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Investigating the Impact of Cultural Schema on EFL
Learners' Reading Comprehension:
The Case of Chahba Mouna Brothers 4th year Middle
School Pupils, Beni Atteli, Medea

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Fulfilment of the Degree of L.M.D Doctorate in
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I, Meriem KALI, declare that my thesis entitled “Investigating the Impact of Cultural Schema on EFL Learners’ Reading Comprehension: The Case of fourth year middle school pupils in Chahba Mouna Middle School, Beni Atteli, Medea” does not contain any material that have been used or submitted before for the for the sake of acquiring any academic university degree or any other educational institution, except where otherwise indicated and stated. This thesis is my own work.

June 05th, 2022 Mrs. Meriem KALI

Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my parents; the light of my life

To my mother Aouaouèche who kept praying for me and sharing with me her time and efforts in all difficulties I have been through

To my father Boumediène; the hero of my life who accompanied me in this journey as a loyal friend

To my husband Mouslim for his support, patience and encouragement

To my sisters Zoulikha and Halima, my brother Hamza, my nieces and nephews

To my true friends who supported me all the time.

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Abstract

Reading as a language skill plays a significant role in learning a foreign language. Though a great importance should be given to reading comprehension, EFL learners face many difficulties to improve the level comprehension using the right strategies which activate the learners' cultural schema and may improve their reading comprehension and performance. The present study aims at investigating the impact of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension: the case of fourth year middle school learners at Chahba Mouna Sghir middle school in Beni Atteli, Medea, Algeria. An experimental approach was implemented in the study with 62 participants to answer the research question and investigate their perspectives about the skill of reading, their difficulties and provided solutions to activate their cultural schema. To reach this aim, a questionnaire was administered to check their awareness about different difficulties in reading. Then, an experimental study was conducted with the experimental group. Pupils were tested before and after the training sessions. Later, an interview was conducted with ten middle school teachers to collect their perspectives about the difficulties in reading comprehension and the suggested strategies to activate their learners' cultural schema for improving their level in reading comprehension. The findings indicate that pupils have benefited from the study to improve their level in reading comprehension using several effective reading strategies to activate their cultural schema and improve their comprehension. Therefore, pupils in the experimental group become actively engaged in the reading comprehension process. Findings of the questionnaire show that most of the participants face difficulties in understanding a text and lack the appropriate strategies to solve these issues in order to improve their level of comprehension. In addition to that, the results of the post-test in both groups demonstrate that the learners' comprehension level in the experimental group has improved after using different reading comprehension strategies to activate their cultural schema. Results of the teachers' interview in turn, have proved that teachers are aware of the main obstacles that EFL learners face in reading comprehension and they suggested different solutions in the light of their experience in teaching reading comprehension in the middle school.

Keywords: schemata, cultural schema, reading comprehension, cultural background, activation strategies.

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List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a foreign language.

ESL: English as a second language.

L2: English as a second language.

ALE: Anglais Langue Etrangere

C.E: Comprehension de l'écrit

General Introduction

English has become one of the most prominent languages in the world. In Algeria, it is officially regarded as the second foreign language taught in middle, secondary schools and university. There are many factors that make learning English an increasing need for EFL learners to become more proficient in different language skills. Reading is one of the most crucial skills in EFL contexts as it allows foreign language learners to improve their personal and academic levels.

In EFL contexts, the most important aim of reading is to understand what is written. Therefore, it can be a complex task for learners if they lack the use of appropriate reading strategies. They will face many problems and obstacles in their process to improve their reading comprehension and other language skills.

Schema is an important theory in reading comprehension as it provides enough and significant linguistic and cultural background for EFL learners. Cultural background is crucial in reading through the application of schema theory. Accordingly, each reader possesses his/her own schemata. Huang (2006) argues that these schemata are culture specific cognitive constructions that organizes information in the long-term memory. A text is considered as a way to provide directions for readers and show them how to retrieve or construct meaning from their previous background knowledge especially cultural knowledge. Thus, Carell & Eisterhold (1983) assert that a particular schema may fail to exist for a reader because schema is culturally-specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background. This means that no one can experience comprehension without cultural schema.

Culture can be defined as the way of life of a given society as well as religion, values, traditions, habits, educational systems, family, social structures, political and governmental hierarchies and technology. However, everyone seems to agree that learning a foreign language depends in part on the learner's attitudes towards the people who use that language, and on his/her motives for studying it. Some students may not accept a new culture or even try to become acquainted with it.

In foreign language contexts, a lesson of English is a good opportunity to bring a sample of a specific culture into others classrooms all over the world. Various EFL middle school lessons of reading comprehension at different levels include written descriptions of facts, scenes, stories, events, traditions, customs and cultures in the foreign country. Some lessons might well also include a pre-discussion and evaluation of the text that is culturally different for EFL learners and provide them

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with useful strategies to activate their cultural schema and use their background knowledge to understand whereas others do not.

Reading as being an important skill for EFL learners to master as well other language skills, is an essential step to be a proficient learner. A good reader is the one who can successfully receive new information and communicate through different types of information received during reading. Thus, understanding these written texts goes through constructing the meaning of the written symbols on the basis of the background knowledge and using the effective strategies in order to improve comprehension. Yet, some EFL learners are still unable to use effective strategies to become efficient readers and improve their comprehension. They just read word by word without understanding the whole.

Carell & Eisterhold (1983) believe that there is a mismatch between the anticipated background of the writer and the reader's possessed knowledge. This makes learners unable to improve their comprehension, which is an important element in learning English as a foreign language. In addition to that, EFL learners tend to read without using appropriate strategies and to translate the text word by word without trying to understand the whole text. This will make them unable to do comprehension tasks.

There is an urgent need to teach learners the way to use effective reading strategies in order to understand reading texts and improve comprehension. These strategies help learners in activating their cultural schema in order to relate the cultural background knowledge to one addressed in the text. Thus, developing their reading comprehension depends on developing appropriate cultural schema activation strategies to improve reading comprehension and give them the chance for better to practice and thus better comprehension.

EFL reading requires a specific cultural background to adapt with different types of texts and improve comprehension. If learners are faced with unfamiliar texts, their comprehension can fail. Thus, cultural schema can improve comprehension of foreign texts through activating their existing cultural knowledge.

The reviewed literature in the subject matter has revealed that there is a direct link between culture, linguistics and language skills (Altarriba & Forsythe, 1993), (Altarriba & Forsythe, 1993) and (Al Salmi, 2011). According to Alderson & Urquhart (1984), an appropriate background knowledge of the contextual field of a given text is both important for EFL learners encountering scientific texts, news, stories and other texts as it is for culturally-specified texts. However, there is

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not enough literature on the impact of culture and schema in Algeria in order to improve the teaching of language skills. This study deals with the impact background knowledge (cultural schema) on reading comprehension only.

The purpose is to investigate the impact of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension. In other words, it attempts to explore the relationship between cultural schema and reading comprehension performance. An experimental investigation was made up in order to find out whether the cultural schema possessed by learners could help them comprehend texts of English cultural content.

The main goal of the current study is to gauge the effect of activating cultural schema on EFL young learners' reading comprehension skills in Chahba Mouna Sghir Brothers middle school, Beni Atteli, Medea, Algeria. Researchers in previous studies as Altarriba & Forsythe (1993) and Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) have investigated the issue of reading culturally unfamiliar texts. They reported that activating cultural schema has a positive effect in improving reading comprehension skills. The researcher has noticed that her middle school learners face many difficulties while dealing with reading lessons, tests and exams. This happens when they deal with a text that is unfamiliar to their culture. Thus, EFL learners need to take an active role in the reading comprehension process in order to achieve a good level in reading comprehension. It is important to teach learners how to activate their cultural schemata to improve their reading comprehension skills.

The present study, therefore attempts to:

- Determine the main difficulties that EFL learners face in reading comprehension.
- Find out the useful reading comprehension strategies that can activate cultural schema
- Show the extent to which learners' cultural schema can or cannot help them to improve their reading comprehension.
- Provide useful solutions to face comprehension issues in EFL contexts.
- Answer the research questions of the study
- Plan and re-arrange information and results to achieve a specific goal.

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To achieve the goal of the current study, it is important to answer the following research questions:

Question 01: What are the main difficulties that Chahba Mouna middle school pupils face in reading comprehension?

Question 02: What is the impact of cultural schema on Chahba Mouna middle school learners' reading comprehension skills in the city of Medea?

Question 03: What are the cultural schema activation strategies that can promote Chahba Mouna middle school learners' reading comprehension?

In this study, the researcher considers activating cultural schema as a vital strategy to improve comprehension and enhance the teaching/learning of the reading skill. Following the aim of the current study to investigate the effect of cultural schema in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension, it hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 01: Chahba Mouna middle school learners face many difficulties in reading comprehension such as constructing meaning from new linguistic patterns and ideas.

Hypothesis 02: Cultural schema has a positive effect on Chahba Mouna middle school learners' reading comprehension skills in the city of Medea.

Hypothesis 03: Cultural schema activation strategies can promote Chahba Mouna middle school learner's reading comprehension skill and strategies.

Henceforth, the significance of this study can be displayed in terms of four major points. First, it investigates the positive effects of cultural schema on improving learners' reading comprehension skills. Second, it is assumed to contribute in the professional success of teaching/learning the skill of reading comprehension in the Algerian middle schools as it identifies different ways to increase pupils' motivation to learn English and become proficient readers. Then, it determines the EFL teachers' conceptions of teaching reading comprehension. Finally, it identifies learners' differences, learning styles and strategies as well as difficulties they face in reading comprehension. This work is, then, an attempt to find solutions that make teaching / learning English successful and motivating.

As it was mentioned before, this study is conducted to investigate the effects of cultural schema on EFL learners reading comprehension skills. To prove or disprove the above research hypotheses, the current experimental study attempts to account for the impact of cultural schema on reading comprehension. The study is based on an experimental quantitative research design which seems to

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be the most appropriate design for the topic under discussion and investigation. In addition to that, the implementation of this study design fits the position of the researcher as being a middle school teacher and the teacher of the research sample.

As long as the present work seeks to highlight the significant effect of cultural schema on reading comprehension, it opts for a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods and procedures. First, a pupils' questionnaire is selected as a primary tool in the study. It is conducted to obtain general information about the learners' learning styles, different reading activities and the use of their previous cultural knowledge. Second, the pre-test to determine learner's skills, abilities and overall level in reading comprehension. Third, learners in the experimental group received different training sessions to be trained on different strategies and methods on the use of cultural schema to improve reading comprehension.

The experimental research design of the study is based on different sessions introduced to learners during six months. After that, the post-test is conducted to check both groups after the administration of the study. Fourth, an interview is set up to different middle school teachers aiming at generating in-depth information about teachers' perceptions and attitudes about cultural schema and its effect on improving EFL reading comprehension. The sample consisted of 62 participants divided into two groups (the control group and the experimental group). The control group consists of 31 participants as well as the experimental group which will also consist of 31 participants. This latter, will be introduced to sufficient cultural schema activation strategies that are needed to practice for a better reading comprehension.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Two chapters on the theoretical background, one chapter for the methodological side and two analytical chapters of the findings. The first chapter reviews literature about the topic of the study. It starts with some definitions of reading comprehension. Then, it tackles the reading comprehension types: intensive reading and extensive reading. In addition to that, it provides a detailed description of theories in reading comprehension: bottom-up model, top-down model and interactive model. Furthermore, it deals with some reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, identifying the main idea, summarizing, brainstorming and semantic mapping. Later, it highlights some characteristics and ethics of research. Finally, this chapter sheds light on the educational reforms and textbooks and teaching English in the Algerian middle schools.

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Chapter two focuses on cultural schema and its role in enhancing reading comprehension. It begins with presenting some theoretical concepts related to language and culture. Then, it highlights the concept of schema, its history, some definitions and schema theory. After that, it discusses some schema activation strategies such as: predicting, brainstorming and text previewing. This chapter also deals with the different types of schemata: content schema, formal schema, linguistic schema and cultural schema. This latter is the main type discussed in the next section in relation with the skill of reading. Later, this chapter shows the effects of cultural schema on reading comprehension. Finally, it concludes with some major related studies in different contexts all over the world.

Chapter three deals with the methodological aspects of research. It describes the research approach, design and setting. It represents a description of the sampling method of the study which include 4ms pupils in Chahba Mouna middle school and different middle school teachers from different schools in Medea. In the methodological section, an experimental research design of the study is based on different sessions introduced to learners during six months with a group of 62 participants. In this approach, the study has included two groups (the control group and the experimental group). The control group consists of 31 participants as well as the experimental group which also consists of 31 participants. This latter, will be introduced to sufficient cultural schema activation strategies that are needed to practice for a better reading comprehension. This chapter has also described data collection instruments and analysis. A triangulation of research methods is employed in the study: pupils' questionnaire, pre-test and the post-test and teachers' interview. Finally, this chapter highlights some limitations of the study and some ethical issues.

The analytical part of the study is composed of two chapters. Chapter four is related to data collection and analysis. It highlights the data collection procedures and the results of data analysis and interpretations of the pupils' questionnaire, the pre-test and the post-test.

The last chapter provides the interview analysis, interpretation and discussion of results as well as the summary of the main findings in the relationship to major related studies on the role of cultural schema on reading comprehension. It also sheds light on some pedagogical implications, recommendations and some suggestions for future research. Finally, the work ends with a synthesis conclusion about the different procedures implemented during the process of conducting the research. After the conclusion, a list of all references and a list of appendices and the summary of the work are included at the end. For the referencing style, the sixth edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) 2010 is implemented in this thesis.

Chapter

One

Chapter One:
Some Review on Reading Comprehension and English Language
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1.1 Introduction

Learning a foreign language relies on reading which is one of the most important language skills in EFL learning and teaching. The reading activity is mainly based on the process in which readers decode written symbols into words and sentences. However, without using appropriate strategies, this activity becomes more complex to relate it to the reader's background and culture. In fact, reading helps EFL learners develop their vocabulary, promote their general knowledge and improve their comprehension of new worlds and cultures. In the reading process, EFL learners encounter many obstacles and difficulties. Many researchers argue that reading is one of the most challenging skills. Ghasemi & Hajizadeh (2011) add that reading comprehension is a fundamental language skill requiring a complex acquisition process, which can account for the way that learners comprehend what they read.

This chapter tackles, discusses and defines the reading comprehension skill. It spots light on the types, theories and strategies of reading comprehension as well as on the way reading comprehension is taught in Algeria. It also deals with ethics and the characteristics of handling specific scientific research and provides a description of English language teaching and learning in the Algerian educational system context with direct reference to reading comprehension skill at the level of middle school. At last, not least, this chapter sheds light on the educational reforms in Algeria and the Algerian English textbooks.

1.2 Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading as a language skill is considered to be a complex process and a challenging issue in EFL contexts though it plays a significant role in learning and teaching. Since it is considered as a receptive skill, learners in this process should look for words and written symbols and texts in order to extract meaning to build comprehension later.

Anderson (1999), Brown , (2001), Goodman (1976) and other scholars and specialists attempted to provide different definitions for the skill of reading comprehension. Many of them have developed different definitions on the basis of different opinions and perspectives. However, defining reading comprehension is such a difficult task to do though there are many available definitions, which cannot define reading comprehension in one sentence (RAZI, 2004).

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The concept of reading comprehension has experienced dramatic changes over the time. Many scholars such as Urquhart & Weir (1998) and Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy (1992) tried to develop the skill of reading comprehension on the basis of different approaches in order to create today's notion of reading comprehension. Nowadays, Snow C. E (2002), Herber (1978) and other researchers believe that reading comprehension is no more a traditional way of decoding written messages and it goes apart from understanding written texts.

Reading comprehension is an interactive process in which readers perform different mental operations, at the same time, to construct the meaning of the text. It is also an interaction between the reader and writer's ideas. It is when the reader decodes written texts and constructs the message that is delivered by the writer in the text. In addition to that, the reader relies on previous background knowledge to link it with what was constructed from the text. The reader extracts the meaning through guessing, predicting and questioning the content of the text in order to build meaning of the text (Hakki Erten & Razi, 2009). According to them, readers use different strategies to build comprehension. Perfetti (1985) cited in the same source argued before that reading comprehension is moving from processing the text in small chunks into larger units of the language. Comprehension comes from small components of the text and makes larger ideas go together to build comprehension.

The skill of reading has been defined as the most important academic skill. According to Carrel (1988) and Grabe & Stoller (2001), reading comprehension is being defined as the most important academic language skill. It receives a special attention in teaching foreign languages. Scholars claim that this importance is related to two main reasons. The first reason is that reading is an important goal for many language readers. The second reason is related to reading itself as it serves different pedagogical aims through written texts. They should go through two different processes: active and interactive. Readers in general need a specific amount of background knowledge and some culture, which can involve them in the comprehension process and make them able to build meaning from the written text. However, defining reading comprehension may appear superfluous in any research context. Urquhart & Weir (1998) argue that we all know what reading is. And many of us have suffered, at some time or the other, from the type of bore who stops any argument or discussion with 'Ah, it depends on what you mean by...'. So it is with some reluctance that we begin this part with an attempt to define reading, to say what we mean by the term. They assert that our excuse is that people do use the term in different ways, and that while this may be permissible when everybody is conscious of the differences, on occasions it can cause real confusion and difficulty.

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Reading is not only a mental process, but also a multi-perspective language skill. Goodman (1976) argues that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game which involves an interaction between thoughts and language. There is an interrelationship between the language used in the text and the reader's background knowledge, thoughts, culture and ideas. Reading as an interactive process involves the interaction between the reader and the text itself. Reading is all about information brought in the text. It's about creating a mental framework that helps us to extract and construct meaning through interaction and taking part with written language (Zidat & Djoudi, 2011). Similarly, Snow C. (2002) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. She argues that using the terms “*extracting*” and “*constructing*” to highlight the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. This explains the process of comprehension based on the three following elements:

- The **reader** who is doing the comprehension should have capacities, abilities, knowledge and experiences that a person needs to read the text.
- The **text** that is to be comprehended that can be in different forms either printed, written or electronic.
- The **activity** in which comprehension is a part of it including the purposes, processes, and consequences in relation with the text to be read.

The three elements mentioned above are the main components in the reading process. The interaction between them creates comprehension and makes learners able to deal better with skill of reading and its comprehension tasks.

According to Ur (1996) cited in Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) reading is: “Constructing meaning from a written text”. In general, reading comprehension is traditionally defined as what a reader understands from reading a specific text. The reader builds his/her own comprehension based on written symbols, ideas and texts and relates it to personal cultural background. However, this definition is too broad to provide the exact definition to the meaning of reading comprehension and may lead to uncertainty when different levels of comprehension are not identified appropriately.

Scovel (1998) cited in Yang (2002) states: “Comprehension is not an absolute state where language users either fully comprehend or are left completely in the dark.” According to him, comprehension can be either totally reached or not. So, instead of that; reading comprehension should be an active, dynamic, and growing process which looks for the interconnection of the text

components. Readers should relate between the text and all its parts and chunks to their own background knowledge and rely on it in order to build and improve comprehension.

Anderson (1999) and Block, Rodgers, & Johnson (2004) defined reading as an active, fluent process in which both the reader and the reading material are involved in building meaning and it is directed by intentional thinking that allows young readers to connect between their thinking processes, the textual content and their own knowledge, expectations and purposes for reading. It means that the meaning of the text is not only provided in the written text but also in the reading activity itself. When words we read are combined with our background knowledge and experiences, meaning is constructed. In other words, in order to decode the text and construct meaning, the background knowledge of the reader should be activated to facilitate understanding.

The next sections will highlight more issues related to this skill. In addition to that, it will explore the reading comprehension as a language skill, its types and theories to enhance and improve the comprehension level.

1.3 Types of Reading Comprehension

In the reading comprehension process, there are two main types of teaching EFL reading. This comprehension process depends on these two main types: intensive reading and extensive reading. Reading books, stories, novels or any other written text for pleasure in free time is considered as the type of extensive reading. Learners read for enjoyment as they only seek some general understanding of meaning. The reader in this case looks for general reading comprehension not for detailed and specific information. Details and specific information are not important to understand the overall meaning.

Meanwhile, intensive reading is when someone reads and concentrates in order to extract detailed meaning, read between the lines and understand the message of the text. The reader tends to read between the lines and tries to extract the most detailed information rather than reading for general understanding. This process needs a full concentration and a well-organized mental activity as well as detailed data to comprehend a given text. The next sections will deal with the two types of reading and define them.

1.3.1 Intensive Reading

This section deals with the concept of intensive reading. Intensive reading is a guided type of reading. The role of the teacher, the way s/he teaches and the provided reading tasks are very important. Harmer (2007) notes the following roles that a teacher plays in a guided reading comprehension lesson:

1. Organizer: the teacher provides his/her learners with clear instructions and explanations before reading a text.
2. Observer: the teacher can be an observer when he gives enough space and time to read and observe their progress.
3. Feedback Organizer: after reading and completing the task, teachers can lead a feedback session with their learners in order to discuss the main points in the texts and the tasks.
4. Prompter: teachers can prompt students after reading the text to make them notice language features.

Harmer (2007) has mentioned above the main roles that teachers should adapt in intensive reading sessions. This type of reading comprehension is a guided type of teaching in which learners always receive instructions, help and guidance from their teachers. EFL Readers are supposed to read and find detailed and key information in the text in order to understand the content and the topic of the text.

In addition to that, Nuttal cited in Carrell & Carson (1997) claims that intensive reading involves approaching the text under the close guidance of the teacher, or under the guidance of a task which forces the student to pay great attention to the text. The aim of this type of reading is then to follow up detailed guidelines and instructions in order to look for detailed information in order to understand the text.

Moreover, intensive reading relies more on accuracy rather than fluency through focusing on the detailed understanding of vocabulary and grammar. However, this may make students feel bored and demotivated to read a text in a foreign language. Therefore, the next section will introduce another type for reading.

1.3.2 Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is more enjoyable and entertaining for learners. Readers using extensive reading tend to enjoy the reading activity and process. Thus, they will improve their vocabulary, knowledge, grammar and language skills. Bryan (2011) defines extensive reading as a resource heavy technique used in second language acquisition in which language learners read large amounts of texts for enjoyment, with the expectation that they will improve their vocabulary and fluency as a result of exposure to the written language.

This technique is considered to play a very useful role to simplify the reading process for EFL learners and provide detailed comprehension and language improvement. In the same way, another definition is provided by Rodrigo et al (2017) cited in Bryan (2011) which draws out that extensive reading is reading in great amounts for the purpose of a general understanding of the text or the enjoyment of the reading experience. Field cited in Mikulecky & Jeffries (2007) explains: "Extensive reading is the most efficient way to help students change old habits and become confident second language readers." Day cited in the same source adds: "Extensive reading may play a role in developing the capacity for critical thinking so important for success in higher education." It has a different role rather than intensive type of reading.

Grabe (1995) cited in Carrell & Carson (1997) states the following points to describe extensive reading:

- Extensive reading develops automatic word recognition through building orthographic and phonetic knowledge.
- It develops vocabulary.
- It motivates students.
- It has a positive influence on students' general background knowledge and reading comprehension proficiency as well as other language skills that can develop and improve each other.
- It develops and maintains reading strategies.
- It is essential for developing the ability to read for learning.
- For students, it is a key tool to continue learning.

As a positive point, Mikulecky & Jeffries (2007) think that because extensive reading is enjoyable, you will read faster and more, which makes it more enjoyable, so you will read even faster and more. However, they argue that extensive reading can easily be done without wasting precious

class time. Many scholars suggest the combination of the two types. They believe that both intensive and extensive types of reading complete each other and they are important in EFL settings. Harmer (2007) goes with the fact that students need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading to get maximum benefit from their reading. A combination of both intensive and extensive reading types may lead to a better comprehension.

1.4 Some Theories of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Following the significant role that the skill of reading play in second language contexts, many scholars made many attempts to construct theories and models of teaching, learning and researching the skill of reading in EFL contexts. Bottom-up model, top-down model and the interactive model are the main learning models in teaching reading comprehension. In addition to these models, the schema theory model will also be discussed in the coming chapter. The three models mentioned above differ in different ways and each model has its own specific functions and characteristics. Consequently, scholars and researchers tried to make a consensus between the different models in addition to the activation of the background knowledge in order to make the perfect combination of them. Thus, readers can understand and construct the right meaning of the text being read through using an interactive model that covers all of them.

1.4.1 Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up model was the first model developed by researchers around the 1940s and the 1950s as stated by Flowerdew & Miller (2005). They believe that understanding starts from the smallest units of sounds, combining them into words, making up clauses, phrases, and sentences, and finally identifying the relationships between them. This means that comprehension is made from the smallest parts to the whole part. In the same way, Buck (2001) believes that this process moves from the lowest level that is the combination of sounds into words, into understanding the linguistic and contextual meaning of the message.

Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) state that the bottom-up process is data-driven. Accordingly, Field (2009) confirms that the bottom-up process consists in building the small units such as phonemes into words and phrases and finally combining them into larger units. Besides, this model is considered as a serial, linear, and hierarchical process in accordance to Nunan (1998) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011). This leads to anxious, frightened and unorganized readers and may cause many problems to

them. All the above mentioned confirm that bottom-up processing relies on the linguistic knowledge which is totally different from the way that the top-down model processes.

1.4.2 Top-down Model

Unlike the bottom-up processing model, the top-down model process shifts from larger chunks and unites into smaller ones in order to construct meaning and improve comprehension. This model was first developed when researchers recognized the fact that readers cannot identify short, isolated text components and parts to form the whole meaning of the text. Nunan (1998) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) claims that the top-down model is conceptually driven because learners use their background knowledge in order to make sense of the message.

In top-down processing, readers move from the whole text using their own prior knowledge and their culture to understand smaller parts and details of a given text that belongs in turn to a new contextual knowledge and culture. Readers use their context and their existing prior cultural knowledge as an effective reading comprehension strategy to understand the meaning of the text.

Buck (2001) asserts that top-down processing involves a variety of knowledge types in order to understand the content of a new message. Readers should employ all these types of their prior knowledge, strategies and culture in order to comprehend and accomplish tasks. In addition to that, it is argued that the top-down processing focuses on the learner's knowledge and context (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The reader is the center of the comprehension process. According to them, the use of the contextual knowledge to understand new information needs pre-established patterns of knowledge and discourse structure that is stored in their memory. Readers should acquire all these qualities and use appropriate strategies to improve their comprehension in new contexts.

The top-down model represents the active role of readers in processing information using both prior knowledge and contextual clues. However, Hedge (2000) and Helgensen (2003) cited in Alam & Sinha (2009) supports the view that over-reliance on the use of one type processing is detrimental. They support the view that readers should not rely on only one model, but a combination of both of them is perfect for a better comprehension. In other words, a successful reader is the one who can use both processes, bottom-up model and top-down model. This will be explained in the up-coming section.

1.4.3 Interactive Model

Because of the drawbacks brought by both bottom-up and top-down models, researchers tried to make a consensus and create a combination between them to come up with the most suitable and effective processing model. Thus, the interactive model appeared by mixing both bottom-up and top-down models that can present a useful and successful way for a better comprehension using different types of knowledge and culture.

According to Flowerdew & Miller (2005), this model was first developed by Rumelhart in 1975. They state that it is also named the parallel model because processing happens simultaneously at different levels. Being able to understand a new text, readers should use many types of knowledge and strategies. These types of knowledge are: phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The interactive model provides more advantages over the bottom-up or top-down models. It helps learners more because it addresses the individual differences in linguistic processing, the different learning styles, and the learning needs. Grabe (1991) cited in Bensoussan (1998) explains as follows: “In terms of the interactive approach to reading comprehension is viewed as a combination of both lower-level rapid, automatic identification and higher-level comprehension/interpretations skills.”

Many previous studies such as Block, Rodgers, & Johnson (2004) and CARREL (1988) were conducted seeking to figure out the type of processing used by skilled readers. That is, an interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes is needed for a better comprehension. Sometimes the learner needs details to understand the whole, and other times the overview of meaning is needed to understand details (Harmer, 2007). Thus, this shows clearly how much the reading comprehension process is complex for less skilled learners and beginners.

As a matter of fact, some scholars and researchers believe that reading should not be a top-down model or bottom-up model activity. They argue that reading should be an interactive and an interpretive process through which readers can use different types of knowledge such as prior knowledge, linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge to understand a given text. Brown (2001) states that more recent research on teaching reading has shown that combining top-down and bottom-up processing is almost an important element in successful teaching.

1.5 Some Reading Comprehension Strategies

Second and foreign language learners face many difficulties in reading comprehension since it is considered as one of the most important and complex language skills. They can read texts and pronounce words and sounds correctly, but they find it difficult to understand the right meaning. Countless studies on reading comprehension like Davis (2011), Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) and McNamara (2007) have pointed out the significance of reading comprehension strategies. Brown (2001) asserts that reading comprehension is a major matter to develop appropriate and efficient reading comprehension strategies. EFL Students using strategies applied by efficient readers had performed better than those who did not Fauziah (2003) cited in Yussof, Jamian, Roslan, & Hamzah (2012). There is an interrelated relationship between the use of different strategies and reading comprehension achievement.

In the light of the above section and in accordance to Brown (2001), reading comprehension strategies are divided into two parts: related to either bottom-up or top-down processing. Each processing model has its own related and specific knowledge and comprehension strategies.

Davis (2011) states that research about effective reading comprehension has helped educators to understand that learning to read is a complex process, requiring knowledge, strategies, skills and awareness to be developed together. A reading strategy is a useful learning tool used by language learners to control, develop, organize and improve their reading comprehension while reading a specific text. Defining the term of reading strategy is a matter of disagreement since there is not an exact definition to the notion. Many scholars provided different views about it.

According to Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy (1992), strategies refer to conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to particular texts and tasks. Similarly, McNamara (2007) states: “a reading comprehension strategy is a cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual conditions, with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension”. Accordingly, Pearson, Roehler, Dole & Duffy (1992) cited in Yussof, Jamian, Roslan, & Hamzah (2012) claim that a strategy is viewed as a flexible plan or technique used by readers in the attempt to get information or make meaning from a text. Successful readers are able to select useful strategies to help them deal with the reading process, improve their reading comprehension and reach their learning goals. The next sections will tackle some reading strategies that can improve learners’ reading comprehension.

1.5.1 Predicting

Predicting meaning on the basis of the contextual knowledge is a significant strategy in reading comprehension. Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) argues that the predictive ability is developed through providing learners with useful knowledge to allow them predict what is coming next. Readers can improve their comprehension if they are provided with the right information to predict. Harmer (2001) notices that learners having this skill look forward trying to predict and understand what is coming next. That is, they predict what they are going to read using specific details trained on beforehand. EFL learners need some clues and ideas to rely on so as they can predict what a reading comprehension text contains. Thus, teachers need to teach their learners how to develop their predictive ability (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). This may include asking some questions in relation to the material (comprehension text) or presenting relevant knowledge to recognize the goal clearly and the requirement of the listening task.

One can define Predicting as a cognitive reading strategy that requires learners to make analytical and formal guesses about events that will happen next in the text. This can be made using clues from the text itself such as reading the title, the headings, the sub-headings, and having a look at the structure of the text, pictures, graphs and knowledge about the author as well as the vocabulary used in the text. Herber (1978) defines prediction as follow: "An intellectual or emotional extension of one's knowledge and experience into the unknown, under the constraints of specific conditions or actions".

Another definition for this reading strategy is provided by Moreillon (2007) who argues that predictions are educated guesses about what will happen next based on what is known from reading the text and that predictions can also involve readers' background knowledge. An important point to consider in this case is that predicting before reading are totally different from guesses. Predictions before reading a given text is based on exact evidence (readers' prior knowledge about the text) whereas; guessing meaning is based on nothing. Readers just try to guess anything and relate it to the text.

As a cognitive reading strategy, Predicting plays a significant role in activating learners' cultural schema and helps them read with less difficulties and more comprehension. Predicting is a helpful strategy in reading comprehension and has a great role to help readers make connections between their cultural prior knowledge and the new information being read in the text. Thus, Olshavsky & Kletzing (1979) believe that the strategy of making predictions is of a great importance

in the process of comprehension as we are not only comprehending the author's literal message but also going beyond the information given to predict the content and the way the author will present it".

Moreover, prediction is a useful reading strategy in many ways and in different contexts. As a useful reading strategy, it allows teachers and learners to identify what they really know and comprehend about a specific text. In this case, we can confirm the strong relationship that exists between predicting and the existing cultural knowledge of the reader in that activating one's prior knowledge that helps in predicting the meaning of the new information provided in the text being read.

Furthermore, predicting is a strategy that helps learners in setting a purpose before reading and helps learners in monitoring their reading comprehension. In addition to that, it allows them to make a more useful interaction with the text and make them more interested in the reading activity, text, materials as well as reading tasks in order to improve their comprehension.

1.5.2 Identifying the Main Idea

One of the most important strategies in reading comprehension is the ability to select the right information and identify the main idea(s) in the text. Zhengfu (1991) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) defines identifying the main idea of the text as the way of selecting and analyzing meaning while trying to grasp the main idea to acquire a basic discrimination ability. That is to say, the EFL learner reads for the first time to get the general idea of what is written while disregarding details. Readers try to extract key significant information and they should be selective in reading to look for the main idea. This shows that this reading strategy is a useful way through which learners can get the general idea of a text while details are less important to them. That is why, cultivating students' ability to identify the main idea is very important in order to control their general understanding and comprehension of the texts they read.

According to Harmer (2007), after identifying the topic of the text, the reader tries to guess and understand what is being written in order to predict what is coming next in the text. After predicting meaning of the text or the passage, learners can read the text to confirm their predictions and expectations in order to check whether their predictions in terms of the main idea were right or wrong. The next section will deal with another reading comprehension strategy that can help learners recall their knowledge and acquired information on their own way.

1.5.3 Summarizing

Summarizing is a key strategy for learning and remembering the ideas in a text is to summarize what you have read (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007). This means that when learners read, reformulate and rewrite the most important ideas and parts of the text, they make these ideas shorter, useful and comprehensible for them and for their own level. This activity will make them promote the use of reading comprehension strategies and improve their level of comprehension and in other language skills as well. During reading comprehension sessions, learners can use some existing knowledge in addition to some words and ideas in the text and rewrite the whole using their own words, language and style.

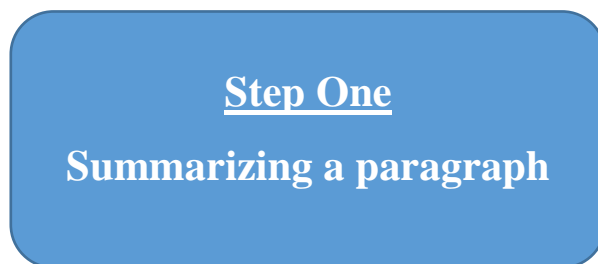
According to Mikulecky & Jeffries (2007), Summarizing is especially useful for learners in different ways such as:

- ✓ Reviewing and memorizing information provided in textbooks in preparation for tests and exams.
- ✓ Preparing and organizing information or ideas from different sources so you can include them in a report or paper.

Summarizing a paragraph or a passage can go through different steps as follows:

- The first step is to write a sentence that summarizes each paragraph aside.
- After that, the learners can make a combination between the sentences in order to write a summary of the whole text.

Mikulecky & Jeffries (2007) suggest the following framework for learners to follow in order to summarize a particular text. The steps of the summarizing process are organized as follow: summarizing a paragraph and summarizing a whole passage.



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- Write single, short and complete sentences that are much shorter than the paragraph itself and summarizes the whole meaning.
- Include the main idea and supporting facts and ideas of the paragraph in the summary sentence.
- In the summary sentence, follow the same pattern of organization and same presentation of ideas as in the paragraph.
- Do not add any facts, ideas, or opinions that are not in the paragraph.

Step Two Summarizing a whole passage



- Read the passage all the way to the end and mark the overall thesis and the supporting points.
- Determine the overall pattern of organization and the presentation of ideas in the original passage.
- Write a one-sentence summary of each paragraph.
- Write a short paragraph by combining the summary sentences of the paragraphs (with any necessary changes to connect them).
- The main idea of the summary paragraph should be similar to the thesis of the whole passage and the pattern of organization should be the same as the overall pattern of the passage.

Learners should only summarize the most important ideas and supporting ideas of the original text and include them the whole summary of the text. A summary should not include small and extra details and information written in the text or the passage. Moreover, opinions or viewpoints should not be included in the summary as it should be much shorter than the original text.

1.5.4 Brainstorming

Another reading strategy called “Brainstorming” is a key strategy to use in order to improve the level of reading comprehension. It is a cooperative technique that makes learners interact with each other to facilitate the discussion of ideas presented in a given text. Brainstorming is a questioning and teamwork technique. Learners can ask questions and suggest ideas in relation to a particular topic. This means that brainstorming is based on cooperative work that aims at providing the longest list of ideas that can learners generate in concern with a specific tackled topic.

Using the strategy of brainstorming, pupils can activate their cultural schema. According to Silver et al (2001) cited in Sejnost (2009) carousel brainstorming is a questioning technique that encourages learners to share their thoughts in a variety of questions. This means that readers are allowed to ask any question in relation to the topic, talk about their ideas, and discuss them with each other. In addition to that, they can share their ideas and conclusions with their teacher for more discussion. Seel (2012) shares the same opinion with them. He argues that brainstorming is a method of generating ideas and solving problems. In other words, brainstorming is a useful strategy of bringing about many ideas to develop them for later use. This means that brainstorming is mainly based on cooperative work that aims at having the longest lists of ideas concerning a particular topic. That is to say, it is a very important strategy to activate learners’ schemata by sharing ideas between students and having the opportunity to hear new ideas and thoughts from all their classmates as they read each other’s work.

1.5.5 Semantic Mapping

Many teaching techniques have been developed to activate student’s prior knowledge for effective top-down processing in order to facilitate reading comprehension Chia (2001) cited in Ajideh (2006). Semantic mapping is one of these useful strategies for activating cultural schema. It is one of the most important pre-reading strategies that is used in order to activate learners’ different types of schemata. That is why teachers should introduce it to their learners so as to help them bring their prior knowledge to the text being read. Freedman, 1980; Heimlich and Pittleman (1986) cited in Ajideh (2006) claim that the first major activity that activates student’s appropriate background knowledge of a given topic is the semantic map.

In accordance to Anderson (1999) cited in Dalby(2010), Semantic mapping is much like brainstorming where concepts and ideas about a topic are collected and organized possibly on the board. Semantic mapping can be defined as a kind of graphical representation of information, data can be organized on the board into categories related to a specific topic and context. It is very beneficial in educational contexts as it helps learners in activating their cultural and prior knowledge as well as preparing them to understand the information being read.

