An Investigation into the Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and the Use of a set Coursebook When Teaching Vocabulary in Kuwaiti Intermediate Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between teachers' beliefs and the use of a set coursebook, namely Target English, when teaching vocabulary in Kuwaiti intermediate schools. This coursebook is prescribed by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education for intermediate schools and is designed to be taught using the communicative method. The main aim of the study is to explore what teachers' beliefs are by triangulating what teachers say about their teaching practice with what they actually do in class. A literature review explains the theoretical issues regarding vocabulary teaching and learning, and the issues that arise when researchers attempt to gain access to teachers' beliefs. It also summarises some key findings from previous empirical studies. The main data gathering procedures consists of a series of classroom observations, followed by semi-structured interviews with five practising EFL teachers. Observation notes, interview transcripts, a mind map and content analysis are used to interpret the data. Tension between the stated aims of the syllabus and the actual pressure of examinations is identified as a serious problem for teachers and appears to have a strongly inhibiting effect on the enactment of teacher beliefs in the classroom. The study concludes that different stakeholders in the Kuwaiti school system are pursuing different aims. The washback effect is a significant issue in Kuwait, and there is a gap between the teaching approach that teachers say they believe in, and the choices that they make in class when they teach vocabulary. Several factors are identified which prevent teachers from following their own beliefs, and from delivering EFL vocabulary teaching using modern communicative approaches or what they believe is best for their students.
Acknowledgments

To my family, I would like to say thank you for your last-longing support to achieve this dream. Being away from you all this time was more difficult than writing any dissertation or essay. I love you and I hope I made you proud.

To myself, you had a dream, you chased it, and you got what you want. Be proud of yourself, and dream bigger.

To my country, to my home, to the land in which I was born and raised... to Kuwait: this dissertation is dedicated to you. My main aim is to work hard and improve the field of TESOL in my country, and this dissertation is a small example of it.

Special thanks to all the participants of this study. Without you I wouldn’t be able to investigate this topic and reach to its conclusions.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Students between the ages of 12 and 15 years are taught in Kuwaiti intermediate schools, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a compulsory element in the curriculum at this stage. A single coursebook is prescribed by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MoE) for this subject, namely, Target English (Keddle and Hobbs 2008). This coursebook presents a number of new vocabulary items with each unit of learning and is based upon the assumption that teachers will use a communicative approach to teach these new vocabulary items in each lesson (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). However, this approach and indeed this particular coursebook are both derived from pedagogy and research which originates in teaching based in European and American schools (Spada 2007). In line with many other Arabian Gulf countries, the pedagogic tradition of Kuwait prefers explicit, teacher-centred approaches and memorisation techniques. It is not entirely clear how well teachers deal with this apparent tension between the communicative approach and rather rigid traditions and assessment regimes. The problem is complicated by more recent research endorsing the use of the first language (L1) in the second language (L2) classroom because it can speed up vocabulary growth (Nation 2001: 296-316), but the Kuwaiti system recommends using only English as much as possible.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

This potential tension between different teaching approaches is the starting point for the present study. It is important to understand what teachers really think is the best and most effective method for vocabulary instruction, and to assess how these beliefs influence the way in which they use the prescribed coursebook in their classes to teach vocabulary. This is a very necessary topic to study because Kuwait’s educational system is rather rigid and is tightly managed by the MoE, and only one approach is prescribed for teaching vocabulary: using just one coursebook. This leaves very little room for individual teachers to develop their own teaching ideas or experiment with different ideas. Another relevant factor is the pressure on teachers and learners to achieve good results in the examinations, again set by the MoE. Despite the communicative method which is suggested by the coursebook, with an
emphasis on speaking and listening (Harmer 2001; Hall 2011), there is a strong pressure to use explicit methods of teaching vocabulary which, in turn, encourages rote learning and memorisation to make sure the learners are able meet the requirements of the written examination. In the literature, this is called “washback effect” (Messick 1996: 241), relevant to this study because it gives a high validity to traditional teaching styles and runs counter to the principles of the communicative approach (Adnan and Mahmoud 2014: 132).

These issues are particularly important at the present time because there is a debate within the Kuwaiti teaching profession about the usefulness of different teaching methods in terms of actual language learning, and the development of independent learning skills as well as their efficacy in passing examinations (Al-Habib 2013). It seems there may be a tension between the short-term goal of passing examinations, and the longer term and wider goals of learning how to learn independently and learning to how communicate in English in life outside the classroom. There is also a rather urgent imperative to expand and improve EFL education across all parts of the education system to meet the country’s objective of internationalising the skills of the workforce and expanding the economy in diverse ways, a pattern that is repeated in many rapidly developing countries in the world (Wedell 2009: 64). The government, educators, parents and learners, all stakeholders in the education process, need to be assured the chosen approach is valid and they also need to have confidence that the national system is being followed well and promoting realistic and achievable goals (Gaies and Bowers 1990: 181). There may well be gaps or tensions between what teachers believe, and what they are expected to do, or what they actually do when they teach (Mak 2001), potentially resulting in some serious, negative results in terms of student achievement (Farrell and Kun 2008). A vital element to address any such potential or actual failures is to start with a better understanding of the connections currently existing between teachers’ actual beliefs and their teaching practice.

There has been considerable prior research into these issues both in theoretical terms and in relation to empirical studies in many different settings across the world (Borg 2003; Borg and Phipps 2007; Khanalizadeh and Allami 2012; Van Vooren et al. 2012; Hassan 2013; Farrell and Lim 2005). However, there is a gap in the research when it comes to the relation between teachers’ beliefs and vocabulary teaching and learning. Therefore, the present study aims to bring a useful addition to this prior knowledge by summarising important
insights from existing research in the literature review, and then applying this knowledge to researching vocabulary teaching in Kuwait’s intermediate schools. Rather than looking right across the spectrum of what teachers do in class and how this relates to their beliefs, vocabulary is used as an exemplar of this relationship.

**1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this dissertation is to explore teachers’ beliefs in Kuwaiti intermediate schools on vocabulary teaching and learning in general, and from the prescribed coursebook, *Target English* (Keddle and Hobbs 2008). To achieve this aim, the task must be broken down into manageable objectives such as: firstly, exploring teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning; Secondly, observing how they actually teach vocabulary when using the prescribed coursebook; thirdly, finding out whether their teaching practice when teaching vocabulary from the coursebook is affected by their beliefs; and fourthly, considering what prevents them from teaching in the way they believe is best.

According to Farrell and Lim (2005: 1-13), there may be some contextual factors at work which could affect the way teachers teach and approach their lessons. These contextual factors include matters such as the time allocated for each lesson, the examinations, the student level and the syllabus set down for teachers to follow in their particular educational setting (Halliday 1999: 5). There may also be pressures from the MoE through the school inspection and supervision processes, or from the head teacher who may have particular local concerns. Because these contextual variables are so important in influencing how teachers teach, this study will aim to explore the teaching context of Kuwaiti intermediate schools and the ways in which they might affect vocabulary teaching. It is quite normal for teachers both to follow the guidelines set down for them and also interpret and apply these guidelines with additional ideas and methods that they themselves think are the most effective (Bacha et al. 2008: 281). Ultimately, it is hoped that this detailed knowledge will help to assess the effectiveness of current educational policy regarding teaching English vocabulary, both in theory and in practice, and provide the basis for some recommendations for further research in this area to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for learners in Kuwait.
1.4 Research Questions

To address my primary research aim I have identified four main research questions:

1) What are teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning?
2) How do teachers use/adapt the *Target English* coursebook in their lessons when teaching the vocabulary items in the book?
3) To what extent is the use/adaptation of the *Target English* coursebook affected by what teachers believe about vocabulary teaching and learning?
4) What factors may have influenced the teachers’ practice or approach not to teach the vocabulary items in the *Target English* coursebook in terms of what they believe?

My primary concern is to actually identify the relation between beliefs and practice in research question 3 (RQ3); so the first two research questions are preliminaries to finding out about RQ3 and are very relevant to it. It is expected there will be some overlap in the answers of the first two research questions with RQ3 because of the complexity of the topic of the present study. As for RQ4, its main aim is to investigate the different contextual variables which might constrain teachers from acting on their beliefs when teaching vocabulary from *Target English*.

These questions involve some extremely complex issues, some of which teachers may not even be fully aware of themselves and some of which may be open to interpretation. In proceeding with this study, it is accepted that there are not likely to be any simple answers to these research questions, though it is anticipated teachers might respond broadly with support either for the communicative (implicit) approach or the more traditional (explicit) approach in answer to the first question. The responses to RQ2 may well be more diverse, with the use of other aids such as sound, images, work sheets, videos and the like. RQs 3 and 4 can be explored by correlating the evidence from RQs 1 and 2 and observing actual classroom interactions and the impact of particular combinations of belief and practice on student learning. It is hoped that by exploring the theory behind such issues and the actual teaching practice of teachers in Kuwait, some deeper understanding can be gained, and that this can be used to review current practice, and form the basis for making continuous improvements in national education policy.
1.5 Structure

This study is presented in a five-part structure. The first is this brief introduction in which I set out the scope and focus of the research, and the main research questions which are being investigated. It is followed by a thorough literature review in Chapter Two, which reviews the main theories behind vocabulary teaching, and some theories relating to teachers’ beliefs and their impact on how vocabulary is taught. This review also covers some key aspects of language pedagogy as it applies to vocabulary teaching and learning, and a summary of the research which has been done so far on this issue both in Arabian Gulf countries and in the wider world. Chapter Three introduces the research methodology and explains why semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were chosen as the main instruments of data collection. The findings and analysis are presented in Chapter Four. The final chapter summarises the findings, and makes some conclusions regarding the impact of teachers' beliefs on teaching vocabulary in Kuwait. A number of limitations are also mentioned, and some recommendations are made for the continuing improvement of vocabulary teaching in the Kuwaiti intermediate school English classroom context.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on vocabulary teaching and learning and some of the main approaches suggested in various contexts across the world. It covers key pedagogical theories and presents evidence from empirical studies which have investigated how different methods and materials can be used to teach vocabulary. The concluding sections focus more narrowly on the Kuwaiti context and the Target English coursebook, in which the precise research gap in the present study is identified and addressed. Information about teachers’ beliefs will also be explored and discussed. I will then explore the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices with reference to the use of Target English in the Kuwaiti context when teaching vocabulary.

2.2 The Importance of Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

It has been noted since the late twentieth century that “vocabulary study has been neglected by linguists, applied linguists and language teachers” (Carter 2013: 1) and that this represents a change from earlier periods of research, in which vocabulary teaching and learning was a major focus. This is confirmed by Zimmerman (1997: 5), who noted that successive trends in the way that professional linguists and educators viewed the importance of vocabulary teaching and learning. There is evidence to show that students need to acquire a large store of vocabulary to read and comprehend L2 texts, and that a lack of vocabulary hinders progress because there is insufficient basis on which to build a framework for future learning (Schmitt et al. 2011: 26-43). Language learning is cumulative, and this means that learners must be encouraged both to acquire new vocabulary and master previous vocabulary because this underpins their reading skills, and all other aspects of language learning (Kuzborska 2011: 117). This realisation has led some researchers to recommend longitudinal studies which seek to identify the amounts and types of vocabulary which are optimal for different levels of proficiency (Schmitt 1998). Programme designers and examination boards are also keen to identify lists of core vocabulary that must be covered by a particular syllabus, and they draw up lists which can be used as a standard by which student progress can be measured (Gardner and Davis 2013: 305-307).
In recent years, there has been a lively debate about the relative merits of decontextualized learning of vocabulary from lists, and contextualised learning of vocabulary from interaction with tasks and other people or from narrative texts. According to Nation, it is not necessary to restrict teachers and learners to just one or the other approaches since “deliberate learning in conjunction with opportunities for learning through communicative use is far more effective than either of these types of learning alone” (2014: 394).

The previous points indicate that teaching vocabulary is a very important aspect of EFL pedagogy at the early and intermediate levels and that there are a great many different pedagogical theories and approaches which have been used to enhance the teaching and learning of vocabulary. For the purposes of the present study, however, it is not possible to cover all of these multiple approaches and so the focus here will be on the two approaches which are most familiar to teachers and learners in Kuwait, namely, the traditional grammar/translation method and the more modern communicative approach.

2.2.1 The Grammar/Translation Method

The grammar/translation method involves, as the name suggests, an explicit focus on the structures of the L2, and on teaching the meaning of words and phrases using the L1. It derives originally from a focus on the written word, and a desire on the part of teachers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to help their students access literary works written in the L2 (Ketabi and Shahraki 2011). The main strategies of this method are formal presentation of grammatical rules and pre-teaching of any new vocabulary items, usually with the help of a special list of new words and phrases at the beginning of each lesson (Hall 2011). Teachers emphasise drills and patterns and encourage learners to use memorisation techniques, often accompanied by short vocabulary tests to ensure that students retain the form and meaning of new words accurately.

The theory behind this method is based on a teacher-centred view of learning, whereby the teacher guides learners step by step through a pre-set curriculum (Hall 2011; Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). It has the advantage of being relatively easy to link course goals with teaching materials, usually through the provision of a prescribed coursebook. Learners are expected to engage their analytical skills in recognising how and when to apply rules they
have learned in advance. One of the major disadvantages of the grammar/translation method is that it constantly brings the L1 into the learner’s mind, and this can result in what is known as “interference” (Ross 2000: 61), whereby the structures and sounds of the L1 heavily influence the learner’s output in the L2.

2.2.2 The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach to second language teaching and learning was first proposed in the late 1970s as a way of improving results in secondary school classrooms in Europe and the USA (Spada 2007: 271). It has been noted that:

although there are different interpretations of communicative language teaching, this approach to L2 interpretations typically focuses on functions of language use and a more authentic use of language in the L2 classroom or better to say, instead of focusing on sentence levels [and] forms it centers on discourse level functions. (Ketabi and Shahraki 2011: 729)

This focus on context, function and using language to accomplish tasks takes the focus of teachers away from explicitly teaching vocabulary, and assumes that learners will automatically pick up the necessary vocabulary as they seek to communicate in their tasks (Decarrico 2001: 285).

This is not so much a unified teaching method as a general approach which seeks to introduce both grammar and vocabulary within a meaningful context. It rests on the idea that inferring meaning is the first step to learning a word or phrase (in a passive sense) before being able to use it in a productive way (Bogaards and Lauffer-Dvorkin 2004: ix). Teachers are expected to ensure learning activities are selected “according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns)” (Richards and Rogers 1986: 72). The teacher’s role in such a methodology is to modify the input that students receive to help students acquire as much vocabulary through incidental usage as possible (Ellis and He 1999: 285). Even routine interactions such as taking a register or clearing books from tables can be made into a vocabulary acquisition and consolidation opportunity if teachers are willing to use these moments to practise natural English language instructions and questions. It is thought, however, that some aspects of vocabulary acquisition, for example, phonetics, are easily acquired implicitly through the use of task-based learning, and ideally also frequent.
exposure, whereas other aspects such as meaning require conscious awareness and effort on the part of the learner (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001: 5).

The communicative approach is based on theories which relate L2 acquisition to the patterns of L1 acquisition (Canale and Swain 1980). It has even been suggested that use of the first language in a second language classroom should be banned to maximise the exposure students have to comprehensible input in the foreign language (Krashen 1982: 14). Having tried this pure communicative approach, and found it difficult to implement, some supporters of the communicative method accept there is a place for use of L1 in certain circumstances, for example, when giving instructions to students, or for classroom management purposes such as keeping good discipline (Mitchell 1988: 29). There are also some researchers working in more recent years who fully support a mixed use of L1 and L2 in the EFL classroom on the grounds that the L1 can provide vital “scaffolding” (Spada 2007: 280) to assist learners in making sense of new elements that they encounter in the L2. There is therefore quite a range of opinion on how strictly to implement the ideal of maximum L2 exposure in the communicative approach, and this question is still hotly debated in many EFL contexts (Storch and Wigglesworth 2003).

One advantage of the communicative method is that it encourages students to use the L2 in interactions with each other as well as with the teacher, for example, in pair work or in group work, and this increases their opportunities to learn vocabulary through speaking (Knight 1996). If classes and materials are well designed, this method can build oral confidence as well as proficiency.

It must be noted that the grammar/translation method and the communicative approach are the two most commonly used methods in Kuwaiti EFL classrooms, but most teachers in Kuwait and elsewhere use the weak form of the communicative approach, and they select those aspects which they find useful, while rejecting others, or combining them with philosophies or theories drawn from other discipline areas (Thornbury 2006: 143). In the EFL field generally, there is a distinct move away from commitment to one single method, and a preference instead for eclectic and flexible approaches involving implicit and explicit exercises because students themselves have a range of different needs (Gairns and Redman 1986). This means, in practice, teachers often switch from one approach to another in the
same lesson to achieve multiple objectives (Ma 2009). Whether teachers in Kuwait or anywhere else use the grammar/translation method or the communicative approach, there are some teaching aids and materials which can be used to process these approaches and from this point, I will move to discuss some of these different teaching aids, namely, dictionaries and flashcards, and visuals in vocabulary teaching and learning which are the most familiar to teachers and learners in Kuwait.

2.2.3 Dictionaries and Flashcards

Dictionaries are an important asset in language learning because they provide definitions for learners, either in the L1 or in the L2, and encourage learners to engage in independent learning by looking up any words they do not know. They vary considerably in their nature from simple glossaries to accompany coursebooks (as in Target English), to multi-volume advanced reference works, and even electronic databases with data on frequency and contextual use.

Dictionaries can be regarded as too difficult for lower and intermediate level students, or for less able students (Knight 1994: 285). Learners need to have a large vocabulary before they can benefit from monolingual dictionaries in the L2 (Atkins and Varantola 1997). Nevertheless, it has been suggested that individual teachers and learners should develop deliberate strategies for vocabulary learning, according to their own preferred style, and for some people, dictionaries are a natural choice (Schmitt 1997: 199).

At lower levels and with classes which contain less proficient students, many teachers use flash cards to help students visualise words and meanings, and they practise by responding quickly when the cards are shown. This is very effective with learners who have a preference for visual learning, and so ideally a mix of different ways of presenting and revising vocabulary is most likely to meet the needs of students who are likely to have a range of individual differences and diverse learning preferences and styles (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003).

2.2.4 Visuals and the Dual-coding Theory
Authentic materials and bits and pieces of information that are usually referred to as *realia* have long been recommended for the communicative method because they add variety and interest to lessons which depend on a single coursebook for their main input (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). It is certainly true that visuals help with motivation in the EFL classroom but there are some even more fundamental reasons why visuals are recommended in language learning. One relatively recent theory which has been highly influential in EFL vocabulary teaching has been that of “dual coding theory” (Sadoski 2005) which suggests the use of pictures as well as words, for example, encourages the brain to use two different processes based on visual and verbal cognition. According to Paivio (2007: 167), some inputs are much more attractive and memorable than others, and added visual modes can be more effective than just reading or just hearing the words. Input modalities are those such as written or printed language on a page, videos, audio sounds, screen text and subtitles and so on. Empirical work with parallel groups has shown that the choice of modalities significantly affects how and what students learn (Sydorenko 2012: 70). Many studies have indicated visuals can help learners to recall words better than other non-visuals input (Abebe and Davidson 2012; Uberman 1998; Porter and Margaret 1992; Wright 1976). The previous points highlight that visuals can make a great impact when it comes to teaching new unknown words to the learners.

After discussing the importance of vocabulary teaching and learning and some of the different methods and teaching aids which can be used in teaching vocabulary, I will move now to discuss these issues more narrowly in the Kuwaiti context and in the use of *Target English*.

### 2.3 The Kuwaiti Context

There is some empirical research on EFL teaching in Arabian Gulf countries which has found a reluctance on the part of both students and teachers to be fully committed to the communicative methodology when it comes to teaching vocabulary. One recent study based in Saudi Arabia found that among upper secondary school students, no less than 90% preferred at least some use of Arabic in class and “Arabic was desired most to explain new vocabulary (54.6%) and to clarify difficult concepts (27%)” (Alshammari 2011: 97-98). Teachers broadly agreed but their view was that “Arabic was most essential to clarify
difficult concepts and to explain new vocabulary words and grammar points” (Alshammari 2011: 98). It is now widely accepted that multimedia input brings better results than input through just one modality (Plass and Jones 2005: 467).

English lessons at intermediate level in Kuwait are generally 45 minutes long, a relatively short time in which teachers are expected to cover all of the material in the prescribed coursebook (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). This leads to some pressure to focus on what is perceived as essential items, and since the mastery of vocabulary and key grammar rules are two areas that feature highly in the examinations, there is pressure on teachers to make very sure learners focus on these points. Teachers tend not to take the risk of teaching using only communicative methods because it is likely that at least some learners will not pick up the key learning objectives of the lesson simply from hearing new English words in a specific context. As noted before, covering the prescribed coursebook and its content is the main objective for teachers in Kuwait and for this reason, it is important to discuss the role of Target English in the Kuwaiti context.

2.3.1 The Role of the Target English Coursebook

In some EFL contexts, the syllabus is described in terms of learning outcomes, and teachers are offered a certain amount of freedom in their choice of materials and methods (Tomlinson 2003). This might be daunting for new teachers (Johnson et al. 2008); however, this is not the case in Kuwait where Target English (Keddle and Hobbs 2008: i) is in effect both the syllabus and the prescribed teaching material. The back cover of the coursebook clearly states that “Target English follows the Kuwait Ministry of Education syllabus” (Keddle and Hobbs 2008: back cover). This means teachers in Kuwait have to follow the book order, and students then take examinations based on the content of this book (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). The layout is designed in a way that the new lessons within the book are introduced with minimal preparation in advance. Most lessons in the book rely on narratives and sometimes on pictures to help learners understand the meaning of new words from the context. It is also important to note that instructions in the book are all in English.

With each new lesson in Target English there is a small icon which contains “Words to remember” (Figure 1). These are the key vocabulary items which teachers have to cover and
students have to learn for examinations. *Target English* also has an English/English glossary at the end of it, so that learners can look up any of the new words they do not know. The words in the glossary are the same key vocabulary items from the lessons in the book (Figure 1), and they are listed alphabetically in bold blue text and accompanied by a definition of its part of speech (adjective, phrasal verb and so on).

