesty each time. In that ethically important moment, I learned to respect my students’ self-evaluations more than my impressions or desire to flatter.

A second important moment, which I navigated even less successfully, in my opinion, came when the same participant returned to the university after a one-year absence which saw the passing away of her sister. After chatting for a while, I went against my inner cautionary voice and asked her if she was

^{3 3} At that time, I was overly cautious not to ‘disturb’ the research setting. Now, in retrospect, I realize that I could have viewed and used it as another opportunity to gather rich data. It could have been an event in the same way that a book exhibition was an event.

reading anything. I found my immediate self-castigation mirrored in her facial features as which appeared to silently admonish me – in as much as a student can admonish a teacher but, this was more than a student. Here was a mature person respectfully guiding her teacher away from what may have been a lapse of judgment on my part (at least that was my reading of it) - in that ethically important moment. On reflection, I saw it as a juggling of my two roles, one as caring, empathetic teacher and human being and the other as anxious researcher driven to follow any chance of uncovering data wherever it may lead; it was an ethically important moment where action preceded reflection on my part. However, that all-important dual relationship which we had built up over two years, had already banked sufficient currency (by always putting my student/participant's well-being first) to tide us over such a moment.

A third ethically important moment came when, after ten minutes as I interviewed participant #278, I realized that I could have ended the interview there and then as she was not a reader and so, in my calculating view, had little to add to my data. I decided that it would be unethical to end it just because there was nothing in it for me as she had willingly given her time to help me in my research, so I listened to her plans for the future and her current interests, which she was happy to share with me for a further 40 minutes. Other ethically important moments were when I made on-the-spot decisions not to distribute the Yesterday Snapshot surveys because my students needed the valuable class time or because of the dynamics or atmosphere within the class; I was sensitive to the mood of my participants (in retrospect, probably too sensitive). When the surveys were distributed in a colleague's class, some students were heard to complain, "Oh no, not this again", so, in my own class, I often presumed that there was a similar, silent, inward groan.

3.2.5 A summary of my ethical considerations

My ethical framework facilitated to the best of my ability the gathering of data that my participants willingly provided with honest intent as data about their reading habits, to the best of their knowledge. Overall, my ethical framework drew on the following elements: autonomy, beneficence and justice (Orb et al, 2001; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Ferguson et al, 2004; Louw and Delpont, 2006), to some extent, the belief that "the ends justify the means" (Ferguson et al, 2004, p.4) which allows for more coercive action when participants will benefit in the end, "deontological ethics" (p.4) in which the researcher is obligated to do the morally right thing, confidentiality (Polkinghorne, 2005; Framework for Research Ethics, 2010; Haverkamp, 2005; Janovicek, 2006; Ferguson et al, 2007; Alsmadi, 2008; Yu, 2008); and respect for participants and the information they gave me (Louw and Delpont, 2006).

3.3 Research question

Qualitative research design begins with a question (Janesick, 1998, p.38).

For the purposes of writing my research proposal, my research questions were articulated thus: (1) what are the leisure reading habits of female Emirati University students? and (2) What affects those habits? Upon starting my investigative process, however, I was obliged to reexamine presumptions inherent in my research questions because, in qualitative research, where the researcher is the main research instrument, the research question is an extension of that instrument and must be investigated before it can, in turn, investigate. In other words, in addition to peeling back the “layers of mystery” (Holliday, 2002, p.4) in my research setting, I should also peel back the “layers of mystery” in my terminology; every word and phrase must be made to seem strange.

3.3.1 Problematizing the questions

In keeping with Janesick’s (1998) dance metaphor for qualitative research, where “dance is about lived experience” (pp. 36-7), my research set out to investigate the lived and living reading experiences of my participants. I entered the field with little more than a curiosity, a question mark rather than a question, the latter of which came gradually into focus as my research progressed, using my two initial research questions as global positioning systems (GPS) to keep me from straying from my research aims. Just as the data must come from the research ground, so too, must the research question be shaped by the constraints of the ground, in a truly grounded qualitative approach, so as to minimize researcher bias. As with all other aspects of language, questions are culture-bound, and it is possible that few questions are truly neutral. Here is a reflection on this topic from my research diary:

[Diary #3: Memo - April 12th, 2007]

Whenever I work in the university’s Writing Centre, I always ask students who come for help the same question: “How many times did you read your paper before coming here?” They invariably start with a random “four times” and, after further probing and removal of my expectations by suggesting the options: “It could be no time, once, twice, three times, etc”, they end up with “no time”, accompanied by an excuse or justification. One of my own students explained it thus: “They want to tell you what you want to hear, to please you”. If I ask “Did you do XYZ?”, the response is likely to be a justification of an action taken or not taken (depending on whether or not it was supposed to have been taken), followed by the rhetorical, “What can I do?” rather than an answer to the intended meaning of the question, a (neutral?) yes or no.

This alerted me, as researcher, to the fact that answers to questions are usually cultural and contextual slices, which is good news for a researcher who wants all that rich data. However, questions are also carved from the questioner's own culture and context and, before they can be used as research instruments they need to be investigated for their cultural and contextual residue. The qualitative researcher, therefore, is faced with a question of questions: how to identify and articulate her research.

3.3.2 A question of questions

How is inquiry possible? (Nickles, 1981, p.89).

The seemingly impossible nature of inquiry hinges around the fact that "either the possible solutions to a problem are known or they are not" (Nickles, 1981, p.89). Does that mean that we reflect onto our respondents some of our own culture and context in both shaping and asking our questions? We must, at least, presume a shared or similar language or way of thinking, but, Nickles' point is more specific than that. He wonders, if you do not know what you are looking for, how can you articulate the problem and "how could you know what it is?" (Nickles, 1981, p.89). You will not know it even if you find it, while, if you know what you are looking for, you have already found it. In other words, "stating the problem is half the solution!" (Nickles, 1981, p.113; Haig, 1995, p.3)⁴. In what he calls a constraint-inclusion model of problems, Nickles (1981) claims that a problem has constraints, or terms of adequacy, and a demand for its solution. Research questions remain ill-defined at the start (Haig, 1995; Robson, 2002) and it is the basic task of the scientific inquirer "to better structure our research problems by building in the various required constraints as our research proceeds" (Haig, 1995, para 6).

My initial expression of curiosity was free of all constraints except for the word, reading, so that my research question looked like this: "..... reading ...?" and I gradually built in constraints such as, leisure and habit, as I gathered my data. This was often a circuitous movement because, if a word was too constraining - such as, the adjective, leisure, for example - I removed it: "..... ~~leisure~~ reading?". Using the phrase 'leisure reading' in my research question would have implied that I knew what I was looking for, according to Nickles' line of reasoning, and that my understanding of the concept of leisure reading was a perfect match with that of my participants or, in Nickles' view, that I already had half of the

⁴ Anyone who has reported a malfunctioning machine (printer or photocopier, for example) as "not working", knows the frustration of being told "It *is* working; it just needs toner!" or "It *is* working; it just has a paper jam." This raises the question of how to report a machine that is not doing what it usually does? If all we know is that it is not doing its job, we resort to the generic complaint, "The printer is not working". On the other hand, a car mechanic, when faced with a strange noise, starts to eliminate possible causes until he has narrowed it down to one or two; his knowledge of engines is far superior to that of the average user of printers and photocopiers and he is already starting to solve the problem.

answer. I believe that in true grounded theory the research question must also be grounded in the research setting through its data. I needed, therefore, to problematize my whole research question and the concepts I was using in order to minimise bias and identify the constraints of my problem from within the reality of the research setting.

3.4 My research methodology

3.4.1 Initial data gathering

I prepared self-reflective journals for my first-semester students attending my general education classes, in which they were encouraged to reflect on how they were coping with university life. These were optional and were not graded and were intended as a medium through which I could get to know my students and offer advice where necessary. They served two purposes, because, as both researcher and teacher, I wished to explore the reading habits of my students as part of a larger exploration of how they were coping, in general. The journal had ten sections, two of which asked about their leisure reading. Here, they were required to fill in a weekly reading diary, based on Day and Bamford's model (1998, p.88), showing the amount of time they spent reading for leisure, daily. These were easily filled in with what became repetitive, meaningless numbers which I had no way of verifying, unless I questioned each student about her entry. This raised some questions: (1) If I was going to engage in such a follow-up dialogue, shouldn't it be included in my data? (2) What did these numbers really tell me about my participants' reading habits or about them as readers? (3) Did I really know what I wanted to find out or would I only know when I found it? I was certain that there had to be more to investigate on the subject.

In another section of their self-reflective journals, called, Me as Reader, they were required to write a paragraph about themselves as readers both Now, and Looking Back. The information which many wrote there was rich and informative and told me much more about these female Emirati university students as readers than mere figures did. It was brought home quite clearly to me that my investigation should use a qualitative approach because, as Smith (2004) writes:

Reading is never an abstract, meaningless activity, although it is frequently studied in that way by researchers and theorists and still taught in that way to many learners. Readers always read something, they read for a purpose, and reading and its recollection always involves feelings as well as knowledge and experience. Reading can never be separated from the intentions and interests of readers or from the consequences that it has on them (p.178).

3.4.2 Choosing a qualitative approach

There is no “best type” of research. There is only good questions matched with appropriate procedures of inquiry ... driven by the researcher, not the method (O’Leary 2004: 9).

The aim of my research was to investigate my participants’ reading experiences and interests, in order to produce results that we can count *on*, rather than merely count. While statistics play an important role in many research studies, I needed to look beyond them to uncover my participants’ experiences and the meanings they accorded them. There is no such person as the average reader! My research participants are multi-dimensional beings living multi-directional, multi-faceted, non-linearly sequenced lives (except chronologically) and their reading habits – my research topic – are embedded somewhere within that “mélange” (Holliday, 2002, p.44). I therefore required a research approach which would enable a clumsy researcher to metaphorically dance her way through the research setting, making occasional leaps of understanding, often going in circles, choreographing her own movements and having her movements, in turn, choreographed by her participants’ movements, melody lines and rhythms, so as “to describe, explain, and make understandable the familiar in a contextual, personal and passionate way” (Janesick, 1998, pp.52).

In a purely quantitative approach the researcher determines from the start the direction the research will take, thus, ruling out any unanticipated discoveries. The researcher as ‘expert’ decides the possible range of answers to questions, and invariably rules out the complexities inherent in most research settings. For example, if someone surveyed some female university teachers’ reading habits they might conclude that they are part of the *Washington Times* readership or members of Oprah’s book club, but those labels do not begin to describe their identities as readers. Relying completely on data from questionnaires can increase concerns over the validity and reliability of the data gathered for when a student writes that she read for two hours yesterday, a quantitative approach offers no way of verifying that. In a qualitative approach, however, I can follow up her answers with more probing questions about why she read and to what extent she liked it and uncover that special information that only she can initiate about her reading.

Conversations in which both researcher and participant discuss books as readers, can provide further validation of quantitative data because they provide an opportunity for the researcher to notice participants’ facial expressions while talking about their reading, their ability to cross reference with other titles or authors, the way they describe their favourite parts of a book and their overall evaluation of reading materials, which can often result in unique expressions, such as: “They are just not producing books nowadays like they used to!” [C 96] from a 20-year old, or: “I read, read, read but all that I

understand is *a, and* and *the*” [IN49&88]. Sole reliance on a survey would not have produced such rich descriptions.

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials ... that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p3).

3.4.3 Summary of justification for using a qualitative approach

If, as Wile (2007) and many others believe: “No two individuals read the same text in the same way” (p.11), then when faced with survey questions, no two respondents will read the questions in the same way, which affects its overall validity. The strengths of using a qualitative approach can be summed up by an analogy used by Piantanida (1982), and cited in Piantanida, Tananis and Grubs (2004) where she described data as stones gathered from the beach. In attempting to analyze them, two options are available: sorting them into piles according to their properties or creating a conceptual picture or mosaic where each stone contributes to the overall picture according to its properties. In qualitative research, each concept is carefully positioned in relation to what it contributes to an overall understanding of the research situation. In my study of students’ reading habits, the role that teachers or parents play in encouraging students to read, for example, would require exploring the many different ways in which such encouragement is given, instead of merely compiling instances of such encouragement.

Further reasons for using a qualitative approach with my participants include the following:

- A qualitative approach allowed me to search for answers to the “Why” and “How” questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10) with regard to students’ reading habits: “The ability to explain, or build explanations, lies at the heart of qualitative research.” (Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor (2003, p.15).
- A qualitative report is more accessible and easier to read than many quantitative studies (Creswell, 1998; Byrne, 2001), particularly when the intended audience includes a wide range of people - including many from the ESL/EFL field - who are concerned about leisure reading.
- It offers a chance to tell the participants’ individual stories from their own point of view as “a complex narrative that takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity” (Creswell, 1998, p.15).

- It places my participants in the role of ‘experts’ on the topic of their reading habits and me as researcher in the role of research instrument “through which data are collected” (Sorrell and Redmond, 1995, p.118), particularly when carrying out interviews.
- It offers the necessary flexibility in research design that permits me to follow any new leads in the data.
- Finally, it enables me to spend an extended period of time in the field to obtain thick descriptions (Ryle, 1968) of my participants’ reading habits, where no prior theories were available to explain them (Creswell 1998:17), to view changes over time, hear participants’ difficulties as they struggle to become readers, examine the role of different reading-related events in their lives, and make people-driven interpretations which may “lead easily to action within the educational setting” (Grady, 1998, p.11) - a desired outcome of my research. Qualitative researchers “seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.8).

Having decided on the need for a qualitative approach, I had many methods to choose from while yet avoiding ‘methodolatry’ (Janesick, 1998). Grounded theory offers a set of analytic tools and a chance to generate theory and therefore, it seems the most appropriate approach for my research.

3.4.4 Grounded theory

The rigor of grounded theory approaches offers qualitative researchers a set of clear guidelines from which to build explanatory frameworks that specify relationships among concepts (Charmaz, 2000, pp.510–511)

What is grounded theory and what is its aim?

Grounded theory (GT) is an approach which involves “the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analyzed” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.1). It is a “living, flexible, practical theoretical tool” (Dey, 2004, p.83) whose aim is to produce theory inductively through constant comparative analysis of data from the “ground”, that explains and describes the social phenomenon under study (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the grounded theory method at the Chicago School of Sociology in an effort to reduce the over-emphasis at the time (1960s) on theory verification and they state that, rather than trying to know the whole field, the researcher should aim to write a theory “that accounts for much of the relevant behavior” (p.30). It quickly became popular as a qualitative research method, particularly because of its data analysis procedures for “dealing systematically and rigorously

with qualitative data” (Piantanida et al, 2004, p.327). Today, it is used widely in fields, such as, business (Goulding, 2002), healthcare (Bonner and Greenwood, 2006; Annells, 2006), natural science (Clarke, 1997) and others:

Grounded theory methodology and methods (procedures) are now among the most influential and widely used modes of carrying out qualitative research when generating theory is the researcher’s principal aim (Strauss and Corbin, 1997, p.vii).

One major difference between GT and other qualitative research methods is that the final result is not the raw voice of the participants or simple description using definitive or “impressionary concepts” (Glaser, 2002, p.5). Instead, the GT researcher conceptualizes while constantly comparing and contrasting incident with incident, until she identifies and names the emerging social patterns of behavior that are “grounded in research data” (p.4). She allocates names (concepts) to the main category and sub-categories around which a theory is then written. It can happen, occasionally, that such a name might appear as an *in vivo* concept in the data, but, usually, participants are not aware of having contributed any such concepts and have no part in the conceptualization process that has gone on. Glaser (2002) points out that:

participants usually just give impressionary concepts based on one incident or even a groundless idea. They do not carefully generate their concepts from data with the GT methodology and try to fit many names to an established pattern. They are not establishing a parsimonious theory. They may have many concepts that do not fit or work. GT discovers which “in vivo” concepts do fit, work, and are relevant (pp.4-5).

A participant may present concepts from the top of her head without thinking and so, the researcher checks with her to see that she has got the data that the participant wished to present; this is called member-checking. The researcher does not member-check with the concepts she has generated, but with the raw data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.268; Maxwell, 1996, p.94). An example from my research is where a participant wrote about the three things that encourage her to read: reading for fun, reader-as-student, and reading for information. My earlier conceptualization and analysis had pointed towards an emerging category of “reader-as-X, Y or Z”, and this *in vivo* concept seemed to further strengthen it. However, in checking with my participant, I simply asked her to explain in a bit more detail what she meant by reading as a student (while hoping she would not notice the excitement building within me).

How is Grounded Theory done?

The strategies of grounded theory include (a) simultaneous collection and analysis of data, (b) a two-step data coding process, (c) comparative methods, (d) memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analyses, (e) sampling to refine the researcher's emerging theoretical

ideas, and (f) integration of the theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2000, pp.510-511).

The first step in doing grounded theory, according to Clarke and Star (1998, p.2) is to “start analyzing immediately!” Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) urge researchers to develop “their own methods for generating theory” (p.8) at least nine key steps are followed in the GT research process: 1) simultaneous data collection and analysis; 2) analytic codes and categories developed from data through constant comparison; 3) theory development at each stage; 4) memo-writing to further the development of theory; 5) theoretical sampling for theory construction, which means selecting one’s next participants to further develop an emerging category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp.45-77; Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.73); 6) a full literature review after doing analysis; 7) data is collected until saturation of categories is reached - where no new data is produced; 8) categories must fit the data and not the reverse; and, less commonly, 9) prior knowledge or theory are treated as if they were another informant (Goulding, 2002, p.42).

The GT method experienced a divergence of perspective by its original authors, which means that grounded theorists today can choose between ‘Glaserian’ and ‘Straussian’ approaches (Piantanida et al, 2004). The latter refers to Strauss’s collaborative efforts with Corbin (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1998) which introduced axial coding as “a set of techniques” (1998, p.10) to help to actively generate theory, filling what many perceive as gaps in the original *Discovery* book. Glaser (2002), however, continues to emphasize emergence of concepts and theory, and strongly refutes any constructivist version of GT (Charmaz’s, 2000, for example), which he believes to be interpretive, rather than objective, emergence. The question, then, in view of Glaser’s valid concerns, is, how to analyse data and generate a theory without unnecessarily forcing the categories. Building on Peirce’s (1934/1998) work on pragmatics, many authors believe the answer lies in viewing GT as an abductive, rather than an inductive, approach, one in which the researcher engages in inferencing to the best explanation (Haig, 1995; Dey, 2004; Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005).

More recently, Clarke (2005) suggests “new approaches to analysis within the grounded theory framework” (p.553), using situational analysis:

Studying action is not enough. We need analytic maps to plot positions taken and their relative locations and power. We need improved methods for grasping the constructions of terrain ...methods that can simultaneously address actors in action and reflection and discursive constructions of human and nonhuman actors and positions and their implications. We need cartographies of discursive positions (Clarke, 2005, p.33).

Whereas Glaser and Strauss’s aim is to generate a completed theory, Clarke (2005) encourages us to theorize; whereas Glaser and Strauss prefer to analyze data into neat categories, Clarke prefers to work with porous boundaries, keeping the complexities of research data; and, whereas Glaser and Strauss prefer

us to work with definitive concepts (Blumer, 1969), Clarke recommends that we use concepts as sensitizing concepts in ongoing analysis.

My research approach was eventually strengthened rather than weakened by this divergence of discussion on GT because it truly became a voyage of discovery with the knowledge that, were I to “fail” to satisfy the stipulations of the “fathers of GT”, I could identify which safety net (or scholarly view) I was falling into. However, I did not compromise on certain pillars such as: reading the literature after completing my data analysis, fitting categories around the data (and not vice versa), comparing incident with incident in constant comparative analysis, writing memos to aid analysis, and conceptualizing rather than describing. I diverged by using abductive rather than purely inductive analytical thinking, thanks to Haig (1995) and others, based on the work of Peirce and I sampled theoretically mainly from the data I had already gathered, due to time limitations, instead of selecting further participants through theoretical sampling.

Why use GT?

The strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted waters or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation (Stern, 1980, p.20).

Living and researching in what is, to me, a foreign country, the most ethical way to investigate still relatively “uncharted waters” such as, female Emirati university students’ leisure reading behavior, is to try to ensure that any efforts at theorizing stem from the local ‘ground’ with minimal imposition of preconceived ideas or biases from elsewhere. This ties in with Flyvbjerg’s (2005) belief that, for social scientists, “the socially and historically conditioned context ... is the only solid ground under their feet” (p.40-41) and one on which they can and should base their work. As the UAE is still a relatively under-researched area, particularly in education and social sciences, my aim was to do my utmost to produce results that are at once rigorous, valid, reliable, credible and truly representative of what is happening on the ground. A grounded theory approach allows for flexibility of theorizing with data from the ground and helps to produce results that are “likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.12), all of which tie in with the aims of my research.

How I used Grounded Theory

Flyvbjerg’s (2005) stipulation that it is pointless to generate theory to predict human behavior, and Clarke’s (2005) preference for theorizing rather than producing a neat theory, allowed me to question more critically my own approach to my research. Instead of searching for the right method of doing grounded theory - what Piantanida et al, (2004) refer to as “functionalist drift” (p.332) – I was encouraged by Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) insistence on flexibility and creativity in using GT. My logic-of-

justification started with the belief that there was something ‘out there’ which I should investigate, which existed independently of me before I entered the field (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.37), namely my participants’ leisure reading habits. From such a positivist stance I quickly moved through interpretive (Piantanida et al, 2004), naturalistic (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and constructivist or progressive (Holliday, 2002) paradigms as soon as I started to gather and analyze my data, while still maintaining some positivist links as I was driven by the belief that there was more ‘out there’ for me to know. I frequently abandoned the ‘crutch’ of methodology in favour of simply being in the research, so that my research guided my choice of approach, and I was present to the phenomenon under study, not just mentally (Piantanida et al, 2004, p.336), but physically, also. My data gathering and analysis stopped when I reached saturation point - the point at which I was not discovering anything new.

3.5 Data gathering

The backbone of qualitative data is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information (Creswell 1998, p.9).

3.5.1 The researcher

Having problematized the research question, I will now outline what I brought to the research in the role of “researcher-as-instrument” (Robson, 2002, p.167), followed by a look at authority and the co-construction of data, and the instruments I used. I brought to the research setting (1) a conviction that important information would emerge, to paraphrase Holliday (2002, p.6); (2) my theories-of-the-world, formed both before and while living in the Arab world (See ch.1.4); (3) a lasting and genuine interest in my research topic; (4) theoretical sensitivity, flexibility in research design and creativity, as required by Glaser and Strauss (1967); (5) an open or enquiring mind, being a good listener, “adaptiveness” without loss of rigour, and ability to interpret issues, as stipulated by Robson (2002, pp.168-170); and (6) personal elements such as, a sense of duty, integrity, challenge (“can I do this?”), privilege, responsibility (to students, colleagues and institution as well as to self and family), ambition (aiming high) and a desire to learn from the experience in order to inspire and encourage students and help them along their educational paths.

I also brought - to varying degrees - Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theorist characteristics: the ability to step back and critically analyze situations, recognize a tendency toward bias, think abstractly and accept helpful criticism, sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents, and devotion to the work process (p.7). Finally, my data gathering was based on what Schwandt (1999) calls a relational

understanding of the Other where it is important to be open to experience and to have a willingness to have a dialogue to such an extent that we “risk confusion and uncertainty” (p.458) because of our listening to the Other. Blended with the rigors of academia, all of these flavoured the research melting pot, where I played two major roles at once, that of researcher expected to take charge of my project, yet, answerable to two institutions, and barely a doctorate student trying to conform to the canons of research and thesis writing. As a qualitative researcher I was willing to fulfill the requirements outlined by Creswell (1998): to spend extensive time in the field, both gathering and analyzing large amounts of data in order to reduce them to a few themes or categories; write long passages to substantiate claims and show multiple perspectives; and participate in a form of social and human science research that does not have firm guidelines or specific procedures and is constantly evolving and changing (pp.16-17).

Researcher as learner

In order to learn about the reading habits and practices of my students – which was the aim of my research – I became the learner and worked with three conditions stipulated by Smith (2004) as essential for learning:

(1) Demonstrations – described by Smith as “learning conditions” (p.203), whereby we learn from what is done around us. As researcher, this included identifying demonstrations of my students’ reading and interest in reading, in a variety of ways and places, including in the classroom during free reading time or in class where some surreptitiously read a gripping novel under the desk, the library coffee shop where they flicked through the latest magazines or my office area where I maintained a reading corner for all our General Education students and posted various cuttings and pages from the daily newspapers;

(2) Engagement - Smith defines this as “the interaction of the learner with a demonstration” (p.203) and adding to what we know, or finding answers to something that has been puzzling us for some time (p. 205). My participants had the knowledge that I sought on the topic of their reading habits and practices and, therefore, I engaged with them to gather this data, sometimes trying out hypotheses (Smith, 2004, p.205). This engagement came in the form of conversations about reading with my students and setting up situations in which they could demonstrate their reading behavior. For example, I often brought reading materials such as newspapers and books to class for my students to read, reflecting Elley’s (1998) Book Flood idea, and Krashen’s (2002) theory that students will read if presented with interesting materials; or I read aloud to them in class (Trelease, 2006) or shared my own reading with them, took them on a field trip to a bookshop and encouraged them to talk to me about their reading or to write about it in their journal;

(3) Sensitivity – is the belief that learning will take place and it is what determines “whether we learn or don’t learn from any particular demonstration” (ibid, p.206). Therefore, sensitivity to learning could be seen as the qualitative researcher’s conviction that, not only “what it is important to look for will emerge” (Holliday, 2002, p.6), but, more importantly, that learning will take place (Smith, 2004, p.206). Glaser and Strauss call it theoretical sensitivity, referring to the researcher’s ability to know what elements of a theory are emerging (1967, pp. 46-47). In Smith’s view, sensitivity is more important than motivation, because we may be highly motivated to learn yet not succeed in learning.

Another factor related to learning, identified by Smith (2004) is the authority of the researcher:

Challenging conventional thought or other people’s opinions, or even drawing one’s own conclusions, is not something everyone is in a position to do ... In many institutions and in many patterns of personal relations, the authority for engaging in thought of a significant nature (as opposed to accepting or providing “right answers”) is not distributed equally (p.28-9).

Critical thinking and learning depend on having the authority to do so. In my section on ethics, earlier in this chapter, I discussed ethical aspects of the fiduciary relationship between teacher and student. Here, I will briefly touch on aspects of authority in my research setting, specifically the authority to ask questions. In many research situations the authority to ask questions is the foundation of the research process but yet, few, if any, research textbooks deal with it. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) refer, simply, to the researcher’s “right to know”, and caution that it should be balanced with the individual’s right to privacy. An examination of my own sense of authority in relation to my participants revealed considerable power that could become what Romer and Whipple (1991) call a “barrier to effective collaboration” (p.1).

The conception of authority as a dynamic construct is unfamiliar in most academic spheres ... Particularly in the case of undergraduate students authority tends to be seen as a static feature inherent in certain individuals (professors) and not in others (students) (ibid, p.2).

However, in spite of that perception, the authors believe that authority is dynamic and that collaboration *can* happen when the teacher becomes a learner and the learner is seen as expert. First, a teacher has already had authority of a certain type bestowed on her which allows her to carry out her duties, including the authority to evaluate students, for example, and to insist on certain codes of practice in the classroom. Second, the authority that is required by a researcher to explore certain experiences of her participants (related to learning, for example) is also bestowed but with responsibilities towards her participants, as governed by ethical procedures, as outlined earlier (ch.3.2). This authority is both earned and bestowed as a result of being accepted onto a doctoral program, engaging in extensive academic reading, having papers presented and published, and securing both institutional permission to carry out research and

students' permission to gather and use their data. This culminates in the authority to author one's findings in a manner that is credible, authoritative and informative. A third type of authority – over and beyond that bestowed on her - is one which needs to be worked at and earned by the researcher, as it always depends on her participants' own sense of authority in choosing whether or not to be a participant and divulge information honestly. When a student in my class opted not to fill in the snapshot survey and four others (of her friends) followed suit after seeing her opt out. I suggest that the first student exercised more authority than the other four who may have simply felt persuaded by her behaviour, in which case they could be seen to have abandoned their own authority in favour of hers. I concede that I will never know and to investigate it further would have interfered with their right of refusal to participate.

3.5.2 Co-construction of the meaning of participants' data

Data is not “out there” waiting to be gathered; neither is it simply “found nor discovered”, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.92) but “created ... by participants and researchers” (p.92). Most of the focus in the literature on data centers on construction or creation of data but, I believe it is more important to focus on understanding data:

The social world does not have a ready-made sense which the researcher simply needs to record; the researcher must make sense of it (Holliday, 2002, p.75).

We can do as Schwandt (1999) advises: ask ourselves, “What am I to make of this?” (p.453). It may be more accurate, therefore, to say that data is presented by participants and its *meaning* is co-constructed by both the participants and researcher through constant interaction, what Schwandt (1999) calls “a dialogue with that which challenges our self-understanding” (p.458). I played a role in co-constructing with my participants my sense of their data, less as the “modest witness” of Shapin and Schaffer (1985) and more as the embodied knower or “immodest witness” described by Clarke (2005, pp.20 – 21):

Embodiment, so long refused, is thus today ever more salient and must increasingly and reflexively be taken into greater account (Clarke, 2005, p.21).

3.5.3 Sampling

I was open to any and all data that was ‘out there’ relating to my topic; nothing was ruled out. I started with a convenience sample (Maxwell, 1996, p.70) or what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as “circumstantial sampling” (p.138), which consisted of the students who were in my class for half of each academic year over a period of two years. This provided me with a pool of approximately 250 students, from which I could do more purposive and theoretical sampling “on the basis of emerging concepts” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.73) as my research progressed. From that pool and beyond, I selected a smaller number of twenty students for one-on-one interviews.

3.5.4 Instruments for gathering data

My data gathering included a weekly snapshot survey called, “What did you read, yesterday, because you wanted to?”, journal entries, interviews, questionnaires and conversations and emails.

Snapshot surveys

I designed a snapshot survey which asked my students to record the various types of voluntary reading they did “yesterday”, explaining to them that it was “Reading you did because you wanted to” – not for assignments (See Appendix 2). It listed all the types of items that our students could possibly read, with space to record not only what they read but where, why and when. Students filled these in approximately two or three times a month during class time, (depending on the demands on our time) or they completed them at home – which often resulted in fewer being returned. I followed up interesting leads by talking to students about what they had written (or omitted, if left blank) to ensure that any claims made were “true to the people and their affairs within the setting, without exaggerations” (Holliday 2002, p.175). The data from these surveys enabled me to keep my finger on the pulse of my students’ reading and to identify possible interviewees.

Journal entries

I gathered data in the form of optional journal entries (Appendix 3), which were written at home. I coded these segment by segment and they produced rich data which suggested topics for further exploration in our interviews. At the start of a grounded theory study “a narrative from the person’s perspective is required to allow the field of inquiry to unfold (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000, p.1489)”.

Interviews

I opted for face-to-face encounters which were hailed by Berger and Luckmann (1966, p.43) as the way to have the most complete experience of the other. They point out that, although such interactions are not without their limitations, through “ongoing negotiation” (ibid, p.45) face-to-face interactions can and do break the often rigid patterns of social interaction:

Whatever patterns are introduced will be continuously modified through the exceedingly variegated and subtle interchange of subjective meanings that goes on (Berger and Luckmann (1966, p.44).

I interviewed twenty students, once, two of whom asked to be interviewed together. Interviews lasted between forty to seventy minutes and were held in various locations throughout the university campus. I recorded them using a computer software program licenced by our institution, and transcribed them word for word, which enabled me to do word searches whenever I wished to locate a certain topic while doing

my analysis. Listening to the recordings also enabled me to relive the interviews, to understand them anew, and to write my thoughts as a form of theorizing as ideas came to me.

My interview sample was invited from the much wider convenience sample of students over a two-year period, both as a result of conversations about reading outside of class and by asking in class if anyone would like to be interviewed about their reading habits. All interviewees were willing participants who showed great enthusiasm for taking part (many asked to be interviewed more than once) and, in some cases, volunteered friends of theirs from other cohorts who were also willing to be interviewed, thus providing a small snowball sampling effect. Criteria for selection of interviewees included interesting concepts from their “Yesterday” snapshot surveys or reading journals and their willingness to talk at length and be interviewed. My sample included some self-described non-readers, private international school and government school graduates, students from very conservative and more liberal families, all of whom are Muslim and Emirati citizens.

My interviews fit Brinkmann’s (2007) description of *doxastic* interviews because my participants ‘as experts’ spoke about their experiences with reading. The interview format was largely unstructured (Glaser 2002) as I sought “to follow the major concerns or point of view of the respondent” (Wimpenny and Gass 2000, p. 1487). For example, my opening question was usually phrased thus:

Tell me about reading in your life.

If the respondent did not understand the question I expanded:

Tell me anything you want to tell me about your interest in reading, its role in your life as a child, today and in the future – as you see it.

If this did not generate answers I asked more pointed questions about students’ attitudes toward and beliefs about reading, the types of things they read, reading behavior, frequency, duration, reasons for/not reading, favorite author or book title, preferences and more. The unstructured nature of the interviews meant that my questions were not asked in any particular order as some were answered without being asked and others were interjected at relevant times. As the interviews progressed certain recurring themes emerged which suggested further questions to ask in subsequent interviews so that I had a bank of questions (Appendix 4) to guide me whenever I drew a blank. The interviews produced rich data while maintaining a relaxed, conversational atmosphere.

As a reminder of the limitations of introducing instruments from outside the research setting, I tried out Pitcher et al’s (2007) Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile conversational interview which was based on a similar one by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni (1996), with questions organized under narrative

text, informational text, general reading and school and home reading. I quickly abandoned it however, as I found myself turning to preset questions unnaturally, rather than following where the data took me. Trying to arrange interviews was challenging because I was reluctant to intrude on students' preparation time for exams and other assignments, most students leave campus after their last class is over, and it was not always possible to find a room that was quiet, private, convenient and free at the times that my would-be interviewees and I were free.

My first interview was carried out with two students who had been friends with each other from school days and whom I selected based on data in their snapshot surveys (See Appendix 5 for full sample transcript). For example, Dana had written that she liked reading and Inas had written that she never reads. In the interview, Dana said "This week I hate reading", implying a time-related complexity which begged further investigation. It showed that I must not presume that each week is the same as the next for any reader. During the interview, Dana and Inas determined who would speak when, they provided contrasting data and member-checked each other's knowledge by sometimes consulting with each other in Arabic to check on a book title, for example. I was able to follow the gist of such asides due to my limited knowledge of Arabic. My initial and ongoing data analysis helped me to identify certain threads which I then followed in subsequent interviews.

Questionnaire

I devised and carried out a questionnaire containing questions about current reading-related events such as, author Paulo Coelho's visit to a nearby city and the local annual book fair, at which students are given free tokens with which to purchase books (ch.1.3.4). (See appendix 6). Although it provided mainly quantitative data, the questionnaire allowed me to see possible emerging patterns that I could follow up in my interviews. For example, questions about the book fair led to an exploration of what my participants bought there, how they searched for books, and whether the book selections there met their reading needs in both Arabic and English.

Conversations /emails

Much data can be gleaned through casual conversations as long as ethical procedures are adhered to. I engaged in conversations about reading with my participants whenever the opportunity arose and afterwards, I typed up the main points of our conversation and sent it to them requesting their permission to use as data. Conversational opportunities arose in chance meetings in the corridor, particularly if a student seemed anxious to tell me about a particular book she was reading. Respect for the student as a person took precedence over the student as research respondent so conversations often started with

questions about their studies or their baby, or I might refer to some local news – particularly if it related to reading. This often but not always lead to the question: “What are you reading these days?” Such conversations helped to keep the lines of communication open for possible data to emerge and identified me as someone who was interested in their reading habits. Conversations were also conducted by email which enabled me to fill gaps in data I had already gathered. For example, I often emailed a student to ask if she remembered the name of the book she had mentioned in her snapshot survey or in our interview. Students would also come to my office and show me books they were reading, or borrow books from my bookshelves⁵.

3.5.5 Problems encountered when gathering data

One unexpected problem I encountered was that I was not allowed to access my participants’ library borrowing records with their written consent to do so. The explanation given was that it is in keeping with America’s fourth amendment to the Bill of Rights, which protects the rights to privacy of all library users with regard to their reading selections or enquiries. Once our students return a book, the borrowing record is immediately deleted which meant that to meet with my request would have entailed changing the whole system. Another problem was that some of my participants left the university during my research which meant that I could no longer gather further data from them.

3.6 Data analysis

Analysis of any kind is no more than one or a few “readings” of a situation – understandings, interpretations. An analysis or reading thus does not claim adequacy or validity in the modern methodological usages of those terms. Rather, an analysis is what it is understood to be, in all its partialities (Clarke, 2005, p.xxxvii).

Everyone wants to be right. However, in my research I want to understand, more than to be right. My participants want to be understood – they are not concerned with what is right (or perceived to be right by others). I believe that they want to be understood. [Memo #1, Research Diary#3, p.25, June 24th 2007]

My data analysis represents my attempt at understanding what was going on in my research setting with regards to my participants’ reading habits, not an attempt to be right. In this section I show how my data analysis was guided mainly by a grounded theory (GT) approach which includes coding and

⁵ and, from such conversations, grew a chance for six of my participants to co-author with me an article for publication on how they came to be readers (Kamhieh, Al Zaabi, Al Hammadi, Nawfal, Khalfan, Al Hammadi & Al Hameli, 2009, p.35).

conceptualizing from data, constant comparative analysis, identifying and labeling concepts, emerging categories and their properties, writing memos and theorizing.

3.6.1 Coding

I started “open coding” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, pp.101–121) or data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp.10-11) by allocating different colours to recurring themes, such as, reading in Arabic (blue) and reading in English (yellow), and so on. I read and reread interview transcripts and journal entries in their entirety and in short segments numerous times because, as Piantanida et al (2004) point out that, “not every aspect of every text will be equally ripe with meaning” (p.338). Some scholars question the wisdom of breaking up data while coding but Strauss (1987) strongly defends it, maintaining that it frees the researcher from description. Holliday (2002) further reminds the researcher that the data itself is merely a construction, which meant that I was, in a sense, deconstructing my participants’ constructions to make better sense of them.

3.6.2 Conceptualizing

Conceptualization is the core category of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 2002, p.1) Blumer (1931) differentiates between perceiving and conceiving and points out the limitations of engaging in one without the other, whereby conceiving helps us overcome obstacles in our perceiving - it permits us to ‘see our way around’ them – and then it feeds back into our perceiving. He clarifies further:

conception arises as an aid to adjustment with the insufficiency of perception; it permits new orientation and new approach; it changes and guides perception (Blumer, 1931, p.518).

Description tells what *is* and goes no further, because “there is no conceptual handle” (p.8); nothing new is discovered. For example, my coding for reading in Arabic or English left me wondering how to proceed with theorizing without quantifying qualitative data or forcing data into preconceived categories. Two early memos show how I tried to pull myself out of a quantitative mode, after reading through participants’ questionnaires on the book fair:

[Diary#3, p.25: Memo #1 – June 24th 2007]

Now, I should start tuning in to what students are saying instead of how many are saying it.

Two memos later, and still wrestling with attempts to avoid quantitative analysis while reading the questionnaires, I write:

[Diary#3, p.25: Memo #3 – June 24th 2007]

Now, looking at them slightly differently, I think I might be able to compare incident with incident – NOT respondent with respondent. I must remember NOT to do that (Piantanida et al, 2004). It won't be easy.

I asked questions of my data, using them as analytic tools (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). For instance: is reading in one language related to reading in another and how? Conceptualization enables the researcher to abstract, to hypothesize, to find new concepts and generate theories by constantly relating concepts to each other on a level transcending description. In other words, to conceptualize is to see how certain social patterns *could* be lying latent in the data, waiting to be discovered. In chapter two, I showed how most of the various studies on leisure reading led to the conclusion that it is a complex, multivariate issue. It, therefore, requires a “multivariate, integrated theory based on conceptual, hypothetical relationships” (Glaser, 2002, p.8) to understand it and such a theory uses concepts as its building blocks (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Ideas are the life source of such conceptualizing.

Ideas

Ideas - or insights (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.251) - play a major role in our data analysis and we need to have access to as many ideas as possible when coding our data (Dey, 2004). Many great discoveries were made as a result of ideas coming ‘out of the blue’ which were then used as sensitizing concepts to develop a theory, or theories, grounded in the data. Ideas can come from our data or from personal experiences in the form of “flashes of insight” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.6) which the researcher then applies to the data to check for their relevance. In the same way that special glasses in a children’s game allow them to see hidden letters or numbers, ideas allow the researcher to uncover what would otherwise remain hidden from view.

According to Prawat (1999), early pragmatists, Dewey and Peirce, believed that ideas are the ideal carriers of meaning because (1) they can travel from mind to the world (outside of mind) and (2) they are transformational: “they are capable not only of illuminating facts but also of being illuminated by facts” (p.51). How then, wondered Prawat (1999), a professor of educational psychology and teacher education, could we generate new ideas? This led him to wonder how more complex new learning can happen from less complex prior learning, what he calls a “learning paradox”, which has puzzled scholars since Plato’s time. In taking on research into the reading habits of my participants, I was about to struggle with the “learning paradox” of how to move from having simple – perhaps generalized - knowledge about my participants’ reading habits, such as, “they read”, or, “they don’t read”, to having more complex knowledge. We remember Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) description of grounded theory as an inductive approach to generating new theories, and Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) claim that GT uses both, deduction and induction. Prawat (1999), however, believes that “the leap to new understandings” (p.55) can only be explained by abduction, a form of reasoning superior to the other forms and the best way of generating new ideas, in his view. Abduction facilitates the introduction of new ideas and the jump to more complex

learning, a conclusion that is consistent with the view of GT as an abductive approach (Richardson and Kramer, 2006; Dey, 2004; Haig, 1995; Kelle, 2005; Charmaz, 2006). Abduction is a form of reasoning in which the researcher looks at data and entertains all the possible ways of explaining it until she “arrives at the most plausible interpretation of the observed data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.186). It is this quality of possibility that leads to new concepts and new ideas, opening the way for new discoveries. Peirce (1934/1998) compares all three approaches to reasoning:

Deduction proves that something *must be*... Induction shows that something *actually* is operative; abduction merely suggests that something may be (p.171).

3.6.3 Concepts

A concept is “an abstract representation of an event, object, or action / interaction that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.103). Concepts are the result of conceiving, they have a content that was conceived and we know them best by their symbol or name, the latter, usually in the form of words. They are essential elements in science (Blumer, 1931; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and are much more stable than the facts that give rise to them. In other words, the fact, event or data that gives rise to a concept may change over time, but concepts seldom do (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 23). The conceptualization of family, for example, has endured for centuries, although we have seen, over the years, one-child families, ‘nuclear’ families and single-parent families. In my research setting the concept of family could also mean extended families of uncles, aunts and grandparents or, step families of one father with two wives, usually in separate homes. This shows the enduring quality or ‘grab’ (Glaser, 2002) of concepts; they do not disappear, though their content is revised in light of new facts Blumer (1931):

Scientific concepts have a career, changing their meaning from time to time in accordance with the introduction of new experiences and replacing one content with another (p.524).

Blumer (1954, p.7) distinguishes between definitive concepts, which tell us what to see in a prescriptive manner, and sensitizing concepts which suggest the direction(s) in which we might look. The latter allow us to use both our own prior concepts and those we have read in the literature as starting points “for approaching social contexts to be studied” (Flick, 2002, p.12). The literature provided me with the following sensitizing concepts: amount of leisure time and other distractions (Greaney and Hegarty, 1987), reading ability (Otter, Hox, de Gloppe and Mellenbergh, 1995; Krashen, 2004; Smith, 2004), access to interesting reading materials (Krashen, 2002), hobbies and interests (Reynolds, 2004; Kajder, 2006), role models (Gupta, 2004), habit as disposition (Dewey, 1922), nine types of habit (Clark et al, 2007), spiritual or religious reading (interview with colleague), ideas (Prawat, 1999, citing Dewey and

Peirce), the concept that custom has us before we have it (Cutchin, 2007, drawing on the work of Dewey, 1922), the use of incentives to promote reading (Flora and Flora, 1999), seeing students as readers or members of the literacy club (Smith, 1987) and reading as a socially situated practice (Johnson, 2000). Of course, if Gilgun (2002) is right, I also used many other sensitizing concepts which I was not aware of using. Some of those concepts suggested possible avenues of investigation during interviews, for example, or suggested that I be alert to their presence in the data.

Words

For GT, a concept is the naming of an emergent social pattern grounded in research data (Glaser, 2002, p.4)

Pinker (1994) points out that “there are far more concepts than there are words ...” (p.82), and, therefore, many concepts remain nameless until they are studied and analyzed. This involves labeling, locating and classifying concepts, the first step in building a theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.103) where words are constantly applied in an effort to find the best fit to the concept. The double challenge to the researcher, therefore, is, not only to identify such concepts but, also, to create labels for them so that they can be studied. This takes a lot of effort and time because in trying to name an “emergent social pattern grounded in research data” (Glaser, 2002, p.4) the researcher has to constantly try “to fit words to it to best capture its imageric meaning” (ibid, p.4), and, of course, there is a shortage of words, as mentioned by Pinker. Another problem with using words to represent a concept is that, the words that my participants and I use can never fully capture their lived experiences, whether for them or for the readers of this research. Once words have been selected and applied in a survey, for example, all attempts to capture the further essence and meaning of a particular phenomenon are usually ended. Therefore, there is a need to keep a dialogue open with participants for as long as possible, in a constant effort to make sense of the data they present.

3.6.4 Constant comparative analysis

Comparing phenomena with each other is one way in which we come to know them, because, in general, “meaning is based on difference” (Culler, 1997, p.56). Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.101-115) stress the importance of doing constant comparative analysis in our data analysis in order to learn about the phenomenon we are investigating and Blumer (1931) claims that “the abstractions within scientific concepts are always being related to one another” (p.524). Attempts by mass media to help readers and viewers make better sense of a shooting incident, for example, invariably involve making comparisons, such as, “the worst shooting incident so far” as if to aid listeners’ understanding. By comparing incident with incident in my data, I was able to abstract to a level at which my concepts were seen to have properties in relation to each other and to categorize them according to those properties. Many incidents

or codes shared similar properties with more than one category and so were placed accordingly. Following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) advice, I wrote memos as soon as I started to analyse my data, not just when I was stuck, but also to record and aid my thinking process and I found them to be "a storehouse of ideas" (p.153).

3.6.5 Categorizing

Once the research is on a conceptual level, dealing with categories and their properties becomes the mode, description fades and abstraction of time, place and people take over (Glaser, 2002, p.16).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress that "in generating theory it is not the fact upon which we stand, but the *conceptual category* (or a *conceptual property* of the category) that was generated from it" (p.24). A key part of generating a grounded theory, categorizing allows us to "unthinkingly view the world" (Culler, 1997, p.60) and is based on our personal theory of the world (Smith, 2004, p.17). To categorize:

means to treat some objects or events as the same yet different from other objects or events. All human beings categorize, instinctively, starting at birth (Smith, 2004, p.16).

In research, categories are not inherent in the data and the categories formed by the researcher are "products of the interaction between the observer and the observed" (Charmaz, 2001b, p.337). When analyzing my data, I had to examine the labels that I attached to different categories or sets of concepts, and determine where they came from. Some were based on ideas from the literature or elsewhere, some came from the data itself – *in vivo* codes – while others came from my own theories of the world and categorization systems, which Smith (2004) believes are culture-based (p.17). Therefore, in order to learn about the reading habits of my respondents I needed to gain access to *their* categorization systems, *their* theories of their world. In a sense, I needed to read their *world* before reading their *words* (Freire, 1983, p.5) which was mainly achieved by spending extensive time in the research field (Creswell, 1998, p.16-17; Holliday, 2002).