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A sample map is suggested in figure 04 in addition an example exercise in Figure 5, below

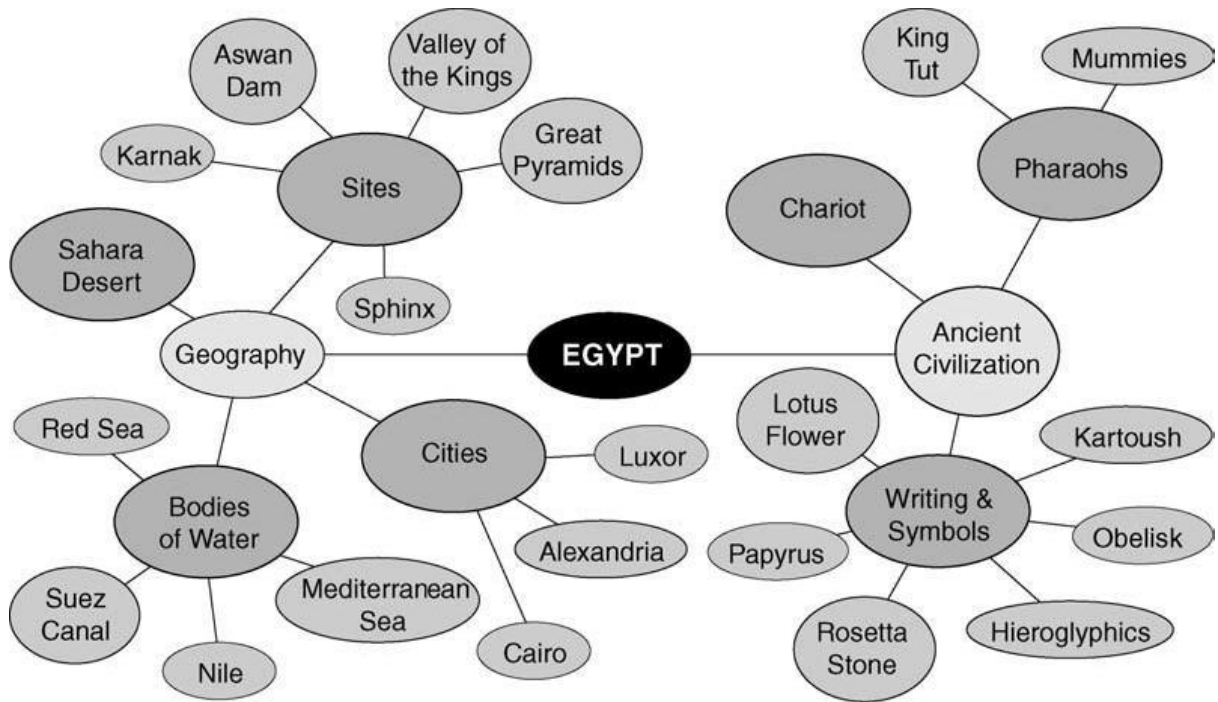


Figure 1.1 Semantic Map Sample Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman (2007)

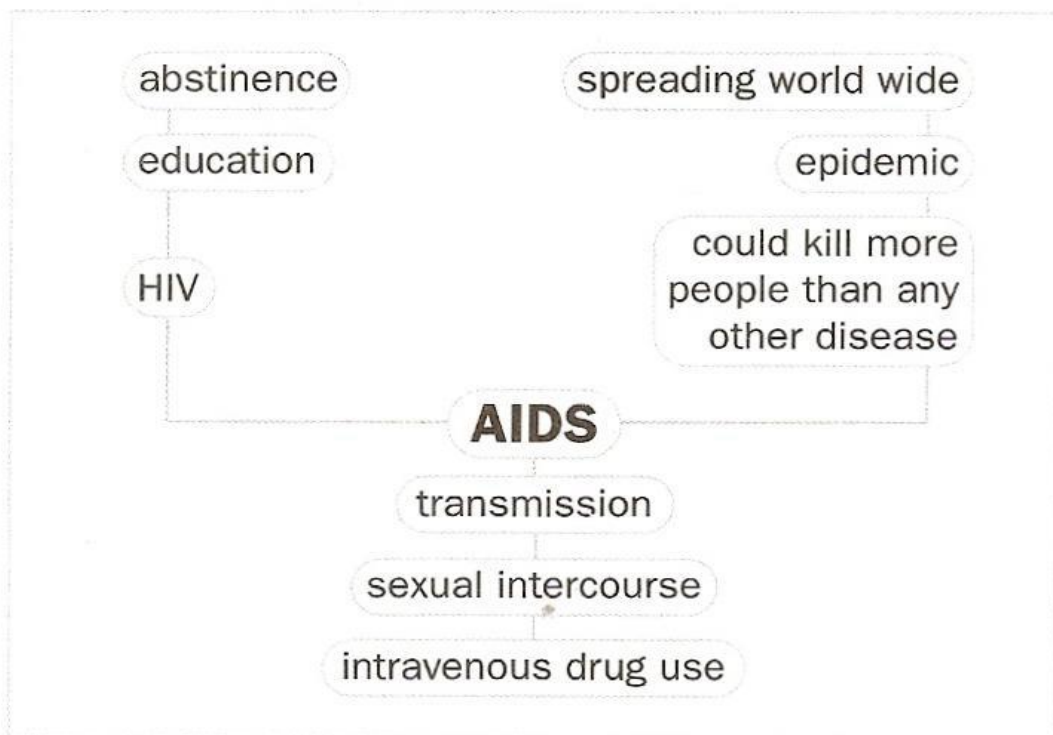


Figure 1.2 A semantic Mapping Exercise Anderson (1999) cited in Dalby (2010).

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Dalby (2010) supports this method because it can help counteract the possible negative effects of activating knowledge by challenging preconceived notions such as stereotypes. He adds: “Sometimes our knowledge of a subject stops us from adequately comprehending a text.”

Similarly, Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman (2007) claim that using semantic maps is a useful way that helps students learn important words and make connections with related key words or ideas as well as gives teachers the opportunity to lead a semantic mapping activity before reading to introduce key terms and activate prior knowledge.

Several definitions have been suggested to identify the right meaning of this strategy. The simplest one was given by Brown (2001) who defines semantic mapping as grouping ideas into meaningful clusters. Semantic mapping is a visual representation of knowledge or a picture that is represented in the learners’ mind. The strategy of semantic mapping is considered as graphical representations, pictures or images of everyone’s thoughts, ideas, and attitudes toward a specific topic or concept. Semantic mapping involves designing and drawing a diagram of the relationship between words and ideas according to their use in a particular text and it is best introduced as a collaborative effort between the teacher and the class

In addition to that, Ajideh (2006) defines semantic mapping as an organized arrangement of vocabulary concepts which reveals what students already know about the topic and provides them with a base upon which they can construct the new information learned from the text. In other words, semantic mapping is a mental representation of information we learn in a form of graphics. It can be drawn on paper or on the board through relating different categories to main topic. It is of great importance in the process of activating learners’ prior knowledge in addition to the fact that it can prepare them to the comprehension process. These graphical representations of information and ideas within different categories that are in a direct relation to a given concept, are of great importance in activating schemata. It helps learners activate their prior knowledge and prepares themselves to understand the information through selecting, grouping and organizing ideas.

Semantic mapping is one of the most important pre-reading strategies that are used in order to activate learners’ schemata. Thus, as it is mentioned above, activating schema is of a great importance in reading comprehension and applying semantic mapping strategy before reading is a very important step towards improving and enhancing comprehension. That is why teachers should introduce this strategy to their learners so as to help them bring and activate their prior knowledge to the text they try to understand.

The main advantage of semantic mapping, as it is mentioned above, is to help learners identify the important ideas in relation to a given concept through recalling previously stored cultural knowledge about that concept. Thus, the task of text comprehension will become a much easier activity for readers.

1.6 The Main Educational Reforms in Algeria

The educational background in Algeria is considered to be as one of the most prosperous and compound linguistic variation among Arab countries. Algeria is a unique geographical area with a considerate number of languages taught like Arabic, French and English as well as Tamazight in some regions because of many reasons such as arabization, colonization and globalization. Rezig (2011) asserts that the Algerian linguistic background is very rich and complex too. The huge surface of Algeria and the variety of cultures, customs and traditions made this country a huge place of great linguistic richness and variety.

Despite of the fact that the Algerian educational system attempts to progress at different levels, it is still leading learners into serious learning difficulties and shortcomings at the different educational levels: primary, middle, high educational levels in addition to higher education (university). Thus, the Algerian educational system has witnessed various reforms and changes made in the previous decade in order to bring changes and improve the quality and the level of teaching and learning in the Algerian context.

Although Algeria is considered as an Arabo-Muslim country, it is also characterized by the presence of different foreign languages. This is due to the different changes that has Algeria witnessed over the past decades. As a result, Lakhal (2008) cited in Rezig (2011) argues that the presence of language variety created a linguistic crisis at the level of different fields such as education and politics. Everyone started to claim language monopoly issue in Algeria. That is Arabization, French-Arabic bilingualism, the English language status driven by the globalization. All these languages are imposed in addition to Tamazight that is the language of the native people in Algeria and in North Africa as well. This issue has never reached consensus.

This linguistic issue can be well described by Tabory and Tabory (1987) cited in Rezig (2011). They believe that the Algerian situation is complex, as it is at a crossroad of tensions between French, the colonial language, and Arabic, the new national language; Classical Arabic versus colloquial Algerian Arabic; and the various Berber dialects versus Arabic. The lessons from the Algerian

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situation may be usefully applied to analogous situations by states planning their linguistic, educational and cultural policies.

All these varieties have seriously led to a considerable number of important linguistic and critical issues. According to Lakhel-Ayat (2008) cited in Rezig (2011), the presence of this variety created a linguistic, political and educational crisis giving the right to everyone to claim monopoly on the language issue: Arabization, French-Arabic bilingualism, the English language statute, never reaching consensus. Thus, the Algerian educational system has included all these languages in its programs and at different educational levels.

Thus, students face many learning difficulties and weaknesses. These issues are mainly related to learning foreign languages and are specifically related to the flaws of the educational system as stated by Entelis (1981) who claim that too many young people may be emerging from secondary schools with an incomplete command of both literary Arabic and functional French. The variety of linguistic knowledge that learners are exposed to may create great issues and make them unable to recall any language. As an example, and due to the French colonization, French has become a significant part in the Algerian culture, language and dialects. Despite this fact, many learners fail in having a successful and good level in mastering the French language.

After the independence, Algeria started to witness different educational reforms as stated below by Rezig (2011):

1. First Reform: Arabization.
2. Second Reform: The Fundamental Schooling System.
3. Third Reform: English in the Primary School.
4. The Higher Education Reforms.

The above-mentioned reforms were based on many changes mainly linguistic ones. Each reform was based on emphasizing on a specific language moving from Arabic due to Arabization, into French after the French colonization and the English language following the world's globalization. These reforms have addressed the different educational levels in Algeria. The recent reforms started to give much more importance to foreign languages mainly the English language.

In recent years, there has been a rapid diffusion of English in Algeria (Belmihoub, 2018). Algerians (especially teenagers) started to show their interest, attentiveness and enjoyment to the

English language. They started to get influenced in different ways and terms. They speak English for different purposes. English is successfully dominating all fields. (Khelloul & Benmaghrouzi (2020) explain: “As moving forward towards the 21st century, English became the language of power, economy and information.” Thus, there is an urgent need in many countries to reconsider the statue of the English language and start to think about improving its statue in the educational system.

As cited in Khelloul & Benmaghrouzi (2020), Ruby & Saraceni (2006) state that: “knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin’s lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science, and travel. In short, English provides linguistic power.” English has become the language of the whole world and it used in different field. It is the language of power in different fields. Language learners should pay attention to the different skill of the English language and should master them in order to acquire a good linguistic level. Learners are mainly provided with school textbooks as the first tool to use in order to learn English since it is difficult for them to afford others tools. Textbooks and manuals designers should pay more attention to the new generations’ backgrounds and attitudes.

1.6.1 The Algerian English Textbooks

Teaching materials are considered to be essential tools in the language classroom for both EFL learners and teachers. They can be provided either in a printed version or in an electronic form. Textbooks are the most used and useful teaching materials in the Algerian context. The word “textbook” is defined as a teaching material used in classrooms for teaching or learning something new or a subject at school. Textbooks as ELT materials play an important and significant role in different language classrooms. Thus, the current part of this chapter aims at defining the term of textbook, providing the importance of textbooks and the role it plays as a learning tool as well as sheds light on its evaluation and statue in the Algerian educational system.

According to Oxford Learners’ Dictionary (2000), a textbook is a book that teaches a particular subject and that is used especially in schools and colleges. For Sheldon (1988): “Textbooks do not only represent the visible heart of any ELT program, but also offer considerable advantages for both students and the teachers when they are being used in ESL/EFL classrooms.” A textbook is not only a set of papers that include some information and tasks for learners. However, it represents useful guidelines for both learners and teachers in the language classroom. These materials are considered to play an important role as useful tools to facilitate the process of teaching and learning. Thus, Torres (1994) cited in Tok (2010) affirms that the textbook has a very important and a positive part to play

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in teaching and learning of English. Textbooks are of a highly important and positive value in the teaching context. Textbooks designers and authorities should carefully select and refine the content of these crucial ELT tools.

Despite the fact that ELT textbooks are of a great importance and play a significant and a crucial role in foreign language classrooms, there is a huge debate here and there about the right and the suitable way to use and evaluate textbooks as teaching and learning material in foreign language classrooms. (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) argue that the textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. They assert that millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in [various] countries...No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook."

As mentioned above, the textbook is a tool of great value in teaching contexts. Millions of people all over the world use these textbooks in learning and teaching. This confirms the fact that textbooks play an important role in the language classroom and no one can deny its significance and utility. A teaching-learning situation can be considered successful only if the textbook is carefully selected, adapted and used.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) cited in Sheldon (1988), textbook evaluation is basically a straightforward, analytical matching process: matching needs to available solutions. It should follow a specific process in order to match the standards of textbook evaluation in order to identify issues and solve them. However, Sheldon (1988) is of the opinion that textbook evaluation is an emotive and controversial task for teachers. Textbooks designers most of the time neglect the role of cultural appropriateness. Sheldon (1988) argues again that the selection and presentation of vocabulary too often seem to be accomplished without system in some course books, despite the relevant studies and sources of information to which reference could be made.

Consequently, he suggested some key questions in the attempt to evaluate textbooks. Researchers, evaluators, teachers and all people interested in the field of textbooks evaluation may ask themselves the following suggested questions in the attempt to evaluate a specific textbook:

- **Rationale:** the first question is the reason behind writing this book, the type of information included in the textbook and the addressed objectives for both learners and teachers.
- **Availability:** the obtainability and the availability of sample copies and support materials with the textbook as well as the accessibility with the publisher for further information.

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- **User Definition:** a good textbook should include a clear specification of the target age, level, culture, background knowledge, learning preferences and educational expectations.
- **Layout/Graphics:** the availability of density and mix of text and graphical material on each page.
- **Accessibility:** the clear organization of material.
- **Linkage:** the right connection between units, tasks and exercises in terms of theme, situation, context, topic, pattern of skill development, or grammatical/lexical progression.
- **Selection/grading:** providing enough linguistic content for students in the appropriate way.
- **Physical characteristics:** giving enough space to write in the book and re-use the book later.
- **Appropriateness:** suggesting enough interesting, attractive and topical tasks in order to address the right level of maturity and language
- **Authenticity:** providing realistic, communicative and simplified content.
- **Sufficiency:** designing enough material and tasks to make the book stand on its own without extra materials.
- **Cultural Bias:** a good textbook should care about content appropriacy in terms of religion, society, choice of topics
- **Educational Validity:** it is necessary to take account of the different educational concerns.
- **Stimulus/Practical Revision:** the interactivity of the course material.
- **Flexibility:** the accommodation of the practical constraints.
- **Guidance:** the utility and the explicitly of the notes.
- **Overall Value for Money:** the course book should be cost-effective, easy to use and successful.
- **The Nature of Course book Assessment:** the course book assessment should be fundamentally subjective.

All the above-mentioned criteria attempt to help textbooks makers and users in choosing and selecting the appropriate tools for their needs, objectives and expectations. If textbook designers care about these criteria, the evaluation of the material may become more practical and objective.

In accordance to the different educational reforms mentioned above, the Algerian textbooks have also witnessed different and huge changes through time. Following Hayane (1989) cited in

Belmihoub (2018) and his analysis of English textbooks and teaching manuals, a useful perspective on the status of English after independence in 1962 is provided. He found that the Algerian textbooks of English were stung by the painful memories and experience with French colonialism with a fear of viewing English as a neo-colonial experience with French colonialism. The colonial era has seriously affected Algerian people in different ways.

Algerian textbooks play a significant role in the teaching and learning process. They are mostly used among teaching materials because of their availability. They are designed and assessed by Algerian teachers and scholars. If someone reads an Algerian textbook of English, he/she will realize the presence of Algerian culture, customs and traditions.

In turn, the Algerian students wanted to see their Algerian culture reflected in the English textbooks in comparison with British cultures. Due to several political reasons such as globalization, people started to neglect the French language and culture more and more. They started moving towards new cultures and worlds where nothing is related to colonialism. Thus, Hayane (1989) in turn recommended that political factors should not interfere in pedagogical concerns and the country should promote the Algerian dialects to improve foreign language teaching and learning especially English. Teaching languages should only depend on pedagogical reasons and goals. In the same way, Thaalibi (2006) cited in Chami & Ait Aissa (2020) suggests that the ministry of education should take their evaluation as inevitable feedback to improve their content as to meet the current needs of the country in terms of globalization. Moving towards the twenty first century made the English language a global language as well as a language of science, technology and development.

1.6.2 Teaching Reading Comprehension in the Algerian Middle Schools

The previous section has discussed different ideas in relation to the issue of textbooks, the right way to select them and the evaluation of textbooks as well as the status and the role of this important pedagogical tool in the context of the Algerian educational system. This section is also an important part of the chapter. It will discuss the issue of teaching the skill of reading comprehension that is considered as one of the most significant language skills in the Algerian educational context most precisely at the level of Algerian middle schools. Algerian learners mostly rely on this skill as a primary step to read and acquire more information in the target language as it can also help them to acquire other language skills.

Reading is a crucial language skill and it is considered as an important step to acquire new information and learn something new in the target foreign language. It is considered as one of the

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most essential skills to acquire any foreign language. Reading provides learners with new vocabulary, develops their knowledge and culture as well as paves the way for them for a better understanding of new information provided in any written text. Nevertheless, it is not considered as an easy task to accomplish in order to understand the process of reading comprehension. It is difficult to acquire the skill and its sub-skills. Learners should make great efforts to improve their reading skill.

Reading is not only about reading what is written on a paper but also understanding the meaning of the text. That is why, both EFL learners and teachers face many difficulties while dealing with the skill of reading comprehension. According to Grellet (1999), reading is an active skill which requires guessing, predicting, checking and asking questions so as to understand what we read. This skill needs a set of sub-skills in order to reach comprehension. In addition to that, pupils in one classroom may represent different backgrounds and bring diversity and richness to of a variety of languages and cultures (Andersson & Barnitz, 1984). Different backgrounds and cultures may represent different interpretations of the same text. Thus, teaching reading comprehension is challenging in EFL mixed abilities contexts. The Algerian EFL learners are struggling in their way to acquire the English language and they are always faced with many issues and obstacles. This was previously explained in the above section of the chapter. This is due to different reasons such as ideological, historical and linguistic through which this issue has appeared.

Like any EFL context, Algerian EFL learners lack the chance to communicate in English as a foreign language. This is because of many reasons such as the French language that is dominating since it is considered as the second official language in the country. This influences them and may hinder their development in the English language. For that reason, teachers of English tend to emphasise on the skill of reading comprehension in order to make their pupils able to read a given text in English. However, both teachers and learners face many difficulties in the attempt to master the reading skill and the other language skills in turn. A large proportion of the reading comprehension difficulties are mainly caused by the language deficiencies students have (Azeroual, 2013).

Furthermore, Zidat & Djoudi (2011) argue that teachers need to develop skills that encourage reading comprehension, guarantee content learning through reading, and deal with the differences in comprehension skills that their students present. Pupils need some motivation and encouragement to become interested in learning a specific language. In addition to that, learners should practise reading more and more in order to enhance their skills and improve their comprehension. Zidat & Djoudi (2011) believe in the fact that learning how to become self-regulated and active reader with a variety of comprehension strategies is an important goal. Learners should work more on how to become

independent learners who rely on themselves and use different reading strategies to reach comprehension.

1.7 Conclusion

As reading is one of the main skills in learning a foreign language, this chapter was devoted to tackle the nature of reading as well as its two different types of reading. It has also tackled some theoretical issues such as the educational reforms in Algeria along with the English textbooks. This chapter has also defined reading comprehension and agreed on one idea that is reading has no meaning without one's ability to understand and comprehend what is being read. It was also important to deal with the various definitions given to reading comprehension.

In addition to that, the chapter has highlighted reading types in order to identify the right type to use with specific texts. Moreover, different theories of reading: bottom-up, top-down and interactive model were tackled in order to know how learners learn to read and how they construct meaning from the text. In addition to the different reading strategies such as predicting, summarizing the main idea, semantic mapping and brainstorming in order to improve the skill of reading and enhance comprehension. The following chapter will attempt to shed light on cultural schema and its role in enhancing reading comprehension.

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Chapter Two: Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension

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2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the skill of reading comprehension has been introduced to explain its importance and its utility in EFL contexts. It has also tackled the different educational reforms in Algeria and the changes that Algerian English textbooks have witnessed. In addition to defining the skill of reading comprehension, its different types as well as the different theories of teaching the skill of reading comprehension and the various reading comprehension strategies. It's high time to discuss the relationship between reading comprehension and a significant variable in this study to improve the level of reading comprehension among middle school pupils in Algeria.

Thus, the present chapter aims at presenting different perspectives in terms of culture, language, the importance of schema and its activation on reading comprehension. It also attempts to shed light on the definition of schema theory and its history as well. Then, the next part of the chapter endeavours to introduce the different strategies of activating schema such as: brainstorming, text previewing and semantic mapping in addition to introducing the types of schema that are: content schema, formal schema, linguistic schema and cultural schema. The coming sections will introduce different ways to activate cultural schema and other types of schema to enhance and improve reading comprehension.

2.2 Language and Culture

Let us ask an important question: is culture an important factor to consider in order to know more about the target language? As human beings, we use languages as a basic form of communication to express our needs, feelings and thoughts. This is considered as the basic form of communication in our world. Moreover, The English language has become one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. People all over the world started to learn English for different purposes. Another question arises: Is it necessary to teach English with culture? This section attempts to answer the above-mentioned questions and provide useful examples and justifications for them.

The topic of culture is a debatable issue in educational contexts. Thus, many researchers attempted to investigate this issue and its relationship with the context of teaching and learning. Choudhury (2014) argues that there are four main views regarding the issue of teaching culture in English. The first two views support the perspective of teaching culture in the target language as follow:

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1. Target language should be taught along with English to acculturate language learners into the cultures of English-speaking countries Byram (1990) and (Byram & Flemming (1998).
2. The second view states that there should not be any teaching of the ‘target language culture’ together with English in the countries where English is an institutionalized variety Kachru (1985,1986), Kachru & Nelson (1996) Canagarajah (1999).

However, both of the next views reject the idea of teaching target language culture but they have different perspectives:

1. Supports the teaching of ‘local culture’ in English language teaching Kramsch & Sullivan (1996) and McKay (2003)
2. English has become a lingua franca and it should be taught in a culture-free context Alptekin (2005), Jenkins (1996, 2000, 2002, 2005) and Seidlhofer (2001).

The word culture has received different meanings and definitions. It depends on which perspectives to rely in order to define the term of culture. According to Tylor (1871) cited in Choudhury (2014), culture is defined as: “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Similarly, Chastain (1988) and Brown (2000) define culture as a way of life which characterises a group of people in a specific period of time according to their ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools.

Another definition provided by Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, & Jones (2000) cited in Peterson & Coltrane (2003) state that the National Centre for Cultural Competence defines the term of culture based on another perspective. According to this centre, culture is “integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group in addition to the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations”.

On the other hand, Wei (2005) cited in Choudhury (2014) claims that language has a dual character: both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Language cannot go without culture. People communicate with each other using languages. In addition to that, they are used to transfer culture of the target language. The language does not only define culture but also reflects culture itself. It is not an easy task to accomplish; it is a much broader concept that is inherently tied to many of the linguistic concepts taught in second language classes (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003).

Alptekin (2002; 2003) cited in Razi (2004) believes that it is necessary to teach culture for EFL learners. He suggests teaching the culture with the English language as being a global language. It is important to teach culture in the target language. According to Peterson & Coltrane (2003), linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999).

In the Algerian context, Entelis (1981) argues that the Algerian political culture reflects the impact of both general cultural values and of recent historical experiences, especially the revolutionary war, on the men who have assumed leadership positions in the state. Other elements of political culture and ideology in Algeria include belief in a continuing revolution, Arab unity, and the resurrection of an Algerian Arab-Islamic culture through the means of Arabization and under the guidance of a mass mobilization political party. These factors highlight the necessity to teach and learn culture in the target context. The next section will attempt to briefly summarize the history of schema.

2.3 Schema and Related Concepts

This section tackles some related concepts to schema. It deals with some relevant definitions of schema and the history of this term in the field of language and culture research.

2.3.1 Some Relevant Definitions

Understanding the meaning of the word schema, might go beyond the term and start referring to the more common and used concept of background knowledge. Schema or background knowledge is also called knowledge of the world. It is considered to be all the knowledge that anyone of us possesses in his/her own mind and memory. Schema is all the knowledge that we store in our minds and keep in our memory which is made by innate capabilities experiences we are exposed to in order to use them later in new contexts and experiences.

Several studies attempted to define the concept of schema in the educational field. Schema or background knowledge can be defined as people's previous background knowledge about a specific topic. Bartlett (1932) was the first to introduce this term in the educational field. He believes that the written text is not only the source of meaning but also it provides the reader with cues used to activate the prior knowledge. EFL readers should not only rely on the text, but also relate it to their previous knowledge. Thus, schema plays a significant role to extract meaning from a given text. Bartlett (1932)

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adds: “schema an active organization of past reactions or of past experiences which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response.”

According to him, schema is a vital representation of the human mental activity that holds all our previous knowledge and experiences. Similarly, McGee & Richgels (2004) define schema as a mental structure in which all information about people, places, objects and activities are stored. Thus, it is the structure of all things we know in our minds. Schema in other words is a mental representation of our previous knowledge, past experiences, knowledge and all things we have already learnt, experienced and stored in our minds. It gives us the ability to deal with new these experiences, situations and try to solve them.

Schema is when we organized our knowledge in our minds. It can be useful for readers when they try to relate their already existing background knowledge and the new topic presented in the text. Thus, the meaning is not only in the text but also in the interaction between the text and the reader himself/herself. Anderson et al (1977) cited in Carell, Devine , & Eskey (1988) state that: “Someone comprehends a text when he finds a mental home for the new information coming from the text. Schema is the basic surface on which store knowledge and use it back when we need to understand new knowledge in different contexts.

In this way, readers relate their background cultural knowledge and past experiences of the world, their new experiences and their own different schemata stored in their memories in order to read a text and better understand it. Readers in this situation do not only rely on the text but also on the interaction between the text and other factors. Alfaki & Siddiek (2013) agree on the idea that understanding the printed texts depends much more on the information that the reader holds in his memory and the related schema that he possesses during a reading process.

Schemata, according to Rummelhart (1977) and Ortony (1975) cited in Sheridan (1981), represent generic concepts, which are stored in memory. Comprehension is made when readers make connections and relationships between the information given in the text and what we already know and have stored in our memories. They add: “A particular schema would be analogous to a play with its integral structure corresponding to the script of the play.” Thus, the term schema represents general knowledge about specific events in relation to our previous knowledge, culture and experiences. The next section of the chapter will shed light on schema theory and its great impact on reading comprehension.

2.3.2 A Brief Historical Sketch on Schema

Schema theory is not a new or modern aspect in the field of education. In fact, it goes back to the old times of Plato and the Greek philosophers. According to (Meurer, 1991), the term of schema was first used by the philosopher Kant in 1781 and by the British psychologist (Bartlett, 1932). At the beginning, Kant (1781) was the first to name and develop the concept of schema, which was later more developed by Bartlett (1932). He was among the greatest scholars in linguistics and cognitive psychology who reintroduced the term schema in terms of contexts related to knowledge or background knowledge in order to organize and understand new information based that is on previous experiences.

Kant (1781) also cited in Meurer (1991) used the term schemata to refer to the rules that supposedly organize smaller units of perception into larger unitary wholes in such a way that we can assign given objects to given categories, say a triangle to the category isosceles. Later, Bartlett (1932) defined the schema as follow: “An active organization of past reactions, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response.” In other words, a particular response is possible when there is any order or regularity of behaviour. This can only happen because the behaviour is related to other similar responses which have been previously organized. Similar to Kant’s work, Bartlett (1932) did not make an attempt to explore and discover the structure of schemata itself. Instead, he insisted on the effects of mental patterns. Similarly, Piaget's theory of learning as cited in Meurer (1991), attempted to provide two types of organizations at the level of the human mind that is the organization which determines the general way through which the human being interacts with his environment and experience new information.

Recently, there have been several and different attempts to study and analyse more the notion of schemata more precisely. Scholars started to be more interested in dealing with this field Rumelhardt (1975, 1980), Rumelhardt and Ortony (1977) and Minsky (1975) cited in Meurer (1991). The last section of the chapter will introduce some different related studies to the field of schema and its positive effect on reading comprehension.

2.3.3 Schema Theory

Recently, a remarkable attention has been devoted to language and reading comprehension theories in which recalling information is mainly based on the pre-existing background knowledge and previous past experiences that are called schemata. These research works such as Carrell & Eisterhold (1983) and Dalby (2010) have suggested different ways to improve our understanding and

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comprehension in the reading comprehension process, the way it works, advantages and some shortcomings of these reading theories.

Many studies conducted by Ajideh (2006), Hwang (2008) and Dalby (2010) have investigated the theory of schema which has a great impact on understanding reading comprehension in both first and second language. Most researchers agree on the fact that when the EFL learners' schemata are activated, they have greater chances to achieve better understanding and comprehension of a given text. On the contrary, EFL learners cannot improve their comprehension if they do not activate their schemata.

In accordance to the perspective of Sheridan (1981), a more recent theory of reading comprehension is called "schema theory" or the "schema perspective." She adds: "The goal of schema theory is to describe interaction between what is in the text and how that information is shaped and stored by the reader." Widdowson (1983) cited in Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) argue that schema includes data structures of general ideas stored in memory. Processing information using schema theory relies on processing data stored beforehand in the memory and relate to new contexts and information in order to improve comprehension. Schema theory deals with the reading process, where readers are expected to combine their previous experiences with the text they are reading (Razi, 2004).

According to Chastain (1988) cited in Razi (2004), pre-reading activities motivate EFL readers to read the text and when they are motivated (prepared for the reading activity before reading) they perform better in the activity and they make less effort as well as they become more eager to participate in the activity since they have gained confidence. Pre-reading activities help both learners and teachers to facilitate the reading process. Schema plays a great role in motivating readers before reading and help them deal with pre-reading activities. Schema theory is based on the belief that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (Anderson, 1999) cited in (Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011).

Adams and Collins (1977) cited in Sheridan (1981), the underlying assumption is that meaning does not lie solely in the print itself, but interacts with the cognitive structure or schemata already present in the reader's mind. These schemata represent, in Ausubel's (1968) terms cited in Sheridan (1981), the "ideational scaffolding" or framework for understanding new information. Therefore, the reader having a cognitive structure of schemata that constitute of a cognitive filter can view the world and make decisions on which predictions and inferences are made about what is read.

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In accordance to schema theory, meaning does not reside in the written text, but rather in the reader's mind (Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011). Thus, the process of decoding meaning from a written text depends on the activation of related schema in reader's mind and memory through using bottom-up and top-down processes. The use of these strategies, enables readers to recreate the writer's message.

Carell, Devine , & Eskey (1988) claim that schema theory has provided numerous benefits to EFL teaching and, indeed, most current EFL textbooks attempt schema activation through pre-reading activities. However, it may introduce some limitations to the effectiveness of such activities and there may even have been some over-emphasis of the schema perspective while neglecting other perspectives.

In the classroom, schema theory has influenced the way a typical reading lesson is approached, giving increased emphasis to the building of interest and accessing previous knowledge (Sheridan, 1978) cited in (Dalby, 2010). Instead of giving a set of direct instructions to EFL learners, teachers should select suitable material and tasks that fit their learners' needs, interests and context. When learners start reading a text with new information and culturally different context, they face many difficulties in understanding the text without activating schema. To accomplish this task, Dalby (2010) argues that there is a large gap between a reader's existing schema and knowledge required to read o then effective reading cannot take place as explained in figure 3, below.

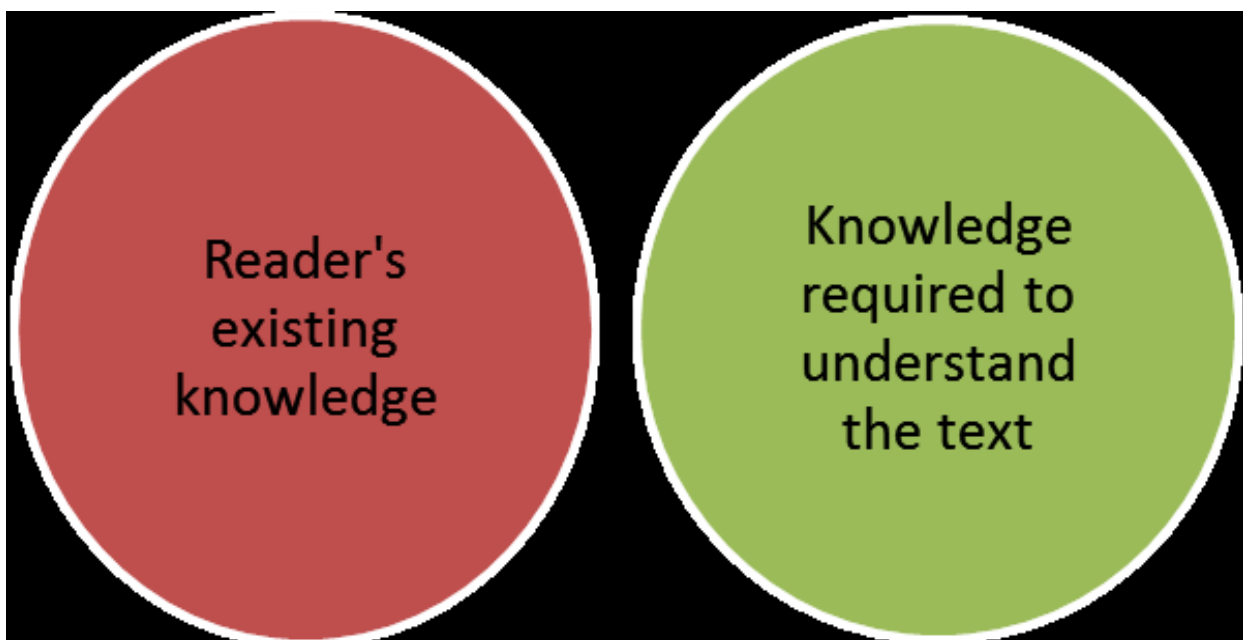


Figure 2.1 The Distance between what a Reader Knows and what a Reader Needs to Know

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Figure 2.1 above represents the gap between the reader's knowledge and the reader's needs to learn more information in different contexts. It becomes a hard task for learners to do the activity. Teachers should train their learners on using schema theory in order to match this gap with pre-existing knowledge and new knowledge using the right materials, strategies and techniques. Therefore, (Dalby, 2010) suggests that if the teacher chooses the right materials where there is some overlap between a reader's schema and the knowledge required to comprehend the text, comprehension can be built as represented in in figure 2.2, below.

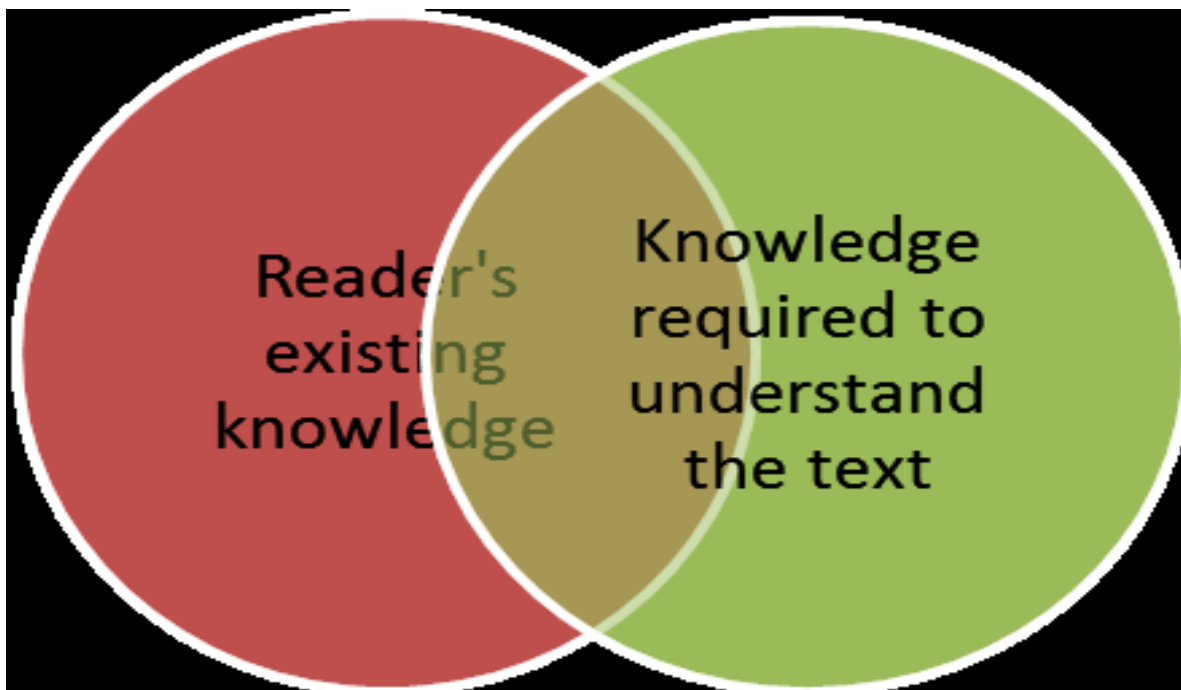


Figure 2.2 Make Reading Interesting through Building on Previous Knowledge

As mentioned above comprehension can be improved through building a bridge between the already existing knowledge and the text. Thus, through activating schema learners can understand the text and do the activities of the three reading stages: before, during and post. The following section of the chapter will demonstrate the way of activating schema and strategies used to improve reading.