![Figure 1](image)

An example of the vocabulary items presented with each lesson in *Target English* (Keddle and Hobbs 2008: 41)

This structure suggests the book is designed to encourage incidental learning, intending that students should pick up new words and their meaning first of all by putting together all the visual and verbal information provided in the coursebook and in the accompanying audio tapes. However, there is no explanation of the meaning when new words are presented in the coursebook, and the “Words to remember” part is simply there to encourage the learners to think about the new words and guess or work out their meaning themselves from the coursebook reading or listening material, or even the English/English glossary at the end of the book. Thus, teachers in Kuwait tend to pre-teach these new vocabulary items before going to the reading text or the listening material, and this is what the teacher’s guide usually recommends, as shown in Figure 2.
2.3.1.1 Pre-teaching Vocabulary

As noted in section 2.2.1 above, the practice of pre-teaching vocabulary is a key element of the traditional grammar/translation method of language teaching. According to Nation (2014: 394):

> studies on the effect of pre-teaching vocabulary on reading comprehension indicate that such teaching needs to be rich and reasonably intensive if it is to have a positive effect on comprehension.

In other words, simply reading out and reviewing a list of new words at the start of a lesson is not likely to be very effective in helping students to understand texts which follow in the lesson and use these new vocabulary items. Students need to notice enough about the new vocabulary items to be able to recall them, and then the process of recalling and repeatedly using the word will aid in the retrieval of the new items in future (Nation 2014: 396). This is why the use of visuals or flashcards might help in such situations as noted above.

The Kuwaiti government has invested heavily in one particular coursebook and yet as a major stakeholder in the outcome of the system, it also insists on methods such as pre-teaching and then testing vocabulary. This approach is based on assumptions that properly belong to the grammar/translation method, mentioned in section 2.2.1 above, such as the idea students must be explicitly taught the form, sound and meanings, using the L1 to make sure they do this correctly. This practice is widespread in Arabian Gulf countries and in the literature, opinions differ on the effectiveness of pre-teaching vocabulary before presenting a text, or post-teaching vocabulary after students have had a chance to read a text and infer the meaning of new words from the context (Sonbul and Schmitt 2010).

Most teachers use the PPP approach when teaching vocabulary in Kuwait, which means “presentation, practice, production” (Harmer 2001: 86). Students are taught the meaning of
new words first; then they have to pronounce them; and finally, they are asked to use these new words in various ways such as writing sentences or speaking short dialogues. Some support for this practice is found in the literature and it has been acknowledged that different methods can be effective in different contexts, as long as a systematic approach is used, rather than just relying on incidental learning alone (Nation 2002).

What is interesting about the previous points is the very clear contradiction here when the MoE asks teachers to use the communicative approach to teach the new vocabulary items in the prescribed coursebook, and then asks them to pre-teach these vocabulary items as shown in Figure 2, a way which properly belongs to the grammar/translation method. It is also noticeable in Figure 2 that the time allocated to teach these items is only 10 out of the 45-minute lesson, which is arguably a short time to teach vocabulary. This might be because the MoE asks teachers to cover all the content of the book so that they can examine the students and evaluate their progress at the end of the year. All these issues can ultimately create a complex situation for EFL teachers in Kuwait, and might lead them to focus on examinations more than authentic language learning. This phenomenon is referred to in the literature as the “washback effect”, and it refers to the power of the examination system that dictates the teaching style of language programmes (Bailey 1999: 1).

2.3.2 The Relation between Examinations and the Coursebook (Washback Effect)

Examinations are a fact of life for most EFL teachers and learners and they can have a very significant influence on the way teachers approach their lessons (Bailey 1999). In systems which have a high-stakes examination at the end of the course, there is some pressure on teachers and students to learn specifically those items likely to be tested, and to skip or ignore items not likely to be tested. When this becomes a strong pressure, it is known as the “washback effect” and it can affect all aspects of teaching including order of materials, what is taught, and how it is taught (Bailey 1999: 8).

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**I- Vocabulary (6 M)**

A) From a, b, c and d choose the correct answer: ($3 \times \frac{1}{2} = 1\frac{1}{2}$)

1. Look at the fireworks over there! What a fantastic ..................................... !
   a. spectacle b. script c. dweller d. waterfall

2. The project is excellent. You are a/an .................................... worker.
   a. blind b. latter c. indigenous d. inventive
As discussed in 2.3.1, EFL teachers in Kuwait have to follow the coursebook in unit by unit order as a syllabus, and teach all the new vocabulary items in the “Words to remember” part of each new lesson. Students will then take examinations and teachers will evaluate the students’ progress, based on the examinations results. These examinations contain multiple-choice and gap-filling questions (see Figure 3). It seems that the role of the coursebook as the main syllabus, whereby students will take examinations based on its content, the MoE asking teachers to pre-teach vocabulary and at the same time to use the communicative method to do that, led to this washback effect in the Kuwaiti context. However, it is seems unrealistic to expect that all teachers teach the new vocabulary items in the coursebook in the same way. In my personal experience as a student in the Kuwaiti system, and as an EFL teacher for the past three years in Kuwait, almost all teachers pre-teach new vocabulary, but they do it in different ways. They adapt to the situation in Kuwait, and this is what I will discuss in the following section.

2.3.3 Materials Adaptation and Vocabulary Teaching
According to Tomlinson (2012: 143), English language teaching (ELT) materials are “...anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language”. When EFL teachers work with a prescribed coursebook, they usually adapt the core materials because it can be rather monotonous both for teachers and learners to be restricted to the same limited material all the time. There are many ways of adapting ELT materials (Tomlinson 2010). Three main ways they are adapted for pre-teaching vocabulary might be: a) simplifying, for example, by breaking down the material into small chunks and giving explanations either in English or in the L1, sometimes using simple aids such as flashcards or whiteboards; b) giving additional material such as work sheets or homework exercises based on the main coursebook; and c) using technology such as overhead projectors, videos or computers to expand the material and make the meanings clear and present visuals (Tomlinson 2010, 2012; McGrath 2002; Swan 1992). Teachers adapt materials to humanise the content and make it more personal and directly relevant to the learners and sometimes to censor culturally inappropriate content (Gray 2010: 274).

In a complex contextual situation such as Kuwait, EFL teachers might need to adapt Target English and aim to “bridge the gap between [the] coursebook and students’ needs” (McGrath 2002: 8). Having said that, the way these teachers adapt the coursebook, or even choose the method of vocabulary teaching, is all governed by their principles and beliefs even if they do not notice them, or act upon them subconsciously (Hall 2011; Farrell 2007). This is why teachers’ beliefs are key in our recent study and the next section is dedicated to discussing this in detail.

2.4 Teachers’ Beliefs

According to Pajares (1992: 307), the term “teachers’ beliefs” is a rather messy concept, since it has been used with different meanings and using different philosophical and psychological theories. Teachers’ beliefs have been defined as “unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (Kagan 1992: 65). This definition is useful but for the purposes of the present study, it is important to include also those conscious beliefs which teachers have about their work. Teachers vary in the amount of conscious awareness they have about their own beliefs and in any case, it is difficult to draw a clear line between conscious and unconscious beliefs (Hall 2011). Some
empirical research conducted in this field finds “a language teacher’s espoused beliefs may be an unreliable guide to their actual classroom practices” (Farrell 2007: 29). Other research has found that teachers’ beliefs about what they are teaching, why they are teaching this subject matter, and which pedagogic methods are likely to be most successful are extremely influential in how they conduct their classes (Kagan and Tippins 1991: 281-291). This view is endorsed by Hall (2011: 61), who adds:

whether they draw upon ‘academic’ theories or not, the approach teachers pursue in their classes will be informed by their personal hypotheses and beliefs whether these theories are explicit or remain unconscious.

The difficulty that exists in finding a proper definition for teachers’ beliefs may explain why in the past there has been a focus on teacher behaviour in the classroom (Farrell 2007). It is much easier to identify and discuss actual behaviours than to research the amorphous concept of beliefs, but it would be a mistake to ignore people’s underlying beliefs. The possibility people are acting on unconscious beliefs makes it very difficult for researchers because simply asking someone what they believe will not produce an accurate answer. The only way to resolve this is to ask questions about what teachers believe, and also observe what teachers do, and then reflect on any gaps emerging between words and deeds. This is why the present study examines both beliefs and teaching practice, and seeks to discern connections between the two.

2.4.1 Teachers’ Beliefs about Language Teaching

In most countries, EFL teachers are required to complete college or university training with an element of teaching practice and this is a source of considerable knowledge about pedagogy. This can underpin teachers’ beliefs about language teaching methods but it is not the only influence, since all teachers have themselves been learners and have observed many other people teaching different subjects throughout their childhood and early adult years (Hall 2011; Farrell 2007). These past experiences can condition a teacher to have certain firmly held beliefs and these may be in conflict with the theories taught in teachers training programmes (Freeman 2002: 1). Another issue relating to teacher beliefs is that some teachers are not accustomed to thinking about or articulating their beliefs, and this makes it hard for them to improve their teaching, since they are unable to make
connections between their implicit beliefs and their actions, even if they are specifically invited to do so (Borg 2011: 378). Teachers might also hold beliefs with varying amounts of certainty, since some are core beliefs, and others more peripheral (Phipps and Borg 2009: 380).

The context in which a teacher works can also exert a considerable influence on what a teacher believes about teaching and indeed, most educational managers are keen to ensure that all teachers working in the same organisation should hold an agreed set of fundamental beliefs so they can easily work together on common goals (Farrell 2007). The systems and processes existing in a school, such as requirements for lesson planning documentation, or the monitoring system for formative and summative assessment, or the inspection regime are all designed to remind teachers what they should be doing and all help to build at least some common ground in terms of basic beliefs. However, most real work in schools is done by a single teacher, unobserved, in a classroom full of learners. This is not monitored, and such teachers are likely to act according to their own beliefs, even when these are not 100% aligned with the official policy on pedagogical matters (Nation 2014: 397-398). Even competent teachers often disagree on the best way to teach a particular lesson, and there are many small and large differences in the way teachers deliver a prescribed curriculum.

It is important to note teachers may not necessarily hold any strong belief, or may exhibit some inconsistencies about what they say and what they do. According to Graves (2008: 147-149), teachers may follow the syllabus and the prescribed method on one occasion because they feel a compulsion to do so in their teaching environment but then on another occasion, they may rely more on their own beliefs which are different from those prescribed, meaning they might depart from the way they are supposed to teach. This is why it is important to discuss this complex relation between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices.

2.4.2 Connection between Teachers’ Beliefs and Teaching Practices
In addition to the influence of training and past experience on teacher beliefs, there is also a connection between a teacher’s own emotions and personal values and his or her beliefs about teaching, and this can exert considerable influence on how that teacher behaves in class (Zembylas 1997: 5). This explains why different teachers working in the same school hold different beliefs, and also explains why the same teacher might hold inconsistent beliefs. The terminology often used for this gap between what teachers believe and say and how they actually behave in class is “espoused beliefs [and] what they do (their theories in action)” (Farrell 2007: 29). Researchers wanting to understand teachers’ beliefs must therefore be prepared to ask the same question several times to test how consistently a teacher espouses a particular belief, or compare what teachers say in interviews with what they do in class to check whether these beliefs are supported or contradicted by teaching practice.

Theories of how to uncover teacher beliefs stress the need for empirical data as well as self-report information because of the complex link that exists between thinking and action (Breen et al. 2001: 470). An empirical investigation into the effects of teacher beliefs was made by Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012: 334-342), who explored Iranian EFL teachers’ beliefs about writing composition and the impact of these beliefs on their teaching, using a questionnaire methodology. A similar recent study was also conducted by Hassan (2013). This questionnaire method was useful in terms of categorising teachers’ beliefs about writing as an activity that is form-based, process-based or social-based, and in correlating these orientations to writing with variables such as level of education, experience of teaching, and gender. However the questionnaire method is not suitable for assessing the impact of teachers’ beliefs on their behaviours in class, since teachers may not always be fully aware of how they interact with learners.

Van Vooren et al. (2012: 641-648) also used a questionnaire method, consisting of a standard questionnaire based on Burgess and Etherington (2002: 443-458) and then an additional second part containing open questions, subsequently followed up with a test in the students’ grammatical knowledge. This combined questionnaire and test method is an improvement because it takes into account the impact of teacher beliefs on teaching, but it still leaves many questions unanswered. The authors conclude, for example, that “the effect of these [teachers’] beliefs on grammar instruction has a low impact seeing as situational
matters also play a significant role” (Van Vooren et al. 2012: 647). A similar study on trainee teachers’ beliefs on learner autonomy in Oman found a range of beliefs present in the cohort, and also considerable variation in the amount of consistency between what teachers said they believed, and how they actually behaved in their teaching practice (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012: 90-91). The previous evidence indicates a number of reasons which can affect teaching and learning procedures, but that ultimately it is the teacher who influences these procedures (Donnelly et al. 2011).

2.4.3 Relationship between Vocabulary Teaching and Teachers’ Beliefs in Kuwait

For many decades, the international literature on teachers’ professional identity has emphasised aspects of professional conduct such as:

- a capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures. (Stenhouse 1975: 144)

Such an approach, however, might not match the top-down management system in the Kuwaiti educational domain very well. Reasons for this system are partly due to the small country size, which lends itself to national management structures, and partly due to the history and culture of the whole Arabian Gulf region (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). Teachers can and do reflect on their work, discuss issues among themselves, and compare their teaching approaches with that of others, but they do this in a highly structured way, within rather strict boundaries set by the MoE (Adnan 2012). Critical reflection is recommended as one of the best theories to use by both researchers with participants, and among teachers themselves, as a way of uncovering and understanding unconscious assumptions and beliefs (Brookfield 1995). Research has shown that an important dimension of vocabulary teaching (and indeed of all L2 teaching) is the ability of the teacher to be aware of what he or she is doing and to reflect continually on what has worked well, or what has not worked so well in each lesson (Farrell 2007: 41).

In Kuwait, both students and teachers are very much judged by managerial and MoE supervision, with a view to establishing conformity across the system, rather than individuality and experimentation (Adnan 2012). Studies from other countries have shown
that when asked about their practice, many obstacles can arise. In one study in Vietnam, “teachers referred to a number of contextual factors [such as material constraints, administration-related constraints] which routinely constrained their practice” (Tayajasanant and Barnard 2010: 279). Most EFL teachers at intermediate level in state schools are not native speakers of English and this situation can result in a tendency to over-simplify the learning process, helping students with L1 language explanations and prompts, and focusing on lesson by lesson content rather than the wider goal of proficiency beyond the covers of the textbook (Medgyes 2001: 418-420). These contextual factors might affect the way teachers teach and can ultimately have some sort of an impact about what they do in class. At the same time, however, teachers might be asked to do something, but when they are in their classrooms they do something else. For example, they might be asked to teach vocabulary by using the communicative approach, but when they are in class, they teach vocabulary using the grammar/translation method because of their beliefs, or because this is what they think is best for their learners. This phenomenon in the literature is referred to as classroom enactment, and teachers’ beliefs are arguably one of the keys to understand the reason behind this phenomenon (Graves 2008).

2.4.4 Teachers’ Beliefs and Classroom Enactment (Hidden Syllabus)

Teachers differ in their interpretation of what is required by their school and in their particular syllabus, implying there is sometimes what is referred to as a hidden syllabus being taught alongside the officially sanctioned syllabus (Hall 2011). Additionally, the linked concepts of curriculum enactment and classroom enactment can be defined as “the teaching and learning processes that happen in the classroom” (Graves 2008: 152). If teachers find the coursebook is unhelpful, for example, they may produce their own supplementary material to achieve goals they think are important (Swan 1992: 32).

An example of classroom enactment is the way in which teachers officially follow the communicative approach of the coursebook, syllabus, or organisational policy but in practice, deviate from these guideline principles by bringing in materials of their own to augment the rather narrow provision of material that comes with the coursebook. Instructions in a coursebook using the communicative approach are designed to encourage teamwork and much informal checking and negotiation for meaning between peers in class
(Foster and Ohta 2005: 402). However, if a teacher simply translates everything into Arabic, this subverts the aims of the exercises. Students learn that they must follow the teacher rather than the book.

Learners are very likely to notice and be influenced by this hidden syllabus that teachers deliver (Hall 2011). If teachers consistently go beyond the instructions in the coursebook, for example, and provide many other types of learning aids and different exercises, then learners might absorb an openness to learning opportunities in the world outside the classroom, and they might also be encouraged to use the L2 with their peers (Swain et al. 2002). If, however, teachers discourage such exploration and experimentation, then learning English becomes a rather narrow and formulaic exercise, having no purpose other than enabling students to complete the assessment at the end and pass examinations. It is clear teaching and learning are somehow complex and dynamic processes, and coursebook instructions and rules are interpreted and acted upon in different ways by both teachers and learners. The curriculum is in effect what actually happens in class, and for various contextual reasons, this might not coincide exactly with what policy-makers dictate from above (Graves 2008).

2.5 Conclusion of the Literature Review

This brief literature review has shown many different theories used to explain vocabulary teaching and learning, and a range of different approaches have been recommended for use in EFL classrooms worldwide. There is a globally general acceptance of the value of the communicative approach, but at the same time, teaching practice in many classrooms appears to retain many elements of the traditional grammar/translation method, particularly in the rather regimented and examination driven educational systems of the Arabian Gulf countries. Having said that, it is not entirely clear in the literature what the implications of this mismatch between theory and practice might be, and some questions have been raised about the effectiveness of EFL teaching in schools in this region (Al-Mutawa and Kailani 1989). This is a rather serious issue because it impacts upon the ability of Kuwait to take advantage of the economic opportunities of globalisation and equip its citizens for successful international careers. It appears that teacher beliefs are central to these issues, and why this issue forms the main focus of this study.
There is another gap in the literature so far as it is not clear which situational factors in Kuwait are most influential, and whether or not teachers respond more to their own belief about the best approaches, or more to the constraints and possibilities of the setting. Some very interesting research on the relationship between teacher beliefs and the implementation of changes in educational goals and policies has shown teacher beliefs can be the key to success or failure in such matters (Richards et al. 2001; Syed 2003). Birello (2012: 88) cites the British educational theorist Simon Borg’s remark that:

...no matter how much you try to program teachers to behave in certain ways, they won’t: they always have their own individual ideas, their individual ways of doing things, their preferences ... beneath the behavior there are beliefs and knowledge and related constructs which influence what teachers do.

In other words, evidence from across the world shows that “if we want to understand what teachers do, if we want to promote change, we also need to look at beliefs” (Birello 2012: 88, interviewing Simon Borg).

What is needed now is more research which takes account of all three factors: the beliefs of the teacher, the influence of the Kuwaiti setting, and the impact of these on actual teaching, and which identifies the connections which exist (or potentially do not exist) between these elements in the teaching and learning process. This is a rather ambitious undertaking, but it is essential to research these issues to ensure that EFL teaching actually delivers what it is intended to do, rather than other unplanned outcomes which arise from gaps and inconsistencies between policy, teacher beliefs and curriculum enactment in the classroom. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will introduce the research design of this dissertation, and how I planned to achieve the previous mentioned goals to investigate the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to the Methodology
This chapter presents the research design. It explains the rationale behind the choice of a qualitative research methodology and then describes the methods used to collect two different kinds of data, namely classroom observations and semi-structured interviews in detail. Issues of reliability and validity are examined, and matters relating to the choice of participants and important ethical dimensions of the fieldwork are also considered. The data analysis procedure is described, including the use of a mind map to clarify inter-related concepts and the process of coding the interview transcripts for content analysis.

3.2 Research Methodology

It is customary in fieldwork research to make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The former is considered appropriate for the exploration of events which can be measured and counted as in some kinds of educational research, for example, when examining trends in examination results or frequencies in various linguistic outcomes (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). In this dissertation, however, since the focus is on teachers’ beliefs, and their impact on a dynamic classroom environment, it is very difficult to arrive at firm facts or quantifiable amounts. Teachers are individuals with their own personal history and unique view of the world. Each classroom exists in its own particular setting, with a distinct group of learners, meaning it is very difficult to draw out exact measurements of cause and effect. Many variables can co-occur, and they are not always visible to the observer, or to the participants in a particular interaction. This is why the qualitative methodology was chosen for this study, because it is:

characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. (Brikci and Green 2007: 2)

Since the early twentieth century, many new developments in the social sciences can be summed up as “the scientific study of human behaviour” (Punch 2005: 8). Social scientists view the world as being constructed in different ways by different individuals, and rather than applying fixed laws to explain human behaviour as in the natural sciences, researchers in fields such as anthropology and sociology seek to understand the world from multiple points of view. This is why qualitative research is often called constructivist or interpretivist since researchers encourage participants to use their own words to describe what they
experience, and then interpret what is said alongside other evidence from observations, questionnaires, interviews and so on (Al-Busaidi 2008). It has been pointed out that the choice of a qualitative method is a choice of epistemology or in other words, it reveals a position on the nature of knowledge itself which allows for interpersonal differences and multiple perspectives (Bryman 1984: 75).

There are both advantages and disadvantages in using qualitative research in the field of education. On the positive side, the open-ended nature of interviews and observations can capture data that may be relevant to the issue in hand, including factors which may not have occurred to the researcher (McDonough and McDonough 2014: 183). Such research can provide a rich and deep understanding of complex phenomena, including those which only arise through the interaction of people (Robson 2011: 24). On the negative side, qualitative research is usually very context-specific, since the researcher captures the unique qualities of people and places (Patton 2002). This means qualitative research results can usually not be generalised to other situations. However, other researchers can apply the same method in other contexts and find similar or new results which can ultimately be beneficial to the field of study they are working on (Al-Busaidi 2008).

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is also a complicating factor, since the researcher is necessarily present and participates at some level in the information gathering and information analysing processes. This can introduce bias, since the researcher has his or her own previous assumptions and beliefs which might influence the participants, or the analysis of the data (Brikci and Green 2007). There is no way to eliminate this human dimension from qualitative research, since people issues are at the very core of the issues being explored. The implication of this is that it is essential for each qualitative research project to clearly describe all of the conditions surrounding the research, and the methods used to gather and analyse data (McDonough and McDonough 2014). This careful description allows other researchers to make comparisons between this and other unique situations and methods. By building up a complex picture of similar contexts, it is then possible to reach some general conclusions, while still being aware of the differences between contexts (Al-Busaidi 2008).

3.3 Methods of Data Collection
In qualitative research, two methods of data collection are better than one because they allow the researcher to engage in triangulation (Denscombe 2010: 62), which entails comparing findings from different data sources and looking for areas of consensus and areas of tension. In this research, classroom observations are the first method of data collection, and semi-structured interviews are the second. It is entirely to be expected that the findings will not overlap exactly, and this is because human beings are not always consistent in their beliefs and actions, and there can be many factors which influence what they do and say. By gathering observation data and correlating them with more in-depth interviews, it is possible to gain an overview of the range of experiences that occur in the chosen setting (Li and Walsh 2011: 39).