English is not my participants' native language, so, they may occasionally use some words differently to the way they are used in native English speaking settings. One example is the word library, which some of my participants use to mean a bookshop. Remembering Strauss and Corbin's (1998) caution that we should not take anything for granted but should question everything, I asked my participants to clarify their interpretations of the word library each time they used it and their interpretations varied according to, including to time spent in the West and their various life experiences. Therefore, trying to read their world so as to know it better helped me to read their words more accurately. A second very important

consideration when forming my categories was that they should grow out of and so fit the data which gave rise to them. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that:

when we classify like with like and separate out that which we perceive as dissimilar, we are responding to characteristics, or properties inherent in the objects that strike us as relevant (p.105).

I did not enter the research arena armed with preconceived categories but let the data guide me, so that my categories were grounded in the reading culture being studied.

3.6.6 Memoing

As I analyzed and thought about my data, I wrote memos both electronically and manually in my research diaries, the former of which was usually more convenient after typing a transcript of an interview or after a table on which I was analyzing data. Memos are “the researcher’s record of analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions, and directions for further data collection” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.110). Glaser and Strauss (1967) write that, if there are conflicts while coding you should “*stop coding and record a memo on your ideas*” (p.107) and they consider it a rule for doing grounded theory because it helps to unblock one’s conceptualization. In fact, Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that memos “force the analyst to move from working with data to conceptualizing” (p.218) and enable the researcher to lay an “audit trail” (p.273), showing her line of thinking and how she reached a particular stance. Writing memos helped me to quickly pick up the threads of my thinking and bridge any gaps due to other commitments that kept me from my data analysis. The following short excerpts from my data analysis and their related memos, help to show their overall importance in data analysis and theorizing (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp.108; 112).

[Diary#3: Memo - Mar 9th 2007]

An interesting point came to me this morning (and as I go through my snapshot surveys it keeps popping up); that is the question of “my own reading” ... as distinct from course-related reading. I relate that to myself and wonder if I could separate the reading I do in relation to my PhD from the reading I do for me (my own reading). I come up with the idea of ‘me-as-something’ – many different ‘me’s. For example, whenever I browse various websites, books or databases, “me-as-teacher” guides my reading ... Sometimes the ‘me-as-wife-of-a-Palestinian’, ‘me-as-mother’ or the ‘me-as-Irish-national’, guides my reading. I wonder if that would be a more accurate way of looking at students’ reading instead of using phrases like leisure reading. [A note in the margin answers, Yes, and I ask: Does that mean I am in the realm of identity?].... I am asking myself these Qs, rather than imposing or looking for such a concept at this stage as I constantly try to make

sense of the different kinds of reading that ‘we’ do. For example, participant #15 reported that she checks the football results for her grandfather on the Internet. Would that be, ‘me-as-granddaughter’? What other options could there be to capture that reason for reading? Is it reading? ... The categories will overlap, no doubt, e.g. ‘self-as-student/daughter; there might be categories that defy description. At the moment I don’t think so. I think that all readers could fit into a category of that pattern.

Later, participant #10 wrote that three things make her read: fun, study and challenge, and, writing about the second one she wrote: “Second thing is **reader as a student**. This means for study”. There was my possible concept emerging from the data, satisfying Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) stipulation that “the conceptual name or label should be suggested by the context in which an event is located” (p.106)! Under the line-by-line coding of participant #10, and referring to line 14, I typed the following two memos:

(i) [Concepts: e-memo –Nov 22nd, 2008]

***Reader-as-student** is exactly the concept that I could see emerging from my data. Here it was as an in vivo concept. That was exciting. However, now the challenge was to develop its properties. (I emailed it to my supervisors).*

(ii) [Concepts: e-memo Nov 25th, 2008]

*One of the challenges with that concept is how big is it? At first I thought it would cover everything but then I started to ask: So what? I think that it needs a **becoming-a-reader** stage before that. In other words, this concept of **reader-as-XYZ** explains how or why reading is sustained or carried out now and then, but it doesn’t explain (1) how readers got started – I am investigating that with their reading stories; (2) why the non-readers are non-readers, which may be our ultimate concern all along. After all, those who read are not of concern to teachers.*

Here we see that an idea which had earlier come to me after some reflection, what I now see as conceptualizing, later appeared in the data independently of my thinking, because I had not yet started to sample theoretically. Theoretical sampling is where the researcher identifies emerging concepts and categories and purposely selects participants to find properties for those categories until they are saturated and no new concepts emerge. Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) stipulation is that categories must fit the data and not the reverse and that “the generation of theory from such insights must then be brought into relation to the data” (p.6). I looked for incidents in the data I had gathered for examples of such a concept and for possible properties, all the time mentally testing the concept to see if it fit the data, my provisional

hypothesis being that the concept of '**Reader-as-X**' would determine what, how often, and how much reading a student did. Seven months later, having spent three years in the research field, while interviewing participant #240 I decided to purposely follow this lead and develop the concept to see to what extent it would be a pertinent one (Diary #1, Memo: June 4th, 2009). Below is an extract from that interview:

R: [IN240-1:12]: You were about to say, "I like to read as ..." and I am wondering if you were going to say 'as a student', 'as a daughter', 'as a sister', 'as an Emirati lady'? What do you think is the identity in you that affects what you read?

A: [1:30]: Eh, like, if I'm a student I like to read things to help me with studying, and also, I have more information. As a daughter, read and be lovely and kind with my mother and eh, to have more information to help my mother. Also, at home, to be a good sister with my sisters and brothers, eh, so that they, I know how to, I know how to ... [prompt: *behave*] ... behave with them.

R: [2:09]: You mean there are times when you are actually reading as a sister? Can you tell me about a time, or a time - as a student, for example, you might say, "As a student, last week I was reading my essay or, a book for my assignment for Islamic Studies"; that's reading as a student.

A: [2:28]: Yes.

R: [2:29]: Can you tell me about any of the other identities like you just mentioned, like a daughter or a sister, em, How does that affect ... Can you give me an example of something you read?

A: [2:40]: As a sister, I have little brothers, small brothers ... (describes how she teaches them the letters of the alphabet).

R: [4:54]: So that's you as a sister. How about, any other identities that you can think of?

A: I like to read more about ... (talks at length about her love for reading history).

R: [5:57]: So, do you think your interest in history is you as an Emirati, or you as a student or both?

A: [6:04]: Both

IN: Really!

A: Yea

IN: Equal, equal, or ...?

A: [6:05]: More of this, eh, me as a human living in this world. I like the history... (expands and answers more questions about reading history)

R: [9:10]: Now, you as a daughter. Can you think of anything you read recently as a daughter?

A: [9:14]: Eh, as a daughter I love to sit with my father and eh, enjoying reading some things like, eh, my father want to do something, first he came to me and ask me what do you think about this? He want to buy a car, he ask me, “What do you think about this car? ... Every day we sit like an hour [on the Internet], sometimes, also my mother, eh, when I read, she tell me “Raweya, enter the Internet and research this for me”.

The above excerpts show the researcher shamelessly ‘leading’ the interviewee and suggesting concepts instead of allowing them to emerge. However, my question [5:57] was prompted by the participant’s interest in reading history and after giving her an example of the concept, she was able to understand it and to show her “conceptual pick-up” (Glaser, 2002, p.13), by conceiving – with my help – of an underlying social pattern which she immediately made her own by adding to it. This was an example of the participant engaging in conceptualization and generating a concept of her own. Of course, had I returned to ask her to confirm what I had conceived from her data, she may or may not have agreed that that was what she meant. In Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) view that does not matter because it is the researcher’s job to analyze, not the participant’s. I then had a *possible* core category, ‘**reader as human-in-the-world**’, which could include the others: **reader-as-student, as-daughter**, etc., but, it might also prove to be too wide and general to be of much use.

A final example of a memo relates to question 5 of the questionnaire and it shows how memoing allowed me to record a perspective and interpretation other than my own.

[QBF-Q5: e-memo, Oct 24th 2007] - participant #2

Question 5: What could/should your teachers do to encourage you to read?

On reading student 2’s response, (“I haven’t got any idea; if I did, I would start applying it to myself rather than wait for the teachers to do so, or anyone else”), I had written “Student believes that the teacher has knowledge that is superior to hers regarding her reading”. I wasn’t sure that I was actually abstracting to any level other than that of the data. I asked my daughter what concept came to her mind when she heard that raw data and, after careful deliberation, she said, willingness to read. I read to her what I had put and she said that I was thinking in terms of my question instead of focusing on the student’s message or response. What a great observation!! She is right!! The question is only a means of extracting data - the drill is not the oil; the telephone is not the conversation; the ear is not the voice - neither should it be allowed to choke the emerging concepts or direct them in any way. I had never thought of the question as being something separate and distinct from the data (or, should I say, vice versa).

3.6.7 Data display

Any descriptions I give here could not possibly accurately capture my many attempts at finding the most suitable way to display my data, and very few texts offer helpful guidelines (for example, Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000), particularly for a researcher who eschews the use of the many software data analysis programs that are available. I set up a multi-column table for each tentative category on a separate electronic document in Excel, and placed segments of data underneath the heading or concept it addressed; I also replicated this on individual cards. This allowed me to play with various conceptual groupings, as the properties and subcategories of the loosely formed categories were still being identified, particularly in the early stages of analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), such data display is the second stage of data analysis (pp.10-11). Category formation and completion were carried out in the right-hand column of each table and their properties were cross-referenced with those of other categories for constant comparison. I “systematically” developed my categories further through axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.143), connecting categories with their subcategories, and continued to gather data until the categories were, in Glaser and Strauss’ words, “theoretically saturated” (p.111), where more data would add only bulk and not advance the theory. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) third stage, namely, *conclusion drawing and verification* (p.11) was my final stage, where the main category was identified and the theory refined. It is important to clarify here that my data analysis did not neatly follow the above stages, nor did it progress in incremental steps.

3.6.8 Timeline of events in my research

2006-2008

- Weekly snapshot surveys distributed to approximately two hundred students.
- Journal entries gathered from approximately thirty students.
- Data analysis started immediately and continued throughout.
- Interviews carried out with first ten students based on emerging patterns.
- Questionnaire distributed to approximately one hundred students.

2008-2009

- Weekly snapshot surveys distributed to approximately fifty students.
- Interviews carried out with another ten students.
- Identifying emerging categories through constant comparison and abductive reasoning.

2009 – 2011

- Refining emerging categories and their properties;
- Writing and testing the theories.

2006-2011

- Ongoing conversations with students about reading.
- Ongoing memo writing.
- In-depth review of the literature on grounded theory, abduction, habit and reading in antiquity.
- Initial review of research on leisure reading in L1, L2 and the Arab world.

2011

- Completing the literature review
- Completing data analysis and refining the theory

3.7 Summary

The present chapter clarifies my research question, sampling, ethical considerations, data gathering and data analysis. Some key points noted are the importance of carrying out interviews in order to gain rich data, the need to conceptualize instead of merely describe as concepts are the building blocks of scientific discovery, and the importance of fitting categories to the data and not forcing data into preconceived categories. With this methodology it was hoped to give as close a representation as possible of the leisure reading habits of my respondents from the ground. The next four chapters show my data analysis.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCEPTUALIZING READERS, NON-READERS AND LEISURE READING

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 through 7 contain my analysis of data which I gathered during my research on female Emirati university students' leisure reading habits. My two research questions are: (1) What are students' leisure reading habits? and (2) What affects those habits? In other words, what can I find out about female Emirati university students as-readers? Chapter 4 presents the codes and concepts which I identified during open coding, the categories and subcategories which emerged and students' conceptualizations of readers, non-readers and leisure reading. Chapter 5 looks at students' reading behavior including their choice of reading materials and their reading habits of times and place. Chapter 6 answers the why questions about reading while, chapter 7 presents three stages of a reading journey. The neatly presented categories which follow, here, should not be allowed to obscure the inherent complexities of students' leisure reading habits, or to suggest that the concepts presented here are the whole story of female Emirati university students as readers. They constitute my theorizing as a result of constant comparative analysis of my data, extensive memo writing (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), conceptualization and inference to the best explanation (Haig, 1995) as an aid to our understanding of both readers and non-readers.

4.2 Coding my data

For the purpose of my data analysis, I identified all data samples by the first letter of their type, with **IN** indicating an interview, **S** a Yesterday snapshot survey, **Q** a questionnaire, **J** a journal entry and **C** a conversation - both in person and by email. This is followed by the participant's allocated research number, and either the date the data was gathered or, the audio segment start point for interviews. For example, IN294 – 26:45 indicates an interview with participant number 294, MP3 file segment starting at 26:45 minutes into my interview, and S21–14/12/06 refers to the snapshot survey filled in by participant number 21 on December 14th, 2006, showing the reading that she did “yesterday”, December 13th. While analyzing my interview transcripts, I selected segments of data according to the units of meaning they contained, rather than line by line (Piantanida et al, 2004, p.338). I opened up each segment to identify as many meaningful codes as possible which I then grouped and recorded, initially, under generic themes, from which my categories would eventually emerge: “Early in the analysis, the researcher might not know which concepts are categories and which are subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.125). Some codes were taken from the data as *in vivo* codes. Table 4.1 presents a sample of data segments, showing how they were initially coded and grouped during my open coding stage.

Table 4.1 Sample of data segments and how they were coded, initially

<p style="text-align: center;">Data Samples About leisure reading</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Codes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emerging themes</p>
<p>They really have to read because you know, people who be in stress, it's because they don't read, I do believe (IN13-30:58).</p> <p>It can give the person peace and get him out of his troubles in like an hour so that he can think well when he will go to deal with these problems (IN322-39:05).</p> <p>Makes me discover lots of new things (IN13-30:05)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Benefits of reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Benefits of reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Benefits of reading</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Beliefs about reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reasons for reading</p>
<p>Leisure reading is when you, when <i>you</i> want to read (IN123-28:20)</p> <p>It's books, comedian books, like this, not interesting ... like eh, Tweety books, eh, <i>Harry Potter</i></p> <p>When you are reading you can imagine anything you want, you know, you can imagine what they're wearing, the place they're in, you know what I mean, the situations, it makes you think, it's nice (IN17-9:30) (IN-22:48)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A reader's view of leisure reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A non-reader's view of leisure reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Benefits of leisure reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reason for liking it</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conceptualizing leisure reading</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Reason for reading</p>

While listening to audio recordings of my interviews I recorded meaningful data segments onto index cards and wrote the code labels suggested by them at the top, adding other data clips which shared the same properties as I progressed. I treated each piece of data as if it were my first, which often resulted in a duplication of theme labels but it helped to ensure that my categories were data driven and that data was not forced into preconceived categories. This was also helped by the interrupted nature of my data analysis, during which there were long gaps which meant that I looked at my data with fresh eyes each time. This first stage of open coding resulted in 115 concepts, which I arranged alphabetically and numbered for ease of management and access, a sample of which I present here in Table 4.2 (The complete table is in Appendix 7).

Table 4.2 – sample of codes and emerging categories

	Initial grouping	Emerging categories
1	Ability, reading ability	Facilitator → Becoming a reader
2	Academic reading	Obligatory → purpose for reading; Non-readers
3	Access to interesting reading materials	Becoming a reader
4	Addiction to reading	Reasons for reading
5	Arabs as readers	Identity
6	Arabic, reading in Arabic	Choosing reading materials
7	Assigned reading	Academic → What students read
8	Attitude toward reading	Attitude toward reading; reasons
9	Becoming a reader	Becoming a reader
10	Beliefs about reading	Beliefs
11	Benefits of reading	Beliefs; Purposes for reading
12	Book exhibition and bookshops	Owning → Access to reading materials
13	Book, a particular book	Books → What students read
14	Books as gifts	Books → What students read
15	Boring – reading is boring	Non-readers
16	Buy or borrow	Access to reading materials; preference
17	Challenge – reading for	Reasons for reading
18	Comic books	Choosing reading materials
19	Conditional aspect of attitude	Attitude toward reading
20	Course-related reading	Academic → What students read
21	Cover of book	Choosing reading materials
22	Defining leisure reading	Conceptualizing reading and leisure R
23	Duty – reading out of	Reasons for reading
24	Effects of reading on the reader	Beliefs about reading → Attitude toward reading
25	E-book or paper book	What students read
26	Electronic reading	Websites → What students read
27	Encouragement - to respond to	Purposes for reading Becoming a reader
28	Encouraged – feeling encouraged	Reasons for reading
29	English – reading in English	Choosing reading materials
30	Escape	Reasons for reading

Through constant comparative analysis and conceptualization, I studied and compared the different emerging categories and their properties to determine how the categories relate to each other, a stage known as axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This reduced the list of codes to 24 categories and their subcategories a sample of which I show here in Table 4.3 (The complete table is in Appendix 8):

Table 4.3 – sample of categories and subcategories

Categories	Subcategories
Conceptualizing (leisure) reading, readers and non-readers	Reading what you want to read; Reading because you want to Describing a reader; Describing a non-reader
Access to reading items	Prefer to own books Home and personal libraries Books as gifts Borrow from friends
No reading recommendations	Choosing a book by its cover
Reading recommendations with information	Recommendations from friends and peers Recommendations from family members Recommendations from television celebrities
Choosing reading items	Students' standards Students' beliefs about reading Students' preferences and interests Students' underlying identities
What students read for leisure	Self-help Special interests True stories and influential leaders' biographies Relationships between both genders Classics and other texts of high regard Comic books Crime, mystery and other fiction Online forums and other websites Newspapers and magazines Religious texts
Reading behavior / practices	Manner of reading Getting meaning from the text When and where students read for leisure Rereading favourite texts Discussing their reading and recommending to others Yesterday's reading
Reasons for reading	To get benefit To challenge oneself To fulfill obligation or duty To pass the time To respond to encouragement from others For fun To escape

These and other tables presented in the following chapters indicate the progression in my theoretical analysis from the simple identification and labeling of concepts presented here to the identification and labeling of the relationships between them which gave rise to new constructs and a new name for a familiar concept.

4.3 Female Emirati university students conceptualize leisure reading, readers, non-readers

In my methodology, I problematized my research question to ensure that I minimized researcher bias and to lay bare any presumptions I might have on the subject (ch.3.3). I truly approached my research with an open mind or *tabula rasa* as insisted on by Glaser and Strauss (1967). As this is the first in-depth study of its kind in the area, I felt an even greater responsibility and researcher curiosity to investigate rather than impose and to allow my participants' voices to come through loudly and clearly so that the results would truly reflect their stories of their leisure reading habits. I abandoned my own preconception of leisure reading, readers and non-readers and opened myself to the uncertainty of having them redefined by my participants, so that whenever I use these words I am speaking empirically from the ground of my research. As we shall see, my participants readily identify themselves as either readers or non-readers and describe the properties of both and these conceptualizations form the basis of my data analysis.

4.3.1 Female Emirati university students conceptualize leisure reading

All participants appear to have an immediate understanding of the concept of leisure reading so that, when asked if they are reading for leisure or to define it, they respond immediately. For example, Salha, a non-reader, describes leisure reading as:

S: (IN278-20:05) Reading for fun (without hesitation).

R: Do you think that could be history or it could be romance or reading about the prophets or something?

S: Yea, it's up to the person who reads (again, without hesitation).

There is a consensus of opinion among my participants that leisure reading is "reading because *I* want to" (IN123), where the decision to read is the student's own, including her choice of reading materials, the language in which she reads them, her purposes and reasons, the anticipated effects of her reading, and her beliefs about reading. All views are based on students' previous experiences with reading. Volition is of key importance and readers may react badly to any attempts to interfere with their volition or self will in leisure reading.

For example, Marwa had written in her snapshot survey, “I hate reading” (123QBF9-7/4/07), and, later, when I asked if she still felt that way, she explained:

Mar: (IN123-36:41) Eh, yea, em, I do hate reading when it comes to reading stuff that I *have* to read. I like it when I find the things *I* like to read.

She did no leisure reading at all for almost three years, rather than read the types of reading materials her father wanted her to read or, to give up the types of reading materials *she* wanted to read:

Mar: (IN123-00:57) There was a time when my classmates gave me like, nice books to read. I really liked reading. I finished, like, mostly half of *A Boy Called It* or something, and eh, I really liked it and everything, and then once my dad was like, he was, “Don’t waste your time reading such novels; read something more interesting”, so, from that time I just dropped the book and never read again. Just this year I started reading again but without the notice of, like, if I want to read I just lock myself up in my room and read.

It may have been that, in avoiding all reading, she was protecting the main tenet of leisure reading, her right to read what she wanted to read, rather than give in to what others wanted her to read. She came off her reading strike when she could no longer resist the pull of reading, access to an interesting book and the recommendations of friends. She reads many books related to her various hobbies, including photography, design and playing the drums, whenever she wants to find out about something:

R: (IN123-8:41) Would you consider that leisure reading?

Mar: It *is* leisure reading

R: What makes it leisure reading?

Mar: because, like, when you are interested in something, like, I enjoy it.

R: and you’re doing it because ... (pause) ... you want to?

Mar: Yea.

Her leisure reading is limited to English reading because she does not like Arabic reading, something she blames on school, as there was no volition or free will attached to it.

I test this concept of ‘reading because you want to’ by asking Marwa if it includes reading the Qura’n:

R: (IN123-30:07) If you pick up the Qura’n and read it do you consider that leisure reading if you read it ‘cos you want to?

M: Mm, that’s hard to, eh, cos, it is a leisure and it is, like, you have to read it and those stuff, ... and, like, you like it and you have to, like, you *have* to like it. You like it ‘cos you have to, you know?

This property of, at once *having* to read the Qura’n and having to like it, is shared by Naheya: “We have to enjoy every single letter in it” (IN15-35:06), combining a sense of obligation and duty with volition,

and Shawq adds the fact that it is not done solely for oneself but is “something you have to do it for God” (IN96-7:40). This removes reading the Qura’n from the description of leisure reading and places it in a category of its own. In fact, students see it as higher than reading, “not reading, I never think of it as reading” (IN96-7:45).

Marwa also differentiates between leisure reading and other types of reading:

R: (IN123-28:11) What would you say is the difference between leisure reading and other kinds of reading? How would you describe leisure reading?

Mar: Leisure is when you, when *you* want to read, when you really want to read. It’s not when someone else wants you to. When you enjoy it, like, when you like the thing. I consider a leisure book is a book where you read the first page, you want to continue.

R: And do you think that sometimes it’s difficult to divide between what you want to read and course work; are they completely different?

Mar: They’re completely different. For example, I will spend Sunday doing school reading and finish work, and spend Monday doing reading, leisure reading, like this.

Assigned reading, therefore, is distinct from leisure reading (IN321-31:20; IN303-16:33), consisting of reading that needs to be got out of the way, in Marwa’s case or, “reading that I forced to” (IN63:24:34), according to Azza.

Based on their very limited reading experiences, non-readers associate leisure reading with texts which they perceive to be of no importance, lacking in benefit and therefore a waste of time. If they wanted to read simply to ‘waste the time’ they would which suggests the importance of readers’ reasons for reading. Non-readers just cannot see the point of reading for fun and they do not consider reading for studying and exams to be leisure reading, even though they claim to enjoy it. Since Salha was in primary school she has always associated reading with the purpose of doing assignments:

R: (IN278-8:13) In primary school was there a library in the classroom in the school?

S: In the primary school there was no library because there were no assignments.

In other words she learned at school that libraries were only for doing assignments. While attending secondary school, Salha borrowed books, “only for jobs, for reports, for projects” (4:20).

Therefore, it appears that, even though some non-readers claim to like to read for studying, they still do not refer to it as leisure reading, and maintain a clear distinction between the two. A memo I wrote at that time reads:

[Memo: 2/2/07]

What is the difference between leisure reading and other reading? Leisure reading is done with no eye on future (benefit). We read for the moment, whereas other reading is done with an eye on the future (academic - for exam, etc).

This definition was later revised by my participants' comments as many see leisure reading as something they do purposely for its benefits, while still enjoying the experience of reading.

4.3.2 Female Emirati university students conceptualize readers

Those among my participants who identify themselves as readers describe a reader as someone who reads widely because she wants and likes to, where the decision to read, her choice of reading materials and her reasons and purposes for reading are for her to determine. She has an interest or curiosity that is satisfied mainly by reading a wide variety of texts, and her behavior, including the way she speaks, will often define her as a reader, including the fact that she loves to talk about her reading and will often encourage others to read. A reader is likely to be able to deal with things calmly (IN299-ch.5.2.4.3) and patiently (IN13) (ch.6.2.2) and appears clever (IN269) and knowledgeable (IN17), is skilled in the use of language and has many other qualities. She is also more likely to read a hard copy of a book than to read it online (IN296; IN322; IN63).

Hearing from the experts: readers identify properties of a reader

Amani describes a reader as “a person who enjoys exploring life through books and commit to this experience by reflecting on what he/she learnt ...” (J7-4/5/2008). Heyam considers her younger sister to be clever: “She reads a LOT” (IN269-12:00), having bought twenty books on her recent visit to a bookshop, which she proceeded to read, rapidly. Raweya identifies her brother as a reader:

Ar: (IN240-25:03) I have one brother. He is the genius in the house. He likes to read, he likes to write and he likes [to gain] more information.

Not only does reading make one smart but, it also makes one *feel* smart and RihamF will often stop while talking to someone about certain references when she realizes that her listener does not know to what she is referring (IN17-10:50); the knowledge is hers alone. That feeling of smartness is what gets her excited about reading:

R: (IN17-20:50) It's kind of like looking smart because, when you read a book, you kind of feel smart when you're done. Reading gives me a very smart feeling, like, when I am done and I'm talking to people, I feel like I have something to say you know?

Shawq describes herself as a very keen reader, someone who reads a wide variety of texts, and who usually reads every day:

S: (IN96-00:14). I like to read different things. Sometimes, I read novels, fiction, autobiographies, biographies, anything that interests me.

Keen readers miss their reading habit when they cannot read and complain about not being able to read as often as they would like to, because of “so MANY deadlines to meet” (QBF2-7/4/07). Including it in their upcoming plans helps compensate to some extent.

Self-described reading addicts are described as those who read regardless of the consequences to their studies. Shawq admitted to having been addicted to reading at one time, telling me: “I could never not read” (C96-14/3/08), and she used to frequently read surreptitiously under the desk during our class. I was puzzled by the fact that she was not doing well academically, which seemed to contradict the widely held view of the benefits of reading. Her grade point average (GPA) became so low that she was placed on probation. I reminded her of her comment to me:

R: (IN96-6:08) I remember you saying to me once, “I could never not read” ... when your GPA was quite low. Would you say you are kind of addicted to it or would that be too strong?

S: I used to be ...

R: Would you say that the addiction might have been to such an extent that it would take the place of everything else that was more important?

S: You know I never had my priorities straight.

While, some students may be addicted to reading, generally, others may be addicted to reading certain items and, like other addicts, require a steady supply of such items. Badira remembers having an addiction to reading comic books:

R: (IN301-24:46) Do you read *Archie* comics?

B: Yea, I was addicted to it, three years ago. It was interesting. I used to go to the book fair and buy a lot of *Archies*, in English. ... I kept them. I like to reread them again.

RehamE was also addicted to reading her cousin’s *Archie* comics when she was younger (IN339-4:35). Amani admits to being addicted to reading a free weekly supplement with a local English language newspaper for third level students. She also remembers being addicted to reading certain books while in high school:

As I entered high school, I started reading again but romantic Arabic novels. It was an addiction that we used to read during class! It was a group addiction. My whole class used to read those novels, and we used to exchange them, all three years of high school ... I was [so] addicted to

reading English books that I do not read Arabic books anymore, and I don't know the reason ... I kept reading, even during summer and while traveling (J7-11/5/2008).

Hunaida was addicted to the *Twilight* series, because of the movies, and had difficulty finding the next book in the series:

H: (IN322-2:42) It was hard to find these at that time.

R: Did you have to go to different bookshops?

H: Yea.

R: When did you read them, a few hours a day, or ?

H: When you open the book you get addicted. At that time, I didn't have a lot of studies, so, I used to read maybe for four hours and I finished them in two hours.

R: You finished a book in two hours?

H: Yea, because the first book was maybe three hundred pages but the last book was six hundred pages

R: and you just kept reading until you?

H: Yea

R: Where did you read them?

H: Everywhere, I kept it in my bag (laughs).

Here, we get a sense of the reading 'junkie' needing to have her 'fix' close by at all times. Unlike many other types of addiction, however, a reading addict may turn off her addiction at will, may detect its beginnings, and is fully aware of and admits to her addiction. MarwaY, for example, recalls:

When I was child, before grade ten, I was addicted to reading but now, not anymore (J30-14/12/06).

Ameera identifies her nascent addiction to reading:

Mee: (IN13-17:50) I started to be addict.

R: Wooh!! To reading?

Mee: Yea, like in weekends, I've got plenty of time, which is, I don't know what to do.

R: So, you're addicted to reading.

Mee: Yea! (very strongly).

Rahma, too, considers herself to be addicted to reading:

Reading is like an addiction to me. In other words am in love with it and very affectionate about it; am very passionate about it (J28-28/3/07).

There are also recovered reading addicts, as Shawq explains:

R: (IN96-6:24) Like, the middle of last semester, I started, like, putting it to the, I limited myself to ten pages, five pages, whereas, I used to finish a book in three days.

Here, she clarifies one way in which a reader is clever, when they take control of their reading habit and do not let it take the place of other more important matters.

Seham used to view herself as a reader but not anymore, while she is attending university (IN321-36:05). She differentiates between the reader she used to be and a *real* reader who reads academic items, such as, articles and other texts that have benefit (J10-30/3/2007; IN321) and is someone for whom libraries, such as the one in the university, exist:

H: (IN321-32:22) Most of the books I saw [there] were like, academic and were for real readers, not for me.

R: Describe a real reader for me.

H: In my opinion, it's a person that reads not for leisure, they just like to read, so, they would read a lot of books just for the sake of reading. I would read for fun or to get information. They would just read, read, read. I don't find that interesting.

R: Would you say your mother is a real reader?

H: Yes, she is.

R: Would you say her reading is mostly leisure or mostly informational or mixed?

H: No, Mixed.

R: Do you think teachers are real readers?

H: Yea, (with uncertainty) I don't know; what they show us, yea, but I don't know.

Her description of a 'real' reader matches descriptions of a reader given by other students, above, as it refers to those who read for a variety of reasons including just for the sake of reading. She currently excludes herself from that group, because of the pressures of reading for her university courses.

Watching a movie or reading the book

Some readers prefer to read a book *before* watching its related movie (IN303; IN322; IN339) and enjoy the demands the book makes on their powers of imagination:

R: (IN303-16:50). Which do you prefer to do, watch the movie or read the book?

H: The book (without hesitation). Also *Twilight*, the movie, I read the novel. It was way better than the movie. I was like to my friends, "You better read the book instead of watching this" ... Read the book is better than watching the movie. Also, *The DaVinci Code*. I read the book and then discovered there is a movie. When I watched the movie I was like, "Why did they cut off the good parts of the book?"

H: (IN322-00:47) I really enjoyed reading the *Twilight* series. It interested me and affect me. I watched the movie before reading the book, but, when I read the book it's more interesting, it's more detailed. It's more nicer than the movie. ... Reading is your imagination, *your* imagination, not what the media puts in your mind, cos it's what you think, what *you* put in your mind, 'cos, if you read the story and you watched the movie you will say, "What's this? because you pictured the characters differently than what was pictured in the movie.

Readers prefer the opportunity offered by reading to create their own images as they make sense of a text:

A: (IN299-58:23) I'd read the book first because sometimes the movies destroy everything. Some things are left out; some important events might not be translated well.

Occasionally, however, the choice depends on the movie:

Re: (IN339-24:40) You know, the interesting thing, when I read a book and after that I see the movie, the books is better than the movie.

R: But yet, for some books, you prefer to see the movie first.

Re: Only *Harry Potter*, like, *Princess Diaries*, I didn't like the movie. I loved the book, and, *Twilight* is much better than the movie. The movie didn't include many points; it only included the main points.

R: Does it make a difference if you read the book first? Do you do both and then compare?

Re: Sometimes, I read the book before the movies and sometimes after the movie.

R: so, either way, you still think that the book is better?

Re: Yea

B: (IN301-2:40) [It] depends. If it's, like, *Harry Potter*, I like to watch the movies because it's like, something, maybe if I don't have this much imagination I won't imagine. It's different when you see a creation and imagination from the writers or the producers. It's different from, eh, how I imagine. ... Maybe they are both equal. You know it's different; it's not all, movies, movies. I can go to reading.

It seems that for certain epic movies with very elaborate scenery and sound effects, the reader's powers of imagination cannot compete to bring about enjoyment. As Ameera said: "[a] movie is a movie, still it's a movie" (IN13-8:33), and although she prefers reading to watching a movie because reading makes her think more, the visual impact of the large screen is powerful and, perhaps, difficult to replace:

Mee: (IN13-8:48) “But, like, the movie, it keeps on in my mind, like imagining pictures and stuff”.

Some enjoy both reading a book and watching its related movie (IN13), because watching a movie allows them to “zone out”, while, when reading a book, the reader has to do the work, imagining all the scenes, etc (IN17). Others have a more utilitarian reason for liking to do both, because the movie often helps them to understand the text better (IN240; IN63). Perhaps reading a book offers the reader companionship, which is lacking when watching a movie and it is not surprising, therefore, that many readers view books as their friends:

S: (IN294-22:53) My books were my friends ... I was shy ... so I didn't have a lot of friends and I stayed reading, reading, reading.

Perhaps the most important quality of a reader is that once a reader always a reader.

A reader ... never gives up reading, no matter how long they leave books (J7-4/5/2008).

For the purpose of my data analysis and the remaining chapters, I will use the term reader to indicate a participant who refers to herself as a reader with the understanding that she reads in her preferred language which may or may not be her native language and has any or all of the following attributes: a reader reads because she likes to, she chooses what she wants to read for her own reasons, she likes to talk about reading with others and likes the way reading makes her feel smart, she is considered knowledgeable, clever, educated and well read by others, as it is reflected in her way of thinking, speaking and behaving. Shamsa's friends capture some of the above:

S: (IN294-25:46). Not all my friends like reading and if I say to them, “Do you know this information that I read about it?” they say, “Oh, you have a big imagination” and I live bigger than for my age.

Some of the main concepts which emerged relative to my participants' conceptualization of readers are presented in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4 – properties of readers

Readers	
Like reading in one language more than another	May ignore other duties because of reading
Consider reading important	May have lapses in their reading habits
Are considered smart by others	Exchange books with friends
Feel smart	May complete a book in one sitting
Read often	Also called real readers
Read a wide variety of texts	Prefer to read a book before watching its movie
Would like more time to read	Gain companionship from books
May find reading addictive	

4.3.3 Female Emirati university students conceptualize non-readers

Both readers and non-readers readily identify the properties of a non-reader which shows that their categorization system is in place and that they apply it to others when relevant. Readers describe non-readers as those who do not read and dislike reading, something that is often detected in their behavior, as Naheya explains about a teacher she once had in school:

N: (IN15-44:35) This teacher, I swear she didn't read anything ... Grade four, it was my worst experience in English subject... She was a substitute teacher. She had bad methods and bad techniques, even when she was dealing with us. I don't think that she was an educated person....

She didn't read a book in her life because if she read, she may behave more better than she did.

Here, Naheya looks back through the eyes of a university student, and with her classification system which views people as either readers or non-readers she is now able to describe her fourth grade teacher firmly as one of the latter. She suggests that her teacher's "bad methods and bad techniques" and apparent ignorance about how to deal with children, are strongly linked to her being a non-reader. In other words, a teacher who does not read cannot be a good teacher but will remain unformed, uneducated and professionally incompetent. This belief is also echoed by Hana from a positive perspective as she describes her English teacher in her government school, who helped trigger her interest in books:

H: (IN303-1:49) We used to go to the library; she was really an excellent teacher, it's rare to find.

She takes us to the library each week, once a week and she starts to read to everyone, and eh, she gives a photocopy of that book so we, if the words, if we don't understand, we can underline them so that everyone can read. She was a new teacher, local.

She appears to link reading and interest in reading with being an excellent teacher.

The quality of a non-reader being uninformed is also evident in the following clip, where Shawq talks about her brother as a not very keen reader:

R: (IN96-00:32) What would you describe as not a very keen reader?

S: My brother [in the twelfth grade] a person who doesn't know what's going on in the world or doesn't know how to read well and who isn't the type of person who likes to look at books and see what's going on.

Both clips suggest that a non-reader lacks certain essential qualities such as the education and information that are necessary to fulfill their duties, to know how to behave toward others and, simply, to have an awareness of the world around them. There, we have a concise description of a non-reader and, by reversal, a description of a reader.

Hearing from the experts: non-readers reveal properties of a non-reader

When my participants describe themselves as non-readers they explain that they do not like to read or, in some cases, hate reading, but, that they read for exams or studying or for religious purposes. In other words, they are not interested in reading unless they benefit from it. They are likely to view leisure reading as being boring - particularly book reading - and requiring lots of time. Below, I look at three self-described non-readers, from now on referred to as non-readers.

Salha

S: (IN278-1:20) I hate reading books, or anything else ... really!

R: All kinds of books?

S: Yea; I think they are boring. Maybe, if I like the subject, *maybe*, but, until now, I think I didn't find anything that interests me.

Salha considers herself to be a non-reader, and when I asked her what comes to her mind when someone mentions reading, she said it was a "boring thing" (IN278-8:37),

S: (IN278-8:48) For someone who has plenty of time, yes, maybe it's leisure or something, yea, but, eh, for someone like me ...

R: Just for exams, maybe?

S: Yes, because I like to study very much ...

R: (IN278-34:51) So, if I were to ask you, "tell me about reading in your life", you would say, "Reading now, is just for

S: Studying or my assignments.

R: and do you think that's how it's going to be until you have finished studying?

S: I think so

Nobody ever read to her, either at home or at school but her parents read a little. Her father never went to school but has taught himself to read the newspaper, with a little help from Salha, and her mother always reads the Qura'n and a little in English. One older sister, a college graduate, likes to read, while another hates reading, but, once brought Salha an English book about *Pinocchio* from a book exhibition, because she had asked her to bring her a gift. She liked looking at the pictures in the book, until she was old enough to read it but, that was the only such book she ever had. She never visited a bookshop but, thinks that, if she had time, she *might* like to go to one. She enjoys reading Japanese comic books, *Manga*, online:

S: (IN278-00:33) Reading books I really don't like it but, I usually read the translation in the *Anime* or dramas I watch.

and gives a running translation of the subtitles from English into Arabic for her sister but does not consider that reading:

R: Does that make you like reading?

S: I don't know, maybe, why not (Laughs), or, maybe this will make me like translating. I am not sure.

When Salha joined the university, she first attended the English foundation program where the teacher told them to read abridged versions of stories in English, referred to as graded readers. She read "a romance story, because I love romance" (IN278-13:50) but read nothing since then, which was five months ago. She read it in short doses, to relieve the tedium of studying for her IELTS exam. If given a choice of reading a book in English or Arabic, she would choose to read it in English:

S: (IN278-15:46) In the past, I would prefer to read the Arabic, and now I will prefer to read the English, because I want to improve my English. I see it you know, eh, eh, better, when I read in English.

When asked what would prevent her from reading, she replied:

S: (IN278-17:18) Studying, maybe. Also, my family: "Come to teach your sisters" and "Come to eat dinner" or "lunch" or whatever ... or "We will go to somewhere", yea.

Referring to Arabic - mostly Islamic - books that are on her bookshelf in her room, she says:

S: (IN278-17:38) I really want to read because they have a lot of interesting subjects. I really want, but I can't find the time to read.

R: When you say there are a lot of interesting subjects how do you know?

S: The title(s). They have some eh, some, eh, some stories about eh, our prophets. I really wanted to know.

Salha likes both fiction and non-fiction but does not have a preference for either. She does not consider reading the Qura'n as leisure reading but believes that reading is important in Islam, particularly reading about the prophets "because they have a lot of, eh, useful stories that we can follow, also, some history" (19:30). Although she was educated through Arabic until now, she struggles to read the articles for her Arabic class because they are too difficult, "too complex to read. These articles are for educated people, people who study Arabic, who are interested in history and science, not for us" (24:35). Whenever she struggles to understand a word in either English or Arabic, she uses a computerized translator, as a last resort:

S: (IN278-25:42) I read the whole sentence. If I didn't understand I will read the whole paragraph. If I [still] didn't understand a word, I will check it out.

She believes that the decision about whether or not to read should be left up to the students themselves and that the teacher should not oblige them to do it. She does not read the newspaper and would prefer to watch a movie than read its book. She travelled only once by plane, to Saudi Arabia, and so, she was too excited to read. If she reads while travelling by car it is just for her studies, and her use of the university library is also related to her studies. Although she has many interests, including setting up her own business and playing basketball, she has no interest in reading about these subjects, although she does admit to liking a particular genre of books: romance.

Already, the concept of non-reader as outlined at the start of this section is being problematized, as we hear from individual non-readers, because the phrase, a person 'who does not read' or 'is not interested in reading' may not apply in all cases – even though non-readers may claim it. A non-reader may identify a certain limited purpose for reading, one that is valued in school, but she may also enjoy and engage in other kinds of reading which are not acknowledged in school, she may express a fondness for a certain genre or complain of a lack of time for reading what she wants to read and believes that the decision to read should be left up to the student herself. A strong difference emerging between reader and non-reader is the manner in which a non-reader talks about reading, using phrases such as: "I hate reading" and "It's boring". Recycling such phrases to a non-reader, however, can prove problematic, as we see in the next data clip.

Khatima

The following extracts from Khatima's data show how the researcher categorizes at her peril:

R: (IN338-13:03) Would you consider yourself a reader or a non-reader?

K: a non-reader.

R: Would you consider yourself a person who hates or dislikes reading?

K: No, (with dissatisfaction) I don't like this. I like to read, but in my courses, only

R: for study, just?

K: yea.

R: but, still, you didn't read what your professor told you to read for your exam!

K: Yea! (laughs).

R: You told me about a graded reader you read that was boring. Is there any one book that you read in Arabic or English that you really enjoyed reading?

K: Arabic book? I read about the, em, the title is *Al Islam Mudhabib*. I read it and it is so interesting because it talks about the religion and how the people divided themselves because of their religion and how the foreigner forced us to change our religion ... not, change our religion but, the effect of the foreigners on our religion; just only this book. I read it this semester.

R: Would you say you like religious reading more than anything?

K: No but, eh, this book was interesting.

Here, my attempts to link Khatima with one or other of what appeared to be the emerging properties of hating reading or reading only religious texts, proved ungrounded, as she rejects both. Khatima has read and enjoyed, at least one book in Arabic and identifies another that she would like to read, *Binat Al Riyadh*, a controversial story about a Saudi woman, "because the title is so interesting" (21:28). I immediately suggest to her that the book titles are very important, which she confirms, and I then ask her:

R: (IN338-21:22) A book called *The Teacher who Couldn't Read*, would you be interested in that?

K: No, I, eh, what teacher cannot read? (laughs)

Here, she represents the distinction accorded to teachers by students, in the belief that they are, at least able to read, building on Seham's comment that, at least they show that they are readers (which is what Corcoran did in the book mentioned above). Non-readers, place themselves very firmly in a different category to that of teachers and readers, which, for them, are synonymous.

We see how problematic it is to try to categorize individual students in their reading habits as they are all so distinct and varied.

K: (IN338-00:20) I like reading but not everything. The necessary things like grammar, books, they help me in my courses, but, story books, if there is any time, I will read, *IF* there is.

R: What I hear you saying is not that you don't like reading ...

K: I don't like; there is no time to read; I feel it is boring.

R: So when you said to me “I don’t like to read” is that true or it’s just that you don’t have time?

K: True, sometimes,

R: sometimes you don’t like it?

K: no.

R: If you have time to read are there times when you prefer to watch a movie?

K: If you tell me to take a movie or reading I will take the movie. ... I feel reading is so boring because I don’t like to think about reading all by myself. If someone wants to read it to me, OK.

Khatima enjoyed it when her cousin read to her from a *Harry Potter* book, to help her understand the movie. His reading helped her to understand the text but, she would have found it boring to read it on her own:

K: (IN338-4:10) We went to see the movie and I told him I didn’t understand anything and the movie is boring. He told me, “Come, I will tell you the story”, so, he started to read it.

R: Is he a reader; does he like reading?

K: Yea, he is in the HCT (Higher Colleges of Technology). He likes to read and likes to study.

We told him: “You are the worm of the books”.

R: Did you enjoy it when he was reading to you?

K: Yea, the pronunciation, the facial expression.

R: did anyone read to you in school?

K: No

She was almost 20 years old at the time and her cousin was twenty-three years old. She believes that her poor reading ability in English may be one reason why she claims to dislike reading, because, for her, reading is associated with academic texts and most of those are in English. She visits bookshops, only to get course books, and the thing that makes her read is: “because our teacher say” (IN338-17:14) and for the planned discussion afterwards, in class. Yet, she did not always do the assigned reading, as I pointed out to her. One thing that is likely to stop her from reading in Arabic, the only language in which she reads, is if the author “is out of the way in thinking ... if he doesn’t stay in the middle; he goes to one side” or extremes.

A common theme which is emerging is the conditional aspect of a non-reader’s attitude toward reading, whereby she appears to say: “if the conditions were right, I might read”, which is similar to reading mainly for the benefit she can get out of it. At the risk of stating the obvious and with circularity, it may be necessary to point out that non-readers do not just dislike reading but that they like to read what *they*

like to read. They appear to have read very little and display a lack of engagement with reading which explains why it has not become part of who they are.

Layali

I informed my class that we would have a sustained silent reading period in our upcoming class and that they were to bring their favourite book to read during that time. Layali did not bring any and I sent her to the library to get something to read. She returned with a *Reader's Digest* (in English) whose pages she kept flicking, until finally settling on a particular story:

L: (IN306-00:28). First of all I don't like to read books. OK, I like to read, but books, no, because when I read I feel I want to sleep and then my eyes are tearing and I can't read. Because of that I don't like to read. But, I like to read magazines and newspaper.

She reads the daily paper only in Arabic, although various papers are regularly brought to her house in both Arabic and English because her father is a keen reader. The first thing she looks at in the newspaper is the sports news and she has been following the successes of her favourite team "because it's the third in the league. They took the cup of Shaikh Zayed" (IN306-4:00). She said she would not read a book about her favourite team but, then, reconsiders, saying:

L: (IN306-4:36) but, if the title was interesting and eh, the contents of the reading is interesting I will read it".

She prefers to read short stories and the last book she started to read was an Arabic book of short stories. One story she picked in the *Reader's Digest* told about a father who did not treat his daughter as he should have and another was about how to cope with stress in the work place. She picked the latter because:

L: (IN306-8:08) I saw this picture with the article, of a woman in a box, and I was thinking: "Why did they put this picture?" She was sitting like this in a box; it was interesting. Because of that I read the article.

She had not finished reading it in class but returned it to the library without attempting to borrow it.

Layali never saw a teacher reading a book, nobody read to her when she was a child and there were no books at home other than school books. Most of the schools she attended (and she attended both private and government Arabic schools) did not have a library, to her knowledge: "I didn't see one" (11:15), and they did not encourage reading, because they were afraid that the students would "spoil the books" (10:05). There *was* a library in one government school:

L: (IN306-12:37) but not interesting; all Arabic books.

R: I see you wrinkling your nose as if you don't like Arabic books.

L: Sometimes I like to read, but, it depends on the book, and the title and the story, if it is interesting or not.

As evidence of the importance she places on reading, she plans to read to her children in the future:

L: (IN306-27:20) I will do anything my family didn't do for me.

R: Do you feel you missed something?

L: Yes.

R: How has it affected you?