2.4 Schema Activation Strategies

Most of EFL learners acquire sufficient cultural schema, however they lack the suitable skills and strategies to activate it to improve their comprehension of texts. Teachers are responsible to guide, help and train their learners in activating their own cultural schema through providing them with useful strategies and activities that facilitate and enhance their reading comprehension level. Now, it is high time for teachers to train and engage their learners in the process of using schema strategies

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as well as schema-activation strategies and activities before, during and after the reading process in order to build an organized basis for reading comprehension.

The pre-reading phase is a very important step in the reading comprehension process. It provides learners with the ability to focus on the reading comprehension tasks, encourages them to make predictions before reading, and provides them with the ability to activate their background knowledge. According to Ajideh (2003) cited in Dalby (2010), the idea of pre-teaching vocabulary now extends to pre-teaching subject details, cultural aspects of a text, and providing context as part of the framework of reading. This can be a great experience for both teachers and learners to improve the skill of reading comprehension.

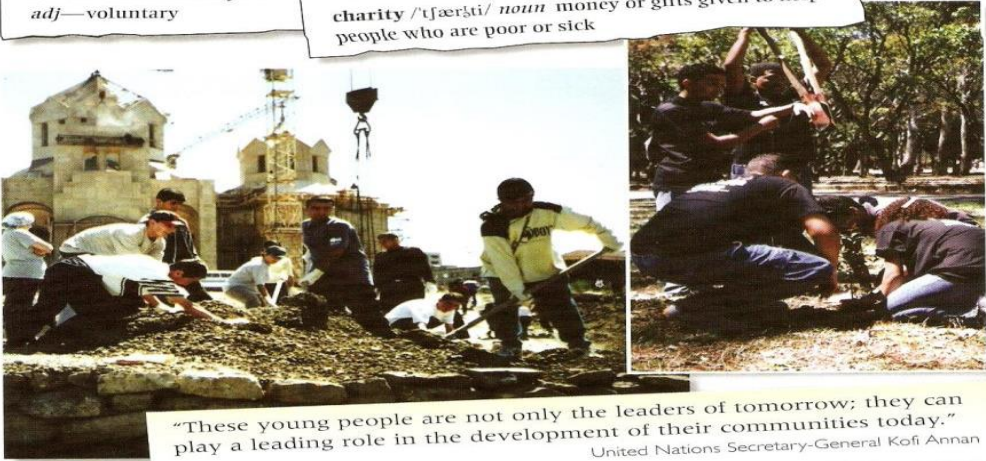
In the pre-reading phase, teachers can simply have a discussion with their learners on a specific topic to prepare them for reading. Anderson (1999) cited in Dalby (2010) suggests that this activity can help students recall knowledge they did not realise they had. Craven (2003) cited in Dalby (2010) suggests a typical discussion activity in figure 2.3 as follow:

Unit 6 Making a difference

Describe these pictures with your partner.

volunteer /ˌvɒlɪnˈtɪr/ *noun* someone who is not paid for the work that they do
adj—voluntary

charity /ˈtʃærɪti/ *noun* money or gifts given to help people who are poor or sick



“These young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow; they can play a leading role in the development of their communities today.”
United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

Think about it

1. **With your partner, make a list of ...**
 - a. three reasons why young people may become volunteers.
 - b. three ways volunteers can help the community.
2. **Make a group and share your ideas.**
3. **Discuss these questions.**

Have you ever done any voluntary work?

Do you want to work as a volunteer in the future?

Figure 2.3 A typical pre-reading activity

The above figure provided a sample of a typical pre-reading activity, which involves learners in activating their schema in order to describe the content of the pictures and predict the content of the text in turn. After, learners are asked to write a list of ideas in relation to the pictures and definitions provided above. Later, they make a group discussion to share and discuss their ideas. The next sections will introduce some schema-activating strategies as well as describe some useful activities in the phase of before reading comprehension. The most important strategies will be discussed in the coming sections. Readers can use a single strategy only as they can apply all of them for more successful reading process. They can be applied at different levels especially young EFL learners in order to establish a good learning basis in reading comprehension.

2.4.1 Predicting

Because of the fact that reading comprehension is considered as an interactive language skill, it requires great efforts from the part of both EFL teachers and their learners before reading in order to improve the level of comprehension. In this process, readers interact with the text through activating their prior knowledge that is related to the topic of the text. This step can be mainly made in the pre-reading phase, which plays a significant and a vital role in activating the readers' cultural schemata and prior knowledge to extract and construct the right meaning addressed in the text while reading.

Predicting can be defined as a cognitive reading strategy used before reading in order to activate prior knowledge that can help readers understand the text. Readers try to predict by making formal guesses about what will happen in the text on the basis of key information about the text like title, headings, sub-headings, text structure, and some information about the writer of the text. Gilakjani et Ahmadi (2011) adds: "Students may guess the meaning of new words on the basis of the topic being discussed and gain some understanding of the probable linguistic items on the basis of the context of discourses, the grammatical structure and the background knowledge of the topic." Olshavsky & Kletzing (1979) assert that the prediction strategy is of key importance in the comprehension process because it implies that we are not only comprehending the author's literal message but also going beyond the information given to predict the content and the way the author will present it.

Researchers and scholars in the educational field tried to provide a variety of definitions for the strategy of prediction. Herber (1978) cited in Olshavsky & Kletzing (1979) defines prediction as an intellectual or emotional extension of one's knowledge and experience into the unknown, under the constraints of specific conditions or actions. Moreillon (2007) has suggested another definition for

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the strategy of prediction. She defines predictions as educated guesses about what will happen next based on what is known from reading the text, predictions can also involve readers' background knowledge. However, it is important to remember that predictions and guesses are not the same since predictions are based on evidence -prior knowledge about the text while guesses are not based on exact evidence.

Smith and Barrett (1976) cited in Olshavsky & Kletzing (1979) classify prediction as convergent inference. Thus, it is a cognitive reading strategy that plays an important and vital role in activating the learners' schemata as well as help them read with more interest to improve comprehension.

Many scholars insist on the significant role of the prediction strategy. The process of prediction is a necessary component of comprehension because we must narrow the alternatives in order to process information within the constraints of short-term memory (Smith, 1975) cited in (Olshavsky & Kletzing, 1979). Similarly, Gillet & Temple (1982) cited in Kelly & Clausen-Grace (2007) assert that predictions help readers make connections between their prior knowledge and the new information being learned.

In addition to that, prediction is a useful reading strategy in different perspectives. It gives the opportunity for both teachers and learners foresee what is coming soon on the basis of prior knowledge that they already have in terms of a particular topic. Therefore, there is a strong relationship that relates between predicting strategy, the existing prior and cultural knowledge of the reader in relation to the topic of the text in order to activate the schemata, which greatly helps in predicting the meaning of the new information in the text being read. Henceforth, predicting strategy helps EFL learners in activating their own schema and make them interested in the reading activity itself.

Setting a purpose for reading is also a priority in predicting as a reading strategy, which can help learners in organizing their ideas and monitoring their reading comprehension. Readers can make more interactions with the content of the text and become more interested in the reading activity to improve their reading comprehension level.

Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) argue that the predictive ability is developed through providing learners with useful knowledge to allow them predict what is coming next. Therefore, many studies have been conducted to investigate the role of predicting as a cognitive reading strategy in improving the level of learners in the skill of reading comprehension. Among them, a study led by Olshavsky &

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Kletzing (1979) which was conducted to investigate the role of predicting strategy in reading comprehension. They revealed that good readers are better predictors whereas poor readers may be content to read at a literal level, comprehending only what the author gives them. They do not only comprehend what they read but also use inferential thinking to read ahead or grasp the intentions of the author.

The results also indicated that good readers in secondary school are able to predict the events of either an abstract or concrete style story more accurately than poor readers. The difference could be due to better comprehension by the EFL good readers.

Teachers need to teach their learners how to develop their own predictive ability Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011). Researchers suggest different ways of teaching reading in which the predicting reading strategy can be implemented. Teachers can follow different steps to teach predicting for their learners as follow:

- Introducing the strategy through eliciting information about the action of predicting and providing different examples such as weather forecast and ask them to provide definitions of the term prediction.
- Explaining the importance of this reading strategy in activating prior knowledge in relation to the topic of the text.
- Informing learners that predictions are not exact of final and can be confirmed or rejected after reading.
- Introducing the components of the strategy such as the title, subtitles, pictures, headings and training them on the way to relate the prior knowledge to the text.
- Providing examples on the practice of this strategy.
- Giving learners the opportunity for practice on reading texts using components mentioned above.

Teachers should train their learners on using the different steps mentioned above in order to activate their cultural background knowledge and improve their comprehension of new texts. The next section will introduce another key reading comprehension strategy that activates learners' cultural schema and enhance the level of comprehension.

2.4.2 Brainstorming

The study of Abedianpour & Omidvari (2018) reveal that readers can activate their schema by using the strategy of brainstorming, which make them active, engaged and motivated to facilitate learning and improve reading comprehension. Brainstorming is considered to be one of the most important pre-reading strategies. Wallace (1992) cited in Ajideh (2006) asserts that one very popular kind of pre-reading task is “brainstorming”. Readers can activate their schema through using the strategy of brainstorming.

Many scholars and researchers attempted to define the issue of brainstorming. One of them are Maghsoudi & Haririan (2013) who defined brainstorming strategy as a technique used to encourage individuals to generate ideas and come up with a list of possible suggested solutions to a certain problem.

As a pre-reading cooperative technique, learners ask different questions in relation to the topic of the text they are concerned with. They suggest different ideas and try to make a relation with the topic of the text and their prior knowledge. According to Ajideh (2006), Students are then invited to call out words and concepts they personally associate with the keyword or words provided by the teacher. Tarker & Shamates (1992) cited in Abedianpour & Omidvari (2018) argue that brainstorming is a means to motivate the quantity much more than the quality. Learners have the opportunity of few minutes in order to bring a big number of ideas and information in relation to a specific topic being discussed.

Osborn (1953) cited in Maghsoudi & Haririan (2013) proposed a number of rules that should be taken into account including:

- No criticism of ideas.
- Building on what others have suggested.
- Strange and wild ideas are accepted.
- Welcoming the large quantities of ideas.
- The roles behind brainstorming are as follows:
- Keep in mind that the more ideas, the better
- improve or combine ideas already suggested,
- And do not be critical.

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Brainstorming helps the learners transfer the thought from the brain to tongue or to the members that relate to skills especially to writing (Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013). Similarly, Ajideh (2006) highlights many advantages of the brainstorming strategy as a classroom procedure:

- First, it requires little teacher preparation.
- Second, it allows learners considerable freedom to bring their own prior knowledge and opinions to bear on a particular issue.
- Third, it can involve the whole class.

This strategy allows learners to express their ideas and collect them all in a list without any evaluation. Similarly, Richards (1990) cited in Abedianpour & Omidvari (2018) argues that Brainstorming can progress the learner's cognitive skill and contribute them to produce opinions. Thus, brainstorming seems to be a useful strategy that aims at generating as much as ideas that may serve the tasks of reading comprehension.

However, Bejarano et al. (1997) cited in Maghsoudi & Haririan (2013) argue that many teachers are not aware of the role of brainstorming strategy or the value of strategy training in promoting students' learning skills. Thus, different ways of teaching the strategy of brainstorming to language learners are suggested to be implemented in reading sessions. Teachers can follow different steps to teach the strategy of brainstorming as follows:

- Introducing the strategy by defining its concept and highlighting its importance to the learners.
- Introducing the different techniques used in brainstorming strategy.
- Giving instructions on the use of this strategy before reading a specific text in order to facilitate and improve comprehension.
- Starting with a practical task to train learners on writing everything in relation to the topic of text.
- Activating learners' prior knowledge through questioning them on the addressed topic of the text.
- Writing and discussing the learners' ideas in a group work before reading the text and doing the tasks.
- Learners start reading the text in a specific period of time.

Finally, they are asked to answer the reading questions on the basis of their prior knowledge in addition to the discussion made before reading the text. However, this strategy is time consuming in addition to the fact that only few pupils can contribute while shy ones do not.

The next section in this chapter will introduce another significant reading comprehension strategy that can contribute in activating learners' cultural schema in order to improve their level of comprehension.

2.4.3 Text Previewing

Text previewing is another useful strategy suggested for teachers to train and prepare their learners before reading through different steps such as asking them a set of questions to make them think about and discuss the topic of the text.

This strategy deals with having an overall look on the text and its different components such as the title of the text, subtitles, headings, visuals and try to guess and predict the content of the text. It is of great help for learners to predict the content and the topic of the text and form questions that will be answered after reading the text. In fact, previewing strategy has a positive effect on activating learners' cultural schema to enhance reading comprehension.

It is important that teachers train their learners on the use of this strategy to activate their cultural schema. Thus, Dalby (2010) in the following figure 2.4 suggests the following sample task to encourage students to predict the content of the text using visual cues such as titles, photos and even text organisation.

Previewing Books for Pleasure Reading

It is a good idea for the class to take trips to the library and to bookstores to browse and to find new books to read. But this may be a new experience for many students, and they may need instruction in how to preview books for personal reading.

You can introduce this kind of previewing in class. Bring in a big bag of paperback books and do the following exercise. (Remember to give the students a *very strict time limit* when they preview.)

Sample Exercise B.3.

Directions: Choose a book. You will have five minutes to preview the book. Use the checklist below to find out all you can about the book. Then tell another student about the book.

Checklist of key features:

___ Title _____

___ Author _____

___ Type of book _____
 fiction _____ non-fiction _____

___ What's it about? _____

___ Date of publication _____

___ Length of book _____ pages

___ Print easy to read _____ yes _____ no _____

___ Front and back cover materials _____

Discussion: Did all books have all of these features?
 Would you like to read this book? Why?

(During the class discussion of the books and their features, it is a good idea to make sure that students understand the meaning and the significance of all of the features. They may not realize, for example, that very small print will make their eyes tired and discourage them from reading.)

Benefits of Previewing

1. Previewing allows the reader to establish the genre, context, topic, level of difficulty, and organization of the text to be read.
2. Once aware of the topic, the students' activated background knowledge allows them to read for meaning, even if many of the words in the text are unfamiliar.

Figure 2.4 Previewing Strategy (Mikulecky, 1990)

Previewing is a useful pre-reading strategy that prepares learners for the reading process. It is an effective reading strategy that has been examined by researchers Perry (1959), Smith (1985) and Stauffer (1969) as a technique to help students retain textbook material cited in (Valeri-Gold, 1987). The strategy of previewing can play a significant role in the reading process since it provides a good opportunity for readers to skim the text before reading. Scholars such as Valeri-Gold (1987) have pointed out the importance of this strategy and provided a variety of definitions to the concept of

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previewing. Wassman and Paye (1985) cited in Valeri-Gold (1987) define previewing as a sorting technique which allows the reader to read selectively and locate the important ideas of the passage.

This reading strategy makes learners draw a mental outline of the text in their minds. Through reading the text, they can confirm their information and improve their reading comprehension. Valeri-Gold (1987) argues that in previewing, students learn how to establish purposes for reading and how to make accurate predictions, actions that can reinforce and enhance the learning process. The main purpose of previewing a text is to make learners able to generate questions and set a purpose before reading.

A good previewer can successfully activate and build background knowledge and establish a goal for reading as well as get motivated to improve comprehension skills. Questions mentioned above can give learners the right steps to follow and guide their reading. Valeri-Gold (1987), also suggests three steps in the strategy of previewing as follow:

Step One: Before Reading

- Defining previewing.
- Make a list of questions.
- Providing a previewing model.
- Explaining how to observe, think and ask questions.

(Smith, 1985) cited in (Valeri-Gold, 1987) suggests the following questions:

- What is my purpose for reading?
- How is the material organized?
- What will be my plan of attack?

Step Two: While Previewing

- Encouraging students to use their own experiences.
- Defining a purpose for reading.
- Reading and selecting relevant data.
- Evaluating and revising predictions.
- Choosing a text, divide it into parts and read the title.

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According to (Stauffer, 1969) cited in (Valeri-Gold, 1987), the teacher should ask them three following questions:

- **Question One:** What is this selection about?
- **Question Two:** What do you think might happen in this section?
- **Question Three:** Which of these predictions do you agree with?

Teachers should encourage the answers of their learners in order to share their predictions with the class and discuss their ideas.

Step Three: After Previewing

- Reading silently to check predictions.
- Ask the following comprehension questions:

Question One: Were your predictions correct?

Question Two: What do you think will happen now?

- Reading silently to check predictions.
- Proving predictions by reading aloud.
- Asking students to review their reading strategies.

Using the above-mentioned steps, techniques and strategies will make learners able to use the strategy of previewing and can successfully activate their prior knowledge as well as improve their comprehension.

2.5 Types of Schemata

Researchers tried to classify and categorize the notion of schema. They suggested different types of schemata and classified them according to their purposes. In order to understand the impact of schema and background knowledge on reading comprehension, it is necessary to understand the distinction between such types namely, formal, content, linguistic and cultural schemata as discussed in the following sections.

2.5.1 Content Schema

Content schema refers to the related knowledge to the content domain of reading materials, which is in turn the key to improving comprehension and understanding of the text. Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) define content schema as the relationship between the background knowledge that readers have about the topic and the content of the text. All the pieces of information that a reader has acquired through time and dealing with different experiences is considered content schema. Cultural background is the main element in content schema. Understanding a text depends on understanding the topic of the text and the needed cultural elements to interpret the meaning of the text.

(Carrell, 1987) asserts that content schemata affect reading comprehension to a greater extent than formal schemata. Content schema embodies the reader's pre-existing knowledge or real and imaginary worlds Anderson et al (1979) or refers to a reader's knowledge about the topic being read James (1987) both cited in (Hwang, 2008). Language learning should not only consist of learning vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures, but should also hold different levels of culture to be taught during the process of learning in order to improve comprehension and language proficiency.

Al Salmi (2011) asserts that readers' content schema influences their reading comprehension more greatly than formal schemata. According to him, they have proved that content schemata affect comprehension and remembering more than formal schemata do for text organization. Thus, readers can remember the most when both the content and rhetorical forms were familiar to them while unfamiliar content may cause more difficulties in correct comprehension.

An earlier study by (Barnitz, 1986) claim that some empirical research studies of formal and content schemata in English adapted from Carrell (1983) used with author's permission their respective cultures. The researcher found that subjects are better recalled through making more appropriate elaborations for the stories about their own culture while there was less gist recall and more distortion of the foreign passages. The next section will introduce another type of schema that is formal schema.

2.5.2 Formal Schema

According to Carrell (1987), formal schema is the knowledge that a reader has about the rhetorical organizational structures of different types of texts. It is the way that readers define their expectations about the way through which pieces of textual information are related to each other and

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the way details appear. When a reader recognizes the type of the text, it is the right time to say that formal schema is being processed. According to Dehghan & Sadighi (2011), formal schema is the knowledge of the language that is necessary for understanding the writer's message.”

Formal schema, includes the reader’s knowledge of the rhetorical patterns in which information is unfolded James (1987) cited in Hwang (2008). Similarly, Hudson (2007) argues that relevant formal schemata to the readers’ background knowledge and related syntax to the text is of great necessity for readers of English as a foreign language while dealing with different types of texts. However, formal schema needs more support from different types of knowledge. Scholars suggest another type of schema that is the background knowledge of the reader while reading a text. Hudson (2007) defines content schema as the content area and the cultural knowledge of the reader.

According to Al Salmi (2011), formal schemata are the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts that include knowledge of different text types and genres, and also include the knowledge that different types of texts use text organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar and level of formality differently. He adds: “Formal schemata are described as abstract, encoded, internalized, coherent patterns of meta-linguistic, discourse and textual organization that guide expectation in our attempts to understand a meaning piece of language.” Readers use their background knowledge of different texts such as fictions, poems, essays, newspaper articles, academic articles in magazines and journals in order to train themselves in comprehending the information in the new text.

All in all, formal schema is constructed from the organizational forms and structures of written texts, including knowledge of different text types and genres, in addition to the different types of texts organization, language structures, vocabulary, grammar and level of formality differently. Carrell (1984) cited in Al Salmi (2011) made an experimental study to investigate this issue. Can we facilitate ESL/EFL reading comprehension by teaching text structure based on schematic knowledge? Results based on this experiment proved that explicit teaching of the text structure can improve students’ reading comprehension. The right use formal schema can play a significant role in improving reading comprehension.

Results revealed by Carrell (1987) has also shown that the knowledge of what type and genre the text can facilitate reading comprehension for readers because the type of the text will offer detailed evidence of the content of the text. In comparison with the linguistic and content schemata, the formal schemata offer less power in the reading process (Carrell, 1984) cited in (Al Salmi, 2011).

2.5.3 Linguistic Schema

Linguistic schema refers to the readers' existing language proficiency at the level of different aspects such as: vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure. It plays a crucial role in comprehension and is regarded as the best way in understanding written texts and messages. Al Salmi (2011) defines linguistic schemata as the readers' existing language proficiency in vocabulary, grammar and idioms. These elements and knowledge are the basic foundation of other types of schemata. Linguistic knowledge plays a significant role in the text comprehension and understanding. It, is essential for the reader to decode, simplify and comprehend a text. Thus, he concludes: "The more linguistic schema a reader has in his mind, the faster the reader acquires information and the better understanding the reader may get."

All in all, Al Salmi (2011) believes that the more language schemata readers have in their mind, the more information readers may acquire from the text, and the more effective readers they may become. The following section will highlight the most important type of schemata in this study.

2.5.4 Cultural Schema

Reading is not only decoding written symbols, words and messages. As it is mentioned before, it a complex process for foreign language learners. Thus, to facilitate teaching and learning in reading comprehension, learners (readers) need to activate their schemata especially cultural schema. Razi (2004), Al Salmi (2011) and Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan (2014) endorse that activating students' existing knowledge enhances their reading comprehension ability. Activating cultural schema plays a major role in learning and improving reading comprehension.

Dalby (2010) asserts that schema theory holds strongest in the area of background cultural knowledge. (Bartlett, 1932) was among the first ones to make research about the effect of cultural schema on recalling information in the reading comprehension process.

Several studies have attempted to define cultural schema. Ketchum (2006) defines cultural schema as an extension of content schema On the Cultural Schema and Reading Performance which is culture-specific. Similarly, Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) argue that cultural schema refers to cultural membership that is needed to fully understand the meaning intended by the writer. Bartlett recognized that when readers process unfamiliar text, manifestations of the cultural differences (Barnitz, 1986). As another perspective, Ketchum (2006) defines cultural schema as an extension of content schema

which is culture-specific. Cultural schema refers to the cultural context that is necessarily needed to understand well the addressed meaning by the writer.

Peterson & Coltrane (2003) believe that cultural knowledge is one of the five goal areas of the national standards: Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language; in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.

One of the early studies of the influence of cultural schemata is that of Bartlett (1932) cited in Barnitz (1986) who reported observations of how Englishmen read and recalled stories based on North American Indian folk tales. Bartlett (1932) recognized that when readers process unfamiliar text, manifestations of the cultural differences in schemata are evident. Barnitz (1986) argues that cultural knowledge cannot be ignored in a model of reading. Therefore, the next section of the chapter will deal with the role of cultural schema in improving reading comprehension.

2.6 Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension

Cultural schema or cultural background knowledge in the reading process has been discussed within schema theory according (Bartlett, 1932) and (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Most discussions on schema theory have provided of the great importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension (Anderson et al 1986) cited in (Al Salmi, 2011). As Melendez and Pritchard (1985) cited in Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) state: “If a reader's [cultural] background differs significantly from that of the author, it is likely that the schema needed to understand a particular concept will be lacking or ignored.” To acquire meaning from the text, readers need to analyze words and sentences on the basis of their own personal background knowledge and culture. That is why it is important to activate learners' cultural schema. This section tends to explore the relationship of cultural schemata and reading comprehension.

Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich (2004) state that the strategy of activating background knowledge refers to recalling experiences and knowledge of texts before reading, for the purpose of linking new content to prior understanding. In the process of activating background knowledge according to them, students at the beginning of their third Grade are supposed to recall knowledge that is not relevant to the topic or is trivial. A first benchmark of instruction is that students should activate knowledge that is relevant to the text topic and use important text cues, such as the title and headings, so that their knowledge statements link to the new text. The second, more advanced benchmark for instruction is that background knowledge should represent interconnected concepts

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and information related to the text topic. Therefore, CORI teachers encourage students to improve their statements of background knowledge by increasing their relevance and using the text features to expand the conceptual richness of their statements (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004).

Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) argue that different studies in the field of foreign language reading research highlight the significant influence of cultural familiarity on readers' understanding of written texts (Steffensen et al, 1979; Carrell, 1987; Barnet, 1989). All the previously mentioned studies represent the significant role that cultural schema plays in EFL reading comprehension process.

However, Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) state that schema theory has gone under some criticisms too. He argues that McVee, Dunsmore and Gavelek, (2005) criticized schema theory researchers for being exclusively cognitive and not paying enough attention to sociocultural perspectives common in the field today. Instead of that, they have suggested a re-articulation of schema theory intended to encompass the ideas that schemata and other cognitive processes are embodied, that knowledge is situated in the transaction between world and individual, and that such transactions are mediated by socially and culturally enacted practices. Despite of the fact that schema theory has been criticized, many researchers support this theory to improve the reading comprehension performance.

Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson (1979) assert that when a person reads a story, the schemata embodying his/her background knowledge provide the framework for understanding the setting the mood, the characters, and the chain of events. Readers with different schemata would give different interpretations to the same story in particular while an individual who reads a story with a presupposed schemata related to a foreign culture would comprehend and interpret the story quite differently from another native reader.

Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982) argue that readers acquire meaning from text by analysing words and sentences against the backdrop of their own personal knowledge of the world. They believe that personal knowledge, in turn, is conditioned by age, sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation-in short, by a person's culture. While linguistic knowledge is only one aspect of this skill, background knowledge including culture can also play an important role (Alptekin, 2006; Johnson, 1981; Pritchard, 1990; Steffensen, Chitra, & Anderson, 1979) cited in (Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011)

2.7 The Effects of Cultural Schema on Reading Comprehension

In the process of cultural schema activation, learners rely on their own prior knowledge about the text and try to link new information to that background knowledge. In other words, to activate cultural schema, learners need to link between their cultural previous knowledge and new information they are reading to reach a successful schema activation of their background knowledge, which leads to successful reading comprehension. This section deals with previous studies that had positive effects on reading comprehension using cultural schema and its effective role in language learning.

Barnitz (1986) argues that the readers' knowledge or lack of knowledge of the culturally specific discourse patterns will influence their expectations and prediction strategies during reading. He explains: "If the text organization matches their expectations, there will be a better chance of comprehension and recall and if the text structure is beyond their awareness, comprehension may be impaired." Thus, if a native English reader encounters non-Western expository and narrative prose and coping with language differences and content, he/she will have to struggle with discourse patterns. Likewise, foreign students reading English prose not within their discourse experience will need to learn new text patterns and prediction strategies in addition to the basic language processes of English. These strategies will improve and enhance their process in reading comprehension.

Andersson & Barnitz (1984) assert that readers bring to a text a wide range of experiences with the world and with discourse, which they use in constructing a meaningful representation of the text. In other words, their prior knowledge, organized in topical clusters (schemata) provides a context for comprehension (Anderson, 1977; Morgan, 1983; Spiro, 1980) cited in (Andersson & Barnitz, 1984).

Furthermore, in accordance to the perspective of Andersson & Barnitz (1984), argue that schemata have a positive effect on reading comprehension. Anderson et al (1976) cited in Andersson & Barnitz (1984) provided two groups of different university students (music education students and physical education students) with ambiguous and unknown passages for them. The first passage could be interpreted as relating either to an evening of card playing or rehearsal of a wind ensemble and the second passage could be interpreted as a prison break or wrestling match. The two groups could interpret both passages in different ways.

Similarly, the study of Pichert and Anderson (1976) cited in Andersson & Barnitz (1984) presented college students with a story that described features of a house and items in it. Participants of the study were asked to take one of three perspectives (potential homebuyer, burglar, or no special perspective) before they read the passage. Each perspective chosen before reading had a significant

effect on which ideas were recalled. That is, the "burglars" could recall more information about the "loot" whereas the "home buyers" were more interested in the number of rooms etc.

All the above-mentioned studies insist on the fact that teachers should become aware of how make their students' use their background knowledge in order to influence reading comprehension and improve their performance. Teachers should also provide them with appropriate needed contexts.

Different studies in the field of foreign language reading research show that cultural familiarity has a significant and positive influence on readers' understanding of written texts (Steffensen et al, 1979; Carrell, 1987; Barnet, 1989) cited in (Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011). According to them, all these studies show that culture schema plays an important role in foreign language reading.

2.8 Major Related Studies on Cultural Schema Worldwide

Numerous studies by Al Salmi (2011), Dehghan & Sadighi (2011), Maghsoudi & Haririan (2013) and others have been conducted to highlight the significant and positive effect of cultural schema on improving the skill of reading comprehension. The following sections will introduce different studies tackled in different contexts all over the world to prove the utility and importance of cultural schema on the skill of reading comprehension. Contexts are varied into different countries and culture in order to justify the role of cultural schema in improving the level of reading comprehension.

2.8.1 Egyptian Context

Nelson (1987) cited in Altarriba & Forsythe (1993) provided strong evidence to support the idea that cultural schema activation can improve the skill of reading comprehension. He insisted on the fact that cultural schema is an important element in the success of the reading comprehension process. In this study, the importance of cultural schema was applied and demonstrated. Participants of this study were native Arabic speaking Egyptians who were exposed to four different pairs of passages to read. Each pair of them consisted of an American cultural passage while the other passage was an Egyptian cultural passage.

Having two different cultures in a pair of reading texts can make them able to distinguish and sort out the differences between them. The participants of the study, have differently recalled both passages. The Egyptian versions of the passages were recalled significantly better in comparison to the American passages. For them, it was difficult to understand a text of a different culture. However,

the cultural background or schema made participants recall the texts better because it is related to their own culture. As a conclusion, cultural schema had an important influence on their memory and reading comprehension.

2.8.2 Iranian American contexts

Earlier studies by Johnson (1981, 1982) cited in Barnitz (1986) investigated the role of background knowledge on reading performance of university level ESL students. In the first study, Johnson (1981) investigated the interaction of both language complexity and cultural background on the reading comprehension at the level of Iranian intermediate/advanced ESL students as well as American English-speaking subjects. All of the participants read stories from Iranian and American folklore with two versions of each story which were also constructed by varying the syntactic complexity (simplified syntax vs. more complex syntax. Results of the study concluded that (a) language complexity did not have as much an effect on the Iranian subjects' comprehension as cultural origin of the text.

The second study by Johnson (1982) studied advanced level ESL students in reading a text which contained sections of familiar and unfamiliar information about Halloween. Participants were divided into four groups who read the text with various treatment conditions. The first group read a passage without a list of important vocabulary. The second group studied the definitions of target words before reading the passage This group did not have the definitions while reading the text. Group three studied the target words before reading a text with the key vocabulary also defined in the text while the fourth group benefited from prior study of word definitions as well as the words defined in the passage. They were asked to participate in free recall and recognition tasks. In general, results by Johnson's study found that readers recalled more propositions from the familiar than from the unfamiliar parts of the text. In addition to that, Johnson also found that vocabulary exposure did not produce a significant effect on recall. As a result, prior knowledge (content schemata) was more important to ESL readers than vocabulary definitions.

2.8.3 Iranian Context

Another study by Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) was conducted to investigate the effect of cultural background or cultural schema on the performance of Iranian EFL students on local (bottom-up) and global (top-down) processes. Sixty-six (66) female pre-university students participated in the study. They were given five (05) texts to read with familiar cultural themes and five (05) other texts with culturally unfamiliar topics. They have been tested through multiple-choice items which were

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designed on the basis of both bottom-up processing (word recognition, literal comprehension and finding referents of pronouns) and top-down processing (making inferences, skimming, scanning).

The findings of study revealed that students performed significantly much better on local items (culturally familiar topics) in comparison with global items (culturally unfamiliar topics). Text familiarity has also influenced their overall performance. They had higher scores on local items and that can be explained by the fact that these items are totally easier to process due to the linguistic context available.

On the contrary, the difficulty of the global items can be explained due to the fact that EFL learners need extra linguistic knowledge to process unfamiliar items. Finally, the difference can also be attributed to the teaching situation in which language teachers do not teach students how to read at all and learners are not familiar with higher-level, global processes being important in reading comprehension.

Later, another study by Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan (2014) investigated the relationship between cultural background of Iranian EFL learners and reading comprehension. Forty-five (45) Iranian language learners majoring in TEFL and English language translation from three different ethnicities in different provinces were selected through purposive sampling to participate in the study. Researchers tested all the participants through a test package containing three reading sub-tests (two culturally different tests, and one culturally specific test) which were administered to three groups of language learners with three different cultural backgrounds living in the same country. Data revealed from the study were organized and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results of the study revealed that the means of all groups on culturally familiar reading tests were greater than their means on reading tests with unfamiliar contents. The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of many related studies (Droop & Verhoeven, 1996; Bernhardt, 2005; Pulido, 2004; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2003; Sharp, 2002; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000; Bensoussan, 1998; Carrell 1984; Foo 1989; Goh 1990; Johnson, 1981, 1982) cited in (Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan, 2014). The main common finding of these researchers is that comprehension of receptive skills such as the skill of reading depends on knowledge; that is, linking what we do not know to what we already know.

2.8.4 American Context

Another study by Pritchard (1990) cited in Altarriba & Forsythe (1993) and (Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011) has examined the role of cultural schemata on the reading comprehension processes of proficient 11th-grade readers with an American or a Palauan background. In this study, the two groups of participants read two different letters in their native language. The topic of these letters is related to funeral ceremonies in the two different countries. After that, participants were asked to give some verbal reports of their reading comprehension strategies as they were reading the texts. Later, they were asked to retell the passage in the after reading phase.

Results of the study has concluded that cultural schemata have significantly influenced the strategies of processing as well as the level of the participants' comprehension. Comprehension in this case depend on the learners' previous knowledge and its activation makes their understanding and comprehension better. These results confirm the previous findings by different researchers (Bartlett, 1932), (Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson, 1982), (Carrell & Eisterhold, Schema Theory and ESL Reading , 1983), (Barnitz, 1986), (Carell, Devine , & Eskey, 1988) and (Carrell, 1987).

2.8.5 Turkish Context

A study by Razi (2004) investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities or reading comprehension. The study was carried out at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey with 3rd grade students at the department of ELT. A 2X2 true-experimental research design was adapted in the study and participants were homogenously placed in different groups. The first group received the original story while the second group dealt with the nativized one. In order to identify the effect of reading activities on the comprehension of both nativized and original stories, the third group read the original story with reading activities while the fourth group read the nativized story with the same activities. Post-tests were administered to check the comprehension. Results revealed that cultural schema has a significant effect on the comprehension of short stories.

Later, Gürkan (2012) conducted a study that examined whether cultural familiarity has a positive influence on reading comprehension and whether using a set of reading activities compensate for the absence of cultural familiarity. Sixty (60) junior Turkish EFL university students participated in this study. In the practical side of the study, A 2 × 2 true-experimental research design was used in the study. Findings revealed that the nativized version of a short story from the target language culture contributes to L2 readers' reading comprehension significantly and the use of these activities

facilitated for better literal understanding of the original text. It also emphasizes a strong influence of cultural schema on comprehension.

As a conclusion, background knowledge is an important issue to tackle in reading comprehension, and schema activation plays an integral role in improving the skill of reading comprehension.

2.9 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter was devoted to tackle the relationship between the skill of reading comprehension and cultural schema in addition to its positive effect in improving comprehension. It has also tackled the notion of language and culture and the relationship between them. Then, it moved to defining schema, introducing schema theory besides to the following schema activation strategies: predicting, brainstorming and text previewing.

In addition to that, the chapter has devoted a considerable part to the types of schemata including content schema, formal schema, linguistic schema and the most important one in this study that is cultural schema. It has also dealt with reading comprehension and cultural schema, the relationship between them and the great effect it provides in order to improve reading comprehension.

The last part of the chapter tackled the effects of cultural schema in addition to the various major related studies in different contexts in the world. These studies are related to the issue of research in this study that have significantly improved the skill of reading comprehension. This chapter and the previous one reported some related literature to the topic of research. The following chapter will deal the practical side of the study and describe the methodology of research.

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Chapter Three:

Research Methodology and Design

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3.1 Introduction.

The current chapter aims at providing relevant information and design to the research methods adopted in this study. It describes the practical side of the research. Besides, it will also shed light on the practical side of the research through describing the research methodology design, the sample of the study, data collection tools, results analysis procedure, ethical issues and research limitations.

As it is mentioned and discussed before, this work is designed to investigate the effect of cultural schema on improving reading comprehension skills. Therefore, in order to collect enough data and answer the research questions, an experimental study is designed and conducted. First, a questionnaire was administered to the participants before the experimental study. Next, a pre-test was administered to check pupils' skills in reading comprehension within two groups (experimental and control). After that, the experimental group received a set of training sessions on the role of cultural schema in improving reading comprehension. Later, a post-test was administered with both groups to check the pupils' reading comprehension skills after being trained on specific techniques in the study. In addition, a group of EFL teachers from different middle schools was also interviewed to provide more information and details for the study.

3.2 Research Approach

Research methodology is one of the most important parts in scientific research. It describes the procedures and the steps of the undertaken study. Research methodology is recognized as a problem-solving technique. Kothari (2004) argues that it is considered as a way to solve the research problem using different techniques and methods in order to evaluate the validity and the reliability of the study. Research methodology in common parlance refers to a search for knowledge according to (Kothari, 2004). It stands for all the steps that a researcher follows in a specific study. Investigating and describing a specific phenomenon in research requires either adopting a qualitative or a quantitative research pattern or a mixed method.

In accordance to the description of Kothari (2004), a quantitative approach involves the generation of data in a quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion whereas a qualitative approach on the other hand, is concerned with a qualitative phenomenon that involves quality or kind. In addition to that, Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009) argue that quantitative research specifies numerical assignment to the phenomena under study, whereas qualitative research produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomena under study.

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Both research approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages. Thus, they can be applied separately in specific study designs or together to reach more valid and accurate results.

On one hand and according to Kothari (2004), qualitative research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. In this case, research is based on the researcher's perceptions, impressions and opinions. Researchers generate findings of their research using different techniques of interviews or observations. In general, qualitative research generates narrative and textual descriptions of the tackled research problem in the study. Yet, Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009) argues that qualitative research usually requires small and non-random sample sizes and therefore the findings may not generalize to the larger population from which the sample was drawn. Kothari (2004) adds: "This type of research aims at discovering the underlying motives and desires, using in depth interviews for the purpose". This type of research aims at exploring, collecting and analysing data directly from the natural setting to understand a specific issue through different types of interviews, observations and documents.