3.3.1 Classroom Observations

Classroom observation is a tried and tested means of carrying out educational research. This method aims to capture the “setting, systems, people and behavior” (McKay 2006: 84) through the careful recording of descriptive details. For this study, I conducted classroom observations and the main field notes were written as objectively as possible (Appendix 1), and any thoughts and feelings on the data were recorded separately. Dörnyei (2007: 185) mentions “the main merit of observational data is that it allows researchers to see directly what people do without having to rely on what they say and do”. However, taken together, the descriptive and reflective data can help me understand the meanings behind people’s words and behaviours. Care must be taken with this method, however, because observation “has most potential for creating discomfort among teachers” (Borg 2015: 247).

In this case, a structured observation framework was used as a prompt to ensure key details were captured for all classes for the purposes of analysis and comparison (Appendix 1). This is a systematic rather than casual observation technique that helps to focus attention on specific issues (McDonough and McDonough 2014: 102) which, in this case, is teaching vocabulary. Observations were carried out before the interviews to prevent any discussion points from influencing the usual teaching practice of the teachers (McKay 2006).

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews
All the interviews were semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and were audio-recorded because “this provides us with in-depth perceptions of the interviewees which can never be captured by note-taking during the interviews” (Basit 2010: 114). The semi-structured interview questions were selected on the basis of my own experience as an EFL teacher in Kuwait for the past three years, and at the same time, from following the example set in an empirical study on the link between teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices by Farrell and Lim (2005). This method is useful because the open-ended questions it contains such as “What is the method that you follow?” invite the participant to frame answers in his or her own way, and then follow-up questions such as “Can you explain?” or “Why?” can be used to seek expansion and clarification of important or difficult points (Kumar 2005). Semi-structured interviews start with a core set of questions, but allow also some deviation to follow the lead of the participant if the discussion is relevant (Farrell 2007). This is better than a free conversation which could easily drift away from the main issues of the research. It is also better than a questionnaire or a tightly scripted interview, both of which are comparatively inflexible, and answers to questionnaires tend to be rather superficial (Kagan 1990: 420-422). Semi-structured interviews also encourage participants and interviewer to reflect together on key issues, and this is a good way of building up a joint understanding of complex issues such as teachers’ beliefs (Farrell 2007). There are some drawbacks with semi-structured interviews, however, being relatively time-consuming to carry out and analyse, and requiring a high level of skill on the part of the researcher if they are to be effective in soliciting good quality data (Kumar 2005).

Interviews in this study were 30 minutes, and took place in a separate room in each school. My role as an interviewer was first to establish a good rapport, and then ask some simple initial questions that helped the participant to feel at ease (Parker and Titter 2006). As the interview progressed, I encouraged the interviewee to speak. Each interview was audio-recorded on an IPhone, with the participants’ permission, and transcribed later. This ensured I paid full attention to the interviewee during the short time available for speaking. All interviews were conducted in English, except one as the participant preferred to speak in Arabic. This particular interview was translated into English and then transcribed as the other interviews. Notes from the observations and interviews are designed to be analysed
together to achieve a rounded view of each teacher’s beliefs and teaching practices. The interview questions can be seen in Appendix 2.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are scientific terms which have their roots in quantitative research and the positivist paradigm, but which nevertheless have been applied with a slightly different definition to qualitative methods (Golafshani 2003). Validity in qualitative research attaches to narratives and the meanings which people attach to them, and so it is more a matter of confidence than certainty (Cohen et al. 2011). An important element in qualitative research is therefore a requirement for researchers to acknowledge the role they play in the research, and to situate the topic with the self in the socio-historical context (Neuman 2013: 20). In this case, I am a qualified EFL teacher who knows the Kuwaiti school environment very well. This insider status allows judgements to be made on the basis of knowledge of that setting and gives assurance that the assessment of classroom activities is valid (Bryman 2001). It would be much more difficult for an outsider to gain the trust of participants and interpret the statements they make about the system in which they work. It is acknowledged that the interview data in particular are likely to be subjective, and because of the narrative form of the data, there may be inconsistencies or unclear conclusions (Cresswell and Miller 2000). These imperfections, however, do not invalidate the research, but merely reflect the complexity and disjointedness of human experience and provide material for reflection and further research (Wolcott 2001: 36).

Reliability in qualitative research is a matter of demonstrating the authenticity of the data used and the fairness of conclusions drawn from these data, rather than any notion of repeatability in other contexts (Coe 2012: 48). In this case, a meticulous recording of all data, and a detailed description of the methods used are featured which enhance the reliability of the work. Furthermore, in this project, the researcher is a teacher who knows the context of the participants very well, and who can sympathise with the daily pressures on teachers in Kuwait. Although some might argue that this brings bias to the project, the advantage here is that it makes it possible for the researcher to identify and take account of the possibility of “socially desirable responding” (Paulhus 2002: 49) or other kinds of bias.
One consequence of socially desirable responding is that the data collected may not be an absolutely accurate reflection of a person’s true belief. One way of dealing with this issue is to rely not just upon one single method of data collection, such as the interview, but to use other methods such as classroom observation, and to correlate the information received in both methods with each other (Paulhus 2002). If there are any tensions or contradictions between the two sources of data, then this may indicate areas where the participant is not aware of inner beliefs, or is perhaps disguising his or her beliefs to appear professional and competent, or to please the researcher (Melketo 2012).

3.5 Participants

The selection of participants was done using a purposive method of sampling because this method focuses “on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which will best enable [me] to answer [my] research questions” (Laerd 2014: online). Five practising EFL teachers were selected from five state intermediate schools in Kuwait. They are all male, which reflects the gender segregation that is customary in the Kuwaiti national education system and they all had at least 5 years’ experience teaching EFL at intermediate level in Kuwait. They were educated in different Middle Eastern countries and all spoke Arabic as their first language.

3.6 Ethical Issues

In line with the university regulations, the principle of informed consent was adhered to in the observation and interview fieldwork (Appendix 3). All teachers who were observed and participated in the interviews completed and signed a consent form, as recommended by Burton and Bartlett (2009). Participants were informed about the focus of the research and they were assured that their anonymity would be preserved through the use of pseudonyms. This openness about the topic can affect the quality of the data, in both positive and negative ways (Crow et al. 2006). In this case, it was judged necessary to be honest and clear to obtain honesty and clarity from the teachers in return.

Permission to carry out this research was obtained from the head teacher of each school and anonymity of the school was also assured. As there was no direct contact with learners, only observation of the teacher’s approach and teaching style in a normal classroom context...
when teaching vocabulary, it was not necessary to obtain informed consent from the students. The researcher did not interact directly with learners but merely observed their lessons from a seated position at the back of the class and in the presence of the EFL teacher.

Documentation relating to this research is kept in a password protected laptop and hard copies stored in a locked filing cabinet. After the completion of the assessment process for this work, the data will be destroyed. These measures are designed to ensure no harm can come to any participant through the research itself, or through the release of information relating to that person’s working life or his views on pedagogic and managerial issues (Bryman 2001).

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

In view of the complex nature of lived experience, this study uses the techniques of the mind map and content analysis to analyse the observation sessions and the interview transcripts (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). According to Seidel (1998), the process of analysing qualitative data consists of noticing, collecting and thinking about things. After finishing transcribing the interviews (Appendix 4) and preparing the data for analysis, I read the interview transcripts and highlighted the relevant concepts and ideas mentioned by the participants. I then began putting these ideas into categories and analysed the data through coding (Creswell 2009). This allowed me to understand the beliefs of the participants and the nature of the Kuwaiti context more deeply, which eventually led me to a “distilled summary of the respondents’ views or experiences” (Ritchie and Spencer 1994: 182). Then I started creating a mind map, starting with the four research questions which form the basis of this research and creating a visual linkage between these questions and the participants’ interview statements and their noticed actions in the classroom observations. Categories were then devised which helped in encapsulating relevant concepts which occurred in the interviews. The advantage of this method is that it avoids an over-simplistic or linear narrative and presents the different dimensions of the problem as perceived by participants (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). Furthermore, it was very useful when summarising and analysing the data and helped me to connect and bring ideas together (Appendix 5).
It is also important to note that content analysis starts with the very words of the participants themselves and seeks to identify thematic links and correlations (Creswell 2009). Again using the four initial research questions as a starting point, the interview transcripts were coded and then linked ideas drawn together for discussion. This method has the convenient advantage of “simplifying and reducing large amounts of data into organized segments” (Marvasti 2004: 91). Larger examples of content analysis counting frequencies of terms could have been used; however, in the present study the sample is too small to make such a procedure valid (Silverman 2006: 168). The emphasis here is on depth of understanding in a few cases rather than a full overview.

3.8 Conclusion to the Methodology

In this chapter, I discussed the steps taken to gather and analyse the data and the methodologies that underpin this process in detail. The combination of semi-structured interviews and systematic classroom observations is designed to provide rich and deep information from two different sources on teachers’ beliefs and their actual classroom practice in relation to teaching vocabulary. Both methods are rather labour intensive in terms of data gathering and analysis, and this necessarily limits the number of participants and sessions, but this detail is necessary to understand complex issues within their proper context. It takes time to gain the trust of participants and to understand the significance of their words, and this is why these two particular methods were selected. In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings and results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction to the Findings and Discussion
In this chapter, I will present the analysed data and discuss the research findings. The data collected for this study take the form of: a) observation notes; and b) interview transcripts. The observation notes were collected according the framework in Appendix 1, and consist of tick and cross notations for the presence or absence of particular features, respectively, and some comments, descriptions and brief summaries in written note form. The interview transcripts follow the core set of questions given in Appendix 2 and were subsequently coded according to the mind map given in Appendix 5. Full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix 4. Reference to the interview content will be made in this chapter using italics and pseudonyms for the interviewees. As discussed in section 1.4, there are four main research questions:

1) What are teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning?
2) How do teachers use/adapt the Target English coursebook in their lessons when teaching the vocabulary items in the book?
3) To what extent is the use/adaptation of the Target English coursebook affected by what teachers believe about vocabulary teaching and learning?
4) What factors may have influenced the teachers’ practice or approach not to teach the vocabulary items in the Target English coursebook in terms of what they believe?

My primary concern is to identify the relation between beliefs and practice and this is the focus of RQ3. The answer to this question will naturally overlap with the answers of the first two research questions because of the complexity of this study. As for RQ4, its main aim is to investigate the different contextual variables which might constrain teachers from acting on their beliefs when teaching vocabulary from Target English.

The approach taken to present the results is to base the analysis primarily on the interviews, using the thematic categories which are present in the mind map. These thematic units are the same four main research questions of the present study. Each research question will be discussed separately, and the statements made by the interviewees are from time to time triangulated with the observation data to highlight areas of congruence and incongruence between stated beliefs and actual teaching practice (Graves 2000). Analytical discussion of each set of data is completed section by section and then summarised at the end of the chapter.
4.2 First Research Question: Teachers’ Beliefs about Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

RQ1 asks “What are teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning?” The starting point for analysing teachers’ beliefs about teaching vocabulary is the statements that they make themselves, although as noted in Chapter Two, it is necessary to bear in mind this is by no means the only source of information, and is often not the most reliable source, which is why triangulation with the observations is necessary (Denscombe 2010).

All five interviewees expressed an awareness of the communicative method in teaching vocabulary. Evidence for this is found in the large number of statements in the transcripts, including the following rather typical examples:

*I try to introduce the words through the communicative approach.* (Abdualziz)

*I try to use the English language all the time, and I ask my students to use the English language all the time.* (Abdualziz)

*The Ministry of Education wants us to follow the communicative method.* (Alaa)

*The role of teaching English is to use English. We are here to teach how to use English outside the school... anywhere.* (Esam)

*[The communicative approach is] the approach used here in Kuwait in teaching.*

(Tareq)

One interviewee immediately confesses, however, that this is the ideal but not the reality in his teaching:

*Theoretically speaking, I’m required to make the students understand the new vocabulary items and use them in their daily life. But... To be honest with you, I don’t do that.* (Alaa)

It seems, then, at least in some cases, there is a clear gap between theoretical belief in the communicative way of teaching vocabulary through implicit means and the actual choices made in terms of practice (Farrell 2007).
Teachers generally also express a belief, theoretically at least, in the effectiveness of the communicative method:

It’s better. It’s better to maximize English as a foreign language. It's better to use the English language all the time. (Abdualziz)

Sometimes it is very informative to consider the metaphors and analogies teachers make when they describe their beliefs, or various factors which they encounter in their work because these can reveal deeply held beliefs that teachers may not feel able to express in concrete terms (Andrews 2003; Hall 2011). One teacher jokes about his students’ desire to have all the answers given to them and accepts the “spoon-feeding” analogy, suggesting he sees himself as being forced to act in the role of a parent feeding a small child from a bowl:

A: Yes, they will understand it [when giving the meaning in Arabic]. But I don’t add anything new to the English language.

H: Mm-hmm! It is interesting.

A: When I give them the meaning, that’s why I tell them open your mouth...

[Laughter]

H: Yeah!

A: ...open your mouth! It’s delicious!

[Laughter]

H: Yeah!

A: It’s delicious!

H: Spoon-feeding!

A: Yes, something like this. So I’m not introducing anything to the English language.

H: Uh-huh! (Abdualziz)

It is quite difficult to interpret the teacher’s true beliefs in this portion of the interview because he is using this exaggerated metaphor of feeding the students delicious morsels in Arabic in an ironic and humorous way. The irony conveys two different meanings at the same time: firstly, that the students like this kind of teaching, and secondly, that it is not
approved of by the authorities because of the policy of using English in the classroom. The humour shows that the teacher is gently mocking the system that produces students who only want easy answers.

It was reassuring in this interview to see the participant relaxing and talking openly and with some humour about his views, and this shows that for at least some of the time this interview achieved what O’Reilly maintains as a good goal in research in ethnographic research; that is to say: gaining access to rather intimate information by:

explaining about our research but then settling into a semi-overt role, where participants know what we are doing but do not always have it in the forefront of their minds. (2010: 8)

The present study was not fully ethnographic because it was able only to complete one round of observations and one round of interviews, and this is much too short to allow the researcher to become fully immersed in the setting, but it does use some elements of the ethnographic approach, since the discussions with participants build upon shared experience in the Kuwaiti education system (O’Reilly 2010).

The content analysis method allowed me a glimpse of attitudes and beliefs present in the culture which surrounds the teaching activity. Even when teachers make statements which deny a particular position, their choice of imagery and metaphor can reveal dominant thinking in the organisation. This dominant thinking is bound to have some effect on their beliefs and behaviour (Tayjasanant and Barnard 2010). The feeding metaphor for teaching, for example, conceives this as a mechanical process in which the teacher makes all the effort, while the learner is in a passive role, simply receiving the material in bite-size mouthfuls without any need to be closely involved in the process. Another metaphor is that of problems and crime:

*If you feel that you need more clarification, then it's not a problem, I think it's not a problem to use the mother tongue. Sometimes words can’t be understood easily by students, so I give it to students in Arabic. It’s not a crime. It’s not a big problem. Students will thank you for that. [Jokingly]* (Salah)
This somewhat extreme choice of words echoes the rhetoric of the government which stipulates just one, monolingual approach which represents a rather strong version of the communicative method. Negative words such as problem and crime show the teacher resists this dominant view, and asserts a need to deviate from it.

Another very revealing metaphor is that of the coursebook as a “holy book” which is used by more than one teacher:

Yes, the teacher should be flexible inside the lesson, should be flexible inside the course. I shouldn't stick to the book. It isn't a holy book. (Abdualziz)

I try to make sure that my students understand and I don't care about the way. Even if I don't tackle certain exercises in the book. It’s not a holy book. I use my own way. (Salah)

This metaphor derives from the largely Islamic world view of the Arabian Gulf region and it suggests that conservative views (Hall 2011) which often come from the authorities in these countries, in this case regarding how to learn, tend to be imposed from above, and this inhibits the population from enjoying the benefits of more modern methods. This is a criticism of the way in which ideas from the authorities are transferred to education, often in ways which conflict with other policy directions. Kuwait has made a conscious decision to modernise and professionalise the EFL curriculum, but it is very difficult to do this if the tools and approaches of modern teaching are not available.

The examination is described also in religious terms:

H: Why do you do it this way to help your students understand...?

S: ...To help them understand and to prepare them for the exam which is a holy goal for some...

[Laughter]

S: ...people here and there. (Salah)

This comment to people here and there refers obliquely to the authority figures in the school and from the government who are concerned about examination results above all other goals (Gaies and Bowers 1990).
Another revealing metaphor, this time drawn from the technological age, echoes a teacher’s
dissatisfaction with rigid dehumanising work conditions:

_We aren't dealing with holy books and we aren't robots. Every teacher should deal
with the new words according to the level of the students_ (Abdualziz)

The ironic tone of voice in such comments reveals that the participants are not in favour of
this over-emphasis on the coursebook and examination, and the use of one single method
to teach vocabulary. The use of metaphors and the indirect mention of the authorities
amounts to an acknowledgement of their influence, and an unwillingness to confront them
openly about problems which might occur in the workplace or theoretical debate which lie
at the heart of the teaching profession. The system seems similar to a _vicious circle_, as
described by Tareq:

_The system... It's a vicious circle. The system of the exams poses something on the
teacher. The teacher follows a certain way to cover the coursebook, so he is training
students for the exam. Students became like this. They like to get everything ready-
made because they are used to this now. After years of the same system of the
exams, this is the result._ (Tareq)

Thus, it is important for the purpose of this study to investigate the nature of this system
and the way the coursebook is used inside EFL classrooms in Kuwait.

**4.3 Second Research Question: Teachers’ Use of the Coursebook when Teaching
Vocabulary**

RQ2 asks “How do teachers use/adapt the _Target English_ coursebook in their lessons when
teaching the vocabulary items in the book?” It is clear that all interview participants
followed the coursebook closely, but at the same time they also adapted the coursebook in
some way when teaching the new vocabulary. The literature suggests that teachers add
materials for many reasons, including the need to add some human interest, or to simplify
the content, or meet the needs or requests of individual students, or change elements not
appropriate to the learner context (McGrath 2013: 129).
Some teachers noted that there was theoretically some freedom to add additional material, including new vocabulary or different types of activity to their teaching, beyond the content of the coursebook:

**T:** If you have time, you can do it [teach vocabulary from outside the book]. But you should abide to the book. You should finish the book first then you can do whatever you like if you have time.

**H:** If you have time?

**T:** Yes, if you have time. So you can just adapt the lesson according to your time, but first you should, or you must finish the coursebook. (Tareq)

However there was no evidence of this in the observations, and in the interviews it was clear that extra work beyond the coursebook was very much the exception rather than the rule. There is strong managerial pressure to stick exactly to the coursebook and avoid adding other material that is not going to be part of the examination (Bailey 1999). It is clear, then, that in the Kuwaiti intermediate school context, the problem is much more a question of trying to cover all the required material than looking to add more.

One strategy used to save time and help students progress quickly through the course, acquiring as much vocabulary as possible, is that of flash cards:

*At the beginning of the next period, I’m going to introduce... not introduce... I’m going to revise the words as quickly as I can using flash cards in order to connect what I explained today with what I’m going to explain tomorrow.* (Abdualziz)

Using flash cards at the beginning and end of a lesson is a way of anchoring student attention to certain vocabulary items, in effect making them notice new words more, and this enhances the approach used in the coursebook of highlighting key terms (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003).

In spite of this pressure to stick only to the coursebook, there is much evidence that teachers use additional material that uses the same vocabulary as the text book, and is designed to give students extra practice. These take the form of worksheets, or sometimes homework exercises, designed to encourage the students to devote extra time to reviewing and recycling the vocabulary presented in class:
Yes, worksheets. We print handouts for the students and give them to students. They can do them at home. It’s homework. (Tareq)

Extra exercises. They are not in the coursebook. I made them, prepared them for my students because I think they are good to consolidate their understanding. (Salah)

This teacher, Salah, also openly states he is prepared to skip some material or speed up when dealing with some tasks:

I think there are lots of exercises that I think... they are not of my students’ interests, so I don’t give them a long time. I try not to consume the time... (Salah)

In a very revealing statement about the gap between the teacher’s own beliefs and the practices he is keen to show to supervisors and the head of department, it is evident the teacher deliberately conceals his everyday practice to appear to be following the guidelines issued to him:

When a supervisor or the head of department comes to your class, you have to show him what he wants to see. Frankly, I’m talking honestly. (Salah)

This shows that the teacher fulfils the demands of the system in a superficial way:

When I am in my class with my students and no body from outside is here, I try to make sure that my students understand and I don’t care about the way. Even if I don’t tackle certain exercises in the book. It’s not a holy book. I use my own way. The exercises that I find necessary and help my students to understand. (Salah)

This statement shows, however, that the teacher follows his own beliefs when he knows no authority figures are watching. This is interesting because students will undoubtedly be receiving a hidden curriculum in this case (Hall 2011), in the form of negative messages about the coursebook and the system. The teacher here is clearly doing what is referred to as classroom enchantment, discussed in section 2.4.4 (Graves 2008).

Another issue that was criticised is that the choice of vocabulary in the coursebook has no relevance to the Kuwaiti context:
Like... let's say... A word like today, I think it was "monkfish". They don't use this word in the street. Why monkfish? This strange type of fish? I don't know. Can you use it in the street? Monkfish? Here in Kuwait? You can't. At least they should bring a type of fish that is known in Kuwait. (Sarcastically) but not a strange, bottom dwelling fish in the ocean. I don't know in which country. Why? (Tareq)

Finally, an important consideration is also that students in the same class have different levels of ability and commitment and this is seen as an obstacle to the delivery of the coursebook in the manner prescribed by the government:

*Students’ attitudes and levels. Some students have positive attitude and others have negative attitude. They don't want to work. They have other interests. They aren't interested in the coursebook.* (Salah)

Many answers on the issue of how the coursebook was being used by the teachers were rather vague and this is perhaps understandable because the coursebook is such a big part of the whole teaching process. In effect, the book was the syllabus itself (Cunningsworth 1995), and there was a feeling it would not be right to skip elements of it because of the need to ensure that students were prepared for the detailed vocabulary testing elements of the examination. However, when the evidence from the classroom observations is taken into account alongside the teachers’ comments, the situation became much clearer. It is possible to see exactly how closely the teacher sticks to the coursebook content in each observed lesson.