L: You feel that your family is caring about you when they read for you a story and buy for you a book. They care about your future.

For the purpose of my data analysis and the remaining chapters, I will use the term non-reader, to indicate a participant who may fit any or all of the following properties: refers to herself as a non-reader, claims to strongly dislike or hate reading but does not always let it define her attitude toward it, likes to read only what she wants to read, who may find reading books particularly challenging from the point of interest and patience, which leads her to describe reading as boring, but yet, values reading as something very important and something that should be supported and encouraged both by spending money on libraries (IN306-20:45) and by families providing books for their children (Table 4.5)

Table 4.5 – properties of non-readers

Non-readers	
Dislike leisure reading – find it boring	May regret lack of time to read
Consider reading important	Have long gaps in their reading
Are not considered smart by others	Do not exchange books with friends
Do not feel smart or well-informed	Struggle to complete a book
Hardly ever read outside of class readings	Prefer to watch a movie than read its book
Read only academic and other obligatory texts	Do not develop close relationship with books

4.4 Summary of chapter 4

Female Emirati university students identify themselves as either readers or non-readers, according to whether or not they read and like to read for leisure. Both readers and non-readers have clear but different views on what constitutes leisure reading, with the former considering it reading whatever one chooses for oneself and the latter considering it reading for fun. Although non-readers claim to enjoy reading academic texts, they do not consider this leisure reading, which shows that the real meaning of leisure

reading lies, not in the types of texts that are read, but, in the students themselves, and their reasons for reading them. Ameera reread Socrates' *Apology* after they had finished studying it in class because she enjoyed it, which made it leisure reading. The following table (4.6) captures students' conceptualization of readers, non-readers and leisure reading:

Table 4.6 – properties of readers, non-readers and leisure reading

Readers, non-readers and leisure reading	
<i>Conceptualizing readers and non-readers</i>	
Readers	Non-readers
Like reading	Dislike leisure reading – find it boring
Consider reading important	Consider only academic reading important
Are considered smart by others	Are not considered smart by others
Feel smart	Do not feel smart or well-informed
Like to talk about reading	Do not like to talk about reading
Read often	Hardly ever read outside of class readings
Talk about reading	Do not talk about reading
Read a wide variety of texts	Read only academic and other obligatory texts
May regret lack of time to read	May regret lack of time to read
May ignore other duties because of reading	
May have lapses in their reading habits	Have long gaps in their reading
Exchange books with friends	Do not exchange books with friends
May complete a book in one sitting	Struggle to complete a book
Also called real readers	
Prefer to read a book before watching its movie	Prefer to watch a movie than read its book
Gain companionship from books	Do not develop close relationships with books
<i>Readers conceptualize leisure reading</i>	<i>Non-readers conceptualize leisure reading</i>
Associate it with interesting texts and believe that all reading is likely to benefit the reader	Associate it with texts that have no benefit
Identify it as reading for a plethora of reasons and it is important	Identify it as reading just for fun and so, as being unimportant
See themselves as belonging to a group called readers.	Exclude themselves from a group called readers.
Can identify a reader	Can identify a reader

Both groups value reading in general very highly, believe that it should not be done to waste time, and can readily identify a reader. Khatima's cousin is a reader - "the worm of the books" - because "he likes to read and likes to study" (IN338-4:40) and he also reads widely beyond the academic texts. Both readers and non-readers are likely to avoid reading in one or other language, according to their preferences, but, with some differences. For both readers and non-readers, their avoidance of reading in English is usually related to their reading difficulty in English while for those who do not read in Arabic but consider their Arabic reading ability to be excellent, lack of desire or interest is the main reason. Attitude toward leisure reading on the part of both groups indicates some conditional properties, whereby non-readers suggest that they *might* consider reading a book *if* it were very interesting and *if* they had time to read. Readers' attitudes toward reading contain an unspoken conditional aspect, whereby they subconsciously know that there are certain genres or topics that they would not read. Therefore, both groups' attitudes have a conditional component.

Readers' identity is a collective shared one whereby readers identify other readers, with whom they talk about and share books, while the identity of a non-reader appears to be a solitary or individual one, lacking such literacy-club like activities. The properties of non-readers are more difficult to determine, perhaps because (as non-readers) they have not yet succeeded in reading their own world. They are very clear on their description of leisure reading - reading for fun or to waste the time and without benefit – and that they do not like it or find it boring. Non-readers do not identify a wide array of choices of reading items, which stems from their limited experiences with reading. They are unlikely to have been read to as children, or to have reading role models at home. They may be the first generation in their families to go to university and, while no obstacles are placed in their way to prevent them from getting a third level education, there may not be strong expectations of parents for them to succeed academically:

K: (IN338-16:0) nobody interferes with

R: Would your father interfere in the other way and say you should be reading something?

K: My father doesn't force us to do anything. He also tells us: "If you don't want to go to the university it's OK, stay at home".

Whereas a reader is likely to encourage others to read, a non-reader is not. Non-readers appear to be open to encouragement to read, if it involves reading materials that they would find interesting. Non-readers are more likely than readers to prefer to watch a movie than read the related book (IN306; IN339). Readers like to read a wide range of genres and topics and actively seek new texts to read, but non-readers do not believe that there is a book 'out there' which they would find interesting. They have not yet found

such a book. Could it be that non-readers simply cannot find interesting Arabic texts? I touched on this with Khatima:

R: (IN338-21:43) The local writers, do you think we need more *Emirati* writers to write *Emirati* books?

K: Yea, actually I don't know any *Emirati* writers.

R: Do you think that having more would encourage locals to read?

K: If there are I think it will influence other people and we will have educated people.

Readers' conceptualization of leisure reading can be summed up as: reading whatever I want to read for whatever reasons I want, "to satisfy my needs" (IN303-45:55). In other words, it is reading for oneself. No type of text or genre is excluded if a student wishes to read it. It could be a class-assigned text that is reread because the student enjoys reading it, the second and subsequent readings of which would constitute leisure reading. This suggests leisure reading does not reside in the text but, primarily within the reader, within her wishes and desires to read. For the rest of my thesis, I will use the terms reader and non-reader to refer to participants who identify themselves as either, based on the descriptions given in this chapter, and I will use the phrase leisure reading and reading interchangeably, to refer to the reading that students do for themselves because they want to. Unless stated otherwise, the reading of all kinds of texts refers to unabridged versions which were read in English.

CHAPTER 5 – STUDENTS’ LEISURE READING PRACTICES

5.1 Introduction

Much may be learned with regard to lovely woman by a look at the book she reads in (Thackeray and Stephen, 1869, p.379).

Much may be learned with regard to lovely female Emirati university student-as-reader by taking a look at the books she reads in. In this chapter I look at the following aspects of my participants’ reading practices including: how they make their reading choices, examples of those choices and when, where and how they read for leisure. Choosing something to read involves the initial decision to start reading a text, which can be indicated by taking a book off a library shelf or buying it in a bookshop, and the decision to continue reading it once started. I will look at how those choices are influenced by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors followed by a sample of what students read for leisure, and end with their reading habits of time and space. All of the concepts presented here emerged from my coding in chapter 4 (see figure 4.3) and, unless stated otherwise, all items were read in English and in their unabridged versions.

5.2 How students choose their reading items: extrinsic factors

Students’ reading choices are often affected by factors such as access to reading materials, the visual appeal of a book and recommendations and information about reading items. First, I present some of the steps involved when students read for leisure and show where the reading item fits into those steps. Marwa’s friend gave her a book which she read: “Just now, like, I read a book and I liked it and I’m waiting for another book” (IN123-1:57). This is shown in path 1 with the inferred steps written in italics (Figure 5.1):

Figure 5.1 - Path 1 to reading a particular item (IN123)

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7
Access to reading item	<i>Decision to read it</i>	Read	<i>Knowledge about the book</i>	<i>Decision to continue reading</i>	Attitude	Desire to read more

It started with access to a book, followed by, most probably, a decision to read and then actually reading it. This gave Marwa knowledge about it, informing her further decision to continue reading it, which she enjoyed.

Path 2 also starts with access to a reading item. As RehamF entered a music store in a busy mall she passed by a presentation of best-selling books near the entrance and picked up one whose title piqued her curiosity. She read its blurb and introduction, which generated her interest in reading it so that she bought it with some other titles and later read it (Figure 5.2):

Figure 5.2 - Path 2 to reading a particular item

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9
Access	<i>Curiosity</i>	Information	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Desire</i>	Choice	Decision	Acquisition	Read

In this reading event, the book cover and title helped to make RehamF’s choice for her – with help from the shop owners who had placed a selection of “really good titles” (IN17-19:58) where people would see them. In both paths, a recommendation to read came in the form of direct access to a book, one from a friend and the other from a “bunch of books” (IN17-2:00) with catchy titles. Although a reading event does not always start with it, access to a reading item is central to the reading event. Again, the steps which were not mentioned by her but were inferred by me are written in italics

5.2.1 Access to interesting reading materials

Having access to reading items helps to guide students’ reading choices. My participants as-readers prefer to own the books they read (C7; IN17; IN88) and so, they are more likely to visit bookshops and book fairs than institutional or public libraries (S35-31/10/06; 3/12/06; S38–29/11/06). For many, the constant worry of remembering to return a book interferes with their enjoyment of it:

I don’t really use our university library much, because I hate borrowing books, since it limits the time I can spend with a book. I like having the book around me for a long time so I can read it with no pressure from deadlines for returning it. Also, there are no new interesting books in our library and I have a better range of choices when I buy (J7-14/11/08).

Rm: (IN17-28:50). I don't know why ... I feel like it's a responsibility [to borrow].

N: (88QBF3-7/4/7) The book I want to read for leisure I buy it.

Students like being able to read a book at the same time as their friends or family members so that they can discuss it afterwards and so, even if they borrow a book from a friend or family member, they are likely to buy a copy for themselves if they like it, (IN303-35:25).

My sister encouraged me to buy them so we could read them whenever we wanted (J63-14/11/08).

Many students purchase books at the annual book exhibition with the free book tokens provided by the royal family (ch.1.3.4) as well as spending their own money, although some complain that there are few interesting English books there. Students also occasionally receive books as gifts from family members or friends. Raweya describes how she got the Arabic book, *Ru'iatu*, written by Shaikh Mohamed Bin Rashed, ruler of Dubai:

Ar: (IN240-20:10) I remember a gift from my mother. She knew that I wanted this book - Mohamed Bin Rashed's book. When I saw it, I said, "Oh Mam, I want to buy this book" and she said, "No, no, no, no, not now" and, after two days, she brought it to me. She said, "I wanted to bring it as a gift".

Giving books as gifts shows the value placed on books by both the receiver and the giver. Together with the books they purchase, these are added to their personal collections (S23-10/12/06; J297-3/2/2010), often resulting in the possession of "zillions" of books:

S: (IN321-5:08) Beside my bed I have a zillion of books (laughs) but I never read them. I buy a lot of books but I don't have time to read them.

My personal collection has five big shelves full of books and books that are in boxes that I kept for almost eight years now (J28-10/12/2006).

Personal book collections facilitate regular access to reading items and help to guide reading choices.

Most students also have access to books in their home libraries, (J40-14/12/06; J23-29/11/06; S37-22/5/07). Basmaa acknowledges that: "The home library is a source of reading material" (J23-29/11/06) and she read *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* after finding it there (S23-24/12/06). Students are often unable to enumerate the books in their homes (S39-29/10/06):

In the house I can't really tell how many books we have (J28-10/12/2006);

We have about over one hundred books, both Arabic and English, of interesting topics (J23-29/11/06).

Some home libraries are measured by the space they occupy:

Mar: (IN123-16:21) My dad's library is very, very full, like, oh my God, I cannot count them. Walls and walls and in his bedroom, in the hallway; there's no place for them. He just loves reading.

R: and do you ever browse those books?

Mar: Yea, and he always gives me books about the, em, you know the em, "Marwa" [pseudonym] the mother of Jesus, yea, because he named me after her ... so he always gives me books about her and poetry and because I write poetry and he, like, wants me to...

R: (IN296-17:30) Who else reads in your family?

A: My grandfather. He has many books in his room, his bedroom and his sitting-room; MANY books, and most of them are Islamic books but, it isn't really very organized because he is very old.... It is, like, one whole wall is all covered in shelves. He used to give me, like, small booklets about Islam. He always wakes up in the morning and starts reading, religious books and sometimes the Qura'n.

R: Who else?

A: My uncle. He has just a small shelf and he has some English books, just English books.

Here, we can see how students' identities as-niece, as-granddaughter and as-daughter gave them access to books and we will see in the next section that various facets of their identities help to determine which ones they chose to read. Many homes have either a mere handful of Arabic books (S35-29/10/06; S37-29/10/06; S28-29/10/06; S36-29/10/06) or none at all (S23; S24; S38; S41; S26-29/10/06). Some have books in other languages particularly where male family members were educated abroad or if they themselves are learning to read in a foreign language. Students also have access to reading items on the Internet and periodicals, such as, newspapers, magazines, and an on-campus monthly publication. Although the data suggests a link between access to interesting reading materials and leisure reading I do not claim that because a book is available it will be read. Access is but one factor.

5.2.2 Absence of recommendations to read: book appeal

The absence of any recommendations about reading items may create difficulties for the would-be reader. Azza attended a government school which was exceptional in that it had a "big, big, big, BIG library" (IN63-13:50), so big that she felt unable to choose a book on her first few visits there:

A: (IN63-15:47) I think: "how can I read all these books? How can people read all these books?"

R: Too many books?

A: Yea, too many books.

R: So, you didn't know where to go?

A: Yea, really.

She also experienced this feeling of confusion in the largest bookshop in the region before coming away empty-handed because she could not decide what to buy:

(IN63-38:37) You know, eh, on Friday, I went to Dubai Mall and there is a shop I don't know what is the name, and there was many fictions and really I want to choose one but I didn't know what's the ones I have to choose. So, em, maybe thirty minutes I was walking around the campus and looking what I have to put (R: to buy) yea, to buy, but at the end I didn't buy anything.

A lack of recommendation in both instances resulted in a lack of acquisition of a reading item.

Although there are some exceptions the lack of recommendations to read by Arabic teachers and librarians is a theme consistently reported by students in both government and private schools. In the former, while some recall teachers who brought in their own books from home, students often recall dingy libraries (IN299; IN278) or none at all with teachers who did not make reading recommendations but adopted a helpless attitude of "what can we do!". In private international schools, Arabic teachers "didn't care much about the Arabic" (IN301-7:15). They "just wanted to give the class and go" (IN322-18:50):

Mar: (IN123-21:11) Arabic teachers never encouraged us to read or something. They never told us go read a book or something.

Does a lack of recommendation promote a negative image of reading? Marwa suggests as much:

Mar: (IN123-20:29) It's all school influence. Everything is related to school, everything. Once, like, if your school will encourage you reading books and getting good books, you will love reading from that. If Arabic teachers would just make you hate Arabic reading and, like, have hard time with it and everything you will hate Arabic reading. It just starts when you are at school.

Recommendations to read at university are usually made in the foundation English program where (government school graduates) were encouraged to read graded readers or abridged versions of well-known English titles. These are specially written to match a wide range of reading abilities for ESL/EFL learners and are housed in the Learning Enhancement Centre (LEC) in the university library. While some found the stories interesting others did not but received little or no information about other books that they could read for leisure. In general, university teachers do not recommend books for students to read, prompting the following observation from an avid reader:

S: (IN96-1:35) I haven't met anyone in this university that actually asked about reading.

5.2.2.1 *Always choose a book by its cover!*

In the absence of recommendations to read, readers judge a book by its cover and are heavily influenced by it. This point is understood by booksellers the world over who capitalize on the selling power of presenting books facing outward, making the shopper view them as “really good books. You just want to buy ‘em all” (IN19:59), as happened to RehamF in a music shop. Such a presentation tempts those who feel lost in big bookshops: “I don’t like to go to big places where I get lost” (IN17-19:49) and who may, in effect, be abdicating their right to choose beyond the bookseller’s choices, which may not always be neutral:

R: (IN17-55) They select for you.

Rm: Yea.

That was how RehamF chose the book, *Burned Alive*, in reading path 2 above (ch.5.2):

Rm: (IN17-1:35) I was actually looking for music in [a well-known] megastore and I passed by the best-selling books. They had a bunch of books, so I got this book and I bought another book. ... It’s about honor killing ... about a girl’s life and what she went through.

First impressions of a particular book are the aesthetic appeal of its cover, followed by basic information from its title and blurb:

N: (IN15-31:4) The excitement starts with the covers. If the covers look very attractive, I read, I wanna read it, even if it is not a good book. I wanna own it because of the covers ... even the title, the way it’s written. The title could be attractive.

A: (IN296-21:14) When I go to a library [bookshop] really, I judge the book by the cover.

Re: (IN339-27:30). Some books, they attract you by the cover.

Sometimes, the title of the book attracts me to read the book (C21-21/1/07).

That was how Layla chose to read *Waiting*, by Ha Jin, for example (C9-14/2/07), how AzzaR chose *Gossip Girl* by Cecily von Ziegesar (C3-5/11/07) and how Amna chose the book, *Princess*:

A: (IN299-14:20) There is a book called *Princess* and it talks about the Saudi community and stuff and how they live their lives and how this particular princess did something wrong; she had some problems. I just read the summary on the back. A Muslim girl did something...

Seham is equally fascinated by a book cover and its title:

H: (IN321-15:00) To be honest, it’s mostly the cover. The cover really plays a big role in choosing the book. If I like all the design, then I would read the name. Sometimes, books are so

nice but their names aren't that good, so, you wouldn't choose it ... If I go into a bookstore, that's how I choose the books. I know it's not the right way ... because sometimes you would choose something that's so nice from outside but it isn't.

R: Have you ever done that?

H: Yea, I can't remember the book but there are some times that I found a really nice cover and name but when I read it it's just a waste of time, really a waste of time. I didn't really get something from the book. I didn't get use from the book.

Badira is attracted by the colours of the cover although, sometimes, if the book is "I won't say ugly, but plain" (IN301-22:00), she will read the summary before completely rejecting it. Hana chose the young adult books series, *Twilight*, by Stephanie Meyers, because of its cover:

R: (IN303-26:10) *Twilight's* covers are really nice. It's so black and the red first, like the chess board ... No, the chess pieces.

She also chose *The Alchemist* partly by its cover because she loves the covers of Coelho's books: "the colours that he uses are so nice" (IN303-26:36).

5.2.2.2 *Risks of choosing a book by its cover*

Choosing a book solely by its cover has its risks, as students too frequently discover:

Sh: (IN96-8:58) I read once, a book; it was *In Her Shoes* ... 'cos I'm addicted to shoes, and, it had *nothing* to do with shoes [laughter]! It was talking about sisters and the, em, the book, the, eh, cover of the book was pink and there was a heel and stuff, so, it was kind of really catchy.

Heyam also discovered the risks involved in picking a book by its cover:

A: (IN269-8:55) Now, I pick them based on the title and the cover. When I was young I used to read the things that are written on the back of the book. Now ... I don't read the blurb. I just look at the cover and the title. I became superficial ... I just bought a book, it's called *Fraud of the Mask* or something, but, I didn't read it until now 'cos, when I read it, it's really boring. I should have read the blurb at the back.

Later, she describes another book she bought, when I took the class on a field trip to a bookshop:

E: (IN269-12:59) I bought one book about the perfect man but I didn't finish it because I thought it was silly ...

R: How did you pick it?

E: Because of the cover [laughter].

Regardless of the perils, when browsing bookshelves, library shelves or online bookshops, readers are clearly drawn to a book by its cover, from which they get some information about it and they often base

their choices on this. It suggests the importance of having information about the book and of having hard copies as opposed to their electronic versions. Azza feels this need as she also reads the introduction before choosing a book:

A: (IN63-39:18) Always when I look at the books, I like to see the introduction. It gives me some information.

She does not rely, solely, on the judgment or recommendation of others, but takes it into consideration:

A: (IN63-40:06) I like first to read. Then I like to read about what people think about these stories.

This leads me to the next section which looks at how students get such information.

5.2.3 Recommendations from others

According to my participants the best way to encourage them to read for leisure is to inform them about suitable books. When asked in a questionnaire, how teachers could encourage them to read more in Arabic or English, in addition to their desire for a reduction of assignments and tests the most frequent request from both readers and non-readers, alike, was for teachers to tell them about suitable books:

Assign name of books which they think that we would enjoy reading [6QBF2-7/4/07]

Recommend good books - something that is interesting and is really a 'page-turner' [35QBF2-7/4/07]

He talks about the books he reads so I get jealous. Therefore, I try to gain the same books that he reads. It's an indirect way of encouraging us [15QBF2-7/4/07].

They told us about the good book [16QBF2-7/4/07].

They told us about the good books and I feel curious to read this book [20QBF2-7/4/07].

Tell me about interesting book [37QBF2-7/4/07].

This shows that one of the greatest obstacles to reading for leisure for my participants may be a lack of information that could help them to make informed choices. Such information usually comes with recommendations of some kind. I will now look at some of the groups of people who make reading recommendations to students.

5.2.3.1 Recommendations from teachers and librarians

We can see the difference that a recommendation makes if we return to Azza in what was an atypical government school with a very large library. There, Azza and her friend "just walked around" their school library "... maybe for one week and didn't read anything" (IN63-1:55), until:

A: (IN63-2:28) the librarian came to us and said: “Why you didn’t sit and read some books?” She gave Azza a book and made a deal that if she did not enjoy the book she would not bother her again about reading in the library. Azza read the book and found it interesting: “You know it was the first time to read in the library”. Students in private international schools had books recommended to them at every opportunity, mainly by native English speaking teachers and librarians who were “big on reading” (IN17). So powerful was the effect of such recommendations to read that private international school graduates among my participants read extensively in English but not in Arabic, although some are also reading in other European languages.

At the university, teachers and librarians seldom recommend extra-curricular reading materials to their students. Exceptions include a professor who recommends that her students read her articles in a local English newspaper (IN17), another who lends students his own books (IN63) and a reading and dialogue club which was started by Arabic and Islamic teachers, which resulted in members reading certain items so as to discuss them later. This prompted Naheya to start reading philosophy, for example (IN15–25:00). Some of my students also read books which I recommended, including *The Prophet*, (J92-12/06/07), a Stephen Covey book (C7-14/11/06) and *The Alchemist* which FatimaH read because she heard me talking about it to some students in class (S4-26/11/06). It is clear that where teachers were constantly recommending books to their students and sharing books with them, students were likely to form a reading habit. In the absence of recommendations however, students have to rely on their own efforts to find the right book.

5.2.3.2 Recommendations from friends and peers

Even in a culture of very closely-knit families, the influence of friends as sources of recommendations about reading materials has replaced much of that of parents. When asked who has the greatest influence on their reading choices, the answer was, invariably:

B: (IN301-55:23) Friends (answers immediately). First friends, then TV, because you know they explain it very well; only those two.

R: After that, parents and teachers?

B: OK, maybe teachers but parents, off the list.

H: (IN303-49:10) My friends.

R: and who would be the least?

H: My brothers.

R: Where would the parents be?
H: close to my friends (at the top?) yes.
R: What about librarians and teachers?
H: in the middle.

From the first clip above and from earlier data (ch.5.3.1) we can infer that Badira identifies with her friends in certain areas, one of which is an avoidance of reading in Arabic. Students' friends are very important to them and so they are likely to be receptive to their recommendations. In a fifty-minute interview, Hana (IN303) mentions her friends twenty-five times in relation to her reading choices, including the second clip above, in which she makes it clear that friends have the greatest influence on her reading choices.

Recommendations of friends and peers are actively sought (IN15; IN63; IN49&88), with friends asking each other: "What good books do you know?" (IN339-18:31) and they form efficient lending systems through which they exchange not only interesting books but also information and recommendations about reading items. Friends' recommendations may be friendly and persuasive, as when Hana's friend suggested that she read Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*:

R: (IN303-17:33) How did you pick that book?
H: My friend said: "If you like mysterious stuff you have to read this".

or, they may be more direct:

Re: (IN339-35:07) My friend, she is always like: "Oh read" ... She's like OK, "Read this book", "Read this book", "Read this book". She encouraged me to read.

Friends are likely to recommend books after reading them. Non-reader Inas heard about the Arabic book "*Don't be sad*" from her friends (IN49&88-20:48) and from her sisters who had heard about it from *their* friends. Hunaida heard about *Pillars of the Earth* from her friend as well as from Oprah's television show (IN322-21:05) and Azza heard about the book which helped her examine her relationship with her sister, from her friend at the university (IN63-7:35). Naheya frequently seeks a friend's opinion about a book before reading it (IN15-6:35), which then encourages Naheya to read it. Hana heard about the controversial *Binat Al Riyad* from a friend who attended its author's book-signing ceremony at the university and RehamE read it four years earlier after hearing her secondary school friends talking about it (IN338-11:40). She relies on the recommendations of friends whenever she wants to go to a particular bookstore to buy a book:

Re: (IN339-18:31) Sometimes I start thinking what to buy and sometimes, when I go with one of my friends, I ask her: “What good books do you know?” or sometimes I bring her a book and ask: “Is it nice or not; did you read it or not?” She tells me if it’s nice or not.

Raweya’s friends tell her and ask her opinion about books:

Ar: (IN240-25:39) Sometimes, my friends say: “What do you think about this book?” or: “Read this book” or: “You will find some nice information in this book”.

University book clubs, too, enable students to hear the recommendations of their peers. Amani joined the university’s movie and book club where students choose and read a new title every month and then discuss it before watching its movie, and others joined the university Arabic book club where students read the same books and discuss them. In such book clubs, students may identify doubly with other students, first, as fellow students facing the same pressures from course work, and second, as readers. Friends are also a great source of information about websites (S25–12/11/06; S37–29/10/06; 14/1/07; S39–29/10/06; 12/11/06).

Online peers

Students are also likely to get book recommendations from online peers. Dana got a list of books from a website where young people discuss books and talk about their positive points, “and eh, I feel interest for that book so that I want to buy it” (IN49&88-25:20). Naheya, too, finds information online about books that she might like to read:

R: (IN15-7:18) So, where would you go now to get Arabic books to read?

N: First from the Internet. First, I select the novel and then search about it, read the critical ideas about it to see if it is good for me or not, to see if it will add for me rich language or ideas and then I go for it ... and then I encourage my friend to read it. We all buy it from the book fair and eh, we selected that next Thursday, we will have a group meeting to discuss it.

Before going to the annual book fair, Amna also searched for book titles on an online forum that she visits regularly, so as to decide which ones she might enjoy reading:

R: (IN299-11:20) How did you pick them, both Arabic and English?

A: First, I went to this online forum that talks about books, where they write opinions and reviews, [to] see what was recommended and repeated and I took the list. It’s like a forum. It’s called Funti. ... They talk about different things but I took the thread that’s talking about books, the recommended ones. I do it every month, every week, just look at them but then, there’s things that I like to write them down because there’s good reviews about them, so, if I find them in the

library I can take them. I found one book, the *Time Traveller's Wife* [by Robert Schwentke] in the university library ...

R: What would you do if there were bad things and good things written about a book?

A: I would be more interested in it because if it is like that then it must be worth.

5.2.3.3 *Recommendations from television celebrities and others*

Another way in which students can update their information about books is by picking up ideas from the mass media, particularly television programs. On Amna's last visit to a bookshop, she came across a book she had heard about from a globally recognized television celebrity:

A: (IN299-16:52) There was one book, *Eat, Sleep, Pray*, something like that. It was recommended by Oprah. They said that it was very beautiful and humorous, something about lifestyle ...

R: So, do you listen to and watch TV programs sometimes to pick up ideas about books?

A: Not all the time; sometimes in passing, and Oprah has this bookclub online, so, it is nice to see what she reads.

Badira bought at least two books recommended by Oprah:

B: (IN301-4:22) There's two books that I want to read, *Pillars of the Earth* and another that Oprah recommended. I gave it to my friend to read it; now she is going to return it to me - my best friend.

R: Not Haleema?

B: No, she got the book [and] she read it.

Seham's mother told her about a book she had heard about on Oprah's show:

H: (IN321-6:00) She was just telling me a few days ago about a book, *Three Cups of Tea*

R: I heard Oprah talking about it.

H: Yea, that's where she heard it. She goes to a book club with her friends and that, so, she told me about it and really, *really*, I am so interested to read it. I am just waiting for the summer to read it.

R: (39:48) How do you select what to read? Do you ever watch Oprah and try to read

H: I didn't do this but I think yea, that's a way of showing us what books are nice and that would really encourage me, but, I haven't done it yet.

Hunaida, too, has heard of the books Oprah recommends:

R: (IN322-20:15) Do you ever hear people talking about reading on the TV, like Oprah, etc?

H: Yea, Oprah talks about books. There was a book she talked about, *Pillars of the Earth*, it was an interesting book. My friend read it and said, “Hunaida, read it; it is a very nice book” and there are two books in the series. She read the first book; we didn’t have the time.

R: Do you think you might after you have finished your exams?

H: Yea.

RehamE has also taken some of Oprah’s recommendations when choosing books to read:

Re: (IN339-18:49) I bought two books of Oprah’s club ... Eh, I forget, [one] it’s about China, it’s not love. It’s about how the people in China live.

However, recommendations by celebrities are not always enjoyed. For example, Shawq was not impressed by some of Oprah’s recommendations, particularly books by Nicole Ritchie and Terri Hatcher (IN96-11:14)

Naheya refers to the pull of celebrities such as Oprah, in the West, as she tries to explain her difficulty in finding information about Arabic books that she might like to read:

N: (IN15-27:10) I find difficuty in choosing the books because we don’t have media that is concerned about Arabic literature. We don’t have connection between the writers, but, in the US, when I see Oprah saying “Read this book” there is a connection between the audience. Obama’s book for example ... I read, eh, *The Audacity of Hope*, the first chapter. Now, it is a most popular book. The media is not doing a good job in, and even the writers ... I don’t know where is the problem. There is no connection between us – the ordinary people – and the writers.

R: and do you think students who want to read in Arabic don’t know about books, that they haven’t found a connection with the right book?

N: Yes.

Here we see that when it comes to reading in Arabic, the onus is on determined readers to forge their own connections with books they might like to read and Naheya did just that. She contacted an Arab author whose work she had enjoyed reading, and struck up a correspondence with him in which they exchanged views. She progressed from following his writings on the Internet, where she first heard about him, to hearing directly from the author himself:

N: (IN15-6:47) This author, I followed his writing through the Internet and I trust his ideas. I have a wonderful conversation with Atif Al Bellawi through the email. I contacted him and told him my opinions on the novel and I gave him some of my writings. He said to me “It’s wonderful writing” so, I respect his view.

5.2.3.4 Recommendations from family members

Despite occasionally experiencing resistance, family members who read still exert an influence on students' reading choices by both their own reading habits and their discussions about reading. Seham's mother reads the *Harry Potter* books and recommends them to Seham:

R: (IN321-5:40) Did you read *Harry Potter* books?

H: No, I started one but I didn't finish it. I like to just watch the movie.

R: Did your mum buy them for you?

H: Yea, she got them 'cos she read them and she said it's more interesting than the movie. She encourages us a lot to read but, I don't like reading that much.

Shawq sees her parents reading daily and she often talks with her father about reading because he is interested in knowing what she is reading (IN96-17:30) and in recommending books for her to read. Reading is not the most important thing for her mother and herself to discuss (IN96-17:10), which suggests that between Shawq and her dad, reading may be one of the most important things they talk about. Shamsa(A) attempted to read Kafka's plays, after her mother's recommendation, even though she found them "a bit boring" (S38-29/10/06). Siblings, cousins, uncles and aunties are also sources of information about books. Dana heard about the book *Don't be Sad* from her aunt who likes to read (IN88-21:20), while Seham heard about three books written by her auntie, from her cousins (IN321-2:20). Azza heard about certain book titles from her uncles, who gave her some from their big home libraries (IN63-43:27), and from her sister who tried very hard to get her to read by recommending many books to her (IN64-43:15). Khawla heard her mother and auntie talking about a particular book and she decided: "whenever I have time I'll start reading it" (S8-31/10/06).

However, like young people everywhere, recommendations from family members are not always warmly received by students. In the middle of our interview, Badira suddenly recalls:

B: (IN301-35:38) My father *did* encourage us to read ... we didn't care.

Hana's father recommended a book to her and offered to lend her his copy, in Arabic:

H: (IN303-26:43) *The Alchemist*, it was nice. Yea, my father told me to read it in Arabic. I didn't read it in Arabic. I didn't actually care about what he said. When I bought the book from the book exhibition [he said] "Why didn't you tell me? I have the Arabic version of this. I told you to read it before".

Hana ignored his recommendation and bought it in English. Her father related some parts to her in Arabic as she read them in English and explained the Arabic origins of the word, alchemist: "*al chaim-i-yya*". Marwa's father reads a lot of topics and genres, including history, religion, poetry, leaders and the prophets, mostly in Arabic, and he tried to steer her away from reading "rubbish" (IN123-1:20) towards

the topics that interest *him*, including science. However, she hates reading such topics as she does enough of that kind of reading in school and so she does not follow his advice (ch.4.3.3):

Mar: (IN123-1:29) He's always like: 'Read and gain knowledge'. I feel: why would I bother?

Although students greatly admire their fathers - Marwa talks about her father's inventions, many of which he has patented - their reading interests are not always similar, reflecting different identities as readers. The young adults-as-readers are emerging from the daughters who used to mimic their parents' actions - Farah, for example, used to pretend to "read" the newspaper like her father (ch.7.2) - and their identities as-readers are constantly evolving through their distinct choices which express their own interests and preferences. Whenever recommendations were made, students checked the recommended item to see how well it matched certain aspects of their underlying identities which I will look at in my next section. Regardless of the outcome, however, fathers' efforts to encourage their daughters' reading continue.

5.3 How students choose their reading items: intrinsic factors

When deciding what to read for leisure, students are likely to do a quick, mental audit - mostly subconsciously - to gauge the potential match between an item and elements of their various identities, such as their preferences and interests, standards for enjoyment and beliefs. These act as filters of other factors in their choice-making process and cast the final vote in whether or not to choose an item.

5.3.1 Students' preferences and interests guide their reading choices

When I want to read something, I prefer to read something that attracts me (J36-12/06). Students' interests include topics that are both foreign and familiar to their own culture, from across a wide range of genres, from poetry to online forums, and from classics to comics.

R: (IN229-14:55) Do you like to read about things that are similar to your culture or?

A: Sometimes, because some of the authors write things that are annoying and you don't really want to go through everything so, yea, different stuff.

Their preferences are likely to include a default language for leisure reading - the language in which they feel most comfortable - and a preference for the style of texts that they read, and these help to guide their reading choices. Ameera's interest is related to her planned major in business:

A: (IN13-14:15) I'm interesting in business course, like business major, so, like, I read for myself about business.

Because of this interest, she is currently reading about setting up a small business and about how to write a good business letter, beyond the requirements for her class, and she read a book about economics in

Russia, which her father gave her. Her reading preference here is related to her identity, or the way she sees herself, as a future business woman.

Interest in a particular topic or genre is integral to the reader herself and, attempts by others to directly influence or control those interests are unlikely to succeed. Conversely, when she finds a topic interesting, she will make every effort to overcome all obstacles to reading it. Amna has difficulty reading in Arabic but she found a way to overcome those difficulties because the topic was very interesting:

A: (IN299-7:10) It's not the Arabic we know. It's like, eh, with the Egyptian writing, it's hard. I asked my Egyptian friend to tell me some of the words.

R: How did you pick that book?

A: Actually it was one of those fun books to read, it was about why women today aren't getting married so, I was interested in the topic.

R: So, the topic is a very important thing for you, is it, in choosing a book?

A: Mhm, yea, of course.

In this clip, Amna's identity either as-woman or as fun-lover (or both) appears to be the driving factor behind her perseverance in reading this book. As-Arab, she attempted to read it and as-friend she was able to find a way to get the help she needed. She talks about other topics that she also likes to read about:

A: (IN299-45:14). I like to read novels that have to do with current issues, the cultural things, like a girl and her culture. It depends where the story is set. If it's from *Twilight* ... it's OK for her to have a boyfriend.

R: The topics you like to read, should they have some connection with you?

A: Sometimes they have to, because, if they don't, I cannot understand why she is thinking this way and not that. That is why I don't understand *Twilight*.

Here, we see the importance of a reader's own culture and her other-cultural knowledge or experiences in making sense of a text whereby, if it is too far removed from her own frame of reference she will not be able to read it. Amna has sufficient knowledge of the world to know that in the West, young girls often have boyfriends and so, she can read a text containing such a reference.

Students' hobbies or special interests are also likely to prompt them to select reading materials on those topics. MarwaH likes to read poetry, for example, and, so, bought poetry books at the book exhibition (83QBF1-7/4/07) and Raweya explains how she chooses a book based on her interests and preferences, when she is in a bookshop:

A: (IN240-12:50) First, I go to the books which have strange things like crimes, or something, like, that the people will do it ... Second, I will look for the history, the wars and the history of the world. Third choice, I will look for cooking books. I am not a cook but I like to read cooking books and when I do something I do it right.

In addition to their interests, students also have certain preferences regarding the author's style of writing. For example, Amna prefers to receive advice in "a nice way ... that could be persuasive" (IN299-37:49), rather than books "that tell you 'do this' and 'do that'" like Dr. Phil's self-help" books, which her father recommended to her. This suggests an identity of an independent reader, certainly of an independent person who does not like to be told what to do or how to do it, unless it is in a "nice way".

Students' preferred language

My participants are required to be fluent in both Arabic and English, but the default language for leisure reading for many is English, not Arabic. The following four factors impact many students' decision not to read in Arabic: (1) The language used in most modern Arabic books is Modern Standard Arabic, which is similar to classical Arabic and is not usually spoken. Therefore, reading in Arabic for some is almost like reading in a foreign language:

Rm: (IN17-39:40) It's not used at all. It is a completely different language.

RehamF, a keen reader, considers herself to be "really good" in Arabic but finds written Arabic difficult to read and thinks that the last book she read in Arabic was so long ago that she cannot really remember. As a private international school graduate, she explains: "We always study everything in English, university and school work" (IN17-2:50). Badira, too, finds reading in Arabic "hard, very, very hard" (IN301-8:55) and, like RehamF, uses the inclusive "we": "We are not used to reading Arabic" (IN301-6:12), which indicates that she sees herself as part of a large group of students who were educated through English in private international schools:

B: (IN301-6:20) It's different [to English]. The Arabic is very small compared to the English ... We're used to reading in English. Arabic is not like the way we talk. It's old Arabic, while, in English the way we speak and talk is like the way we read it. I find it hard to read Arabic.

They had an Arabic lesson every day at school, but

B: (IN301- 7:35) it wasn't powerful like the English, it was very weak; English took over, colonized it.

(2) *Khaleeji* Arabic, which is spoken by Emiratis, is a predominantly oral language which has limited written literature. (3) Many Arab authors write in the language with which *they* are most familiar, which is usually a colloquial version of Arabic which is not familiar to all Arab readers. We recall how Amna

struggled to read Egyptian Arabic as the vocabulary was different. (4) Perhaps the most important reason is that some participants have not developed a liking for Arabic itself (IN303-16:33; IN123:20:13; IN321-1:43) and some may have even developed a strong dislike for it:

Mar: (IN123-22:18) I never read a story in Arabic, ever.

R: and do you think there are stories in Arabic in the shops or in the libraries?

Mar: em, yea ... but I don't want to see them. I don't know I just hate seeing Arabic letters in a story or something.

Most of the participants who do not read for leisure in Arabic attended private international schools where the teaching was all through English, and Arabic was simply one of many subjects rather than a means of communicating in and out of the classroom, something that has carried through to university.

Readers among my participants who were educated through Arabic – mostly government school graduates – are likely to have Arabic as their default leisure reading language, but are also willing to read in English, although some may find it difficult:

S: (IN294-17:25) In English, I started now, when I entered the university, because before, I thought, “Oh, reading in English is very hard”.

They see reading in English as a way to improve their linguistic abilities while enjoying the greater variety of reading materials available in English than in Arabic. At the university, students' reading in their native language is marginalized as English is the dominant language.

Students' preferred authors

If students have enjoyed reading a book by a particular author, they are likely to want to read more books by that author – even though they may forget their names:

H: (IN322-14:55) The lady who wrote the vampire books,

S: (IN294-10:09) and another one, I remember his face – I saw it on his book – but I don't remember his name.

The only author whose name Azza remembers, is Shakespeare (IN63-11:30), not likely to be forgotten by any reader, and she likes most of his plays, because she thinks they have some meaning apart from their stories. Hana's favorite author is Dean Koontz because her friend recommended his books on discovering that she likes suspense thrillers (IN303-17:31). RehamF's favourite author also features in her near future plans to read:

R: (IN17-19:05) Are there any books that you plan to read in the future, that you'd like to read?

Rm: Yea, I bought a book by Dickens, called *Our Mutual Friend*. I still didn't read it. It's been there for a very long time.

Students' preferred reading format

Students largely prefer to read paper-based texts for most of their reading (IN123; IN13; IN17), because they find that the screen hurts their eyes:

R: (IN299-1:59:56) Which do you prefer to read, paper or online?

A: I like printed because the screen sometimes hurts your eyes.

The above data helps to illustrate how diverse and varied students' reading interests and preferences are.

5.3.2 Students' standards for enjoyment guide their reading choices

Enjoyment of a text by its reader is a most important factor in her leisure reading. A student starts to read a book with the expectation that she will enjoy something or many things about it and that it will add value to who she is and is becoming. These expectations and the factors which bring about this reading enjoyment are unique to each individual reader and they function at a subconscious level. Their absence is likely to take away from or belittle who the reader is and wants to be. To deliver, texts must be well written, must not contain offensive language, must catch the reader's interest from the start and must add ideas or other value to the reader. I ask Shawq to explain:

R: (IN96-10:00). You told me once before, that you think that books are not being well written today. You said, "They're not writing them as they used to" and that the important thing about a book is it has to catch you from the beginning. Is that still what you think?

Sh: Yes, I remember one of the first books I read was *The Fatal Key*. I don't remember who's the author. I gave it to my teacher in school and I gave it to my friends in school, too, but I never got it back.

R: It was such a good book! [joint laughter]

Sh: Yea, it was such a good book [that] it went to a lot of students. The first sentence was that she died. I still remember it. 'Twas like, em, the name of the character and then it said, "died", and there was a full stop. And then you just wanted to know more.

She contrasts that with some of the books she read at Oprah's recommendation (ch.5.2.3.2):

S: (IN96-11:29) I don't find them as well written. They do it for publicity more than for giving you knowledge.

R: So, would you say that those books don't make you think?

Sh: Kind of, not don't make me think but make me think: "Why did they write it?"

She is unable to complete a book if it does not meet these standards, and has three books on her shelf, which she started but did not finish:

Sh: (IN96-23:04) The first one started with very eh, bad language, so, I kind of threw it away. I mean I'm not in favor of really bad language. I'm not. I don't like reading things that are [pause]

R: Vulgar or not up to your standard?

Sh: Yea

R: You have standards for yourself?

Sh: Yes

When Naheya spoke of rejecting the book, *Binat Al Riyadh*, her initial interest had prompted her to start reading it and her subsequent dissatisfaction with its language and writing style, prompted her to abandon it after the first page:

N: (IN15-21:03) First, the language is not that, it's not a writer's language. It's the simple language. I can pick out any student in secondary school and let them write her memories and she will do it like Raja Sana.

R: The language is correct but it's simple, is that what you're saying?

N: Simple, and then, I don't have any interest in it. She doesn't add any ideas for me. From the first page, I can tell about that.

Here, we see that, although interest in a topic is the first attraction, my participants-as-readers require the author to offer benefits and ideas to the reader through writing that is complex in thought and language. When a student finds an author who meets her standards, she may find aspects of her underlying identities reflected there, as happened with Naheya, who admires the writing style of her favourite author, Algerian Ahlam Sagham:

N: (IN15-19:32) She writes very, very honestly about politics, love, hope, peace, war ...

Sometimes I don't agree with her ideas but that's what makes me really love her because when you face someone who you feel is against your ideas, that makes you understand more about people and how to respond.

R: and maybe it makes you understand yourself more, too?

N: Yea.

When those standards of enjoyment are met students often reread books that they have previously enjoyed reading as they want to relive a pleasant experience and believe that they get more from a text during each subsequent reading, whether it is months or years later. Shawq, for example, has discovered that a reader can grow with a book:

S: I really enjoy rereading a book because I have discovered in doing so that a person's way of thinking changes in a year or so (C96-7/12/07).

A student may reread a book in a different language (Arabic or English), a different version (abridged or unabridged) or exactly as she read it the first time. Azza reread "more than twice" the book which helped her reevaluate her relationship with her sister (ch5.3.1), Amna read her favourite childhood book, *Alice in Wonderland*, "maybe three or four times" (IN299-18:50) and RehamE is now rereading a book that she read three years earlier while in secondary school, to remind her of the story:

R: (IN339-24:03) What did you read at home yesterday?

Re: I read this story (she shows it to me) *Erragon*. I read it, before, when I was in grade ten, I think. It's about dragons. It's interesting.

Ameera rereads the text on the Ancient Greeks, even though they have finished reading it in class: "OK, we're done with the Greeks, but I still love to read the *Apology* for Socrates" (IN13-9:00). Naheya read an Arabic book three times after searching for it (IN15-2:40) and Badira rereads all the *Archie* comics she has kept over the years (IN301-25:18). Seham used to reread her books many times when younger, but, "not so much now" (IN321-17:45). Shamsa enjoyed reading *The Alchemist* so much the first time that she highlighted interesting parts and started reading it again (IN294-7:50). Books are also *partly* reread, just enough to recapture the story before going on to read a different book (IN17-17:55).

Students' reading standards have developed over time to maximize their enjoyment of a text and they reside in their subconscious. They are highly individualized so that a text which one student describes as "fantastic" (C226) may not draw the same response from another. Classics and award winners, which are highly acclaimed by large groups of people and give great enjoyment to many, do not have the same effect on every reader.

5.3.3 Students' beliefs and values guide their reading choices

Students' leisure reading choices are guided by their beliefs about the many benefits of reading, including improving our mental and emotional states, our behavior, our knowledge and our abilities. Students may also believe that certain genres are of no benefit and so avoid reading them. Shamsa used to think that reading novels was a waste of time, until she read *The Alchemist* (in Arabic) after overhearing her aunt and sister discussing it, as they were both reading it:

S: (IN294-4:50). I didn't start to read novels because I have that idea that these stories, we don't have any benefit from them. They talk about the regular life and about some people; I don't know how we benefit when we read about that. But then, my aunt when she bought this book, my sister

borrowed it from her – she is thirteen years old. Then, I saw them when they sit, they talk about it and my aunt asked her, “Did you read about this thing?” and she said, “No, not yet; I reached this situation” and I said, “Oh, what are you talking about”? She said “This is a Paulo Coelho novel, *The Alchemist*”. Then I read it. It was very, very, very, VERY interesting and I enjoyed my time. Usually and honestly, when I take any book, I read from the first [page] and then I am not interested [so] I skip, skip, until the end. Then I [have] finished the book. [But in this one], yea, on every page, I said, “Oh, what will happen then, what will happen then, what will happen then?”

R: What kept you going? Was it to see if he would find what he was looking for or were you interested in everything?

S: When I read the blurb (told her the word) it is written: “This novel mostly talks about if you have a desire for something, all the world will eh, follow your desire and you will get it”. I said: “Oh, how can we catch the attention from the whole world to get my dream, or what I want?” Then, I started to read.