On the other hand, quantitative research is more specific, detailed and accurate to get results that are more valid and precise. Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger (2005) define a quantitative research design as studies that make use of statistical analyses to obtain their findings. This type of research includes formal and systematic measurement and the use of statistics and numeral data. In the same way, Thomas (2013) assures that 'quantitative research' refers to research using numbers. Quantitative research designs rely on statistics and numbers, which are analysed to confirm findings. Kothari (2004) asserts that quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount. It is applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity. A quantitative type of research identifies detailed findings through examining obtained results, records, documents and data to evaluate their content and interpret them.

This study is a mixed method. It includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

- Characteristics of quantitative research method:
 - a) A quantitative study is more specific, well-structured and have been tested for its validity and reliability.
 - b) It is based on quantitative data and statistics, which make the phenomena described numerically.
 - c) It can be explicitly recognised, organized and defined.
 - d) Findings in quantitative research reflect the overall population of the sample.

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- e) It deals with specific questions or hypothesis
- f) In quantitative research, organizing, classifying and measuring gathered data require more detailed and structured analysis.
- g) It provides a detailed description of the study design for future verification and replication.
 - Qualitative research method is Characterized as follows:
 - a) It is concerned with qualitative phenomenon and its description.
 - b) It discovers the underlying motives.
 - c) It is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior.

The above-mentioned aspects describe both quantitative and qualitative types of research and encourages researchers to use both of them in mixed-method of research to get more efficient and reliable results using a triangulation of research tools. The next section will be devoted the research design of this study.

Thus, it important to shed light on the research process before moving to the research design and analysis. According to Kothari (2004), a research process consists of series of actions or steps necessary to effectively carry out research and the desired sequencing of these steps. In other words, all steps made by a researcher to accomplish his/her research work to generate and confirm specific findings belong to the research process.

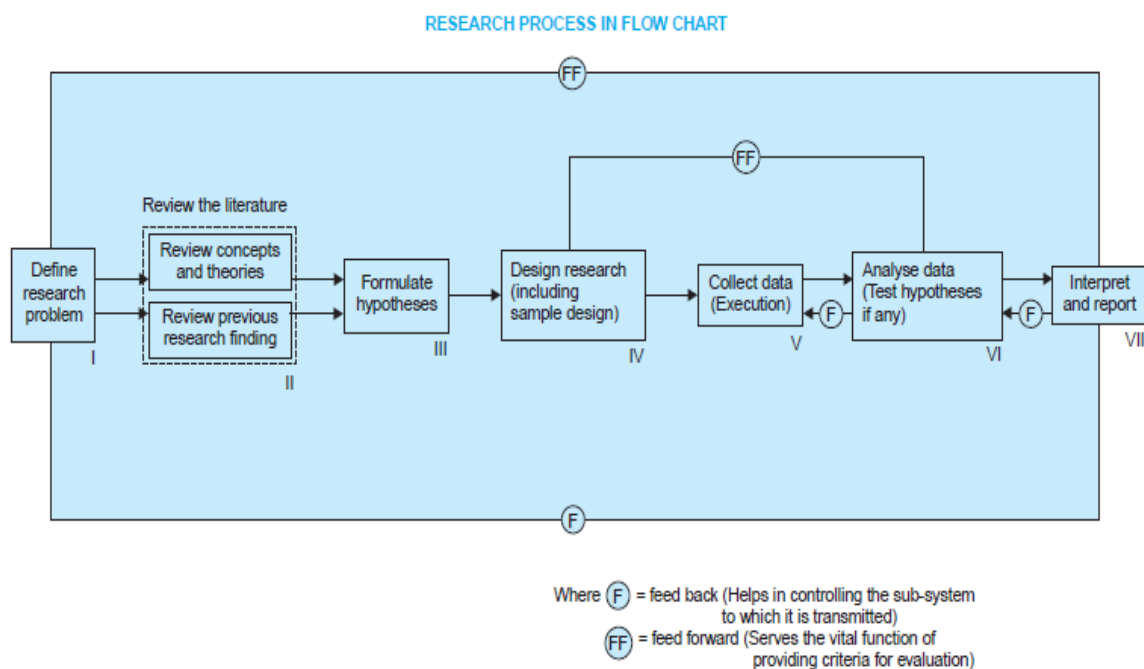


Figure 3.1 An Overview on the Research Process

The above chart shown in figure 3.1 illustrates this concept. It shows that the research process consists of a number of closely related activities (Kothari, 2004).

3.3 Research Design

The main goal of the current study is to lead an investigation about the effect of activating cultural schema on EFL young learners' reading comprehension skills in Chahba Mouna Sghir Brothers middle school, Beni Atteli, Medea (Algeria). As mentioned before in the first chapter, activating cultural schema has a positive effect in improving reading comprehension skills. The researcher has noticed that her learners face many difficulties while dealing with reading lessons, tests and exams. This happens when they have a topic that is unfamiliar to their culture and previous knowledge. Thus, EFL learners need to take an active role in the reading comprehension process in order to achieve a good level in reading comprehension. It is important to teach learners the way how to activate their own cultural schemata to improve their reading comprehension skills and make them active readers.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the main difficulties that EFL learners face in reading comprehension?
2. What is the impact of cultural schema on middle school EFL learners' reading comprehension skills?
3. What are the cultural schema activation strategies that can promote middle school learners' reading comprehension?

The three research questions mentioned above are led by the following research hypotheses:

1. EFL learners face many difficulties in reading comprehension in understanding texts.
2. Cultural schema has a positive effect on reading comprehension.
3. Cultural schema activation strategies can promote learner's reading comprehension.

As it has been previously mentioned, this study is conducted to investigate the effects of cultural schema on EFL learners reading comprehension skills. It will be based on an experimental quantitative research design since it seems to be the most appropriate design for the topic under discussion and investigation.

In addition to that, the implementation of this study design fits the position of the researcher as being a middle school teacher and the teacher of the research sample. Also, the purpose of conducting this research is to answer to the research questions mentioned above. The research design aims at planning and re-arranging information and results to achieve a specific goal.

The experimental research design of the study is based on different sessions introduced to learners during six months with a group of 62 participants. Following this approach, the study has included two groups (the control group and the experimental group). The control group consists of 32 participants as well as the experimental group which will also consist of 32 participants. This latter, will be introduced to sufficient cultural schema activation strategies that are needed for a better reading comprehension.

3.4 Research Setting

This study took place in the middle school of Chahba Mouna Sghir Brothers Beni Atteli (Medea). It is situated in a rural area in the city of Medea (North of Algeria). The researcher has worked in this middle school since 2017 which has paved the way for the study to be executed easily rather than doing research in another school as an outsider. The pupils' questionnaire was administered to fourth year (4ms) middle school pupils through face-to-face meeting. They had extra sessions in their free time.

The experimental study consisted of a pre-test, specific training sessions and a post test. They took place in the same school with participants of the experimental group only in their free time too. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was conducted with ten participants (middle school teachers) in in different middle schools. Interviews took place inside and outside their working place and in their free-time after school.

3.5 Sampling

The target population is defined as the collection of cases in which the researcher is ultimately interested and to which he or she wishes to make generalizations (Sim & Wright, 2000). In other words, the population is the overall group of interest for the study. The following figure shows the adopted sampling design.

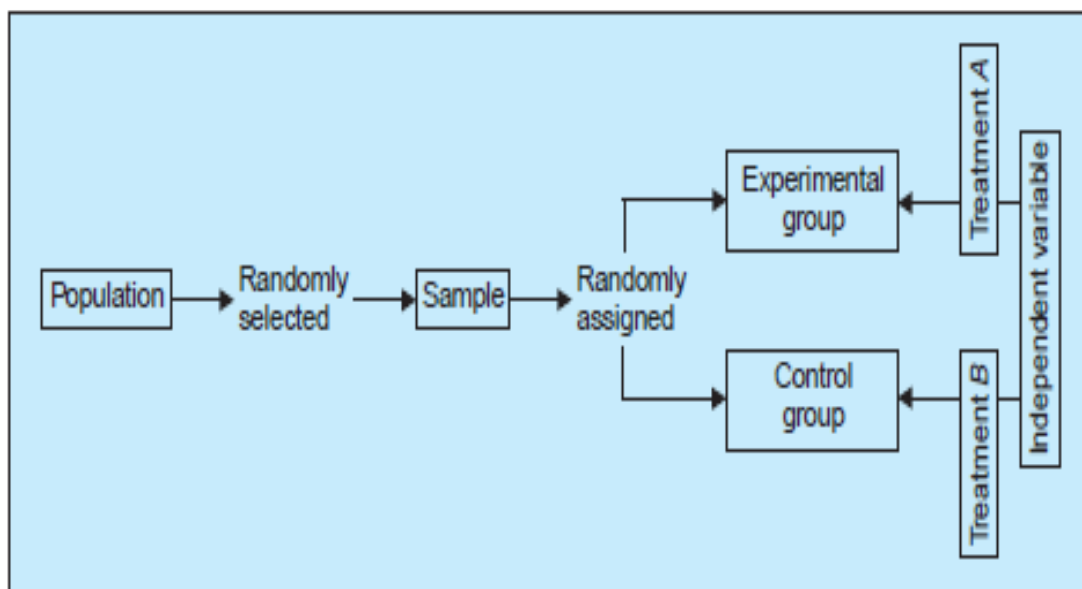


Figure 3.2 Sampling Design

The whole population of this study consists of middle school pupils at Chahba Mouna Sghir Brothers middle school (Beni Atteli in the wilaya of Medea) during the academic year 2018/2019 and included EFL teachers from different middle schools in the same area. The reason behind choosing to work with middle school pupils is the availability the researcher being a middle school teacher with them during the academic year. In addition to that, these pupils come from different backgrounds and they have been introduced to different teaching strategies. Besides, they receive different teachers every year since it is a rural area and teachers often change the school. Moreover, these pupils have been introduced to different reading texts and reading comprehension tests in English along the three years of middle school.

Two groups of pupils were selected as a sample for the study (two classes of 4ms) since there are only two classes in this middle school. These groups were chosen because the researcher is their teacher of English in the fourth year (4ms). The researcher teaches them English for three hours per week in addition to a tutorial session. The study was made up in extra hours (pupils' free time). This has allowed the researcher to carry out her experiment in good conditions because it suits the timetable of the teacher and helps the pupils improve their level in comprehension to score good marks in the BEM exam at the end of the school year.

The sample consisted of 62 pupils. The participants' average age is 14 years old from both genders. All the participants are non-native speakers of English and their native language is Algerian Arabic. They have been taught English as a foreign language for three years before the study. Participants were divided into two groups: 31 pupils in the control group and 31 others in the experimental group. All these participants were interested in having extra sessions to improve their level in English. They came to school to fill in the questionnaire and the pre-test. The experimental groups attended many training sessions during six months.

In addition to that, ten middle school teachers were selected for their availability (place and time) to participate in this study. They welcomed the idea, loved the research topic and were very cooperative.

The selection of the sample is based on a simple random selection (SRS). According to (Kothari, 2004), this type of sampling is also known as chance sampling or probability sampling where each and every item in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample and each one of the possible samples, in case of finite universe, has the same probability of being selected. This means that each participant had an equal chance to participate in the study and the choice was not influenced by any specific consideration and no personal preference has interfered in the choice of the sample.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study aims at investigating the effect of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. In order to reach such objective, a questionnaire, a pre and post-tests and an interview have been implemented as research instruments to collect data and answer the research questions. The following sections will describe them and justify their choice vis a vis the study.

3.6.1 Pupils Questionnaire

One of the most effective data collection tools is the questionnaire. It was the choice of the researcher to start with this tool to collect, organize and select data with a large number of participants and in short period of time. Kothari (2004) argues that questionnaire with clear instructions (illustrated by examples), is certainly more effective and easier to complete than one which lacks these features. Kumar (2011) defines a questionnaire as a written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. They read questions, interpret expected answers and write them down.

This questionnaire aims at:

- Collecting data about participants' biographic information, level and knowledge.
- Exploring participants' difficulties in the language in general and in reading comprehension specifically.
- Exploring participants' challenges while dealing with a culturally different text from their own context.
- Defining their understanding about cultural schema in reading comprehension.
- Obtaining results about their awareness of the importance of activating cultural schema in order to improve reading comprehension skills.

3.6.1.1 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of 21 items (questions) divided into five sections. Organized, typed and printed to let participants answer directly on the questionnaire sheets. This choice was made because participants are young and need guidance to answer questions in addition to the lack of ICTs. Not all of them can answer the questions on Google documents application. Questions vary between multiple-choice questions and few open-ended questions.

Section One: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This section is composed of five items (from item one to the fifth one). Four of them are multiple-choice questions while only one is an open-ended question. The current section is devoted for collecting data about participants' biographic information, which helps in organizing their data and know more about their level and familial background.

Section Two: LANGUAGE LEARNING AND READING

The second section consists of five items too (from question six to the tenth question). The main goal of this section is to get an overall idea about each participant's level in the English language and reading comprehension. Four items are multiple-choice questions while only one is an open-ended question.

Section Three: READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Section three starts with the eleventh item (from item eleventh to the thirteenth item). It contains three items. All items are multiple-choice questions. This section deals with participants

awareness of reading comprehension importance, strategies, knowledge and activities during reading comprehension classes.

Section Four: READING DIFFICULTIES

Section four consists of three items too (from item 14 to the 16th item). All items are multiple-choice questions. These questions deal with difficulties that participants deal with while reading in English. They also try to explore reasons which make reading comprehension a difficult task for them. They check whether participants use reading strategies while reading to face their difficulties.

Section Five: CULTURAL SCHEMA AND READING COMPREHENSION

The last section (section five) starts with an overall description and definition of cultural schema, its activation and use in reading comprehension in order to pave the way for participants to answer the next questions. This section consists of five items (starting from the sixteenth items to the 21st one). Items in this section deal with asking participants about the use of different strategies to activate background knowledge. They also explore the use of texts' components and illustrations to anticipate the rest of the text using different strategies. Participants are asked about their opinion about the effectiveness of related cultural knowledge in order to understand a suggested new text. They are also investigated about reasons which make a text difficult to understand and possible strategies to activate cultural schema in order to improve the level of reading comprehension skills

3.6.1.2 The Questionnaire Pilot Study

Before piloting the questionnaire, it was corrected by the researcher's supervisor who suggested reducing the number of suggested items. Long questionnaires make it a difficult task for young participants. She also gave remarks about the type of some questions, some errors and recommended the reformulations of some items and avoiding open-ended items to make participants able to express their ideas easily.

A pilot study was made with 4ms middle school pupils. This operation was made before starting the study. It took a significant period of time to sort out some valuable suggestions and remarks. These remarks dealt with some linguistic errors and the order of appearance of some ideas and items in the questionnaire. Another remark was also about reducing the number of items because it will take a long time for a young participant to answer the questions of a long questionnaire. This piloting

study was conducted in the free classrooms at the middle school. The researcher could directly make her observations about the participants' reactions and responses.

3.6.1.3 Data Analysis

When the researcher received the answers of the pupils' questionnaire, data was organized, translated and interpreted into tables using both Excel Microsoft Office and Word Microsoft Office (2013). These programs transformed results into tables and graphic circles. Description, comments and analysis of each item was provided under the table. Then, the following section discussed the main findings with details.

3.6.2 The Pre-Test

Young EFL learners face difficulties in learning language skills especially in interactive skills such as reading comprehension because it seems difficult to understand what is written in terms of culture familiarity. To know more about the participants' level in reading comprehension, an experimental research design has been adopted.

It should be noted that, the main goal of the experimental design is to determine a significant difference among control and experimental groups. Thus, the researcher started the study with a pre-test. Campbell & Stanley (1963), assert that the pre-test was first presented by Solomon (1949). According to Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger (2005), the pre-test has several benefits as it allows the researcher to compare the groups on several measures and provides baseline information about the participants.

Thus, before the training sessions have taken place, participants of the study had a reading comprehension questionnaire to test their performance before the pre-test. It is introduced to examine the pupils' reading comprehension level in the two groups (experimental and control). The researcher's aim is to measure the pupils' (experimental and control groups) reading comprehension level before being introduced to the practical training sessions in reading comprehension skill.

3.6.2.1 Description of the Pre-Test

As already mentioned in the first chapter, researchers believe that different reading strategies can activate cultural schema and improve the level of EFL learners reading comprehension. To understand a given text, learners should rely on activating their existing cultural knowledge.

Before the training sessions, the participants had an academic reading comprehension pre-test to test their level in reading comprehension. The pre-test is a test designed by the researcher with texts extracted from different books. It consisted of a text, which is related to a different culture followed by a set of activities: true or false task, a matching task and a multiple-choice task. This text has been chosen according to the level of the participants and their interests. The text was selected according to a different culture to the pupils' culture. It speaks about the "Statue of Liberty". It contains four paragraphs and followed by a set of different tasks: writing true/false, matching the words with their definitions and choosing the right answer according to the passage.

During the session of the pre-test, participants had enough time to follow the researcher's instructions, read the text and select the appropriate answer for each question. They took about 15 minutes to read the questions and the text silently in order to select the right answers. It took them about 40 minutes to answer the reading comprehension questions.

3.6.2.2 Data Analysis

After the pre-test, the researcher collected the answers and started correcting the answers. Marks were tabulated in Excel Microsoft Office and transformed into graphs using Word Microsoft Office (2013) Description. Comments and analysis of each item has been provided under each table. Thus, the following section will be discussing the main findings of both experimental and control groups.

3.6.3 Training Sessions

Many researchers such as Al Salmi (2011), Alfaki & Siddiek (2013), Altarriba & Forsythe (1993), Razi (2004) and Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan (2014) argue that activating cultural schemata has a great influence at the level of reading comprehension. It prepares pupils for reading and makes them ready to read with an open mind to discover new information. Thus, pupils need to activate their existing cultural knowledge. So, after the administration of the pre-test, the researcher started the training session to teach participants in the experimental group only how to activate their cultural schema before reading a text.

In this study, two tests were administered to measure participants' level in reading comprehension before and after. A pre-test was administered with the experimental group before the treatment of the experimental study (training sessions) with the experimental group only. At the end of the study, another test (a post-test) was meant to test the level of participants again and check

whether the reading strategies that activate cultural schema have a positive effect. The tests were designed by the researcher to accommodate the participants' level, language proficiency, difficulty and level in reading comprehension. All reading comprehension tests (the pre-test, reading comprehension activities, and the post-test) had the same level of difficulty to ensure validity and reliability of the results. Moreover, participants were informed beforehand that these tests were not part of the regular classroom assessment in order to establish a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

The aim of the practical sessions is to teach participants the right use of reading strategies that can activate their cultural schema for a better reading comprehension. It emphasizes on three basic skills. First, predicting meaning which aims at teaching participants the right way to predict meaning before reading a text. Second, brainstorming ideas, which aims at showing participants the right way to brainstorm ideas while reading a text. Third, showing participants the useful way to represent their knowledge in a form of semantic maps which helps more in activating their cultural schema and prepares them for a better understanding of the text.

At the beginning of the sessions, the researcher informed the pupils about the procedures beforehand. Pupils were prepared to the reading comprehension sessions to ensure more valid and reliable results.

Pupils had 16 training sessions, one extra reading comprehension session per week. Six sessions were devoted for predicting strategy, four sessions for brainstorming strategy and four other sessions for semantic mapping strategy. Each session lasts for **60** minutes. The experimental group was introduced to the techniques of activating cultural schemata before starting to deal with the practical sessions of reading comprehension. In each session, the experimental group had one text and a set of questions to measure their reading comprehension level.

3.6.4 The Post-Test

First, the researcher's aim is to test pupils' (in the experimental and in the control groups) level in reading comprehension after being introduced to the practical reading comprehension sessions (experimental group.) The post-test also aims at identifying the effect of cultural schemata on EFL learners reading comprehension level and highlighting the differences between the control group and the experimental group in terms of teaching strategy.

At the end of the experimental study, the post-test was administered to test the pupils' reading comprehension level in the two groups (A experimental & B control) after implementing the treatment on the experimental group: the activation of cultural schemata to enhance the level of reading comprehension. The post-test is administered in session 15 after the training sessions.

3.6.4.1 Description of the Post-Test

After the training sessions, the participants had an academic reading comprehension post-test to test their level in reading comprehension after receiving training sessions in activating cultural schema. The post-test was also designed by the researcher with a text extracted from a reading comprehension book. The post-test consisted of a text followed by a set of activities: true or false task, a matching task and a multiple-choice task. This text has been chosen according to the level of the participants and their interests.

During the session of the post-test, participants had enough time to follow the researcher's instructions, read the text and select the appropriate answer for each item. Participants took about 15 minutes to read the questions and the text silently in order to select the right answers. It took them about 40 minutes to answer the reading comprehension questions.

3.6.4.2 Data Analysis

After the administration of the post-test, the researcher collected the papers and started correcting the answers. The marks of the participants in both groups were typed and organized in Excel Microsoft Office (2013) and transformed later into graphs using the program of Word Microsoft Office Description. Comments and analysis of each item score was provided under the table and the graph. The following section discusses the main finding with details. Results of both experimental and control groups were organized, compared and discussed. The researcher uses these findings to compare the performance of participants in both groups in the pre-test and the post-test.

3.6.5 Teachers' Interview

Interviewing is one of the most used research tools in education and linguistics research. Kothari (2004) defines the interview method of collecting data as the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. Thomas (2013) defines an interview as a discussion with someone in which you try to get information from them. The information may be facts or opinions or attitudes, or any combination of these.

Kothari (2004) summarizes the advantages of the interview in the following points:

- Obtaining more information
- An interview can be a flexible tool to overcome resistance
- Observation methods can be applied during the interview
- Personal information can be obtained easily
- The sample can be controlled more effectively while answering questions

The researcher's aim behind interviewing middle school teachers was:

- Explore their knowledge about the topic of research
- Explore the adapted strategies in teaching English
- Identifying reading comprehension activities and difficulties
- Explore the suggested strategies to teach learners in activating their cultural schema to improve their level in reading comprehension

This interview was designed on the basis of participants questionnaire. It has discussed the same points studied before with the participants. It is a semi-structured interview composed 27 open-ended items divided into seven sections. Each section consists of a set of questions. According to Thomas (2013), there are three basic types of interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is defined by Mackey & Gass (2005) as an interview in which researchers use written lists of questions as a guide, but can distress and probe for more information. They add: "The semi-structured interviews can be employed as they allow researchers to examine phenomena that are not directly observable". Using this type of interviewing as a data collection tool gives freedom to the interviewees to express their ideas and opinions in details. Thus, the interviewer can easily collect data and draw new questions during the interview.

3.6.5.1 Description of the Teachers' Interview

The researcher conducted the interview with ten middle school teachers from different middle schools in the Wilaya of Medea, who were invited to participate in the current study and give their opinions about the pupils' level in reading comprehension. Their teaching experiences ranges from five to 15 years in service.

After contacting the participants and fixing an appointment with them, the interview took place in the participants' schools or homes. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. The researcher started the interview by showing gratitude to the participants who welcomed the idea of participating in the study. She started explaining the aim of the interview and the study in general to each interviewee. The interviewer started recording teachers' answers and taking some important notes.

3.6.5.2 Pilot Study of the teachers' Interview

The interview was pilot tested with two middle school teachers and the researcher's supervisor. It was made to evaluate the validity of the interview in terms of types of questions, their appropriateness, aim and time needed to accomplish the interview. The pilot interviews did not exceed 90 minutes.

3.6.5.3 Data Analysis

After interviewing the ten participants, the interview records were transcribed by transforming each record into a textual format. The researcher collected all transcripts and started grouping, coding and comparing findings to analyse them.

3.7 Ethical Issues

This chapter has discussed some related issues to the process of conducting scientific research in order to obtain valid and reliable findings that can have a considerable improvement in the field of research and knowledge. However, Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger (2005) think that all studies with human participants involve some degree of risk ranging from minor issues such as discomfort or embarrassment to much more severe effects on participants' physical or emotional well-being. Research designs based on human participants often cause different problems and issues. Thus, researchers must avoid any kind of issues in order to ensure the validity and the reliability of the research work and findings. Some ethical instructions should be followed in order to avoid the risks and the issues in research process.

Therefore, Thomas (2013) summarizes some risks that researchers may face in the research process. These points are mentioned above:

- Causing psychological or physical harm to participants or others before, during or after the research.

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- Damaging the standing or reputation of participants or others.
- Infringing the privacy of participants or others.
- Breaking the law.
- Harming a community in some way (e.g. by drawing attention to differences within it).

Most of the above-mentioned risks and issues are mainly related to the participants. Research instructions and guidelines always care about the status and the personal conditions of the participants in terms of psychological, physical issues as well as their privacy in the community. These kinds of risks represent some ethical issues to the researchers and may affect the process of research. Thomas (2013) believes that ethical clearance is the first thing to think about before conducting the research project. As a first step before doing a specific research, the researcher should clarify and identify all steps and should explain every single detail in the research process to the participants beforehand.

Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight (2010) define ethics as the key issue to confront a researcher in collecting data for a research project. Researchers may encounter different kinds of problems and issues while conducting research. Each single issue may hinder the process of research. Therefore, ethical issues are the most challenging obstacles in the research process. Accordingly, ethics are essential in the research process (Thomas, 2013). He asserts: “Ethics are principles of conduct about what is right and wrong.” The issue of ethics is the first thing that a researcher should start thinking about at the beginning of conducting research. They clarify and show the right way to the researcher to follow the right steps of research. A number of ethical codes have been developed by the US department of Health and Human Services to provide guidance and establish principals to address such ethical dilemmas (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). Researchers must apply what is right and avoid what is wrong in order to conduct the research work in an ethical way.

Different conditions are set up to regulate the research approach. Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger (2005) state the following conditions:

- Participants are able to consent.
- They are free from coercion (i.e., outside pressure).
- They comprehend the risks and benefits involved.

As mentioned before, ethical standards and regulations always care about the status and psychology of the participants before, during and after conducting research. As an initial step, the researcher should get the necessary agreement to use information given by a specific participant

before using it in the study. This permission is given without any pressure in the outside context of the research.

It is highly important to mention that researchers should ensure that their research work is ethically appropriate and suitable for the participants and their context. All researchers should set a goal to conduct research that respects the aspects and the standards of ethics in doing their research in addition to the clearance with the participants of the study. The researcher must show respect, kindness and justice with all participants. It is also highly important to provide participants with the opportunity to make autonomous and informed decision in order to get more valid and reliable results.

In this research, it has been taken into account the way data and participants are treated and dealt with. This is concerned with ethical issues in research methodology. All participants of the study (pupils and teachers), during the questionnaire, the experimental study (pre-test and post-test) and the interview were provided with enough and necessary information about the aim of the current research. They were also provided with the way in which data will be used in the future. For the interviewees, they received a consent form in which they declare their acceptance to take part as a volunteer in the study and that their answers will be audio-recorded and used later in results' discussion.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

It is important to note that this study is not without limitations. It was not designed to test and measure the effectiveness of reading comprehension activities. Alternatively, this study was designed to investigate the effect of cultural schema in improving the EFL young learners reading comprehension.

This research was conducted as a successive step to other related studies and it might miss the availability of all relevant possibilities to the topic of research. Although the research has tried to cover many aspects and perspectives of the impact of cultural schema on reading comprehension, it is far from being complete. This study has some limitations worth mentioning.

First, the current investigation was conducted in a rural area far from the English native-speakers environment. Therefore, the study might have been conducted in comparison with the respondents for whom English represents a foreign language. This study could have also been done under other methods such as observation method to collect more information concerning the factors experienced by pupils and teachers. Different contexts and conditions may represent different findings and conclusions.

Another limitation is related to the selection of the activities that were implemented in this study, it was not based on experimental investigation but on rather upon pedagogical descriptions and conditions provided in the field. Thus, different studies with different activities may yield different results.

In fact, one of the most important limitations is related to the application of reading strategies in order to activate learners' cultural schema and time constraint. The researcher did not have enough time to test the different strategies of cultural schema activation such as summarizing, questioning, think-pair-share and others. Only three strategies (predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping) have been implemented and tested. Although the time of the training sessions was reasonable (one session per week), more practice, tasks and exercises would be beneficial for the right use of the three strategies by the pupils. Also, the researcher could not test a larger number of pupils because the whole number of the 62 participants were all 4ms pupils in the school (small school with two 4ms classes).

The results obtained from the study cannot be generalized to the whole population (approximately 390). Therefore, a larger sample would make results totally different in terms of statistics and analysis.

Finally, the limitations stated above should not discredit the value of the study to be utilized later in the classroom in order to improve reading comprehension and provide a useful status for further research.

3.9 Conclusion

The present chapter has tended to describe the research methodology design of the current study and provide a thorough account of the research process. It has explained the relationship between the selected research design and the aims of the current investigation as well as the research questions. The chapter has also provided a detailed explanation of the study nature with the rationale behind the choice of the study. It has also presented the research design, the sample of the study, the study setting and a detailed description of the research tools and their analysis.

First, the questionnaire has been introduced and described in details aiming at providing different answers from both groups. For the experimental design of the study, a pre-test and a post-test were administered before and after the training sessions. The interview addressed ten middle

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school teachers as a data collection tool to answer the research questions and identify appropriate strategies in activating learners' cultural schema and improve reading comprehension in turn.

This chapter has also shed light on the validity and the reliability of the research tools in addition to the ethical issues related to the participants' privacy and their data. The next chapter will focus on data analysis and discussion. It will also interpret results and answer the research questions mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter

Four

Chapter Four:

Data Collection and Analysis

Part One: The Questionnaire and the Experimental Study

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4.1 Introduction

The current chapter is devoted to the practical part of the research attempting to provide an answer to the research problematic: whether cultural schema has a positive impact on EFL young learners' reading comprehension level. It is based on the assumption that activating EFL learners' cultural schema is effective on reading comprehension and will facilitate interaction with the text.

The previous chapter has presented a detailed description of the experimental design used in this study, starting from the pupils' questionnaire to the pre-test, the post-test administration and the teachers' interview. This chapter focuses on the field research of the present investigation. In relevance to the objectives of the study, this chapter collects data on cultural schema and reading comprehension in the Algerian context. Extracted data from the different research instruments will be tabulated, presented and analysed in details. In the light of its outcomes, the investigator will draw some conclusions about the effect of cultural schema on reading comprehension.

4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection in this chapter attempts to test the effect of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension level. A triangulated approach is adopted in the study to explore the study using different methods.

4.3 Analysis of the Results

This section is devoted to the analysis of the obtained data from the first two research instruments: the pupils' questionnaire and the experimental study (the pre-test and the post-test).

4.3.1 Analysis of Pupils' Questionnaire

Section One: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Question 01: Gender

Option	Participants (N°)	Percentage (%)
Male	31	50%
Female	31	50%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.1 The Informant Gender

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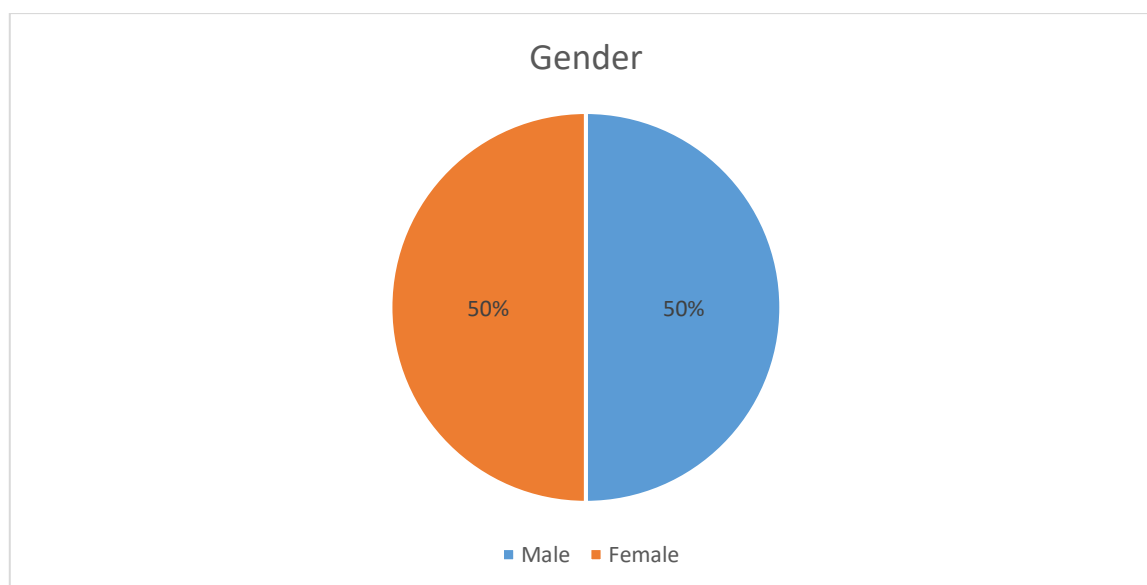


Figure 4.1. The Informant Gender

The table and the graph above show the gender of the participants. Both male and female informants share the same percentage (50%): 31 girls and 31 boys.

Question 02: Age

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
13/15	36	58.06%
16/17	26	41.93%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.2. The Informant Age

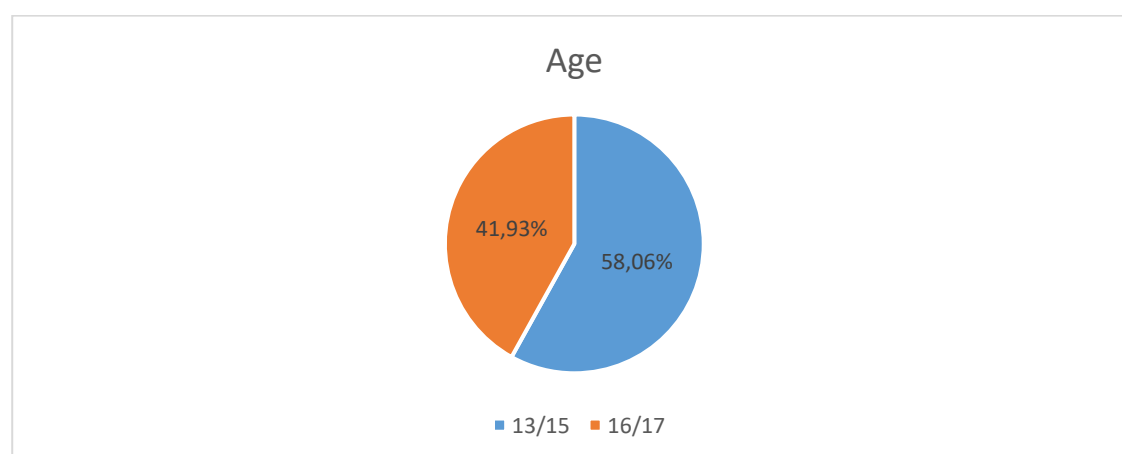


Figure 4.2 The Informant Age

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The table and the figure above indicate the age of the participants. The age of 36 participants (58.06 %) is between 13 and 15 years old. The age of 26 participants (41.93%) is between 16 and 17 years old.

Question 03: Residence

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Urban	03	4.8%
Rural	59	95.16%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.3 The Informant Place of Residence

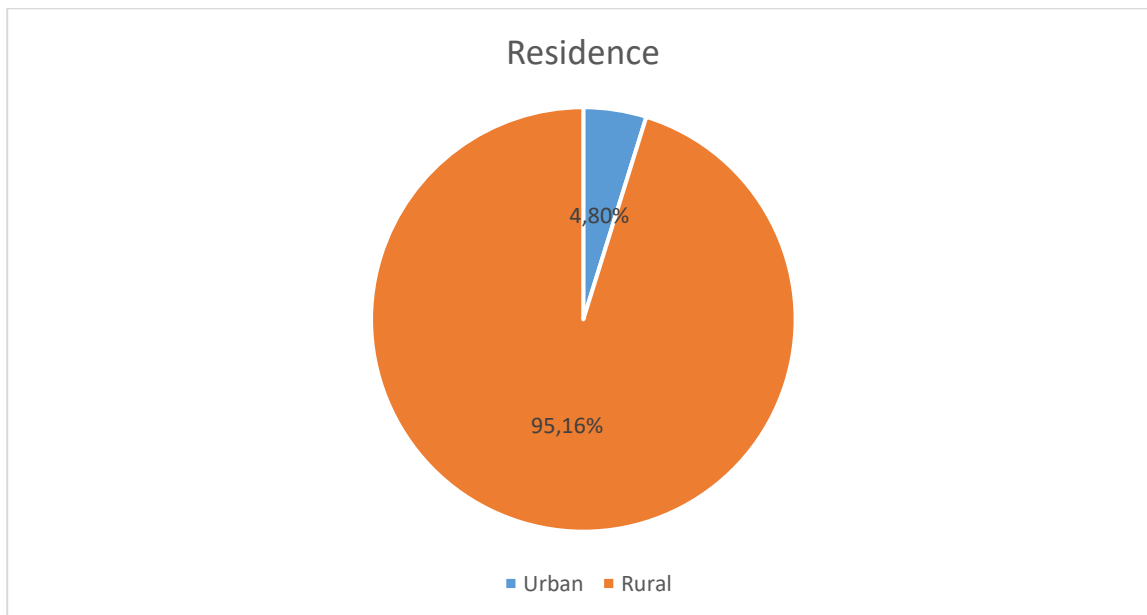


Figure 4.3 The Informant Place of Residence

The table and the figure show the residence of the participants. 59 participants (95.16%) live in a rural area while the other three participants (04.80%) live in an urban area. This shows that the majority of participants have the same residence and share the same culture while only a minority of them live in different conditions.