There is some evidence that teachers understand very well what the coursebook’s intended purpose is but nevertheless choose to take a different approach. When teachers add or skip material, they use their skills to tailor the coursebook to fit what they perceive as student needs in their particular setting. This is an example of what Thornbury (2013: 204) calls “resisting” the coursebook, and it is by no means always a negative or harmful activity. Good teachers make their lessons suitable for the needs of their learners, and this means they modify and change if they know these changes will help their students achieve some important goal.
Another notable feature of the observations is the frequency with which the L1 Arabic was used. Although the coursebook was written for the Kuwaiti context, Arabic is not present in the coursebook, and vocabulary is introduced through the texts and dialogues. In each unit, there are small icons (the Words to remember section), as shown in Figure 1, Chapter 2 Section 2.3.1.

These icons are dotted throughout the coursebook, and not precisely situated in front of new textual content, but rather located incidentally at one or other side of the page, interspersed with exercises. Both teachers and students use them, however, as formal learning lists with the implication they have to be memorised in an explicit way. I noticed that teachers had to follow the book and teach the vocabulary items in the “Words to remember” section because this is the vocabulary that students will be asked about in the examination. This can ultimately lead to the washback effect on teaching vocabulary, especially as these steps are done throughout the whole year by following the prescribed coursebook (Bailey 1999; Messick 1996).

At no point is there any mention of Arabic meanings, but there is a monolingual glossary at the end, organised alphabetically, which provides a short explanation for students, defining for example the word valuable as: “valuable (adjective): extremely useful, expensive or important” (Keddle and Hobbs 2008: 109). This shows the use of Arabic falls outside the syllabus, as prescribed by the MoE. One teacher was very firm in his rejection of the L1:

\[ A: \quad \ldots \text{So I’m not introducing anything to the English language.} \]
\[ H: \quad \text{Uh-huh!} \]
\[ A: \quad \text{I try to avoid this...It’s forbidden in my class to write the word in Arabic, and [I ask the learners] to write the word in English and to give their meaning.} \ (\text{Abdualziz}) \]

This statement suggests that the teacher is an advocate of the strong version of the communicative approach, though when this is triangulated with the observation of his teaching, it is clear he does allow Arabic, since I observed that after finishing his explanation of new words in English, students then guessed and gave the meaning in Arabic until they got it right. He did not write Arabic on the whiteboard but he did accept oral answers in Arabic to check that students understood the meaning of new vocabulary.
A similar strategy was displayed by Salah in the observed lesson. He noticed a student did not understand the meaning of the word “element” and explained this by means of an example, “water has two elements, Oxygen and Hydrogen”, so that the student guessed the meaning correctly and gave the word in Arabic. This is good practice using the communicative approach because it uses English to help students access knowledge from another subject area (chemistry) and from an authentic situation within the classroom to help them work out the meaning without being told any Arabic terms (Harmer 2001). The linkage is made first from English word to English word, and the Arabic comes in only as a back up to check the student’s guess is correct. It must be noted, however, this teacher somewhat undermined the communicative approach by asking students to revise Arabic meanings of the words orally. It is as if he started out with a communicative approach, but only took it as far as establishing meaning via translation. He did not take the approach right to the end to the production phase because there was no opportunity for students to demonstrate their grasp of the function of these words in actual conversation with the teacher or with each other.

Interestingly, Abdualziz provided the parts of speech such as noun, verb, adjective, which suggests a nod to grammar/translation methodology since this allows students to categorise words according to their grammatical role. This mirrors the approach of the textbook, which always lists the parts of speech after new words in the glossary. Therefore, in practice, this syllabus uses a weaker version of the communicative method which allows some place for conscious learning of the L2, even though it does not go as far as allowing the L1 to intrude in learning the vocabulary (Thornbury 2006).

Another teacher explains there are some occasions when he judges it necessary to use Arabic:

_Sometimes we need to use Arabic in introducing new vocabulary especially in abstract words._ (Esam)

This same teacher also suggests that using the L2 for new words does not always work, and uses Arabic as a last resort:
Some words you need to say them in Arabic at the end. After many times. After many tries, you need to say them in Arabic [so students can get the meaning]. (Esam,)

This view is also supported by Salah, who explains that some students need the extra help that the L1 provides:

... you are a teacher. You know if your students understood the word or not. If you feel that you need more clarification, then it's not a problem, I think it's not a problem to use the mother tongue. Sometimes words can't be understood easily by students, so I give it to students in Arabic. It’s not a crime. It’s not a big problem. Students will thank you for that. [Jokingly] (Salah)

This, too, is evidence of a general belief on the part of the teachers in the communicative method in its weaker version, since the teacher believes that some abstract words are too difficult to teach using only the L1 by asking students to learn the meaning implicitly from pictures or context in the coursebook. A rather more extreme position was demonstrated when teacher Alaa actually wrote Arabic meanings alongside the English vocabulary items on the whiteboard. This is not in accordance with the communicative method. In short, a very wide range of additions, reductions and amendments to the coursebook was described by the teachers and demonstrated in the lessons observed. These changes did not deviate much from the vocabulary content in the coursebook, but they did differ rather significantly in terms of pedagogical approach. This is an important finding because it shows exactly which perceived deficiencies in the coursebook are being identified and rectified by teachers:

A: Using only L 2 is required from us as teachers here. But the circumstances here enforce us to use L 1. So, my answer is yes. I use L 1 when I teach the new vocabulary items, but we aren’t allowed to do that.

H: Why is that? Why do you do that?

A: I told you. Because students lack the motivation in learning. They want to pass the exam. And I help them to pass the exam. So I follow the easiest way to do that like giving them the meaning of the new vocabulary items in Arabic. (Alaa)

Again, the examination seems to be key in the way teachers approach their lessons and teach vocabulary. It is also worth noting that many of the teachers, such as Tareq, Salah and
Esam, used pictures and visuals when presenting the vocabulary items from the coursebook using *PowerPoint* software. As discussed (section 2.2.4), visuals can help learners to recall words better than other non-visual input (Abebe and Davidson 2012; Uberman 1998; Porter and Margaret 1992; Wright 1976). This is also supported by Paivio’s “dual-coding” theory (2007: 167). It seems that some teachers are aware of the advantages of using visuals and this is how they adapted the coursebook:

*I usually use modern technology like making PowerPoint presentations about the new words. I put some pictures, definitions, and examples in an interactive way. Students can see the presentation and get the new words. This is how I adapt my vocabulary lesson from the book.*  
(Tareq)

*The pictures, the PowerPoint, they are attracting students. They can have fun. They are motivated to participate. Visuals are good. They motivate students’ thinking about the words. They are good for the memory. When they see the picture, they can remember the word for a long time and maybe forever. [Jokingly]*  
(Tareq)

*I think using visuals makes students understand the words better*  
(Salah)

Furthermore, these comments indicate that visuals are not only helpful for recalling words, but they also motivate students inside the classroom and create a vivid class environment for communicative tasks and interaction (Goldstein 2008). One teacher, Esam, claimed this is the main reason he uses visuals when adapting *Target English*:

*H:* Are you using visuals just for motivation?

*E:* Yes, motivation, to make students active in the classroom. To make them with me always.

*H:* So your main goal for using visuals is just for motivation nothing else? You don’t think visuals can add something else other than motivation?

*E:* *It’s motivation.*  
(Esam)

Following this discussion of teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning in section 4.2, and how they use/adapt *Target English* in this section, the next section now answers the primary research question more directly.
4.4 Third Research Question: The Effect of Teachers’ Beliefs

RQ3 asks “To what extent is the use/adaptation of the Target English coursebook affected by what teachers believe about vocabulary teaching and learning?” As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the answer to this question was discussed indirectly in the two previous sections, 4.2 and 4.3. In the case of visuals, for example, an important aspect of teacher beliefs about teaching vocabulary, the teachers expressed mixed views about the value of visuals in their lessons. These range from high levels of enthusiasm and demonstration of visuals using PowerPoint (Salah, Esam and Tareq) to outright rejection on the grounds they do not increase the effectiveness of the lesson (Alaa).

Most of the teachers tolerated Arabic as a means of ensuring the students had grasped the meaning of new vocabulary items, and they promote the use of translation, even though this is not strictly part of the communicative approach (Hall 2011). There is a focus on accuracy and writing, when one might have expected more emphasis on fluency and free speaking from a programme based on the Target English coursebook. This dichotomy supports the findings of other researchers, notably Andrews (1994: 44) who maintains that public examinations have a very strong washback effect, and that one of the main consequences of this washback effect is that it inhibits innovation. Teachers may well hold the belief it is best to teach new vocabulary implicitly, as indeed is recommended in Kuwait, but due to the pressures in their own particular organisation, they are afraid this will jeopardise their students’ examination performance, and in so doing, prevent their students from attaining future educational and lifetime goals (Bailey 1999). It is clear from the interviews that teachers are deeply committed to the current and future welfare of their students:

H: When it comes to the use of L1, you [said you] believe that it’s necessary sometimes. Even if it’s not allowed, but when you are inside the class, you use L1 when you think it’s...

S: …If it’s necessary, I use it, and I don’t hesitate. I’ll do...

[Laughter]

S: …anything in the interest for my students.

H: Do you think that your students expect you to use L1 in the classroom?
S: Well, my students’ goal is to understand and to cope with me in the class. ‘It doesn’t matter what way my teacher uses to make me understand’. They don’t mind. They just want to understand so I try my best to make them understand…. (Salah)

Despite the very strong focus on accuracy in preparation for public examinations, some teachers still retain a belief in teaching for longer term lifetime goals:

A: My aims... my aims are how to help students to pronounce the words in a good way. My aims are to help students to speak about themselves, to use English in their daily life, to use English at home, to use English everywhere, to use English every day and so on.

H: So?

A: To express their ideas, their beliefs. I... my aims are to help them speak at anytime and anywhere and so on....

A: .... I try to focus on fluency more than accuracy. (Abdualziz)

This tension between the stated aims of the syllabus and the actual pressure of examinations appears to have a strongly inhibiting effect on the enactment of teacher beliefs in class (Graves 2008). They do not teach vocabulary in the way they think is best, but they justify this with many reasons. It seems that there are a combination of very strong influencing factors which might prevent teachers from acting on their beliefs. More details on what these pressures and barriers are, how exactly they inhibit teacher practice, and what reasons teachers used to justify their practice are discussed in the next section.

4.5 Fourth Research Question: Factors Affecting Teachers’ Practice or Approach

RQ4 asked “What factors may have influenced the teachers’ practice or approach not to teach the vocabulary items in the Target English coursebook in terms of what they believe?” The communicative approach applies a functional emphasis, and there is a consequent implication that vocabulary should be learned implicitly, as explained by Decarrico (2001). The teachers interviewed clearly understand this does not match with the Kuwaiti system’s emphasis on testing individual vocabulary items through exercises such as gap-filling or multiple-choice. This presents the teachers with a serious dilemma because they are in effect being asked to do two opposite and contradictory things. It is arguably impossible to adhere to the principle of implicit and task-based learning, while at the same time forcing
learners to use explicit methods to notice, practise and memorise individual vocabulary items in anticipation of these items being tested later (Tomlinson 2003).

It is very interesting to see how the individual teachers deal with this contradictory demand. We have noted above that most teachers appear to make a considerable effort to stick to the communicative approach, and deal with vocabulary acquisition primarily using English, and with reference to the texts and exercises in the coursebook. In one case, however, there is a very clear and honest admission that the teacher sees the problem but opts to sacrifice the principles of the implicit, communicative approach in favour of the explicit, grammar/translation method:

H: What is the method of teaching you follow? Do you follow the communicative method? Or...

A: The Ministry of Education wants us to follow the communicative method. However, because of the fact that we have to stick to the coursebook, I use the grammar/translation method. I find it more effective in preparing my students for the exams. (Alaa).

This teacher identifies two strong constraints on his teaching practice: first, the coursebook and second, the need to prepare students for examinations. It is clear the teacher experiences a sense of urgency about the demands of the coursebook:

A: I have to teach the new vocabulary items from the coursebook...

H: Just from the coursebook? You can’t teach new words from outside the book?

A: Just from the coursebook. I have to stick to the coursebook. I have to finish it. It’s a great problem if I don’t finish it. So I try to finish it whatever happens. (Alaa).

This situation obviously presents something of a dilemma for this teacher, since the prescribed method is communicative, but the need to cover all the vocabulary in the coursebook in time for the examinations forces a different approach. This particular teacher resolves this conflict as follows:

Because students want to pass the exam, they want to get everything ready-made.

So I adapted my teaching style to fit their needs. I left my beliefs behind me. (Alaa)
In the case of Alaa, there is a conscious and deliberate distancing from his real beliefs and a resignation to the contrary beliefs on which the system in Kuwait is based (Farrell 2007). This is a highly rational and consistent position, but it could be argued that most of this teacher’s talents and skills as a language teacher are not used to their full extent. He could theoretically fulfil the communicative goals of the curriculum but he has come to believe the context makes this impossible and so he has just given up trying. On the surface, this teacher delivers exactly what most stakeholders in the system actually want: clear teaching towards the examination, good examination results and no complaints from the students. There is a real question, however, how valuable this teaching is in terms of pedagogical outcomes. Students can accomplish mechanistic tasks such as filling gaps with items of vocabulary but they are not likely to learn to use English for any useful purpose outside the school setting. This will not serve them well when they advance to higher levels of study because they have not acquired the skills of experimentation and guessing that they will require when they encounter advanced texts beyond the covers of their prescribed coursebook. The hidden curriculum being delivered in this case encourages dependence on the teacher for everything, and an extremely narrow view of what it means to learn English:

*The system of exams here. The time allocated to teaching vocabulary items is not enough. The coursebook. When you are asked to stick to the book, you lose many things. You lose the freedom to choose what suits the level of your students. There are many difficulties but these are the most prominent difficulties that I face and which prevent me from acting on my beliefs. Ideally I would use the communicative approach, but I can’t follow it in each lesson because of this system. (Alaa)*

It is clear from this teachers’ statements that the real constraints on acting according to his own beliefs about teaching vocabulary are the coursebook, the examination system and the time allocated to teach vocabulary, and he capitulates to what he feels is rather extreme pressure, while rationalising his decision with a mention of the needs and wishes of his students. The students along with the teacher are caught in a system which demands accuracy and they add to the pressure on the teacher to make a pragmatic decision, rather than follow his inner conviction about the best way to teach a second language. It is an uneasy position for the teacher, and it clearly shows how difficult it is for this teacher to meet all of the conflicting demands of the setting. His own beliefs are sacrificed and the
teacher has given up any attempt at reflection and innovation. This teacher’s resignation is a sad and obvious consequence of unsolvable dilemmas in the workplace. These findings are in line with Farrell and Lim (2005) and Tayjasanant and Barnard (2010) in the sense of the contextual constraints that stop teachers from acting on their beliefs.

The other four teachers do not go as far as Alaa in completely rejecting the communicative method, but they do demonstrate in words and in practice that they feel the same pressures. Consequently, they use the weak form of the communicative approach. There is evidence from the fast pace of teaching in all the lessons observed to support Alaa’s claims about the oppressive effect of the system’s focus on completing the whole coursebook at all costs. It was noticeable in all the lessons that the pace of delivery of material was very fast. In the literature, it is often stated it takes time to teach new vocabulary using the communicative method, and even though judicious use of the L1 can help to shorten this time (Nation 2001), there still appears to be very little time in the classes observed which was solely devoted to vocabulary learning, amounting to around one minute per new word at the most.

The other four teachers, Abdualziz, Esam, Salah and Tareq, clearly try to use the communicative method despite the heavy pressure to cover all the coursebook material in a short time and they take shortcuts whenever they can. Their strategy is to try and fuse the two opposite demands in a mixed approach, although the teachers acknowledge this is not very effective. There does seem to be a problem in using Target English to teach vocabulary. These four teachers do not capitulate completely to the pressures of the system or the environment, but they do express some difficulty in matching their beliefs with the conditions of the workplace setting.

One teacher displays a belief in the value of visuals, for example, but an inability to put this belief into practice because of the restrictions placed upon him in relation to the coursebook:

...in the coursebook. You are following these steps. You can’t go outside them. You don’t have the freedom to maneuver or use different material. You have the book so
stick to the book. Don’t go outside this book. They want you to finish the book, just to finish the book and get students prepared to be examined. (Salah)

This problem echoes some findings in the literature relating to the tendency of some language coursebooks to emphasise short dialogues in the interests of authenticity, rather than longer reading passages, with the result that students do not gain any real grasp of the frequency of words and structures (Milton 2009: 240). Students take great pains to learn items of little use, and yet are unable to deal with very common vocabulary (Nemati 2009: 98).

Other teachers state it would be challenging to use visuals because of the lack of technological equipment in their schools:

... We have just one room for data show. Just one science lab for English language. But what I say... if every class is provided with the projector, every class is provided with the smart board, every class is provided with data show, it’s better for the teacher to go without or to do without the whiteboard. (Abdualziz)

I rarely use visual aids especially because they aren’t available at our school. There is only one Show Room at this school so you have to wait for a long time to use it. (Alaa)

It appears the reason why teachers make very little use of visuals is not to do with their belief about their value, but rather is connected with them not having access to the equipment that would make this possible. By implication, the lack of available equipment discourages them from gathering or preparing such visuals for use in class and so in effect, the physical constraints of the setting force them back to the coursebook without additional visuals.

It seems from the previous comments and my observations, the main difficulties and factors which might constrain EFL teachers from acting on their beliefs when teaching vocabulary in Kuwait are: the role of Target English as the main source material; the time allocated to teach vocabulary; the examination system and the washback effect; the physical constraints of the setting; and finally, that they are asked by the MoE to teach the language, and
vocabulary, by following the communicative approach only in a rigid examination system. This seems to be creating a serious dilemma because they are in effect being asked to do two opposite and contradictory things.

4.6 Conclusion: Summary of the Main Findings

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings of both the interviews and the classroom observations I conducted. The findings were discussed in a way to answer the four main research questions. These findings have confirmed that teachers generally believe in using the communicative approach when teaching vocabulary; however, they are prevented from acting on these beliefs by a combination of very strong influencing factors, in short, the coursebook, the examination system, the time allocated for each lesson, the physical constraints of the setting and the Ministry regulations. Therefore, teachers try to adapt and use what is best for their students’ needs in that system, which is arguably to focus on preparing students for written examinations rather than teaching vocabulary implicitly.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

The main conclusion of this study is that there is a considerable gap between what teachers say they believe in in terms of how they should teach vocabulary and, for the reasons discussed above, the actual teaching practices and procedures that they employ in the classroom. The teachers are very keen to follow the coursebook but they also want the freedom and flexibility to adapt it from time to time in line with their professional
judgement. They only deviate from the core material because of a desire to improve the learning experience for their students, according to their view of what is most important. When additional material is used, it is closely related to the coursebook, and is designed specifically to encourage consolidation of the core vocabulary for the purposes of better recall in the examinations.

In terms of their actual beliefs about teaching vocabulary, most teachers value the oral proficiency and motivation of students more highly than the letter of the rules on teaching materials and methods, perhaps because they do not agree with the MoE’s priorities, or because they think they know a better way to teach their particular group of learners. They would clearly like more freedom to adapt the coursebook and to use other materials that suit their students’ needs more closely. One rather surprising finding has been the considerable differences that existed between the teachers in the way they used the coursebook in their classes.

In summary, the teachers exhibit a rather strong belief in the communicative method, but they espouse a weaker version of this in their actual teaching, and in one case (Alaa) the teacher rejects the communicative method altogether in practice for pragmatic reasons. The gap between belief and practice varies considerably at different points in each lesson, and teachers themselves exhibit some ambivalence about the feasibility of applying their beliefs in a consistent way. What this means is that most of the time they hold back from using what they believe in, and instead they simply follow procedures they believe are not likely to be effective. This is evidently an unsatisfactory situation, and this ambivalence on the part of the teachers is bound to be communicated to students and to become part of the hidden curriculum delivered in Kuwaiti intermediate schools.

In conclusion, it must be accepted that no EFL teaching situation is ideal, and there are always compromises and sacrifices that teachers have to make when they come with their own beliefs to the reality of working to a prescribed syllabus within an environment that has resource constraints and a particular teaching and learning culture. What is clear, however, is that in the context of the Kuwaiti national intermediate EFL system, there are some very real contradictions which prevent teachers from implementing their own beliefs about the value of the communicative method. There is great irony in the teachers and the MoE fundamentally agreeing that the communicative method is an excellent method for
teaching, but somehow conditions in schools prevent students and teachers from gaining the many benefits of this approach. The teaching of vocabulary involves frequent use of Arabic, not just as a secondary means of clarification and support, but as a primary vehicle of instruction, which is not in line with the professed commitment to the communicative method. This practice undermines the whole approach, and can be traced back to the government’s arguably contradictory focus on accuracy in written examinations rather than the functional and conversational goals that characterise the communicative approach in other non-Arab countries. One suggestion is that the MoE can improve the system by formally allowing teachers to use what is best for their students, whether it is the communicative method, the grammar/translation method, a combination of these, or even any other method. In this case, teachers would have the freedom to choose any appropriate method for their learners to achieve the Ministry’s goals.

5.2 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study which must be taken into account when using it to reflect on the matters raised in the fieldwork. First of all, the sample size of five teachers is too small to present a full picture of the whole Kuwaiti system. The qualitative method of enquiry also involves a focus on the detail rather than general principles, and it brings a certain subjective bias. This means the findings cannot be generalised across every school and every teacher in Kuwait. Thus, the diversity of beliefs and teaching practice in this small sample suggests that the picture nation-wide might be considerably more mixed than one might assume from the rather rigid system of oversight and control. Furthermore, when I gathered and analysed the data, I did not have the chance to meet with another researcher to cross-check the data, which might prevent subjectivity during the interviews (Cohen et al. 2011).

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This small scale study has raised some important questions and it has provided some limited evidence to suggest that all is not well in the teaching of EFL in Kuwaiti intermediate schools. There is evidence that the system works well in terms of producing good examination outcomes, and that this no doubt pleases students, teachers, parents and administrators in the short term. In the longer term and at the level of real language
learning achievement, however, the picture is very different. More research is needed into the mismatch between the stated aims and prescribed methods of the curriculum, which are based on the communicative approach, and the severe constraints at work in the form of examinations which focus on features associated with the grammar/translation method such as accuracy and memorisation. This is a matter for policy-makers at government level and in the educational training institutions. This mismatch could also be explored with other language skills such as teaching reading or writing, or even other subjects in the Kuwaiti national intermediate EFL system since the system is pushing teachers to focus on preparing students for written examinations. It is worth investigating these issues with the other main subjects in the Kuwaiti intermediate school system such as mathematics or Arabic to see if these dilemmas in the workplace and the mismatch between beliefs and practice due to the system occur or not.

There should also be more research into the way that teachers’ beliefs emerge, are applied, and develop over the course of a teaching career. This would entail a longitudinal study starting at training college and following teachers into the workplace to track how their beliefs change over time. Demographic factors in the lives of teachers such as place and type of education and previous experience might also provide some illuminating data on how teacher beliefs develop. This would allow a proper correlation to be made between different supporting and constraining factors over time.