Here, we see the importance of a student’s belief and how it influences her reading choices, to the extent that it kept Shamsa from reading a whole genre when she thought it would not give her any benefit. We also feel her excitement and interest on turning each page as the author’s words captivated her and we see how it changed her usual way of reading so that she did not want to miss a single word. She had wanted to read it partly to satisfy her curiosity to know what her relatives were talking about and, perhaps, because she felt left out of their interesting conversation. As an active reader she identified what she found particularly interesting and reread it – twice so far. The phrase, “Then, I started to read” may signal a more important junction than merely starting to read one book. It signals a turning point for her as a reader, where she started to include novels in her reading repertoire and thus became part of a larger group of readers. She changed her view about novels being a waste of time.

Reading improves our mental state and stimulates thinking

Reading also helps nourish my imagination (J28–10/12/06).

My participants-as-readers believe that reading helps them to think positively and improve their general mental activity, suggests solutions to problems and opens their minds to others’ opinions much more calmly than if those opinions were spoken:

A: (IN299-7:50) Sometimes, when you’re talking to someone, they might not be able to give you something nicely but, when you read it in a book, you can read it in peace and calm.

In other words, when we *hear* different opinions to our own, we often react sharply without thinking our responses through but, when we *read* the same ideas, we have time to digest them completely and understand them before identifying our own reactions to them.

(IN322-39:00) [Leisure reading] can give the person peace and get him out of his troubles in, like, an hour so that he can think well when he will go to deal with these problems.

R: Do you think it matters what the subject is that he reads. Can it be non-fiction about history, for example?

H: It can be something that interests him.

Shawq laments the lack of reading among many of her country's young people whose minds, she fears, will be adversely affected:

S: (IN96-13:38) Now, as I grow up and I see lots of students who aren't into, em, reading, yea, I find it a shame because our country is developing and so should the minds of the students and the citizens.

Students' identities both shape and are partly shaped by their reading choices which are guided by their beliefs about reading, and they seek opportunities to learn more about themselves through their reading and their reactions to it. We recall that Amna prefers a lesson in a text to be taught through persuasion and not didacticism, which she exemplifies from *The Kite Runners*:

A: (IN299-37:51) When I'm reading the second chapter, the father was drinking and he is a Muslim, and the son said: "But the teachers told me you are not supposed to drink", and stuff, and he said: "Listen son, you have to learn and do this and that" and he told him that there is only one sin that people do which is stealing, 'cos if you kill someone you steal that person's life; if you take money, etc. It is a nice way to think of things ... Well, at first I was surprised at the drinking thing, but then, when he came to explain it 'twas like, "Wow, that's a new way to explain".

R: I understand that you are saying you liked it, not because you agree with the father but

A: Yea, not all the time, but the way he says it, it makes you think of new things. It made me think more, that's for sure.

I asked her if it made her question her values or religion:

A: (IN299-39:03) about drinking thing, no, I don't even have to.

Some students believe that certain authors have a greater effect on our thinking than others. Naheya, for example, explains why reading a certain author is important to her:

N: (IN15-38:21) Yusri Fouda, he's a journalist in Al Jazeera. [He writes] in Arabic, but sometimes he uses English words, phrases or even passages.

R: Is there a particular topic he writes about that you like to read about?

N: The world, it's a politics article. I really like politics. He is Egyptian and he lived in England and he has a famous program ... and he did a lot of interviews that no other journalists did. He went to Guantanamo Prison, met Ramsi Mushaiber, Afghanistan and Iraq and every place, so, he has a lot of views. Even if I don't agree with him, it's important to know his view.

This shows how the reader is likely to decide how she will respond to her reading including what to question and what not to question in her own life. When I asked Ameera how she might react when reading different opinions to her own, she intimated that, if she was going to make a fuss every time she met a different opinion, she would not read at all, which touches on the cornerstone of reading:

A: (IN13-26:31) I keep my own opinion but, I'm a person, like, if you did something wrong and you see it right but I see it wrong, still I'm gonna excuse you because if I looked at it from this side, I'm gonna be with you. If I really disagree and make a big deal of it I won't read at all.

Heyam, too, indicates her way of dealing with differing opinions to her own:

R: (IN269-20:28). Do you like to read things related to your own culture or things that are different?

E: From my own culture.

R: Would you read a book that was challenging or criticizing your own culture?

E: Maybe I will but, then, I will criticize the writer.

The above data indicates readers who are open to the views of others while remaining secure but not rigid in their own identities, suggesting overall maturity as readers.

Reading improves our emotional and psychological states

Reading makes a reader feel smart (IN17-33:30), helps her to de-stress (IN13-31:05), makes her patient (IN13-12:10), gives her a sense of peace (IN322-39:05; IN299-7:55) and pleasure (IN301-51), relieves boredom by improving the mood (S23 -17/3/07) and allows her to "spend free time" (S78-22/4/07). It also offers a temporary feeling of freedom, in the form of escape from reality:

It helps me get away from this world we live in. It helps me escape to another world where anything can happen (J28-10/12/06).

We recall RehamF's (IN17-20:50) description of how reading makes her feel smart when she talks to others about it (ch.4.3.2). Students also have a feeling of connectedness while reading online (S25-10/12/06; S 23 -7/11/06), particularly online forums, *Fan Fiction*, and in chat rooms and while reading emails from family and friends which often make them laugh as they contain jokes (S39-10/12/06; 23-

17/12/06) or funny Arabic short stories (23–17/12/06). The importance of this feeling of connectedness is indicated by the fact that students usually open and read such emails first (S25–17/12/06; S39-12/11/06).

Reading improves our knowledge, abilities and behaviour

Students' reading choices reflect their belief that, reading makes them smart and gives them a broad range of topics to talk about and references to mention:

Rm: (IN17-10:52) I don't know but like, since I, remember all those stories that I read, even if they are old I feel like when I am talking to someone, I feel like I have references because I read in this book that life used to be like that at that time.

Similarly, Hana shows how, after reading the books in her personal library, she feels able to hold her own in conversations that include famous authors:

H: (IN303-50:20) Thanks to them I really learned some words and some quotes because some people will say: "To be or not to be". If they don't know Shakespeare, some people will say, "Who said that?" or even "You, too, Brutus?" these famous quotes.

Reading also helps the reader to know more about herself (IN15-44:53) and to discover her potential (J23-29/11/06). It adds to her general knowledge (IN17-33:55; J34-13/12/06; IN294-26:35) and helps her to discover (IN13-30:05) and learn new things (IN13-30:05; IN296). Students choose many of their reading items based on what they hope to learn from them, even while having fun, and they believe that reading benefits them in many ways and improves their overall language abilities, including vocabulary (IN299-1:03:26; IN303-50:30; IN13), reading ability (S83–22/4/07; S78–22/4/07; J23–29/11/06; 98QIL5-13/4/08) and writing skills (IN13-33:50; J7). Ameera now reads faster than before and is able to "get the idea" (IN13-13:05) from the first reading. Her writing skills have improved greatly and she now expands her sentences and paragraphs when writing in English, thanks to her reading:

R: (IN13-22:54) Which do you think you prefer to do, read in Arabic or read in English?

A: Read in English because I want to develop my language and I want to get a new vocab which can help me when I'm writing, so now, rather than writing only five sentences in one paragraph, now I can write, like, twelve sentences and I can expand the sentence itself.

R: That's fantastic and you think that's because of your reading?

A: Yea, because, like, you know, I get ideas and I see, like, how they write. It's not like I'm reading for myself only to get information. Also, I'm learning of this reading, how to write.

Basmaa combines her enjoyment of reading with the benefits she knows she will gain from it. For example, she read *Wuthering Heights* more than once because:

I learned valuable lessons from it, such as: beware of what you wish for, anger can make people lose their morals and mind, and revenge is not always the solution for your problems (J23-29/11/06).

Reading makes the reader educated (IN15-45:40) and look knowledgeable to others (IN17-20:50), even more knowledgeable than their age (IN294-25:45) (ch.4.3.2). We saw earlier how students can tell how educated and well read a teacher really is by her behavior in class (ch. 4.3.2). Non-reader Khatima, also believes that reading improves readers' language and that they can be educated by just reading academic books (IN338-22:10). Her belief in the importance of reading extends to the importance of libraries:

R: (IN338-20:15) do you think libraries are important?

K: Yes, important for the students or whoever wants to read, because it has many books in many languages from many countries.

R: Do you think money should be spent on libraries in schools?

K: Yea (emphatically, without hesitation).

This belief extends to wanting it for her children in the future and, although she does not see herself passing it on to them she has a solution:

R: (IN338-12:23) So, you think there are a lot of advantages to reading?

K: Yea

R: But, you don't want those advantages for you? (She silently agrees) and your children also, you wouldn't want those advantages for them?

K: If they want to read, OK, I will tell their father to read to them.

Readers believe that reading also shows the reader how to behave toward others, how to get out of bad situations, solve problems and listen to others' opinions (IN299; IN294; IN15; IN63).

This section has explored and, to some extent, demonstrated the role played by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors in bringing about students' reading choices. We saw how a student's current or desired future identity is a constant underlying factor in her reading choices and how occasionally we are reminded of the cultural components of that identity. My next section presents a wide array of instances of these factors coming into play.

5.4 What students read: samples of their reading topics and genres

My participants-as-readers have very varied, eclectic reading interests, which are constantly being revised in light of new knowledge and experiences, and so defy categorization. Therefore, in this section I present merely a cross-section of those interests, suggesting their importance in their enjoyment of reading, which

is the essence of their conceptualization of leisure reading. While students derive great enjoyment from reading a wide range of fiction in English, English and Arabic translations, and, to a lesser extent, texts written originally in Arabic, they also have an interest in non-fiction with a strong preference for reading self-help texts, such as, psychology, particularly that of children, true stories or biographies, special interests, including hobbies and learning a new skill or language, poetry, educational topics including those related to their studies and future careers, the Arab world and the world in general, politics, women's issues such as, marriage, family, children, and fashion, cultural issues, philosophy and religious texts. They also enjoy reading other young people's writing online and their views on topics of common interest, including books that they have read or plan to read. Their choices indicate the effects of both extrinsic (ch.5.2) and intrinsic factors (ch.5.3).

5.4.1 Self-help and inspirational texts

Self-help and inspirational texts offer solutions to many of the problems students face in their daily lives, including how to lose weight, make sense of the dynamics of family and peer relationships, cope with the death of a close relative or increase one's emotional intelligence. The Arabic book, *Don't be Sad* (transl.), by Aiadh Al Qarni, is popular with many students (QSR148-15/10/07; IN49; IN88) and non-reader Inas (IN49) find its Western, Eastern and Islamic philosophies very helpful. It was meant to be read in short doses, which suits students' fragmented time for reading. It offers "a practical approach ... in overcoming the various hardships and difficulties we face in life" (Shafeeq, 2005, p.22), urging readers to read and reflect "at the present time, when so many of us are afflicted with the ailments described in this book – depression, grief, spiritual malaise" (ibid, pp.22-23). It lists the removal of anxiety, as one of the many benefits of reading, which echoes Ameera's belief that people are stressed because they do not read (IN13-30:15). Dana voluntarily shared with me that she had read there about how life is beautiful, no matter what (IN49&88-21:35).

Citing an Arabic book by Ibrahim Al Fikhi, *The Power of Love and Forgiving*, Shamsa gives an example of how reading helped *her* cope with and overcome her disappointment at her friends' reactions to the death of her dear grandmother:

S: (IN294-11:40) I think that reading benefits me and impacts my life deeply because it gives me a chance to think positively how to act with other people and how to get myself from the bad situations or some situations that eh. You know that in our life, some friends will hurt us, yea, in this way. Honestly, two weeks ago when my grandmother died I came to the university and thought that people should respect my sad feeling, but what I was really surprised (at was) that most of them didn't respect it. They were laughing: why should I be sad; she is just an old

woman. At this time we had a lot of meetings and interviews and presentations and, for this period I feel that I hate all these people. Then, I read a book that talks about forgiving others. I read a paragraph that tells us that when someone hurts us we should smile and forgive them because if we hate people and we keep thinking, if we have this type of thinking we will lose a lot of power in our lives, thinking of things we should ignore.

After reading this book, Shamsa reread her way of thinking about and feeling toward her friends, and viewed the problem with fresh insights, feeling empowered and no longer a victim of their thoughtlessness. She reads another Arabic book before she sleeps, called, *Happy Thoughts* (IN294-15:52). Here, we see again how students often read to improve or change their way of thinking about life and to empower themselves.

Similarly, Azza had initially been reading her relationship with her sister in a particular way: “You know, I love her but, sometimes I think that I hate this person” (IN63-2:00), until she read a story she got from her friend who had also read it. The author (“Don’t ask me about the name. I always don’t remember!” IN63 – 11:03) examined his relationship with his brother, which then helped her to examine her relationship with her sister:

A: (IN63-6:35) Really, I liked this book and I read it more than twice. When I read that book I feel that this person is like my daughter. When I read about what he felt and how he think about his brothers I think that, like what he thinks about his brothers, I think that my sister will hate me in the end, will not treat me like her sister so, I really changed my opinion to how to treat my sister.

My participants-as-readers may find parallels between their own lives and the author’s experience as if, in addressing his own problems for them to read and in showing how he solved them, the author is also addressing their problems enabling them to reread them in light of possible solutions. Such books enable students to reflect on aspects of their own lives with the benefit of the experiences of others. Marwa found a Dr. Phil book very helpful when she was trying to lose weight:

Mar: (IN123-24:47) The Dr. Phil one was about weight and those stuff, and I had a lot of books about weight and everything because I started losing weight alone and everything, like, I’ve lost 20 kilos [read pounds] so far

However, Dr. Phil’s ways of imparting advice does not suit everyone’s preferred manner of receiving advice, for example, Amna (IN229-37:32) (ch.5.3.1).

Readers draw inspiration from the insights of others. When Seham read her aunt's book in Arabic about life and how to live it, written before she died, she found that "She gave sick people and sad people a lot of hope from this book ... It made me feel so much better" (IN321-00:34). Another inspirational book which Naheya plans to read, having heard about it "on Oprah", is Randy Bauch's *The Last Lecture* in which he encourages people to live life to the full and love every moment, as he faces his own imminent death.

Students like to have their thinking stimulated when they read and are often fascinated by the reasons for people's behavior which generates a great interest in reading psychology for the lay person (C7; IN96; IN294). Amani borrowed a psychology book for children from my office and planned her next psychology book purchases from the references at the back. She read the motivational book *Who moved my cheese?*, which deals with ways of coping with change, and plans to buy Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* after reading a short extract which I had distributed in class the previous year (C7-1/10/07). Shawq's interest in psychology and other non-fiction came after she had read her way through one genre after another, from romance novels to celebrity autobiographies to her current interest, people and their behavior:

S: (IN96-5:00) In the past, I used to, I read more of novels and fictions, 'cos I used to be in high-school and it was kind of the thing going on, and since I moved to university, it was kind of reading about individuals and I told you I was kind of interested in psychology since I read only about what people think, and in the future I think I will do more of that. I mean, I started liking actually reading about important people, about, em, individuals and what they think and what they do.

Shamsa is reading an Arabic book on Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP):

S: (IN294-26:39) I started reading about NLP. I like to read about these things, about psychology, 'cos it is my dream life. When I was in my last year at school I said to my mother: "I want to be a psychologist". Always I think: "Why do people act this way?"

The theme of understanding others and ourselves a bit better continues through to books about different races, one of which Zainab bought recently:

I find the subject very interesting ...why people categorize each other. It's called *Us and Them: Understanding Your Tribal Mind*, by David Berreby (S33-19/3/07).

Other titles related to self-help which were read by my participants include *How To Say No Without Being Shy* (in Arabic) (S142-10/12/07), *How to keep yourself calm* (IN399-9:18), *Taking care of your nails*, in Arabic, *The power of verbal intelligence* and *The power of social intelligence* by Tony Buzan, *The*

definitive book of body language, by Barbara and Allen Pease, (C51-3/9/09), *Creative Thinking*, in Arabic (S100-28/10/07), *The seven habits of highly effective teens*, by Sean Covey and *Chocolate for a teen's soul*, by Kay Allenbaugh, (C7-23/4/08), most of which are related to self-empowerment. Raweya captures some of what self-help books are all about:

Ra: (IN240-10:50) I like to read some books, like, I used to have a collection of books, like, if I'm nervous, how to calm down, how to be very comfortable, like if you are very sad, how to be happy. I like to read these things.

We see how students choose texts that will enable them to satisfy their strong desires to understand themselves, the world around them and their relationship to that world.

5.4.2 True stories and influential leaders' biographies

While self-help texts connect with readers' own lives and show how to improve them, true stories pique their interest in and curiosity about other people's lives. Students love a good story and, perhaps the only thing better than a good story is a good true story:

Mar: (IN123-5:58) I like when it's non-fiction. I like real stories, like for example, *Princess* is the true story about a woman and something, and *A Boy Called It* is a true story about the author, yea, and so, I like those stories.

True stories set in or near one's own culture are of interest to many including such titles as, *Burned Alive* by Souad (transl.), *Desert Royal* (QSR155-13/9/07), *Princess: a true story of life behind the veil in Saudi Arabia*, by J. Sasson (C226-3/9/09; QSR155-13/9/07; IN299-14:20) and *Binat Al Riyad*, by Raja Al Sanea, which is known to most of the students either in Arabic or in its English translation: *Girls of Riyadh* (R. Al Sanea and M. Booth (transl.) (C226-3/9/09)). Everyone has a different opinion about it, from Sawsan's ecstatic:

It was fantastic! I don't know why the other girls say it is boring. (C226-3/9/09),
to Seham's:

H: (IN321-27:53) Her way of writing is nice because she's honest ... she talks to us as a friend,
to Shamsa's lack of interest in reading it because:

S: (IN294-25:37) I read about it in the newspaper that it gives a negative idea about Saudi women
and a lot of arguments about this.

and Naheya's and her friends' dislike of it:

N: (IN15-21:57) When I told my best friend or my group, "Did you read Raja Al Sanea?" they
would say, "No, no way!" They didn't finish ten pages. We cannot keep reading it.

Amina has an interesting way of reading it:

A: (IN299-46: 16). I heard of it. I was in the CO-Op (supermarket) and I was eh, going through the books. I saw that book and I was “let me read it”. I just want to know why every, why people bothered. I read the first part about the weddings. It was disturbing, the beginning. I mean, why should you be mean to the people? ... Someone was being mean, I was like, ‘Why are you so mean like this?’

R: Did you finish it?

A: No, not yet, because only when I go to the Co-op, then I open it and read. ...

R: You stand and read it there?

A: Yea, or sometimes – it is not allowed to read there – you have to just like, yea, I move around like, sometimes I will be near the Tide and the cleaning things so [that] people don’t see me.

The above data samples highlight the individual nature of students’ reading interests and their individual responses to the same text, and it confirms the lack of a generic reader (Rosenblatt, 1995) referred to earlier (ch.2.4.3). Such a wide array of responses also helps to demonstrate the (sometimes) complex role that culture plays in students’ reading choices. While some may disassociate themselves from any potentially disturbing portrayal of women within their own or similar culture, others want to know what is being written about their culture and yet others may take a more personal view, as does Badira, whose mother originates from Saudi Arabia. She mentions the sequel to *Binat Al Riyadh: Binat Jeddah*:

R: (IN301-20:38) Did you read it?

B: I am not very interested because it’s all about girls’ problems in Jeddah and Riyadh and I know them. I’ve been to Saudi and I’ve seen Jeddah and the girls’ problems and ... everyone knows about it, so, why do we have to read about it. It’s depressing.

This clearly indicates the role of students’ underlying identities and the knowledge that they bring to a text, in guiding their leisure reading choices. Budoor’s knowledge about Saudi women “and the girls’ problems”, convinces her in advance that she would not find reading the books enjoyable so neither her curiosity nor her interest is aroused.

Yet, similarity of cultures spurred RehamF to read *Burned Alive*, which is set in another Arab country:

R: (IN17-2:16) The story interests you because ...?

Rm: It’s part of our culture. It’s something that happens in the world we live in.

R: Is it a culture that you identify with?

Rm: Yea

She identified with the culture being described in the book, even though it is a non-Emirati culture. Perhaps there is just sufficient distance in such books which makes them readable to many. One purpose

for choosing to read these is curiosity, to see what other Arab girls' lives are like and to see "what everyone is talking about" (C226-3/9/09). In the case of David Pelzer's *My Story*, containing: *A child called It*, *The lost boy* and *A man named Dave*, Sawzan's curiosity about it had lasted from when a friend told her about it in secondary school until she saw it in my office.

Students also have a keen interest in reading biographies or other writings of well known people, such as, President Obama's *The audacity of hope* (IN15), *An affair of state* by Richard Posner (QSR37-12/10/07), and *Ru'iati (My Vision)*, by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum. This last book is of particular interest to my participants-as-Emiratis because it reveals the ruler of Dubai's ambitions for the development of Dubai, the most internationally known of the emirates. Hilary Clinton's autobiography *Living History* (C3-18/2/2007) evoked AzzaR's sympathy because she felt sorry for her when her husband was unfaithful (C3). On a lighter note, some enjoyed reading *Burnt Toast* by Terri Hatcher, *The truth about diamonds*, by Nicole Ritchie, and *Robbie Williams: Angels and demons - the biography* (IN96-11:14).

5.4.3 Special interests and hobbies

Mar: (IN123-24:53) When you're interested in something and you really want to know about it and learn from it, you will go reading it.

Students read about their special interests or to get information about a certain topic. Naheya reads about politics online (S15-24/12/06; IN15-37:46) to keep up with world events, "seeing what's new in the world" (IN15-37:46), and she follows the writings of Yusri Fouda in both languages. He goes where few others dare to tread – both literally and figuratively – and she enjoys being able to forge links between his television reporting and her reading by searching for his writings. If a television program ignites her interest in a topic or author, she searches for information about him and for texts written by him, in order to continue her quest for a better understanding of her world and to develop an informed opinion on world issues. Because of her new-found interest in philosophy, Naheya she has started reading Nietzsche (in English) (IN15).

Raweya's special interest is reading history books:

R: (IN240-4:54) I like to read more about, like, eh, what the Emirati people did, and who are the famous people in our country, pictures from the local areas, long time before I was born; history, yea, I like to know the history. The most thing I like in reading is history. I am very interested in history. I like to know, like the first war and second war ...

She goes on to explain that she knows the history of the founding of the UAE and cites dates and facts. Because of this, she is known as the historian of the family.

R: (IN240-11:09) Also, I used to buy eh, history books. I have a Napoleon book. I know his history; I know his life, everything about him.

Her friends outside the university share her interest in such topics but, she does not talk to anyone at the university about it.

Raweya is also an avid reader of the *Guinness Book of Records* and took great pride and joy in doing a presentation about it to our class, where she demonstrated her extensive retention of facts and figures and fielded students' questions. This transformed her identity in my eyes from that of a disinterested student to a more alive, engaged and confident one, because her special interest and out-of-class reading were suddenly valued in class. It effected a positive change in the way both Raweya viewed herself and I viewed her, she went on to succeed in her studies and continued to talk to me about her reading and how she used to borrow poetry books from her school library and spend hours reading them because: "I like to read the poems. Also, I write poems" (IN240-17:45). Other students' interests include learning Spanish and about aviation in *Wings over the Gulf* by Shirley (C51-3/9/09) and poetry, which Marwa(H) bought at the book exhibition (83QBF1-7/4/07), while Shamsa reads Arabic poetry and literature online (IN294).

Students' hobbies are also likely to prompt them to select reading materials on those topics. In addition to reading books about losing weight and how to start a business, Marwa (IN123) buys and reads many books related to photography, music, and starting a business.

R: (IN123-7:37) I know that you are interested in graphics, and Photoshop and all that. Would you say that that's another favourite leisure activity of yours?

M: It is. I read books about it. I have books about photography and design ... and I'm going again in the holidays and get some more.

Like Marwa, Samya also follows her interest in designing:

I prefer to spend my free time using the Internet, searching for pictures to use in a Photoshop program (J40-12/12/2006).

In addition to reading about history, Raweya also likes to read cookery books so that "when I do something I do it right" (IN240-13:02). This shows that students' hobbies and other leisure activities, far from replacing their leisure reading, can result in them reading more. We saw earlier that much of Ameera's current reading is focused on her future major in business (ch.5.2.1). Marwa, too, reads about her planned future major in business:

M: (IN123-24:30) I just read a Donald Trump one. ... not all, I just read chapter one. I was interested to start a business and I really wanted some tips.

Interest in a particular topic or genre is integral to the reader herself and, attempts by others to directly influence or control those interests are unlikely to succeed.

5.4.4 Classics and other texts of high regard

I use the word classics to mean the works of authors whose names are instantly recognizable as having produced literature of a very high standard which has endured for decades and, sometimes, centuries. Reading the classics, such as Shakespeare or Dickens, makes students feel smart, as we saw earlier (IN303; IN17) whether in English or translated into Arabic. Classics are considered by many students as a type of reading to aspire to and some students list Shakespeare (IN63-11:30) or Dickens (IN17) as their favourite author. Some students include the classics in their future reading plans:

A: (IN299-59:19) There would be important books like Shakespeare or classical books. I have not gone that far to read them yet. I would like to read and see the concepts but I haven't.

R: (IN301-3:28) If you had time what kind of books would you like to read?

B: Em, ah, I like classics; old time, you know the Victorians when they, old stories, or maybe how people struggled back then. I like to read those stories.

R: Maybe Charles Dickens? Boys working in the factories?

B: Yea, it's heart-breaking but I like reading it.

and we saw earlier that RehamF plans to read Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (IN17-19:05 – ch.5.2.1).

Students are likely to consider the shift to reading the classics as signaling their transition from reading childish books to real books, even if they are sometimes abridged versions:

R: (IN17-6:53) What is the first real book you ever read, that made you feel the transition from childhood reading?

Rm: I remember ... *Oliver Twist* by Dickens. It was not the very big version but it was not the simplified version either. I was in grade eight.

Other works of high regard which are popular with my participants include award-winning or award-nominated books, such as, the young adult books series, *Twilight*, by Stephanie Meyers (IN322; IN303) whose titles were also made into movies. Haleema is reading a book described by the Adult Learners' Association as the best book for young adults called *Define Normal* (IN296-00:59). Shamsa is currently reading an Arabic book called, *Al Zazeel* by Joseph Zaidan, which won a Booker Award and which she heard about through a university-based book club, which she recently joined:

R: (IN294-00:42) Will you attend the meeting after this to discuss it?

S: Yea Miss! (excitedly). I will read it every free time I have in the university, especially when I come in the car, because we live far away, I read it in the car.

Here, Shamsa is reading to respond to the encouragement offered by a university bookclub.

Naheya, too, is currently reading an Arabic book which was nominated for the Booker Award:

N: (IN15-2:03) My most interesting book will be my most favourite book, a novel, a first novel for a Jordanian writer and poet at the same time. It's in Arabic. 'Twas nominated for the Booker Award. It's called *Heqeabat Hadzher* in Arabic; translated it would be *A Luggage of Caution* ... The author's name is Atif Bellawi ... He talks about friendship and the human relationships with others, how we can behave with one who is opposite to us, how can we look in different dimensions, so, I really like it.

She had been following the author's work online when she read that he had written a novel. I try to ascertain what she means when she says that he uses her her :

R: (IN15-4:19) Your language, your tongue, your thoughts?

N: Exactly.

R: So, by your tongue you mean your language *and* your thoughts.

N: Yes. It's me, you know? When I read it, "Yes, I will think like that".

In the above clip, Naheya appears to find aspects of her own identity, including the way she speaks and thinks, reflected in the work of Atif Bellawi. As we saw earlier, quality of language is very important to Naheya and so, I can either take the literal meaning that this author's choice of language is acceptable to her or I can read into her words a meeting of minds between reader and author. This suggests a strong shared cultural factor between author and reader in Naheya's reading choices and perhaps it is this which continues to draw her back as reader to this author. She had read Bellawi's book three times before our interview, the first time completing it in one day. The cultural aspects of her reader identity become clearer as she describes an extract from his book:

N: (IN15-2:53) I really liked it. It's about, you know, friendship between four people who live in an apartment and they come from different backgrounds ... the one who can be balanced between [his] lies and his religion, there is one who does not believe in God, and the narrator is just an observer who can observe all these relationships.

In the book, the protagonist requires another character to "be more Muslim" while he himself lies to people. Here, Naheya's identity as-Muslim is perhaps, more strongly activated because she is obliged to redefine certain aspects of that identity as being distinct from or similar to that of the protagonist who

claims to be a Muslim. In doing so, she also shows her tolerance for others' points of view and her disapproval of hypocrisy.

5.4.5 Electronic reading

Data from the snapshot surveys show that my participants also do a lot of reading on the World Wide Web (S33-10/12/06), to which they have virtually uninterrupted access, as evidenced by Sarah's snapshot survey reports of using chat-rooms "24/7" (S19-31/06/06). They read emails, spend time on social networking, check to see how their shares are doing on the stock market (C3) and engage in various reading activities online, for both self and family. Najla checks the football results for her grandfather while Raweya goes online to help her father research a car he wants to buy and to teach her brother:

R: (IN240-3:10) Two days ago, I read in the website, about how to help the babies know the letters and numbers and I have a little brother, he's four years old; he didn't go to school 'til now, so, I bring a paper and write the letters for him and say, I read "A, apple, B bus". I show him the pictures of this and tell him: "this is the letter A; my name is A---, starts with letter A" and he likes it. He sits; we, like, enjoy one hour and a half. I didn't teach him like only teach him, like I teach him and having fun.

Snapshot surveys show that on a given day, Ameera spent 15 minutes on her emails, 50 minutes reading Arabic websites and 120 minutes reading English websites (S13-31/10/06), Marwa(Y) spent two hours on her Arabic emails, one and a half hours on her English emails, thirty minutes reading Arabic websites and two to three hours reading English websites (S30-31/10/06), and Hessa spent approximately two hours on the Internet, which she does most days (S6-31/10/06; 12/11/06), (all of which were self-reported and are approximations).

Online forums are popular as sites where students both read others' views and write their own on various topics (Q76; IN15; IN49&88; C7-31/10/2006; IN299). There are different kinds of forums to suit a wide variety of tastes. Dana and non-reader Inas, for example, discuss "students' issues" and their favourite hobbies with other students, in Arabic in an online forum:

R: (IN48&88-32:47) How often do you read on this forum?

N: Every day for one hour, one and half.

I: It's like group ... not chatting, yes writing. Someone put an issue and we should eh

N: put response for this

R: I see, so, do you mostly read on that or do you read and write?

N: Both. Sometimes, only read and sometimes read and write.

R: Most of the time would you say it is mostly reading or half and half or

N: Mostly reading

Naheya found an online forum on Nietzsche's work where she read some of his quotes (IN15-24:39). We also saw earlier, how Amna reads reviews of certain books in an online forum and then prepares lists of those she wishes to buy (ch.5.4.1). It seems that there may be an online forum for everything that interests students:

S: (IN294-18:23) Because I love poetry and literature, I enter many forums that are interested in this.

R: You discuss with other people?

S: Yes, Arabic poetry and my blog also, for my pictures. I have a gallery of my own photographs of flowers, etc. It is shared with others and is in Arabic.

Mar: (IN123-27:35) The thing I read every day, is, in one website, its' for art and those stuff, like, members have journals and they will write journal entries. It's very interesting. I always read their entries and those stuff.

R: (IN299-1:1:13) I like to read blogs. I have one blog and I put on random things about how university is.

Many students enjoy reading websites such as, *Fan Fiction*, where different people around the world add to or rewrite parts of well-known stories:

I always read from this online story website. It has amazing stories written by people our age (S38-31/10/06).

H: (IN303-33:36) Sometimes I read Internet novels, like stories, posted by a number of people, or some fiction, like, *Fan Fiction*. Sometimes there's this story, like, these two characters and the fans, they're like: "Oh, these two should be together" so they write about that.

Hana helps her friend to write for the site: "I help but I don't do" (IN303-33:56). HaleemaY, too, is a fan of *Fan Fiction*:

I read a lot of *Fan Fiction* online, daily. It blows my mind sometimes at the amazing talented writers I can find online (J297-3/4/10).

A: (IN299-44:07) Online, there are the forums that I mentioned. There is this like, different writers, like, my age, they write stories. There was only one story that I liked. It made me emotionally disturbed for like the whole summer but it was very nice. It's called *April loves black coffee*. The guy character died in the end. I was disturbed because they were fighting. It was more of a romantic. It was funny.

Some read websites to follow the latest news about the topics which interest them. Ameera reads online, about the extent of road traffic accidents in her country, the UAE:

A: (IN13-32:16) Actually, I check out the local news on the website and the last topic I looked [at was] about traffic jams and its causes like, em, in *Khaleej Road* it's nearly 45% of accidents, like death accidents, so after reading it I am kind of worried about our population, what's going to happen.

One cannot help feeling that Ameera's identity as a concerned *Emirati* was at play because she worries about the future of her country, where the national population already constitutes a very small minority of less than twenty percent of its residents.

Reading online enables students to feel connected with a larger group of readers and writers, through a mutual exchange of views on different topics, including the books they are reading or that they plan to read. They are unlikely to consider much of their online reading as reading, when they browse through an endless array of websites including some which are recommended by friends for interest or fun and some they return to as favourites. Students read online, simply because they can and because it gives them round-the-clock access to interesting reading materials, in addition to its other benefits. This shows again the importance of access to reading materials in bringing about reading.

5.4.6 Other popular genres

Students also enjoy reading different types of novels, comic books and periodicals.

5.4.6.1 Novels

In addition to the books already mentioned students also read books by Agatha Christie and Paulo Coelho in both English and Arabic (IN15-52:46; IN17-33:00; IN269-2:10; IN303; IN339; C7; IN294; C92) with *The Alchemist* having been read by many – we recall how it triggered Shamsa's interest in reading novels (ch.5.2.4.3). Other authors and titles include Maya Angelou, Harper Lee, Emily Bronte and T.S. Elliot, *You Belong To Me*, by Mary Higgins Clark (QSR7-18/9/07), *Tell me your dreams* (in Arabic) by Sidney Sheldon, (C398&400-13/5/10) and *Intensity, False Memory*, and *Velocity* by Dean Koontz (IN303-22:40). Some also read ghost stories, such as, *The thirteenth tale*, by Diane Setterfield (QSR155-13/9/07); popular or contemporary novels, such as, *A thousand splendid suns* (C226-3/9/09) and *The Kite Fliers* (IN299-13:38), by Khaled Hosseini, *Angels and Demons* and *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown, (IN303-17:01) and vampire or other horror stories, which Haleema enjoys (IN296-9:58).

Texts that take a humorous look at relationships or the differences between genders and that could be referred to as “Chick lit”⁶ are also enjoyed, as illustrated by the popularity of the Allan & Barbara Pease books, *Why men don't listen and women can't read maps* and, *Why men lie and women cry* (C51-3/9/09), *All she ever wanted*, by Lynn Austin (C7-23/4/08), *The devil wears Prada*, by L. Weisberger, and Sherry Argov's books such as, *Why men love bitches*, (IN96; IN339):

Re: (IN339-10:30) It has a bad title but the title doesn't tell you what is inside the book. The book tells you how to make the woman confident in herself and independent and not depend on the men ... like for example when you marry you don't depend on the men for their money. You should work by yourself. After that you're gonna impress him. He will say: “Look, she can work by herself”.

A sample of the romance fiction read by female Emirati university students includes *Message in a Bottle*, by Nicholas Sparks (C226-3/9/09), *A child to call his own*, by Sheila Danton (QSR37-12/10/07) and *Wedding in December*, by Anita Shreve (QSR7-17/9/07), *Every boy's got one*, by Meg Cabot - a “romance comedy book” (IN17-33:30) - and *Every breath you take*, by Judith McNaught (IN269-18:58), which is “very sophisticated” because the author uses beautiful descriptive phrases. However, in general romance does not appear to feature as a popular genre with comments such as: “I hate romance” (IN296-10:23). Marwa gives a very logical reason why she does not like it:

M: (IN123-31:24) I don't like romantic, no ... 'cos if you're reading romantic, the purpose of it is to make you feel romantic and when you are alone you don't need to feel that.

The above titles help to demonstrate the diversity of students' reading interests and preferences, the extent of Western influence on their reading choices and to some extent, their fascination with most things American. This may be due to the paucity of Arabic titles that are available and their interest in the lives of people from other cultures (C3-5/11/07).

5.4.6.2 Comic books

Archie comics used to be very popular with some students when they were younger (IN339-4:28; IN301-24:45). We recall, for example, that Badira and RehamF were self-declared addicts of *Archie* comics (ch.4.3.2).

⁶ “Chick lit” is a term which was originally coined by Mazza, working in the area of post-feminist literature (Mazza and DeShell, 1995). In more recent years, it has become synonymous with a popular fiction genre which takes a (usually) humorous look at modern-day woman, focusing on both familial and romantic relationships.

R: (IN301-24:52) Does anyone stop you reading comics at home?

B: Uh, uh (no) and they don't encourage also.

Japanese comic books, particularly *Anime* and other *Manga* titles, have largely replaced the *Archie* comics today for many of my participants as readers. Hana takes us with her on her trip to the newest and largest bookshop in the area:

H: (IN303-10:12) I went there twice. It was the influence of my friend, "Go there, there are comic books and everything." OK, I will take a look, so, I went there. Wow, it's so spacious place! (said with great emphasis), filled with books. You can *smell* the books!

R: Do you like the smell of books?

H: Yes ...

R: How did you get started when you went there?

H: First, first to the comic book corner "Where's that? Where's that?" because my friend told me like, it's the first, like, you have a big choice of books, yanni, ah, so

R: Tell me about the comic book corner; what did you see there?

H: My favourite, *Mangas*, the Japanese comic books. The *Manga* has too many genres, like *Shojo* for girls and *Shawna* for boys; shojo, girls, shojo means girl [in Japanese] so, the *Manga* is girlish. *Shawna* is boy ... a type of *Manga* for the boys. Sometimes it has the both.

R: So, what did you buy?

H: I got a *Manga*, it's like three volumes.

R: How did you pick that particular *Manga*?

H: Because I read on the Internet about it and I have to buy this and I didn't find it on the Internet, like, to order.

Her excitement at finding something she is interested in reading is palpable, as it is in her account of finding *Manga* in the university library:

H: (IN303-20:31) I found two shelves of *Manga* up there; a senior told us: "There is a *Manga* corner there; you should look at it".

Heyam, too, has discovered the 'treasure' trove of *Manga* in the library corner (IN269-17:10) and she borrows them for herself and her sister as she cannot find them elsewhere. Seham plans to bring her *Manga* with her on an upcoming family holiday (IN321-7:01) and, as I alluded to earlier (ch.4.3.3), they are one of the few items that non-reader Salha reads although she calls it translating, not reading. As the *Anime* English subtitles flash across her television screen she immediately translates them into Arabic for her sisters, while following the story:

S: (IN278-1:57) As I told you, the Japanese things, yea, they translate it into English, and I read it and translate it to my sisters.

R: Ah, into written Arabic. So, you write it for them?

S: No, I

R: Or you speak it to them?

S: Yea, I speak it to them.

R: At the same time, is it?

S: Yea.

R: That has to be very fast, isn't it? (She laughs). So, you're reading and translating at the same time.

S: Yea

R: Wow!!! That's amazing.

Students also read the English subtitles of *Manga* and *Anime* comics online (IN278-15:20; IN301-46:35). Reading *Anime* and *Manga* suggests an interest in popular literacy from cultures other than American. Although some comics are not to everyone's taste (IN338) - Badira, for example, finds the *Manga* too short and more suitable for children (IN301-23:34) - comics are a source of enjoyment and fun through reading in different format for some readers and non-readers alike.

5.4.6.3 *Periodicals*

Most homes get daily Arabic and English newspapers (S30-7/11/06; S36-29/10/06; 12/11/06; S37-5/3/07; S38-29/10/06): "I always find newspapers in the living room" (S8-31/10/06) and fathers usually read them in what is a daily ritual, signaled in Hana's home by her father changing his glasses to his reading glasses (IN303-7:48). Non-reader Khatima's home is an exception as there are no newspapers (IN338); her parents cannot read. Students are likely to scan newspaper headlines as they wait for their ride to campus or as they are being driven around (IN13). Many like to read about their favourite football team in the sports section (IN303; IN306), check the latest news both locally and worldwide, read about particular interests such as art (S33-19/11/06) or crime (IN240) for example, or "get information so, like, when I have a conversation with someone, if I read a lot of newspapers and stuff, I would know how to give ideas and speak out" (IN321-11:57). Hana starts by reading:

H: (IN303-6:58) the recent sports, what's happening today worldwide ... I flip to the entertainment eh, scandals and these stuff; and then, OK, let's go back to the real world.

Non-reader Layali also finds interesting things to read in the newspaper:

R: (IN306-3:27) What kinds of things do you like to read in the newspaper?

L: Everything interesting. Most of the time I read the sports and I like, eh, about the artists and photography and famous people.

Curiosity to know what is happening both in the world at large and closer to home, is the main reason why students read a newspaper (S13-3/12/06; S4-3/12/06; S5-31/10/06; 5/11/06; S8-10/12/06; S98-17/11/07), for others they relieve boredom while some are just “not into newspapers” (S7-14/11/2006). Although there are newspapers available in the university library (S25-14/1/07), few students read them there. Others prefer to read them online because of the ungainly size of the paper versions:

R: (IN17-26:16) because it’s more neat. You just click and it just shows you, instead of opening the paper.

Students also often find magazines at home where a housemaid, family member or friend may leave one lying around (S30-7/11/06; 5/12/06; S36-7/11/06; S37-22/5/07; S38-19/3/07): “I always find Arabic magazines in my home” (C132), and they may also find them in the university library or in a beauty salon. They usually flick through them, stopping to read whatever catches their attention – which includes shopping and horoscopes - and this is done mainly to pass the time, rather than for the sake of reading. Students often purchase their magazines at petrol stations and supermarkets (S35-14/1/07), choosing from a wide selection of local and international titles. The locally produced Arabic magazine, *Zahrat Al Khaleej*, now over thirty years old, deals mostly with health, fashion, beauty and other topics and is popular mainly among students who read in Arabic. *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* are read by some (IN17; C3), in addition to Oprah’s magazines, which are “kind of fun” (IN299-39:50). Amna also buys *Teen Vogue*, which she believes is culturally appropriate for her but she cannot say if it is culturally appropriate for *Emirati* women in general and cautions against generalizing with regard to *Emirati* women’s tastes (IN299-47:50). Some prefer to read magazines online:

R: (IN17-26:27) I like to have a hard copy, but it’s interesting online [also], because there are all these games you play and that’s cool.

Many students read the university’s in-house magazine which they look out for regularly on the university campus (S83-6/11/07). It contains articles by both students and professors. Marwa likes to read it because she works on it as designer and photographer, and there is an article about her in the upcoming issue (IN123-35:38). Naheya loves reading medical magazines because they interest her (IN15-49:16).

A particular children’s Arabic magazine is remembered fondly as it used to help fill the void created by the absence of a school library for those who wanted to read when younger:

A: (IN299-21:24) In the school they were selling this magazine, *Majallath Majid*, [excitement]. Yes, twas only three dirhams, so I bought it every week because they were the only materials to read. That was fun.

R: Did most students buy it?

A: Yea, because it was *Majallath Majid* [sings the song from its TV cartoon]. ... We would search for things, look at things, it was nice.

R: Did the teachers ever ... give you time to read it?

A: No, only in break.

Periodicals such as newspapers and magazines offer students a chance to read short, interesting items on various topics, which suits busy students who have very little free time for reading. A common theme is that students sample an item first, usually by its headline, and if it is interesting they will continue reading it. For many students, newspapers and magazines may be the only texts which they read in Arabic, apart from the Qura'n.

5.4.7 Religious texts

I include religious reading here because it plays a major role in students' lives. Both readers and non-readers try to read the Qura'n every day and it indicates another aspect of their identities but, they do not consider it leisure reading (IN303-46:00; IN96-7:32; IN338-15:20):

N: (IN15-36:05) It's not reading; there is no word for reading the Qura'n. There should be a higher word for it.

S: (IN96-7:33) I don't see it actually as reading. I see it as something you have to do it for God, not reading, not reading. I never think of it as reading.

Religious reading consists mainly of reading the Qura'n, stories about the prophets (IN278-18:15; IN339-33:40; S8-15/2/07), about Ramadan and how Muslims should prepare for it (J1-27/2/07), and about the fight between good and evil (IN294-3:05). On a given day, for example, Basmaa read 1-3 pages of an Arabic book called *The Life of the Prophet* (S23-31/10/06; 5/11/06).

Reading the Qura'n brings students many of the benefits they associate with reading in general, including meeting their needs and providing inspiration and comfort but they also do it for reasons other than for themselves, which could be called, obligated volition:

N: (IN15-34:56) Reading the Qura'n; it's hard to say it's compulsory but we have to read it. We have to enjoy every single letter in it.

I love reading the Holy Qura'n very much and I enjoy it (J39-14/11/07).

S: (IN294-14:52) I think that we enjoy doing and we have to do it.

R: (IN123-30:07) If you pick up the Qura'n and read it do you consider that leisure reading, if you read it 'cos you want to?

M: Mm, that's hard to, eh, cos, it is a leisure and it is, like, you have to read it and those stuff so, it's something in the middle and, like, you like it and you have to, like, you have to like it. You like it 'cos you have to, you know?

In the midst of all the various reading items that are available, students do not forget their religious reading, suggesting the clear identity of being a Muslim. As non-reader Salha said: "If I don't have time, I will make time" to read the Qura'n. I understand students to mean that they have obligated volition to read the Qura'n but this phrase could also be said to be the main factor in all leisure reading for my participants in that as educators, we would like them to feel obliged to want to read and that together we would find a way to make time for it and to make it enjoyable. Perhaps, to use Marwa's words, if students want to become readers, they "have to like it".

5.5 Students' leisure reading habits of time, place and manner

We have seen samples of what students read and now I will look briefly at how they find time for reading and also, the private and social spaces in which they read for leisure.

5.5.1 Students' reading habits of time

Many students complain that since they joined the university they have had very little time for leisure reading and they try to 'make' time to read, regardless of difficulties such as a heavy course load and related assignments:

Since I started university I have been having a hard time with finding time to read but my attitude towards reading hasn't changed and I still read and manage to find time (J28-14/12/06).

R: (IN15-59:35) Do you think you are reading enough these days with your class work and everything; do you have time to read?

N: Sometimes no, but I try, try hard to spend at least ten minutes before I go to bed to read even just two pages it's enough for me.

I always read twenty pages or more per week (J7-4/5/2008).

Students try to find time whenever they can. Some get their assignments completed early, so as to free up some time for pastimes, including leisure reading (IN299-4:20; IN123-7:11) while others try to read while travelling by car (IN294; IN13; S42-13/3/07; 20/3/07), by bus (105QIL-13/4/08; IN299) or by plane (IN63). Marwa's conservative family do not allow her to visit shopping malls and so, she is:

Mar: (IN123-7:13) always free at home.

R: So, would you say that you have time to read?

Mar: Yea, I have a lot of time ... I manage my time, like, if I'm given work, I spend one day like long hours, finishing everything like, early, in time, like yesterday I spent seven hours doing the review for Global Studies.

More reading is done at the weekend than during the week. RehamF reads "a few pages every weekend; that's all I have time for" (IN17-1:25) as do Ameera and Azza:

M: (IN13-17:35) When I've really got time I start to search for something to read ... like, in weekends, I've got plenty of time ... in the end of the semester, we're supposed to submit all our assignments and I'm done with them.

A: (IN63-32:01) Actually, ah, during these days now I don't read but only at the weekend. At the weekend I read, yea.

For many students, the long stretches of time in the summer holidays are the most suitable time for leisure reading, particularly for those who do not travel outside the country:

I usually read a lot during the summer because of my free time (S98-24/5/08).

I leisure read more when I'm on my summer holiday (S64-17/11/07).