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Question 04: Parents' occupation

a. Father

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	02	3.22%
Retired	20	32.25%
Employed	40	64.51%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.4 Parents' Occupation (Father)

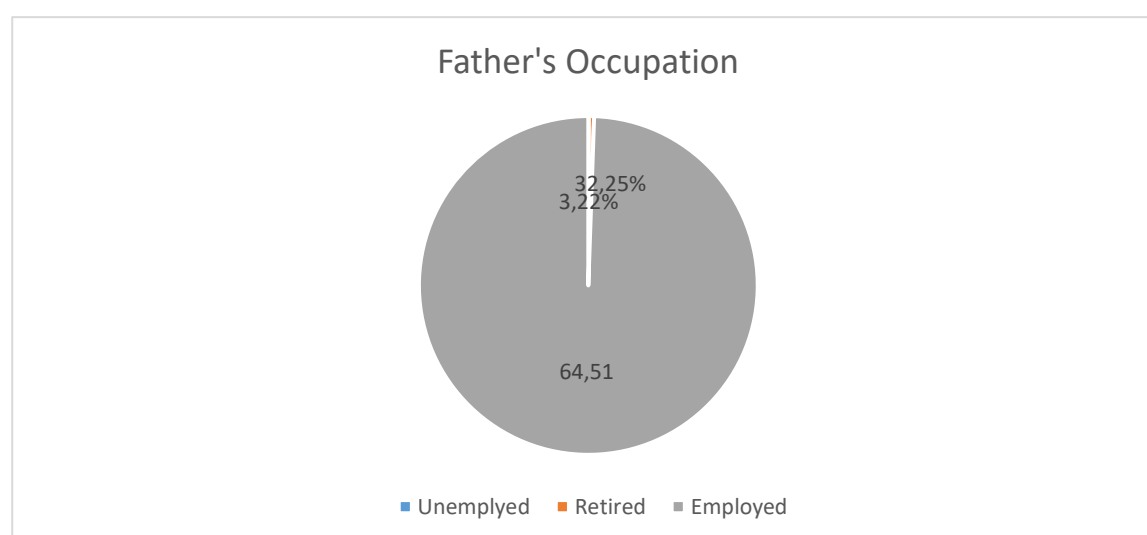


Figure 4.4 Parents' Occupation (Father)

Looking above at the table and the figure shows the social and the cultural statue of the participants. The majority of the participants' fathers (40) are employed (64.51%) while 20 of them are retired (32.25%) and only (02) of them are not employed (3.22%).

b. Mother

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
House wife	62	100%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.5 Parents' Occupation (Mother)

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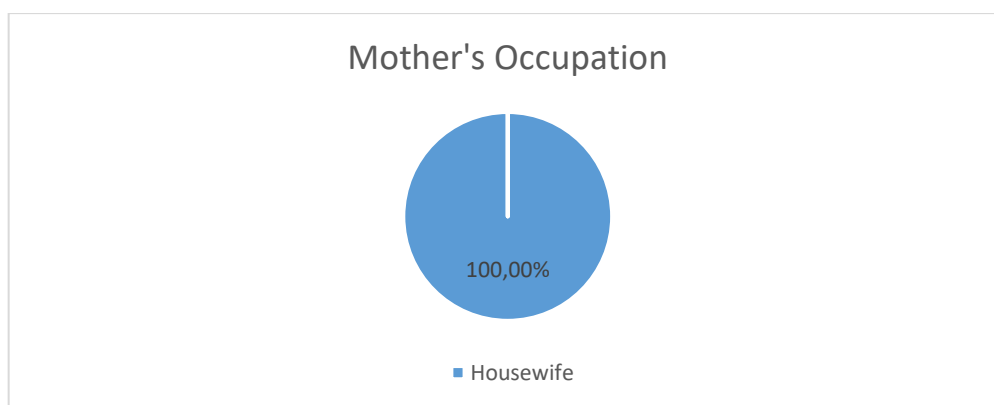


Figure 4.5 Parents' Occupation (Mother)

The findings above show that all participants' mothers (100%) are housewives. This shows the pupils' familial and cultural background. Pupils spend all their times with their mothers. Thus, the cultural background of the mother plays a great role in constructing their knowledge and culture.

Question 05: Parents' educational level: (tick the right level)

a. Father

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Primary school level.	09	14.51%
Middle school level.	29	46.99%
Secodary school level.	15	24.19%
University level.	09	14.51%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.6: Parents' Educational Level (Father)

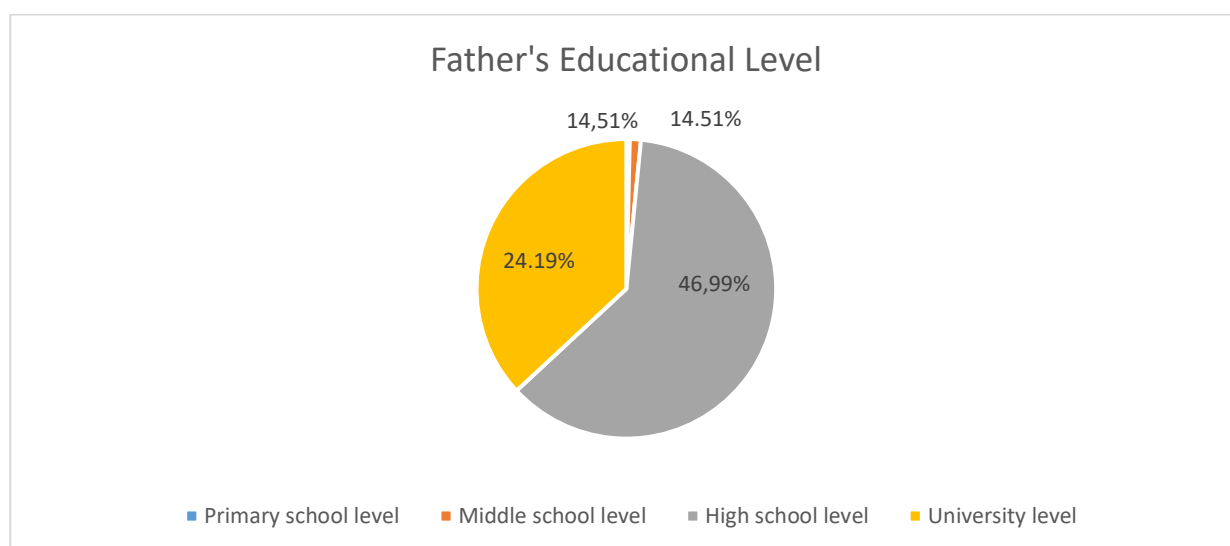


Figure 4.6 Parents' Educational Level (Father)

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Results above display the educational level of the participants' fathers. Nine of them (14.51%) are university graduates while 15 of them (24.19%) have reached the high school level. Mostly half of them 29 (46.99%) have the middle level and only 09 (14.51%) studied in the primary school.

b. Mother

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Primary school level.	18	29.03%
Middle school level.	27	43.54%
Secondary school level.	16	25.80%
University level.	01	1.61%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.7 Parents' Educational Level (Mother)

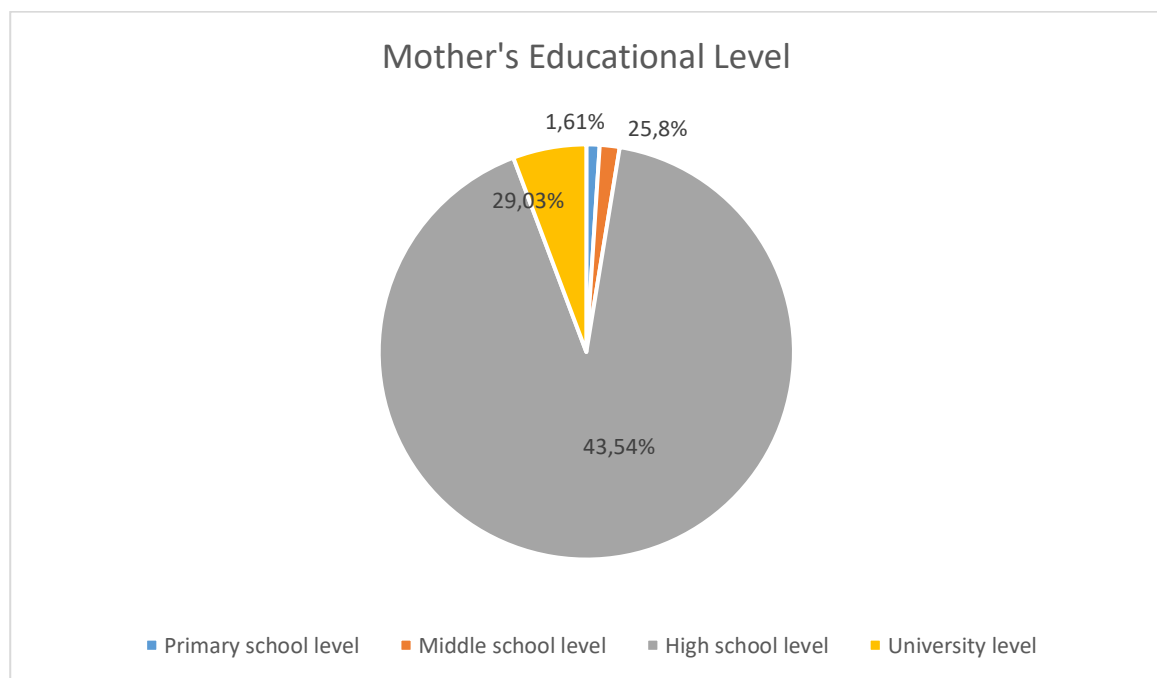


Figure 4.7 Parents' Educational Level (Mother)

The table and the graph above show mothers' educational level. 18 participants of them (29.03%) have studied in the primary school while most of them (27) (43.54%) have reached the middle school level and 16 (25.80%) could study in the high school. Surprisingly, only 01 of them (1.61%) graduated from university. This probably shows that the educational level of mothers displays a significant role in raising their children and constructing a good cultural context for them.

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Section Two: LANGUAGE LEARNING AND READING

Question 01: How long have you been studying English at school?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
04 years	32	51.61%
05 years	19	30.64%
06 years	10	16.12%
07 years	01	1.61%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.8 Period Spent in Studying English at School

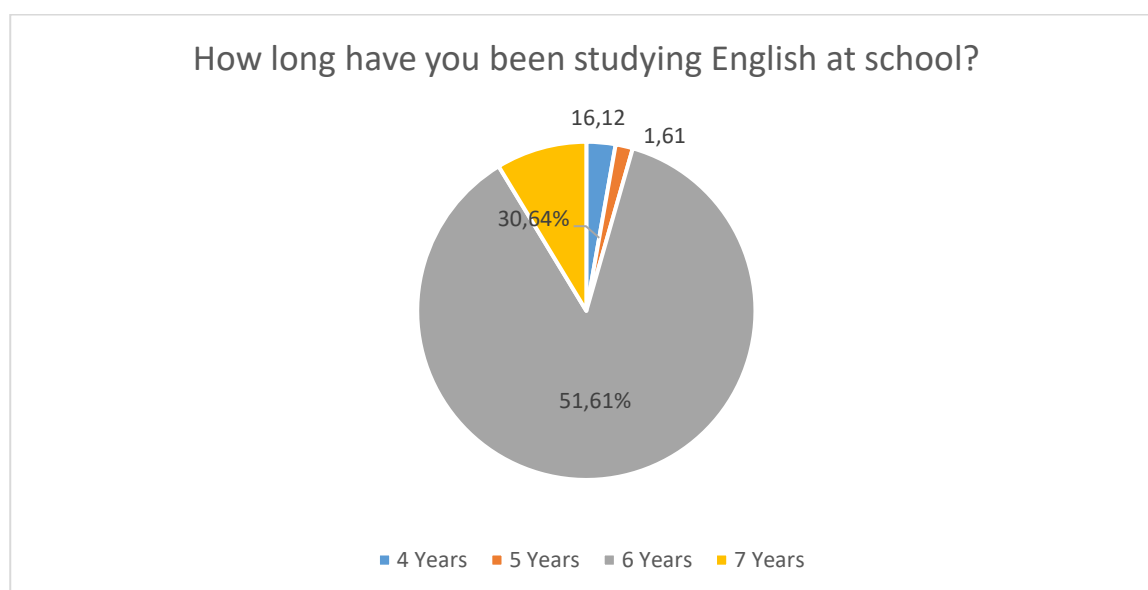


Figure 4.8 Period Spent in Studying English at School

In accordance to results above, half of the participants (51.61%) have studied English for 04 years. 19 of them (30.64%) were English learners for 05 years, ten of them (16.12%) for 06 years and only one participant (1.61%) studied English for 07 years in the middle school.

Question 02: Reading English for you is:

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Easy	24	38.70%
Difficult	38	61.29%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.9 Reading Difficulty in English

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Figure 4.9 Reading Difficulty in English

For 24 participants (38.70%) English seem easy whereas 38 of them (61.29%) think it is difficult for them. This may show a clear image that most pupils have difficulties in English. This is probably due to the lack of enough cultural information and needed vocabulary.

Question 03: Do you read in English?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	43.54%
No	35	56.45%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.10 Reading in English

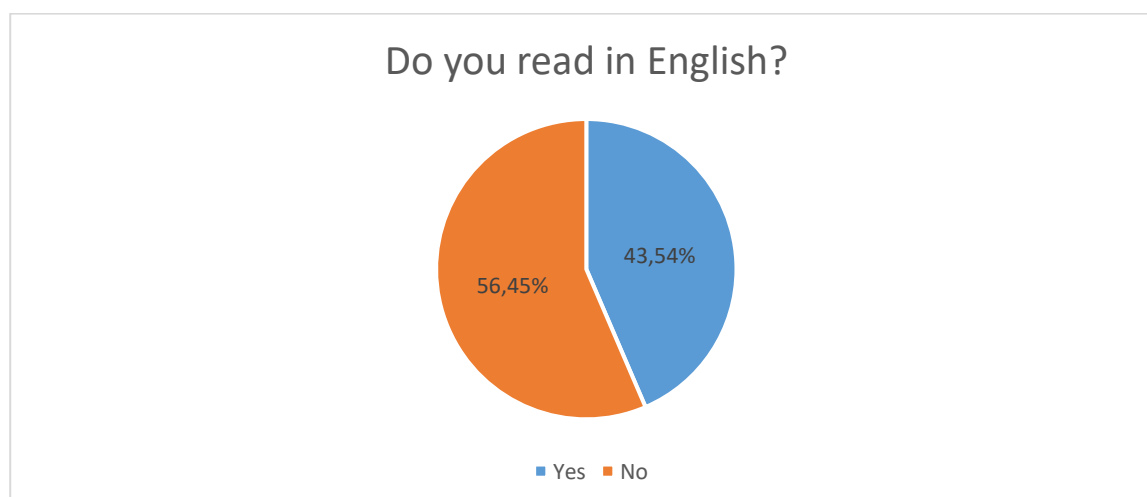


Figure 4.10 Reading in English

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Results above in the table and the graph show that only 27 participants (43.54%) read in English while the rest of them (56.45%) do not.

*** If yes, why?**

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
A) To improve my English language	14	22.58%
B) For pleasure/entertainment.	03	4.83%
C) To do homework	05	8.06%
Other:	02 (I love English.) (because I love this language)	3.22%
A+C	01	1.61%
B+C	02	3.22%
Total	27	100%

Table 4.11 Reasons for Reading in English

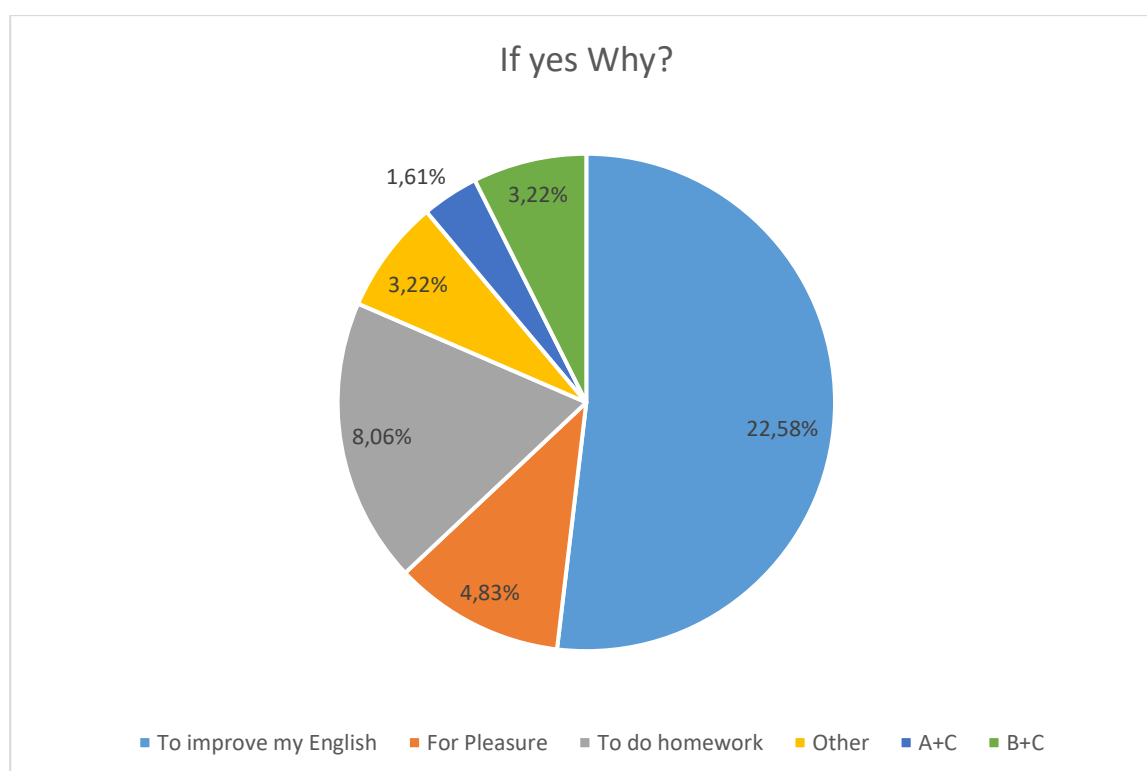


Figure 4.11 Reasons for Reading in English

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Results above show that participants read for different purposes. 14 of them (22.58%) read to improve their English language while three of them (4.83%) read for pleasure, five pupils (8.06%) read only to do their homework while two others (3.22%) read because they love English language. We can see that only two participants (3.22%) have chosen two choices (B+C) whereas only one participant (1.61%) went for these choices (A+C). It seems good to realize that most of the participants read to improve their English as well as to their homework. This shows interest in this language and pupils are eager to enhance their skills.

Question 04: Do you like reading extra texts in English?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	35.48%
No	40	64.51%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.12 Reading Extra Texts in English

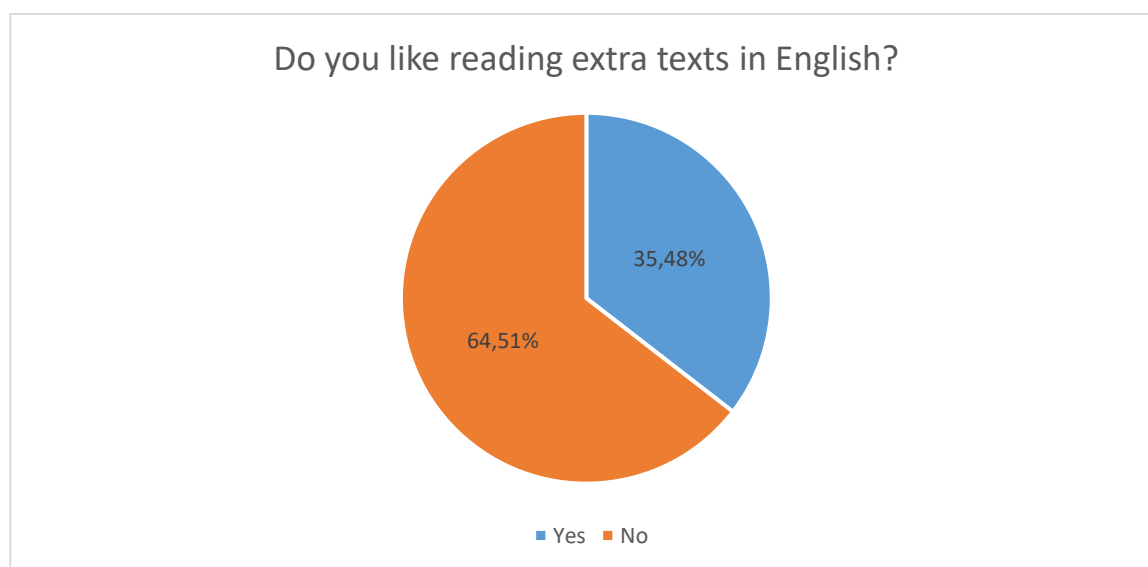


Figure 4.12 Reading Extra Texts in English

Results above show that 22 participants (35.48%) like reading extra texts in English while 40 of them (64.51%) do not.

- **If yes, how often do you read?**

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Daily	00	00%
Weekly	00	00%

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Monthly	01	1.61%
From time to time	21	33.87%
Total	22	100%

Table 4.13 Frequency of Reading Extra Texts in English

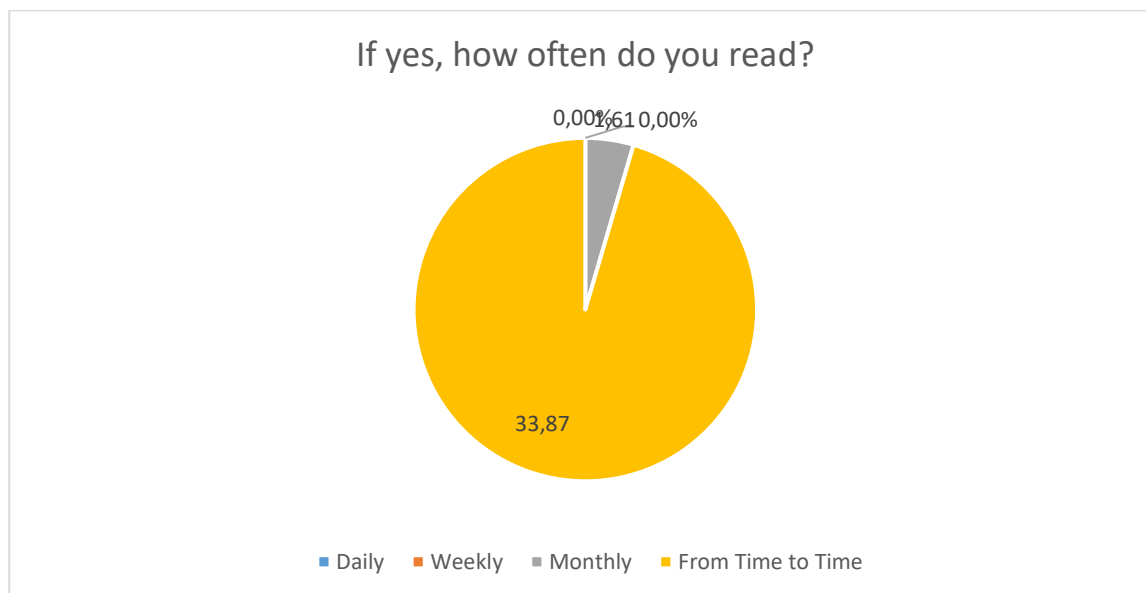


Figure 4.13 Frequency of Reading Extra Texts in English

Table and chart above show that those like reading and said “yes”, prefer reading from time to time (21 participants/33.87%) whereas only one participant reads monthly (1.61%).

Question 05: Which type of texts are you interested in?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
A) Short stories	25	40.32%
B) Scientific texts	13	20.96%
C) Course book texts	13	20.96%
A+B	05	08.06%
B+C	03	04.83%
A+C	03	04.83%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.14 Interesting Texts

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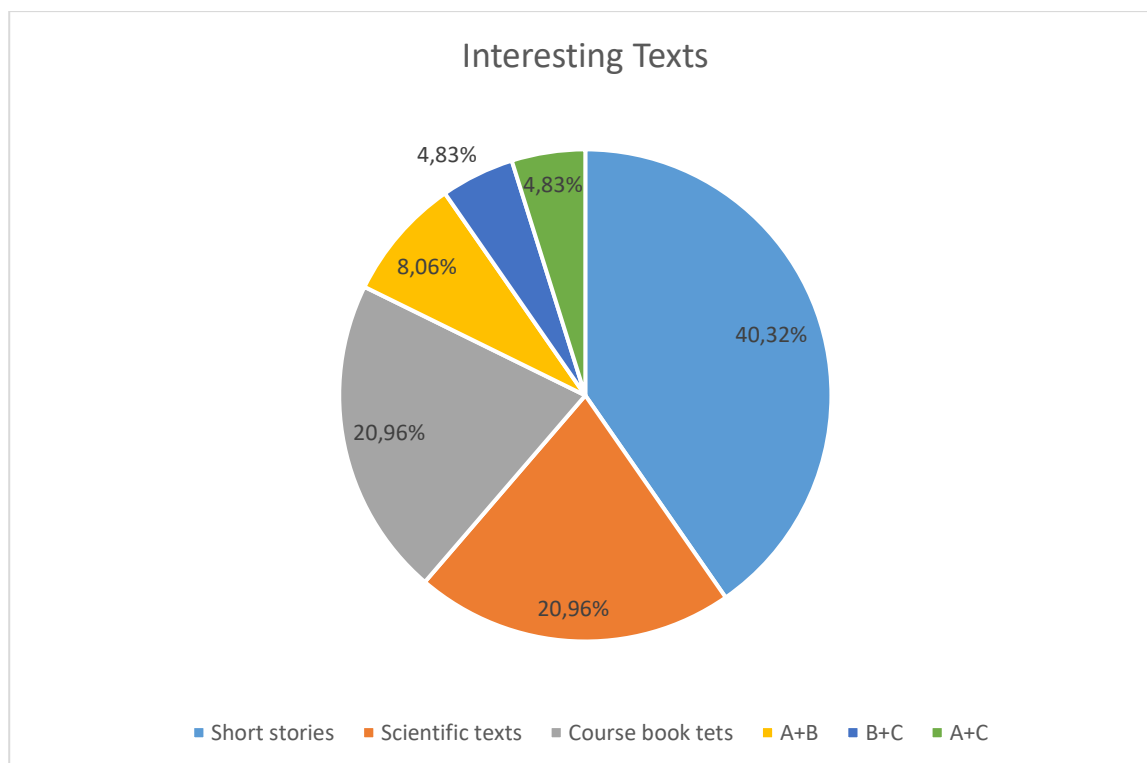


Figure 4.14 Interesting texts

The graph above represents types of texts that these participants are interested in. 25 of the participants (**40.32%**) prefer short stories, 13 of them (**20.96%**) like scientific texts whereas 13 participants (**20.96%**) read course book texts only. The rest of participants have selected two choices. Five (05) participants (**08.06%**) chose A+B, 03 of them (**04.83%**) selected B+C and the same number went for A+C (**04.83%**). Perhaps participants prefer easy texts to read. Then, they give the turn to coursebook scientific texts which are related to their studies.

Section Three: Reading Comprehension activities.

Question 01: Do you like reading aloud in the classroom?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	66.12%
No	21	33.87%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.15 Reading aloud in the Classroom

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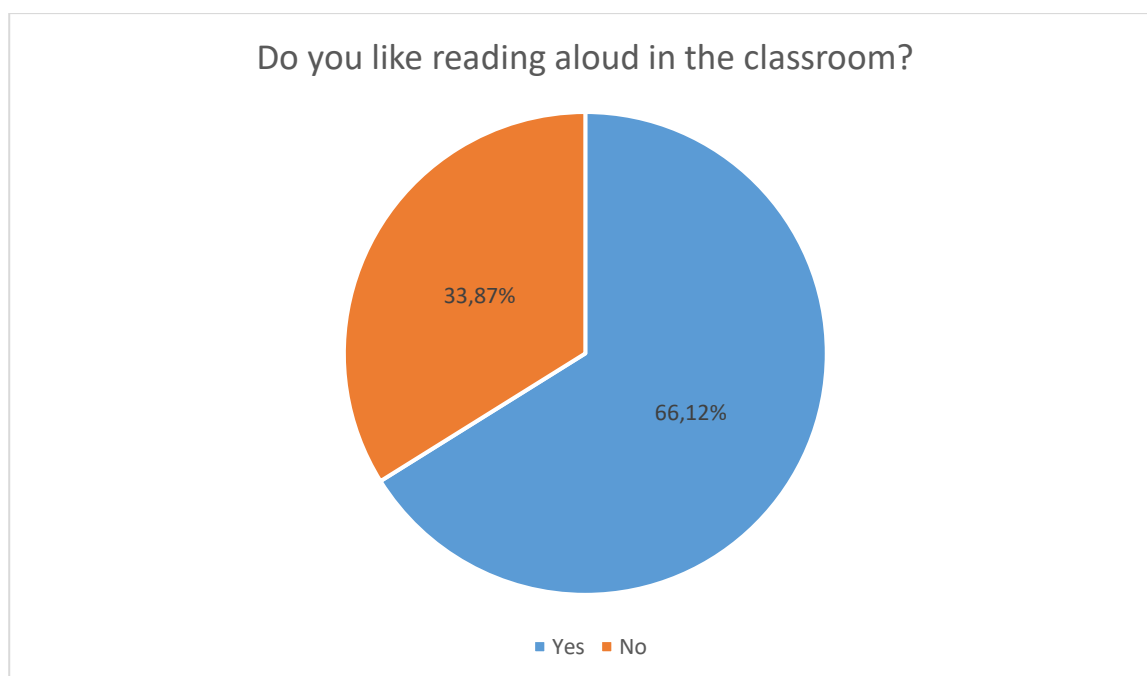


Figure 4.15 Reading aloud in the Classroom

Results above show that 41 participants (**66.12%**) like reading aloud in classroom while 21 participants (**33.87%**) do not. Participants prefer reading aloud in classroom as an oral activity to perform in class. Most of them read just to participate without understanding the real meaning of text.

Question 02: Tick the types of texts you know. (you can tick more than one box)

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
A) Narrative	04	6.45%
B) Descriptive	06	9.67%
C) Expository	02	3.22%
D) Argumentative	04	6.45%
E) Explanatory	00	00%
A+D	09	14.51%
A+B+C	01	1.61%
A+B+D	12	19.35%
A+B+E	01	1.61%
A+B	04	6.45%
A+C	05	8.06%
A+C+D	04	6.45%
B+D	02	3.22%

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A+D+E	01	1.61%
B+D+E	01	1.61%
A+B+D+E	04	6.45%
A+B+C+D+E	01	1.61%
D+E	01	1.61%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.16 Types of Texts.

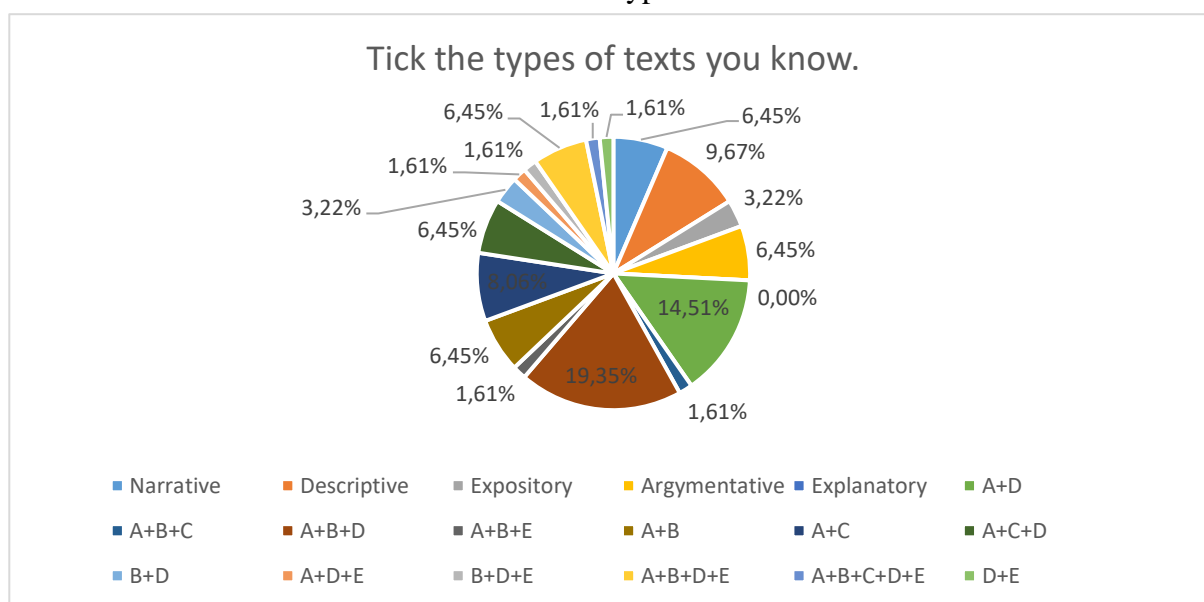


Figure 4.16 Types of Texts.

Results presented in the graph above, represent the type of texts that participants know. Four of them (6.45%) know the narrative type while six of them (9.67%) selected the descriptive one, only two (3.22%) opted for the expository type while four (6.45%) of them have chosen the argumentative type. The rest of participants selected multiple choices of texts types as it is clearly mentioned in the table above. Surprisingly, no participant has selected the explanatory type. This could be because they have not dealt with it yet in class.

Question 03: Is reading important in learning English?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	98.38%
No	01	1.61%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.17 Reading Importance.

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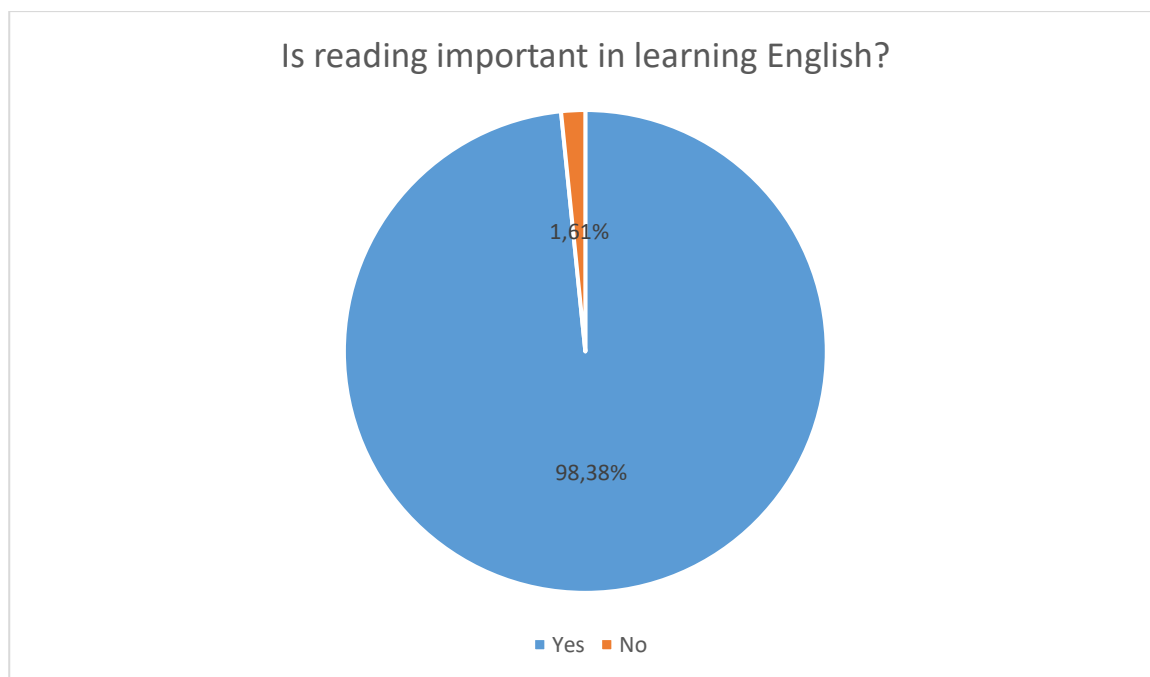


Figure 4.17 Reading Importance.

This graph shows that the majority of participants (61) (**98.38%**) think that reading is important in learning the English. However, only one participant (**1.61%**) disagrees. Some pupils are not interested in learning English as a foreign language. This may be due to their learning problems since their first year.

- **If yes, why is it important? (Tick the right answer(s).)**

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
A) It develops my mind, imagination and creativity.	09	14.51%
B) It helps me discover new cultures and learn new information.	14	22.58%
C) It enriches my vocabulary and background.	19	30.64%
D) Other	00	00%
A+C	03	04.83%
A+B	07	11.29%

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B+C	09	14.51%
Total	61	98.38%

Table 4.18 Reasons of Importance

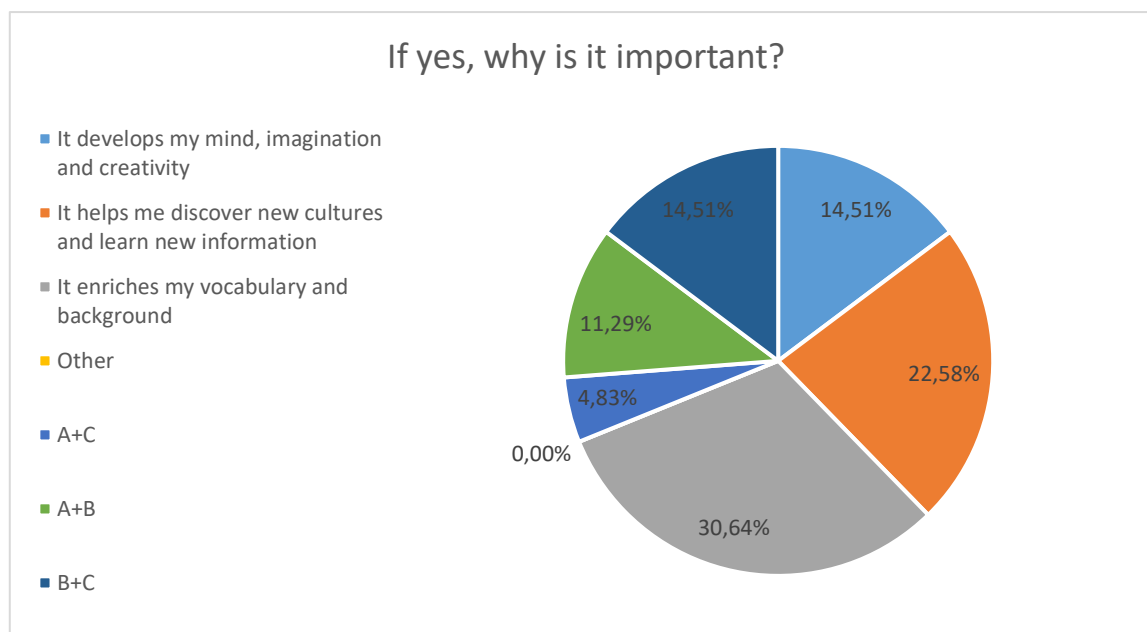


Figure 4.18 Reasons of Importance

Those participants who said “yes”, have explained their choices in the graph above. 19 participants (**30.64%**) believe that reading is important because it enriches vocabulary and background. 14 of them (**22.58%**) think it helps them discover new cultures and learn new information while nine of them (**14.51%**) argue that it develops their mind, imagination and creativity. No participant gave a new reason and the rest of them have selected multiple choices (A+C/A+B/B+C). Reading is apparently important for EFL pupils to improve themselves in learning English.