This study has indicated that teachers themselves have a very good understanding of these complex issues, and although they may not agree on the best way to meet the challenges they face, they certainly have the capacity to analyse the problems they face, and apply their beliefs in fruitful ways if the setting allows them to do so. As a matter of urgency, more practitioner-led research is needed to capture the experiences and insights of professional teachers, and enable them to link up with international researchers and build improvements from within the Kuwaiti educational system. A few useful suggestions have been made in this small study, but the time has come to actively seek out and listen to what teachers really believe, and integrate their knowledge into the future of Kuwaiti intermediate EFL education. I recommend that there should be more consideration of the views of teachers and learners in the on-going Ministerial reviews of teaching EFL in Kuwait. The views of teachers on the actual practice of using the coursebook should be taken into account. Now
that there has been a period of several years of using this coursebook, it would be useful to
gather teacher experiences and reflections and make suggestions for future revisions or
entirely new course designs which better reflect the experience of Kuwait’s EFL teachers.
This will not happen without solid research evidence, which is why initiatives which gather empirical data are such a good idea.

Word Count: 20098 (including 2000 words of qualitative data)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation Framework and Notes

a- Observation Framework:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Using Gesture</th>
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<tr>
<td>Giving Definitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of L1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation of the word</td>
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<td>Use of visuals</td>
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<td>Use of the Whiteboard</td>
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<td>Use of technology (Computer/IPad)</td>
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<td>Using Realia</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Dictionary/Glossary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask students to guess from the context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usage: Spoken/Written (in a sentence) (Teacher)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usage: Spoken/Written (in a sentence) (Students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the accuracy of Pronunciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drills (Pronunciation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revising the newly learned words with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revising old vocabulary items with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary exercises (multiple choice, gap filling...etc.)</td>
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b- An Example of My Observation Notes:

Observation Notes (Salah):

The lesson from the coursebook was about “Happiness”. The teacher started his lesson by a warm-up exercise. He showed some images on PowerPoint and discussed with students what makes them happy. He then introduced new vocabulary items by using visuals in PowerPoint. He asked the students to look at the visuals, guess the meaning, and then drill the pronunciation of the word. After that he asked individual students to repeat the word after him. When he asked students to give the meaning they were giving the Arabic meaning and he was happy with that. He also gave them some sentence examples, but he didn’t ask them to put the newly learned word in a sentence of their own.

Images helped learners to know the meaning of words easily and guess the meaning especially when comparing between “twins” and “identical”. They were motivated excited. There was no focus on the part of speech of the new words. The teacher was also asking students to guess the word in Arabic after presenting the visuals and giving the definition/meaning in English “Ok, so now what does this word mean in Arabic?”. Sometimes he was using referring to the English/English glossary at the end of the book for definitions.

The teacher was checking students’ understanding when explaining the new vocabulary word by word. Students were writing the new vocabulary items and their meaning of Arabic in their notebook. However, there was no focus on spelling. It took him 15 minutes to explain almost 14 words and he seems to be obliged to cover them all, so his pace was fast.

He then asked students to read the text in the coursebook after explaining the new vocabulary items. A student didn’t know what is the meaning of the word “elements” while reading the text (and this word isn’t part of the new vocabulary items in the coursebook), so the teacher gave him an example “water has two elements Oxygen and Hydrogen” so the students guessed the meaning and said it in Arabic and the teacher told him that he is right.

After the students read, and discussed comprehension questions of the lesson in the coursebook, the teacher gave them a vocabulary gap-filling exercise to check their understanding of the new learned vocabulary, but before solving this exercise with them he asked one of the students to revise all the meaning of new words in Arabic orally (Twins means= Arabic translation, Identical means= Arabic Translation...etc.). The teacher used the white board for writing the exercise and students copied that in their note book. This exercise wasn’t part of the coursebook but the teacher added it to check students’ understandings. When students were struggling with some words he gave them some equivalents in English until they guessed the right meaning in Arabic. This was interesting. The teacher was clearly following the weak form of the communicative approach in his teaching, and he did allow the use of Arabic to check students’ understanding.
Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. What is your background? (How long have you been teaching? What are your qualifications?)

2. How do you see your role as an English language teacher in a Kuwaiti intermediate school?

3. What are you required to do when you teach vocabulary in your school?

4. Do you think that students expect you to use L1 in the classroom? Do you think that it will help the students to understand words better?

5. How does the use of the Target English coursebook affect/influence your teaching of vocabulary?

6. What do you think about the vocabulary items presented in the coursebook?

7. What do you usually do when you teach these vocabulary items in the book? Why do you do it this way? (adaptation)

8. How long will it take you to teach these vocabulary items?

9. Do you revise these vocabulary items with the students? How?

10. Do you think that your teaching beliefs regarding language teaching influence the way you teach new vocabulary?

11. What are your aims when you teach vocabulary items? (spelling, pronunciation, meaning)

12. If you came across a word that is untaught, what would you do?

13. If you had the freedom to teach vocabulary items without the coursebook, what would you do? Why?

14. Does the level of the students or the nature of the lesson affect how you teach vocabulary?

15. Are there any difficulties you usually face inside the Kuwaiti classroom in terms of vocabulary teaching? How do you overcome these difficulties?

16. Is there is anything that stops you from acting on your beliefs in the Kuwait context? What are these factors? (time/students’ level/examinations/the syllabus)

17. There has been a lot of discussion about the use of visuals in vocabulary teaching in terms of multimodality, motivation and memory; are these important to you? Do they influence the way you teach vocabulary?

18. Do you think that the exam system in Kuwait reflects the students’ understanding of these vocabulary items? Why? Why not?
Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Informed consent

My name is XXXXXXXX and I am a postgraduate student on the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programme in XXXXXXXX. This research is for my dissertation (XXXXX) module).

Your participation in this study will provide me with the data I need to investigate “the impact of teachers’ beliefs over their teaching practices in reference to the use of the Target English coursebook in the Kuwaiti context when teaching vocabulary”. I would like to observe your way of using or adapting the coursebook in one of your lessons when teaching vocabulary, and then interview you about this topic face to face.

You will not be identified in any way in this research. When I report the data, you will be given a pseudonym and your school will not be named. If you want to withdraw from the research, you may do so at any time; in that case, the information gathered from the observation and the interview will be deleted.

Once the research is completed on 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 2015, I will be happy to provide you with a copy by e-mail.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me by phone XXXXXX or via email XXXXXXX. If you have any further concerns about the study, you could also contact my supervisor, Doctor, via e-mail: XXXXXXX.

Please read each statement below and sign at the bottom if you agree and wish to participate.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above research.

4. I agree to the anonymised use of quotations in any report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Name of Head of School</th>
<th>Name of Research</th>
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<td>Date</td>
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Signature

My sincere thanks.

Best Regards,
Appendix 4: Interview Transcriptions

1- Tareq:

H: First of all, thank you for participating in this study. I really appreciate this.

T: You are most welcome.

H: Let’s start with this question. What is your background? How long have you been teaching? What are your qualifications?

T: I have a degree from Damascus University, Faculty of Arts. I have been here in Kuwait teaching for about six years. This is my sixth year.

H: How do you see your role as an English language teacher in Kuwait since you have said you have been teaching for six years?

T: I think my role here is just to prepare students for the exams. Because they just worry about the exam results here. You are asked to finish the coursebook no matter what happens. Just finish the coursebooks. These are our orders as teachers here. We don’t have the freedom to adapt or to change anything in the coursebook. Just finish them from the cover to the cover. Your students should have the highest marks. This is how they... let’s say, how they scale you or put you on a scale... your performance. When they want to judge you or to assess my performance, they look at my students’ results. So I’m worried to lose my job so I do what they want me to do; prepare my students for the exams to get high marks.

H: OK. But you said you don’t have the freedom to adapt the coursebook. But to be honest with you when I saw you in your lesson, I saw that you adapted the coursebooks. You used Visuals. You used exercises that aren’t part of the book. So you adapted it.

T: We can do this just when we teach the new words because as you know using visuals makes things easier for you as a teacher and for the students to get the new words, to internalize them, and to learn the new words. That’s it. We do it just with the new words.

H: But you know, even the exercises... because you gave students exercises, gap filling, these aren’t part of the coursebook.

T: I know, I know. We do this just with the vocabulary. That’s it.

H: So, you don’t give students... exercise is... about grammar? About, you know, reading comprehension?

T: It’s a practice! If you have time, you can do it. But you should abide to the book. You should finish the book first then you can do whatever you like if you have time.

H: If you have time?

T: Yes, if you have time. So you can just adapt the lesson according to your time, but first you should, or you must finish the coursebook.

H: Now, what are you required to do when you teach new vocabulary items? What do they ask you to do?
T: I think they want students to learn some new words related to some different topics in the coursebook. So I am asked to cover these new words, and to make sure that students know how to use them, and know their meaning, and know their pronunciation. Everything about the word, part of speech. So that's my role, I think, to let students know these things about the new words.

H: And what do you think about these words that are presented in the book? Do you think that they are useful? Or do you think they are just put their randomly?

T: No, they are just useful to the topic in the book. They are related to the topic covered in the book. But some words are strange. They can’t use them outside the classroom in their everyday life, to practise them. Some words... We just use them academically speaking. We can't use them outside. Even you as a teacher... You don't use this word. Even native speakers, they don’t use such words in the street in their daily life.

H: Can you give me one example?

T: Like... let’s say... A word like today, I think it was "monkfish". They don’t use this word in the street. Why monkfish? This strange type of fish? I don't know. Can you use it in the street? Monkfish? Here in Kuwait? You can’t. At least they should bring a type of fish that is known in Kuwait. (Sarcastically) but not a strange, bottom dwelling fish in the ocean. I don't know in which country. Why?

H: Interesting. Now because you are talking about the coursebook, how do you... I mean... Does the use of this coursebook affect or influence your vocabulary teaching?

T: I think it just restricts me or I can’t choose my words. The words that I see they are useful to my students. That’s it. Just a restriction. A restraint to my performance.

H: Are you required to use L2 only when you teach vocabulary items? The communicative approach in other words.

T: Yes, that's the approach used here in Kuwait in teaching. But when we teach vocabulary, it's allowed to use the translation method if there is no way that students can learn the words except for it, the translation. So I can tell them the meaning directly in Arabic. If it's a strange word, I can’t use visual aids or something, so I can tell them the meaning in L1.

H: So it's allowed to use L1?

T: Yes, but this is a method used to teach vocabulary. One time, I was in a meeting and the first... let us say, supervisor said that. The inspector said that we could use translation but let it be your last resort.

H: Interesting! Because I thought this is not accepted.

T: No, it’s used here.

H: OK. How often do you use L1 when you teach vocabulary? And why do you use it?

T: I use it... I sometimes use L1 because my students insist on knowing the word in Arabic.

H: Uh-ha!

T: They always ask me about... After they know...

[Laughter]
...They saw the picture of the monkfish and they ask you what is it in Arabic? So sometimes, I get angry and tell them the meaning in Arabic. Just to keep them quiet. Because they may make a problem. They want to write the meaning in Arabic because they are worried about the exam. They want to memorise the meaning in Arabic because they want to use the words in the exam.

Students sometimes expect you to use L1 in the classroom?

Because... I think this is something common here in our Arab world. Teachers, I believe that they use L1 a lot. So when students come to a new teacher, they expect him to do the same as the old one. So that's why they ask for Arabic meaning and they use it.

And because... You know... Other subjects are all in Arabic...

Yes, of course. Because they learn Maths in Arabic, Religion, Geography, every subject at school is taught in Arabic except for English and French.

And do you think when you use Arabic that this will help the students to learn better?

To learn better for the exam. Not for their good.

Uh-ha. Interesting! Do you think that the level of the students affects how you teach vocabulary? I mean, sometimes you have students...

...Low achievers?

Yeah! Sometimes you use L1 with some students and sometimes because the students are good enough you don't use L1... I'm not sure about this. Do you think that the level of the students or the nature of the lesson even affect how you teach vocabulary?

Of course. Because with low achievers, they have special ways to teach them and to deal with them. So we are allowed to... Just to explain things... To simplify things for them and make them very simple. We can use L1 with them. Not only in vocabulary but also in everything, in grammar, in functions, in writing, in reading. We can just use L1. It's different with low achievers.

But you have a mix of students... And when you are teaching vocabulary... I mean not all the classes are the same, as you know.

Of course.

So do you teach vocabulary... You know, if you go to this class or the other class, do you teach vocabulary differently because of their...?

I don't change my way of teaching because of low achievers, because, in the classroom, there are some students who can say the word in Arabic aloud. So they can get the word.

Yeah! I noticed today that one of the students while you were explaining the meaning of the word; he gave you the meaning in Arabic...

...Without anyone asking him. He just said the word in Arabic.

"Does this word mean something?" And he said yes.

Yes, that's it.

When you teach vocabulary, any new word, what are the steps that you usually follow?
T: I usually start by presenting the... the main thing is presenting, and then asking students to produce sentences.

H: Presenting then what?

T: Presenting the words through pictures, examples, definitions, situations, discussion. I use some words in one... let’s say discussion. I put four or five words creating a situation...

[Phone ringing]

T: ...Sorry. That's it. So I start by presenting the word, then practice and production. I ask my students to produce... to use them in meaningful sentences, to fill in the gaps, to assess their understanding of the new words. That's it! Easy! Presenting, practising, and production. Students produce sentences using the words or fill them in the gaps.

H: Why do you do it this way? Because I also noticed that you preteach vocabulary, right?

T: Mm.

H: Why do you preteach vocabulary? Why do you follow these steps?

T: This is how we are asked to do in the coursebook. You required to cover the active words. They call them the active words in the coursebook. So before you go to the tasks in the coursebook, you have some certain active words we should present them before we start any task in the lesson.

H: So, you are asked to preteach vocabulary?

T: Yes. In the beginning, if there is vocabulary, it's in the beginning of the lesson.

H: In terms of the steps, you are also asked to follow these steps? Or is it your own way of doing things?

T: No! This is how I... this is my... From my experience, I think this is what suits my students here.

H: All of them?

T: Yes. This is after six years. I reached this...

H: Decision?

T: Yes.

H: When you teach these items, how long will it take you usually?

T: According to my time, not more than fifteen minutes.

H: Do you think that this is enough to teach vocabulary?

T: I don’t... No! We need more practice; more activities to check students' understanding, but you should cover the book.

H: So again, it’s about the book. About covering the book.

T: Yes! The book and the coursebook, you should finish them before the exams.

H: Do you revise the vocabulary items with your students?
T: Not too much. Because I don't have enough time. We can give them some handouts and they practise at home...

H: ...You mean worksheets?

T: Yeah, worksheets, and they show me their job at home.

H: By homework?

T: Yes, homework.

H: OK. Now are there any difficulties that you face inside the Kuwaiti classroom in terms of vocabulary teaching?

T: Just the low achievers and those who use the first language every time even if they are excellent in the classroom and at school, they keep using L1. It's in their nature. You can't prevent it. You say to them don't use Arabic, don't use Arabic, but they keep using it all the time. So they spoil the lesson.

H: And how do you overcome this?

T: I try to use visual aids and real life objects...

H: ...Realia?

T: Yes, realia to make things easier for them. But they keep using L1...

[Laughter]

T: ...Even when they saw the car and you put the word car, they said Sayara [car in Arabic]

[Laughter]

H: So I think that students really expect you to use L1 here.

T: Yes.

H: When you teach new vocabulary items here in Kuwait, what are your aims?

T: They aren't my aims. It's one aim. Make students pass the exam. That's it. If you want me to be honest, that's it. Just to make my students pass the exam. I don't want to lose my job. If my students fail the exams, I may lose my job. So to pass the exam and get high marks. That's my aim.

H: Ok.

T: It's not mine. It's what the situation enforces me to do.

H: Let's say that the students were reading a text in the coursebook and there is a word that is not part of these active words.

T: Yes.

H: And one of the students asks you, "What does this word mean?" What will you do?

T: Simply I tell them the meaning in Arabic, because it's not in the active words. But sometimes I prepare some list of the difficult words in the text and prepare some examples. I don't usually use pictures or visual aids to... because I don't have time. I'm enough with the active words. There are many active words. You may teach twenty words in fifteen minutes. How?
H: Yeah. It will take a lot of time.

T: Yes.

H: Let’s forget about the coursebook. Imagine that the situation in Kuwait is different from what it’s right now. You entered the classroom. You don’t have a coursebook. You are allowed to use whatever want to use. How will you teach vocabulary? If you have the freedom to...

T: I can choose interesting topics related to students’ interests. I can choose active words from this topic. For example, I can bring a song with some new words and teach them through this song. They listen to the song and learn some new words and expressions used in this song. This will be more fun. I think students can be interested because it’s not... And I tell them not to worry about the exam. The exam system. If there is no exam system, things will be better.

H: Yeah. Again... You know... You said that you would use... for example a song. What is your aim here? Without... you know there is no exam here. The exams are not as it’s right now here.

T: By teaching vocabulary here, my aim is to make my students have a good repertoire of words so they can use them in real life.

H: OK.

T: In their life, in the street, at restaurants, at the airport, when playing video games. So they can just use the language outside the classroom.

H: So your main focus is on usage of the word.

T: Yes.

H: When it comes to your beliefs and this is the main thing that we are talking about here. Do you think that your teaching beliefs regarding language teaching influence the way you teach new vocabulary items?

T: To some extent.

H: Even in the Kuwaiti context?

T: Yes, to some extent.

H: Can you explain please?

T: My beliefs, let’s say that... I want an ideal classroom. I try my best to teach vocabulary according to my beliefs.

H: What are your beliefs about vocabulary teaching?

T: I believe that vocabulary is the main bricks of learning a new language. You can know the grammar, know the functions, but without words, you can't build a sentence. So it's the most important thing about language. Having a good repertoire of words that you can use to build sentences. Then comes the grammar. But unless you have the words, you can't build a sentence.

H: So again, you believe that usage is...

T: ...Yes!

H: Now you said that you believe in usage. You believe that you should teach the students the meaning... Does that... Can you see this when you teach vocabulary items in Kuwait? Do you see
yourself doing this sometimes? When you teach vocabulary, do you think that you are trying to let the students use the words not just study them for the exam?

T: Sometimes if the topic is related to their real life, we can do it. For example, if it's about video games, we can adapt the lesson according to students.

H: Yes... You said that you believe in using visuals. You believe in usage. When you were teaching you were using them. I saw you using visuals. Despite the fact that this is not a requirement from you to do but you used visuals. And when you taught any new word you were asking students to put the word in a sentence.

T: Yes, to use it.

H: So you were focusing to some extent on usage?

T: Yes. That's my belief. I want them to use the words not just to know their meaning. This is why I follow the communicative approach.

H: Is there anything that stops you from acting your beliefs in Kuwait?

T: Just the system here. The exams, the coursebook, the time. You don't have enough time. For example, fifteen minutes for teaching vocabulary is not enough. Twenty words in fifteen minutes is not enough to practise, to present, to produce sentences, and to check their understanding. You don't have the time.

H: Now you use visuals. I noticed that your school provided you with some computers and...

T: ...Interactive boards. [Data show]

H: Yeah. Now let's say that your school don't have these things will you still use visuals?

T: No, I can't. How can I use visuals?

H: Why?

T: If there is no projectors, data show, or the equipment, I will go back to the old school, the whiteboard and the marker. I can bring some pictures, some objects, but I can't use the computer or the iPad or PowerPoint.

H: Do you think that visuals are important when it comes to vocabulary teaching?

T: Yes! They make things easy for the teacher and the students. They are also good for time management. They give you extra time to practise and produce sentences. You don't waste your time explaining and using... let's say trying to explain the word by definitions. Just show them a picture, a video, and students will know the word. Then you go to practice.

H: There have been a lot of discussion about using visuals. Do you think they influence the way you teach vocabulary?

T: Yes, because I tried the two methods using the visuals and not using them. Students were more active when I used the visuals.

H: So what is the difference?

T: They attract students. The pictures, the PowerPoint, they are attracting students. They can have fun. They are motivated to participate. Visuals are good. They motivate students' thinking.
about the words. They are good for the memory. When they see the picture, they can remember the word for a long time and maybe forever. [Jokingly] Like the "monkfish"

[Laughter]

H: You said that students respond better when you use visuals. Do you believe that when you use visuals this will affect the learners' achievement? Why? Why not?

T: Yes, [Firmly] of course. Visuals make teaching more fun and easier for the teacher and the students.

H: I'm talking about the achievement of students in the exams.

T: To some extent. It's not that big difference using the visuals. Because students have to memorise everything whether you use visuals or not. It's the exam. The results are better but not to a great extent. Some classes... my colleagues don't use visuals and the results of my class and theirs are almost the same. I don't know why. Maybe they teach for the exam. That's it.

H: But when you teach vocabulary, you are not just focusing on the exam? Are you also trying to act on your beliefs?

T: Yeah! I try to be satisfied with being a teacher not an exam trainer. I don't train my students for the exam. I'm a teacher. But here it's training more than teaching.

H: Interesting. Do you think that the exams reflect students' understanding of the new words or just memorising?

T: It's memorising only. If you don't know the word in Arabic.

H: In Arabic?

T: The meaning of the word in Arabic, they can't use it. Because they test their memory not their understanding.

H: But you also have the writing thing?

T: This is the exam. There is a section for the vocabulary questions.

H: The vocabulary is only...

T: ...It is memorising. They don't have to use the words in sentences. Just gap filling and multiple-choice questions. I think it is memorising. It is less about understanding. It's more about memory. Testing their memory about the new words.

H: When it comes to writing according to some of the teachers here, they said that the writing question is also based on the coursebook and the new words that are in the coursebook. I mean that... today you also gave students a task where they have to write.

T: Yes, to write.

H: So do you think that this is a good thing or a bad thing when it comes to writing because...

T: ...No! They can use the new words in writing. My answer was about the question about the vocabulary in the exam. It was only about testing their memories. But they still can use the words in writing and reading comprehension. Even if there is a language function question, they can use the new words to answer that question.
H: OK. Based on what I have observed I noticed that you didn’t focus on pronunciation. You didn’t give pronunciation drills. Do you believe that this is not really important?

T: I used to practise my students on pronunciation but they didn’t want this method. They feel silly repeating the word after the teacher together. They don’t like it. So I stopped using this method. They think they are old enough and they don’t like it. They think it’s silly. They told me they didn’t want this method.

H: When you teach vocabulary, do you focus on pronunciation?

T: I try to say the word more than one time.