I usually read a lot during the summer because of my free time (S97-24/5/08).

R: (IN15-59:05) Do you do more reading in the holidays?

N: Yes

Dana agrees:

N: (IN49&88-1:07) I think, eh, when we have holiday we read much than ...eh, than when we have school ...

R: Yea, yea, when you have holidays, you read more

N: Yea,

Sawsan read eight books in one week in the summer holidays because her mother was away and she was at home with her dad. Conditions in place included boredom, holiday time and access to books (C226-3/9/09). Naheya "read many Arabic books and English articles" in her vacation (C15-23/8/07).

Keen readers also keep in touch with their reading when holidaying abroad. When RehamE goes to France for her holidays she adds to her personal book collection and does some reading:

Re: (IN339-33:47) I love the library [bookshop] in Paris. When I used to be bored I used to go with my cousin. We'd go walking to the library and buy English books and come back. They have many English books. I was surprised.

R: Was this in the summer holiday or were you living there?

Re: Summer holidays

Khawla reads at least four to six books every summer when she goes to Egypt (C51-3/9/09).

R: When do you think you will read?

B: In the holiday.

R: What do you think will happen in the holiday when you think about you, the holiday and reading, what do you see in your mind?

B: Going to bookshops.

R: Do you see yourself sitting down to read during the day or at night?

B: At night.

My data suggests that the question of time or a lack of time for reading may be a matter of perspective and that many readers simply "make time" for their reading by organizing their studying habits to make room for their reading habits. Others wait to read during the weekend or during their holidays.

5.5.2 Students' reading habits of place

"I read here, there, everywhere" (IN303-43:17).

Students' favourite reading space is in their bedrooms (IN303; IN13; IN49&88; IN15; IN17; IN13; IN63; IN96; IN123; S38; IN296; IN301; IN303; IN322; IN339), "in bed, just if I have something to drink on the side" (IN17-47:26), "with a lamp beside me and closed, closed door" (IN301-19:30). It is a room which they can call their own, where nobody disturbs them, where they feel safe, comfortable and in control, where they can concentrate (IN49&88), "far away from my little sisters" (S105-6/11/08) and where they keep their personal libraries (C61). Some read to put themselves to sleep:

Re: (IN339-9:23) I love, sometimes, before I sleep, I read a chapter or two or three and sometimes when I want to sleep but I cannot I read a book so I can sleep ... and sometimes it's not a fiction book, it can be a book like *The Secret, How to Keep yourself Calm*.

while others find that reading keeps them awake:

R: (IN63-31:57) Do you have a favourite space in your house (she interrupts)

A: Yes, on my bed.

R: so, your favourite space of all, whether in the university or at home

A: On my bed. I like doing all things on my bed. ... Yea, also, sometimes I like writing my homeworks on my bed.

R: Does reading make you sleep, sometimes?

A: No, because your mind all on the words and what you are reading.

When Shawq read a particular book in three days she was in her cosy room, where it was:

Sh: (IN96:22-15) quiet, and kind of, the lights are a bit dim, they're not really bright and I sometimes like to read out loud ... because when you read it out loud you kind of have the picture of what's going on.

Private reading spaces enable unhindered impersonations and the ability to shed or assume different identities at will. When Marwa read a book in one day, she was in her room with the door closed, and nobody disturbed her:

R: (IN123-2:34) How long did it take you to read it?

M: One day ... I just went back home and started reading like 2:00 pm until 2:00 am.

R: If you can capture your feelings during the reading were you aware of the rest of the world outside you or ...?

M: No, I was just into the story like maybe take a break and tell my mother something about the story and then go back.

She moved back and forth from her identity as-reader to that as-daughter in her sojourns to talk to her mother about her reading.

Students also identify social reading spaces where other people may act as audience or as shared readers in the reading event. Non-reader, Inas, likes to read in the family living-room, even while the television is on:

R: (IN49&88-18:49). Where is your favourite place to read?

IN: the living room, (laugh) with my family.

In view of the fact that she said she hates reading, this is an interesting response!

R: And they won't disturb you?

IN: Eh, they disturb me but, if I read anything interesting I tell them.

R: Oh, interesting; that's good. And have you done that before?

IN: Yes [with] a book in Arabic ... If I read something interesting, I tell them to turn off, eh, the TV and I tell them [about it].

Hunaida, too, sometimes goes to read in the family living-room when she feels bored of being in her room (IN322-26:19). Outside the family home, social reading spaces may include the family car. Earlier Seham referred to the books her aunt had written in Arabic to give hope to sick people (ch.5.3.1). She read her third book aloud to her father as they drove for two hours to the next city:

H: (IN321-2:47) the last book because I was in the car - we had a road trip so, I had to read something (smiles, as if it is shared knowledge) - I was reading it aloud to my father and sisters.

Amina used to go with her “library buddies” to the school library from grade seven onwards:

A: (IN299-24:34). I had one friend, not one, two, twins, and those were my first library buddies.

R: Tell me about them. What’s a library buddy?

A: OK [she seemed happy to tell me, and became more energized]. It’s like, we go, the library – it wasn’t really active but it was big, it had books and books and books. It was my first time seeing this large library and I told my friends, these two girls, to come with me [during] break ... it was open, but it was empty. We just took a book out ... It was fun, and ... after we read, we would come back to the library and talk about what was inside these books. It was really fun.

Students are likely to get more enjoyment from reading certain texts together when they have the chance, as did Badira in her school library:

B: (IN-13:42) Sometimes I would take the *Guinness Book of Records*; it’s very interesting. We would sit together as friends

R: and you read it?

B: yea, and we laugh and make fun, you know; girls!

R: Do you like to read privately on your own or with a group of friends?

B: It depends. If it’s like *Guinness*, with friends, but if it’s a novel, I like to sit alone in my room.

Ameera explained that she can read in the university cafeteria even while music is playing but not while people are talking (IN13) so, we see that social spaces may be both conducive to reading and problematic. Social reading also depends on the type of text and the presence of others as reading partners.

Students’ reading-related behavior must be tailored to suit different spaces as we see when Amna compares her presence in the university library with that in a bookshop

A: (IN229-29:28). In [the university] library, I try to be more calm: “Oh I found that book, look!”

“Oh, I found that book” is something

R: Exciting?

A: Yea

R: So you try not to say it out loud?

A: and in a bookshop I can scream: “Oh, my God, I want that and that and that!”

Regardless of the physical space in which they read, students also carry with them their private reading space, a concept which was beautifully captured by Amna:

R: (IN299-51:31) What is it about books that excites you?

A: (without hesitation) you can be sitting next to someone on the subway or on a bus, a public bus, whatever, and ohhhhh, you will be in your own little world (she says this happily) but then someone sitting next to you could be somewhere else, yea, that's nice. You can be in different worlds.

Amna's account of standing to read among the detergents in a local supermarket (ch.5.3) shows how a keen reader carries that private reading space with her so that she can become lost in her "own little world", conscious only of the book she is reading. Perhaps it is a sad reflection of our classrooms that Amna managed to read more and to do it more frequently in such a public space than she ever did in a classroom in her thirteen years of formal education.

Students believe that teachers should provide time for in-class reading:

M: (IN123-35:40) We should read, like, they should have time for us to, like, go and enjoy reading.

I planned to do just that in one of our classes and told my students, in advance, to bring a book to read (in any language). I interviewed Amna (at 6:30) in the morning ahead of the planned in-class reading session to get her reactions to the chance to read in class:

R: (IN299-3:20) When I mentioned on Monday that we could read today in class, please tell me what was going through your mind.

A: Oh, I was so happy, yes, because I left this book a while, like, two months, like, I couldn't read it. Today, in the morning, I just read a couple of pages to remind me. In the summer I finished the first book and in the second (this) semester ... I finished the second. I thought I would be able to read the third book in this semester but I couldn't. It's hard.

R: So, you didn't actually say to yourself, "Oh, I wish I could have that hour to myself to finish my assignments"?

A: Not really, no, because also I have finished most of my homework.

The stark implication from this data analysis is that the most problematic social reading space is the classroom where, unfortunately, students' leisure reading is either non-existent or driven 'underground'. This is evidenced by the two students I observed reading under the desk during class (C458; C96) and by other similar observations by students themselves in secondary school (IN278). When Amna was in school, they were not allowed to read the Arabic magazine *Majallah Majed* in class – being "good" meant not reading it in class - and so most waited until break-time to read it, which pushed the social reading space into the school playground. To a great extent the secondary and tertiary level classroom remains the

only social space wherein students may not read their own reading materials or discuss their leisure reading. This is indeed a tragedy because my participants-as-readers love to talk about their leisure reading. Ameera, for example, still loves to talk about *Socrates' Apology*:

A: (IN13-9:24) *Yea, I do* talk about it, about Agememnon's story, I love it.

It appears highly unlikely that reading culture can ever develop in such classrooms.

5.5.3 Students' leisure reading habits of meaning-making

My participants-as-readers use various strategies to assist them in making meaning from a text, including getting the gist from the paragraph (IN339), stopping to look up words in a dictionary (IN13; IN303), reading it in both L1 and L2 (IN306) or in an abridged version (IN17) and asking a friend for help (IN229). RehamE, an avid reader, relies on the text for the meaning:

Re: (IN339-10:58) If you read the sentence you can understand it.

R: Do you ever come across a word that you don't know?

Re: Sometimes, if I didn't understand the sentence or the chapter, but I didn't read a book that I didn't understand a page or a chapter because it's easy, when you read a sentence you can understand what it means.

5.6 Summary

Without a text to read no reading could take place so, the items which students read for leisure are highly significant because they help to illuminate certain underlying characteristics of my participants-as-readers. Their reading choices are influenced by both extrinsic factors which may bring student and text together, and intrinsic factors which have the final say in whether or not a student decides to read an item. For example, a student may be attracted by a book cover but, on reading it, finds that it is not interesting after all and so a further decision is made about whether or not to continue reading it. This calls on intrinsic factors which act as a filter. When Shawq (IN96) discovered that the book she chose because of its picture of shoes on the cover had nothing to do with shoes she decided to continue reading it because it was interesting (ch.5.3.2.2). Within the same category, also, some factors may outweigh others. For example, Naheya (IN15) was very interested in reading *Binat Al Riyad* but when she started to read it, her standards for enjoyment prevented her from continuing (ch.5.2.2). Meanwhile, Shamsa's belief that novels are a waste of time was overruled by her interest in knowing what her aunt and sister were reading (ch.5.2.3). The significance of such findings is to realize that the power of any one factor in influencing reading choices is established only in relation to other factors and that therefore, its influence is not

constant. Choice of reading items is a complex activity and the influence of various factors is not always obvious even to the reader.

The cross selection of what students read (ch.5.4) presented here exemplifies their diversity of reading choices and preferences and it underscores their self-agency in determining their own choices. Their reading choices are never fixed but are constantly changing as they discover new texts and challenge themselves further. No two students read a text in the same way although their choices may often signify elements of prescribed cultures, such as Emirati, Arab, Muslim, or young females (ch.5.4.6.1) or such negotiated cultures as avid fans of all things Western (ch.5.4.6.1), comic book readers, or its subgroup: *Archie* readers (ch.5.4.6.2). In identifying with some of those cultures, in the texts that they choose to read, students find insights into their own individual, unique lives and identities which help them to better understand themselves and others. Such individual identities as-readers are upheld even in the face of skepticism from others, such as: “Are you sure you will read it?” (IN15-24-17) when Naheya planned to read Nietzsche, for example (ch.5.4.3; ch.6.2.1.2). This shows how students may identify with a wider group of readers while simultaneously identifying differently to and independently of it in their reading choices.

We see the emergence of elements of reading culture or ways of doing reading in the way that students choose what and where to read and, indeed, in the way they conceptualize reading and readers (ch.4.3.1; ch.4.3.2). Readers identified both social and private reading spaces and described their reading behavior in each. Some explained that when they reread their favorite book they grow with it so that they get more from each subsequent reading, which shows that their identities are not fixed but are continually being shaped by their reading. Therefore, while students’ identities influence their reading choices their reading choices in turn influence the growth of certain aspects of their identities. These include the identities that they have already acquired, or the way they see themselves both through their own eyes and the imagined eyes of others, and their desired identities which refer to what they would like to become or how they would like to be seen by others. We also see, unfortunately, some elements of non-reading culture emerging (ch.4.3.3; ch.4.4) and the lack of Arabic reading culture (ch.5.3.1).

In my next chapter I will explore students’ underlying reasons for reading and, by association, for not reading, in order to get to the heart of their reading habits.

CHAPTER 6 – WHY SOME STUDENTS READ FOR LEISURE

6.1 Introduction

So far, in my data analysis, I have looked at participants' conceptualizations of leisure reading, together with their reading choices and practices and the factors which affect those choices. I will now investigate the factors which influence students' decisions to read for leisure, addressing the why question. It is hoped that underlying patterns of behavior and thinking in the data will provide a lens through which to view my participants' reasons for reading and for not reading. Chapter seven will also address the why question by identifying three stages of a student's journey to becoming a reader.

6.2 Purposes and *qana'a*

Answers to all *why* questions are usually referred to as reasons but, my data analysis shows that there are two distinct categories of reasons, purposeful and non-purposeful, as we can see from the following clip:

R: (IN63-12:56) What would be your reason for reading in English - Shakespeare, for example?

A: The first time I was reading to improve my English, and then, I, because I like it, so, I read it for interesting.

Azza started with a specific purpose for reading Shakespeare, to improve her language, followed by her interest in and liking for reading, which, together with wanting and feeling encouraged, expressed in other data samples, refer to states of mind or feelings. This newly emerged category required a new label which would reflect the empirical ground from which it came and distinguish it from extant concepts such as affect, feelings, dispositions or attitudes. The Arabic word *qana'a* denotes liking, being happy and convinced to do something, not pressured but self motivated to do it which, I believe, are similar in meaning to wanting, being interested, liking and feeling encouraged to do something. Therefore, I will use the word *qana'a* to indicate this new concept of reasons for reading as distinct from purposes.

The above data clip suggests that, once a purpose has been achieved, a student's *qana'a* will continue to bring about reading long afterwards. The following purposes and *qana'a* emerged from my data, samples of which follow the table (See Table 6.1):

Table 6.1- purposes and *qana'a* for reading

Specific Purposes for reading	Outcomes-focused
To gain benefit	To improve my language, reading and writing To gain knowledge
To challenge myself	To meet a challenge and achieve something
To fulfill my obligations	To satisfy expectations of others (and self)
To pass the time	To prevent boredom while time passes
To respond to encouragement	To respond to someone's encouragement
For fun	To have fun
To escape	To escape, temporarily, from reality
<i>Qana'a</i> for reading	Process-focused
I want to read	I want to do what I want
I am interested	It keeps my mind engaged
I like to read	I am happy while reading; I enjoy many things about it
I feel encouraged	I feel that I want to read

The above table shows that a purpose for reading is an intended outcome of an upcoming reading event. It lasts as a 'reason' to read only until its purpose has been served, while *qana'a* are more long-term affective factors which refer to the extent to which a student views reading favorably or unfavorably and wishes to engage in it. Purposes for reading may be applied to any kind of reading, whereas *qana'a* relate to reading that a student wants to do which makes it leisure reading. While both sets of reasons may result in reading, the latter is more likely to contribute to a leisure reading habit. I will now look at each category and its subcategories, starting with purposes for reading.

6.2.1 Purposes for reading

Both readers and non-readers identify purposes for reading which are short-term, conscious intentions, aimed at particular outcomes. Seham, for example, had a specific purpose for reading her aunt's book:

H: (IN321-00:34) I read a book, eh, an Arabic book. My aunt passed away five months ago; she wrote it before she passed away. I am not so interested in Arabic books, but, I read it because I wanted to see what she wrote.

Her purposes included satisfying her curiosity and perhaps, meeting her obligation, as she may have felt obliged to read a book written by her aunt. I have not created a separate category for curiosity because its

use in the data suggests synonymity with being interested. Therefore, it did not emerge as a separate category.

Amna started to read *Binat Al Riyad* because she wanted to see what people were talking about and Farah has an express purpose for wanting to read Paulo Coelho's latest book:

R: (95QBF2-7/4/07) His most recent book is set in London, Lebanon and Dubai and has an Emirati character in it. Do you think you would like to read it some time?

A: Yes, am curious to read about Emirati character from a foreign writer. I think he is Brazilian, right?

As we saw earlier, students often select a particular part of a newspaper or magazine to read for their own specific purposes (ch.5.4.6.3), whether to check their horoscope or the local sports news or to see what is going on in the world:

I was searching for top news (on reading an Arabic newspaper; J23-12/11/06).

Students identified the following purposes for reading: to get benefit, to challenge themselves, to fulfill a duty or obligation, to pass the time, to respond to encouragement from others, to have fun and to escape.

6.2.1.1 Reading to get benefit from it

In chapter five, section 5.2.3.3 I summed up the many benefits of reading which were identified by my participants as improvement of our mental and emotional states, our behavior, our knowledge and skills. In this section, I will show that students identify gaining those benefits as a purpose for reading. Students are likely to read for the purpose of improving in reading and writing (J36-12/06), spelling, grammar and vocabulary (J25-5/12/06; IN13-33:50; IN299-1:03:26; IN303-50:30):

The most experience I get from reading is writing (J25-3/12/06);

Improvement in reading ability (S83-22/4/07; S78-22/4/07);

To help me improve my reading and learn new things (J23-29/11/06);

I see that my reading skills are improved and that led to improve my writing skills (J36-12/06);

Improvement in language in general (IN63-12:23; N294-15:15);

Just to practise language (S132-22/4/07);

Students may also read to improve in a particular language: "I read because I want to improve my English language" (S26-9/12/06). Naheya read an English translation of *The Chaos of Senses* and plans to read it in its original language, Arabic, in the upcoming summer holidays to improve her Arabic reading (IN15-

10:20). When asked in which language she would prefer to read a particular title, her response took the researcher by surprise:

R: (IN15-52:15) You mentioned Agatha Christie. Now, supposing you've read some Agatha Christie books ... and you're curious to read the next book. There are four, the same title, one in Arabic, one in English, one in Spanish, one in German, which one would you prefer to read it in?

N: First?

R: Oh! [surprised] OK. First and then second [Researcher laughs]

N: First, in Arabic and then I will read it in English, because I read a lot of Agatha Christie's novels [in Arabic] and then I noticed that in the library they have for her in English, so, I will decide to read her books in English in the summer.

Her purpose for reading is a sense of obligation to herself which also helped shape the language in which she chose to read:

N: (IN15-52:58) I *have* to read in English.

R: Why?

N: Because, as Dr. Pamela [her professor] says, you have to feel the language and this phrase interested me because, I know my language. I cannot say to myself I'm a very good writer, but, I'm a good writer because of my reading ... so, I *have* to go to another direction to read in English and try to write in English in the summer.

Azza does not even let me finish the question, because her purpose for reading is clear in her mind:

R: (IN63-30:47) If I have two books here, and they're the same title, same story, one of them is in Arabic and the other is in English

A: I would take the English one.

R: Why?

A: I told you, I want really to enrich my English ... really, I want.

R: So, that's one reason that you've mentioned a few times for reading.

A: Yea, for enriching my English and also for interest.

In the above clip, Azza repeats her earlier combination of purpose and reason. There is a strong tendency for government school graduates as-readers to read for the purpose of improving in English.

6.2.1.2 Reading to challenge oneself

Challenging oneself can add purpose to reading. One of Maisa's purposes for reading is to challenge herself:

I like to challenge myself a lot. Once you have this thing on you, you will read a lot, because reading teach you to be more patient and [a] competitor. For example, there were many times when I decided to read a book or a story only because I wanted to challenge my friend in completing it (J10-30/3/2007).

Naheya's specific purpose for planning to read Nietzsche is to challenge herself and broaden her reading experiences:

N: (IN15-23:49) I notice that, why do I keep reading only the novels? I will not challenge myself, while, at the university they try to give us some articles on politics, philosophy and, like, humanities courses, so, I decided at the last book fair I talked to myself, 'I have to challenge myself' and then picked some books by eh, Nietzsche. I bought a big book for him and this is the big challenge. My friend told me, "Are you sure you will read it?" I told her "Yes" ... and in summer I don't have anything to do, I have to read it. I have to, to improve myself.

We saw earlier how Naheya reads her favourite author, Ahlam Al Sagham, to have her ideas and ways of thinking challenged by her (ch.5.2.4.2).

Amani and Asma read because they both want to become writers some day (99QIL5-13/4/08; C7) and Amani has already started writing. Najla's purpose is more social:

My friends also encouraged me to read because they always read books and I didn't, so, I started to read so that I would know about the book when they talked about it (J34-14/2/07).

Marwa is looking forward to the challenge of reading a book which has puzzles to solve:

M: (IN123-5:01) My friend, now, she's reading a book – it's a fiction book – and she told me that it's interesting. It has all puzzles that you have to fill them up, like, to understand the story, so, I think I'll enjoy reading it.

She could not, however, see the purpose of reading the topics suggested by her father:

M: (IN123-3:45) I feel like, why would I bother? We already do that stuff at school.

Some non-readers suggested that one way to encourage reading would be for teachers to:

make a challenge or a competition to push us to read (QBF48-7/04/07).

One such challenge is the Reading or Cultural Passport Award, which is run nationwide and is sponsored by the country's first lady. Hana took part:

R: (IN303-44:58) If you were not a reader before the Reading Passport competition, would that have helped you to?

H: Some people would hate because they have to read sixty books and they have a due date. Some people like to take their time while reading.

Seham, too, took part in the Reading Passport:

H: (IN321-22:4) Once we had a competition and the librarian used to always tell us “read, read” and we had a competition and you should read forty or sixty books in Arabic or English. I read sixty books and then you get, like, a passport, a reading passport. I came in third place in the sixty books. ... I was in grade eight. We had to read and summarize them and then we had an interview.

R: Do you think that encouraged you to read?

H: Yea, it did because, after that, I said “Oh, wow, I read books in this period, so, I will get more and I can read like a hundred books!” It used to excite me.

R: But, you didn’t.

H: No, I did read, but when I came to grade eleven or twelve I started more on the computer, so, I left the reading.

The effect of the competition wore off as time passed, which shows the possible limitations of such a reading incentive. For example, for the Reading Passport competition Heyam got her family members to help by reading and summarizing the books and then telling her about them. Reading for a challenge is outcomes-based, and this section shows how reading solely for a purpose may affect the reader’s engagement in the reading process itself.

6.2.1.3 Reading to fulfill a duty or obligation

We have to read the newspaper (S8-10/3/07).

Some students feel it is a matter of duty to read the newspaper every day, as we can see from Khawla’s statement above. Obligatory reading may relate to any genre or topic and usually includes both religious and academic reading, which are often the only types of reading done by many non-readers. Academic reading includes purposes for reading, such as, “because I needed to do a research” (S12-31/10/06) or “for my project” (S12-5/11/06) or to help a sibling with their study:

I had to research for my brother (S12-19/11/06).

We saw how non-readers Salha and Khatima read only what they are obliged to read (IN278:8:53; IN338). Amaalya read about the ancient Greeks and some of their poems to practice her reading (J1-11/3/07) and reread some Islamic history that she had learned in high school, to “revise my knowledge” (J1-27/2/07). Some refer to their academic reading as having at least partly sustained their interest in reading. Maisa identified study as the second of three major factors that encouraged her to read:

Second thing is reader as a student. This means for study. Some teachers ask us to read a specific article which is related to the class, so, I find myself reading something useful because I was

asked to. I believe that most articles and readings that teachers ask us to read are meaningful and they encourage you to read more. That's why I said study is a thing that may make you a real reader (J10-30/2/07).

It is obligatory for students to read the Qura'n regularly so as not to have "abandoned the Book":

H: (IN321-13:33). I'm supposed to read it more but, I don't, but, if I read it, I read it to feel comfort and to feel closer to God, to feel I am doing something right in my life. If we have the time, we should read it. The prophet says [Translated from Arabic IN321-13:41]: if a Muslim does not read the Qura'n for three days it is a sin because it will be considered as if she abandoned it.

We recall how Naheya and Marwa effectively combined purpose and *qana'a* for reading the Qura'n by saying that students must read it and like reading it (IN15-34:56; IN123-30:17).

6.2.1.4 Reading to pass the time

One example of reading to pass the time is in a beauty salon or waiting room where magazines are usually found. Other examples include surfing the Internet (S36-10/12/06; S36-24/12/06; S38-24/12/06), reading blogs (S35-14/1/07; S40-24/12/06), online magazines (S78-22/4/07), movie reviews (S24-24/12/06; S35-3/12/06), downloading subtitles for movies (S24-24/12/06), or reading stories online (S38-12/11/06; 19/11/06), all of which can be done to improve the mood while waiting:

Because I was bored and needed something to relieve me (S23 -17/3/07);

In the mood for reading (S35-12/3/07);

Because I was bored of doing some research for my Islamic studies (S23-19/3/07).

Reading for the purpose of passing the time is different to a student reading to enjoy her time pleasantly, in that it is the main aim in reading and it is done only in the absence of other more attractive options.

6.2.1.5 Reading to respond to encouragement from others

Reading is encouraged in our house (S8-10/3/07).

When a student says that someone encouraged her and does not add "but, I didn't read" or "but, I ignored her encouragement", I take it as evidence that she responded to that encouragement as a purpose for reading. Much of the following data was given in response to the snapshot survey question: Who in your life encourages you to read?

Responding to encouragement from family

Non-readers struggle to identify someone in their family who encouraged them to read (S1-29/10/06; S6-29/10/06; S18-29/10/06; IN306; IN278), while readers may have responded to encouragement from their mother (S3-29/10/06; S9-29/10/06; S11-29/10/06; S20-29/10/06; S23-29/10/06; S30-29/10/06; S38-29/10/06; S37-29/10/06; S37-29/10/06; S41-29/10/06),

When I was a child my mother brought lots of colorful stories to encourage me to read (J40-12/06; J36-14/12/06),

father (S2-29/10/06; S7-29/10/06; S12-29/10/06; S25-29/10/06; S28-29/10/06; S35-29/10/06; S36-29/10/06; J36-10/12/06; IN96; IN123),

In my home the first encouragement comes from my dad, then my mother (J25-5/12/06);

My dad has a huge influence on me because he always encourages anything for education so, he would bring me articles or books about my major, and, finally, I started to ask him for books instead of him bringing them for me (J34-14/2/07),

both parents (S13-29/10/06; S19-29/10/06; S24-29/10/06; S26-29/10/06; S29-29/10/06; S34-29/10/06), one of whom will often compensate in the absence of the other (S11-29/10/06; J7-18/11/08; S12-29/10/06), grandparents (S34-29/10/06; 14/2/07; IN321), brothers (S21-29/10/06; S16-29/10/06), and other family members (S8-29/10/06; S17-29/10/06; S39-29/10/06). Actions which encouraged students to read include, for example, being read to, being given books as children and having conversations about reading as they got older. Lamya responds to her brother's encouragement to read:

My big brother like to read very much. He always buy books or borrow it from the library and he made [a] room in the home, only for books. He also encourage us to read and take us with him to the bookshop. All of these book are allowed to us to read and I read some of these books; I don't know how many (J21-6/12/06).

When a student is given a book it is seen by her as a form of encouragement to read, particularly when it comes from a family member. In fact, data – particularly from the snapshot surveys - shows that the biggest single action in encouraging reading is bringing students and books closer together. FatimaH was encouraged to read when her mother handed her *The Alchemist*, for example (S4-19/11/06) and she read some pages every night. When Khawla's sister gave her an English book to read she read four to ten pages most nights (S8-3/12/06; 5/12/06; 10/12/06; 17/12/06) and four to ten pages of an Arabic book that her aunt had given her (S8-17/3/07; 17/3/07). Amani's cousin gave her an English book, *The Choice*, which she promptly started to read (S7-3/12/06: 1-3pp; 5/12/06: 1-3pp).

Khawla reads Arabic magazines which she finds at home (S8-19/11/06) and her mother buys English magazines for her and her sisters (S8-14/11/06). Family trips to bookshops and the annual book fair also provide encouragement to read, to which many students respond. Amna's father takes her to the mall whenever she wants to buy a new book, and waits patiently outside in the car while she chooses (IN299-6:15). Basmaa recalls how, by the time she started school, she knew how to read most of the words in her first reading book, thanks to the encouragement she had received at home:

Sometimes my mother used to let me sit on her lap while she was reading the story, so that I could follow with her and see the words and the way we should pronounce them (J23-29/11/06).

Azza responded positively to her sister's direct efforts to try to influence her reading:

A: (IN63-31:16) Now, my sister makes me read for benefit, to benefit me to get more experience

R: Are you responding to the encouragement she's giving you?

A: Yea

Just being in the company of other readers may also serve as encouragement to read:

H: (IN303-7:33) My father also reads novels and books but, he likes the newspaper most because it's recent and talks about the world. I used to see him, because he'd change his glasses to the reading glasses, "Oh, he's reading now".

Najla has similar tastes in reading to her mother and is encouraged by the books she reads, (J34-213/12/06), as is SumayaM:

In my family, my mother likes to read cooking books and other magazines (J39-14/11/07).

Responding to encouragement from teachers

Here, much of my data comes in response to a questionnaire question about what teachers did or are currently doing to encourage students to read. From the time they started school to their first year at university, female Emirati university students may have been taught by between fifteen to twenty different teachers and so, many of my participants as-readers were able to identify at least one teacher who had encouraged them to read (S32-29/10/06; S39-29/10/06; J40-12/12/06; IN96; IN49&88; IN63). At school, some teachers used to arrange regular trips to the school library (J28-10/12/06; J40-12/12/06; QBF116-13/11/07), where they showed students "good books" (QBF117-13/11/07) or read parts of books:

This made us more curious to know more about these topics. Then, we demand to borrow the same books (QBF111-13/11/07).

Some students identify university instructors who talked about reading (QBF129-13/11/07; 49QBF6-7/4/07; IN63; IN96), particularly their own reading (99QBF7-13/11/07; 89QBF9-7/4/07; QBF89-13/11/07) – we saw earlier how a student used to feel jealous of the books that her teacher talked about in class, which served as an indirect form of encouragement for her (QBF15-13/11/07) (ch.5.2.3) – who talked about good or interesting books (QBF16-13/11/07; QBF106-13/11/07; QBF123-13/11/07) “that are worth reading” (S4-12/11/06; QBF99-13/11/07), who recommended books to read (QBFb114-13/11/07; QBF124-13/11/07; QBF126-13/11/07) and told them where to find them (QBF118-13/11/07).

Having the chance to talk about their leisure reading in class also encourages students to read more so that they can talk about it afterwards (and impress their professors). RehamF tries to read the newspaper that her professor recommends so that when he asks questions about general knowledge she might know the answers:

Rm: (IN17-34:58) For example, they would ask a question - it doesn't have to be related to the class - and the girls don't know what to say about it; it's general information. They say: “Well, you should read this book” specific to the topic or, if it's just general stuff they will say: “Read books”.

R: If you were not a reader would that change you to being a reader?

Rm: It depends on the person. I don't know really, because for me I feel kind of shamed really, I'm like, 'I should read' and I go back home (R: and look up that book?) Yea, but the other girls, I don't know how they feel about it.

ReemS read John Gatto's book *Dumbing Us Down* because “Ms Celine recommended it” (S109-6/11/07). Teachers also brought newspapers (QBF78-7/4/07) or books to the classroom (QIL99-13/4/08; QBF99-13/11/07; QBF90-13/11/07):

As Mrs H.did: she brought us a very interesting booklet containing short stories, written by an African woman. The stories often talk about women and marriage. Her stories are very cool because, although they are very short, they contain strong ideas (QBF76-13/11/07); and allowed students time to read in class (QBF90-13/11/07; QBF107-13/11/07; QIL105-13/4/08), exemplified by Farah who describes herself as a very keen reader:

To be honest, I like to read after the reading coffee shop with you (QBF95-7/4/07).

Here, she was referring to a reading club I had set up within my foundation English class, where we read stories online once a week and had refreshments brought to the classroom while we read (ch.1.4.3).

Similarly, Dana recalls another occasion when I turned our weekly advising class, in the general education program, into a reading club which encouraged her to read (QBF88-7/4/07). Teachers also encouraged reading by discussing assigned readings in class (QIL98-13/4/08; QBF98-13/11/07; C420; S87-16/12/07; IN15) and by taking an interest in students' own reading (QBF49-7/4/07):

She gives a file to encourage me to read more and she will read what we write in the file about any reading. Then, she will put her comment. All the time, she sends us emails to tell us to read news (QBF54-13/11/07).

In my opinion, Mrs. Celine is doing a great job in encouraging her students to read in their free time (J23-29/11/06).

Simply researching my students' reading habits encouraged many to read, including some who felt guilty at not having read so that they could write it in our weekly snapshot surveys (C32-7/4/07; C32; IN63):

Ms. Celine when you started your research it made me interested in reading. I have no idea why, but it did (J34-14/2/07).

Ms. Celine's questionnaires about reading made me aware of how much I need, I miss reading (QBF98-13/11/07),

My Miss encouraged me by her research paper about reading and that enthused me as to how important reading is (QBF128-13/11/07).

During my interview with Badira, as I reflected back to her, her reasons for not reading *Binat Jeddah*, she decided:

B: (IN301-33:06) Now, I'm gonna go and read it, looks like it.

Dana, too, was encouraged by my research:

I will try to read a minimum of twenty minutes daily, after your encouragement (S88-22/4/07), and she wrote in her reading journal:

I have a teacher who encourages me a lot and I really like reading from her (J88-14/10/08).

Dana *responded* to my encouragement but her liking for reading was generated directly through her chosen reading experiences. Teachers cannot directly generate liking for reading in a student, although students may believe that they can and may generously credit them and others with doing so. Liking for reading comes through their reading experiences.

The overwhelming response from my respondents about a teacher who encouraged them to read shows their desire for teachers to speak to them about reading and books, and to make time for them to read. Simply telling students to read is not encouragement if students do not or cannot respond as they would like to. Non-reader Salha, recalls that the teachers in her school used to tell them to read extra books

outside of class and to use the school library (IN278-7:40), but, when students complained that the books, there, were for children, teachers replied: “What can we do? This is our library” (IN278-8:00). This was not taken as a form of encouragement because the students were unable to respond and needed a further response from the teacher which did not come. Indeed, they may have learned that out-of-school reading is really not that important, which conflicts with their belief that teachers should “help me to realize the importance of reading” (QBF23-13/11/07), as a means of encouragement. This sentence has great significance for my next chapter: the reading journey and later in this chapter, I will look in more detail at the construct of encouragement because it is a critical factor in helping students become readers.

Students are never too old or independent to welcome suggestions from their teachers in choosing books. Amani, for example, frequently passed by my office to talk about books and ask for advice on what to read and she took written notes, so that she could respond to my encouragement which included telling her about the latest bookshop that had opened, nearby, for example (C7-1/10/07). No matter how small, no help or suggestion on the part of a teacher is inconsequential because, to our students, it shows that we care about their reading, which they find most encouraging.

Responding to encouragement from friends

Friends often exchange reading materials with each other which encourages reading (S78-4/12/07; S8-31/10/06) and such encouragement has a very strong effect on students’ reading habits (S15-29/10/06; J34-13/12/06; IN15):

My peers at the university encourage me to read ... they always read books (J34-13/12/06).

It seems clear that students recommend items only if they consider them worthwhile:

R: (IN17-11:17) Do you ever talk to your friends about your reading?

Rm: If I read a really good book, yea, like, this book about Souad, *Burned Alive*, I have told everybody about it. They are like, “Really? Do you think I should read it? I tell them, “Definitely!”

R: So you encourage people to read?

Rm: Only if I really, really like the book.

R: Do any of your friends do what you do and say: “I’ve read this book you’ve got to read it”?

Rm: I have one friend that does that.

Simply being in the company of friends who read may encourage students to read. We saw that Amna was encouraged to read by the presence of her “library buddies (IN299-24:34) (ch.5.5.3).

Friends are also likely to use a more direct form of encouragement, as we saw earlier when RehamE's friend simply told her to "read this; read this" (ch.5.2.3.2):

Re: (IN339-35:13) When I started to go to the university in level eight [English foundation] you know, because of the pressure of the university and everything, I stopped reading. I told her I have many books that I want to read but I don't find the time ... She encouraged me to read.

Such short, direct approaches are likely to work between friends and peers but parents and teachers have to invest more time. Amani bought and read *The Alchemist* at the recommendation of a friend (S7-5/11/06; 12/11/06; 14/11/06), followed by her own research on the Internet but yet, Amna had ignored her father's recommendation to read the same book in Arabic (ch.5.2.3.4). Friends usually tell each other about websites which they like, which encourages them to read them (S9-29/10/06; S10-29/10/06; S11-12/11/06) and they may decide to read the same book so as to discuss it later (J34-14/2/07) in their own informal reading club. Seham prefers to read in English but would read in Arabic "if everyone, like, a lot of people tell me: 'It's good, read it', I will" (IN321-2:16). In other words, she would read in Arabic to respond to encouragement from others.

6.2.1.6 Reading for fun

Fun is important to all young people, particularly in their leisure activities and seeking fun is a purpose in itself. Female Emirati university students-as-readers read regularly for fun (S35-24/12/06; S39-24/12/06; IN338-21:15; J10). Maisa's first reason for reading is for fun:

First of all, I read for fun, especially if I find an interesting article or story, I can't stop myself from reading it. For example, I remember last time when I read this novel written in Arabic by Amenah AlMansori, called *Aynaaki Ya Hamza* (transl. *Your Eyes, Hamza*). I saw it on my brother desk and he got it as a gift from his wife. I took it and started to read it. Once I started, I couldn't stop! I took four continuous hours to read the whole novel. I know that [I] am not that kind of person who likes to read a lot, but I believe that when I like the subject that [I] am reading, then, I won't stop reading at all! So, fun, fun, fun is the most important thing for me which made me a reader (J10-30/3/2007).

Basmaa combines her enjoyment of reading with the benefits she knows she will gain from it:

One of the favourite things that I love to do in my free time is reading. Reading to me is like a beautiful and a fun way to learn (J23-29/11/06).

Here, we see that students view reading as a way of learning while also having fun. Readers choose to read as a way of having the fun they seek, while also gaining benefit from it.

6.2.1.7 *Reading to escape*

The desire to escape into a good book is a strong purpose for reading, something students do frequently.

Reading ... helps me get away from this world we live in. It helps me escape to another world where anything can happen, where dragons and magic exist and, because of this, I read whenever the opportunity arises (J28-13/12/06).

Reading allows me to escape reality, even for a short period of time. It's where you can put yourself in another world and in another person's shoes, and that is the main reason why I like reading. Reading a book gives you a chance to live many lives and have many experiences, while sitting in a couch or lying in bed (J297-3/4/2010).

Reading is my passion in life. Since I was a little girl I did not care if the story that I am reading has any illustrations or any pictures as long as I can imagine anything I want (J51-14/1108).

Students' purposes for reading constitute a conscious decision to read, they are outcomes-focused and centred round a belief that reading will achieve a particular purpose, they are identified by both readers and non-readers and are therefore, of limited importance in the formation of a reading habit. In my next section I will look at students' *qana'a*, for reading.

6.2.2 *Qana'a for reading*

I will present the *qana'a* which emerged from my data and then look at their role in the overall development of a reading habit. The concept of *qana'a* (ch.6.2) emerged from my participants' reasons for reading as distinct from their purposes for reading and they refer to wanting, being interested, liking and feeling encouraged, which are very closely interconnected. Students' definition of leisure reading is reading that they do because of those positive affective factors (IN123; ch.4.3.3), which makes it redundant to say that students leisure read because they want to, for example, because wanting is subsumed in the concept leisure reading. If we say that a student reads because she likes to read, this denotes it as leisure reading. Therefore, as in the previous section, I will use the word reading, instead of leisure reading, because its reason or *qana'a* denotes it as leisure reading.

Students who are readers have discovered the many benefits which come from their reading and these include many which are not identified at the outset as purposes for reading. For example, Ameera compares herself now with the way she was before becoming a reader:

A: (IN13-12:08) Now, I felt like, from reading, I started to be a patient person

R: Oh, so before, maybe, you were impatient?

A: No, I wasn't patient at all but now, like, I can wait; I can listen to people if they talk to me. I can sometimes change my mind about something.

(30:55) You know people who be in stress, it's because they don't read, I do believe in this.

(30:03) Reading makes me discover lots of new things, like, I read about stuff, which is I never know.

This suggests that these are benefits that Ameera recognizes from her reading as a whole rather than something she set out to achieve from the start. Once a reader has identified these benefits she may subconsciously expect to receive them every time she reads but they may not be the driving force behind her decision to read. It is as if she knows at many levels – cognitive, affective and more - that when she reads “good things will happen” (Krashen, 2004).

6.2.2.1 Female Emirati university students read because they want to

When students say that they *want* to read they mean that they want for themselves, everything that comes from engaging in a text, including its benefits and the enjoyment it provides. It is a selfish aspiration that is expressed in many different ways in my data, including regretting a lack of time for reading (IN17; IN229; QBF2-7/4/07), organizing time to include reading in busy schedules (IN123), planning to read in the future (IN15; IN17; IN294), talking about the items they read, borrowing books from friends (C7; C228; IN339), searching online for information about books that they might like (IN299; IN303), reading at the risk of getting caught (IN299), carrying a book around (IN322; IN339), being excited by just thinking about books (IN303), going to great lengths to find a book they want (IN 322) and being distinct from those who do not want to read. If, as Dewey (1922. p.30) points out, we cannot have the idea of something and therefore cannot want it unless we experience it, for students to want to read it must start with their reading experiences.

6.2.2.2 Female Emirati university students read out of interest

Students read for leisure because they are interested. In section 5.5, we saw how students pick their reading items according to their *specific* interests but here interest is taken as general interest in reading itself. A student who is interested in reading is ready to direct her attention toward it and to listen to others when they discuss books that they have read. Interest may increase or give rise to liking and wanting to read. A student's interest in reading may be observed in her rereading a favourite book (IN17; IN63; IN294) or being so absorbed that she may read non-stop (IN123; IN15) and become “lost in a book” (Nell, 1988b). In spite of the prevalence of multimedia, my participants-as-readers remain interested in reading and will often choose to read a text over other alternatives. Samya(M), for example, found an audio file of Arabic poetry on the Internet, but, chose to read the text instead of listening to it

(J39-14/1/07). Reading on the Internet provides great scope for students to read for both particular and general interest (S35 -19/11/06; 17/11/06).

Interest in reading is triggered by students' reading-related experiences and as we will see in the next chapter, this signals the start of her reading journey (ch.7.2). General interest may yet preclude certain topics or genres such as romance, horror stories or novels so that a student's interest in reading, therefore, is accompanied by implicit conditions that she has no interest in reading certain items. (This concept is developed further in ch.6.2.2.5). We saw this in Shamsa's earlier lack of interest in reading novels, for example (INI294-5:17).

6.2.2.3 Female Emirati university students read because they like it

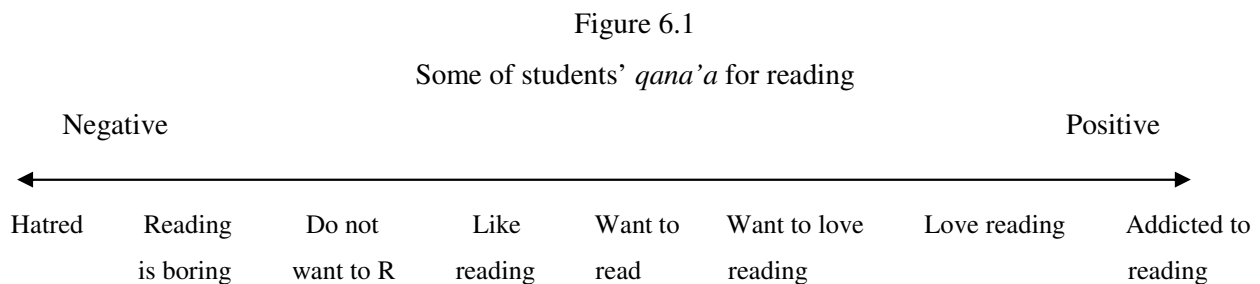
Students read for leisure because they like reading; they enjoy actually doing it or something related to it or both (IN13; IN123; IN15; IN17; IN303). Liking may be described by students as preferring reading to some other activity, enjoying a certain book, feeling happy with their reading and the fact that they are readers (IN17), viewing certain books as companions or friends (C7; IN294) and being distinct from those who do not like to read (IN96; IN294; IN303). They may express it thus:

I like to read in my free time (J25-6/12/06).

I am one of these people who like to read a lot (J22-6/12/06).

In school, I liked to read anything, but, not related to the school's books because I think that they are boring (J36-6/12/06).

or as, loving and being addicted to it (IN96; IN13; J28-28/3/07). Degrees of liking may be placed on an evaluative bipolar continuum (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p.13) using data samples (See Figure 6.1):



Students may also relate their liking of reading to their underlying beliefs about it:

I like to read newspapers because it makes me knowing what is going on around the world and in our country. Also, I like to read kinds of books that have topics I love to know more about (J22-6/12/06).

I like reading because I'd like to live with the story and imagine the people in the story (J30-13/12/06).

or to a particular book:

I like the book that my aunt's son wrote. It's short stories about the history of Qatar (J21-13/6/06).

HaleemaY links her reasons for liking reading to different aspects of the author's craft:

I love reading for many reasons. First, you will always learn a lot by reading a book. Also, books can contain a lot of quotes and writing that can have a great influence on your behavior and thinking. I really appreciate good writing, whatever genre it is. I read once that authors write to create a new world that they can escape to when they can't handle the real world (J297-3/4/2010).

She explained that the author's creation also allows its reader to escape into other worlds (ch.6.2.1.7) which is the main reason why she likes reading. Here, Haleema's liking for reading is expressed as being tied to her beliefs about it and these are inextricably linked to her reading-related experiences. Similarly, Alaa loves reading because:

It's like reading opens up a new world (C231-22/12/09).

They share the belief about reading that it enables them to escape or to experience other worlds.

Liking may be perceived as being tied to certain circumstances as when Seham explains: "I think if I leave university I will love it again; if I don't, I won't" (IN321-36:05). Liking to read may also define a "real reader", according to Seham who believes that "real" reading is reading for the love of reading itself rather than for specific purposes (IN321-32:22) (ch.4.3.1). It includes preferring to read a book than to watch its movie or before watching the movie (ch.4.3.1) and making time to enjoy it by getting assignments done early in the week, (IN13; IN123) or by reading during breaks at university, whenever possible (IN339).

6.2.2.4 Female Emirati university students read because they feel encouraged

Feeling encouraged to read, is a reason or *qana'a* distinct from the purpose for reading identified earlier: to respond to encouragement. It may result from many contributing factors, including enjoyment of reading and the actions of others. I will now clarify the theoretical construct of encouragement that

emerged from my data analysis. Those who are concerned about encouraging students to read may believe that they have encouraged them when they tell them to go and read but encouragement is much more.

It starts with an invitation to students, which could include reading in front of them, buying or lending them books, placing books in the environment, talking about reading, offering incentives, creating a reading atmosphere, organizing trips to book fairs or bookshops, offering book vouchers to purchase books, reading to a class, setting up a reading club, carrying out research on students' reading habits, displaying books in one's office, recommending books to read, setting a time for in-class silent reading, adopting a positive attitude toward reading - all of which are present in my data - and many, many more. A student's response to that invitation provides a purpose for her to read and it must, in turn, be followed by the teacher's (or inviter's) response to her response, and so on, until the reader *feels* encouraged to read, which thereby, becomes a *qana'a* for reading. (Younger children are likely to feel encouraged by their reading-related experiences without identifying the purpose of responding to encouragement).