Section Four: READING DIFFICULTIES

Question 01: Do you face difficulties in understanding a text in English?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	62	100%
No	00	00%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.19 Difficulties in Understanding a Text in English

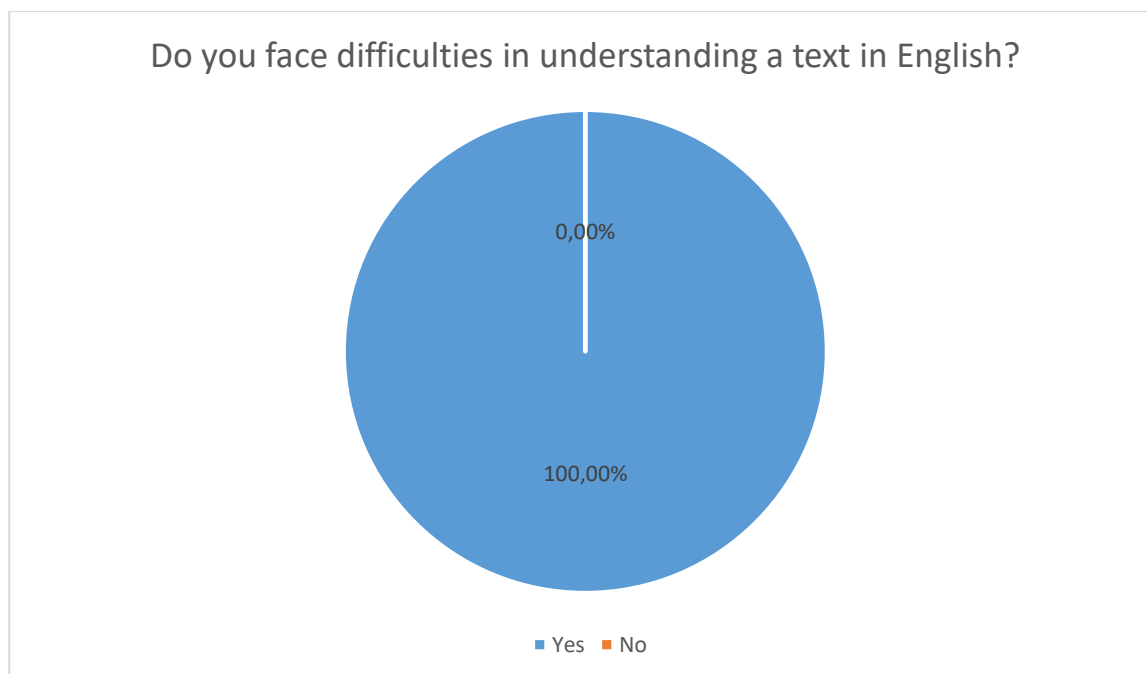


Figure 4.19 Difficulties in Understanding a Text in English

All 62 participants (**100%**) argue that they face difficulties in understanding a text in English. This is clear in their grades in the reading tests and exams. Even some excellent pupils commit some mistakes in reading tasks.

- **If “yes”, what makes reading a text difficult for you? Tick the most important reason(s)**

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
The text contains many difficult/unknown words.	31	50%
The text is about a topic I don't know.	08	12.90%
The text is culturally different.	04	06.45%
Other	01 (I can't understand some words)	01.61%
A+B	12	19.35%
A+C	05	08.06%
A+B+C	01	01.61%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.20 What makes reading a text difficult?

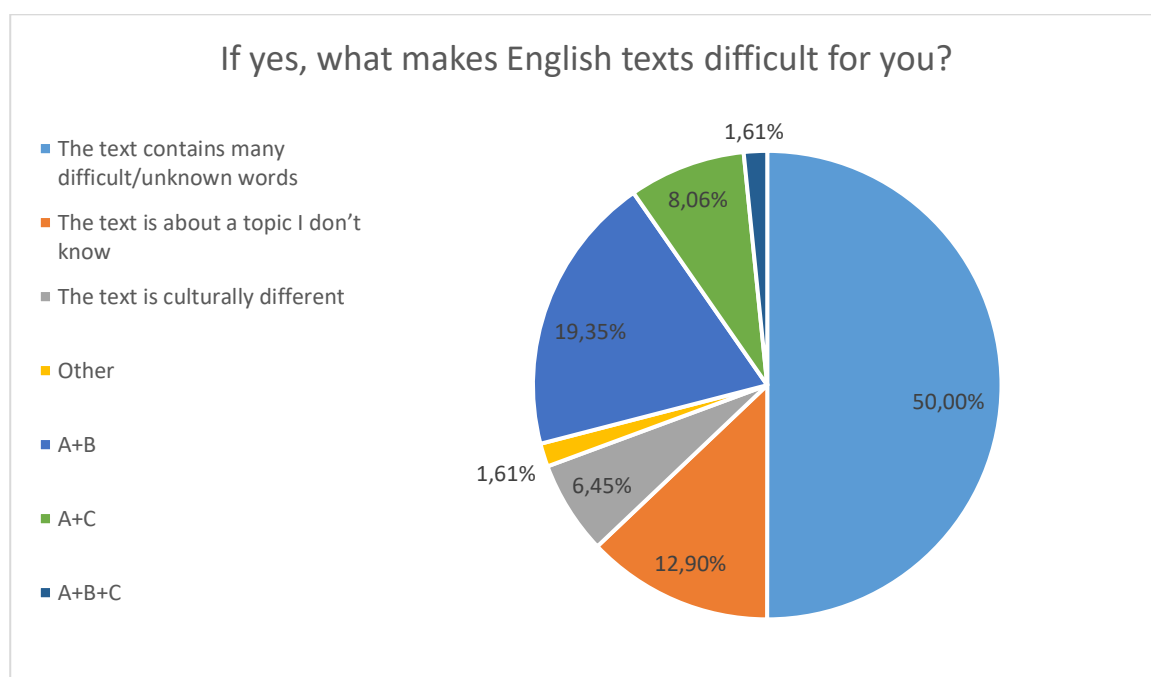


Figure 4.20 What makes reading a text difficult?

Results above the most important reasons which makes English difficult for the participants. Half of the participants (**50%**) think it's difficult because the text contains many difficult and unknown words. Eight of them (**12.90%**) argue that the text is difficult because the topic is unknown while four of them (**06.45%**) said that the text is culturally different. One participant suggested another reason that is difficult to understand some words (**01.61%**) whereas 18 of them (29.03%) have selected multiple choices (A+B/A+C/A+B+C)

Question 02: Do you use reading strategies when you read?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Never	09	14.51%
Sometimes	49	79.03%
Usually	04	06.45%
Always	00	00%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.21 Frequency of Using Reading Strategies

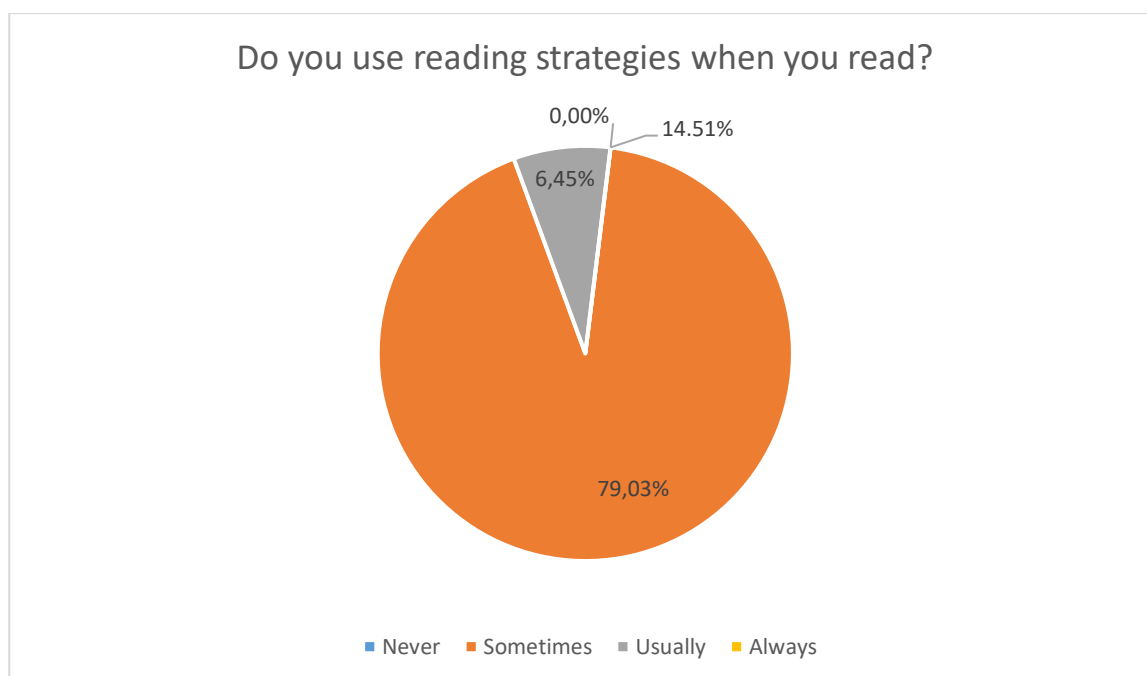


Figure 4.21 Frequency of using reading strategies

Table and figure above show the participants' frequency of using reading strategies when they read a text. Nine participants (**14.51%**) pointed out that they never use reading strategies, 49 of them (**79.03%**) sometimes use them while only four participants (**06.45%**) use them.

Question 03: When you cannot understand a word in a text, what do you do?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
I check it in the dictionary (Arabic or French)	02	03.22%
I stop reading.	04	06.45%
I skip it.	07	11.29%
I try to guess its meaning from the text.	00	00%
I ask my friend/teacher about its meaning.	02	03.22%
I rely on previous information.	01	01.61%
Other	01 (I ask my brother about its meaning)	01.61%
A+C	02	03.22%

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A+D	04	06.45%
A+E	06	09.67%
A+F	01	01.61%
B+C	04	06.45%
B+D	01	01.61%
B+E	01	01.61%
B+C+E	01	01.61%
C+E	07	11.29%
C+F	01	01.61%
C+D	02	03.22%
D+E	07	11.29%
A+B+E	01	01.61%
A+C+E	02	03.22%
A+C+D	03	04.83%
A+D+E	01	01.61%
A+C+F	01	01.61%
C+D+E	02	03.22%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.22 Strategies Used to Understand a Difficult Word in a Text

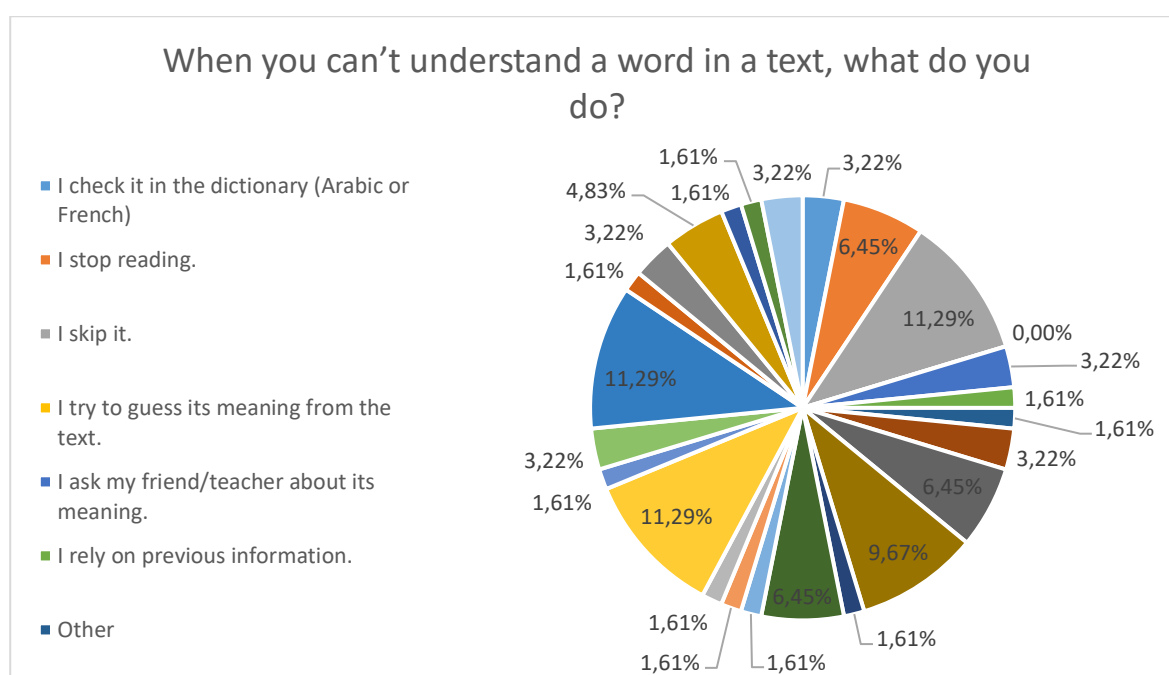


Figure 4.22 Strategies Used to Understand a Difficult Word in a Text

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Results in table 4.22 represent what participants do when they can't understand a word. Two of them (03.22%) check the word in the dictionary (Arabic or French), four participants stop reading (06.45%), seven (11.29%) skip the word, two participants (03.22%) ask a friend or a teacher about the meaning of words and only one (01.61%) relies on previous information while no one try to guess meaning from the text. It is also shown above that one participant (01.61%) suggested another choice who asks his brother to help him. 41 participants have selected multiple choices as presented in the table above. Participants have selected the most important strategies that should be adapted to deal with reading difficulties. They used to apply them before but they could not name them.

Section Five: CULTURAL SCHEMA AND READING COMPREHENION

Question 01: Before I start reading a text, I try to relate the title to my previous information and past experiences.

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Never.	01	01.61%
Rarely.	11	17.74%
Sometimes.	28	45.16%
Often	12	19.35%
Always	10	16.12%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.23 Relating the Title to the Previous Information and Past Experiences before Reading

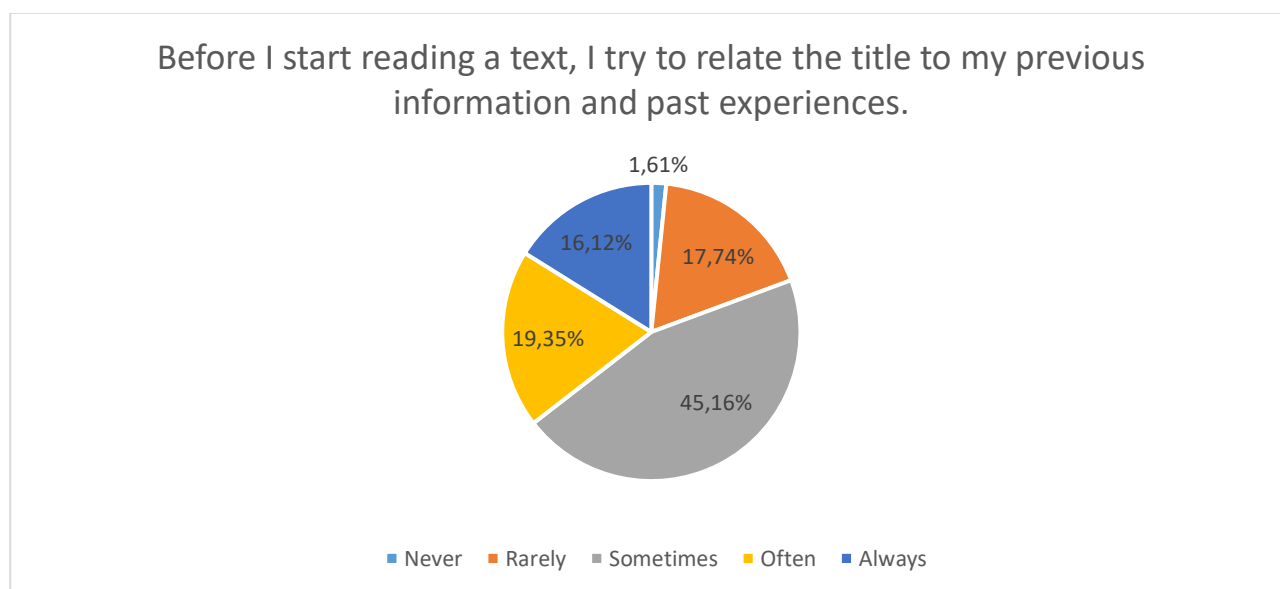


Figure 4.23 Relating the Title to the Previous Information and Past Experiences before Reading

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Results in the graph above represent the frequency of relating the title of a text to previous information and past experiences. One participant (**01.61%**) argued that he never does, 11 of them (**17.74%**) rarely do, 28 of them (**45.16%**) sometimes do, 12 of them (**19.35%**) often do and 10 of them (**16.12%**) always relate the title to previous information. In general, participants have the ability to relate the text with their existing knowledge to understand the text they are reading.

Question 02: Do you anticipate what is going to happen next when you read a story or a text?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	33.87%
No	41	66.12%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.24 Anticipating what is going to happen next while reading a story or a text.

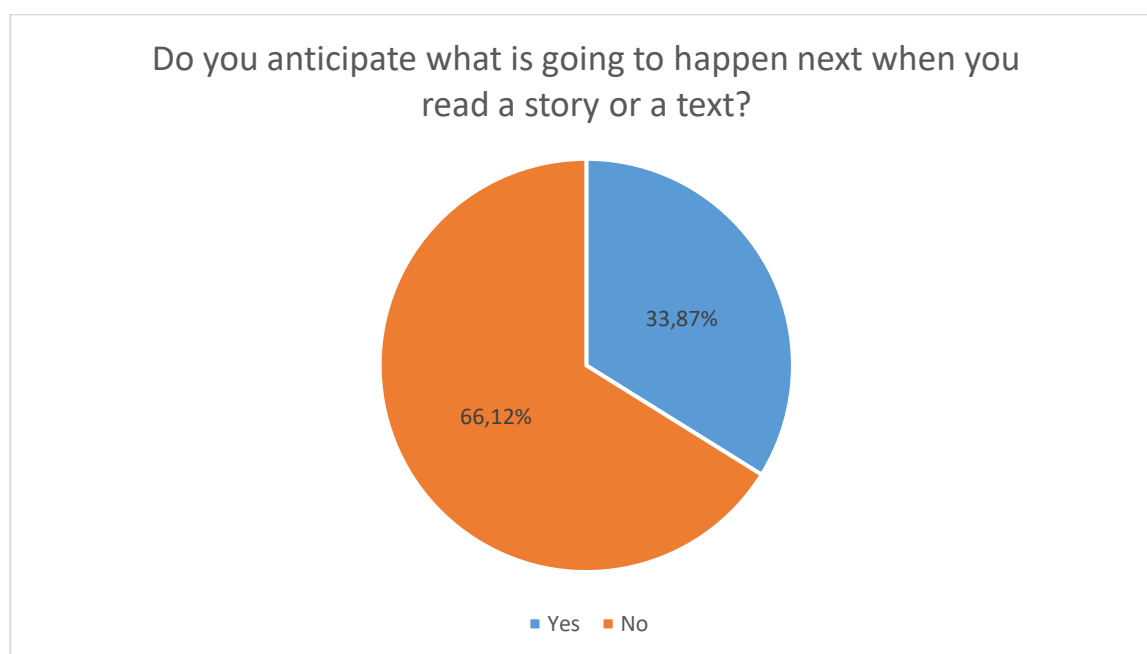


Figure 4.24 Anticipating what is going to happen next while reading a story or a text.

In the figure above, results show that 21 participants (**33.87%**) try to anticipate what is going to happen while 41 of them (**66.12%**) do not. Participants in this latter category lack the ability to anticipate what is going to happen next. Only few ones can do that and can improve their comprehension and performance in doing the tasks of reading

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- If yes, how?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Title	04	06.45%
Pictures	06	09.67%
Source	01	01.61%
A+B	08	12.90%
A+B+C	02	%03.22
Total	21	100%

Table 4.25 Predicting Strategies

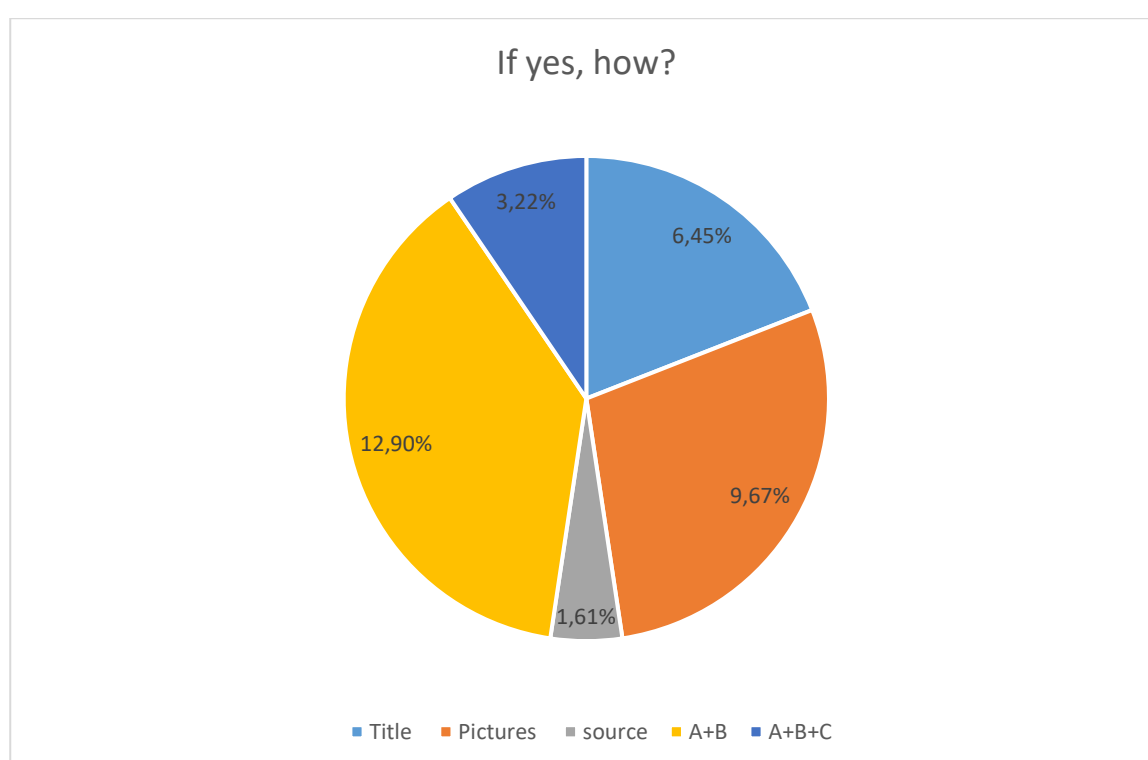


Figure 4.25 Predicting Strategies

According to the figure above, four of the participants (**06.45%**) try to anticipate what is going to happen next through the title of the text, six of them (**09.67%**) use the pictures and only one of them (**01.61%**) use the source of the text. It is also shown in the results that eight participants (**12.90%**) use both title and picture in addition to two participants (**%03.22**) who use title, pictures and source.

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Question 03: Do you think that reading a text about a topic that is related to your previous cultural knowledge can help you understand the meaning of the text?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	59	95.16%
No	3	04.83%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.26 Reading a Text about a Related Topic to Previous Cultural Knowledge.

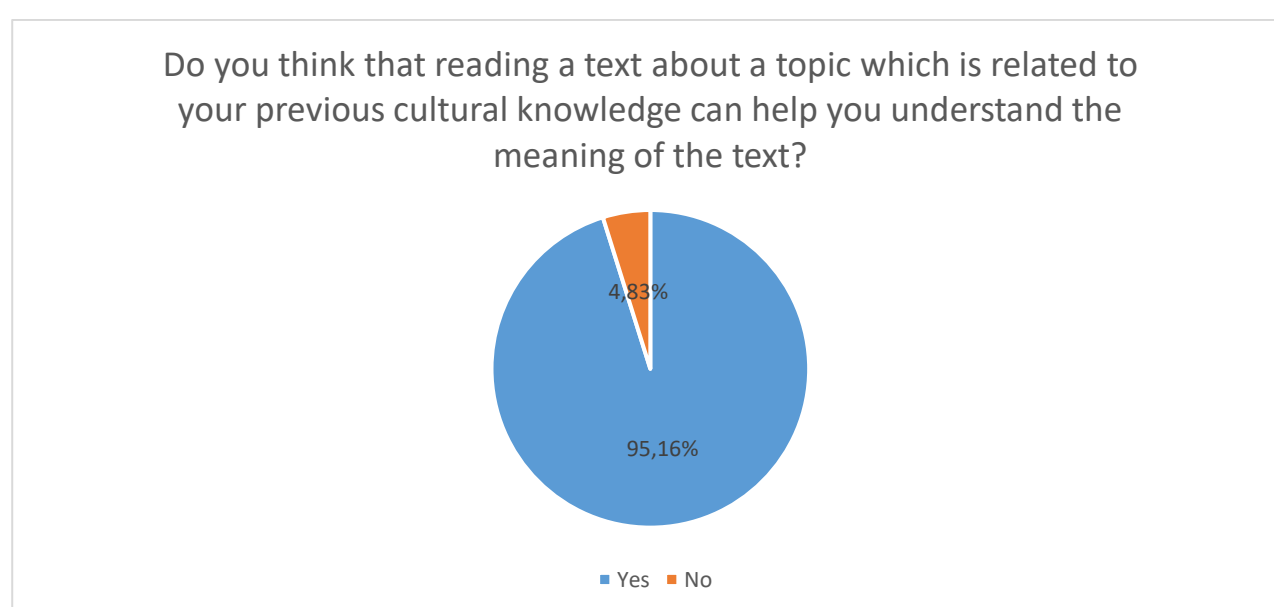


Figure 4.26 Reading a Text about a Related Topic to Previous Cultural Knowledge.

In accordance to the results in the graph above, 59 participants (**95.16%**) think that reading a text about a topic related to previous cultural knowledge can help them understand the meaning of the text while only three of them (**04.83%**) do not.

Question 04: Is it difficult to understand a text about an unknown topic for you?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Yes	57	91.93%
No	05	08.06%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.27 Difficulty in Understanding a Text about an Unknown Topic.

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Is it difficult to understand a text about an unknown topic for you?

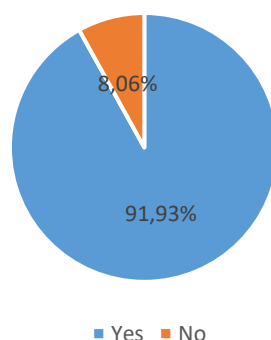


Figure 4.27 Difficulty in Understanding a Text about an Unknown Topic.

In the table and the graph above, 57 participants (**91.93%**) argue that it is difficult to understand a text about an unknown topic for them while only five of them (**08.06%**) didn't agree. Most of the participants think that reading a text about an unfamiliar topic is difficult. This answer seems logical since they lack the appropriate knowledge and vocabulary to understand new information.

- **If yes, why?**

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
A) The topic of the text is unfamiliar	03	04.83%
B) The topic is not related to my culture	03	04.83%
C) I don't have an idea about the topic of the text	00	00%
D) The vocabulary is unknown for me	04	06.45%
Other	00	00%
A+B	10	16.12%
A+C	07	11.29%
A+D	11	17.74%
B+C	07	11.29%
B+D	10	16.12%
C+D	02	03.22%
Total	57	100%

Table 4.28 Reasons of Difficulty in Understanding a Text about an Unknown Topic.

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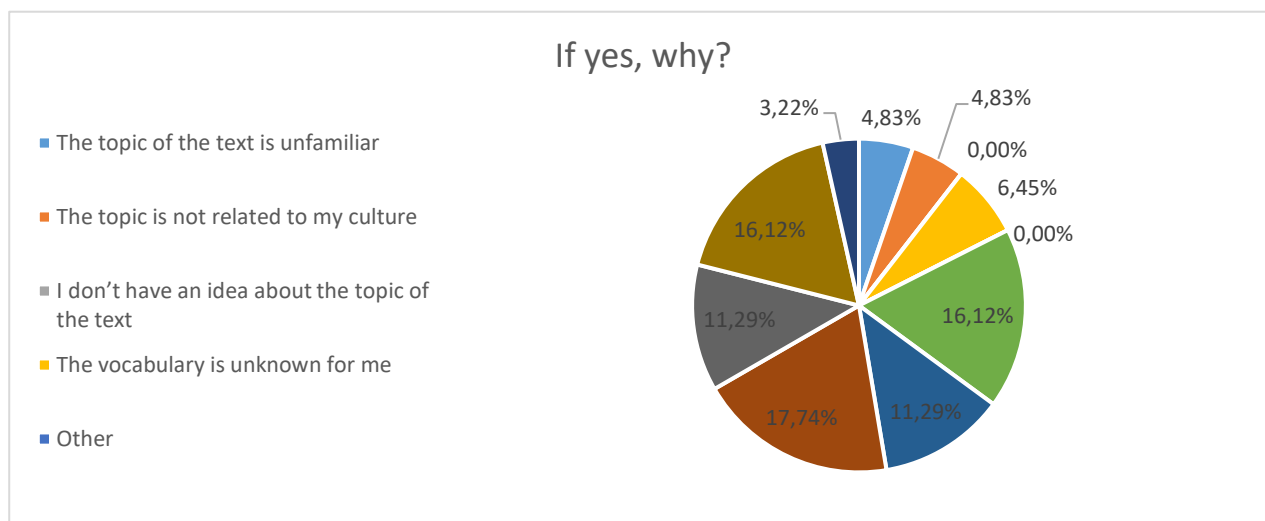


Figure 4.28 Reasons of Difficulty in Understanding a Text about an Unknown Topic.

Results above show that those participants who said it is difficult to understand a text about an unknown topic have explained their choice. Three of them (**04.83%**) argued that the topic of the text is unfamiliar. The same number (**04.83%**) said that the topic is not related to their culture while four of them (**06.45%**) state that the vocabulary mentioned in the text is unknown for them while the other 47 participants (**82.45%**) have selected multiple choices (A+B /A+C/ A+D/B+C/B+D C+D). This latter category argues that they have many reasons to justify their difficulty in understanding an unfamiliar text.

Question 05: When you read a text, how often do you rely on your previous cultural information (cultural background)?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
Never	02	03.22%
Rarely	03	04.83%
Sometimes	29	46.77%
Often	16	25.80%
Always	12	19.35%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.29 Relying on Previous Cultural Information (Cultural Background).

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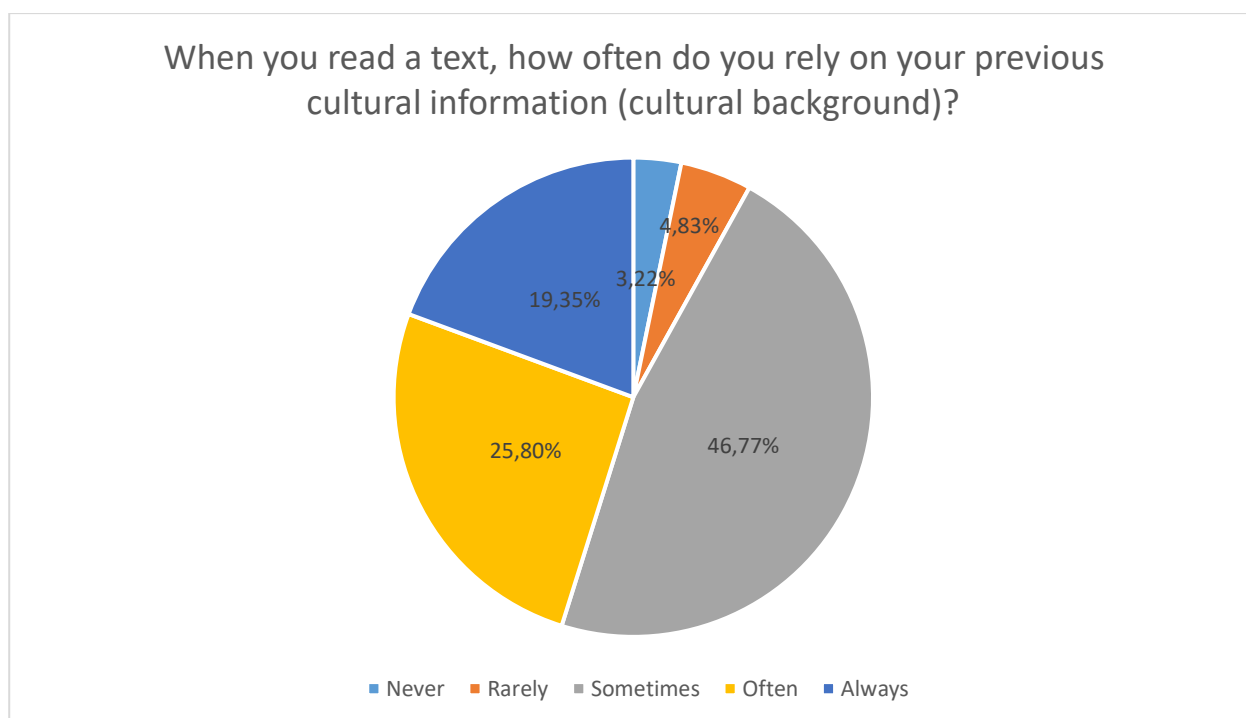


Figure 4.29 Relying on Previous Cultural Information (Cultural Background).

Results in the graph above, represent the participants' frequency of relying on previous cultural information 'cultural background). 02 of the participants (**03.22%**) never do, three of them (**04.83%**) rarely do, twenty nine (29) of them (**46.77%**) sometimes rely on it while the other 16 participants (**25.80%**) often do.

Question 06: How does your previous cultural knowledge affect your understanding of the text?

Option	Participants (number)	Percentage (%)
It facilitates my understanding of the text.	13	20.96%
It develops my reading comprehension strategies.	07	11.29%
It facilitates the interaction with information presented in the text	03	04.83%
It saves time.	04	06.45%
A+C	08	12.90%
A+D	08	12.90%
A+C+D	02	03.22%
B+C	01	01.61%
B+D	06	09.67%

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C+D	10	16.12%
Other	00	00%
Total	62	100%

Table 4.30 The Effects of Previous Cultural Knowledge on Understanding a Text.

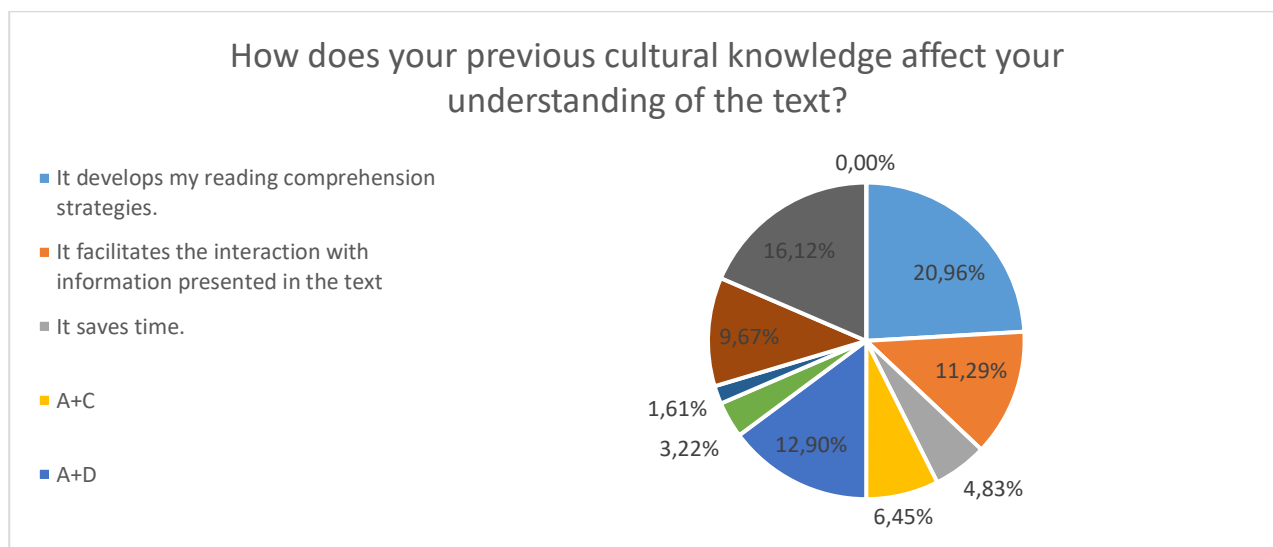


Figure 4.30 The Effects of Previous Cultural Knowledge on Understanding a Text.

Results shown above, represent the way in which the previous cultural knowledge affect the participants' understanding of the text. 13 of the participants (**20.96%**) assert that it facilitates their understanding of the text, seven of them (**11.29%**) claim it develops their reading comprehension strategies, three of them (**04.83%**) think it facilitates the interaction with information presented in the text while 04 of them (**06.45%**) argue that it saves time. The rest of the 35 participants (**56.45%**) have selected multiple choices (A+C/A+D/A+C+D/ B+C/B+D/ C+D). They think that not only one reason is enough to argue that previous cultural knowledge is a positive strategy t understand a text.

4.3.1.1 Interpretation of the Questionnaire Findings

Reading is considered as one of the most essential skills to acquire any foreign language since it provides learners with new vocabulary, develops their knowledge and paves the way for them for a better understanding about new information in any written text. According to Grellet (1999), reading is an active skill which requires guessing, predicting, checking and asking questions so as to understand what we read. Most of EFL young learners lack the use of these strategies and techniques to enhance their level in reading comprehension. In addition to that, Andersson & Barnitz (1984) believe that EFL students in one classroom may represent different backgrounds and bring diversity and richness to of a variety of languages and cultures. Therefore, this may cause comprehension

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difficulties for pupils. Teachers play an important role in teaching their learners how to deal with these difficulties. Thus, in this questionnaire, pupils are asked about their knowledge, attitudes and strategies dealing with reading comprehension.

The first section of the questionnaire dealt with the pupils' biographic information and their familial and cultural background and intellectual status, which plays a major role in their level. According to Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982), readers acquire meaning from text by analysing words and sentences against the backdrop of their own personal knowledge of the world. They add; "Personal knowledge, in turn, is conditioned by age, sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation-in short, by a person's culture". The majority come from a rural area and their parents have not reached a high level of education.

The second section includes questions about pupils' general knowledge in English language learning. The major part of the participants (**56.45%**) does not read in English. The rest read mostly to improve their level in English while just a minority (**35.48%**) read extra texts mainly short stories from time to time. However, most of the participants (**66.12%**) like reading aloud in the classroom (table 15). They know different types of texts and the majority (**98.38%**) think that reading is important in learning English.

Section three is concerned with reading comprehension activities. It seeks to collect data about reading comprehension activities and their importance in enhancing the level of English. Andersson & Barnitz (1984) argue that selecting appropriate reading material for reading comprehension instruction will make students more involved, interested, and successful in reading material that relates to them and that matches their cultural background. They explain: "These include pre-reading activities such as providing pictures, learning to do an activity that is mentioned, or discussing cultural experiences. Teachers' role in this case is to make a significant link between the content of the text and their pupils' cultural schemata".

Section Four, show that all participants face different obstacles in reading comprehension. More than half of the students (61.29%), as shown in table 4.9 face difficulties in reading in English during a period, which ranges from four to seven years. All participants (**100%**) face difficulties in reading English for many reasons mentioned in table (20). Andersson & Barnitz (1984) assert that in reading comprehension, students of English are affected by language complexity and cultural background. In addition to that, Pichert (1979) and Shantz (1975) cited in Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982) argue that minority children have had less opportunity to acquire the schemata of the majority because, for the young, the most accessible schemata are those

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of parents' peers. Moreover, children often have difficulty interpreting events from perspectives not naturally their own. Most of the respondents (**79.03%**) sometimes use reading strategies (table 4.21) and they suggested some of them (table 4.22). Thus, applying cultural schemata develops learners' reading strategies in order to solve reading complex problems.