H: You are focusing on fluency more than accuracy?

T: Yes. Fluency and usage. I want them to use the word.

H: If there is an oral exam and you are required to teach the pronunciation, will you do that?

T: I’ll follow that. I have to.

H: Do you think that is important?

T: No. They can just listen to the word more than one time. And when they use it in sentences, they can practise pronunciation. They don’t like to repeat the word after the teacher.

H: I also noticed that teachers in Kuwait, including you, don’t use dictionaries. Why?

T: Students don’t want to use them. They want everything ready-made. They don’t want to... it’s the nature of the students here. You rarely find a student who wants work with you and exert effort to learn. They want everything ready-made. Even if you answer the questions for them in the coursebook, they want them written. I struggle to make them work and finish the tasks themselves. Sometimes they ask for the answer.

H: Why is that?

T: I think it’s in their nature because of the system. They are used to this. I don’t know why. I think it is in their nature.

H: Is it related to the exams?

T: Maybe. The system... it’s a vicious circle. The system of the exams poses something on the teacher. The teacher follows a certain way to cover the coursebook, so he is training students for the exam. Students became like this. They like to get everything ready-made because they are used to this now. After years of the same system of the exams, this is the result.

H: My final question is how do you adapt the coursebook when you teach? What do you usually do?

T: I usually use modern technology like making PPT presentations about the new words. I put some pictures, definitions, and examples in an interactive way. Students can see the presentation and get the new words. This is how I adapt my vocabulary lesson from the book. I can just bring extra exercises and give them some worksheets about the new words and they answer them as homework.

H: I noticed that you have this collection of worksheets in the notebook.
T: Yes, worksheets. We print handouts for the students and give them to students. They can do them at home. It's homework. We can't finish it at school because we don't have enough time. They finish it at home and we check at school.

H: So even when you adapt the coursebook it's also related to the exam.

T: Yes! The handout is a practice about the types of questions that come in the exam. It's the same. Even when we give an exercise about the new words, it's related to the exam. If it's about grammar, it's about how it comes in the exam. Reading comprehension, how it comes in the exam. That's it

H: Thank you very much. It was really appreciated talking to you.

T: You are most welcome.

H: Thank you again for participating in this study.

T: You are welcome.

2- Exam:
H: First of all, I’d like to thank you for participating in this study.
E: Thank you Mr. Hassan. You are welcome in our school.

H: Thank you very much. So the first thing I’d like to ask you is about your background. How long have you been teaching? What are your qualifications?
E: I have been teaching for twenty-two years in Kuwait.
H: Twenty-two years!
E: Twenty-two years. I graduated from the Faculty of Arts, English department in Minya University.
H: It was the college of art not education but then you decided to become a teacher?
E: I have decided to become a teacher because I like teaching.

H: How do you see your role as English language teacher in the Kuwaiti intermediate schools since you said you have been teaching for twenty-two years? What is your role? Do you think it is the same role or it has been changed by time?
E: The role of teaching English is to use English. We are there to teach how to use English outside the school... anywhere.
H: So do you see your role as what? Do you think that you are like a teacher of English or just preparing students for exams or...?
E: Sometimes I prepare students for exams. But what is important to teach the language.
H: So you think your role is a teacher of language?
E: Yes. But you have to put in your mind the exams especially here in Kuwait. Students in Kuwait concentrate on exams.
H: We will talk about this later. I think that it’s a very important point that you raise here. Especially I think that Kuwait is facing this wash-back effect.
E: Yes, that’s right.
H: When you teach a new vocabulary item, what are you required to teach? What are the requirements? What are you asked to do when you teach these vocabulary items?
E: I teach them how to pronounce the word. How to use the word. And finally the spelling of the word.
H: Are you required to use L2 only in your lessons?
E: Sorry?
H: Are you required to use L2?
E: Say it again, please.
H: L2 stands for the second language.
E: Second Language!

H: So are you required to use English only without Arabic? As a requirement. Maybe you do something else.

E: Sometimes we need to use Arabic in introducing new vocabulary, especially in abstract words. We need to use Arabic.

H: Because the Ministry of Education says that they follow the communicative approach. I noticed that in your lesson you used L1. Which I understand why you use L1. But do you think that it’s very important sometimes to use it?

E: Sometimes we need to use Arabic but not always. Especially for abstract words like... Remind me of one...

[Laughter]

H: ...Like the...

E: ...Some words you need to say them in Arabic at the end. After many times. After many tries, you need to say them in Arabic.

H: I just noticed that you said that you are required to teach the students how to spell the word. In your lesson I noticed that you focused on pronunciation. I noticed that you focused on meaning. But when it comes to spelling, they didn’t write anything.

E: Because they old enough. You teach spelling for primary stage.

H: Primary stage? So in the intermediate stage you think...

E: ...In the intermediate, especially eight class and nine class, they don’t need the spelling because they already know the letters.

H: You are teaching from the book of the Target English. It is what you follow, right?

E: Yes.

H: I’d like to ask you two questions about this. What do you think about the vocabulary in the books? Do you think it is useful for the students to...? Do you think that these items are useful?

E: Yes, it’s useful. They can use these words outside the school. In the secondary stage, some items of the vocabulary are not used. But here in the intermediate stage most of the words can be used outside the school. These words help them to read. To understand if they watch movies.

H: So you think that they are using these words. These words can help the students not just inside the school for example.

E: Yeah, Yeah. Outside the school. Right.

H: That’s good news. Again about the book. How does the use of the coursebook affect or influence your teaching of vocabulary?

E: Sorry. I didn’t understand.

H: I mean how this book can affect your vocabulary teaching. Is it... because in Kuwait you only have this book. You teach the vocabulary from the book. You don’t teach it from outside it. So does it affect your vocabulary teaching? I mean that you can’t teach anything except from the book.
E: Yes! If students ask about anything outside the books, I can... I'm ready to teach it.

H: But when it comes to vocabulary items?

E: Because sometimes in the text... in the book... in the target... in the text itself you can find some words that are not new vocabulary. They need to be teaching...

H: ...They need to be understood.

E: Yes. They need to be understood by... I think they need to be taught by students. Many students ask about words not in the new vocabulary.

H: So you think that the Target English coursebook affects your teaching because it's...

E: Yes.

H: It's the syllabus, right?

E: Yes, it's. It affects me.

H: Now, when you see these items in the book what will you usually do when you teach them? The new vocabulary items in the book when you want to teach them. I noticed that you used visuals. So what do you usually do when you teach these items?

E: To teach new items... or to introduce a new vocabulary item there are some steps you have to follow. First, listening. The first thing to do is listen carefully. Then show them a picture or a real object to know what it is. To guess the meaning. Then read the word. And ask the students if they can use the word in a sentence from their own.

H: So this is what you usually do when you introduce new vocabulary items?

E: Yeah.

H: Why do you do it this way?

E: It makes students understand the meaning quickly. Students need to see, need to listen first and need to see.

H: So they are using all their senses to get the meaning?

E: Yes. They can use them together.

H: Does the level of the students affect the way you teach vocabulary?

E: Of course!

H: Can you talk about this more, please? How can this affect you? Can you give some examples?

E: If the class is good, it helps you to introduce the words in a very simple way and quickly. Sometimes some students have known the meaning already.

H: This may help you not to use L1 maybe.

E: Yeah.

H: You said that you adapt the coursebook by using visuals, by using all these things.
E: Yeah.

H: My question is how long will it take you to teach these items? I noticed that it takes fourteen minutes... maybe?

E: It took fourteen minutes?

H: Yeah. Does it usually take the same time?

E: Because they were about... How many words? Each word about one and a half minute.

H: Yeah. Do you think that this time is enough to teach these vocabulary items?

E: It's enough but they must be revised. The next period I will revise them.

H: So you revise them.

E: Yeah. Before introducing new items for the next lesson I should emphasize the students understand the previous taught words.

H: But my question is about the vocabulary items that are in the book. I mean they ask you to teach different vocabulary items in every new lesson. And as you know, vocabulary isn't easy to teach. You taught them in a very short time... don't you think that the book and the system isn't good enough because they give vocabulary items just a short time of the lesson? Sometimes you feel...

E: ...Mm. No, no. It's not a short time Mr. Hassan. It's not a short time. The students may be... these words are just used in the next lesson. You can find some of these words in the next lessons or in the next unit. It's not a short time.

H: Right. That's a good news. You already answered this question about revising. Do you revise vocabulary items?

[Laughter]

E: Yeah.

H: You told me how to revise them. You revise them by giving them the...

E: ...Sentences. Choose the correct word. Today I asked my students to do an exercise at home. As a homework concentrating on what they studied, especially the new vocabulary.

H: Yeah. Right... If you came across a word that is untaught and you thought that the students need to know the meaning of that word what do you usually do and why you do it this way?

E: Untaught?

H: Like you are reading a text and then there is a word that [isn't part of the new vocabulary items]

E: Yeah. I introduce them.

H: You give them the meaning?

E: I give them the meaning. I try to explain the meaning.

H: Do you usually use L1 or...?
E: Not usually. Sometimes.
H: Are there any difficulties that you usually face inside the Kuwaiti classroom when you teach vocabulary?
E: [Laughing] You see.
H: It’s not about me. It’s about you.
E: Little students ask, "What does it mean in Arabic, Sir?" After explaining many times. The picture is clear for them.
H: The students want that?
E: Yes. For example, the word "handle". Someone asked, "What does it mean?" I showed you! It’s a handle. (Foreign language) this is the most important problem in our classes here in Kuwait. The students want to say everything in Arabic. But as an English teacher, I try to use English. I try to make students accustomed to use English. To understand by using English.
H: That's your belief.
E: Yes. That's my belief.
H: Do you think that the students expect you to use L1? I mean because they already... You said many students ask you about L1. Do they expect the teacher to use it?
E: As a teacher, you have to insist on using English inside the class.
H: OK.
E: You have to insist. Tell your students be usual with the language. One two three time, they will always ask... and never get bored from asking, "What does it mean in Arabic?" And you have to insist on using English. At the end, they must stop asking about the meaning in Arabic. I'm sure. I tried it.
H: And it worked?
E: Yes. I did it.
H: Great. I think this is a very good point because you have already said how to overcome this difficulty. Now your personal aims. Let's forget about the coursebook. What are your aims when you teach new vocabulary? Just forget about the coursebook. As a teacher, you want to teach vocabulary items; what's your aim?
E: I always tell my students, even my children, you need to use English outside. In restaurants, when you travel abroad, you have to use English. You need to use English. This is my aim.
H: So you are concentrating on the usage?
E: Yes, the usage of the language.
H: And do you think that this the main goal.
E: When I teach language, this is for me, I forget all about the tests or exams. I teach language for language.
H: That's a good thing for you!
E:  This is my belief.

H:  This is your belief. Because here in Kuwait sometimes it's difficult for...

E:  In Kuwait, in Egypt, in Syria, in Lebanon we teach language for language. Nothing else.

H:  If you have the freedom to teach vocabulary items without the coursebook, without the Target English...

E:  Without the Target English?

H:  Yeah! What will you do?

E:  The same steps. When you teach language or when you teach new vocabulary, you have to follow the same steps; listening, reading, watching and reading.

H:  But will you preteach vocabulary before going to the text. Because in the Target English coursebook...

E:  Yeah! Sometimes words will be difficult from the text itself. Sometimes I ask students to read the text and try to guess the meaning of the words.

H:  I'm sorry. I maybe wasn't clear enough. But right now, you don't have a book. They tell you go and teach a lesson about vocabulary and you don't have this list of words to remember. What will you do in that case? Will you have your own... will you design your own words to remember books?

E:  Of course, I will design my own words. I prepare the lesson at home. I read the text and elicit some difficult words. If I see words are difficult for my students...

H:  And then you preteach them before reading?

E:  Yes. I try to teach them or to preteach them as you said. And we do this in comprehension texts. It's unseen passage. As a teacher, you read it at home and elicit difficult words then you can preteach them.

H:  And do you usually preteach the new words?

E:  Yeah.

H:  Do you think that your teaching beliefs regarding language teaching influence the way you teach new vocabulary?

E:  Yes, of course. It reflects my beliefs in using visuals and L2 only.

H:  Is there anything that stops you here in Kuwait from acting your beliefs? Sometimes you want to do this but you can't do it for a certain reason.

E:  I always tell my students to forget about the tests. Learn English for English.

H:  But do they...?

E:  ...But they insist on studying for the exams. And after the exam, they forget everything. This is a big mistake. But it is not our problem that students insist on that.

H:  Don't you think that it's also from the system?

E:  No, no. it's not from the system.
H: It’s all about the exams.
E: But we have to test them. What can we do? We have to test students.
H: Do you think that the exam system here in Kuwait reflect students' understanding not memorisation?
E: Not understanding.
H: So there is a problem here.
[Laughter]
E: Not understanding.
H: Memorisation?
E: Yeah!
H: So do you have any comment about that?
E: No!
[Laughter]
H: OK. You said that you sometimes use L1. I really liked the way you use visuals because there is a lot of discussion in the literature about the use of visuals in terms of memory, modality, and motivation. Are these things important for you?
E: Yes, they are very important for me.
H: Do they influence the way you teach new vocabulary?
E: The visuals?
H: Yeah.
E: The visuals, realia? Yes.
H: What is the difference between a lesson you use visuals and a lesson you don’t use visuals?
E: It would be a monotonous, boring one.
H: Are you using visuals just for motivation?
E: Yes, motivation, to make students active in the classroom. To make them with me always.
H: So your main goal for using visuals is just for motivation nothing else? You don’t think visuals can add something else other than motivation?
E: It’s motivation.
H: When you use visuals, do you use them for motivation only? That’s it?
E: Motivation, teaching, and learning.
H: So how can these visuals be more effective than the whiteboard?
E: Because there are different levels of students. Some students need to remember the word by watching it. Another one by hearing it. You need to use all these things.
H: Do you think that students respond better when you use visuals?
E: Yes, I think so. All of them.
H: All of them? [Laughing] That's good! Do you believe that using visuals affect the learners' achievements?
E: The learners' achievements. Yes. But should be recycled.
H: How?
E: It helps them remember the words. It's about the memory. It's easy to remember the word.
H: So you are using visuals not just for motivation but also you want students to memorise.
E: Sure. Both of them. Motivation and memorisation.
H: The last question I'd like to ask you here is about the examination system here in Kuwait. Everything is... you are teaching from the book then you go to the exams. And you think that the exams are good enough. But at the same time, you said that they don't reflect students' understanding. I'm not sure how can they be good enough but they don't reflect students' understanding. Can you explain this a little bit?
E: I don't understand you. Sorry, Mr. Hassan. Again please.
H: In terms of the exams.
E: Exams.
H: You said they are good but at the same time, you said they don't reflect students' understanding.
E: Yes. It depends on memorisation.
H: But how are they good then? Because you said the exams are good!
E: I don't say they are good.
H: You mentioned this earlier when I asked you about...
E: I said... I said the exams in Kuwait are too many exams. Too many exams.
H: And you think that this is wrong?
E: Yes. I think this is wrong.
H: Because students always focus on them?
E: Yes.
H: Thank you very much. I really appreciate this. Thank you for participating in this study.
E: I'd like to see you again.
H: Hopefully. Thank you very much.
3- Salah:

H: First of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this study.

S: You are most welcome.

H: I really appreciate that. The first question I want to ask you is about your background. What's your background? How long have you been teaching here in Kuwait? What are your qualifications?

S: Well, it's been a long time for me, about five years; this is my fifth year in Kuwait. I studied in Syria about four years in the English department. I studied English literature [Laughing] there. It's good job that to teach English language. It was a good opportunity to work... It's a good job. Working in Kuwait gives you the ability to do certain things. It's better than working in my home country. We are talking about working in Kuwait. I tried to come to Kuwait and have this job. I'm interested in it. I enjoy teaching very much. I love my students so much. It's a good way to live...

H: That's good to hear. In Kuwait, you have been teaching for five years. How do you see your role as an English language teacher in Kuwaiti intermediate schools?

S: Well... I try my best to teach my students to speak the language as much as they can, to use the English language in everyday situations. Whenever they go out with their friends... they go to restaurants... they go to cinemas. I encourage them to use the language. We sometimes do an open discussion in the class. I try to encourage them to use the language I want. My aim is to make my students master the language; make them able to express themselves. I think this is the main role for teacher, to change his students' attitude towards the language. Lots of students don't want to speak the language. Some of them are shy. Some of them think that they can't; they will never master the language. They do not even try. So my role as a teacher is to encourage them, to give them the instructions, to give them the help and the aid they need. This is the teacher's role as I see it.

H: You see your role... You see yourself doing this?

S: I am doing this. I'm doing my job. I'm doing well as I see it. My students are improving in using the language in a good way especially the eighth grade and the ninth grade. They are doing well. They are using the language properly. I think I changed something in them. This is what I like to see. I'm doing something.

H: That's a good thing. I really like what I hear about this. When you teach vocabulary, what are you required to do here in Kuwait?

S: Well, when you teach vocabulary, you want your students to understand the meaning of the new word and to know how to use it in everyday language. When he wants to use this word, how can he put it in sentences? Your role as a teacher is to see or to know the nature of your students. How can they understand this word? In which way I can present this word. Some words are easy; just give them an example, a simple sentence; your students will understand it immediately. Other words sometimes you need to give more examples. You need to use a picture. You need to use visuals and videos, realia sometimes. But you can't use all these aids because there are different circumstances around us. You are not free while you are working here. Sometimes you are forced to use or obliged to use or to give just examples. To use as much examples as we can to make sure that our students understand the word. After understanding the word or making sure that my students understood this word, I ask them to give sentences. They should use the word in a correct way. This
is how I see teaching vocabulary. But I have too many hours working here. I don't have enough time to prepare teaching aids and visuals every day. So sometimes, when I see that the lesson needs visuals, I exert more effort. I try to prepare what the lesson requires so that I make sure the new words are clear to my students. When the lesson is easy and the words are not that difficult, I think it's enough to give examples and to ask students to put the words in sentences. Then to check their understanding. If anyone has a question, I try to make it clearer.

H: I'm just going to go back to this point. I was asking about what you are required from the Ministry of Education here. When you teach vocabulary, what do they ask you to do?

S: They ask me to look at this group of words...

H: ...in the coursebook...

S: ...in the coursebook. You are following these steps. You can't go outside them. You don't have the freedom to manoeuvre or use different material. You have the book, so stick to the book. Don't go outside this book. They want you to finish the book, just to finish the book and get students prepared to be examined.

H: The book here is like a syllabus?

S: It's a syllabus you have to follow. You have to finish. And if you don't finish this book, I'm sorry to say this word, it's just like a crime, you'll be sentenced, and you'll be judged. You are not a good teacher if you don't finish the syllabus. They don't look at the way you finish the syllabus. Just finish it. OK. As a teacher, I find myself responsible not to move ahead in the syllabus unless I make sure that my students mastered what they had gone through. They should understand everything I teach them. Then I move to next steps.

H: Interesting. Based on the comment you mentioned, you said that your aim is to let students to master the language and to use the language in real life. I noticed in the lesson when you were teaching vocabulary, you weren't asking students to put the words in sentences from their own.

S: At the end of the lesson, I asked them to do some exercise. This is not all. Every day we recycle new vocabulary. Every day we ask students to do exercises referring to these new words. We don't just take the new words today then forget about them. We recycle new vocabulary every day. In any chance you get you have to go through the words again. Ask them to do more exercises and ask them to give new sentences as simple as possible.

H: Again, these vocabulary items are related to the coursebook?

S: They are from the coursebook. You can't teach new vocabulary unless a student asks you about a word he came across and didn't understand it. As a teacher, I try to balance things. I have these words in the book. I finish them. I teach them to my students. I make sure they understand them. If anyone of my students ask me about a different word, a new word to him and it's not in the coursebook, I don't have a problem. I try to...

H: ...How do you deal with this if someone asks you about a word that is not from the new words? Do you give them the meaning in Arabic? Or do you give them the meaning in English?

S: I try not to use Arabic because we are asked not to use it.

H: Do you believe that this is right?
S: I don’t think so. For example, make your students understand a word through examples, through any teaching aid you have. If you feel, you are a teacher. You know if your students understood the word or not. If you feel that you need more clarification, then it’s not a problem. I think it’s not a problem to use the mother tongue. Sometimes words can’t be understood easily by students, so I give it to students in Arabic. It’s not a crime. It’s not a big problem. Students will thank you for that. [Jokingly]

[Laughter]

H: From what you say, I think that the Target English coursebook truly affects and influences your vocabulary teaching because it’s the syllabus, right?

S: It’s the syllabus. You have to follow

H: When it comes to the use of L1, you believe that it’s necessary sometimes. Even if it’s not allowed, but when you are inside the class, you use L1 when you think it’s...

S: ...If it’s necessary, I use it, and I don’t hesitate. I’ll do...

[Laughter]

S: ...anything in the interest for my students.

H: Do you think that your students expect you to use L1 in the classroom?

S: Well, my students’ goal is to understand and to cope with me in the class. ‘It doesn’t matter what way my teacher uses to make me understand’. They don’t mind. They just want to understand, so I try my best to make them understand through the aids, the visuals, the examples, realia, etc. if they don’t... it’s not a problem, neither for me nor for them. They expect it and accept it.

H: About the vocabulary that is presented in the coursebook, do you think that it is useful or just they are put there randomly?

S: I think it’s not random. The variety is there. The words are used every day. They are common words. They are not strange or old-fashioned. I think they are good words. They are put with previous study.

H: When you teach these vocabulary items in the coursebook, and you have to follow this book and the syllabus as you said before, you need to adapt this book because... Certainly, not every teacher uses the book in the same way. You said that you use visuals. So how do you adapt this coursebook? And most importantly, why do you adapt it this way?

S: I think there are lots of exercises that I think... they are not of my students' interests, so I don’t give them a long time. I try not to consume the time...

H: ...Sorry, but this is related to vocabulary teaching...

S: ...We are talking about vocabulary?

H: When you adapt the coursebook, you know, sometimes there are exercises in the book about vocabulary that you don’t use. How do you adapt the coursebook when you teach vocabulary?

S: You know...

[Laughter]
S: When a supervisor or the head of department comes to your class, you have to show him what he wants to see. Frankly, I’m talking honestly.

H: Which is?

S: Which is following the instructions given by them. Stick to the coursebook even if it consumes the time. Students are not fully motivated. They understand everything fully. When I am in my class with my students and no body from outside is here, I try to make sure that my students understand and I don’t care about the way. Even if I don’t tackle certain exercises in the book. It’s not a holy book. I use my own way. The exercises that I find necessary and help my students to understand.