To illustrate, we can look at non-reader Salha's secondary school teacher who issued an invitation to read to her students:

R: (IN278-7:19) In school, did any of the English or Arabic teachers say to you, you should read?

S: Yea ...

R: and when they said you should read, did they mean your textbook or outside ...?

S: Outside, eh, stories.

R: Did they tell you where to get them?

S: They said, "Go to the library".

R: The school library?

S: Yea, and we always said, "Miss, this is for children," but, they said, "Read it, you will improve. What can we do? This is our library!"

In this exchange, the teacher may have believed that she was encouraging her students to read when she issued the invitation as an instruction. Her students' response (not given) is likely to have been to ask: "Where shall we get the books, Miss?" The teacher's response is another instruction: "Go to the library", to which the students' response suggests that the books there are not likely to encourage secondary school students to read. In fact, this is Salha's view of their school library:

S: (IN278-4:34) Eh, our library it's, eh, a silly one, really! Eh, it only contains books for children and, eh, books for, eh, Arabic teachers and some encyclopedias.

R: So, was it always open?

S: No, because the librarian always stay at the café ... yea! (when she saw my surprise) really!
She was not taking care of her responsibilities, yea!

Salha went there only to use encyclopedias for her assignments (reading for a purpose), and claims to hate reading except for studying.

In contrast, we saw earlier, how Ameera's teacher encouraged her to reread the class-assigned texts (about the Greeks) until she understood them and she became a reader as a result. This is not to suggest that the same approach would lead to reading in all similar cases, but that the person who is encouraging the student needs to respond to the would-be reader's responses, which can vary from reader to reader. The emerging theory suggests that encouragement to read is a *series* of reading-related actions - rather than one solitary instruction - which takes into consideration the students' circumstances, preferences and responses. We can test it in the following scenario, which followed Dana's announcement that she hates reading:

R: (IN49&88-23:42) What do you think teachers can do to encourage you ... to like reading?

N: Maybe, if me and, I make a, eh, eh, encourage each other to read this part for this day, we will do that.

As her teacher, my response was to turn our weekly advising class into a reading club for which Dana chose the book *How to Win Friends and Influence people* by Dale Carnegie, for all fourteen students to read. We met weekly for class over coffee and snacks and did as she had suggested, but, students' responses - including Dana's - were varied. My response was to continue to read and discuss excerpts in class, relating it to their needs (for example, how to influence one's teacher!), until the club petered out at the end of the semester. Dana and I continued to have conversations about reading and, over a year later, she came to tell me that she was reading Shaikh Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum's book, *Ru'eeati*, (transl., *My Vision*) in Arabic. She held it as if it were a very precious object, proudly showing me its beautiful binding and velvet cover and told me that I had encouraged her to read. More recently, over three years later, she had invited a speaker to the university and proceeded to tell him that this teacher had made her love reading. Only she and I fully understood the construct of encouragement that had unfolded between us and that still continues.

An onlooker might say, "Well, it's simply just doing whatever it takes to ensure that students read". The question, until now, was: "What did we need to do; what did encouragement look like?" Our view of encouragement consisted of telling students to read and expecting them to do so. The encouragement Dana got was in the form of a series of responses, starting with her response to my interest in her reading

habits (I had also earlier interviewed her for my research – IN49&88), followed by my response to her response, and so on, until reading took place and beyond.

We can also test the emerging theory in the following data sample from a former student of mine, KhatimaO, whom I had not seen for almost two years. Although we were both rushing to our respective classes, she took the time to stop and say that she was really grateful to me for encouraging her to read when I was her teacher, because she now reads for leisure. I asked her to email me and tell me what she had just said, so that I could use it in my research:

It is a long since I saw you I doesn't like reading too much but you're the one who teach me the importance and the enjoyment of reading. You always motivate me to read. I remember in one class in level eight [English foundation program], you asked us to write our story of reading. The last sentence I wrote in the paragraph was: "Now, I try hard to improve my reading skills and know the enjoyment of reading, with help from my English teacher". Then you wrote near this sentence: "I am sure you will succeed". I actually succeeded. For that time I start reading some books and story. I read *Anna Karenina*, *Jane Ayer*, *The Seven Habits for Highly Effective Teenagers*, *The Alchemist* and *Memories of a Geisha*. I know it is few books, but, I think it is great achievement for person who never read before. Now, I am working on improve my reading. I will be glad if you can give some names of books that can be helpful for me as the beginner reader. I actually kept that piece of paper from level eight with me, "Story of Reading". You really inspired me, thank you a lot (C92-3/3/2008).

I had extended several reading invitations to my students to write their Story of Reading and KhatimaO was one of many who responded. She recalls that I responded to her response and she, in turn, responded by reading several books and when we met, it was as if we were continuing a conversation which we had started just recently. This is further evidence for the construct of encouragement as a series of reading-related actions, as responses to actions and their responses, which continues until reading takes place and even long after that. It closely resembles the construct of a continuous conversation in which two speakers take turns listening and responding to each other and are *attentive* to each other. It may have interruptions but it can be continued at will and has an indefinite life span. The student feels encouraged to read along the way and, therefore, has a *qana'a* for reading which may last her a lifetime.

Further evidence of encouragement as a continuous dialogue can be seen in the following data sample. As I walked with Ameera to the room in which our interview would take place, she referred to my question

of some weeks earlier, about how we, at the university, could encourage students – including herself - to read. She picked up the thread of conversation as easily and as naturally as if we had only just discussed it the day before, whereas, it had been so long ago that I had forgotten about it (as evidenced by my non-committal “Mhmm”). It carried on into the start of our interview:

R: (IN13-0:01) What is the great idea?

A: The great idea, like, we get readings, and eh, we choose picture for it, something that’s related to the same story ... because some students they get bored when they read, only reading without pictures, and some students they found it interesting, so, she [editor of the in-house magazine] really liked the idea and she told me that they’re working on a project so, when we’re done, insha’allah we’ll, eh, I’m gonna contact you and eh, tell you about it.

R: It’s an idea *you* have or a group of you have?

A: It’s an idea I have, which I told you in the spring holiday.

R: Mhm.

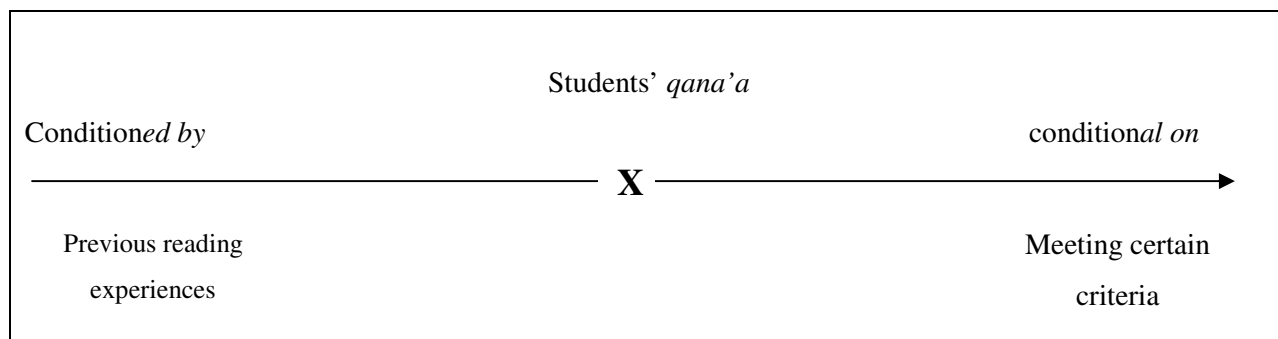
A: It’s the same idea. We set, like, stories, something, stories that are related to what we’re studying in the university, not something like, something out of the subject, no. Something interesting which girls can find some benefits of it, which can help.

In the data samples above, we can see how our conversations about reading continue to be very real and vivid for my respondents, regardless of the time which has elapsed, whether it was Najla shouting after me along the corridor that she had read seven books in the summer holiday or Sawsan looking for “the *It* book” in my office, two months after she had discovered I had it, and, two years after she had seen a school friend reading it and had decided that she wanted to read it. One difference between this construct and a conversation is that responses are not limited to talk but include any type of positive reading-related actions. Successful encouragement consists of an invitation, the student responds in her way, the inviter responds to her response and so on until the student reads, but, it need not stop there. Feeling encouraged to read, may stem from any reading-related activities, some of which I listed earlier. It is clear from my data that, in the early years, family members play a key role in making students feel encouraged to read.

6.2.2.5 *The conditional properties of qana’a*

Two final points about *qana’a* are that they have been conditioned by students’ past reading-related experiences and that they are conditional on certain factors being in place, which positions them as follows (See Figure 6.2):

Figure 6.2



My participants who are readers had their interest in reading triggered as children. Shamsa has liked reading since she was a child, thanks to her mother reading to her every night and filling her purple bag with books for school and for fun:

S: (IN294-22:54) Books were my friends ... I stayed reading, reading, reading.

Children are likely to accept most experiences that come from their parents and teachers, especially if they are pleasant but young adults may choose to reject such overtures (IN123; IN303; IN301), because of two factors which are largely absent during early childhood: free will and pre-conceptions about reading. Young adults exercise their free will in deciding whether or not to engage in reading experiences created or recommended by parents or teachers, and they may struggle to alter their pre-conceptions about reading. Dana, for example, ignored her secondary school teacher's advice to read (IN49&88) and Najla resisted her grandfather's efforts to get her to read (J34). It was only when they were both in their first year at university that they responded to encouragement while Badira had even forgotten that her father used to try to encourage her to read:

B: (IN301-35:44) Yea, he used to, you know, tell us: "You gotta read more to understand the world better and watch news." We didn't care, except for my biggest brother.

Ameera (IN13) and Inas (IN49&88) both said: "I want to love reading", which shows students' inability to will themselves to love reading or to change their conditioned preconceptions about it on their own. My participants' positive *qana'a* were formed, not at will, but, after they had engaged in enjoyable reading experiences which resulted in an internal realization about reading. Only through reading experiences can *qana'a* be re-conditioned and this is more complex in older students, which indicates the need to establish reading habits while young.

The second condition-related property is that while they may be expressed as positive or negative, *qana'a* are always conditional on certain factors being in place. Students who say “I do not like to read” or “I hate reading” are likely to have made a long-term decision not to read. However, on further probing they show a possibility of being open to persuasion or encouragement with comments such as “It depends”, “If the story is good”, “If I have time”, “If I really want to”, “If it interests me”, or, “If I get benefit from it”. For example, non-reader Salha is definite that she hates reading books or is she? She intimated that if the topic of a book was interesting she might *read* it after stating: “I hate reading ... all kinds of books” (IN278-1:20) (ch.4.3.3).

R: (IN278-12:44) Do you ever go to a bookshop?

S: No, never

R: Do you feel you'd like to?

S: Maybe, if I have free time

She admits to enjoying reading romance stories and she bought one on our class trip to a nearby bookshop. She prefers to read books in English rather than in Arabic, so as to improve her language. Her *qana'a*, although expressed negatively, are conditional on certain criteria being met, such as, time to read, and interesting items. We also recall that she reads the subtitles on the *Anime* television series and translates them into Arabic for her sister (ch.4.3.2), whereby she is actually reading for two people simultaneously ... although she hates reading.

Inas also hates reading but said that if there was a book that she really wanted to read she would read it (IN49&88). We saw, earlier, that she read a book in her family sitting-room and shared extracts with her family (ch.5.5.3). At the time of our interview, Dana's *qana'a* for reading was clearly tied to the assigned chapter in her global studies textbook that she was struggling to read. She volunteered:

N: (IN49&88-35:09) I think, in this week, I hate the reading. ... because the global book.

The previous week she was “free from the reading” – meaning the very difficult global studies book - and so, she read magazines and newspapers:

R: (IN49&88-37:00) Do you think that next week you will like it more?

N: (Laughs) depend

I: If she have global she didn't [won't] like it.

Here, Inas picks up and confirms the conditional element of Dana's attitude toward reading: that it depends on what she has to read.

For positive *qana'a* holders, the long-term decision to read has already been made from the time they became hooked on reading. Preceding each short-term decision to read the reader engages in a lot of

mainly subconscious-level activity such as, wondering about how interesting the topic might be (IN17), recalling a review she read (IN299) or a conversation she had with her friend (IN15) about the text and many other such considerations. When readers claim to love reading it is implicitly understood to be conditional on certain factors being in place such as, the level of difficulty of the text, the topic, the language it is written in, the genre and more (ch.5.2). In other words, when a student says that she likes reading she means that she likes reading as long as it is what she likes to read. Marwa's entry in her snapshot survey: "I hate reading" led to my discovery that this is true under certain conditions: being obliged to read what she does not want to read, and reading in Arabic (ch.4.3.1). She states: "I like it when *I* find the things *I* like to read" (IN123-36:48). We also saw how Shamsa's love of reading earlier excluded novels.

6.2.3 Purposes, *qana'a* and beliefs about reading

Having identified students' reasons for reading I now had to understand how purposes, *qana'a* and beliefs relate to each other. Student as-reader expresses her *qana'a* for reading as primary/overall reasons for reading – she reads because she likes to read - but, if pressed for an explanation as to why she likes to read she may extol its many benefits and express them as purposes for reading. Earlier in my analysis, this suggested that purposes - which stem from beliefs - generate *qana'a* but that did not fit my data because non-readers, too, identify some purposes for reading. Also, students' main reasons for reading appeared to be that they like it, are interested in it, want to read and feel encouraged to read, not that they read for specific purposes. They presented purposes as secondary reasons simply to answer my probing question as to why they like reading and to rationalize what they almost never have to rationalize to themselves. It was clear from the way they talked that they could have given any of an infinite number of purposes for reading and that they continue to find more reasons for reading as they read. When I asked Shawq why she likes reading she replied by telling me the story of how she became a reader (IN96) which suggests that students read because they have become readers, which I will look at in the next chapter.

I solicited the help of the literature on attitudes, beliefs and affect to help loosen my analytical straightjacket and I selected some hypotheses to test on my emerging concepts. These included Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) view that one's affect stems from beliefs about an object based on the information one has about it; that beliefs precede affect (ch.1, p.14) and, more recently, their reiteration of a "reasoned action" approach to behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005, p.174). My students as-readers' long-term decision to read was taken some time ago and now they approach it almost without thinking, instinctively, so it is clear that they do not engage in laborious rationalizing every time they want to read. Hume's (1739; 2006) belief that reason must be slave to the passions seemed to fit my data as did Zajonc's (1980,

p.172) view that affect may precede belief, that it may be independent of cognition (p.159) and is faster and stronger than it because nobody can convince someone that they do not like what they like. It was clear from my data that my students developed their interest in or liking for reading independently of their beliefs about it, which means that their *qana'a* must have been formed directly from their reading experiences. The importance of affect is also evident in Pascal's (1958) views on beliefs:

We must get an easier belief, which is that of custom, which ... makes us believe things, and inclines all our powers to this belief ... It is not enough to believe only by force of conviction, when the automaton is inclined to believe the contrary (252).

Non-readers' belief that reading is important is not sufficient to form a reading habit; they cannot will themselves to like it. Inas's "I hope I like reading" (IN49&88-23:27) is evidence that her belief was not sufficient to bring about a love of reading.

Both our parts must be made to believe, the mind by reasons which it is sufficient to have seen once in a lifetime, and the automaton by custom, and by not allowing it to incline to the contrary (Pascal, 1958, 252).

In other words, once students have identified purposes for reading (its benefits, the enjoyment it gives, etc) they need never again examine their beliefs about it.

The reason acts slowly, with so many examinations, and on so many principles, which must be always present, that at every hour it falls asleep, or wanders, through want of having all its principles present. Feeling does not act thus; it acts in a moment, and is always ready to act. We must then put our faith in feeling (ibid).

Each time a student wishes to read she does not activate her cognition or belief because it takes time but her habituated feelings are quicker and more reliable in bringing about a reading event as they are readily available to her.

A student's early reading-related experiences include being frequently read to, watching close family members enjoying reading and serving as reading role models, having access to interesting books and more. We saw many examples of this in the previous chapter. Non-readers are unlikely to identify any reading role models from their experiences either at home or at school (4.3.2). Students' reading experiences are the base from which they form their reading *qana'a* and their beliefs about reading. What makes their *qana'a* supreme as reasons for reading is that they are a form of affective, experiential knowledge rather than simply beliefs about reading whereby students have come to know reading as something they love. This knowing or way of knowing has come through direct experiences of reading and not, merely through sitting in the library looking at the books in the distance, for example (IN49&88).

The reading-related experiences of students as-readers resulted in them having positive *qana'a* for reading while non-readers' experiences resulted in them having negative *qana'a*, both of which are always conditional, as we saw earlier. Their experiences also resulted in students forming beliefs about reading as they became older and more cognitively aware. To suggest that students' beliefs about reading are affected by their *qana'a* is to go against much of the literature on the subject but that proposition emerged from my data. Although Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) still maintain that behavior is largely guided by "beliefs, attitudes, and intentions" (p.174) they recognize "the possibility that influence can also flow from attitudes and behaviors to beliefs" (ibid, p.174). There is little evidence in my data to show that students' beliefs generate their *qana'a*; they do not decide that they love reading because they believe it to be useful. It may be that they have discovered its usefulness and benefits as a result of their loving it but it seems likely that the relationship is the reverse. In other words, because a student loves to read, she reads extensively which may either generate or confirm her beliefs about reading. Perhaps it is, as Ajzen and Fishbein (2005, p.208) suggest about emotions, that students' *qana'a* activate their beliefs about reading whenever they are required.

6.3 Summary

Both readers and non-readers among my participants identify specific purposes for reading, which are outcomes-focused and last only until a purpose has been achieved but while non-readers identify only two main purposes, readers identify many more. Readers also have positive *qana'a* for reading which serve as the distinguishing factor between them and non-readers and their importance is underscored by the fact that they feature in students' conceptualization of leisure reading. Reading for purposes alone does not result in students reading for leisure. The view of *qana'a* as being either positive or negative was replaced in my data analysis by a more complex view of it as being both conditioned by students' earlier reading experiences and conditional on certain factors being met in their future experiences.

Here, we see students actively doing and talking reading culture and employing the related Discourses (ch.2.4.3). Negotiated reading culture is evident in Badira's comment: "*Now, I'm gonna go and read it, looks like*" (IN301) when I reflected her previous comments to her, and also in Dana's statement: "*I will try to read ... after your encouragement*" (INJ88), (ch.6.2.1.5). This sense of negotiated reading culture implies that students are actively involved in determining their reading habits. In contrast, the Reading or Cultural Passport Award which is run through the schools every year (ch.6.2.1.2) has more elements of prescribed culture as it stipulates the number of books that students should read, their purposes for doing so and the range of categories from which they should choose them.

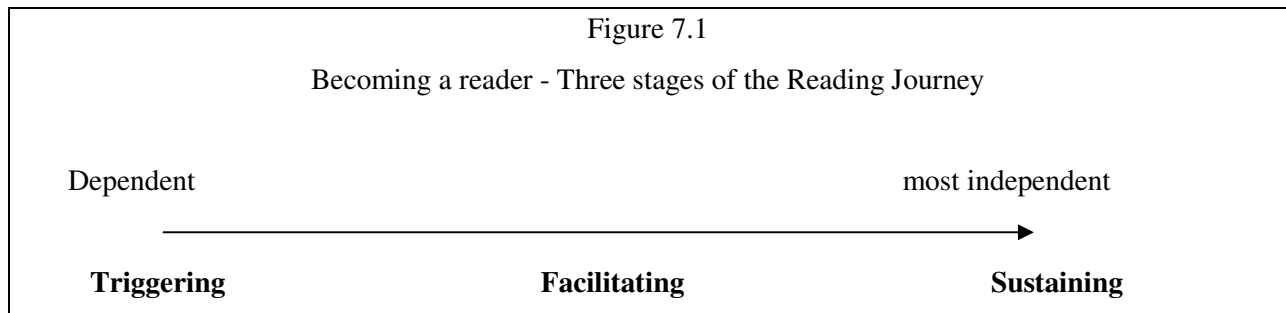
My wish to know why some students have developed positive *qana'a* toward reading and some have not takes me to the next chapter which looks at how my participants-as-readers became readers and builds on the theorization which was started in this and in previous chapters.

CHAPTER 7 – STUDENTS’ READING JOURNEYS

We must change *what* is to be done into a *how*, the means whereby. The end thus re-appears as a series of “what nexts”, and the what next of chief importance is the one nearest the present state of the one acting. Only as the end is converted into means is it definitely conceived, or intellectually defined, to say nothing of being executable (Dewey, 1922, p.36).

7.1 Introduction

The tantalizing question of why some students read for leisure and others do not, has been the main driving force of my investigation and it comes to a conclusion in this chapter. As my respondents were answering my questions about reading it became clear that most were answering as readers, which suggests that they read because they have become readers. This brought new insights into my investigation, suggesting a process of becoming and the acquisition of a reader identity, which, it was hoped would provide a theoretical lens through which to view underlying patterns in the data. In this section, I will suggest a three-stage theoretical construct of an Emirati university student’s reading journey as it emerged from my data, during which she becomes increasingly independent. The three stages are: a triggering stage, a facilitating stage, and a sustaining stage (See Figure 7.1).



I will now look at each stage and its properties together with some of the data which gave rise to it. I will specify the language in which students read only when it is relevant and adds to the analysis.

7.2 The triggering stage: a student’s interest in reading is triggered

The key component of this stage is a realization about reading as something desirable. Most of my participants who are readers started their reading journeys in their childhood, while, others started later including their first year at university. During the triggering stage, a student comes to realize something good about reading as an internal response to an external factor, in which she apprehends reading not just

intellectually but also emotionally. This concept was confirmed by HeyamH who, when asked in a questionnaire: What could a teacher do to encourage you to read? answered that she should help her to “realize the importance of reading” (QBF26-13/11/07). This suggests that she already knows at an intellectual level that reading is important but that she wants to realize it on another level, to know in a way that involves all or more of her and not just her intellect. She wants to *experience* and live the knowledge she has about reading; she wants to experience reading. Based on my theoretical construct, as a non-reader HeyamH was expressing her desire to start her reading journey or, in other words, to become a reader. Asra answered:

My Miss from 120 encouraged me by her research paper about reading and that enthused me as to how important reading is (QBF128-13/11/07)

This suggests that Asra came to realize how important reading is as a result of my research. The events which bring about this realization may vary widely and may differ for each student. The would-be reader’s interest may have been triggered by having stories told or read to her by family members or teachers, having access to interesting and colorful books, watching others read, or by any of a myriad of reading-related actions. Among female Emirati university students who became readers, those who had stories read to them as children or who handled picture books (IN303; IN299; IN321; IN322; IN294; IN321-5:37; J28; J51), soon realized how interesting and exciting books and reading can be. While they may not have formed or been aware of their beliefs about reading while young, they would have realized how they felt about what they were experiencing. As a result of Shamsa’s mother reading to her (in Arabic) until her sister came along when she was five, for example, she realized how exciting reading was, before she started kindergarten (IN294-20:35). Marwa(Y) remembers how her mother triggered her interest in reading:

In my childhood my mother used to read to me, even though I didn’t know reading, but, I’d like when someone read to me with changing his voice and actions. She read to me [in the] afternoon usually (J30-14/12/06).

The above-mentioned actions may have been purposely aimed at encouraging these young students to read, but, many students also became interested in reading by observing others enjoying reading (IN15; J93). Wardha was inspired by watching her mother reading:

The love of reading started with me since I was a small kid and that was because of my mother who I always saw her reading (J93-20/5/2008).

Farah used to mimic her father’s reading behavior:

I was enjoying the way of how my father was reading the newspaper, so, I was running to my room with the newspaper in my hand and standing in front of the mirror and started to imitate him and the way of reading the news. From that time I started reading (J95-7/5/07).

It is likely that Alanoud's interest in reading (in Arabic) may have been triggered by watching her sister reading her Arabic comic book:

When I was child, my father used to buy two copy of *Majid* magazine, one copy for me and the other for my older sister because each one of us wanted to read first, even [‘though] I was not able to read in a good and fast way. I always spell the words and ask the others to read the words for me. I was in grade one and she were in grade four and I was always like to do like her. So, I became reading that magazine every week on Wednesday, until the secondary school. It is really an excellent magazine. ... Most of my reading and writing and maybe all of them were in Arabic (J22-8/12/2006).

As we can see from this clip, a triggering stage is language specific. Alanoud's interest in reading was triggered in Arabic initially, not in English.

All of the above are examples of encouragement offered by parents to their children, which helped to trigger their interest in reading. Teachers, too, played a role in encouraging students to read, particularly in private international schools. There, students as young as kindergarten or grade one, had their interest in reading triggered by teachers reading aloud to them (J25-29/11/06) and letting them ‘read’ on their own (IN322-8:25; IN17-3:45), as we saw earlier with RehamF:

Rm: (IN17-4:04) I really loved the way they, like, make you, like, want to read,

Hana, too recalls how, in fourth grade at school, the teacher used to read stories to the class:

H: (IN303-1:06) When our teacher started telling us stories from the book, I wanted to read these books and I borrowed them from the teacher. After I read them, they were interesting. I liked them, so, I told my mother to buy story books, only with the big drawings.

Reminding us of the diverse nature of students' reading experiences many had their interest triggered by neither parents nor teachers. Shawq was also in fourth grade, when she had her interest in reading triggered in her home but in a different manner:

My personal story was, once my father invited a Pakistani family to have dinner with us, a few years back. Their daughter was as old as I was back then. She started our conversation talking about books, which authors she liked and the books she's eager to read. I did not know how to respond except with silence. I felt ashamed of how little I knew of the book world [*trigger*]. The

next day, I remember telling my father that he should take me to a bookstore and buy his daughters books [*facilitator*]. Since then, I believe, I became a keen reader (J96-29/10/08).

Coming face-to-face with a peer, nine-year-old Shawq realized both that reading was something desirable and a feeling of shame at her lack of knowledge about books which rendered her unable to hold up her end of the conversation. She experienced a strong realization about reading on a level far greater than just that it is important, but one which encompassed all of her feelings, desires and thoughts. I label such realizations, *triggers*, because they trigger an awareness or desire in the would-be reader.

The following data clips show students starting their reading journeys when they were older, some in secondary school and others in university. As a result of obligatory class-related reading, Zainab realized that reading is interesting, and that prompted her to go to places where she knew she would find books to read:

My interest in reading began when I was in grade seven. We had a library class in which we were required to choose a book and give a summary about it afterwards. This started my growing interest in books [*trigger*] and I began to go, not only to the library outside class hours, but also, to book stores [*facilitator*]. From then on reading became a habit [*sustainer*] (J33-23/11/08).

Again, as a result of reading the obligatory class novels, HaleemaY realized that she loved reading and reacted by asking someone to help facilitate her interest:

When I was about the age of fourteen we started reading famous novels in school and I loved those classes the most [*trigger*]. So, one day I went home and asked my father to take me to a book store [*facilitator*], and when I went I remember thinking that it is the most amazing place ever. That is the day when I started my own book collection. Now, I buy at least one book every two weeks and read a lot of fan-fiction online daily [*sustainer*] (J297-3/4/10).

Budoor, too, came to love her class-assigned novel, *The Outsiders*, after reading parts of it and realizing that novels can be interesting, even “amazing!” At first, Badira wondered: “Outsider: what the h***’s an outsider; outside of what, you know?”

B: (IN301-34:12) I really liked novels after this book. ... I cried then this guy died. ... We read it once a week but, I finished it at home in two days, maybe. I finished the whole novel.

It is clear that a trigger of interest in reading may happen at any age. Students may also identify more than one trigger. Alanoud, for example mentioned her father buying comic books for her and her sister (above) and she identifies an event in school, also, as a trigger,

I remember when I was in the preparatory school [grade seven] all the girls were talking about an important news in the world except me. I was not even heard that news. After that day, I started to

watch the news and read newspapers. Also, I like to read kinds of books that have topics I love to know more about (J22-8/12/2006).

It is important to note that what triggers interest in one student may not have the same effect on another and that while obligatory reading triggered some students' interest in reading above, it had the opposite effect on many other students. For example, many students became interested in reading when they saw their parents reading, as we saw above. Yet, when Hana saw *her* mother reading she felt neglected:

H: (IN303-00:38) At first I hated it, that time, because my mother was reading the newspaper and I was calling her and she was into her reading,

and Ameera left school – a school which heavily promoted reading - with a hatred of reading:

A: (IN13-27:52) Actually, you know that me and reading were not friends at all (laughs).

R: You said to me, "I hate reading"! [the previous year in my foundation English class].

A: Yea, you remember?

R: I do. (Laugh) Course I do, it's a strong statement.

A: So, at school, we had to read, like, in high school, we were supposed to read the novels because at the end ... we're supposed to response and to answer questions.

Ameera's hatred continued into her first year at university, until her interest was triggered in a most unexpected manner: while struggling with a black and white photocopy of a humanities text about the Ancient Greeks, which contained names that few could pronounce:

M: (IN13-3:29) I love the reading of the Greeks and Persians. In the beginning, I would have cry of reading it because it was so complicated but then, I really love it, yea.

R: What made you like it?

M: Socrates, his *Apology*! Oh my God, it was lovely. 'Twas amazing! [*trigger*] ... The teacher, before, it was, like, after tomorrow is our class. We read from certain page to other page, like, and then, she ask us question in class and, eh, she sum up the story and we say which part we like most about it. ... I didn't felt that I wanted to read it at the beginning, 'cos I was like, I talked to my teacher, like, "I'm sorry, I didn't read the pages that I was supposed to read, but I can't understand what's going on". She was, like, "Read it again, keep on reading it" and she gave us, like, two weeks to read the same pages so we can concentrate and focus on what's going on.

She identifies the trigger as her reading of the text itself, confirmed by the fact that she often reread Socrates' *Apology*, even after the class had moved on to other topics:

M: (IN13-9:00) Until now, OK, we're done with Greeks, but I still love to read the *Apology* for Socrates.

R: Do you talk about it with friends or family?

M: Yea, I do talk about it. About Agememnon's story, I love it.

M: (IN13-29:53) Well, now I've changed my mind about reading. I like reading. It makes me discover lots of new things, like, I read about stuff, which is, I never know ... [*sustainer*].

At the triggering stage, many factors within the would-be reader combine with the external factors in the environment to trigger her interest. The centrality of the student is very important. For example, I could not possibly draw up a list of triggers which work because the theoretical construct does not rest on any one trigger per se but on the fact that something (a person or event) triggers a student's interest. It is a stage and not an action as such. Interest in reading, therefore, may be triggered by an action but, it does not constitute a particular action. I pick up Najla's story from her resistance to her grandfather's efforts to encourage her to read:

When I was in school I used to hate reading, I absolutely hated it, but, when I entered the university that changed. My grandfather used to always sit down and read with me, but I still didn't like reading. I wasn't interested. However, when I started university and when we started to learn new interesting things and we had to think for ourselves, that made me curious and I started to read a lot [*trigger*]. When I started to read out of curiosity I began to like it ... My friends also encouraged me to read because they always read books and I didn't, so, I started to read, so that I would know about the book when they talked about it [*facilitator*]. My dad had a huge influence on me because he always encourages anything for education, so, he would bring me articles or books about my major [*facilitator*] – [she was planning to become a teacher], and finally I started to ask him for books instead of him bringing them for me (J34-13/12/06).

We can see from the above data that Najla and Ameera's interest in reading was triggered as late as their first year at university, as was Dana's, whose realization that "reading is a huge school for the person" signaled the start of her reading journey (J88-14/9/08).

A would-be reader's first reading journey – and I say first, because there will be others - starts with her interest being triggered in her dominant or first language, the language she uses regularly, which, as we saw in Chapter 5, may not necessarily be her native language. Each subsequent reading journey in another language is likely to require its own trigger of interest and may include some of the reading-related events mentioned above, such as, listening to stories in that language, travelling to other countries or acquiring friends from another country. For example, some students read for leisure in Spanish, Italian and even Russian (S2-29/10/06; 31/10/06; 19/11/06; 3/12/06), journeys that were triggered by the start of online friendships with students in other countries, by joining a university foreign language club or, in at least one case, being given books in Russian by her father who had acquired them while studying in Russia.

Many participants, who first became readers in Arabic, had their interest triggered in reading in English at a later stage, including some after many years of studying in English (IN63; IN17; IN294). Being a bilingual student does not automatically trigger an interest in reading in two languages; interest in reading is language specific. In addition to this, interest is also likely to be genre specific or genre exclusive excluding certain other genres. For example, we recall how Shamsa realized when she was very young that she loved reading in Arabic but avoided reading novels until she read *The Alchemist* in Arabic, which triggered her realization that novels can be interesting and beneficial to the reader, in her view.

With this new theoretical lens, I can now see that a large number of readers who started their reading journeys in English have not yet started their reading journeys in Arabic (IN303; IN301; IN123) whereas, a large number of those who started their reading journeys in Arabic have also started their reading journeys in English. RaweyaI reads avidly in English and has started her reading journeys in at least three other languages but she did not once report having read a book in Arabic in eighteen weeks of snapshot surveys, although she can read in Arabic “quite well” (S2-29/10/06). Marwa, too, loves to read in English but, hates reading in Arabic, cannot even stand to see Arabic letters and has never read a book in Arabic, although her Arabic reading ability is “excellent” (S123-29/10/06). As we saw in chapter 5, she suggests that the trigger stage should have happened in school. RehamE, an avid reader in English, may also have had her interest triggered in Arabic reading when she was younger, perhaps when her father read to her:

R: (IN339-14:23) Did he ever read to you?

Re: Yea, when I was a small kid I was like, “Baba come and read to me some of your old stories”, and he did.

However, something prevented and continues to prevent her from continuing her reading journey in her native language:

R: (IN339-13:14) Do you like to read in Arabic?

Re: No ... because every time I try I can't understand. ... My dad, yea, he's always, like: “You always read English books, you always read English books. Why don't you read Arabic books?”

I'm always like, “I don't understand them.”

He tries to get her to read the Arabic books he buys for himself and, although she is willing to try, she does not succeed and so avoids reading in Arabic.

We will find reasons why at the next stage of the journey but first, I will recap on the main points about the triggering stage. Interest in reading is triggered by an external factor, which may be different for everyone, acting on the student to bring about a realization about reading. Neither the diverse types of reading-related incidents reported above nor their effect on students appear to have anything in common

if viewed at a perceptual level. However, at a conceptual level, we can theorize that, as a result of these incidents, students realized something about reading and this theory fits wherever we test it. A trigger is language, genre and topic specific and reading in every other language, genre and topic requires its own trigger. It may happen gradually or in an instant and, at any age, and there can be more than one. A student is at her most dependent at this stage because an external factor is essential in triggering this internal response. In the above data, the following factors appeared contextually to have helped to trigger an interest in reading in some of my participants: conversations about reading, being read to by parents or teachers, watching others read, having access to attractive books, hearing peers talking about something they have read, and more. We know that a student's interest has been triggered when she starts to function at the next stage: the facilitating stage.

7.3 The facilitating stage: a student's interest in reading is facilitated

The spark of interest in reading which was triggered at the first stage of the reading journey is fanned into a full-blown flame by reading extensively at the facilitating stage. To do that a would-be reader must have: access to interesting reading materials, a certain level of reading ability, plenty of encouragement and time for reading.

7.3.1 Access to interesting reading materials

At this stage the would-be reader's burgeoning interest in reading is facilitated by having access to a wide variety of potentially interesting books. She is a co-facilitator who behaves semi-independently by identifying her reading needs and agitating to ensure that they are accommodated. We see this with Shawq and Hana, for example:

The next day, I remember telling my father that he should take me to a bookstore and buy his daughters books (J96-29/10/08).

(IN303-1:20) I told my mother to buy story books.

We also saw earlier how Naheya and Maisa took books belonging to other family members in order to facilitate their interest in reading.

Putting interesting reading items of manageable reading difficulty into a would-be reader's hands is a key role of a co-facilitator, a role that is predominantly played by many family members, particularly parents, and continued in later years by fathers. In my research setting, it is often achieved by parents driving their daughters to bookshops and book fairs (IN296-16:45), choosing books for them until they are old enough to choose for themselves (IN294-20:55), providing the use of credit cards for online purchases (C7; C3),

bringing back books from their travels and sharing books that they found valuable or that they think will interest them. Lamyā's brother helped facilitate her reading:

The first book I read when I was child is [a] story my brother buy it to me ... He took me to the book exhibition and to the public library and also the school took us there. My brother helped me a lot in reading. He encouraged me to read every time. He took me to the library every weekend. Also, he brought some books to me to read. Therefore, my brother is the person who make me a reader (J21-6/12/06).

Schools which organize field trips to book fairs are also facilitators as are teachers who fill their classrooms with books for students to choose from and those who take their students to the school library. Hana describes her teacher's role in fanning the flames of interest in reading in her students: "She put the fire to us" (IN303-4:51), by taking them to the school library. For female Emirati university students, access to reading items is facilitated by many factors, including the growing number of bookshops which have opened in the spacious air-conditioned shopping malls, the generous provision of free sizeable book tokens by a member of the ruling family for all students to spend at the annual book fair, gifts and loans from friends, family and teachers, the Internet as a source of many different types of reading texts and, to a much less extent, the university and public libraries. Students prefer to own rather than borrow the books they read so, libraries do not feature as main facilitating factors. Owning books facilitates unlimited, unconstrained access to them which allows students to reread them, regard them as friends and form lasting relationships with them. The importance of facilitating access to interesting materials is evidenced by the fact that in eighteen weeks, the only time that MarwaY reported not having read a book was when she did not have a new book (S30-31/3/07).

There is an asymmetry, however, in access to interesting reading materials as a facilitating factor because while its absence will undoubtedly prevent a student from reading, as we saw above, having access to interesting reading materials is not a guarantee that reading will take place. Students also need to have a certain level of reading ability or mastery of the text, sufficient to enable them to engage with the text.

7.3.2 Reading ability – mastery of the text

Students need a reading ability that enables them to engage with a text and, when this happens, reading ability does not feature as a factor in their decisions to read for leisure. In other words, reading ability becomes a factor in leisure reading only when it interferes with students' enjoyment of a text in which case it is an obstacle to reading and not a facilitator. When my participants were asked about their reading

ability they invariably linked it to a particular text. Naheya, for example, replied that she does not wonder about her reading ability but, about the types of books she is reading, planning to move beyond reading “only the novels”, to reading Nietzsche (IN15-23:41). RehamF feels the need to improve her reading ability in English because of her difficulty in reading particular texts, such as, Dickens’ 800-page, *Our Mutual Friend*.

In the previous section we saw how Dana’s struggle to read her global studies class-assigned text helped to shape her attitude toward reading in general (ch.6.2.2.5). Here, we see in more detail, the extent of her difficulty in reading that particular text:

N: (IN49&88-35:19) I, eh, read from page seven to twenty and really, really, really, I feel bored and don’t understand anything, only read, read, read but, [all] what I understand [is] *the, a, and* (Laughter all around).

R: That’s brilliant. So, what do you do when you come across words you don’t understand in global studies?

N: I translate, translate, but I come across many words. Which word I will translate it?

Her difficulty in mastering the text prevented her from reading it. Yet, we recall that when she was on holiday she read magazines and enjoyed reading, a pattern which was quickly identified by her co-interviewee who predicted that next week Dana would not like reading if she had global studies texts to read (ch.6.2.2.5).

This shows a great need for facilitation of students’ ability to master the texts they read, right up to college level and it shows how all factors are interconnected because Dana’s attitude toward reading was affected by a lack of reading ability. We saw earlier that when Ameera’s global studies teacher encouraged her to keep reading the text about the Ancient Greeks and then discussed it in class she both triggered Ameera’s interest in reading and facilitated that interest by enabling her to master the text. Ameera believes that she became a reader as a result and the data supports this. Clearly, facilitating means more than referring a student to a dictionary because, if the most a student can read is *a, and* and *the*, she is faced with the frustrating question: “Which word I will translate it?” (IN49&88-36:5). Dana had needed a facilitator - reading ability - which would have enabled her to read more than those three functional words in the assigned text.

Therefore, we can say that students’ interest in and attitude toward reading are related to their ability to master a particular text. Reading ability is like a current which may carry a swimmer and enable her to make great strides or may act as an undertow so that the swimmer merely treads water or worse, goes

under. It is essential that students have sufficient reading ability to master the texts that they choose to read, rather than being told that they cannot choose books to read because they are not yet ready. Once their interest has been triggered they will start to read straight away because there is always a book to match their level of ability and it is the job of a co-facilitator to bring would-be reader and book together. Reading then becomes its own facilitator because as we saw in chapter 2.3.2, the more a student reads the better her reading ability becomes. Would-be readers need to be facilitated in figuring out meaning from the texts they attempt to read in the same way that avid readers do. RehamE's extensive reading has enabled her to facilitate her understanding of the text by reading the whole sentence or paragraph:

Re: (IN339-10:51) If you read the sentence you can understand it.

R: Do you ever come across a word that you don't know?

Re: Sometimes, if I didn't understand the sentence or the chapter, but, I didn't read a book that I didn't understand a page or a chapter, because it's easy. When you read a sentence you can understand what it means.

Being able to read what they wish to read is essential for students as-becoming-readers because it results in them feeling encouraged to read further, which leads us to the next factor at this second stage.

7.3.3 Encouragement to read

In chapter six a theoretical construct of encouragement to read emerged from my data as having two components: responding to encouragement (6.2.1.5) and feeling encouraged (6.2.2.4), I will now show how they fit into the reading journey. We saw examples of how my participants, when young, enjoyed being read to and being provided with books, which probably resulted in them feeling encouraged. They also felt encouraged just by being in the company of readers, even when there were no explicit efforts to encourage as we saw when Shawq listened to a Pakistani girl talking about books, Farah saw her father reading and Naheya saw her brother's books while he was studying. Participants who became readers as older students, articulate their desire to respond to encouragement as a purpose for reading: "I will read to respond to your encouragement" (IN88). Separating the two constructs helps those who are concerned with encouraging students to read to more fully understand their role vis-à-vis a would-be reader because encouragement features throughout the reading journey. The ultimate aim is for students to *feel* encouraged to read and the greatest sources of encouragement are the texts they read, whereby if they enjoy reading them, they will feel encouraged to read more. Viewing encouragement as a continuing two-way dialogue means that we listen for the student's response so as to continue the encouraging dialogue.

Dana's interest in reading was facilitated by the encouragement she received from various sources, some of which she acknowledged (See 6.3.4), by having access to interesting reading materials, and by her

improved reading ability – as evidenced by her going beyond understanding only *a*, *and* and *the* to get an A grade in her global studies, a course which requires a lot of reading. We also saw how Hana’s teacher had fanned her flame of interest in reading and “put the fire to us” (7.2.1) but this was interrupted:

R: (IN303-4:58) Because of that you started to be interested in books?

H: Not really because eh, she will leave an impact for a year, because I transferred after a year, but then I felt like, “There is something missing; I have to read. In school, I used to do something. What is that thing?”

Hana’s reading journey stalled after she transferred to another school and it needed to be re-triggered by a realization that something was missing. This data clip reminds us of the importance of teachers as facilitators who can provide access to reading materials, encouragement and, very importantly, time for reading and it shows the need for consistency within and between schools in policies regarding the promotion of reading.

7.3.4 Time for reading

The demands of being a university student often leave little or no time for extra-curricular interests, such as leisure reading, and teachers, as keepers of students’ time - both in and out of college - may be the only ones who can facilitate time for reading. When asked what their teachers could do to encourage them to read, a large number of students, replied that they should create more time for them to read, either by allowing time in class for reading or by giving fewer assignments and exams (ch.5.2.3.1). For secondary or tertiary level students whose reading interest was triggered recently, all the encouragement in the world will not work if they do not have time to read. While some (who are in the third stage of their reading journeys) are able to find or make that time, those who are in this second stage need the help of a co-facilitator to ‘create’ time for reading.

At this stage a student must read extensively and this is facilitated by having access to interesting reading materials, a certain level of reading ability, encouragement which may come from various sources, including her reading, and time to read. When a student has successfully had her interest facilitated she goes on to sustain that interest by taking charge of her reading at her most independent stage.

7.4 The sustaining stage: sustaining interest in reading by being a reader

At this most exciting stage of her journey, a student has become and now *identifies* herself as a reader and this identity ‘as-reader’ helps to sustain her interest in reading which was earlier triggered and facilitated. It is not a fixed identity but one that is always becoming and which both acts on and is acted on by her

reading choices. Here, I will present an understanding of what being a reader involves for my participants, and the two main factors which sustain that identity: reason-as-*qana'a* and choice of reading materials.

7.4.1 Female Emirati university student as reader

Female Emirati university student as-reader loves to read and reads widely whenever she can for her own reasons, makes her own decisions about what to read and identifies many options for acquiring reading materials. She actively seeks information about books that she might like to read and their authors including soliciting the feedback and recommendations of friends, family members, online forums and well known personalities. Her default language for leisure reading is mainly determined by the language in which she was educated, unless she is learning a new language. She has a keen interest in benefiting from her reading as well as enjoying it and while she may read to pass the time she prefers not to waste time reading something that does not meet her needs in some way. She tries to find time to read in her busy schedule, even if it is just “a few pages every weekend” (IN17-1:28) and when she misses it she includes it in her plans for upcoming holidays. Her reading makes her feel smart (IN269; IN17) both in herself and in front of others in the way she speaks (IN17-10:50) and this extends to the classroom where she likes to look as if she has read the assigned readings by being able to discuss them:

Rm: (IN17-45:44) Yea, we talk about things we read in the chapter ... I don't want to sit there like I don't know anything; I want to like, answer.

Reading broadens her mind considerably and stimulates her thinking, introduces her to many different ways of life, enables her to view her problems differently and helps her to ‘hear’ her own thoughts: “You feel, like ... you can't understand yourself but when you read it clearly someone can be your voice” (IN15-19:38). She loves to talk about her reading and often encourages others to read, particularly her friends and family. She has standards for enjoyment whereby she expects and demands certain things from a text whether it is grabbing her from the first page or contributing something to her knowledge or way of thinking or simply, being well written. There are certain types of texts that she will not read but she is usually open to encouragement. She identifies with other readers and authors with whom she is likely to make connections in order to further enhance her reading habits. She prefers to read a book – usually in its paper format - before watching its movie, has a favourite place in which to read and is initially attracted to books by their book covers.

She has matured as a reader from the days when she may have been “fragile” and easily influenced by her reading:

H: (IN322:16:24) Before, when I was eh in high school, my father looked at the books that I have and ... he said to me “throw all those books” but now, no, he doesn’t say anything ... because at that age he was scared for me because I was fragile, like, anything can change my mind. Now he trusts me.

R: Do you think that anybody should control what other people read?

H: If they are small, yea but when they are big it’s OK.

R: When is the change, what’s the age group?

H: It doesn’t depend on the age; it depends on the mind, like, she’s 14 and she is like mature like a girl who is 22 or something, it’s OK to read a book.

She finds that an author speaks directly to her as-reader and addresses her immediate interests and needs, meeting her where she currently is and frequently showing her the way to where she wishes to go in the evolving identities of the person she is always becoming. She has established and continues to establish a reading character which governs most of her reading choices based on her preferences and interests but, she also reserves the right to step out of character and read for no obvious reason at all or for what she may describe as “silly reasons”. Her reading habit is sustained in great part by the authors whose texts she reads and her *qana’a* for reading.

7.4.2 Sustaining interest through choice of reading materials

Readers must read *something* and so, evidence of how female Emirati university students sustain their reading identities can be seen to a great extent in the texts they choose to read. I present the following summary of data to indicate some of the reader identities which emerged from my data. I summarized approximately seventeen weeks of Amaalya’s Yesterday Snapshot Surveys (S1-29/10/06 to 28/1/07), and presented it to her for her confirmation or “member checking” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp.11; 44; 108), together with her demographic information; she confirmed it as it is. It is important to bear in mind that the identities below were merely *suggested* by the data because we see only the roles that people play and not their actual identities (ch.2.4.3; ch. 2.5.2.2).