The fifth section deals with the effects of cultural schema on reading comprehension and strategies used to activate cultural schema, predict and anticipate meaning from new texts. Nearly half of the participants (**45.16%**) relate the title of a text they are reading to their previous information and past experiences. They also try to anticipate what is going to happen next using the title, the pictures or the source of the text (table 4.25). For (Yang, 2010), schema and culture are the fundamental elements to learn and understand surroundings and when people's schema is connected to the specific language environment they are living in or familiar with, the common language and context will help them communicate smoothly.

The greater number of the participants (**95.16%**) think that reading a text about a topic which is related to their previous cultural knowledge can help them understand the meaning of the text (table 4.26) while it is difficult to understand a text of an unknown topic (table 4.27) because of many difficulties suggested in (table **4.28**). Half of the respondents (**46.77%**) sometimes rely on their previous cultural knowledge when they read a new text. According to Anderson (1999) and (Carell and Eisterhold (1983) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011), the very important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension is when the reader's comprehension depends on the ability to relate the information from the text with the pre-existing background knowledge. In addition to that, Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) believe that cultural background is also one of the factors that constructs one's pre-existing knowledge about the world. Participants assure that their previous cultural knowledge facilitates their understanding and interaction with information presented in the text, develops their reading comprehension strategies and saves time. Another related study by Pickens (1982) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) found that familiarity with the cultural content schematic area of the text facilitates reading comprehension.

The following studies have revealed a positive effect of cultural schema on reading comprehension (Erten & Razi, 2009; Youcef, Lotfollah, & Kamran, 2014; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Horiba, 2000; Dehghan & Sadighi, 2011). According to the study of Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982) data obtained strongly support the view that cultural schemata influence reading comprehension. For Barnitz (1986), readers' knowledge of cultural content, represented in culturally variant texts, can influence their construction of meaning for the text. He explains: "During

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top-down processing, readers construct meaning in terms of their own prior knowledge, goals and belief systems.

A study led by Dehghan & Sadighi (2011) revealed a positive effect of the cultural background (schema) on students' performance both for familiar and unfamiliar texts. Another study by Erten & Razi (2009) reported a positive effect of background knowledge and cultural familiarity on reading comprehension. On the same way, Shirzadi (2015) concludes that the findings of his research demonstrates that cultural background is an important factor in comprehension of texts in second language. Moreover, Gurkan (2012) reports that cultural familiarity has a significant effect on reading comprehension in addition to the positive effect of nativization and reading activities on reading comprehension

4.3.2 Analysis of the Pre-Test

The scores obtained by the participants in the pre-test are reported in the table below. The scores are arranged from the lowest to the highest mark.

Pre-test	Experimental group			Control Group		
	Scores	Frequency	Percentages	Scores	Frequency	Percentages
	04	01	3,2 %	05	01	3,2 %
	06	03	9,7 %	08	04	12,9 %
	07	03	9,7 %	09	03	9,7 %
	08	04	12,9 %	10	07	22,6 %
	10	02	6,5 %	11	01	3,2 %
	11	05	16,1%	12	04	12,9 %
	12	02	6,5 %	13	03	9,7 %
	13	03	9,7 %	14	06	19,4 %
	14	03	9,7 %	15	01	3,2 %
	15	02	6,5 %	16	01	3,2 %
	16	02	6,5 %			
	17	01	3,2 %			
	Average 10.77	Total 31	Total percentage 100%	Average 11.19	Total 31	Total percentage 100%

Table 4.31 Presenting the Scores of the Pre-Test (Experimental and Control Group)

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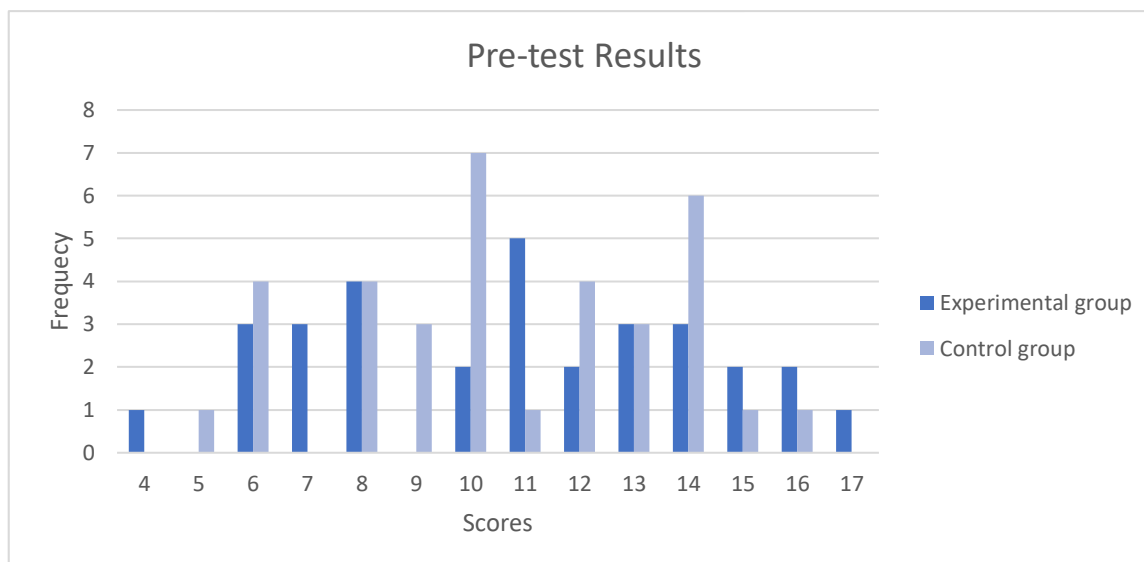


Figure 4.31 Presenting the Scores of the Pre-Test (Experimental and Control Group)

As presented in table 4.31, the experimental group has scored 10.77 whereas the control group has scored 11.19. When we compare the averages of both groups, no great or significant difference occurs in terms of both groups' performance in the pre-test. As shown in the table above, the two groups have got approximately the same level (average). It is remarkable that the lowest mark of the pre-test in the experimental group is 04 out of 20 and it is obtained by only one participant (3,2 %) who was not able to answer all the questions of the three reading comprehension tasks. It is also clearly shown in the table above that the highest mark is 17 out of 20 and it is also obtained by only one participant (3,2 %). The highest rate (16.1 %) goes for those who has got the mark 11 out of 20. Twenty participants got marks above the average while eleven participants scored under the average.

In the control group, nearly the same results were noted. The lowest mark of the pre-test is 05 out of 20 and it is obtained by only one participant and (3,2 %) have got it in the three reading comprehension tasks while the highest mark is 16 out of 20 obtained by one participant (3,2 %) too. The highest rate (22.6 %) goes for those who has got the mark 10 out of 20. 23 participants scored above the average while eight of them got marks under the average.

Pre-test	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Under the average	Above the average	Under the average	Above the average
Scores				
Percentage	35,5%	65,5%	25,8%	74,2%
Total	100%		100%	

Table 4.32 Presenting the Rate of Scores under and above the Average in the Pre-test.

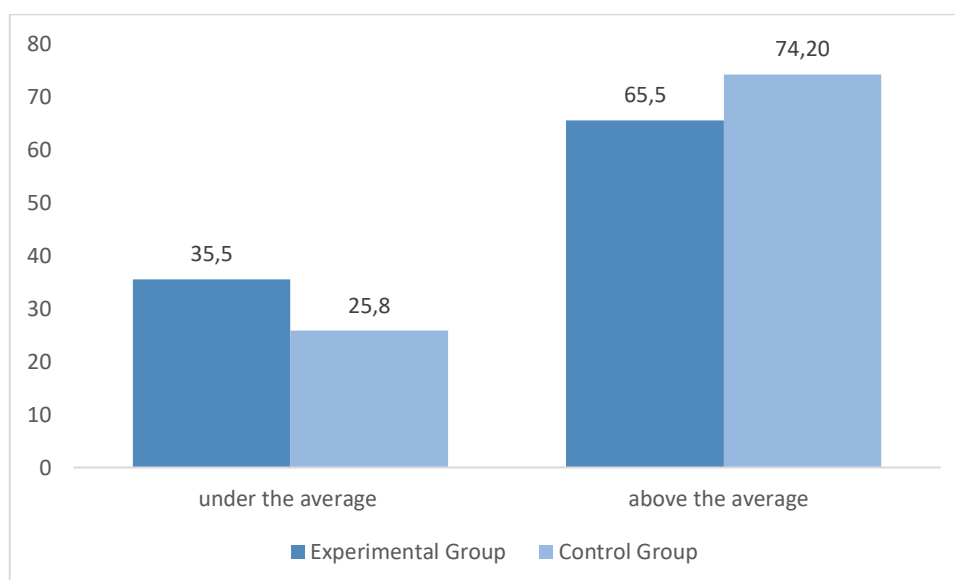


Figure 4.32 Presenting the Rate of Scores under and above the Average in the Pre-test.

According to data presented in table (32) above, it is remarkable that both groups nearly share the same rates. It is also noticeable that the lowest percentages in both experimental (35,5%) group and control group (25,8%) go for marks under the average while the highest percentages in both groups: experimental (65,5%) and (74,2%) go for scores above the average. This shows that participants in the control group performed better than those who belong to the experimental group. Another noticeable remark is that most of the participants scored above the average (65.5%/74.20%). The reason behind these results (in both groups) is that the participants are 4th year middle school pupils preparing to take the 4th year middle school exam and they receive extra reading sessions each Tuesday afternoons to improve their level in reading comprehension.

4.3.3 Analysis of the Post-Test.

The scores obtained by the participants in the post-test are reported in the table below. The scores are arranged from the lowest to the highest mark.

Post-test	Experimental group			Control Group		
	Scores	Frequency	Percentages	Scores	Frequency	Percentages
	06	01	3,2%	02	01	3,2 %
	08	01	3,2 %	03	02	6,5 %
	09	02	6,5 %	04	02	6,5%
	10	05	16,1 %	05	02	6,5 %

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	11	03	9,7 %	06	06	19,4 %
	12	04	12,9 %	08	02	6,5 %
	13	05	16,1 %	09	04	12,9 %
	14	03	9,7 %	10	03	9,7 %
	15	02	6,5 %	11	02	6,5 %
	16	03	9,7 %	12	04	12,9 %
	17	02	6,5 %	13	01	3,2 %
				14	01	3,2 %
				15	01	3,2 %
	Average 12.32	Total 31	Average percentage 100%	Average 08.25	Total 31	Average percentage 100%

Table 4.33 Presenting the Scores of the Post-Test (Experimental and Control Group)

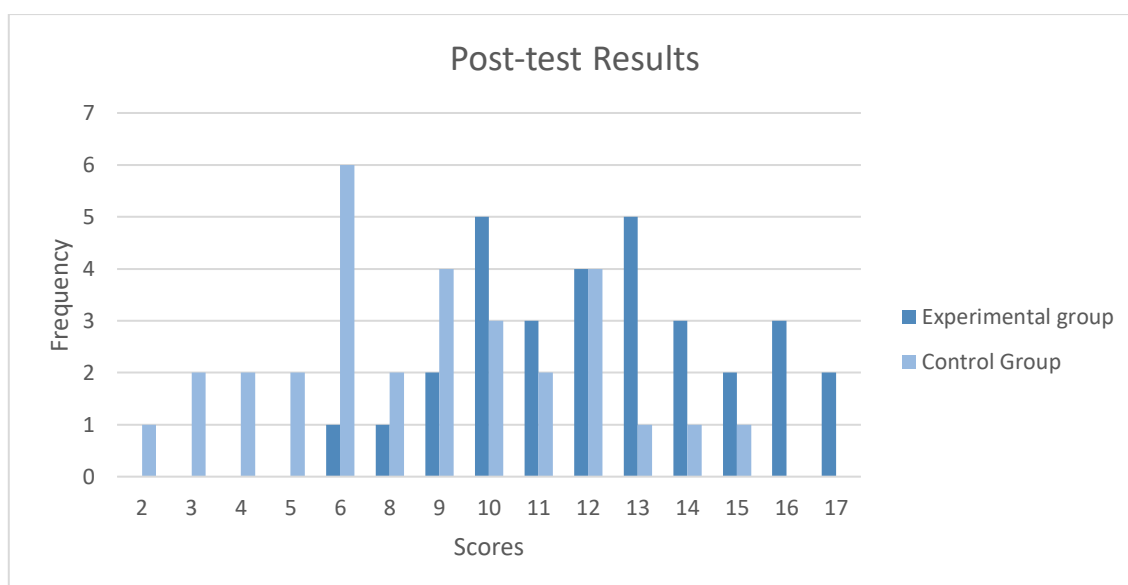


Figure 4.33 Presenting the Scores of the Post-Test (Experimental and Control Group)

Data presented in table 4.33 show that the experimental group has scored 12.32 while the control group has scored 08.25 in the post-test. When the averages of both groups are compared, it seems that there is a big significant difference in terms of pupils' performance in the post-test. On that way, as shown in the table above (4.33), the two groups have got different averages. It is remarkable that participants in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group. The lowest mark of the post-test in the experimental group is 06 out of 20 and it is obtained by only one participant (3,2 %). In the experimental group, it is also clearly shown in the table above (4.33) that the highest mark is 17 out of 20 and it is also obtained by only two participants (6,5 %).

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The highest rate (16.1 %) goes for those who has got the mark 11 and 13 out of 20. 27 participants got marks above the average while only four participants scored under the average.

Concerning the control group, pupils scored differently. The lowest mark of the pre-test in the control group is 02 out of 20 and it is obtained by only one participant and (3,2 %) of the participants have got this mark in the three reading comprehension tasks while the highest mark is 15 out of 20 and it is also obtained by only one participant (3,2 %). The highest rate (19,4 %) goes for those who has got the mark 06 out of 20. Only 12 participants scored above the average while 19 of them got marks under the average.

Post-test	Experimental Group		Control Group	
Scores	Under the average	Above the average	Under the average	Above the average
Percentage	12,9%	87,1%	61,3%	38,7%
Total	100%		100%	

Table 4.34 Presenting the Rate of Scores under and above the Average in the Post-Test.

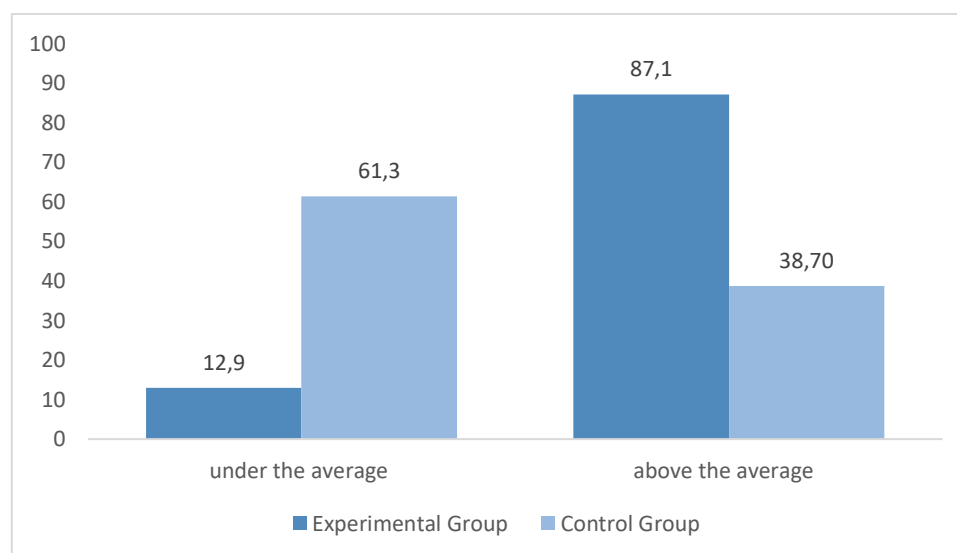


Figure 4.34 Presenting the Rate of Scores under and above the Average in the Post-Test.

According to data presented in table 4.34 above, it is remarkable that results of the experimental group have improved whereas results in the control groups have declined. It is also noticeable that the lowest percentages in both experimental (12,9%) group go for marks under the average and (38,7%) in the control group go for marks above the average. The highest percentages in both groups: experimental (87,1%) above the average and (61,3%) go for scores under the average. This shows

that participants in the experimental group performed pretty better than those who belong to the control group. Another noticeable remark is that most of the participants scored above the average in the experimental group while the majority in the control group scored under the average. The reason behind these results (in both groups) is that the participants have received training sessions on the use of different strategies to activate cultural schema in order to improve reading comprehension level.

4.3.4 Interpretation of the Pre- and Post- Tests

Data presented above in the analysis of the pre and post-tests show a significant difference in the performance of both groups before and after the training sessions. Both groups have scored nearly the same average and results noted: (10.77 in the experimental group and 11.19 in the control group). However, in the post-test, results have totally changed. The experimental group scored (12.32) in the post-test while the average of the control group declined into (08.25). This can be explained by the training sessions, which were introduced in the experimental group whereas the control group did not receive any session. These sessions trained pupils in the experimental group on how to activate their cultural schema in order to improve their comprehension level in reading comprehension.

This is in accordance with Razi (2004) study about the Effects of Cultural Schema and Reading Activities on Reading Comprehension. The findings of this study after implementing the reading tests on the participants have confirmed that cultural schema has a significant effect on reading comprehension in relation to different scholars cited in the same paper. In addition, he has suggested that the different reading activities (pre, during and post) make it possible to give background knowledge about the text if readers' schemata do not match with the writers' and they can also activate readers' schemata before reading if they share the same background knowledge with the writer. Other three studies by Al-Hassan (1992), Emsley (2011) and Dimassi (2006) agree on the same results that if the reader's cultural schema is activated, he will enhance his level of comprehension.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented some findings and results obtained from the pupils' questionnaire and the experimental study (pre-test and post-test). They were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the present study have confirmed that learners face many difficulties in reading. Consequently, these struggles shaped a negative attitude towards the skill of reading comprehension.

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Thus, the majority of students try to solve their problems using different reading strategies and activities such as activating their cultural schema to understand the new text. In the next chapter, the results and the interpretation of the teachers' interview will be provided in comparison with other related studies. In addition to that, some effective strategies in motivating pupils and activating their cultural schema to actively read and understand new and difficult texts, recommendations and suggestions for further research will be presented.

Chapter

Five

Chapter Four:
Data Collection and Analysis.

**Part Two: The Interview, Implications, Recommendations and
Limitations**

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5.1 Introduction

According to results mentioned in the previous chapter, cultural schema has a great positive impact on reading comprehension. If EFL teachers train their learners on using their cultural background, they may encounter fewer difficulties in reading comprehension. Moreover, cultural schema also enables readers to perform better in the reading comprehension classes. Therefore, activating learners' cultural schema in reading comprehension develops their reading strategies like problem solving, creative, and interpretive strategies.

This chapter aims at summing up the main findings of the study. Besides, it presents results related to data obtained from the last research tool that is the teachers' interview. and compares it with some previous related studies that have introduced the same issue. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the major statistical findings from the results and interpret them in the light of what have been said in relation to the research problem. In addition to that, the researcher attempts to draw out conclusions and provide some applicable suggestions and recommendations on how to activate learners' cultural schema to improve their reading comprehension level.

Finally, this chapter ends with some suggested general implications for activating cultural schema in order to inspire future researchers to promote the status of reading comprehension and the English language level as well in the Algerian educational system as well as some highlighted limitations of the study.

5.2 The Interview Analysis

This part of the chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the teachers' interview. This interview was devoted to gain middle school teachers' insights about the impact of cultural schema in teaching reading comprehension to young learners. Using this instrument as a third research tool aims at collecting more data and providing reliable information about the topic of this research. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the interview is divided into seven sections. Each section devoted for a set of questions: biographic information, general knowledge, and language of instruction, language learning and reading, reading comprehension activities, difficulties in teaching reading and cultural schema and reading.

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The ten interviewed teachers answered the questions of the interview through providing different ideas, views, perspectives, comments and suggestions. The majority of them could answer all questions included in the interview. Yet, each interview took a considerable duration of time since most of teachers did not have a clear idea about the topic in addition to the length of the interview.

Section One: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Ten middle school teachers presented their acceptance to participate in the current study. Most of them are middle school teachers in the Wilaya of Medea while only three teachers are from different Wilayas. Three of the participants are male teachers while the other seven ones are female teachers. They work in different areas of service. Five of them work in rural areas while the same number of them (five teachers) teach in urban schools. All teachers have a teaching experience, which ranges from ten to four years of service.

Section Two: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Question 01: What can you tell me about ‘Schemata’?

To start with, the teachers who took part in the interview were asked about the term “schemata”. In this question, the interviewed teachers could provide similar answers. Data collected from the teachers’ interview suggest that all teachers defined the word schemata as knowledge, background knowledge, prior knowledge, cognitive structures representing knowledge, diagram or plan, non-realistic knowledge and a teacher tried to explain the role of schemata while another one couldn’t define it. If learners use their background knowledge in the right way, they will be able to understand the right meaning presented in the text.

- **What about 'Cultural Schema'?**

In this question, interviewees provided different answers and comments. According to (Teacher 1), cultural schema is a universal knowledge while (Teacher 2) and (Teacher 8) argue that it means what learners know about culture. (Teacher 3) thinks that cultural schema is a pattern of schemata, which creates meaning in a particular culture. (Teacher 4) defines it as previous information that a person has acquired from experiences, knowledge, events, studies, books... (Teacher 5) and (Teacher 7) argue that cultural schema is the background knowledge that is related to culture whereas (Teacher 6) and (Teacher 9) explain the term as the implementation of one’s culture in understanding and comprehending any given information related to culture. Only one teacher (Teacher 10) could not

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define the term. For them, Culture is an important element to acquire new information in relation to previous related cultural background.

Question 02: Do you think that there is a relationship between ‘cultural schema’ and reading comprehension? How do you see this relationship?

Nine teachers think that there is a strong relationship between cultural schema and reading comprehension whereas only one teacher does not agree that there is a strong relationship.

They claim that cultural schema has a significant effect on learners’ comprehension. (Teacher 4) adds: “if there is no background about the topic, it will be difficult to build comprehension”. (Teacher 5) thinks that cultural schema is the way of comprehension itself. (Teacher 7) explains: “the reader uses his or her previous knowledge (cultural schema) to understand a new text. The eighth interviewee (Teacher 8) agrees on the fact that it helps students recall their own personal experiences to understand the new ones. Teacher (9) adds: “it is necessary that pupils use their cultural schema to understand texts”. On the same way, Teacher (10) explains: “There often is a relationship between the two because students tend to tackle different subjects depending on the way they were brought up so their cultural background plays a big role in the way they interpret or interact with what they read”.

Section Three: LANGUGAE OF INSTRUCTION

Question 01: Do you think that using mother tongue is effective in teaching English in middle school in Algeria? Why?

Of all respondents, eight teachers assert that using mother tongue is effective in teaching English in the Algerian context. They believe that is necessary when learners face difficulties in grammar and vocabulary when they encounter English as a new and foreign language for the first time. Teachers declare that they use mother language to explain difficult words to retain information in a faster and more efficient way. Teacher (8) asserts that she personally considers it as a “must” since Algerian beginner learners are not familiar with the English language and it is important to create a comfort zone for them throughout the use of their mother tongue. Teacher (4) explains: “To a certain point and at a certain level, yes, I do think it is effective. I have taught at university, primary, middle and high school, pretty much all the possible levels except adults, and I do think that using the mother tongue to explain some important things is mandatory sometimes and without it the pupils lose interest and become absent-minded because they can’t build any comprehension. Hence, using the mother tongue to explain the key words to give all the students the whole picture is not something

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bad and won't affect neither our teaching nor our students' minds". In addition to that, Teacher (6) adds: "Well, it is very effective. It shows learners the similarities that languages have. This results in an easy comprehension of the structure of the targeted language (English) as well as the easiness it offers learners while learning words and names of objects or animals. For instance, the effect is so clear in these cases.

Only two teachers disagree with the use of mother language in teaching English for middle school learners. They believe that this will hinder their development. Teacher (9) illustrates: "For me, no. Teachers should use gesture, realia to help learners understand and acquire the language better. Yet, sometimes they find themselves obliged to use their L1, but this should be done in a limited way.

The role of mother tongue in second language learning and teaching is a debatable subject. Many teachers disagree with use of mother tongue in foreign language classes while others argue that it has a positive effect on learners' when they face difficulties.

Question 02: Do you communicate with your pupils using English?

All interviewed teachers share the same opinion; they all use English in communicating with their pupils according to their level. It is necessary to develop learners' communicative skills in English to improve their comprehension and fluency. If yes, how often do you use it?

They often use from 50% to 80% of the session; according to each learning situation.

Question 03: Do you organize extra activities (such as language clubs, workshops, Jigsawing) for your learners?

Among the ten teachers, eight of them responded positively while the other two teachers did not.

- **If yes, can you mention some? How often do you organize them?**

They mentioned different activities like:

- Teacher (1): crosswords (during tutorial sessions).
- Teacher (2): school English club for extra activities like songs and plays (twice a month).
- Teacher (3): jig-sawing activities, songs, crosswords, icebreakers... (Once a week).

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- Teacher (4): book clubs, watching short movies, vocabulary games... (Once per term, once in a fortnight, once a month).
- Teacher (6): reading group (during tutorial sessions).
- Teacher (7): class decoration, recording videos while speaking in English... (During tutorial sessions; once a week).
- Teacher (8): flashcard games, dictionary competition, hangman, crosswords (each session in the warming-up phase).
- Teacher (10): scrambled words, sentences and crosswords (once or twice a week).

Section Four: LANGUGAE LEARNING AND READING

Question 01: What do your learners read in English?

Most of the interviewed teachers state that their learners read texts provided by the teacher (most of the time taken from the textbook), short stories, novels, books that teachers recommend. Only two teachers (Teacher 6 and Teacher 7) declare that only few excellent pupils do otherwise they rarely do without the supervision of their teacher.

Question 02: How do they find reading in English (is it easy/difficult/interesting/boring..?)

- If the answer is easy (enjoyable), explain why? what do they read in English?

Only two teachers (Teacher 7 and teacher 9) recognize reading as an enjoyable activity. They claim that it is an interesting and enjoyable activity and it can be easy if they use the dictionary.

- If the answer is difficult (boring), explain why?

Seven teachers declare that their pupils face difficulties while reading in English (Teachers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10). They claim that pupils are not used to read in their daily life in addition to language difficulties. Thus, they get discouraged. Teacher (6) illustrates: "It is nearly impossible to enjoy reading when having difficulties in understanding words and sentences. It is the case even with adults learning languages". Teacher (4) explains: "For middle school learners (beginners), it is a challenge. It is difficult and tiring to look for each single word in the dictionary. But I think it is less challenging for those who like and master the language, they are curious to discover new words so they find it interesting". Finally, Teacher (10) adds: "I believe it has to do with the fact that English is a foreign language for them and they haven't been exposed enough to it to master it".

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All reasons mentioned above make reading in English difficult, challenging and less motivating. Thus, this will hinder learners' performance and comprehension. Teachers should motivate their learners to make them able to face their difficulties and improve their level in turn. Interviewed teachers will suggest some solutions to discuss the problem with their learners in class.

- What do you do so that you know how your pupils feel about reading in English?

All teachers agree on one idea they all make a group discussion during reading sessions. They give the chance to their learners to express themselves and discuss their weaknesses in order to suggest some solutions.

Question 03: In your opinion, how can reading enhance pupils' language learning level?

Teachers share the same opinion. They all think reading has a positive impact on learners. Teachers (1), (2) and (3) assert that reading improves their general knowledge and other skills like speaking and writing in addition to gaining motivation to read. Teachers (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (10) insist on the fact that reading enhances their level and make them able to develop their vocabulary and grammar. Teacher (9) explains: "Reading is a vital skill because it can improve their memory and their critical thinking as well when it comes to answer questions related to the text. It is also important to acquire new vocabulary, to pronounce words correctly...etc".

According to Collins Block, Rodgers, & Johnson (2004), readers gain the confidence to select more challenging reading material, which in turn improves their vocabulary and broadens the depth and breadth of their cognitive schemas.

Section Five: READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Question 01: How would you define the term 'reading comprehension' in terms of working principle? (*Process {bottom-up} or product {top-down}*) (*tool or skill*)?

Eight (08) respondents defined the term "reading comprehension" as a "**skill**". According to them, it is the ability to process and understand a written text in relation to the prior knowledge.

Remarkably, Teacher (4) regards reading as both tool and skill whereas only one respondent thinks it is just a tool used in teaching and learning English.

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Question 02: As a tool, it might be considered as a frame to teach Grammar, Vocabulary, content, etc. For you, what is the importance of reading comprehension as a skill in English?

Teachers (1), (3), (7), (8), (9) and (10) argue that reading is the most important skill because it improves language learning, vocabulary and writing and grammar should not be taught in isolation. Teacher (2) explains: “It is very important if it is used effectively in the classroom. Teachers may use structures from the text to teach grammar or vocabulary from context”. Teacher 4 adds: “In my humble opinion, reading, which is a receptive skill, helps more to back up the other skills as writing and speaking by building a solid repertoire of words and a good knowledge of grammar. Reading helps acquire new words, new information and knowledge and thus the background knowledge increases, which contributes in learning a language”. On the same way, Teacher (6) believes that reading comprehension is far more significant than to be limited to a mere tool of teaching grammar or vocabulary. He explicates: “In fact, those aspects can be taught without using reading as a frame. Reading is a basic skill that should be taught to be the end itself....reading is for reading, and not for doing other tasks’.

According to them, reading can play an important role in developing learners’ second language proficiency and fluency. Through reading, learners can improve their vocabulary, general knowledge of the target language, other language skills (such as writing, speaking and listening) and discover new cultures. Moreover, they can also improve their grammar skills in context.

Question 03: To what extent do you think Reading comprehension is targeted as a skill to be developed in Middle school English curricula?

Teachers (1), (2) and (8) claim that reading is not given too much importance and time in the Algerian curricula. Teacher (7) thinks that reading in the middle school is targeted as a tool more than a skill. Teacher (10) adds: “I believe it is a neglected skill”. Teacher (6) argues: “It is given a fair amount of attention that it should get, but it is still lacking the field of implanting an actual background knowledge that really has a relation with what the learners know”. Teacher (4) thinks that reading is targeted in the Algerian curricula to a high extent. Teacher (9) explains: “Middle school is the stage in which learners discover English for the first time. The reading skill is essential to acquire the language and the curriculum takes this into consideration and encourages teachers to enhance the learners’ skill of reading descriptive, narrative, argumentative meaningful texts”. Yet, only one respondent (Teacher 5) had no idea about it.

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Most teachers believe that reading should receive more attention in the Algerian curriculum. They think that reading is a neglected skill that needs to be reviewed and developed to help Algerian learners become skilled readers and fluent learners of English.

Question 04: In your description, you have mentioned some factors that represent how important Reading is as a skill in learning English. How would you target these aspects? (How do you address this importance?)

Teachers (1), (3), (4), (7) and (8) encourages their learners to read more than their schoolbook texts. Teacher (2) adds: “As much as they read, they will be able to write better”. Teacher (5) argues that these factors are taken into consideration while planning lessons. Teacher (6) in turn adds: “If I had a choice, I would plan a session for reading where its main goal is understanding the text itself as a whole and not doing some tasks”. According to Teacher (9), these aspects can be targeted through the variation of texts provided each time like culture, food, travelling, health...

The last one (teacher 10) argues that she doesn't do much because of time constraint, but she sometimes gives extra reading texts during tutorial sessions.

Question 05: How do you teach reading comprehension for your pupils in class? Can you give me some examples?

- Teacher (1): matching, filling the gaps, ordering, and answering questions...
- Teacher (2): spelling, vocabulary and writing tasks.
- Teacher (3): monitoring comprehension, answering and generating questions.
- Teacher (4): teaching reading through textbook texts or extra texts and ask comprehension questions
- Teacher (5): the traditional method (text/questions).
- Teacher (6): PDP framework.
- Teacher (7): visual aids (pictures and videos), group work ...
- Teacher (8): three-phases lesson with a set of activities.
- Teacher (9): PDP framework. First, warming-up (brainstorming, matching activities...). Pre-reading stage (eliciting questions about the topic, video, song...). During-reading stage (scanning activities). Post-reading stage (production).
- Teacher (10): warming activities, matching, comprehension questions...

All interviewed teachers suggested some useful activities that they personally use in class to teach reading comprehension. They proposed a set of activities with different aims to reach by the end of the lesson. These activities can be used in different lesson plan stages: pre-reading activities, during- reading activities and post- reading activities.

Question 06: Do your pupils participate actively in the reading Comprehension class?

All respondents responded positively to this question. They claim that their pupils participate actively in the reading session rather than other skills. Teacher (9) adds: “it depends on each pupil. Some of them take part actively while others are shy or slow learners...”

Teachers should guide their learners through creating interactive opportunities for them. Learners in turn will be able to develop their own skill and participate positively to enhance their level of comprehension.

Question 07: How do you judge their reading skill development?

The first teacher argues that reading development is judged through speaking and writing fluency. Teachers (2), (3), (5), (6) and (10) add: “through their participation and answers”. Teacher (4) explicates: “pretty well if the text is interesting. I also notice that when I play a video or a short passage from a movie about the same topic that is going to be dealt with in the reading session, they show more interest and they like answering and finding the pieces to the puzzle”. Teacher (7) suggests that she uses short rubrics and questionnaire during tutorial sessions whereas Teacher (8) believes that this skill needs to be worked on more. Luckily, Teacher (9) attests that through time, he sees some progress regarding pupils’ pronunciation, their spelling, vocabulary and understanding.

Question 08: In case their reaction is not positive (*I mean in case they do not participate as necessary*), what are the possible reasons for you?

Interviewees argue on the following reasons:

Boring texts, lack of motivation, slow learners, difficult and challenging texts that are beyond pupils’ linguistic and intellectual level, poor prior knowledge on the topic, difficult and ambiguous vocabulary, shyness and the fear of committing mistakes.

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Question 09: How would you deal with their weaknesses and difficulties in reading comprehension?

- Teacher (1): extra tasks related to reading.
- Teacher (2): changing the text into a moderate level.
- Teacher (3): find texts and books they are interested in.
- Teacher (4): provide learners with new vocabulary, ask them to read and watch videos in English, simplify the explanation for them.
- Teacher (5): choose the appropriate materials, which fits their needs and level, make them interested through warming-up activities, try to attract their attention and motivate them to read.
- Teacher (6): repetition is effective, the more you try the more you get used to it and learn it.
- Teacher (7): using pair or group work to share ideas, dictionaries, and providing extra time for activities.
- Teacher (8): teachers should be selective in the choice of texts.
- Teacher (9): choose texts of their interests, needs and simple vocabulary as well as avoiding over-correcting and motivate them to read even with committing mistakes.
- Teacher (10): provide them with the general idea and explain the tasks for them.

Teachers suggested different solutions to deal with learners' weaknesses and difficulties in reading comprehension.

Section Six: DIFFICULTIES OF TEACHING READING

Question 01: Do you find teaching reading comprehension challenging?

Six teachers among the interviewees believe that teaching reading comprehension is challenging while the other four teachers do not think so.

- **If yes, how?**

Those teachers who think that teaching reading comprehension is challenging because of:

- Large and mixed abilities classes which are hard to be controlled and dealt with.
- Time management.
- Lack of teaching aids like data show, speakers...
- Keeping pupils captivated and interested.
- Uninteresting and ambiguous topics
- It requires efforts and skills for both teachers and pupils.

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- Pupils face new vocabulary with no background about.

These difficulties may draw obstacles in the comprehension process and hinder learners' improvement in reading comprehension. It is recommended for teachers to find solutions such as class discussion, or work in pairs, with their learners to review their difficulties.

Question 02: In your opinion, what are the possible reasons for this challenge? (training issue, complexity of the reading texts, level of the pupils, etc.)

According to the respondents, there are many issues, which make teaching reading challenging. Starting with the first teacher who thinks that the availability of few reading texts cannot help learners to become good readers. Then, Teachers (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), (9) and (10) think that the issue is within the complexity of the texts and its choice in accordance to learners' level and cultural knowledge. The third teacher believes that comprehension issues are the main reason behind this challenge.

Question 03: What did/do you do to overcome this challenge?

The respondents suggest the following solutions to overcome this challenge:

- Providing adapted texts according to learners' level.
- Explain the text.
- Identifying learners' problems, reading texts with them and being aware about their cultural preferences.
- Advising learners to read, use dictionaries to find synonyms and help them link their prior knowledge with stories and events they are reading.
- Choosing interesting texts that cope with pupils' needs and expectations.
- Doing repetitive skills that build the needed confidence for learners to advance.
- Changing the texts and adapting it according to learners' needs and interests.
- Devoting more time to reading comprehension.
- Choosing texts that suit the level and the background (culture) of the pupils as well as motivating them to read texts of their interest.

Section Seven: CULTURAL SCHEMA AND READING COMPREHENISON

Question 01: Do you think your learners are aware of the term 'cultural background'?

Seven teachers among the respondents claim that their learners are not aware about the term and its use and importance. Only three teachers (Teachers 3, 6 and 8) declare that their pupils do.

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Mahmoudi (2017) defines it as the background knowledge which is related to national and social knowledge, topic familiarity, previous experiences, and cultural knowledge.

- If yes, from where do you think they have acquired this term?

Those teachers think that their pupils have acquired this term from school. They are aware of the term without mentioning it in the class. Teachers (8) explains: “They are subconsciously aware of it”.

Question 02: Do your learners make use of their ‘cultural background knowledge’ to understand a text?

Only one teacher (Teacher 2) argues that his learners do not make use of their cultural background to understand a text while the other nine teachers claim that their learners use their cultural background to understand the text they are reading.

- **Could you explain how?**

(Teacher1), (Teacher 7) and (Teacher 9) argue that they link their knowledge with new meaning. Teacher (6) adds: “They always try to implement their own life experiences as a basic tool to compare and understand”. Teacher (2) claims that cultural awareness is a global term nowadays not only in education. Teacher (4) illustrates: “They always surprise me by linking their experiences and knowledge to what they are reading and they become even motivated to continue reading and understanding the text”. Teacher (8) adds: “they may hit you with: oh I know this word or I’ve seen that in a movies”. In addition to that, Teacher (5) justifies the use of cultural background knowledge to understand and explain some behaviors or events that are not known or accepted in our culture. The last teacher (Teacher 10) states that it can be seen through their reactions and perceptions of certain subjects.

- **In your opinion, how did they know about using ‘cultural schema’ in reading comprehension?**

(Teacher 1), (Teacher 2) and (Teacher 3) think that pupils use their cultural schema through their teachers, reading texts and their cultural topics, language, norms and traditions. (Teacher 4) explicates: “I pretty much think it is something learnt by themselves, metacognitive skills... Or maybe has been taught by their parents/siblings/friends as tricks to remember things and be interested more in what they are reading”. (Teacher 6) “I believe it is an innate ability that can be used without being aware of its existence. Much like talking which we do without understanding how our vocal cords work”. (Teacher 7) adds: “I think that they do not know but it happens automatically without thinking.