H: Because I noticed that after you explained the new words, you added some other exercises...

S: ...Extra exercises. They are not in the coursebook. I made them, prepared them for my students because I think they are good to consolidate their understanding.

H: Why do you do it this way to help your students understand...?

S: ...To help them understand and to prepare them for the exam which is a holy goal for some...

[Laughter]

S: ....people here and there.

H: Again! The exam?

S: The exams! Why do you talk about the exam? [Sarcastically]

H: Let’s just focus on the vocabulary. This is a very important point. When it comes... I think you already answered this question, which is, does the level of the students or the nature of the lesson affect the way you teach vocabulary...?

S: Of course!

H: ...and you said that sometimes you use visuals...?

S: Some students understand a word just by hearing the example from the first time. Each individual has his own abilities. Some weak students think of something else. Their levels are different, so a teacher should pay attention for everyone in the class. The low achievers, you should pay attention to them and give them the information you want and the new words explained in different ways to make sure that he understood it in a good way.

H: How long will you take to teach these vocabulary items? Because I noticed that you took about twelve minutes to teach these items... maybe even ten minutes, sorry.

S: Ten minutes.

H: Do you think that this is enough? Or do you have to teach them in ten minutes because you have to go to the coursebook and do...

S: I told you Mr. Hassan, I can’t give vocabulary all the time of the lesson. There is a time limit. I told you that I have to finish the syllabus. I try to focus students’ attention in this short time to new vocabulary. I try to use as many ways as I can to help them understand then moving to next steps. Reading comprehension is important. Finally, lot of students, even my students think of the exam.
They always ask me about the exam. Reading comprehension is important. Vocabulary is important but it shouldn't take all the time of the class or even half of the time of the class. What should a teacher do in this case? I think he should use different ways and give as much examples as he can. He can use definitions and ask students to use words in sentences to help them. It's said that a picture worth a thousand word. Use pictures. If you use a picture, students won't forget this word and they can use it. We come back to our problem, which is the coursebook and finishing it.

H: Finishing it! So do you think that this is really a problem?

S: ...A big problem.

H: This is maybe one of the difficulties that you face. You said that exams, coursebook, and sometimes students level...

S: Students’ attitudes and levels. Some students have positive attitude and others have negative attitude. They don't want to work. They have other interests. They aren't interested in the coursebook.

H: How do you overcome these difficulties?

S: I think the coursebook and sticking to the coursebooks make students less motivated, less interested to study. A teacher should adapt his way to motivate his students and to make the subject interesting. So when you come inside the class, your students will be happy to receive you and they will work with you. They will help you in the class. They will understand better. Teachers shouldn't stick to the coursebook. They should use their own way. They should use the good things in the coursebook. If you see that this exercise or that exercise aren't necessary, just ignore them.

H: Maybe sometimes the topics, right?

S: Topics sometimes aren't interesting. They are not even accepted culturally.

H: In Kuwait?

S: In Kuwait, yes.

H: For example?

S: Sometimes we talk about...

H: ...Because this coursebook was made for the Kuwaiti context.

S: It was made, but there are some things here and there that aren't accepted by some students.

H: Can you give me one example?

S: I think it was put by mistake. For example, Fahad went to see his friend and a girl [?]. Students would not accept that. A girlfriend in Kuwait is a big problem.

[Laughter]

H: If you had the freedom to teach vocabulary items without the coursebook. Forget about the coursebook, OK? What will you do? And why will you do it this way?

S: You mean the way or...?
H: Right now, you don't have the coursebook. You're going to a class in Kuwait and you want to teach vocabulary, what will you do?

S: I think there are some dictionaries and some books that were made depending on deep studies about the most common words used every day. I think I would go there and choose some words that are used in everyday language. I present them to my students. Verbs, nouns, adverbs...

H: Will you preteach them also before you go to... Because you follow the coursebook, you preteach vocabulary then move to the tasks. Will you preteach them also using the same way or do this in a different way?

S: I think it's the normal way I will use. I would use it in my class. I choose the word...

H: Preteach them then go to the reading text?

S: OK.

H: Why will you do this? Why will you follow this way? To preteach vocabulary? Why do you preteach the vocabulary? Why do you teach vocabulary items before you go the reading text?

S: When a student go through the reading comprehension text, he faces these words. He will encounter new vocabulary. Our students will forget about reading. They will forget about the comprehension of this text. They will ask about the meaning of these words. We try our best to encourage our students to read more and more and try to figure out the meaning of the word through the context. I think it was difficult to convince my students to do it this way so I try to read a text before. I choose the difficult words. I try to explain them beforehand. When my students read the text, they read to understand not to translate.

H: Do you think that your teaching beliefs regarding language teaching influence the way you teach vocabulary?

S: We are asked to teach in certain ways. Don't use Arabic. Never use Arabic. Follow certain steps. You have to make all students repeat... I think it's my way, my beliefs so I adapt it. I apply it in the class no matter what anyone else says. I know my students. I know what they need.

H: Do you think they need this?

S: If I believe they need this, I'll do it. I don't care. I'm interested in using any way even if it is not working by...

H: ...The Ministry?

S: ...Our supervisors. I use it.

H: Again, what are your aims? Now you want to teach those words, do you focus on pronunciation? Do you focus on spelling? Do you focus on reading?

S: I think all these are important.

H: All of them?

S: For example, when I present a new word, first of all I have my students pronounce it well. They pronounce it well. They repeat it, all of them. They can pronounce this word well. After that, I try to give them examples, pictures. I try to make them understand the meaning. After that, I show the word to let my students know that this word is spelled like this.
H: But how can you make sure that they are writing it by just showing them a picture?

S: This comes afterwards. So they pronounce it well. When they come across this word in reading, they read it well. They understand the meaning through the teaching aids we talked about videos, visuals, realia, examples, etc. After that, they are able to use it in sentences. They know if it’s a noun. We’re talking about the genre here; adjective, adverb, etc. After that, in exams or in the class when we write a topic, they are given these words or most of these words are used in topics. Write about something and use these words. When you give them this exercise, you can check or make sure that your student is able to write it correctly.

H: When they write the...

S: ...When they are practising writing.

H: So your steps for pronunciation and for spelling. After they write, your focus is on spelling, pronunciation, and meaning? That’s your aim?

S: First of all, pronunciation. Then they should get the meaning. After that, practise using it in sentences. Finally, I think it’s not that important, the spelling. Even if my students write it with wrong spelling, it’s not a big deal. It’s not a problem.

H: Is there anything that stops you from acting your beliefs in Kuwait?

S: Sometimes the time. The number of hours. You know, a teacher should teach four hours a day. I think it makes my job more difficult.

H: There has been a lot of discussion about the use of visuals in teaching. I know that you use visuals in teaching your lessons. Do you always use visuals or just sometimes?

S: You know... Before you go inside the class, you should be prepared. I note down the new vocabulary... the new words in the lesson. If I think that these words need some visuals to make them easier for my student, then I use them. If I think that the words are simple and my students are going to understand them without videos, without pictures, without the visuals, so I just use examples, I just... I give my students examples and put the new word in different context to make my students guess the meaning. I’m not using this way in every class. Sometimes when I think that these words, there are a lot of difficult words. They need videos, pictures; I go ahead and use them.

H: It’s also a way of adapting the coursebook.

S: Of course.

H: [Laughing] what is the difference between a lesson that you use visuals with and a lesson that you don’t use visuals with? Because you said that you sometimes use visuals and sometimes you don’t use visuals.

S: I think using visuals makes students understand the words better. But you are not... you don’t always have the time. You don’t always... you know, free to use them. When you have a lot of working hours, you can’t move around the school carrying all your stuff and preparing to show students the videos or visuals. So teachers suffer from this problem.

H: So here comes back the classroom environment... That classrooms here are not provided with the computers or...

S: All right. You have to bring everything with you...
H: Oh!
S: ...Get them set in the class beforehand. You need at least fifteen minutes to get everything set and prepared.
H: Fifteen minutes?
S: Of course!
H: And the lesson is only forty...
S: Forty-five minutes.
H: So fifteen minutes just for...
S: For preparing your computer, your data show projector, etc. So if there were projectors and computers in classes, our work would be much easier. Just bring your flash memory with you. Everything was prepared before. It would save our time.
H: I mean... let’s say that this room was provided with data show? Will you use visuals every day?
S: Definitely. Absolutely. Because as we said before, a picture worth a thousand word.
H: Do you think that students respond better when you use visuals?
S: Of course. When they see pictures, videos, they are encouraged. They are motivated. They respond in a great way.
H: Does that help them in their achievements?
S: Of course.
H: In terms not to the exams, all real language use?
S: Of course. I agree with you. When they are taught in a motivating way, they understand better. They don’t forget the words easily. Sometimes when I teach them in the normal way by giving example sentences, they always need recycling and revising. But when you teach them a word using visuals, I believe that it’s learnt. They don’t forget it easily.
H: Let’s talk about the last thing, which is the exam. Because you said, we are going to talk about this later on.
[Laughter]
H: First of all, do you think the vocabulary questions in the exam reflect students' understanding of the language or memorisation?
S: It depends. They are not that difficult sentences. The answer is right there. Because some of our colleagues, when they prepare exams, they don’t make them difficult enough for students. If you want to make sure that students fully understand the word, you have to try to trick them. But our exams, I think, they are sometimes too easy concerning vocabulary. Because you use... it depends on memorising. Just memorise the meaning of the word. If you memorise it in Arabic, it’s enough. You will be able to answer all the questions easily. Because they... the other words... well, we talk about the multiple choice, for example. I have four choices. Three choices are irrelevant in any way; they
are far away from this sentence. So students, even low achievers, know that this is the suitable word.

H: I think... I’m not sure... I had that in Kuwait when they give the exams. All the choices in the multiple choice should be from the new vocabulary.

S: From the coursebook, from the new vocabulary of the...

H: So that will make it even more difficult because...

S: Of course! You can’t use... as a teacher, when you put an exam for your students, you can’t choose a word from outside the book.

[Laughter]

S: You have to stick to the holy book. [Sarcastically]

H: Even if...

S: I’m sorry to call it a holy book.

[Laughter]

H: No. it's OK. You are saying that it’s not just about the right answer. Even the wrong answers should be from the coursebook?

S: Of course.

H: [Laughing] Oh! That’s silly but it’s the way it is.

S: I think it should be reconsidered.

H: But you also said that there is this writing comprehension thing. Do you think that this is also related to vocabulary?

S: I think this is a big problem.

H: A big problem?

S: Our students don’t have the freedom to write about something from outside the book. The book, you know, for example, when we talked today about happiness. I think next exam the writing topic would be about happiness. Next lesson will be about friendship...

H: ...And the vocabulary items...

S: ...They would be used in writing as guidewords.

H: As guidewords?

S: Yes.

H: Vocabulary can also... Even the vocabulary items aren't just for the vocabulary question...

S: ...The exams depend on the book. On the coursebook. You can’t use anything from outside the book. You will test your students with two vocabulary questions gap filling and multiple-choice. You will ask your students to use the same vocabulary or words to answer the comprehension questions. From the Setbook. We call them Setbook... Setbook questions. From our coursebook. From the syllabus. Then they are going to use lots of these words that they studied from the
coursebook in writing a topic. A topic can't be chosen from outside the book. Most... or ninety... at least ninety-five per cent of the topics are tackled through the textbook.

H: But don't you think that it's beneficial for students to write about something that they have learnt about...

S: ...I think in early stages yes. But we are in the intermediate stage. I think that students should write freely about different topics. Even if they aren't mentioned or studied or prepared before. This is my point of view.

H: Your belief about...

S: ...I believe that, yes.

H: This was interesting. Do you want to add anything more about the steps of vocabulary teaching? I think that in this school you have this worksheet...

S: ...The pamphlet. It’s prepared to revise as I told you. When we teach new vocabulary, we revise them whenever we have the chance. So we go ahead, print some exercise, distribute them to students, and tell them to memorise again. It’s a way to help them understand and to get them prepared for the exam.

H: So you are trying to do is to balance between your beliefs?

S: That’s what I’m trying to do...

H: Thank you for your time I really appreciate this.

S: My pleasure.

H: Thank you very much.

S: You are most welcome.
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H: First of all, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.
A: You are welcome, Mr. Hassan.

H: I appreciate that. So the first question I'd like to ask you is about your background. Now, how long have you been teaching here in Kuwait and what are you qualifications?
A: I have been teaching here in Kuwait for 10 years. I graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Department of English in Cairo University.

H: Now... about your role here in intermediate schools in Kuwait. How do you see your role as an English language teacher here in Kuwait?
A: As a teacher of English, I tried to facilitate the language to help students to use it in their daily life. I'd like to check their pronunciation, tell them to speak, to help them express their ideas, to help them express themselves, to be confident when they use the English language.

H: Oh! That's interesting! When you are teaching vocabulary here in Kuwait, what are you required to do? What is the Ministry of Education asking you to do? What are you required to do here?
A: As a teacher of English, I try to follow the four skills... teaching listening, reading, speaking and writing. I try to introduce the words through the communicative approach so the students, as you know, first they listen to the word after that they repeat it then they read it and the last point or step they write it.

H: So this is what the Ministry of Education is asking you to do?
A: Yes, and I also try to apply this in my class. I try to apply because, as you know, when the students or when anybody here... he has the ability to pronounce so the best way for producing sounds is to listen to sounds, so when he listens he can speak or pronounce...

H: So when you teach vocabulary you focus a lot on pronunciation more than anything else?
A: I try to...it's the best way. When a student listens carefully, he can produce sounds carefully.

H: Yes, interesting! Because I notice here that you used a lot of drills in you lesson. When I observed you, you used drills you know...
A: ...Yes, it's better for the students to make... I start with the clever smart students. And at the end we end with students whose levels or whose standards are low.

H: Oh! So you think that... you know... the students... because you said different students have different levels, so do you think that the level of the students affect the way you teach vocabulary?
A: Yes, certainly. The level of the students affect my way of teaching. Because I have clever students, I can use different ways. I can use flash cards. I can use a projector. I can use data show. I can use everything because of students who are clever. There's action and interaction between the students and... between the teacher and the students. If the standard of the students is so high, it's easy to introduce the lesson in different ways and using different methods and using different
techniques. And this will be more motivating for the students themselves. There will be an action
and interaction between the teacher and the students.

H: By clever, you mean hard-working students, right?
A: Students who are clever... who are... who always gets high marks... who are hard-working
students. Clever students. Smart students...
H: ...And if you have a lot of you know...
A: ...Low achievers?
H: Yeah.
A: If I have a lot of low achievers, I have to follow different ways. I'll try to apply the same ways,
the same methods, or the same techniques. But I'll try to use different ways according to their level.
H: Mm-hmm. Can you give me just one example? Like... What will you do if you have...?
A: I think it's better for them to use visual aids frequently to use data show frequently to use...
H: ...low achievers?
A: Yes. I'll try to... I'll try to make them connect or join or... Mm-hmm, try to make them
connect the pictures with the word itself. I try to encourage them to pronounce, to see, to feel...
Mm-hmm, try to create a real class for them, help them to understand, help them to pronounce,
help them to see...
H: ...To make it more personal? You mean.
A: Yeah! Help them to get the idea, to get the word...
H: But do you think that visuals are only good for low achievers?
A: No, for all the students. But it is better for low achievers because it enhances what I’d like to
say.
H: Oh! OK, interesting. That’s really interesting because we’re going to talk about the visuals.
Now in Kuwait, here, when you teach vocabulary, are you required to use L2 only? And by L2, I mean
the second language.
A: L2 means in English?
H: Yeah!
A: It's better. It's better to maximize English as a foreign language. It's better to use the English
language all the time, but sometimes we have some complicated words, some difficult words, some
abstract words. They can't be... the students can't get the meaning of it. So I have to use the Arabic
language in order to clarify the meaning of some words, but most of the lesson must be in English. I
must maximize the use of English language all the time. I should ask my students to use only the
English language, as can I as possible, ok?
H: And this is your belief?
A: It's my beliefs. I try to use the English language all the time, and I ask my students to use the
English language all the time. But if there's something difficult abstract nouns, something that can't
be clarified, so this is the time for the Arabic language here.
H: Uh-huh! And do you think that students sometimes expect the teacher to use L1 in the class?
A: No, in my class they don't expect me to use the English language.
H: No, L1 not L2, I mean.
A: You speak about Arabic?
H: Yeah! Do they expect you to use Arabic?
A: No, just to clarify the meaning of some words...
H: ...Yeah I'm talking about... because you know I noticed that some students when they were writing the words, they were asking about the meaning in Arabic.
A: They try to give the meaning of the word.
H: Yeah! So I think the students here...
A: Some of them... most of the students or some of the students who are asking about the meaning of the words, they are low achievers. And they can't get the meaning or the equivalent English definition. They can't get the meaning of the word or they can't understand the English definition. So that's why they asked more times about the meaning of this word, "what the meaning of this word?" and so on. Can we tell it us in Arabic? But the clever students or students who have high levels, they get the meaning from the beginning. That's why they don't... they aren't asking.
H: Yeah! If you give the meaning in Arabic, do you think that students will understand the words in a better way? In your opinion?
A: Yes, they will understand it. But I don't add anything new to the English language.
H: Mm-hmm! It is interesting.
A: When I give them the meaning, that's why I tell them open your mouth...

[Laughter]
H: Yeah!
A: ...Open your mouth! It's delicious!

[Laughter]
H: Yeah!
A: It's delicious!
H: Spoon-feeding!
A: Yes, something like this. So I'm not introducing anything to the English language.
H: Uh-huh!
A: I try to avoid this.
H: That's your belief. Yeah.
A: It’s forbidden in my class to write the word in Arabic, and to write the word in English and to give their meaning.

H: When you said forbidden, you mean that what you believe in not...

A: Yes, yes. It’s a good way for teaching English.

H: OK. Now, let’s talk about the book.

A: Yes.

H: Because if you have to follow the book, there is no way... it's the syllabus. Now first of all, what do you think about the vocabulary items in the coursebook? Do you think they are useful or just randomly put there?

A: From my point of view, I think that the vocabulary in the coursebook or syllabus is so useful because it... here... it connects different topics that... from different topics. Some of them from geographical topics, some of them from scientific topics, some of them from historical topics, especially in grade eight. Here you can find different topics that talk about different... you can find different lessons that talk about different topics from geography, from history, from science, from math puzzles. That is why it is an integrated course.

H: Uh-huh!

A: It is an integrated course. It is full of different vocabulary from different fields, and that's why it helps students to have different background... or great background.... or wide background about his knowledge... his culture... his school subjects.

H: Yeah! Interesting. Now, how does the use of the Target English coursebook affect or influence your teaching vocabulary? I mean...

A: Excuse me! Can you repeat it again?

H: Yeah! How does the use of the Target English coursebook affect or influence your vocabulary teaching? Because you know, it's the book that you follow so when you teach vocabulary you can’t... You teach vocabulary from...

A: ...From the coursebook.

H: ...So I suppose it’s... It influences your teaching of vocabulary in a very good or bad way.

A: Yes, of course. I think the coursebook is full of different vocabulary... different words that enforce me to search, to use dictionaries, to get different words different meanings.

H: I mean do you have the freedom to teach students words that are outside the coursebook?

A: Again.

H: Do you have the freedom to teach students words that are outside the coursebook?

A: Words from outside the coursebook?

H: Yes, as new vocabulary.

A: Frankly speaking, I don't approve with this idea because we have limited time. We have time limited. We have a coursebook, when we finish the coursebook and I have extra time or extra activities, I can introduce the new words. But I try to stick to the words...
H: ...To the syllabus.

A: ..Vocabulary that are in the syllabus. Because if I have time, if I have extra time, if I have free time, if I have time for activities, I can provide them with the new vocabulary.

H: So again, I think... Because the answer for this question is yes. Because you said the Target English coursebook influences your vocabulary teaching... because it is the syllabus you can't go out...

A: Yes.

H: Mm-hmm. Now because this is a book and you have to follow the book...

A: Yes.

H: I totally understand that. But at the same time, it's absurd to think that all the teachers use this book in the same way. Teachers, you know, have different opinions, different beliefs, and different ways of using this coursebook.

A: Yes.

H: Now, how do you adapt this coursebook? For example, some teachers add things, some teachers delete things, some teachers use technologies with it to adapt the coursebook. When you teach vocabulary, how do you adapt the coursebook?

A: As you know, or as we know different teachers deal with vocabulary in different ways, according to their talents, according to their beliefs, according to their ideas, according to their points of view, according to their opinions. Every one deals with the words or the vocabulary according to his own beliefs and his own opinions. For me, I’d like to use technology. I’ll try to improve myself; I’ll try to know more; I’ll try to use dictionary, to use data-show and technology in the next years because I’d like to try to change the ways I follow. And I put this in front of my eyes; I’m going to change from... In order to help students to learn more.

H: I mean in in terms of... I know because you used the whiteboard this might be the way you adapt the... but... I mean, do you put in exercises? I mean, when you open the coursebook and teach vocabulary... I know that in this school you have this worksheet...

A: Remedial exercises?

H: Yeah! So you are not just teaching from the coursebook. You are also adding things that are out of the coursebook, right?

A: Yes, some extra exercise.

H: Yes.

A: Some extra exercise like remedial exercise or reading, writing paragraphs or creating...

H: Yeah! Like what you did at the end of the lesson.

A: At the end of that, I’d like to know if my students understand what we explained. If they got the idea... if they got the idea of the lesson or not. So I’d like to make something called wrap up...

H: Wrap up stage?
A: ...Wrap up stage. Now they listen... they read the lesson, they were taught the new vocabulary, and now it's their turn to produce. It's their time to tell me what they understand.

H: So when you adapt the coursebook, you usually add things to make the learners...

A: Yes, the teacher should be flexible inside the lesson, should be flexible inside the course. I shouldn't stick to the book. It isn't a holy book. It's your style, beliefs to add touch to the book. We aren't dealing with holy books and we aren't robots. Every teacher should deal with the new words according to the level of the students, according to the new ways of technology that appear... using realia, using real objects, using data show, using visual aids, using flash cards, using word charts; so I may use or sometimes I use... Sometimes I use my... Sometimes I use whiteboard, other teachers used data show or use flash cards, others use word charts, so different ways, different style, different beliefs. Every one put his touch on the lesson.

H: Don't you see? Because you said that my belief is to use the whiteboard right now at this moment. Why do you think the whiteboard is important? Or let's say, why do you think the whiteboard is a good way to teach vocabulary? What does it add?

A: I think today most of the school is using data show projectors and smart board. Now after two or three years, I think the whiteboard will be deleted or cancelled or won't be at schools. So I try to follow the technology. That's why, but here every class has a whiteboard. And I sometimes use the data show with me but not in every lesson.