Data Summary

Amaalya lives with her husband and two children outside the city. She attended government schools, and Arabic is the predominant language for almost all media-related activities in her home (**Reader-as-Arab**) ... Her home library contains twenty Arabic books and five English books (**Reader-as-Arab**) and her reading in Arabic is excellent and, in English, it is OK (**Reader-as-bilingual student**). In her family, only her parents like to read (**Reader-as-family**)

member). Detractors from her leisure reading on a given day included having guests and having to attend a relative's wedding party (**Reader-as-member of family**). On a given day Amaalya ... glanced at headings in an Arabic magazine or the *Gulf News Friday Magazine* in English, as well as headings and local news items in a local daily Arabic newspaper (**Reader-as-Emirati**). During a twenty-week semester she reported having read two books related to her class assignments (**Reader-as-university-student**) (J1-27/2/07), another book about Ramadan and how Muslims should prepare for it (**Reader-as-Muslim**) (J1-27/2/07), and a fourth about how to cook good healthy food for children (**Reader-as-mother**) (S13/3/07). She read about career opportunities in the UAE (**Reader-as-future graduate**) (J1-10/3/07) and regularly looked out for the *Mirror* on campus (**Reader-as-university-student**). She has never borrowed a book from the university library to read for leisure because there is "no time for that" (S1-29/10/2006) (**Reader-as-mother; Reader-as-university-student**).

The category labels are subjective and in the interests of transparency, I will show how I identified one of the above categories. The concept **reader-as-mother** places Amaalya in the larger category of mothers worldwide because the data that gives rise to it - referring to the roles she plays - fits the broader, universal category of mothers who are usually concerned about their children's nutrition and diet. That is not to claim that all mothers are identical to Amaalya, but to suggest that Amaalya-as-reader-as-mother has some key properties in common with the category, **mothers**. The concept, mothers, already exists and so is a *perceived* concept and my data analysis adds the conceptual level of **reader-as-Emirati mother**.

Students' identities are multiple, they may express more than one at any time and they can easily move between them. Here we see Amaalya-as-reader going from **reader-as-student** to **reader-as-mother**. In other data samples Seham-as-reader went from **reader-as-niece**, while reading her auntie's book in Arabic, to **reader-as-Arab**, to **reader-as-daughter** when she read it aloud to her father, as he drove them to the next city (ch.5.5.2). When Marwa read *Princess* non-stop for twelve hours (ch.5.4.2.2) she occasionally took breaks to go and "tell my mother something about the story and then go back" (IN123-2:44) so, she moved from having shed most of her identities and being "lost in a book" (Nell, 1988b) to **reader-as-daughter** when she spoke to her mother about her reading, and back again. She was also being **reader-as-rebellious daughter**, because her father had forbidden her to read such items. Azza read her uncle's articles in a local Arabic newspaper (IN63-48:33), which suggests **reader-as-niece** and **reader-as-Arab**, while, the topic he wrote about - Emirati women's rights, how they dress and how their lives are changing - suggests **reader-as-young Emirati woman** (ch.5.1.4.3). Reader-as-niece suggests the importance of an uncle or aunt in a student's reading choices because the desire to see what her uncle had

written may have initially brought Azza and the articles together. Once she started reading, the topic itself may have activated some of her other identities, particularly that of **reader-as-woman** and **reader-as-Emirati**.

Cultures – particularly prescribed cultures (ch.2.4.1) - determine the roles members play in society. As an Emirati wife and mother Amaalya may identify with certain prescribed cultural elements which determine, for example, how she should receive guests into her home. As reader-as-mother, some of Amaalya's reading roles (the texts she chooses) are also determined for her so that we see her reading a cookery book. Her identities of reader-as-Muslim and as-Arab would also have prescriptive elements which determine certain reading roles, such as, reading the Qura'n, reading about Ramadan and carrying out most or all literacy practices in her home in Arabic. As reader as-university student or as-future graduate, Amaalya negotiates the reading roles she plays although both negotiated cultures also contain prescriptive elements (certain texts must be read to pass exams, for example).

Students' identities are the arenas within which they take a stand vis-as-vis such roles or behavioural norms. We recall, for example, that Azza found it almost impossible to identify with her younger sister but within the constraints of the larger culture of family she had to play the role of loving sister (ch.5.4.1). It was a source of conflict for her and one that she could not comprehend or resolve until she read a book in which an author documented his struggles in his relationship with his brother and how he resolved them. Her reader identity served as the arena within which she worked to resolve her conflict.

The identity of reader-as-Emirati has been the central topic of this research and, perhaps surprisingly, we can see that its cultural alignment is not with a particular, prescriptive culture, but with a wide range of cultures including Emirati. Students read items from many parts of the world including the UAE and topics or themes with a Western or international flavor as well as more local. They are Emirati and as such they are doing their highly negotiated reading culture which moves across many cultures but is not contained within any one.

7.4.3 Sustaining interest through *qana'a* for reading

In the earlier stages of my analysis when my hypothesis of a reading journey first emerged, I had placed the category reasons for reading as a sustainer at this (third) stage of the reading journey but had not yet written the theoretical framework into which it would fit. After identifying the theoretical construct of both purposes and *qana'a* for reading in Chapter 6 – with the category *qana'a* replacing the category

reasons - I found that I had a clearer theoretical explanation as to why and how *qana'a* for reading fit at the sustaining stage of a reading journey. A brief recap is required here to remind us of the two categories. Students' answers to the questions "why did you read this?" or "why do you read?" were presented as reasons but through constant comparison, two distinct categories emerged. Purposes for reading such as to improve my vocabulary or to gain knowledge are consciously identified by a student as desired outcomes ahead of her reading and they are short-lived, firefly situations which are unlikely to bring about or sustain a reading habit. The other reasons are not outcomes-based but more process-oriented, dwell in the subconscious and become long-lasting dispositions toward reading. They appear similar to attitudes, they stem from the reader's reading-related experiences and are based on her beliefs about and feelings toward reading. They include: interest, volition, liking and feeling encouraged. They are more enduring and are likely to sustain an interest in reading and thus a reading habit, because they dwell in the subconscious mind where habits reside (Clarke et al,2007).

As both categories had emerged under the concept of reasons for reading as identified by my participants, I needed to distinguish the new construct both from purposes and from the umbrella concept of reasons from which it had emerged. They appeared to be close to the concept of attitude and so I initially referred to them as reason-as-attitude. However, this did not fully represent the new category which had emerged or show how it emerged as the concept of attitude is an already well-established concept with an extensive body of literature (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; McKenna and Kear, 1990). There was a risk that I would be imposing a label which had not truly emerged from the research ground and that I was falling back on tried and tested labels, thus defeating part of the aim of this research which was to generate new concepts. A new concept had emerged and it now needed a new label, one which would at least generate some curiosity about how the new construct came about and how I came to the understanding that I did. Mindful of Pinker's (1994) claim that there are more concepts than words, I realized that I had to go outside the English language – as have many others if we can judge by such labels as *verstehen*, *habitus*, and more – and coined the label reason-as-*qana'a* – *qana'a* for short - where the Arabic word, *qana'a*, includes in its meaning the four reasons I had identified in addition to being convinced, self-motivated and not feeling pressured. This label achieves its purpose of identifying the category as distinct from both purposes for reading and the general label of reasons, and it stems from the research ground.

7.5 Summary

The above chapter brings together the data analysis of the previous three chapters culminating in the theory of a process of becoming a reader. Journeying through three stages female Emirati university

students go from being totally dependent to becoming increasingly independent as readers, the readers they will continue to become. Students' interest in reading is triggered through a realization of some kind about it, that interest is facilitated through four main factors which enable them to engage in extensive reading and sustained through their identities as-readers, choice of reading materials and *qana'a* for reading. This construct enables us to look more closely at individual students to see why they have not become readers. Non-readers are unlikely to have had enjoyable reading experiences and they identify mainly academic purposes for reading rather than *qana'a*. Any reading they do is usually purpose-driven and they see little purpose in reading for leisure. Before she became a reader, Ameera wondered about the text on Ancient Greece which she was required to read for class:

A: (IN13-4:40) How they're telling a story about a person who never exist, *ya'anni!*⁷

She could see no purpose in reading such a text. In fact, non-readers identify *qana'a* for *not* reading for leisure, such as, "It is boring" and, "I hate it".

Encouragement to read is a critically important factor because it runs throughout the reading journey and serves as two factors: as purpose and as *qana'a*. A student may decide to read purely for the purpose of responding to encouragement from a teacher and may articulate it thus: "I read to respond to your encouragement". Encouragement as *qana'a* is evident when a student *feels* encouraged to pick up a book and read it and, if the topic and reading level of the text are a good match, she will feel encouraged to continue reading it and to read more books. The success of *offering* encouragement to a student to read hinges on it taking the form of a never-ending conversation, whose construct I have outlined above (ch.7.3.3). Like all habits, Emirati university students as-readers' reading habits reside in their subconscious (Clark et al, 2007), which means that their *qana'a* and not their purposes for reading, sustain their reading habits.

The reading journey represents students' gradual enculturation into reading whereby they develop negotiated reading culture, particularly from the second stage onward when they play a more active role in deciding what they want to read. This sense of negotiated reading culture is evident when they tell their parents to get them books and specify what types of books they want (ch.7.2): "I told my mother to bring storybooks, only with the big drawings" (IN303); "I told my father that he should take me to a bookstore" (J96).

⁷ The word "*ya'anni*" serves the same purpose as the interjection "you know" in English. Here it indicates that the speaker is left almost speechless as she struggles to comprehend the (to her) incomprehensible.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 What I set out to find

Clarke's (2005) strategy of problematizing the past to see how the present arose may appear to be an obvious one – after all, past behaviour is all we have to examine – but it is worth stating:

the major means of avoiding the present as “a necessary outcome” is problematizing how we have arrived at the present moment, seeking out those elements that each and all had to be in place for this present to “happen,” and “how things could have been otherwise (p. 262-3).

As educators we wish to avoid any further ‘presents’ of students as non-readers by trying to understand processes of events which led to current presents, and, if we accept that human beings are walking bundles of habit (Dewey, 1922) we must look to earlier experiences which helped shape those habits. I set out to investigate the leisure reading habits of a sample of female first-year Emirati university students and the factors that affect those habits, prompted by my own professional curiosity and the oft repeated claims of colleagues that “our students do not read”. My research questions were:

- 1) What are the leisure reading habits of first-year female Emirati university students?
- 2) What are the factors that affect those habits?

Had I undertaken to carry out self-reported time studies of my participants' reading, I imagine that my findings would have concluded with one of the following statements: female Emirati university students read as much as, less than, or, more than their counterparts elsewhere (Greaney, 1980; Chen, 2007). I wished to present findings that I could not have imagined beforehand and that would be grounded in empirical data (ch.3.4.2). Rejecting pre-conceptions, I set out with a loosely defined understanding of leisure reading as free voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004) with the intention of building an understanding of leisure reading from the ground. My efforts to minimize bias and to strive for a balanced investigation were helped by adopting a non-presumptive manner and questioning everything during my data collection and analysis. I was constantly aware that the questions I asked could be interpreted by my listeners as carrying assumptions, mainly by the constraints we habitually build into the questions we ask (ch.3.3.1). This point was brought home to me whenever I asked: “are you reading anything these days?” and received the shy, almost apologetic answer: “yes, but in Arabic”. Therefore, whenever I asked about reading in English it was just as important to also enquire about reading in Arabic and in other languages, and if I asked “why do you *not* read?” it was just as important to ask: “why *do* you read?” I frequently clarified to my participants and to myself that my research was an investigation of their leisure reading in all languages. Had I concentrated on reading in English only, my findings would have been less complete,

because I was frequently able to compare both to further enhance emerging categories. In spite of my best efforts to strip my questions of all traces of presumptions, they lingered, again to be mirrored by my participants. When I asked Naheya in which language she would choose to read a particular book, she added the constraint “first?” (IN15), meaning that she would want to read it in both languages and so the question needed to be reworded with the inclusion of new constraint. This was a response I could not have imagined.

Neither could I have imagined that I would hear a nineteen-year old say: “they are not writing books like they used to” (IN96) or a twenty-year old say how much she enjoyed being read to by her twenty-three-year old male cousin (IN338), or that one would go on a reading strike (IN123) while another would stand among the detergents in a supermarket to read excerpts from a particular book, that one would read regularly in at least three languages but not in her native language (S2) while another would say: “I hope I like reading (IN49&88-23:27), that one would enthuse over the smell of the books in a bookshop (IN303) or that another would give a running translation of English subtitles from a television screen into Arabic for her sister but yet not call it reading (IN278). Neither could I have imagined the theoretical constructs that would emerge from my data analysis and which I will review below. One property of rich data must be that it cannot be imagined by researchers beforehand; the true meaning of hypothesis-free research for which to strive.

My attempts to answer my research questions about my participants’ reading habits involved an exploration of their reading-related behavior from childhood onwards. I allowed my data to tell the story and so, in the true meaning of emergence and “discovery” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) my findings answered a question which I had not set out to answer: how students became readers as opposed to non-readers and so answers to my research questions are to be found in the story of female Emirati university students-as-readers. Section 8.2 answers my research questions, section 8.3 looks at some of the implications of my research for professional practice and section 8.4 suggests topics for further research and indicates the limitations of my research. In this chapter, I will use the full appellation of female Emirati university students wherever necessary to convey meaning but, otherwise, I will refer to my participants as readers, non-readers or students as appropriate.

8.2 My findings: answering the research questions

My research started off as an investigation of students' leisure reading habits but, true to its qualitative nature, it took me in a direction in which I had not expected to travel. It made me look beyond mere expressions of reading habits to the reader herself and to the process of becoming a reader. In other words, the short answer to my open-ended research question about my participants' leisure reading habits was that students read for leisure because they have become readers (ch.6.2.3) while non-readers have not. The constraints of my research question, which were unknown at the outset (ch.3.3) became clearer as my analysis progressed and it became, retrospectively, an investigation of how students became readers, what it means to be a reader and sustain a reading habit, and what it means to be a non-reader. Students became readers through a three-stage reading journey during which their interest was triggered and facilitated by their reading experiences and the environment surrounding them and sustained by their *habitus*, which both acted on and were acted on by them. Their leisure reading habits are not habitual in the common-sense view which suggests the reading of a certain number of pages daily, nor as routine, mindless acts. Any automaticity which pertains to students' reading habits, is to be found in their repeated, attitudinal response to the mention or thought of reading and things associated with it.

The longer answer to my research questions follows below showing the theoretical construct of a reading journey and how this process happened. Key findings include students' *qana'a* and purposes for reading, reasons for not reading, an insight into the types of genres and topics that readers are likely to read, how they choose and access the texts they read, who influences their choices of reading items, the role of earlier reading-related experiences, their favourite place to read, the construct of encouragement and their preference for paper books. Section 8.2.1 gives an overview of the first two stages of the reading journey, section 8.2.2 focuses on the third stage: being a reader and section 8.2.3 looks at what it means for students to be non-readers. Each student's reading journey is different and, "just as no two individual histories are identical no two individual *habitus* are identical" (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 46). Therefore, the theory of becoming a reader which emerged from my data is loosely defined, as theories should be (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), so that it fits the many individual differences along the way and so that it can be further developed by other researchers.

8.2.1 Becoming readers: developing a reading habit

8.2.1.1 *The reading journey*

For my respondents who became readers, it all began with students' earliest reading experiences, mainly in their homes but also in some cases, at school (ch.7.2). Their reading habits stem from the environment in which they live(d) (Dewey 1922) where reading was perceived to be valued (ch.5.3.1). Although each student's early reading experiences were unique they all shared a common factor: they resulted in students' realizing something about reading. Parents read to them when they were very young and made up stories to tell them as they tucked them into bed - sometimes to teach them a moral lesson but mainly for entertainment, they provided them with picture books to look at and reading role models which they often mimicked, fathers brought home books from their travels, older siblings shared books with younger siblings and there was a general atmosphere of reading in a home where there were usually books in at least two languages. Some had their interest triggered while at school when teachers read to them and where they were surrounded by books. During all those experiences, the young children came to realize something positive about reading and books, most probably that reading is nice, fun, enjoyable and made them feel happy. This triggering of interest in books and reading happened over some time for some children while for others it came with a sudden dawning as they watched older siblings or parents reading and realized that they wanted to do the same. Their realization about reading was primarily affective as they lacked the cognitive abilities to explain why they liked it and so their feelings for reading most probably preceded their beliefs which were formed gradually as they got older.

This is similar to Early's (1960) first stage of students' growth in literary appreciation (ch.2.2.3.4) which she calls "unconscious enjoyment" (p.163) of reading where the reader cannot articulate her reasons for liking it which underscores the affective aspect of the start of the reading journey construct. Early (1960) urges teachers (and parents) to be "go-getters" in feeling the pulse of students' reading enjoyment (p.164) so that they can "select wisely more and more stories, poems, and plays that delight them" (ibid, p.164) and that suit their "varying maturity and interests" (p.164). My reading journey shows that the older my students were when their interest in reading was triggered the more cognitively did they express their realization about reading. For example, we saw how Najla realized that reading made her think and Dana realized that "reading is a huge school" (ch.7.2) but the pattern was the same: they realized something positive about reading.

Once this realization set in, students immediately started to act on it to try to bring about the factors which would help to fan the flames of their interest in reading. They went from being completely dependent in

the previous stage to being semi-independent at the second or facilitating stage by sharing in the development of their interest in reading. They actively sought reading items if they were not already available, they made up their own stories as they tried to “read” on their own or asked for help with reading until they learned how to read either at school or at home, they felt encouraged to develop their interest and spent time poring over books or being “lost in a book” (Nell, 1988b). They discovered for themselves the kinds of books that they liked and disliked and read extensively. This is similar to Early’s (1960) belief that at the second stage of students’ growth in literary appreciation (ch.2.2.3.4) they are “willing to exert considerable effort” (p.164) to gain enjoyment from their reading. Again, students’ beliefs about reading did not feature in their descriptions of this stage of their reading journeys. At the third or final stage of the reading journey, students have become readers and so their reading habits are seen as an identity or character (Dewey, 1922), an integral part of who they are. These reader identities shape and are shaped by their *qana’a* and reading choices, or *habitus*, a system of “durable transposable dispositions” which are “structured structures” acting as “structuring structures” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53) and which provide the tools for their own change. Early (1960) writes that the reader is now mature, desiring to read not only to know herself but to have a “deeper feeling for mankind” and being willing to dig “at the wellsprings of life” (p.166). Overall, the three-stage reading journey represents my identification of the process through which participants became readers, according to their data; it is not meant to be prescriptive but to enhance our understanding. Once students’ interest in reading was triggered they were then propelled into the next stage so that, if they were not seeking reading opportunities with the help of facilitators they had not come to a positive realization about reading. This should help teachers and parents to better understand the importance of those early reading experiences. Referring to literary appreciation, Early (1960) makes a similarly valid point about students going through the stages at their own pace:

Unfortunately, many persons are denied even unconscious enjoyment by having literature forced upon them before they are ready for it. Teachers should remember that a reader of trash has the chance of improving his taste; a non-reading pupil has no taste to improve (p.164).

8.2.1.2 Encouraging students to read: an iterative process

Running through the three stages of the reading journey is a common thread or lifeline of encouragement which may be one of the most important factors in bringing about reading. Although there are many programs for promoting reading such as SSR (Pilgreen, 2000) and Drop Everything and Read! (READ, Gardner, 2003), there are currently few if any models of reading encouragement in the literature, which could suggest that everyone knows what encouragement is and so it does not need to be explained. The problem arises when teachers encourage and students do not read. This research proposes a very simple,

multi-step model of encouragement which starts with someone – parent or teacher – issuing an invitation to the student to read, through her reading-related actions or words. It could involve any of the reading experiences outlined earlier such as a teacher, for example, reading to a student, giving her a book or suggesting that she keep a diary of her reading (for an older student) or any of a myriad of such actions (ch.6.2.2.4). The student responds in her own time and in her own way and the teacher must listen to that response without bias so that it guides her response to her needs as a reader. No response by a student is wrong; each response helps to inform our next course of action and it is all we have to work with. Each student has unique reading strengths, interests, desires and history of reading-related experiences and so the encouragement process has no script; it is trial and error. Once a student has responded, the teacher responds and this is repeated. This continues throughout the whole reading journey and students-as-readers never tire of being part of the ongoing dialogue.

Understanding encouragement as an ongoing dialogue-like process reminds us that our work is only beginning when we issue the first invitation to a student to “pick a book to read” or allow students to read in class. Few educators focus on the student’s response and none distinguish between *responding* to encouragement and *feeling* encouraged. The encouragement factor, therefore, gained double strength in my research as it emerged as two separate autonomous categories, each playing its own distinctive role in helping a student to become a reader: reading for the purpose of responding to encouragement and reading because of feeling encouraged to read as a *qana’a* (ch.6.2.1.5; ch.6.2.2.4). University students who are starting their reading journeys may articulate their wish to *respond* to encouragement to read, either to themselves or to others, as a purpose for reading (ch.7.3.3). This is encouragement as purpose. Alternately, as a result of positive reading-related experiences students may *feel* encouraged to have more, whether it involves being read to (ch.4.3.3) or reading on their own. Younger children are unlikely to state that they feel encouraged in those words; we see it in their actions and requests to “read it again”. This is encouragement as *qana’a*.

Discouraging reading

Another way of understanding the importance of encouragement as a factor in developing students’ reading habits is to look at what can *discourage* reading. Examples include but are not limited to, Arabic teachers who only want “to give the class and go” (IN322-ch.5.3.2) or who make them hate the Arabic language (IN123-ch.5.3.2.1), teachers who never encourage their students to read (IN123-ch.5.3.2) (Bouchard, 2001) or who take a helpless attitude when faced with a school’s inadequate reading materials (IN278-6.2.2.4), school librarians who do not show interest in carrying out their duties (IN278-6.2.2.4), university libraries which do not investigate or cater to their students’ reading interests (J7-14/11/08-

ch.5.3.3) (Worthy et al, 1999), parents who do not read to their children (IN306-ch.4.3.2) or who criticize students' reading choices (IN123-ch.4.3.3) (Norton, 1997) and having to read for examination purposes academic texts which even native English speakers find difficult (IN49&88-ch.6.2.2.5). The above examples demonstrate the dangers of doing nothing to encourage students to read because the absence of encouragement to read is not, simply, a neutral non-factor. It may be an active factor in developing non-readers.

8.2.2 Being readers: students' reader identities

Here, I will look at reader identities and reading culture, followed by a more complete discussion about the role of beliefs and affect, a short reference to the reader's need for texts to read and a reference to the importance of the body in reading habits.

8.2.2.1 Reader identities

Students' reader identities have been constructed alongside their many other identities within and across a wide range of cultures both prescribed and negotiated (large and small, in Holliday's, 1999, terms) (ch.2.4). No one prescribed culture can completely claim or contain students' reader identities although students may variously identify as Emiratis, Muslims and Arabs and favour, display or highlight one more than another on different occasions. We recall for example, how Ameera was concerned about road traffic accidents which claim the lives of many young Emiratis (ch.5.4.5) and how Azza read her uncle's articles about Emirati women's issues (ch.5.1.4.3) thus highlighting their Emirati cultural identities in addition to many others. Rather than having one, prescribed, culturally-aligned identity as-reader therefore, students' reader identities move within and across many different cultures. These include but are not limited to reader as-student, as-adolescent, as-fun lover, as-user of technology, as-member of an Emirati family, as-daughter, as-university student and more, including reader-as-Muslim, as-Emirati and as-Arab.

Their reader identities are socially constructed in the way that they position themselves as being similar to other readers with whom they discuss and share books (ch.5.2.2) - as members of a metaphoric literacy club (Smith, 1987) - and different from non-readers because reading makes them feel smart (ch.4.3.1). Becoming a reader means replacing the identity of non-reader with that of reader. Students' reader identities are sometimes "conflictual" (Canagarajah, 2004, p.117), for example, their identity as-reader challenges their identity as-daughter or as-student. Reader identities are never static but are constantly "evolving" (Canagarajah, 2004, p.117) as a result of readers frequently examining their reading habits in light of the texts they read. Nayeya wondered why she kept reading "only the novels" (IN15-23:49)

(ch.6.2.1.2) which led her to choose more challenging texts to read. Therefore, students' reader identities – both current and desired - strongly influence their reading choices.

Reader identities are indicated by the ways in which students think about and react to the views of others and this may involve withholding one's own opinion while acknowledging the views of others. For example, Ameera explained that she can read the views of others and understand that they have their views in the same way that she has her own views (ch.5.3.3). At other times students partly align themselves with the authors and the themes they write about. Naheya appears to find some aspects of her own identity such as the way she speaks and thinks reflected in the work of Atif Bellawi (ch.5.4.4). Reflecting their independence as readers, students are free to choose whatever they wish to read, now that they have passed their impressionable teens (ch.7.4.1). Therefore, we can see that readers exercise agency in the way they position themselves vis-à-vis the texts that they read (ch.5.3.3) as they exercise the right to agree or to disagree and to have their thinking challenged.

They use social spaces such as home, shopping malls and, to a lesser extent, the university campus, as venues for further constructing their reader identities but it is in their private spaces where most of this construction of reader identity takes place (ch.5.5.2). Norton's (1997) view that having a cultural identity means sharing a common history, language and "ways of viewing the world" (p.420), helps us to see that the most shared reading language among readers is English. This resulted from their reading-related experiences in Arabic or lack thereof. It raises the question of readers' Arab identities and, subsequently, their alignment with Arab culture, particularly in light of Al Qasmy's (2010) statement that Arabic is the "major component of Arab identity" (ch.2.4.3). Lack of a shared culture of Arabic reading may be explained by the scarcity of interesting reading materials in Arabic and a fascination with Western-style entertainment and media. If language, literacy and identity "breathe life into each other" (Birr Moje et al, 2009, p.416) and private international school graduates are reading very little in Arabic, then their non-Arabic identities which grew out of their education are being reinforced through their leisure reading.

Culture plays a major role in being a reader because, as Burns (2003) points out, texts cannot be interpreted in isolation from their cultural and social roles and purposes (p.19). Texts demand to be understood with regard to their "broad cultural and social roles and purposes" (ibid, p.19). Amna explains that if she does not have that broad cultural knowledge she will find it difficult to read: "I cannot understand why she is thinking this way and not that" (IN299). She understood that girls in the West have boyfriends and so she accepted that it was all right for the girl in the story she was reading to have one (ch.5.3.1).

Reductionist statements such as “Emiratis do not read” are often given equally reductionist reasons such as: “it’s an oral culture”, both of which accord culture a causative agency it does not have (Holliday, 2001, p.186) as if suggesting that orality prevents reading. It would be incorrect to say that Arab or Emirati culture either generates or does not generate readers. Another reductionist statement comes from Richardson (2004, p.433) who claims that, based on her experience with third level students in the UAE, Arab-Islamic culture is incompatible with reflective practice and that “This male-dominated society still resists the idea of women thinking for themselves” (Richardson, 2004, p.433). Clarke and Otaky (2006) reject such a reduced view of culture, calling it “formulaic stereotyping and over generalizing” (p.113) and report that female Emirati pre-service teachers in the same third level college as Richardson show evidence of engaging in reflection about their future roles as educators. My findings also refute Richardson’s claim as they show that students are reflecting on what they read and frequently choose their reading materials accordingly. In answer to Beatty et al’s (2009) call for reading culture in the UAE, my findings provide an outline of female Emirati university students’ reading culture.

Framing readers’ reading habits and identities within reading culture, allows for a better understanding of students’ cohesive group qualities while maintaining the individuality of their reading habits so that I can report on the various elements which are at play without resorting to generalization. Therefore, saying that Islam is one of students’ “identity allegiances” (Wallace, 2008, p.64) or that their reader identities are religious (Atay and Ece, 2009, p.26) means that their reading culture contains many elements of Islamic culture within it, rather than being concerned about individual frequencies of reading the Qura’n or books about the prophets. Indeed, their reading culture is strongly aligned with (prescribed) Islamic culture which places great importance on reading and seeking knowledge, the first word in the Qura’n being *iqra’a*, the imperative “Read”.

Earlier I distinguished between prescribed and negotiated cultures (ch.2.4; ch.5.6; ch.6.3; ch.7.4.2). Students’ reading culture is largely negotiated whereby members determine the ‘rules of behaviour’ by consensus, through doing culture rather than through prescribing. Members exercise such agency that they negotiate prescribed culture. A data sample presented in the previous chapter (ch.7.2) shows how Shawq (who has been actively negotiating and constructing her reading culture since she started to read, aged nine) takes a prescriptive approach to her negotiation of Emirati culture:

S: (IN96-13:38) Now, as I grow up and I see lots of students who aren’t into, em, reading, yea, I find it a shame because our country is developing and so should the minds of the students and the citizens.

In negotiating Emirati culture, she employs a prescriptive element with regard to reading habits so that young Emiratis who wish to claim their Emirati culture would be obliged to read, in her view.

A view of negotiated reading culture accords students more agency in their reading habits and it is consistent with the construct of encouragement outlined earlier as an ongoing dialogue in which students take an active role.

8.2.2.2 *Affect and beliefs about reading: continuing the discussion*

Students sustain and continually develop their reader identities mainly through their reasons as *qana'a* and their choices of books and authors. Readers' reasons for reading evolved into two distinct categories: purposes and *qana'a* (ch.6). Purposes involve rational, conscious decisions to read for a particular purpose such as to gain benefit, challenge oneself, fulfill a duty or obligation, pass the time, respond to encouragement, have fun or escape (ch.6.2.1). *Qana'a* are more affective than rational and include liking reading, being interested in it, wanting to read and feeling encouraged (6.2.2), they are longer lasting, become part of who the reader is, are not present in a non-reader and help to sustain a reading habit. My data suggests that the second category of reasons, *qana'a*, helps to sustain a reading habit. I will look at the importance of feelings and how they may relate to beliefs in leisure reading.

My findings suggest that students' affective response to reading is their primary reason for reading (Smith, F., 2004) and contrary to some of the literature there is no evidence from my research that students' beliefs about reading are habit-sustaining or that their feelings stem from their beliefs (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). Hume's (1739; 2006) claim that reason is a slave to the passions – the latter half of which I understand to mean our feelings and dispositions - and that reason alone never brings about action, closely resembles my conclusion and is consistent with some of the literature (Yamashita, 2004 p.1) (ch.6.2). My findings show the limitations of purely cognitive reasons for reading in either acquiring or sustaining a reading habit (ch.6.2). I believe that habit compensates for the limits of our immediate, conscious memory so that we commit to habit what we cannot keep in our memory and this includes feelings and emotions. It takes over from memory. We see an example in ch.7.3.3 where Hana wondered what it was that she used to do (when she used to read), suggesting that her habit was working to activate her memory, and her feeling that something was missing surfaced first.

Nuyen's (1984) summing up of Hume's views on the role of reason and passion comes close to capturing the essence of purposes and *qana'a*:

Reason is the track on which the human train is running, passions the engine. Without passions, we go nowhere, but without reason, we go nowhere in particular (p.44).

In other words students' beliefs guide their reading while their *qana'a* drive it so that their love of reading ensures that they read while their beliefs determine what they read. This ties in with Pascal's (1958) belief that it is not enough to use reason alone but that "the automaton" must also be activated (ch.6.2.3). Pascal seems to suggest that each time a decision to read is imminent, reason would take too long to bring it about, whereas feeling (he seems to equate feeling with automaton) takes us straight there. Feeling is a short-cut to what we want to do. Readers are unlikely to think to themselves "I read because I know that it is good for me" each time they read, which is consistent with Wilson, Hodges and LaFleur's (1995) view that "people do not have perfect access to the reasons for their attitudes" (p.16). Students are more likely to feel that they read because they like it but, if they are obliged to reflect – when asked by a researcher for example - they can call on their belief that reading is good for them and has many benefits. Once is enough for them to rationalize that fact at a conscious level and then it becomes stored in their habitual feelings and dispositions toward reading which are sufficient to sustain their reading behavior every time.

The question, then, of the relationship between beliefs about and feelings for reading may best be answered by the fact that there is no evidence that beliefs about reading generate feelings for it but that, while both develop from reading experiences, the opposite *may* be true. Students' positive reading experiences mean that they first come to know reading as something they love and once they love it, they are likely to organize or define their beliefs to fit with their feelings. In this sense feelings *may* be a contributing factor to beliefs about reading. This shows again the importance of enjoyable reading-related experiences.

Students' *qana'a* are seldom purely negative or positive but conditional. Non-readers cannot will themselves to read. Although powerful, their ability to use their will and reason is not powerful enough to overcome the effects of previous conditioning which has resulted in their present dispositions (ch.6.2.3.1). Those who are positively disposed toward reading have made a long-term decision to read, and their more short-term decisions to read usually depend on the availability of time and suitable materials. In other words, students' reading attitudes or dispositions have been conditioned by their previous reading-related experiences. Another conditional element is that although the language used to refer to attitudes is usually situated somewhere along a continuum from positive to negative, students' reading attitudes (*qana'a*) are conditional so that a non-reader is likely to say "it depends" (IN278), in the same interview in which she expresses hatred for reading. Similarly, readers' positive attitudes toward reading are also implicitly conditional in that certain texts would be acceptable while others would not. It is helpful to realize,

particularly with regard to non-readers, that students' reading *qana'a* are neither completely negative nor positive but are conditional on certain factors being in place. This is evidence that students' *qana'a* can be turned from negative to positive when the right conditions are in place.

8.2.2.3 Readers must read something

Being a reader brings with it independence regarding most things related to reading. Early's (1960) third stage of growing to appreciate literature also shows the same reader independence:

At the highest stage of literary appreciation, the reader responds with delight, knows why, chooses discriminatingly, and relies on his own judgment. His reading has range and power. He finds delight in many kinds of literature from many periods of time, appreciating the best of each genre and of each author (p.166).

Of course students as-readers are never fully independent as they rely on the authors who write the books that they read. Books are read in abridged and unabridged versions depending on the difficulty of the text and the readers' maturity. Borrowing books does not have the same appeal as owning the books they read so students avoid going to public or institutional libraries but delight in expanding their own, personal collections.

They identify a number of sources for the books they read, mainly bookshops (ch.5.5.1), book fairs (ch.5.4.6.2), friends, family, online sites, home libraries and occasionally, a public or institutional library - although the concept of going to a public library is not common. When choosing a book to read, readers are likely to select initially on the basis of the attractiveness of the book's cover and the catchiness of its title (ch.5.3.2) which suggests the aesthetic aspect of reading (ch.5.3.2.2), an experience to be treasured and enjoyed from many aspects. Their choices are then filtered by many of their underlying identities (ch.5.2.4), both current and desired, as expressed by their stated preferences, interests, standards and beliefs. Their descriptions of how they choose the items they read usually refer in some way to aspects of who they are, such as the way they like to receive advice in a non-didactical manner, an addiction to shoes (as a reason for choosing a book with shoes on its cover) or their preference for an author who appears to express their own thoughts before they themselves have articulated them. Their carefully considered reading selections are individual, personal, distinct, varied, adventurous, demanding, ambitious, lacking in conformity to the expectations of others, exciting, untamed and unpredictable.

Even in this electronic age, being a reader means reading paper, hold-in-the-hand books or "book-books" (Appendix 5, p.1, 1:39), and, not just *having* books, but developing relationships with them and viewing them as friends. Friends can be trusted to give good advice and to help one get out of trouble; so can

books (ch.5.2.3). Friends can make one feel calm and cheered up; so can books (ch.4.3.1). One's first encounter with a soon-to-be friend is important; so it is with books whose covers either entice or repel the would-be reader (ch.5.3.2). Friends are often revisited; so too are books (ch.4.3.1). Friends often keep one company on a journey; so it is with books (ch.5.5). Students can spend long hours chatting to friends or being in their company and often prefer to be with them than to watch television or a movie; so it is with their books. Friends are chosen with care; so, too, are the books chosen by students as-readers, as we saw above.

8.2.2.4 *Students' reading habits are also of the body*

Students' reading habits are as much of the body (Mauss, 1973) as they are of the mind because readers must physically *be* somewhere while reading. The body has largely been absent from most of the literature on leisure reading, apart from Lesesne's (2006, p.8) *Naked Reading* which describes the "abandoned and oblivious joy" that her daughter finds in reading in the cupboard. My findings take reading out of its intellectual cocoon and bring it back together with the body and its senses so that books are enjoyed by the whole reader, by being smelt (ch.5.4.6.2) and felt (ch.6.2.2.4), held and treasured (ch.6.2.2.4), heard and vocalized (ch.5.4.2; ch.5.5.2) and selected for their visual appeal (ch.5.1; 5.2.2.1) and by students being able to shout their excitement at finding what they want (5.5.2). My participants-as-readers' favorite place to read is in bed (ch.5.5.2), in their private room with the door closed (ch.5.5.2), with dimmed lighting (ch.5.5.2), a drink beside them (ch.5.5.2), a physical book to hold and treasure and their personal book collections arranged on their shelves or gathering in a pile beside their bed (IN321-ch.5.3.3).

I also observed students taking up various reading positions during in-class reading time where some chose to kick off their shoes and sit on the floor with their backs supported by the classroom wall while others lounged in their chairs as best they could and one or two faced each other as they read silently. Re-embodiment of leisure reading is in keeping with Bourdieu's (1990) concept of *habitus* as being "embodied history" (p.56). Manguel (1996) describes how he used to lie stretched out on the floor of his father's library with his toes caught under a chair (perhaps to anchor him as he took flight among his father's books). It seems clear that students as-readers are not merely reproducing the social conditions of their own production (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 87) but that they are shaping their own reading *habitus*, consistent with Piecowye's (2003) findings of a possible "*habitus* in transition" among a similar group of Emirati students when he studied their use of computer technology.

8.2.3 The absence of a reading habit: being non-readers

Non-readers associate leisure reading with silly, unimportant, waste-of-time types of texts that have no benefit (ch.4.3.2) which gives them a reason for not reading for leisure because they do not see the point if there is no benefit. They have not had their interest in reading triggered so they have not started their reading journeys. They were not read to as children and did not have any enjoyable reading-related experiences, they did not see family members reading other than obligatory religious or academic texts, they do not have a wide variety of interesting books in the home and they find reading boring and difficult - particularly in a second or foreign language. This gives them another reason for not reading. Therefore, they do not associate reading with good feelings but they acknowledge that it gives others fun and enjoyment. Similarly, they consider reading to be important for others but not for themselves. Here, we see students' affect overriding their beliefs about reading as they believe that it is important but they do not like it and so do not engage in it. Some express a wish to become readers but they are unable to help themselves at a cognitive level; they cannot do it alone.

Having developed reasons for not reading, non-readers read for purposes only, which are mainly academic and religious. This is consistent with Strommen and Mates (2004) who found that "not-readers" describe reading "in terms of purpose rather than pleasure" (p.198), usually in order to get its many benefits. Their complaint of a lack of time to read (ch.7.4.3) may be misleading because there is no evidence that if they had time they would read. They prefer to watch a movie than to read a book, their use of the library is limited to checking out books for their research and if pressed, they have difficulty recalling a book they completed which was not assigned for class. Leisure reading does not feature in their leisure plans.

Conditional element

Non-readers are negatively disposed toward reading and have made the long-term decision not to read but, on closer inspection, their *qana'a* are negative only up to a point, until they meet the right book which, in most cases, has eluded them until now. This shows their *qana'a* to be conditional rather than negative and although they profess to hate it, they do different kinds of reading which they do not consider to be reading. Similarly conditional views were found among third-level US students' metaphors describing reading where they were asked to complete the sentence: Reading is like _____. Many responded that "it depends" on the type of text and the purpose for reading (Paulson and Armstrong, 2011, p.501).

Non-readers claim to like reading for certain purposes but they identify themselves as non-readers, which suggests that reading is not an identity for them as it is for readers, but a role that they play mainly for academic purposes. Like all good role players, their lines are scripted, they depend heavily on direction and cues from others and when class assignments are over, so too, are their roles as readers; the role of reader ends as they exit the stage. From a sociological perspective, I believe that non-readers cannot avail of the cultural capital generated by readers because they do not have the code, to use Bourdieu's (1984) concept:

A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. The conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture is the hidden condition for recognizing the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason (p.2).

Although Bourdieu is referring to art, that sums up how many non-readers feel when they think about reading a book.

8.3 Implications of the findings for educators

In 2005, research which was commissioned by the Minister for Education for the UAE of the nation's education system included in its findings that government school libraries were understocked and underused, and a seven-billion pound reform program was initiated to bring about a "fundamental transformation of schools and the education system" (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer and El Nemr, 2007, p.23). It identified a need for an education system that will produce students who can think and solve problems (Al Najami, January 22nd, 2008), who are bilingual and prepared to succeed at university without requiring remedial courses when they leave secondary school (Afshan, 2011). I believe that at the forefront of such reforms are teachers who can apply sound empirical findings to their students' literacy practices while also developing their own classroom-based findings through action research. But, thinking skills, ability to tackle problems, readiness for university and biliteracy: how can overworked teachers deliver? My research shows that reading can go a long way toward delivering on all fronts.

8.3.1 The need to investigate students' reading behavior and tastes

How many of us can say, like Miller (2009): "The best lessons I have learned about teaching reading have come from my students" (p.5)? We should get to know our students as readers because every student reads something outside of class, even those who profess to be non-readers. In my research, the question

“Do you like to read?” sometimes produced contrasting results when asked thus: “Where is your favourite place to read?” Non-reader Inas, for example responded to the first question that reading is boring but that she hoped to like reading (ch.6.2.3) while her answer to the second question was “in the family sitting-room” (ch.5.5.2) where she frequently read a book that was recommended by her friends (ch.5.3.3.1). Talking to students about their reading in groups or in pairs encourages them to open up more and they remind each other of what they have read. Encouraged by her co-interviewee, Inas, for example, revealed that she often spends over an hour reading in online forums (ch.5.4.5). We need to keep searching for the right questions to ask which will unlock the reader inside each student (Miller, 2009) and wait patiently for the answers to come. This is essential if we want to match students and books because their reading choices are very personal and diverse. When many students happen to read the same title it does not indicate a collective preference for a particular book, and the same title may be read differently by many, as we saw in the case of the book *Binat Al Riyadh* (ch.5.4.2).

As teachers, if we do not ask our students about their reading they are unlikely to tell us. Young children are delighted to tell their teachers about everything in their lives including books and reading but, as they get older, they stop talking about reading and sadly, many stop reading. We have much to learn by listening to our students before taking action and to know what like to read we must walk beside them on their reading journeys as real facilitators.

8.3.2 The power of the teacher

If we show students how to embrace reading as a lifelong pursuit and not just a collection of skills for school performance, we will be doing what I believe we have been charged to do: create readers (Miller, 2009, p.4).

As teachers, our power is enormous. Even our most guarded words speak volumes as do our silences while our actions have no volume control. We send messages to our students in the way we talk and the topics we choose to talk about (ch.1.4.3), when we fill our classrooms with books (ch.5.4.1) or turn them into reading clubs (ch.6.2.2.4), read books to our students (ch.6.2.1.5; ch.7.2), encourage them to bring books to read in class (ch.5.5.3), ask about their reading (ch.6.2.2.4), take them to the library (ch.7.2) or on field trips to a bookshop or book fair (ch.6.2.2.5), when we patiently encourage students who struggle to read a class text (ch.7.2) and constantly look for ways in which to stimulate their interest in reading. Through all of the above they learn the importance of reading. Our successes lie in those students we have inspired by a word, a book, a short in-class reading, an encouraging comment in their diary (ch.6.2.2.4), a conversation about their reading, our research projects, our passion and underlying beliefs about reading and our generosity in sharing with them what little knowledge we have about it.

Conversely, many students also learn a lot that we did not plan to teach them (Smith, F., 2004) including that “all kinds of books are boring” (IN278-ch.6.2.2.5), that reading is difficult (ch.6.2.3), that they hate it, reading (ch.4.3.2) and that it is only for exams (ch.4.3.1). They also learn that their teachers do not read (ch.4.3.1) and the question we should ask ourselves is: do I give my students any evidence to the contrary? We should examine our classroom practices which often consist of nothing more than intensive reading of carved-up chunks of class texts, lacking in continuity, real meaning, personal connection, relevance, delight and more. Discouragement, therefore, is a real factor which must not be ignored as we may promote it just by saying and doing nothing.

Teachers can encourage instead of teaching reading

To paraphrase and adapt Khalil Gibran (1926), as teachers we must lead students to the threshold of their own love of reading believing that it already lies dormant within them so that we will strive to activate it. How do we bring them there? We cannot teach students to love reading in the same way that we teach grammar but we can and must encourage and inspire. The construct of a reading journey and the expansion of the construct of encouragement, from my findings, help us to better understand how we may achieve this. Based on our ongoing investigation of our students’ reading habits, we must establish at which point in their reading journey they are and act accordingly. If students have no interest in reading, we must provide plenty of positive, enjoyable reading experiences to trigger their interest and we must be prepared to read to them. This first stage cannot be bypassed (Early, 1960); the journey does not start without it. If students are interested but are not reading it is possible that they lack any of the four facilitators identified earlier (ch.7.3) and if they have passed these two stages we will know them as readers.

Encouragement runs through all stages of the reading journey. Simply telling students to go to a library to read a book is not encouraging them although it may be a first step (ch.6.2.2.4). The newly expanded construct of encouragement shows us that the ultimate aim of reading encouragement is that our students will *feel* encouraged at an affective level (6.2.2.4). This feeling of encouragement is usually noticeable in younger children in the way they talk excitedly about their reading or when we observe them reading. The new construct also shows us that before *feeling* encouraged, older students may take a more cognitive route and at first, read *to respond* to our encouragement (6.2.1.5), just as Bouchard (2001) was ready to do. Both of these are achieved by providing successful reading experiences, continuing to listen to students’ feedback and taking them a step further (Miller, 2009). Therefore, the key factor in bringing about encouragement to read is for students to have positive or enjoyable reading experiences, regardless

of whatever stage they are at in their reading journey. Encouragement is never-ending. Investigating our students' reading habits shows them that we care about them as readers and they are likely to respond. Students can become discouraged when they struggle to read an interesting text which is too difficult for them. Instead of suggesting that they abandon it, which may discourage them further, we should facilitate their interest and read it for them (Smith, F., 2004) or help them to identify someone who can help them with the meanings if it is in Arabic, as Amna did, for example (ch.5.2.1).

Feelings for reading cannot be passed on; they must be experienced and realized. Students cannot imagine or visualize what they are missing when they do not read for leisure (Dewey, 1922) and so, the types of reading-related experiences they have will determine whether or not they become readers. The classroom should be fully exploited as a social reading space so that non-readers may come to realize many things about reading. Also, teachers can read to their students who are never too old to be read to (ch.6.2.1.5) and many are encouraged to read the book that the teacher read to them (ch.6.2.1.5) (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994). We should work with librarians to build on the knowledge that students are attracted to books by their covers (ch.5.3.2.1) by ensuring that eye-catching displays flood the environment with books facing outward so that students are drawn to pick them up and investigate.

8.3.3 The threat to Arabic literacy

There is a worrying implication from my research of a lack of interest in reading in Arabic among private international-school graduates who are readers. This is unfortunate from many aspects. Parents all over the Arab world – and more recently the oil-rich states – believe that Western education systems are the best and want them for their children (Godwin, 2006, p.8). The result, as my research shows, is that many students are unable to read in Arabic and they therefore, have no interest in reading in their native language (ch.5.2.1). Fathers who wish to share their love of Arabic reading with their daughters often face what they see as resistance (ch.6.2.3). The sad fact is that most cannot read in Arabic. As Arabic is a key part of the Arab identity (Al Qasmy, 2010) this lack of Arabic reading among a large and growing number of students may have implications for their Emirati identity and culture. If the most privileged Emirati families favour Western-style education in the formative years for their children, this can result in the next generation finding themselves firmly severed from their very identity as Arabs. Once students' native language has been replaced by another from infancy, it is extremely difficult for them to reconnect with it. Alshaboul (2004) places the responsibility with parents and while, in the US Arab parents face obstacles in maintaining their children's cultural, religious, and social identities through their literacy practices, many Emirati parents in the UAE are choosing a Western-style education regardless of the cost. Some students regret the loss of shared literacy experiences with their fathers but feel helpless to change

the situation (ch.5.2.1). If people have the right to be literate in their own language (Alshaboul, 2004) those rights are being denied to most private international school students.

The implications for teachers in the UAE are enormous. The dilemma is that if, as expatriate teachers, we do such a wonderful job of promoting reading in English that our students never look at an Arabic book, we may well wonder if we have a responsibility beyond this. We know that we send very strong signals to students that Arabic literacy is not valued – just by omission and by favouring English - and therefore, we are no longer neutral bystanders but are implicated in reinforcing their views of their own language. The fact that students find interesting reading materials to read in English in well-stocked school libraries but few in Arabic and that their English teachers read to them while their Arabic teachers do not, tips the balance even further in favour of the dominant language. The implications for Arabic teachers are even more important. My research shows many missed opportunities. It is hoped that the current educational reforms taking place in the UAE (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer and El Nemr, 2007, p.23) will empower Arabic teachers to implement the changes that are needed in the classroom.

Implications for government policy-makers in the UAE are even more serious because in a number of Emirati homes the Arabic language now matches the United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) description of languages which are "definitely endangered: children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home" (Moseley, 2010) although the UAE is not listed in UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. Education for all must not mean forfeiting one's native language and my research shows that interest in reading in English cannot be transferred to reading in Arabic; interest must be triggered in each language separately (ch.7.2). Any approach to encouraging reading must involve school management, parents, teachers and students working together (Bouchard, 2001), so that families' own literacies are respected and given the importance that they deserve, together with a realization that some parents may have lacked schooling opportunities when they were younger.

It may take years to build a reader but only a moment to take the first step. Before we teach our students we must examine our own beliefs and passions with regard to reading. If we do not believe that reading in its undivided sense (not merely academic reading) is essential for our students and if we do not genuinely care about promoting readers we will not succeed because our students, as readers of the world (Freire, 1983) are busy reading us. Promoting reading takes patience, time, effort, intention and a belief in the power of reading (Krashen, 2004). We must be encouraged by a single success and readjust our actions to fulfill our wishes for all of our students. We should fill our offices, classrooms and hallways with interesting reading items, eye-catching print and books of all kinds to lend and to lose. We must be

adaptable and keep searching for that one book that will match our reluctant readers. We must look for the roots of their reluctance to read, and help them to engage in a type of reading at which they can succeed while getting much enjoyment. It is all about encouraging, providing plenty of reading items and plenty of enjoyable reading experiences. We could sum it up as triggering students' interest, facilitating that interest and continuing to engage in dialogue about reading as they sustain that interest as a reading habit.

8.4 Limitations and recommendations.

This research is an investigation into the reading habits of a particular group of female Emirati university students using a convenience sample which was limited only by the participation of those who were willing to take part. Although their demographics are very diverse they are typical of a cross-section of university students in many Gulf Arab countries. Such diversity is reflected in the words of one participant when I asked her if she thought that a particular magazine was culturally appropriate for Emirati women in general:

A: (IN229-47:49) No, no, no, I will not say in general. I can not ever say general (She speaks each word distinctly and evenly to mark their importance) because I might not be like every individual so 'twould be hard for me to say.

I set limitations on the amount of class time I used for data gathering and always put my students' needs before my needs as researcher so that weekly snapshot surveys, requiring the use of valuable class time, were limited to short time spans or were sometimes abandoned until another day. Students did their best to minimize my self-imposed limitations by saying: "ask me anything you want" and "I am ready to help at any time". Such willingness to co-operate was curtailed by the limited joint free time both they and I had on-campus together and the challenge of finding a space in which to carry out our interviews. Not being able to engage in conversations in Arabic with my participants may have also limited the data which I was able to gather in some cases, a point that was made by two participants:

A: (IN63-46:58) You know, in my language, maybe, if you were Arabic, so you can understand

R: you mean you could tell me more?

A: Yea, maybe.

and

S: (IN294-3:05) I don't know how I can say it in English.

In such cases I encouraged them to speak in Arabic and got a trusted Arabic speaker to translate it for me later.

I opted not to follow Jazzar's (1991) suggestion that a female researcher should enter female students' homes and see what reading materials they have beside their bed (to replicate his study of male university students' literacy habits), considering it to be an unnecessary intrusion. I was confident, instead, that my participants spoke honestly as they presented me with the information that they wished me to have (and I was not interested in accessing information which they did not wish me to have).

This research was carried out with the express wish of informing classroom practice and teacher philosophy and beliefs so that its effects would reach the students who need to benefit from it most: our non-readers. Therefore, following on from the implications for teachers above I suggest that teachers carry out action research in their classrooms, using the findings presented here as starting points. The theory and constructs presented here could be tested and developed further. We need to view our non-reading students as potential readers because we know that their *qana'a* toward reading are conditional, no matter how absolutely they may be expressed. This means that there is hope. Whatever age our students are, they need intervention now and action research is one way of delivering the best that research has to offer. Such research should have as its aim the creation of reading-friendly classrooms where students come to see reading – both academic and non-academic - as a source of joy and discovery.

Other recommendations:

- A more in-depth investigation is needed to better understand how public school students develop a dislike for reading.
- While it is important to acknowledge the work of large numbers of parents who actively encourage their children to read immediate steps must be taken to promote Arabic reading so as to reverse the erosion of culture and identity, particularly among private international school educated students.
- Teachers of Arabic in both the private and public sectors need to be encouraged and supported to take a more active role in promoting reading among their students.
- There is an urgent need for Arabic writers of good quality fiction and non-fiction for young adults to connect with their potential readers, to write what the topics they want to read and to actively pursue the distribution of their work to ensure it reaches the hands of eager readers. This study provides some successful examples.
- Another full-scale research of the public school libraries is needed to see if any of the recommendations made by McNally (2003) have been implemented, as my findings show that

where students used school libraries which were well stocked and maintained by caring librarians, they became interested in reading.

- Finally, all current and future educational reforms in the UAE should ensure that chief among its aims will be the promotion of a love of reading which remains as a constant in the midst of change.

8.5 Final paragraph

We cannot predict human behavior but, as educators, we can inform ourselves about patterns of behavior which have emerged from past events showing factors which appear to affect reading habits, and we can use that knowledge where needed and where appropriate. Panichas (2005) links his concern about the disappearance of readers to the disappearance, also, of religion and patrimony in society. In my research setting, both of those factors are alive and well and do not appear to be planning to leave centre-stage in the immediate future. Does that mean that leisure reading in the UAE is assured at least for now? Like Panichas, I will answer my own question, based on my empirical findings: I believe that leisure reading is going to grow in strength, with the help of concerned educators and parents.

Art is not like mathematics or philosophy. It is a subjective, sensual, and highly personal activity in which facts and ideas are the servants of fancy and feeling; and the artist's first aim is not truth but delight. Even when, like Spenser, he wishes to instruct, he seeks to do so by delighting. It follows that the primary object of a student of literature is to be delighted. His duty is to enjoy himself: his efforts should be directed to developing his faculty of appreciation (Cecil, 1957, p.4).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Student Consent to Participate in Research

Research Project: *What factors affect the reading habits of female Emirati students? An in-depth study of reading habits and practices among female Emirati university students.*

I _____, a student at *Khaleeji* University, agree to participate in a study of the reading habits and interests of female Emirati students. I agree to answer truthfully any questions that I am asked, in so far as I feel comfortable doing so. By allowing this data to be used for research purposes I will be helping to generate a body of knowledge about the key factors relating to free reading among female students in the U.A.E. This will benefit *Khaleeji* University students as it will help teachers better understand their needs as readers.

I understand that all personal identification will be removed assuring complete anonymity. I also understand that participating in this study will not affect my academic status. The study will be carried out in strict adherence to internationally established rules of confidentiality restricting access to the researcher whose name is given here.

If at any time I would like to withdraw from the study I may do so with no penalty attached. I acknowledge that I will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

For more information about the study or to discontinue participation please contact:

Celine Kamhieh at (02) 4079822, celine_kamhieh@zu.ac.ae

or Dr. R**** M****. at: _____ email address

Student's Name and signature:

ID# _____

Date _____

Appendix 2 – snapshot survey

Yesterday, which of these items did you read because **you wanted to**, **not** because you had to? Please provide the information required.

EMAILs	Approximately how many did you read?			WHY?	WHERE did you read?
Read - Arabic: 1-3; 4-10; >10	English: 1-3; 4-10; >10				
Which ones did you read first?					
Did you delete some without reading them? Y / N. If Yes, why?					
PHONE TEXT MESSAGES	Total number Received - in English _____		In Arabic _____	Mixed _____	
Give an example of the mixed language used					
MSN Chat	How many minutes - in Arabic?	In English?	Mixed?		
BLOG	How many minutes - in Arabic?	In English?	Mixed?		
INTERNET	How many minutes - in Arabic?	In English?			
DATABASES	Name the database(s) you visited:				
Here, below, name the magazines, newspapers, and books that you read and say which parts you read, and why and where you read them					
MAGAZINE	Mag Name	Which parts did you read?	WHY did you read them?	WHERE did you read?	Where did you get it?
Arabic -					
English -					
Other Lang? -					
NEWSPAPER	Newspaper	Which parts did you read?	WHY did you read them?	WHERE did you read?	Where did you get it?
Arabic -					
English -					
Other Lang? -					
BOOK	Book's name	pages you read	WHY did you read it?	WHERE did you read?	Where did you get it?
Arabic - Name of book(s):		() pages			
English - Name of book(s):		() pages			
Other Lang? - Name of book(s):		()pages			

1. When did you last take a book from the university library for interest or pleasure (**not** for course work)?
2. What could teachers do to encourage you to read more?
3. Anything else you would like to tell me about your reading?

Appendix 3 – journal entry prompts

Leisure Reading (in Arabic, English and other languages)

NOW

Do I like to read? Why? / Why not?
Do I read whenever I can?
What is my favourite leisure time activity (what do I like to do in my free time for fun)? e.g. watch TV or a DVD, use my phone, go on the Internet, go to the mall or read a book?
Do I prefer to read in Arabic or in English or both (or in another language)?
What types of things do I like to read? (Books, magazines, newspapers, emails, Internet)
Where do I get them? Do I borrow from people / family / friends?
How do I decide what to read? What are my favourite things to read?
What are my favourite books / who are my favourite authors?
Do I think I am good at reading? How do I know?
In my home, who likes to read a lot?
What reading materials are there usually in my home? (daily newspaper? Books? etc).
Approximately how many books are there in my home? Approximately how many of them have I read?
Are there certain books that I am not allowed to read? Who decides what I can read?
What nice or good reading experiences have I had recently?
What not-so-nice reading experiences have I had recently?
Who encourages me to read at the university? At home?
Now, what is my attitude to reading?
Anything else about me (how I see myself) as a reader?

LOOKING BACK

What is my first memory of books / reading or being read to as a child?
Who read to me when I was young? When, where, what and how often?
How did I learn to read? Who taught me? How did they teach me?
How did I learn to read at school?
Was I taught the names of the alphabet letters or their sounds, or was I taught the whole word from flashcards?
Was I good at reading in school? How did I know if I was good or not?
Did I like to read at school? Why? / Why not?
Did we have a school library? What was it like? How often did we go as a class? / Individually?
Did I ever go to a book exhibition? Who brought me?
Did I ever go to a public library? Who brought me?
What was a very good reading experience I had in my early life?
What was a horrible or not-so-nice reading experience from my early life?
Who encouraged me to read at school? At home?
Did my attitude to reading change? When? Why?
What else can I tell about my memories of reading?

Appendix 4 – Interview question bank

I introduce my research topic, remind the interviewee of their right to withhold information at any time and assure them that their participation will not affect their grade in any way. I express my appreciation for their time and contribution.

1. Tell me about reading in your life [anything you want to tell me about your interest in reading, its role in your life as a child, today and in the future – as you see it].

OR

Do you like to read for leisure or enjoyment? Why? / Why not?

2. How often do you read?
3. What are your reading practices? E.g. reading behavior - read silently or aloud; alone or in company;
4. What do you do when you do not know a word in the text?
5. Where is your favorite place to read?

6. What affects your leisure reading these days?
7. Did anyone ever encourage you to read? What did they do?
8. Whose advice are you most likely to take regarding reading, your friends', parents', teachers' or others?

9. Who in your family likes to read?
10. Did anyone read to you when you were very young? (if not answered in the previous question).
11. Do you have many books at home apart from textbooks?
12. Do you ever read to your little brother or sister (or other relative)?
13. Who else do you know who likes to read (outside the immediate family)?

14. Did any of your teachers ever encourage you to read outside class? Describe.
15. Talk about reading in your school. (Was there a library? Did teachers talk about reading?)

16. In what language(s) do you read for leisure?
17. Tell me about a pleasant / unpleasant experience you had with reading in Arabic / English.
18. Describe how you learned to read in Arabic / English and who taught you.
19. Tell me about class-related reading; how much is assigned and do you usually get it done?
20. To what extent does your class work affect your time for leisure reading?

21. How do you rate yourself as a reader in English / Arabic?
 22. Has your interest in reading changed since you were younger? Talk about the effect of attending university on your leisure reading.
 23. Tell me about the last book you read for leisure?
 24. Why / how did you choose it? How do you usually choose your books?
 25. What conditions were in place when you read it?
 26. What makes a book good or interesting?
 27. What would put you off reading a book?
 28. Do you have a favourite author or book?
 29. What types of books / texts do you like to read?
 30. Where do you get your reading materials?
 31. How do you find out about reading materials?
 32. Talk about how you use the university library.
 33. How often do you go to a public library? Describe a time you went there.
 34. How often do you go to a bookshop? Describe your last visit to one, with whom you went, when, what did you do there and did you enjoy your visit?
 35. Does anyone tell you not to read certain things or to censor your reading in any way?
 36. Do you prefer to read online or in a book (electronic or paper)?
 37. Are you aware of censorship in the country?
 38. Talk about your reading during the holidays and weekends if different to the usual days.
 39. What things might prevent you from reading?
 40. What are your main leisure activities?
 41. Which do you prefer to do: read a book or watch its movie?
 42. Do you talk about your reading to anyone?
 43. They say that Arabs do not read; what do you think?
 44. Why do you think many students do not read?
 45. Reading the Qura'n; is it (leisure) reading?
 46. Do you think that reading for leisure is important? Why? Why not?
- What are your reasons for (for not) reading?

Appendix 5 – sample interview transcript: IN49&88

This interview was carried out with two students who were high school friends and who wished to be interviewed together.

IN = respondent #49; N = respondent #88; Both = both students together; R = researcher

R: I am interested in anything you want to tell me about reading (I explain more about my research). How important is reading? Do you differentiate between reading for work ..

N: I think, eh, when we have holiday we read much than ...eh school reading and we have eh

R: Yea, yea, when you have holidays, you read more (Interrupted by IN)

IN: for me no, the same. I don't read at all. (Laughter all around).

R: You never, ever read a book? Like you never pick up a book and read it?

IN: No

R: Did you ever, when was the last book you read, either in Arabic or English or any other language?

IN: (1:39) Book-book, you mean?

R: Yea

IN: Never

R: How many years did you spend in the English Foundation program?

IN: Only one year.

R: One year, and did you read any book there?

IN: Yes, because the teacher said I have to read.

R: OK, and what did he tell you to do?

IN: Ehhhm, he gave us a ...

R: A list, maybe?

IN: No, not a list, number of book, a number of pages we have to read in all the semester.

R: Did he pick the book?

IN: No. We have to pick the book.

R: Where did you get the book?

IN: From the LEC Learning Enhancement Centre in the library)

R: So, they were graded readers, in other words they were made simpler than the real (interrupted by I)

IN: Stories

R: Stories. They were simplified stories?

IN: Yes

R: What we call graded readers in the LEC, those thin books

IN: Hm

R: They're actually simplified versions of the real original book, did you know that?

IN: Hm

R: So, which book did you pick, or books?

IN: I don't ..

R: Okay.

R: Did you like reading when you did it or ...

IN: No

R: Okay. (Laughter) I see you wrinkling your nose. You didn't enjoy reading it. Did you complete the number of pages he told you to?

IN: Yes

R: and you did it only because he asked you to?

IN: Yes

R: So, before that, then, can you remember a book you read before that, like in primary school, secondary school? Did you have a library in school?

IN: Yes.

R: Tell me about it.

IN: I didn't know anything about it (Laughter)

R: Did you ever visit it?

IN: No (Laughter)

R: So how do you know there was a library?

IN: I think we had classes in the library.

R: Okay, so sometimes you had a class in the library?

IN: Yea

R: Who took you there?

IN: Eh, my teacher.

R: And she said now we're going to the library? What did she say to you? And it was in English or in Arabic?

Both: Arabic

R: What did she say to you, if you can tell me in English what she said to you?

IN: Only we go to library and we have a, a lesson.

R: She didn't say: Now we are going to the library?

IN: Yes, she said.

R: And she didn't say why or

IN: No ...to change the place.

N: Yes, to change the place.
R: So, you (to N) had the same experience?
IN: We were together
R: Oh, you were in the same school?
IN: Yeh
R: Which school was that?
N: XXXX School
R: That's out outside Abu Dhabi, right?
N: 40 – 45 minutes
R: So, the teacher would take you to the library?
Both: Yeh,
R: the whole class.
Both: Yeh
R: And you think it was just for changing the scenery?
R: What did you do in the library?
IN: Listen to the lecture the teacher gave us
R: So she would teach you the same as if it was in the classroom?
IN: Yes.
R: I see. So, you were sitting there in the library. Were you looking around you?
IN: We see books
R: You saw books, (Laughter) on the shelves?
IN: Yes
R: What did you feel? I mean did the books look interesting or attractive?
Both: (a very strong) No!
R: You weren't interested in just reaching up and taking (interrupted)
IN: I think all about history and, (pause) and, (pause) not anything interesting
R: So, you did have a look
IN: Yea
R: You looked at the books and you saw the names of them. Were they in Arabic or English?
IN: In Arabic, all in Arabic
R: And did any of your classmates take a book, as far as you know?
N: I think yes
R: Did you have to go to the library another time for borrowing a book?
IN: In the school?

R: Yea. Did the librarian say this is your class time when you can go and get a book or

B: No

R: No, you had no time?

IN: We had subject name eh library

R: Oh, lovely,

N: Yea, and this subject is only to teach us how to make a research paper

IN: Like information literacy

R: Oh, wow!! So, you were doing information literacy out in XXXX school?

IN: Yes, in Grade eh, 12.

R: Tell me a little bit about it; what happened ... in the library class?

IN: Eh, (pause and talking to each other in Arabic to decide what they would say next).

Both: Like information literacy

N: We learn how to search and what we have to do.

R: OK, so then did you actually search through the books?

B: No

N: We didn't make a practice

R: It was just theory, not practice. So, you went to the library with that library teacher for library class but it was really like information literacy, which you are doing now (looking at I) and you will be doing next semester (Looking at N). And she just said when you want to search for something ... what did she say?

IN: About books, not websites.

R: She said if you are looking for something

Both: yea

R: ... here's a book and

N: and make cards when we want to research. Also, draft one and draft two.

R: Oh, to write a research paper?

N: Yes. Only teach us how to write research paper.

R: OK. So, that was your only experience with the library, two experiences, you went with the teacher, the regular teacher? As a class? And then you went also for a library class. Anything else, about the library in school?

IN: No

R: OK, So, now in the university there is a library. OK. Do you ever go into it?

B: Yes

R: Good!! For what? (Laughter)

IN: (Still laughing) For walking.

R: For walking? (Laughter). Is it nice to walk there?

N: It's nice to see the books and (Laugh) read the titles (laughter)

R: Aaaaah, so have you a particular place that you like to walk in the library, where you like the books more than the other place? ... or do you just go around?

IN: No, go around. I feel comfortable when I go to the library.

R: That's interesting, why?

N: Quiet place, good place for studying, and eh,

IN: All students study

R: And that encourages you to study, yeh?

B: Yes

R: Do you ever, you know, when you're looking at the books, do you ever take a book?

N: Yes or course, and look to the pictures, eh, eh ..

R: OK, so, you like looking at the pictures

N: Yes

IN: I like a lot, too, to look at the pictures

R: Do you ever like the book enough to take it home? (Laughter). Does the book ever say, "Take me home, take me home?"

N: Sometimes, yes.

R: This semester, have you ever taken home a book?

N: A children book for eh my sister, yes, in Grade 1.

R: Lovely. What was the name of the book? (Pause) Can you remember?

N: Eh, Arabic book, Arabic stories book, mm, the bird and, eh, his friend; also ..

R: And did you read it to her?

N: She read it.

R: She read it, in Arabic? Is it easy Arabic? Or

N: Yes,

R: But you can read it, too.

N: Yea. It's for ah, Grade one.

R: Does she, is it a textbook or a story book?

N: Storybook

R: Storybook, but you think it's good for Grade 1

N: Yes

R: because it's got pictures?

N: Yea, and little bit of writing. My sister eh like to read so I encourage her ..eh..

R: That's great! Does she like to read more than you or .. do you like to read more?
N: I think she read more than me
R: Is she the only one in the family who likes to read?
N: Yes. (Laugh). She is like my mother.
R: She's like your mother. Your mother likes to read, too?
N: Yes
R: So, OK. Do you have books at home?
N: Yes
R: And does she read a lot of those books, your sister? Or are they are too difficult for her, maybe?
N: Only the stories. We have ah "icycliped" .. (I: encyclopedias) Yea?...and eh, ..eh.. I think three kinds of eh encyclopedias yea?
R: Mhmm (to reassure her)
N: ...eh and many Islamic books
R; Mhmm
N: also stories and eh ..
R: So you have a lot of books
N: Yes
R: Are they in Arabic or English or both?
N: All in Arabic. Maybe two or three in English
R: And who else reads in your house, your mother and your five-year-old sister and who else?
N: Eh, When I want something from eh this book I pick up the ... the encyclopedia and search for which information I need.
R: Yea, and that's it.
N: Yea, that's it
R: OK. What about newspapers, do you read newspapers at home?
N: Yes
R: English or Arabic?
N: Arabic of course
R: And do you read it?
N: (Laugh) Yes
R: What part of the newspaper do you read, mostly?
N: I don't read eh a specific, a specific .. Not all the newspaper
R: OK
N: from the beginning

R: OK, so what do you read, like, the headlines or something?
N: I eh read the headline. If the headline interests me I read the rest.
R: Ah, OK. So, tell me about an article that you read recently. Can you remember one?
N: I like to read the .. eh about UAE society, only
R: Mhm. What about you? (to IN)
IN: I only read the headlines
R: The headlines. In an Arabic newspaper or an English newspaper?
IN: Arabic
R: So, do you get the Arabic newspaper at home every day?
IN: Yes
N: Not every day
R: Do you ever read the newspaper in the university?
Both: Yes
R: Do you also see it in the library?
Both: Yes
R: and you look at it sometimes?
Both: Yes
R: The English one or the Arabic one?
Both: The Arabic one (laugh)
R: So, I think you prefer reading in Arabic, do you?
Both: yes (Laugh)
R: If I had two books here and it was the same story ... what kind of stories do you like, do you like murder or romance or .. what kind of
N: Murder
R: Murder. Agatha Christie, maybe? You call her Ajatha Christie?
IN: I heard about her
R: She writes about crime
IN: (Checking in Arabic with N) Agatha Christie, *sah?* (= correct?)
R: If I had two Agatha Christie books here, the same story in Arabic and in English, which one would you prefer to read?
IN: In Arabic, it's easier
N: In Arabic but eh, if I want to improve my English I read the English one.
R: OK. So, is that one reason that you might read in English, would you say I'm understanding you correctly, that one reason for you to read in English is to improve your English?

Both: Yes.

R: Yea, but do you do it often?

Both: (Smiles and laughter)

R: No, never, never never?

N: (Laughing) Only in the university

R: In the university, only if the teacher tells you to.

N: Yes

R: Like a textbook

Both: Yea

R: OK, so, if the teacher says to you “This is what we’re doing for global studies, for example, but if you want to read more, you can read this book or that book (laughter), would you read it?

Both: (Definite) No (Laugh)

R: Why not?

N: Maybe because we don’t have time. We have eh .. a more important thing than reading. (Laugh)

IN: I think if I want to read I have time.

R: If you wanted to you’d make the time. That’s interesting. So, for you, you just don’t want to. .. either in Arabic or in English?

IN: Arabic and English

R: You don’t want to

IN: I feel bored; I can’t start reading

R: Ah, OK. Now, when did you read a book that made you feel bored?

IN: Any kind of book.

R: But tell me about one, the last boring book you read. (Silence and laughter) ... because you must have had an experience if you think reading is boring, would you agree, that maybe that gives you the impression that all reading is boring? No?

IN: No

R: Why did you get the impression that reading is boring?

IN: (Laugh). I don’t know ... a lot of em (Checks in Arabic with N, “kalim, shoo yanni”?)

R: Words, too much description?

IN: Yea

R: You just want to know the story?

IN: mmm.

R: I do that, too, when I’m reading, sometimes. So, you’re more interested in what happens next; don’t tell me about the beautiful house and the beautiful mountain

IN: Yes

R: and the trees and the flowers

IN: I skip all of that

R: You skip all of that. So, it can be boring for you

IN: mm

R: and do *you* find reading boring (to N)?

N: Sometimes. Depends on the kind of the book

R: Exactly, the topic

B: Yea

R: and whether it's a story or .. do you like, you know there's two main kinds of books. There's fiction, which is made up, it's not real, and non-fiction. Which do you prefer? Non-fiction is like, it really happened, you know, history or really true stories

N: non-fiction. I like the book that improve myself

R: Knowledge

N: Ambition and

R: Yea, talking about your ambitions and stuff

N: Yea

IN: Psychology. How to increase myself how to reach to the goal and, like that,

R: So, do you have one particular book in mind that you read recently?

N: I read one but I didn't complete it, maybe, the eh

R: The headings?

N: Yea

R: There is one by Stephen Covey: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers*. Was that one of them?

N: No

R: Or *Chicken Soup*?

N: ah, the Arabic one

R: Maybe you read it in Arabic?

N: Yea

R: The Arabic translation of St ..

Both: No, no no

N: I read the Arabic

IN: books in Arabic

R: You read a book in Arabic about self-help

N: yes

R: and setting your goals

N: Yea

R: So, really what you're saying is it depends on the type of book

N: Yes

R: and it depends what's in it

N: Mm

R: For you, you like self-help books.

N: mm

R: any other kinds of books that you like? Do *you* like self-help books (to IN)?

IN: Yes, and also I like the books about children, child development

R: Ah, OK, like child psychology

IN: Yes

R: How to be a good mother

IN: Yes. How the child grows

N: Sometimes when eh we read the title of the book, and begin to read the introduction we feel bored of the introduction and we don't have interest in it, so we don't complete

R: the book

N: Yea

R: Ah

N: It depends on the introduction also

R: Good, good, but IN's suggestion for that is to just skip, skip the introduction and go to the next part.

N: No

R: No? You didn't try that?

N: Read different parts of the book.

IN: Eh, the heading. We are interested in the headings

R: So, you're interested in non-fiction, or you're interested in both, like stories would be fiction, you know, fiction is where it is made up, like a murder or..

N: I like stories also

R: So, you like fiction

N: Yea

R: Does it depend on the actual topic and it depends on, what else, time? But you said it doesn't make any difference to you.

IN: mmm

R: If there's a book that you really, really want to read and you don't have the time, would you make time for it?

IN: Of course.

N: Yea

R: Where is your favourite place to read? I mean, if you've got a book and this looks fantastic (laugh) where in your mind are you planning to read the book?

IN: In the home or ..

R: Anywhere, at home or in the university? Where is your favourite place to read?

IN: the living room, (laugh) with my family.

R: Ah, so, you mean if you're sitting with your family, you can actually read your book?

IN: Yes

R: And they won't disturb you?

IN: Eh, they disturb me but, if I read anything interesting I tell them.

R: Oh, interesting; that's good. And have you done that before?

IN: Yes

R: with what book; can you remember?

IN: Eh, book in Arabic

R: A book in Arabic. So, you read a book in Arabic, and what was it about?

IN: em, it's name eh, (Checks in Arabic with N)

Both: *Don't be sad.*

R: Ah, OK, and when did you read that?

IN: Ah, I didn't read it all; different bits;

R: OK. Different parts of it?

IN: Yea

R: When did you start it or when did you last read it?

IN: In summer

R: In the summer, in the holiday. So, you were sitting in your living-room. Describe what's happening in your living-room. Is the television on?

IN: Yes, (Laugh)

R: Tell me what is happening; share with us; take me into your living-room. (Laugh). Paint a picture for us.

IN: If I read something interesting, I tell them to turn off eh the TV and I tell them

R: the name of the book was "*Don't be sad*"?

IN: Yes

R: Who wrote it?

IN: (Checking in Arabic with N: *Shusumha?* = What's his name?)

N: A'yed Al Qardni

R: Is he an Emirati writer or?

N: No,

IN: Kuwaiti, maybe. Maybe Saudi, maybe. *La Thahsin, Don't be sad.*

R: can you remember, who told you about the book; how did you get the book and how did you feel when you read it?

IN: My friend.

R: in the university or school?

IN: University, and my my sisters, also

R: OK. They read it before you?

IN: Eh, eh, no, they tell me about it

R: How did they know about it?

IN: Their friends.

R: OK. So, friends would be the ones to tell you about books

IN: Yea

R: Where did you get it? Did you buy it or?

IN: Yes, I buy it

R: OK, and you read it. Did it make you feel sad?

IN: No.

R: Good. Did *you* read the book as well?

N: Yes

R: and where did you, how did you know about the book and who told you about it?

N: eh, eh, my aunt; from my aunt

R: Does she like to read?

N: Yes. Eh I have something interesting in this book. If a snake h (R: bites?) bites you don't be sad for that because this eh, eh (R: bite or poison) bite, yea, yea, will be good for you. And it's really good.

R: and do you agree with that?

N: Yes

R: you do, OK. I hope you never have to try it out.

N: Because eh the life is beautiful. (laugh)

R: life is beautiful, even if you get poisoned by a snake!

N: Yea

R: OK, so, em, so, your auntie said to you here is a good book.

N: mm

R: and eh, where is your favourite place to read? She (I) likes to read in her living room. Where do you like to read?

N: In my room

R: Your bedroom

N: I want to concentrate in one place.

R: Do you ever read in bed?

N: Yes (laugh)

IN: If I read in bed I will sleep (Laugh).

R: Ah, that's good; that's really good. I'd like to talk about how can teachers encourage students to read and are there some books that teachers should not encourage the students to read, like for example, the content of the book. Do you think that it is important for students not to read certain books or should you be free to read everything you like or, or..

IN: Free to read everything

R: Yea

IN: I hope I like reading.

R: You'd love to, you'd love to like it.

IN: Yes

R: Excellent! What do you think teachers can do to encourage you, or parents or friends? Who can help you to like reading?

N: Maybe if we make a, ah, ah, encourage each other to read this part for this day, we will do that.

R: What do *you* think? (to IN)

IN: Yes.

R: You could try that, and em, we could get you the same book. Do you have problems getting books if you need books to read?

IN: No

R: So, if you want a book you can just go and buy it. And *you*?

N: Sometimes ..

R: Sometimes difficult?

N: Yea.

IN: Yea, sometimes difficult

N: Maybe you need this book and you didn't find it.

R: Yes; have you gone looking for a book sometime that you didn't find? In the bookshop?

IN: No

R: No. So, you have no experience of not finding a book.

N: I eh, wrote the list of title books that I wanted to read and I don't have it and I want to .. (R: buy it)

Yea. And I eh told my father I want to go to the bookshop but eh, he didn't have time to get me to eh .. so I didn't get them.

R: And was there nobody to take you to the bookshop?

N: No.

R: Just one day.

N: I read eh, other books.

R: Where did you get the list of books that you wanted to read?

N: From the Internet, eh someone put eh a picture of this book and write eh a good sentence related to that book, and eh, I feel interest for that book so that I want to buy it.

R: So, what you're saying is that sometimes the Internet can encourage you to buy a book.

N: Yes

R: like just a website that you found?

N: Yes

R: OK

N: Also, eh my teacher told me that book is good, that book is good, the title of the book and I wrote it,

R: Tell me about that; which teachers were encouraging you? Would this be the English teacher, the Arabic teacher or maths or ..?

N: Arabic teacher, she give me .. eh to do for her a presentation and the reference of the presentation, the title of the book... I designed her presentation for eh

IN: She did a PowerPoint presentation

N: She would do and I did a PowerPoint

R: and you helped her with the PowerPoint

N: Yes,

R: and so when you were doing the list of names of books ...

N: she encouraged me to read that book because this book is really good

R: and the English teacher and the other teachers? What did they recommend? What books did they recommend you to read?

N: English teacher?

R: Yea (They shook their heads). No books. What kind of books did the Arabic teacher recommend?

N: About eh (IN: poems) self help

R: Yea. Now, let me see what other things I have to ask .. Are we OK for time? So, the last book you read in English you said was back in the English Foundation Program, and you only read that for the English teacher because he told you to but before that you never read a book, except the Arabic book you read in your living-room?

IN: (Laughs) Yes

R: And you didn't finish it?

IN: (Laughs) Yea. Two books I read about it

R: In Arabic

IN: Yes

R: So, that was last summer? And your last book that you read?

N: Mmm, in Ramadan.

R: This last Ramadan which was last September, wasn't it, September or October.

N: Yes

R: What was the book you read? Was it Arabic or English?

N: Arabic

R: and what was it?

N: Eh, (checks in Arabic) the, about the Quran

R: *Thafseer* (heard N saying it in Arabic). Does that mean ...

IN: explanation

R: Explanation and it was in what language?

N: Arabic

R: So, it would be religious reading?

Both: Yes

R: So, in Ramadan, would you say that you do mostly religious reading, in Ramadan, .. or not only religious?

IN: No, we read normal

R: Other stuff as well

Both: yes

R: but the last book that read was in Arabic in September or October (N: Yes). A long time ago, isn't it.

N: Ah, I think yes, ah because we read eh, we read eh websites and..

R: OK. What do you read on the websites? Thank you for telling me that because that's another area we can talk about, electronic reading.

Both: yea.

R: OK, so, what kind of reading do you do electronically ... let's say because you want to, not because you're searching for articles

N: Yes, the students' issues.

R: Students' issues. Where do you read about them?

N: (Checking in Arabic) eh, groups, eh,

IN: a forum.

R: A forum.

N: yea.

R: How did you find it? Is it in Arabic or in English?

N: Arabic. It's eh, for all students in the UAE, in universities, also in schools

R: And what do they do? Do they write their opinions about something or ..?

N: Yes, and ah, maybe sometimes their feelings. They put their favourite topics and hobbies in this, eh, encourage us to do those things.

R: not just to read about it

N: Photography, eh take photos

R: Good. How often do you read this forum?

N: Every day.

R: Every day? For how long? How many minutes?

N: one hour.

R: Fantastic.

N: One hour, one and half

R: Do you do it together or separately, each one with your own computer?

IN: Separately but the same eh

R: the same website.

IN: yea

R: that's fantastic, and do you do it on the university campus or at home?

IN: Both

R: that's great

IN: It's like group

R: It's like a group so you are chatting or talking in a group

IN: not chatting, yes writing. Someone put an issue and we should eh

N: put response for this

R: I see and do you like writing your response?

N: Not a lot

R: You don't. So, do you mostly read on that or do you read and write?

N: Both. Sometime only read and sometimes read and write

R: Most of the time would you say it is mostly reading or half and half or..

N: Reading

R: Mostly reading

N: Yes

R: Do you consider that reading as reading, first of all? And in other words, what do you consider reading is? Is reading just reading from a book or .. what do you consider reading to be? Do you consider that reading?

IN: for me, no

R: You don't. What do you consider reading to be?

IN: Like book or eh serious topic, like eh .. not like this... only like daily something, every day.

R: so you don't consider that reading

IN: yes

R: So, if I said to you tell me about your reading, what you're doing for your reading, like your reading for leisure, you would not tell me about that, would you? Or you might?

IN: yes

R: You might. So, do you consider it as reading or .. It's a different kind of reading

IN: different kind of reading (Laughs)

R: OK. What would you call it and what kinds of reading do you want to talk about, I mean when you have in your mind reading, what do you think of?

IN: Book.

R: A book.

IN: yea.

R: OK. Book reading, and, if you think of a book, does it have to be a certain kind of book?

IN: No, any kind, but big book, in my mind, eh it have to be big book

R: a certain kind of book

IN: Yea

N: I think, in this week, I hate the reading.

R: Why? (Laugh). This is very interesting. (Laugh). Please tell me why.

N: Because (of) the global book. (Laugh)

R: Tell us about the global book.

N: eh because this weekend I, eh, read from page 10, no, from page 7 to 20 and really, really really, I feel bored and don't understand anything; only read, read, read but what I understand: the, a, and. (Laughter all around)

R: That's brilliant. So, what do you do when you come across words you don't know, that you don't understand in global?

N: I translate, translate, but I come across many words .. which word I will translate it?

R: After you translate, where do you get the word from?

N: Word document

R: Online?

Both: yes

R: After you've translated, do you then go back and read the whole thing again?

N: No (Laugh)

R: So, this week N hates reading.

N: Yes

R: Last week?

N: Ehhhh. Last week I was in holiday and I was free from the reading and ..

R: so, did you like reading or not last week?

N: Yes, I was reading the, the, eh newspaper, magazines

R: At home or in the university?

N: At home

R: So, last week you liked reading; you liked it a lot? Or, you just liked it a little?

N: I liked it. This week I hate it.

R: Do you think next week you will like it more?

N: (Laugh) depend

IN: If she have global she won't like it.

I thanked the students and ended the interview as they had to go to class.

Appendix 6 - Questionnaire

1. Did you know there was a book exhibition in Abu Dhabi in March? How did you know about it? Did you know that there were book tokens worth 100/- dirhams for students to use at the book exhibition? Who told you?

Did you get a book token? Did you go to the book exhibition? Who brought you? Were you looking for anything in particular? What did you buy there?
2. Author Paulo Coelho (who wrote *The Alchemist*) was in Magrudy's in Dubai last month. If he comes again would you like to meet him at Magrudy's?

Have you read any of his books? (Please write their names).

His most recent book is set in London, Lebanon and Dubai and has an Emirati character in it. Do you think you would like to read it sometime?
- 3.(a) When did you last sit in the library coffee-shop area (between the LEC and main library)?
Did you read any of the magazines there? How often do you go there to read the magazines? Do you ever look in the glass display cases there to see the new books?

(b) Approx how many times do you go into the Advising Seminar room per week?
Do you ever read anything there (in the Reading Area or on the displays?)
4. Do you regularly look out for certain reading items in the university? Which ones? (e.g. *Khaleeji* Mirror, 7 Days, Gulf News Notes, new library books, Ahlan magazine, etc)?
5. When did you last take a book from the library to read for pleasure (not for course work)?
In Arabic? In English? What was its title?
6. Are you reading as often as you would like to? If not, why not?
7. What could your teachers do to encourage you to read more?
8. Write the names and IDs of any students you know who are keen readers (who like to read as often as possible).
9. Describe yourself as a leisure reader: Very keen Not very keen I hate reading

Appendix 7 - 115 initial codes and concepts

	Initial grouping	New grouping
1	Ability, reading ability	Facilitator → Becoming a reader
2	Academic reading	Obligatory; Non-readers
3	Access to interesting reading materials	Becoming a reader
4	Addiction to reading	Reasons for reading
5	Arabs as readers	Identity
6	Arabic, reading in Arabic	Choosing reading materials
7	Assigned reading	Academic → What students read
8	Attitude toward reading	Attitude toward reading; reasons
9	Becoming a reader	Becoming a reader
10	Beliefs about reading	Beliefs
11	Benefits of reading	Beliefs; Purposes for reading
12	Book exhibition and bookshops	Owning → Access to reading materials
13	Books and authors	Books → reading choices
14	Books as gifts	Books → What students read
15	Boring – reading is boring	Non-readers
16	Buy or borrow	Access to reading materials; preference
17	Challenge – reading for	Purposes for reading
18	Comic books	Choosing reading materials
19	Conditional aspect of attitude	Attitude toward reading
20	Course-related reading	Academic → What students read
21	Cover of book	Choosing reading materials
22	Defining leisure reading	Conceptualizing reading and leisure R
23	Duty – reading out of	Purposes for reading
24	Effects of reading on the reader	Beliefs about reading; Attitude toward reading
25	E-book or paper book	What students read
26	Electronic reading	Websites → What students read
27	Encouragement - to respond to	Purposes for reading Becoming a reader
28	Encouraged – feeling encouraged	Reasons for reading
29	English – reading in English	Choosing reading materials
30	Escape	Purposes for reading
31	Excitement about reading	Like reading → Reasons for reading

32	Experiences with reading	Beliefs about reading; Attitude toward reading
33	Facilitators	Becoming a reader
34	Family	Encouragement
35	Famous people	Information → Choosing reading materials
36	Feelings related to reading	Attitude toward reading
37	Fiction and non-fiction	What students read
38	First book read or enjoyed	Books → What students read
39	Forums – online	Recommendation; Choosing reading materials
40	Friends	Information about books; encouragement
41	Genres	Fiction/Non-fiction; preferences; interests
42	Hate reading	Non-readers
43	How do sts decide what to read?	Choosing reading materials
44	How do sts know about books?	Information; people
45	How do sts decide which books to buy?	Information; Choosing reading materials
47	Holiday reading	Behaviour, reading behavior
48	Home libraries	Owning → Access to reading materials
49	Identities	Identities
50	Importance of reading	Beliefs about reading; benefits of reading
51	Improves our minds	Beliefs about reading; benefits of reading
52	Improves our emotions	Beliefs about reading; benefits of reading
53	Improves our behavior	Beliefs about reading; benefits of reading
54	Improves our knowledge and skills	Beliefs about reading; benefits of reading
55	Information about reading materials	Choosing reading materials
56	Interests – special interests	Choosing reading materials
57	Interesting books	Choosing reading materials
58	Interruptions to reading	Behaviour, reading behavior
59	Interest – general interest in reading	Reasons for reading
60	Keen reader	Types of readers
61	Language they read in	Choosing reading materials; preferences
62	Last book read	Books → What students read
63	Learning from reading	Benefits → Beliefs about reading
64	Libraries	Borrowing → Access to reading materials
65	Liking reading	Reasons for reading

66	Magazines	Periodicals → What students read
67	Meaning in the text	Reading behaviour
68	Memories of reading	Beliefs about reading; experiences
69	Movie –book connection	Information; Choosing reading materials
70	Movie or book – preference	Matching → Choosing reading materials
71	Newspapers	Periodicals → What students read
72	Non-stop reading	Types of reading
73	Oprah Winfrey	Television celebrities; recommendations
74	Pass the time – reading to	Purposes for reading
75	People	Becoming a reader
76	Personal libraries	Access to reading materials
77	Plans to read	Beliefs about reading
78	Preferences	Choosing reading materials
79	Problems encountered while reading	Problems encountered while reading
80	Purposes for reading	Purposes for reading
81	“Real readers”	Types of readers
82	Reading because you want to	Conceptualizing reading and leisure R
83	Reading what you want to read	Conceptualizing reading and leisure R
84	Realizations about reading	Attitude toward reading; trigger
85	Reasons for NOT reading	Reasons for reading
86	Reasons for reading	Reasons for reading
87	Reasons for liking to read	Reasons for reading
88	Recommendations	Information → Choosing reading materials
89	Readers identify readers / non-readers	Conceptualizing reading; beliefs about reading
90	Religious reading	What students read; obligatory reading
91	Repeated readings	Books → What students read
92	Reading-related behavior	Behaviour, reading behavior
93	Reading role models	People; encouragement; experiences
94	Rereading texts	Reading behavior
95	Re-starting reading	Reading behavior
96	School	Reading ability → Becoming a reader
97	Self-help books	Choosing reading materials; preferences
98	Standards when choosing what to read	Choosing reading materials

99	Stopping or interrupting reading	Behaviour, reading behavior
100	Stories – true and fictional	Choosing reading materials
101	Sources of reading materials	Access to reading materials
102	Sustainer	Becoming a reader
103	Talking about reading	Talking about reading; recommending to others
104	Teachers	Encouragement; recommendation
105	Temporal aspect of reading	Time to read
106	Time – reading to pass the time	Purposes for reading
107	Topics	Choosing reading materials; preferences
108	Trigger	Becoming a reader
109	Want to read	Reasons for reading
110	Waste of time	Non-reader; beliefs
111	Websites	What students read
112	What materials they like to read	Choosing reading materials; preferences
113	Writing connection	Benefits → Beliefs about reading
114	Yesterday's reading	Reading behavior
115	Gulf Arab university student as reader	Time to read

Appendix 8 - Reduced codes

	Categories	Themes / subcategories 1-24
1	Arab readers WHO	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Arabs as readers</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Reading in Arabic</div> </div>
2	Attitude toward reading WHY	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Beliefs</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Plans to read</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Effects</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Conditional</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40%;">Experiences with reading</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Feelings</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Interests</div> </div>
3	Becoming a reader WHY	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Reading ability</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 15%;">Interest</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 15%;">Triggers</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Encouragement</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Facilitators</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Reading materials</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">Reasons for reading</div> </div>
4	Reading behaviour HOW	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Rereading</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Re-starting</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Decisions</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">Interruptions</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40%;">Where & when they read</div> </div>
5	Books and authors WHAT	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">First or last book read</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Sources of books</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Attraction of</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">Knowledge about</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">Decisions about</div> </div>
6	Conceptualizing (leisure) R WHAT	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40%;">What is (leisure) reading?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40%;">Reading because you want to</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 50%;">Meaning in the text</div> </div>
7	Course-related reading WHAT	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 45%;">Courses where students read a lot</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 45%;">Reading own assignments</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 30%;">Assigned reading</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 25%;">Incentives to read</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20%;">Databases</div> </div>
8	Identities WHO	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Identities</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Gulf Arab university student as-reader</div> </div>
9	Languages WHAT	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Arabic</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">English</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Other languages</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Books & authors</div> </div>
10	Libraries	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Home</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Personal</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">School</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">University</div> </div>
11	Reading materials	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Sources</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Websites</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Magazines</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">What</div> </div>

		Newspapers	Genres	Topics
12	Movies and reading	Movies	Movie or book	Movie –book connection
13	People	Family	Teachers	Reading role models Friends
14	Preferences	Standards	Language	Author’s style Beliefs
15	Problems	Reading ability	Interest	
16	Past experiences	Memories of reading	Reading-related experiences	
17	Censorship	Self-censorship	Macro censorship	
18	Talking	Terminology	Recommending to others	
19	Time	Lack of time	Making time	Leisure activities
20	Types of readers	Avid	Addicts	Keen readers Traveler Critical readers Seasonal “Real readers”
21	Types of reading	Electronic	Religious	Book Non-stop
22	What they read	Topics & genres	Yesterday’s reading	Materials
23	Writing	Reading/writing connection		
24	What affects their reading?	Eliminators	Conditions	Facilitators Encouragement Detractors Interest Influence Incentives Experiences Being read to Reasons for / for NOT reading