H: Let's assume that at this school, they provide you with computer and data show in every class. Will you use visuals in all the lessons?

A: Yes.

H: No whiteboard. Because you think that...

A: No whiteboard.

H: Why is that?

A: Now, all what I need is to activate my students to have an interaction inside the class... to help them to speak, to help them to use the language. So... and to help them to see the picture of the new word. I think this will facilitate the idea of learning new language... help them to speak, help them to express their beliefs and their ideas.

H: Uh-ha.

A: If I have in... my classroom is provided with data show and computer and smart board, I will not use the board again.

H: The whiteboard?

A: The whiteboard again

H: Yes. Now... because you have to follow the book

A: Yes.

H: You usually... when you teach vocabulary items you, for example, today it took you ten minutes to teach the vocabulary items

A: Yes.
H: Do you think this is enough? Or do you think that because you have to follow the book?
A: No, I think... I think that new words inside the lesson should take ten minutes because we have a lot of techniques inside the lesson. We have a lot of techniques for example, we have reading aloud, reading silently. We have to follow some techniques like scanning, skimming...
H: ...But do you think that all these things in one lesson for forty five minutes is too much?
A: ...so we have to divide the lesson, ten minutes for vocabulary, ten minutes for... five minutes for reading, five minutes for skimming, asking questions, five minutes for reading aloud, and five minutes for asking the students to read the exercise and answer the questions.
H: But from your talking, I think that this is also related to the coursebook because you have to follow the coursebook you are doing this way.
A: Yes, yes. I have to follow some techniques inside the... inside the... some techniques...
H: Yeah. But now let's say that you don't have the coursebook...
A: Uh-ha
H: ...Will you teach vocabulary items just for 10 minutes? Because you know, what you are saying is interesting because I totally...
A: Do you think that a lot of time or I take short time? From your point of view.
H: I can't talk about my point of view.
A: Yes, from your point of view as a teacher is a short time or long time?
H: What I think is that it's too much to focus on reading, scanning, and vocabulary in one lesson that takes forty-five minutes. It usually takes in order to teach vocabulary, you need to... you know... I'm not going to talk about my beliefs.
A: Yes.
H: I think it will take you... you may need forty minutes just to teach vocabulary to make sure that the students understand to integrate...
A: Twenty minutes?
H: Maybe more.
A: I just... I think...
H: ...If we were teaching...
A: ...They are ten words...
H: No, no. But if you are teaching vocabulary without the coursebook let's say. You know what I mean.
A: Yes.
H: Because right now you have to follow the coursebook.
A: As you know, we have comprehension, we have the passage, and it's my job to introduce... it's my task to introduce the words. The words here not everything, the words here just to facilitate the lesson. Just to facilitate my task inside the lesson.

H: Uh-ha

A: The lesson is a comprehension lesson, that's all. So students are going to read. It’s the job... or the task of the students is to read inside the class. I introduce the words to facilitate the reading task only. I'm not teaching... my lesson wasn't teaching vocabulary or teaching words. What my lesson is comprehension lesson. So I introduced the words. They were about I think ten words and they took ten minutes or eight minutes. OK. I think that's enough in order to have the chance to focus on the main task, which is reading.

H: OK. Do you revise these items with the students usually? The words... I mean the new words. Do you revise them?

A: Yes, at the beginning of the next year... the beginning of the next lesson

[Laughter]

A: The lesson is still connected.

H: Yeah.

A: The lesson is still connected; just I introduce the exercise number one, two, and three. We have exercise four, five and six. The lesson is still connected and the lesson is taken in two periods.

H: Uh-ha, OK.

A: At the beginning of the next period, I'm going to introduce... not introduce... I'm going to revise the words as quickly as I can using flash cards in order to connect what I explained today with what I'm going to explain tomorrow.

H: Ok. Now do you face some difficulties when you teach vocabulary in Kuwait? What are the difficulties you usually face and how do you try to overcome them?

A: I think it's so little, but sometimes if the word is so abstract or complicated or the students can't get its meaning in Arabic that's why I try to facilitate it. If the students can't get the meaning in English... can't the definition, can't get the equivalent word for it, OK, I'll try to tell them the meaning in Arabic.

H: Hmm-mm.

A: If it abstract noun or they can't get...

H: Yeah! I noticed that you usually in your lesson say, you don't talk in Arabic, you gave them the meaning in English, you gave them some example and say: OK, so what does this word mean? And then one of the students would say the word in Arabic and you say...

A: Yes.

H: ...Yes, that's right.

A: Hmm-mm.

H: So?
A: I try to elicit the ideas from their minds.

H: Yes. So when they say the word in Arabic do you accept that? Is it OK for you?

A: Now... now...

H: Because I think what you are doing is good, I’m not...

A: In this way, I become sure that they got the meaning in Arabic, in their own language. So when they understand what I say English and translate it in Arabic, this mean they got the idea, they got the meaning of the word.

H: But doesn’t that... don’t you think that this reflects what you believe in? Because you said that I try to forbid the Arabic in my class.

A: How can understand that? How can I understand that they got the meaning of the word in English?

H: Uh-ha

A: Or... or... sure, I should ask them to use the word in another equivalent in English.

H: Or in another sentence.

A: Or in another sentence. Yes, it's a good suggestion.

H: Hmm-mm.

A: I’m... next time I should ask them to put the same, the word, in another sentence.

H: Yeah.

A: To make... yes, it's a good suggestion. I’ll put it in my consideration.

[Laughter]

[Silence]

H: What are your aims when you teach vocabulary? Let’s forget about the coursebook.

A: Hmm-mm.

H: Just, just forget about Kuwait.

A: My aims... my aims are how to help students to pronounce the words in a good way. My aims are to help students to speak about themselves, to use the English in their daily life, to use the English at home, to use the English everywhere, to use English every day and so on.

H: So?

A: To express their ideas, their beliefs. I... my aims are to help them speak at anytime and anywhere and so on.

H: You’re focusing on pronunciation more than meaning.

A: Yes. I try to focus on fluency more than accuracy.

H: Ok! Good, good. That’s a good thing to hear but you know if you are focusing on fluency...
A: Yes.
H: ...You should focus on meaning maybe more than pronunciation. Because... I mean a lot of topics right now about pronunciation that different people pronounce the words in different ways and it's acceptable right now.
A: Hmm-mm.
H: But don't you think that you should focus on meaning more than pronunciation?
A: I think that pronunciation should be put in consideration...
H: Uh-ha
A: ...Because we have, as you know, we have different words which can be pronounced on the same way and give different meanings.
H: Hmm-mm.
A: Sometimes give awful meanings.
H: Yeah, sure.
A: So students don't understand what you are going to say. So if you...
H: So do you think that pronunciation affect the meaning? And that's why you focus on it.
A: Yes, pronunciation affects the meaning.
H: Yeah
A: That's... That's...
H: OK. Now, if you came across a word that's untaught.
A: A word that's untaught?
H: Yeah, if a student asks you about a word that isn't from the new vocabulary items.
A: Yes
H: What will you usually do? You give them the meaning in Arabic or...?
A: No, in every lesson we meet some new words...

[School bell ringing]
A: ...which they don't understand. From the beginning of the lesson, I ask students to underline the words they don't know, ‘try to underline the words you don't know’. And I try to clarify the meaning or to put the words in a text to help them get the meaning.
H: In English?
A: In English. I try, at first, to be in English.
H: Now, if you have the freedom to teach vocabulary items without the use of the coursebook.
A: Yes.
H: Without Target English.
A: Yes.

H: What will you do?

A: As I said, I’ll follow the four steps or the four skills. At first speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Because if a person listens carefully, he will speak carefully. So listening and speaking are connected with each other.

H: OK. Now we have just four more questions, number one, if you... do you think that your teaching beliefs about language teaching and vocabulary teaching, you know, are reflected in your attitude when you teach vocabulary? So is what you believe in is done here in Kuwait? You said you believe in many things...

A: Yes.

H: Are these beliefs reflected in your teaching practice?

A: Yes, I try to apply what I believe; I try to apply what I believe. Yes, my belief is to use the language as much as I can, is to help my students to understand, to speak, to... specially to speak freely, OK. And I try to maximize my use of the English language inside the class and to help my students to express their ideas and their beliefs.

H: OK. Do you think that in Kuwait there are things that are stopping you from acting on your beliefs?

A: Frankly speaking, I don't find anything like this here... I don't find anything that prevents me or hinders me to teach the words or to teach the new vocabulary or...

H: But you know, you said for example that I want to teach, use visuals but here in Kuwait they don't have... or in this school they don't have PowerPoint, so this is maybe one of the things that are stopping you from...

A: As you know here, the English lab is available. English lab is available. Data Show, computer, and overhead projector is available but sometimes the teacher isn’t ready to have ready-made materials to use. So he resorts to the whit board. But everything is available as you see. The English lab, data show, computer, overhead projector, everything is available for the teachers but sometimes we take it easy and try to use the whiteboard because we don't have the materials which is really prepared. Sometimes if the materials are prepared.

H: Prepared by who?

A: By me.

H: Yeah, OK!

A: By me. Two weeks ago, I prepared a lesson. It was a demo lesson and I used the projector. I used the data show. I used the language lab. Something like this. Because I prepared myself for using it.

H: You said that visuals are good and can help the learners.

A: Yes.
H: But you rarely use them. When I talked to you about this, you said because they don’t provide us with projectors here in the school. Now you said that you used the projector last time. I’m a little bit confused.

A: No, no, no. I said they are available. They are available. But not a smart board in each class. They are available. We have just one room for data show. Just one science lab for English language. But what I say if every class is provided with the projector, every class is provided with the smart board, every class is provided with data show, it’s better for the teacher to go without or to do without the whiteboard.

H: OK.

A: Everything. It’s available but the number is so low.

H: So this is what you...

A: I have to use it once a week, once every two weeks and so on.

H: So this might be one of the things that are stopping you from acting on your beliefs. Because one of the things are maybe the time of the lesson sometimes...

A: Yes, yes.

H: Now... OK. Why do I talk to you about this? Because you said you used visuals and you used...

A: Yes.

H: Now, there are a lot of discussions about visuals and videos in terms of memory and how can they ... do these things influence your vocabulary teaching?

A: Again, please.

H: There are a lot of discussion.

A: Yes

H: About, you know...

A: Visual aids

H: Visual aids and... you know... and... that if you use visual aids, it will help students to memorise the words in a better way.

A: Of course.

H: Do you think that the use of these things can be good in your lesson?

A: Yes, they are very helpful. They are very helpful. One picture... one picture is better than one hundred words.

H: Yeah!

A: One picture is better than one hundred words. When the students see the picture, so he can get the word without speaking... without telling him anything.

H: Ok. Now because you said that you taught a lot of lessons without visuals and taught some lessons with visuals. What's the difference between the lesson with visuals and the lesson without visuals?
A: I think using visual aids helps students to interact inside the class. It motivates them to participate. It enhances their language; facilitate the learning process, OK? I think there is an action and interaction inside the class. All these visual aids or using technology helps students to be motivating... or to help students to be motivated, sorry.

H: So the students respond better when you...


H: Ok. Now do you think that the use of visual aids affect the students achievement in the exam? Or not just in the exam, even in real life when they talk...

A: Of course, the way the students see something, he can't forget it. He can forget words; he can forget what I said. I can teach him a moral lesson from a video. I can teach him a moral lesson from a video. But if I speak for one hour, he can't get what I want to say. But a video...

H: Sorry. He can't get what?

A: A student can learn a moral lesson from a video whose period is about two minutes.

H: Two minutes, yeah.

A: But I can speak for about ten minutes or twenty minutes or one hour and the students can't get anything.

H: Yeah! Sure.

A: That's why I say we should stick to technology.

H: Let's talk about the last point here which is about exams. Do you think that the vocabulary exams here in Kuwait or... because in the exam you have vocabulary and you have the writing...

A: Yes.

H: All of these things can test vocabulary. Do you think that these exams reflect students' understanding of the language in Kuwait? Do you think that when a student gets the exam and answer the vocabulary items, do you think that this means he understood what you taught or will he use the word in the future?

A: Now, the student is dealing with paper. He is dealing with paper. It’s a written test.

[Loud noise in the background]

H: Continue talking.

A: We have to prepare students or to ask students to memorise the words in order to prepare them for the exam. But I think we should have two kinds of tests. I think we should have two kinds of tests. The first one is written test and the second one is oral test. Written test to ask students to memorise the words to prepare them for the exam and check their understanding. OK? And the other oral test to check the students' pronunciation, to check students' understanding of the words. Asking them to put the words in sentences from their own. Something like this. OK? I think we are teaching to prepare students to speak outside and inside school, prepare students to speak in their real life, to express their ideas. And in the exams, we ask them to deal with paper.

H: Hmm-mm. So there is a contradiction here.
A: There is a gap.

H: But you have the presentation. Do you think that is not enough?

A: Presentation. We... just two students each lesson come at the beginning of the lesson and he introduce just one every month. Just one presentation every month.

H: Even this presentation.

A: It's not enough.

H: Cannot even be memorised.

A: Yes

H: Sometimes it is noticed that some students just memorise things and...

A: And the presentation or oral fluency shouldn't be related to the words, shouldn't be related to the coursebook. He can choose any topic from any place and talk about it. It's not facilitating the vocabulary of the syllabus.

H: Yeah!

A: So we should have two kinds of tests. The first should be written and the other should be oral. Number one... written to deal with... to ask students to deal with the words that they memorised, to test their understanding. And another one to prepare them for their future and for their daily life.

H: Thank you very much. I really appreciate this. Thank you for your time. I really appreciate this. Thank you.

A: Thank you.
5- Alaa: (This interview was translated from Arabic to English)

H: First of all, thank you for participating in this study. I really appreciate this.
A: You are welcome.

H: Let’s start with the first question. What is your background? How long have you been teaching? What are your qualifications?
A: I hold a university degree in English Literature. I became a teacher of English in 2007. I’ve been teaching since then.

H: So you graduated from the Faculty of Arts.
A: Yes.

H: And you decided to become a teacher.
A: Yes.

H: That’s good. Ok. How do you see your role as an English language teacher in Kuwaiti intermediate schools?
A: I think that my role here is to teach English to students to make them master the language. However, I hardly do that because what matters here is the result of the exam.

H: So what do you do?
A: You can say that I prepare students or... I make my students able to pass the exam successfully with the highest marks.

H: That sounds interesting. Now...Let’s talk about teaching vocabulary. What are you required to do when you teach vocabulary?
A: Theoretically speaking, I’m required to make the students understand the new vocabulary items and use them in their daily life. But... to be honest with you, I don’t do that.

H: Can you tell me why?
A: After many years of teaching under this system of exams here in Kuwait, students became interested in passing the exams only. So they want everything ready-made. They worry about their results. So I decided to offer them what they need.

H: Which is...?
A: Getting them ready to pass the exams. So I give them the information needed to pass the exam in the easiest ways.

H: So when you teach the new vocabulary items, how do you teach them?
A: I present the new words and give the meaning in Arabic.

H: Interesting! You are allowed to use L1?
A: Using only L2 is required from us as teachers here. But the circumstances here enforce us to use L1. So, my answer is yes. I use L1 when I teach the new vocabulary items, but we aren’t allowed to do that.

H: Why is that? Why do you do that?

A: I told you. Because students lack the motivation in learning. They want to pass the exam. And I help them to pass the exam. So I follow the easiest way to do that like giving them the meaning of the new vocabulary items in Arabic.

H: Ok. Let me ask you about the vocabulary items presented in the book. What do you think about them? Are they useful? Or are they put in there randomly?

A: I think they are... Not all of them are useful. Some of them are useless. I believe there are some words chosen randomly.

H: Can you give an example?

A: Some abstract words can’t be used or... like rudder or wind-up. We don’t use them frequently. They are rarely used even by native speakers.

H: OK. What do you usually do when you teach these vocabulary items?

A: As I told you before, I try to prepare some examples to explain them to my students. But finally, they ask about the meaning in Arabic even after they know it in English... But... What can we do?

H: So do you use visual aids when teaching the new vocabulary items?

A: [Laughing] Oh my dear! I tried to use them more than once but students kept asking about the meaning in Arabic...

H: Really?

A: Of course! Since then I decided not to use them again.

H: That’s so sad.

A: I know. It’s frustrating.

H: And you didn’t try to do anything to change students’ attitudes towards learning English?

A: You can’t change it. It’s in their blood now.

[Laughter]

H: Hmm-mm!

A: They always ask me about the meaning in Arabic. Sometimes I think that I’m a teacher of Arabic.

[Laughter]

H: How long does it take you to present the new vocabulary items during a lesson?

A: Between ten to fifteen minutes. It depends on how many words you are going to present.

H: Do you think that’s enough?
A: No. It’s not.

H: Do students sometimes expect you to use L1 in the classroom?

A: They always expect me to use Arabic.

H: Hmm-mm! Why?

A: They are used to that. Most teachers here use L1 when they teach English. This is the situation here.

H: Really?

A: When the teacher is alone with his students in the classroom, he follows his own way to teach the students the English language.

H: And?

A: And when some visitors come to his class, he follows the procedures they want.

H: You mean the Ministry?

A: Yes, which is to teach by using the communicative approach without using Arabic at all.

H: That sounds strange. So, let’s talk about the coursebook. How does the use of the coursebook affect your teaching of vocabulary?

A: I have to teach the new vocabulary items from the coursebook...

H: Just from the coursebook? You can’t teach new words from outside the book?

A: Just from the coursebook. I have to stick to the coursebook. I have to finish it. It’s a great problem if I don’t finish it. So I try to finish it whatever happens.

H: Uh-ha. Interesting! Do you think that the level of the students affects how you teach vocabulary?

A: Of course. The students are the ones who made me follow this way in teaching, especially the new words.

H: What is the method of teaching you follow? Do you follow the communicative method? Or...

A: Mmmm... The Ministry of Education wants us to follow the communicative method. However, because of the fact that we have to stick to the coursebook, I use the grammar-translation method. I find it more effective in preparing my students for the exams.

H: Can you explain?

A: Of course. Because students want to pass the exam, they want to get everything ready-made. So I adapted my teaching style to fit their needs. I left my beliefs behind me.

H: Your beliefs? That’s interesting. What are your beliefs about language teaching?

A: My beliefs. [Sadly] I believe that teaching a language, especially the new words, is something important and should be done following the communicative approach.

H: Hmm-mm.
A: But I can’t do that.

H: Why? What are the difficulties that stop you from acting on your beliefs?

A: Yes. Hmm-mm. I told you. The system of exams here. The time allocated to teaching vocabulary items is not enough. The coursebook. When you are asked to stick to the book, you lose many things. You lose the freedom to choose what suits the level of your students. There are many difficulties but these are the most prominent difficulties that I face and which prevent me from acting on my beliefs. Ideally, I would use the communicative approach, but I can’t follow it in each lesson because of this system.

H: You said that the coursebook is one problem.

A: Sure.

H: So, if you have the freedom to teach vocabulary items from outside the coursebook, what will you do?

A: I think I will choose the most frequent words used in everyday English...

H: Ok.

A: Then I present them to my students making sure they understand their meaning...

H: In English?

A: [Laughing] Yes, but with different students under different circumstances.

H: Aha!

A: Then I may use visual aids to facilitate the presentation of the new vocabulary items.

H: Do you think that visual aids affect the way you teach vocabulary items?

A: I rarely use visual aids, especially because they aren’t available at our school. There is only one Show Room at this school so you have to wait for a long time to use it.

H: Hmm-mm!

A: However, I think that visual aids can be helpful in teaching English Language, especially the new vocabulary items.

H: How?

A: They save your time and effort. They help you to deliver the lesson smoothly and easily.

H: But you don’t use them.

A: I told you that they aren’t available at our school.
H: So, if your school provide you with the needed equipment, will you use them?
A: Of course, I will.

H: So do you think that visual aids will influence the way you teach vocabulary items?
A: Not to a great extent. Students here, as I told you, keep asking about the meaning in Arabic even if they know it in English. So, I will tell them the meaning in Arabic.

H: How often do you use L1 in teaching vocabulary?
A: Every now and then. Almost in every lesson.

H: Why?
A: Because students want that. Because of the exam system.

[Laughter]

H: Ok. Let’s go back to talk about visual aids.
A: OK.

H: There has been a lot of discussions about the use of visual aids in vocabulary teaching in terms of multimodality, motivation, and memory. Are these things important to you? Do they influence the way you teach vocabulary?
A: I believe that all the things you mentioned are very important.

H: OK.
A: If I use visual aids when teaching new vocabulary, it will be more fun. It will be motivational to students...

H: Do you think that students respond better when you use visuals? And how?
A: When I used visuals before to teach the new vocabulary, students were motivated to participate in the lesson. But they kept using Arabic. Visual aids didn’t stop them from using Arabic. It made no difference.

H: So you don’t think that using visuals affect your student’s achievement?
A: No.

H: Why?
A: Because of the exam system.
H: Hmm-mm.
A: Under this system, you can’t make any change.
H: You mean that there is no difference between lessons with visual aids with those without visual aids?
A: It’s not that big difference. Visuals make the lesson more fun but the students’ achievement is the same. They study for the exam.
H: Didn’t you try to overcome the difficulties that stop you from acting on your beliefs?
A: I tried but...
H: You couldn’t?
A: I failed.
H: Hmm-mm.
A: I’m not really satisfied with the current situation but what can I do?
H: I see. The last question for you.
A: Great!

[Laughter]
H: It’s about the exam system.
A: Ok.
H: Do you think that the exam system in Kuwait reflects the students’ understanding of these vocabulary items?
A: No. I don’t think they are about their understanding.
H: Why?
A: I think the types of the questions about vocabulary items in the exam test the memory of the students not their understanding.
H: But there is the writing question...
A: The writing question?
H: Can’t the students use the new words in the writing topic?
A: It depends on the topic. They may use them or not.

H: Hmm-mm.

A: Look...I mean the vocabulary questions in the exam are there to test the students’ memories only.

H: Ok. Thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it

A: You are welcome.
Appendix 5: Mind Map

Mind Map

Issues around the main research questions were identified and visualised as follows:

Follow coursebook
Translate (Arabic)
Pre-teach vocabulary
Add visuals
Add worksheets

Implicit (communicative)
Consistent
Explicit (grammar translation)
Inconsistent

RQ1: Teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching
RQ2: How teachers use Target English to teach vocabulary
RQ3: How beliefs affect the use of Target English
RQ4: Factors influencing teachers not to teach vocabulary in terms of what they believe

School context
Classroom environment
Examinations (washback effect)
Time factor
Level of students
Coursebook design