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They relate what they knew before with what they have just read”. According to (Teacher 9) Learners feel concerned when teachers choose texts that really serve their needs and cultural backgrounds. It is a way to attract their attention; they can use their prior knowledge to learn new vocabulary. Also, (Teacher 10) I do not think they do in purpose. It just comes by instinct. Only (Teacher 5) and (Teacher 8) have no idea about this process.

- **To what extent do you think your learners are successful in this?**

(Teacher 1), (Teacher 5) and (Teacher 10) think that learners are successful in this to an average extent while (Teacher 2) and (Teacher 3) could not explain more. (Teacher 4), (Teacher 6), (Teacher 7), (Teacher 8) and (Teacher 9) argue that learners are successful to a good extent and it works with a large number of pupils. (Teacher 4) states: “The majority are pretty successful in this if they have the right previous cultural knowledge”. In addition to that, (Teacher 9) believes that learners need to be put in situations that are similar to their lives, their surrounding culture, their way of thinking and their interests.

Question 03: Have you taught your pupils how to use their cultural background knowledge before reading a text?

Seven teachers of the respondents argue that they have already taught their pupils how to use their cultural background knowledge before reading a text while the rest (three teachers) have not.

- **If yes, could you explain how?**

These teachers taught their pupils how to use their cultural background knowledge before reading a text through different ways. (Teacher 1) make her pupils think about what will they read (guess). (Teacher 3) insists on establishing a good learning atmosphere. She explains: “you need to create an atmosphere of inclusivity. Include allowances for cultural necessities in classroom rules, choose texts that are relevant and explore cultural differences through communicating with pupils about their needs and expectations. (Teacher 4) explicates more: “I tell me pupils some tricks to understand and make links between what they read and what they already know before. To link whatever, they read to everything that they have seen or heard”. (Teacher 5) declares that in the warming up phase, she asks her learners to predict or guess the topic of the text after interpreting a picture, listening to script or watching a video refreshing their prior knowledge related to the text. (Teacher 6) adds: “I teach them to think of a text as a piece of writing that was written for them specifically and how does it relate to them. According to (Teacher 7), this can be taught by guessing, predicting and asking some questions. The last teacher (Teacher 10) thinks that it is a matter of habit

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and that is why the warming-up is a very important phase to recall previous information before they start reading.

Question 04: Can reading strategies (such as guessing and predicting) be effective for learners to achieve understanding in reading comprehension?

All interviewees responded positively to this question. This means they all believe that reading strategies can be effective for learners to achieve understanding in reading comprehension.

Question 05: Do you think that your pupils rely on their cultural schema in anticipating or guessing the meaning of a text?

Nine respondents argue that their pupils rely on their cultural schema in anticipating and guessing the meaning of a text. Only one teacher does not agree.

- **How often?**

Four teachers state that their pupils always do that. Two of them assert that it occurs many times, two other teachers think it sometimes happens and the last respondents (two teachers) declare that their pupils rarely do.

Question 06: Do you think that cultural schema makes a difference in developing the reading comprehension skill?

Nine teachers (Teachers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) think that cultural schema makes a difference in developing the reading comprehension skill and it affects the process of understanding while reading in accordance to (Teacher 5). (Teacher 6) confirms; “I surely do. If learners are capable of using it to their advantage, then it will prove as a way for them to acquire English or any other languages”. (Teacher 7) assures: “Yes, I think that without cultural schema it’s so hard for pupils to understand a text. Each time pupils read a text, they learn new things, which help them to understand another text that means they develop their reading comprehension skill easily”. Finally, (Teacher 8) explicates: “For sure, a foreign language cannot be taught only in the native context. Pupils in remote villages do not know much about the foreign lifestyle for instance. They are mainly familiar with the Algerian one, teachers should not exclude that when organizing reading comprehension sessions”.

4.2.1 Discussion of the Teachers' Interview Results

The respondents' answers to the interview questions reveal that most of them have provided a positive addition to this research. They are interested in the topic of teaching reading comprehension and most of them approached the aims of teaching reading comprehension, difficulties, challenges, suggestions and the role of cultural schema in teaching reading comprehension. ALtarriba & Forsythe (1993) add: "Prior knowledge and cultural background greatly influence comprehension processes." Being culturally familiar with the new information makes learners understand better. Most teachers indicate that they use reading strategies to teach their pupils how to activate their cultural schema to understand new information.

Teachers are aware of the significant role of cultural schema, teaching reading comprehension and the positive relationship they share. They argued that using one's culture, knowledge and context show less challenges and difficulties in the comprehension process. Most of them believe that it is necessary to use the mother tongue because it serves pupils' cultural knowledge to understand new information. Simultaneously, all teachers claim the importance of communicating in English with their learners in class. The majority of them organize extra activities for their pupils to help them face difficulties in reading comprehension.

Interviewed teachers declare that their pupils read the texts of the schoolbook. Only few of them (excellent pupils), read extra texts without the supervision of their teachers. Yet, they find reading in English difficult and need support from their teachers. All teachers believe that reading has a positive impact on learners' language progress. Most of them think that it is an important skill in language learning, which makes other skills easier to master and makes learning grammar and vocabulary taught in context less challenging and difficult. While some teachers claim that reading is not given too much importance in the Algerian curricula, others think that it is well targeted in the middle school where pupils discover English for the first time.

Thus, they suggest taking reading into consideration and encouraging teachers to help learners improve their performance in reading comprehension. They suggested a set of activities for pupils to enhance their reading comprehension skills either in class or at home. Using these activities will enable learners to improve their performance in reading comprehension.

Maghsoudi (2012) proclaims that pre-reading strategies have been developed to help students relate new information in the text to their background knowledge. Teachers should train their learners how to use new information with their existing cultural background knowledge in order to understand

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the new context. Mahmoudi (2017) explains: “students rely on their prior knowledge about the text and link new information to that background knowledge”. In addition, Wallace (1992) cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) argues that reading activities can promote interpretation of the text through the interaction between the reader and the text. Readers can comprehend a text that is unfamiliar to them through interaction made by given reading activities to facilitate comprehension.

Teachers argue that much more time and efforts should be devoted to teaching reading comprehension. On the same way, Ghasemi & Hajizadeh (2011) believe that reading comprehension, as a fundamental language skill, requires a complex acquisition process which can account for the way that learners comprehend what they read. Reading is an important skill that empowers learners in improving other skills and the language itself. They claim that pupils participate actively in reading rather than other skills. Teachers discuss with their learners to fix their problems and sometimes they use short questionnaires to identify them. However, many pupils do not participate during the session. This is due to many factors such as boring and difficult texts, lack of motivation, level difficulty, shyness and fear and poor cultural prior knowledge.

According to Choudhury (2014), textbooks are also being criticized for being too artificial in their presentation of the target language. He argues that these textbooks lack of authentic material, which, simplifies the language using real-life situations. Thus, Bishop (2001) cited in Alterio & McDrury (2002) maintains: “we must attempt to create learning relationships within classrooms wherein learners’ culturally generated sense-making processes are used and developed in order that they may successfully participate in classroom interaction”.

Interviewees suggested different activities and strategies to face these difficulties and make reading more enjoyable and successful for pupils since they see teaching this skill very difficult and challenging. The majority of them claim that their pupils are aware of cultural schema subconsciously. They always use their cultural background to understand a text and they mention the link between their previous experiences and the present situation. Springer and Collins (2008) cited in Al Muzzamil Fareen (2013) insist on the fact that learners are not able to extend their talk outside the classroom in English though they communicate in English with their teachers in class. According to (Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan, 2014) argue that there is a strong relationship between cultural schema and reading comprehension. They insist on the fact that understanding a text is not only based on the linguistic knowledge but also related to the learner’s knowledge and culture. Anderson and Pearson, 1984 and Weber (1991) cited in Youcef, Karimi, & Janfeshan (2014) suggest that cultural schema has facilitating effect on reading comprehension, in both adults and children who have a background knowledge in relation to the topic of a text. Teachers argue that learners activate their

cultural schema naturally through relating their cultural background to the new information and most of them are successful in this.

Most of respondents have confirmed that they always teach their pupils how to activate their cultural schema using different strategies before reading such as guessing, predicting, brainstorming and refreshing their prior knowledge through visual aids. According to them, these strategies are very effective in enhancing learners' level in reading comprehension. According to Andersson & Barnitz (1984), readers bring to a text a wide range of experiences with the world and with discourse, which they use in constructing a meaningful representation of the text. Anderson (1977), Morgan (1983) and Spiro (1980) cited in Andersson & Barnitz (1984) agrees that the Prior knowledge, organized in topical clusters (schemata) provides a context for comprehension.

EFL teachers proclaim that their pupils rely on their cultural schema in guessing and predicting meaning of a new text most of the time. The greater part of respondents, think that activating pupils' cultural schema makes a difference in developing the skill of reading comprehension and improving their understanding. Maghsoudi (2012) argues that students with well-developed background knowledge comprehend texts better than those with poor schema. Andersson & Barnitz (1984) adds: "Students in any one classroom may represent many backgrounds and bring to the reading task the diversity and richness of many languages and cultures".

5.3 Summary of the Main Findings

The results of this study discussed the reading comprehension problems and difficulties faced by EFL learners in addition to the significant effect of cultural schema to enhance the level of reading comprehension. To prove this, several research instruments were implemented to collect data which were analysed and interpreted to answer the research questions.

On the basis of the results mentioned above and a large experiment made by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982), it is proved that activating learners' cultural schema before reading is of a great importance in improving their level of comprehension. This can be shown through the scores got by the experimental groups, in reading comprehension, before the experimental study (training sessions) and after they have been trained on using reading strategies (predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping) to activate their cultural schema before reading. Pupils in the experimental group achieved better in the post-test than they did in the pre-test.

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This study revealed that cultural schema has a positive impact on middle school EFL learners' reading comprehension. These findings confirm the results of several related studies. The findings also highlighted a variety of reading strategies to activate cultural schema and can promote middle school learners reading comprehension.

Several studies in the field of education have confirmed the results of this study. Early studies by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982), Andersson & Barnitz (1984) and Barnitz (1986) introduced the relationship between cultural schema and reading comprehension and its major role in improving this skill. Using the cultural background knowledge to understand a specific text is a very important step. Maghsoudi (2012) asserts that when the cultural backgrounds of the author and the reader differ, the reader may not understand the text appropriately. Thus, it is important to enrich the cultural background in order to raise the level of comprehension.

Results revealed that cultural schemata can influence reading comprehension performance. Then, another study by ALtarriba & Forsythe (1993) highlighted "The Role of Cultural Schema in Reading Comprehension. A study entitled: "The Effects of Cultural Schema and Reading Activities on Reading Comprehension" carried out by Razi (2004) investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Different groups participated in an experimental research design. Results of the study revealed that cultural schema has a significant effect of comprehension on short stories.

Another related study by Fuhong (2004) entitled: "Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension" examined the role of cultural schema in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. Results concludes that cultural schema has positively affected the teaching of reading comprehension and that pre-reading activities activated learner's schema and improved their level in reading comprehension.

All in all, the results of the study confirm and support the arguments of many scholars and researchers in that cultural schema activation has a positive effect on EFL young learners' reading comprehension because the comprehension process occurs when there is an interaction between the text being read and the readers' previously stored information. (See review of literature chapter). Thus, results obtained in the experimental study confirm that activating cultural schema, as a reading strategy, has a positive effect in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension level.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications of the Research

As already mentioned in the analysis of the research tools above, activating learners' cultural schemata before reading displays a significant role in facilitating their interaction with the text. It has a positive effect in improving their level of comprehension. This section is devoted for some proposed implications, recommendations, suggestions and limitations of this research.

This study attempts to tackle some EFL reading comprehension issues. Program writers, curriculum developers as well as teachers can implement the findings of this research for developing reading materials and pedagogy according to their learners' level, needs, cultural preferences, and interests.

5.4.1 Teachers' Role

Classrooms share a variety of learners with different learning styles. Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) assume that teachers must be sensitive to potential comprehension difficulties which ESL/EFL readers may encounter with a text due to a lack of familiarity with the culture-specific content the text presumes. It is recommended for teachers to act the role of models for their learners. Teachers should introduce reading comprehension strategies explicitly to their learners. In addition to that, they should play the role of a classroom guide to help their learners find their weaknesses and guide them to identify the right reading strategies that fit their learning styles. This can be done using short interviews, reading checklists, conversations, discussions and many other techniques. In this way, teachers should provide their learners with guidance to face their difficulties and create useful opportunities to solve their problems.

Teachers may provide their learners with simple texts that suit different levels especially for slow learners and give them the chance to cope with other learners. Texts should address their level, culture, interests, and needs in terms of content and language. Moreover, they can organize workshops for their learners to train them on different activities and tasks dealing with a variety of cultures.

Moreover, they should devote some extra time and efforts to help their learners make a link between cultural prior knowledge and new information they are encountered with to activate their cultural schema and build comprehension. However, (Fuhong, 2004) argues that almost available EFL reading materials in China are about foreign culture, but the activation of learners' background knowledge is still neglected by teachers. According to him, this due to the lack of awareness of schema's role in reading comprehension.

In addition to that, EFL teachers should select texts according to their learners' levels, cultures, interests, preferences, needs, individual differences. This provides meaningful texts and understandable messages, which help in activating existing cultural schema and building new information.

5.4.2 Developing Learners' Habit of Cultural Schema Activation before Reading.

The results of this study demonstrated that activating learners' cultural schema using different reading strategies such as predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping strategies before reading plays a significant role for learners to construct new meaning on the basis of new information mentioned in the text and their previous cultural knowledge. According to Yadav (2014), habits, conducts, values, virtues, customs and beliefs are all shaped through the mother tongue that is an indispensable instrument for the development of intellectual, physical and moral aspects of education. In accordance to the **Guidance for Secondary Schools** (September 1997) cited in Yadav (2014), educational research worldwide and in Hong Kong has shown that students learn better through their mother tongue. They argue that teaching using mother tongue has a positive effect on students' learning who prefer this way and perform better than using only English as medium of instruction.

These strategies help them activate their cultural schema and facilitate their understanding. Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982) illustrates: "Readers acquire meaning from text by analysing words and sentences against the backdrop of their own personal knowledge of the world. Personal knowledge, in turn, is conditioned by age, sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation- in short, by a person's culture." Thus, teachers need to develop in their learners' habit in using these strategies. Teachers should pave the way to their learners and help them to connect new information exposed in the text to the previous cultural background knowledge using various strategies and techniques. This can be done through encouraging them to brainstorm information they know about the topic presented in the new text before reading it.

Teachers should encourage their learners to predict the content of the text before reading. They can rely on different clues presented in the text such as the title, the subtitles, the source of the text, the pictures, and the structure of the text. Predicting is considered as an important schema activation strategy, which is of a great importance in the process of reading comprehension. Predicting is a useful strategy that helps learners in setting a purpose for reading and monitoring their reading

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comprehension. It helps learners predict ideas that may occur in the text before reading it. In this way, learners can make connections between the new information and their existing cultural knowledge.

Moreover, the strategy of brainstorming is also a beneficial cooperative technique in teaching reading for EFL learners since it is less time consuming, less formal and does not require a lot of preparation. Also, brainstorming gives learners the chance to work together in order to link their previous cultural knowledge and existing information to make connections. Learners have the freedom to express their ideas on the basis of their cultural knowledge and presented information without being worried about committing mistakes. This creates more engagement and motivation in reading to find out what happens in the text.

Another important strategy in the reading process is semantic mapping. It represents a graphical image of information in relation to previous related cultural knowledge. This strategy helps learners activate their cultural knowledge in order to facilitate their understanding. Teachers should train their learners on using a semantic mapping activity before reading to introduce key vocabulary and activate their cultural background.

In other words, activating EFL learners' cultural schema before reading, using predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping strategies improves their engagement in the reading task and gives them enough confidence to start reading about new information they can link to their previous cultural knowledge and build meaning. This makes learners active readers in the reading process rather than just decoding written symbols in the text. It is better to rely on their past experiences and cultural knowledge to understand the meaning of what is written in the text.

In addition to that, making efforts in building new cultural schema or background knowledge about a specific topic without having some considerable linguistic abilities and significant vocabulary will not work all the time. Learners should be trained on developing their language proficiency and vocabulary. This will make them benefit from some cultural schema activation strategies and will understand new topics and texts using their linguistic knowledge.

5.5 Some Recommendations

In this section, the researcher attempts to present some suggested recommendations. Having a look on the participants' answers to the different research tools (pre and post-tests, questionnaire and the interview), it is clear that the majority of learners are strongly aware of the significant role of cultural schema on reading comprehension. Thus, it is recommended to call for research in the

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content of reading comprehension curriculum looking for implementing different reading strategies in activating cultural schema to enhance learners' level of comprehension.

Teachers should train their learners to use different reading strategies to activate their cultural schema to get encouraged and motivated to read. There are several strategies such as brainstorming texts before reading, predicting before reading, guessing the new content...

Teachers should guide their learners to discover their hidden comprehension problems in reading comprehension. In this way, they should show their learners the way to become more confident, independent and self-directed. Thus, they will change their attitudes towards reading comprehension, activate their cultural schema to understand new texts and improve their level of comprehension. This process should take enough time to train learners in the right way. It is recommended that English should be taught in a foreign language context. Teachers should bring texts and tasks on English real-life situations.

It is also recommended to design reading materials in preference to learners' interests, level, culture, and language proficiency. These materials should consist of different types of reading activities and texts to increase learners' understanding through activating their cultural schema. The availability of reading material for learners is important in reading classes. Teachers should select materials that can motivate learners to read more.

Further, the class atmosphere should reflect the cultural content of the texts being read. Pupils are required to organize their cultural knowledge before reading using semantic mapping. Thus, teachers should provide their learners with pre-reading tasks to activate their cultural schema and facilitate their understanding and post-reading activities. In addition to that, teachers should provide their learners with culturally based texts to develop their cultural schema that plays an important role in reading.

In terms of long-term projects, teachers should assign projects based on different cultures in English. They should provide their learners with a rich material holding a different cultural content. Teachers should encourage their learners to read culturally different famous works in English to develop their cultural knowledge and improve their productions.

Educational institutions that are responsible on syllabus designing should ensure that relevant culture is targeted. Teachers should be aware of their role in training their learners in the ESL classrooms. Exams should be culturally based on what was taught and learned in the syllabi.

Moreover, it is recommended to create new matters for pupils in the three different levels (primary, middle and high schools). Teaching culture and training learners on adapting new cultures to understand new information is an important step towards improving the level of reading comprehension and the language proficiency itself.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Since no research can cover all the aspects of a specific issue, this study has attempted to provide some suggestions for further research.

First, although participants had no cultural knowledge about texts tackled in the study, they could interact well with texts and understand new information. It is suggested to replicate the study with a different cultural group of learners from a totally different culture and background knowledge.

In addition, in order to measure the real impact of cultural schema activation on reading comprehension, this study would also be conducted with different levels of learners with different levels of language proficiency such as other middle school levels (1ms, 2ms, and 3ms) as well as high school pupils and university students.

Moreover, a larger study including an extended sample could have had more convincing and reliable results. Thus, further research as well as other related studies have to be conducted to examine the results of the current study in addition to testing other cultural schema activation strategies with a larger population including other levels of language proficiency.

5.7 Conclusion

The current chapter presents data collected and analysed results obtained from the teachers' interview. It is an additional part to the previous chapter, which presents results related to learners' (participants) contribution in study. This chapter consisted of teachers' thoughts about the study with a detailed analysis of their contributions and a general synthesis of the whole study results.

It has also highlighted some pedagogical implications of the research in relation to the teachers' roles in classrooms and the development of learners' habits to develop their reading strategies through activating their cultural schema. The last section of the chapter has also mentioned some recommendations and suggestions for future research in the same field.

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This study has investigated the effects of activating cultural schema on reading comprehension. The results of the present study have confirmed that learners face many difficulties in reading such as the lack of needed vocabulary to understand a new culturally different text. Consequently, these struggles have shaped a negative attitude towards the skill of reading comprehension. Thus, the majority of students have attempted to solve their problems using reading strategies such as activating their cultural schema to understand the new text. That is why, this research has provided some effective strategies in motivating middle school pupils and activating their cultural schema to efficiently read and understand new and difficult texts.

General Conclusion

Reading is a fundamental skill in teaching and learning a foreign language. It can play a crucial role in EFL classrooms if learners activate their cultural schema in order to enhance their comprehension in the target language. As a middle school teacher of English, we stood on the difficulties that our pupils encounter in constructing the meaning of a given text. This nurtured our interest and fuelled our motivation to conduct the present study following the fact that pupils neglect the use of comprehension strategies that are thought to help them activate and utilise their cultural knowledge to improve comprehension. The present study was an attempt to investigate the impact of cultural schema on English reading comprehension amongst middle school pupils to prove that readers' prior knowledge plays a crucial role in enhancing comprehension.

The present thesis was made up of five integrated chapters. Two theoretical chapters, one chapter for research methodology and two analytical chapters. The first chapter represented a brief critical review in relation to the reading comprehension skill. The chapter began with some definitions of reading comprehension. Then, it tackled the types of reading comprehension: intensive reading and extensive reading. Moreover, this chapter provided a detailed explanation of reading comprehension theories: bottom-up model, top-down model and interactive model. Furthermore, it highlighted some reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, identifying the main idea, summarizing, brainstorming and semantic mapping. Later, it tackled some characteristics and ethics of research. Finally, it shed light on the educational reforms and textbooks and teaching English in the Algerian middle schools.

The second chapter focused on the role of cultural schema in enhancing reading comprehension. It started with presenting some theoretical concepts related to language and culture. Then, it has discussed the concept of schema, its history, some definitions and schema theory. After that, it highlighted some schema activation strategies such as: predicting, brainstorming and text previewing. This chapter also reviewed the types of schemata: content schema, formal schema, linguistic schema and cultural schema. This latter was dealt with in the next section in relation with the skill of reading. Later, this chapter has highlighted the effects of cultural schema on reading comprehension. Finally, it has concluded with some major related studies in different contexts all over the world.

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Chapter three has presented the methodological aspects of research. It has described the research approach, design and setting as well as it provided a description of the sampling method of the study which include 4ms pupils in Chahba Mouna middle school and different middle school teachers from different schools in Medea. As for the methodological section, an experimental research design of the study was based on different sessions introduced to learners during six months with a group of 62 participants. Following this approach, the study has included two groups (the control group and the experimental group). The control group consisted of 31 participants as well as the experimental group. This chapter has also described data collection instruments and analysis. A triangulation of research methods has been employed in the study: pupils' questionnaire, pre-test and the post-test and teachers' interview. Finally, this chapter concluded by highlighting some limitations of the study and some ethical issues.

The analytical part of the study was composed of two chapters. Chapter four is concerned with data collection and analysis of the first instrument's results. It has analysed the pupils' questionnaire and discussed results. In addition to that, it dealt with the analysis of the pre-test, post-test and discussion of their results.

The last chapter has provided the interview analysis, interpretation and discussion of results as well as the summary of the main findings in the relationship to major related studies on the role of cultural schema on reading comprehension. It has also shed light on some pedagogical implications, recommendations and some suggestions for future research. Finally, this chapter has ended up with a synthesis conclusion about the different procedures implemented during the process of conducting the research in addition to a list of all references, appendices and the summary of the work.

The main findings of the study have discussed the reading comprehension problems and difficulties faced by EFL learners in addition to the significant effect of cultural schema to enhance the level of reading comprehension. To prove this, several research instruments were implemented to collect data which were analysed and interpreted to answer the research questions. The first research question was about the impact of cultural schema on Chahba Mouna middle school learners' reading comprehension skills in the city of Medea. The second one looked for the main difficulties that Chahba Mouna middle school learners face in reading in the same city. The last question attempted to highlight the cultural schema activation strategies that can promote Chahba Mouna middle school

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learners' reading comprehension. Thus, this work has tried to answer the above research questions and check whether the findings were plausible with the suggested hypotheses or not.

On the basis of the results mentioned above and different experiments made by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982), it is proved that activating learners' cultural schema before reading is of a great importance in improving their level of comprehension. To answer the research questions and test the validity of the hypotheses, three research tools were implemented to collect data. This can be shown through the scores got by the experimental groups, in reading comprehension, before the experimental study (training sessions) and after they have been trained on using reading strategies (predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping) to activate their cultural schema before reading. Pupils in the experimental group achieved better in the post-test than they did in the pre-test.

This study has revealed that cultural schema has a positive impact on middle school EFL learners' reading comprehension. These findings confirm the results of several related studies and highlighted a variety of reading strategies to activate cultural schema that can promote middle school learners reading comprehension.

Several studies in the field of education have confirmed the results of this study. Early studies by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson (1982), Andersson & Barnitz (1984) and Barnitz (1986) introduced the relationship between cultural schema and reading comprehension and its major role in improving this skill. Results revealed that cultural schemata can influence reading comprehension performance. Then, an earlier study by ALtarriba & Forsythe (1993) highlighted "The Role of Cultural Schema in Reading Comprehension. Another study entitled: "The Effects of Cultural Schema and Reading Activities on Reading Comprehension" carried out by Razi (2004) investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Different groups participated in an experimental research design. Results of the study revealed that cultural schema has a significant effect of comprehension on short stories.

Another related study by Fuhong (2004) entitled: "Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension" examined the role of cultural schema in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. Results concludes that cultural schema has positively affected the teaching of reading comprehension and that pre-reading activities activated learner's schema and improved their level in reading comprehension.

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The results of the present study are confirmed and supported by the arguments of many scholars and researchers who argue that cultural schema activation has a positive effect on EFL young learners' reading comprehension because the comprehension process occurs when there is an interaction between the text being read and the readers' previously stored information. Thus, results obtained in the experimental study confirm that activating cultural schema, as a reading strategy, has a positive effect in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension level.

In addition, the sought to confirm the three following research hypotheses

1. Cultural schema has a positive effect on Chahba Mouna middle school learners' reading comprehension skills in the city of Medea.
2. Chahba Mouna middle school learners face many difficulties in reading comprehension such as constructing meaning from new linguistic patterns and ideas.
3. Cultural schema activation strategies can promote Chahba Mouna middle school learner's reading comprehension skill and strategies.

Findings have reported that there is a positive effect of cultural schema on reading comprehension. Cultural schema activating strategies confirm that they can solve problems and difficulties that EFL learners face in reading comprehension and they can promote their reading comprehension performance. The experimental study has attempted to test the first hypothesis. Participants in the experimental group performed better in the post-test while learners in the control group did not score well.

The pupils' questionnaire attempted to test their difficulties as stated in the second hypothesis. Results helped in verifying the hypothesis and identifying learners' difficulties to deal with them during training sessions. The post-test results of both groups confirmed the last hypothesis. Participants in the experimental groups improved their level in reading comprehension and scored better than the control group.

Classrooms share a variety of learners with different learning styles. Upon the results of the questionnaire, it is recommended for EFL teachers to act the role of models for their learners. Teachers should introduce reading comprehension strategies explicitly to their learners. In addition to that, they should play the role of a classroom guide to help their learners find their weaknesses and guide them to identify the right reading strategies that fit within their learning styles. This can be done by using short interviews, reading checklists, conversations, discussions and many other techniques.

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In this way, EFL teachers should provide their learners with guidance to face their difficulties and create useful opportunities to solve their problems.

They may also provide their EFL learners with simple texts that suit different levels especially for slow learners and give them the chance to cope with other peers. Texts should address their level, culture, interests, and needs in terms of content and language.

According to the results of post-tests, teachers should devote some extra time and efforts to help their pupils make a link between cultural prior knowledge and new information they are encountered with to activate their cultural schema and build comprehension. However, Fuhong (2004) argues that almost available EFL reading materials in China are about foreign culture, but the activation of learners' background knowledge is still neglected by teachers. According to him this due to the lack of awareness of schema's role in reading comprehension.

In addition to that, teachers should select texts according to their learners' levels, cultures, interests, preferences, needs and individual differences. This provides meaningful texts and understandable messages, which help in activating existing cultural schema and building new information.

The results of this study demonstrated that activating learners' cultural schema using different reading strategies such as predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping strategies before reading plays a significant role for learners to construct new meaning on the basis of new information mentioned in the text and their previous cultural knowledge. They help them activate their cultural schema and facilitate their understanding. Therefore, teachers should pave the way to their learners and help them connect new information exposed in the text to the previous cultural background knowledge using various strategies and techniques.

This can be done through encouraging them to brainstorm information they know about the topic presented in the new text before reading it. They should encourage their learners to predict the content of the text before reading and can rely on different clues presented in the text such as the title, the subtitles, the source of the text, the pictures, and the structure of the text. Predicting is considered as an important schema activation strategy, which is of a great importance in the process of reading comprehension. Predicting is a useful strategy for learners in setting a purpose for reading and monitoring their reading comprehension. It helps learners predict ideas that may occur in the text before reading it. In this way, learners can make connections between the new information and their existing cultural knowledge.

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In other words, activating EFL learners' cultural schema before reading, using predicting, brainstorming and semantic mapping strategies improves their engagement in the reading task and gives them enough confidence to start reading about new information they can link to their previous cultural knowledge and build meaning. This makes learners active readers in the reading process rather than just decoding written symbols in the text. It is better to rely on their past experiences and cultural knowledge to understand the meaning of what is written in the text.

In addition, making efforts in building new cultural schema or background knowledge about a specific topic without having some considerable linguistic abilities and significant vocabulary will not work all the time. The learners should be trained on developing their language proficiency and vocabulary. This will make them benefit from some cultural schema activation strategies and will understand new topics and texts using their linguistic knowledge. Cultural schema has a great impact on reading comprehension performance, in fact, if readers are provided with adequate cultural background, they may encounter fewer difficulties in responding to bottom-up and top-down reading comprehension tasks. Therefore, applying cultural schema to reading comprehension develops the learners' problem solving, creative, and interpretive strategies. For this reason, reading activities can have an effect on reading comprehension.

Pre-reading activities make it possible for teachers to give background knowledge about the text if readers' cultural schema does not match the writer's schemata, and they can also activate readers' cultural schema before reading if they share the same background knowledge with the writer. However, as the study implies, the pedagogical focus should not be so much on the process as on the product. Teachers should also cater for their students' linguistic needs, for vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric, and functions, to name a few. This, however, does not affect the fact that cultural schema is a very beneficial means to reading comprehension, as an end.

Interestingly enough, teachers should train their learners to use different reading strategies to activate their cultural schema to get encouraged and motivated to read. There are several strategies such as brainstorming texts before reading, predicting before reading, guessing the new content. Teachers should guide their learners to discover their hidden comprehension problems in reading comprehension. In this way, they should show their learners the way to become more confident, independent and self-directed. Thus, they will change their attitudes towards reading comprehension, activate their cultural schema to understand new texts and improve their level of comprehension. This process should take enough time to train learners in the right way. It is significant to highlight that

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English should be taught in a foreign language context and teachers should bring texts and tasks on English real-life situations.

It is also recommended to design reading materials in preference to learners' interests, level, culture, and language proficiency. These materials should consist of different types of reading activities and texts to increase learners' understanding through activating their cultural schema. The availability of reading material for learners is important in reading classes. Teachers should select materials that can motivate learners to read more.

Furthermore, the class atmosphere of the lessons should reflect the cultural content of the texts being read. Pupils are required to organize their cultural knowledge before reading using semantic mapping. Thus, EFL Teachers should provide their learners with pre-reading tasks to activate their cultural schema and facilitate their understanding and post-reading activities. In addition to that, they should provide their learners with culturally based texts to develop their cultural schema that plays an important role in reading.

In terms of long-term projects, instructors should assign projects based on different cultures in the world for EFL learners. They should provide their learners with a rich material holding a different cultural content. Learners should receive encouragement to read culturally different famous works in English to develop their cultural knowledge and improve their productions.

Moreover, the educational institutions that are responsible on syllabus designing should ensure that relevant culture is targeted. Teachers should be aware of their role in training their learners in the EFL classrooms. Exams should be culturally based on what was taught and learned in the syllabi. Moreover, it is recommended to create new modules for university students as well as for pupils in the three different levels (primary, middle and high schools). Teaching culture and training EFL learners on adapting new cultures to understand new information is an important step towards improving the level of reading comprehension and the language proficiency itself.

Since no research can cover all the aspects of a specific issue, this study has attempted to provide some suggestions for further research. First, it is suggested to replicate the study with a different cultural group of students from a totally different culture and background knowledge. In addition, in order to measure the true impact of cultural schema activation on reading comprehension, this investigation would also be conducted with different levels of students with different levels of language proficiency such as other middle school levels (1ms, 2ms, and 3ms) as well as high school pupils and university students. Moreover, an extended study including a larger sample could have

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had more convincing and reliable results. Thus, further research as well as other related studies have to be conducted to examine the results of the current study in addition to testing other cultural schema activation strategies with a larger population including other levels of language proficiency.

For further research, it is also recommended to replicate the current study with another group of learners from a different cultural context. Moreover, for a better measurement of the true effects of cultural schema on reading comprehension, it is also suggested to conduct this study with different levels of learners (primary, middle and high school) to check if they perform in the same way or not. Furthermore, research may be carried out with other language skills such as writing, speaking and listening to evaluate more the effectiveness and impact of cultural schema on foreign language comprehension.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Pupils'

Questionnaire

Fourth Year Middle School Pupils' Questionnaire

Dear pupil,

This questionnaire is administered as a part of a research work which investigates the impact of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension.

You are kindly requested to answer it and any information you provide will be anonymous.

Please complete the following questions by filling in or adding a tick (√) next to the appropriate answer.

Thank you for your help and collaboration.

Section One: Biographic Information

1. Gender: a- Male b- Female

2. Age: a- 13/15 b- 16/17

3. Residence: a- Urban b- Rural

4. Parents' occupation:

a. Father: _____

b. Mother: _____

5. Parents' educational level: (tick the right level)

	Father	Mother
a. Primary school level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Middle school level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. High school level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. University level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Two: Language Learning and Reading

1. How long have you been studying English at school?

- I have started learning English _____ years ago.

2. Reading English for you is:

a. Easy b. Difficult

3. Do you read in English?

a. Yes b. No

- If yes, why?

a. To improve my English language

b. For pleasure/entertainment.

c. To do homework

d. Other: _____

4. Do you like reading extra texts in English?

a. Yes b. No

- If yes, how often do you read?

Daily Weekly Monthly From time to time

5. Which type of texts are you interested in?

Short stories Scientific texts Course book texts

Section Three: Reading Comprehension activities.

1. Do you like reading aloud in the classroom?

- a. Yes b. No

2. Tick the types of texts you know. (you can tick more than one box)

- a. Narrative
b. Descriptive
c. Expository
d. Argumentative
e. Explanatory

3. Is reading important in learning English?

- a. Yes b. No

• If yes, why is it important? (Tick the right answer(s).)

- a. It develops my mind, imagination and creativity.
b. It helps me discover new cultures and learn new information.
c. It enriches my vocabulary and background.
d. Other _____

Section Four: Reading Difficulties

1. Do you face difficulties in understanding a text in English?

- a. Yes b. No

• If “yes”, what makes reading a text difficult for you? Tick the **most important** reason(s)

- a. The text contains many difficult/unknown words.
b. The text is about a topic I don't know.
c. The text is culturally different.

- d. Other: _____
2. Do you use reading strategies when you read?
- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Usually
- d. Always
3. When you can't understand a word in a text, what do you do?
- a. I check it in the dictionary (Arabic or French)
- b. I stop reading.
- c. I skip it.
- d. I try to guess its meaning from the text.
- e. I ask my friend/teacher about its meaning.
- f. I rely on previous information.
- g. Other

Section Five: Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension

What is cultural schema?

- Cultural schema is the background knowledge about cultural aspects of the language being learned to comprehend a text

This means that readers with sufficient and proper cultural background knowledge perform better on reading comprehension activities than those who have insufficient and inappropriate background knowledge.

1. Before I start reading a text, I try to relate the title to my previous information and past experiences.
- a. Never.
- b. Rarely.

c. Sometimes.

d. Often

e. Always.

2. Do you anticipate what is going to happen next when you read a story or a text?

a. Yes b. No

• If yes, how? _____

3. Do you think that reading a text about a topic which is related to your previous cultural knowledge can help you understand the meaning of the text?

a. Yes b. No

4. Is it difficult to understand a text about an unknown topic for you?

a. Yes b. No

• If yes, why?

a. The topic of the text is unfamiliar

b. The topic is not related to my culture

c. I don't have an idea about the topic of the text

d. The vocabulary is unknown for me

e. Other _____

5. When you read a text, how often do you rely on your previous cultural information (cultural background)?

a. Never.

b. Rarely.

c. Sometimes.

d. Often

e. Always

6. How does your previous cultural knowledge affect your understanding of the text?

- a. It facilitates my understanding of the text.
- b. It develops my reading comprehension strategies.
- c. It facilitates the interaction with information presented in the text
- d. It saves time.
- e. Other _____

☺ THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLLABORATION ☺

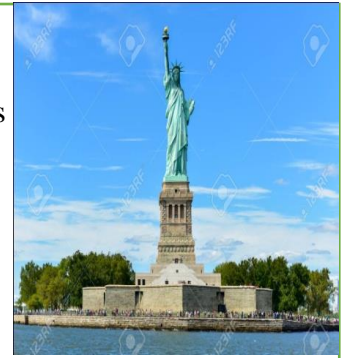
Appendix B

The Pre-

Test

The Statue of Liberty

The Statue of Liberty, arguably one of New York City's most iconic symbols, is a popular tourist attraction for first-time visitors to the city. This monument was gifted to the United States to celebrate 100 years of its independence. The statue is located on Liberty Island, and it is accessible by taking a ferry from either Battery Park in New York City or Liberty State Park in Jersey City.



When Claire visited the Statue of Liberty for the first time, she instantly admired it as a symbol of freedom. Claire made sure to make reservations before her visit because only 240 people are permitted to climb the staircase to the top of the statue every day. After climbing almost 400 stairs, Claire received spectacular views of the city from the statue's crown.

During her visit, Claire learned that the Statue of Liberty was not always the color that it is now. She found out that because the statue's exterior is made of copper, the statue oxidized over time, giving it the greenish appearance it has in present day. When it was first constructed, the statue was the same color as a shiny penny!

After touring the Statue of Liberty, Claire spent the rest of the day in New York City visiting other important monuments and historic landmarks. Claire left New York hoping to have had the time to explore more sites, but she can't wait to return to the city in the future.

Adapted from:

<https://lingua.com/english/reading/statue-of-liberty/>

Questions

A. Say whether the following sentences are: **True**, **False** or **Not Mentioned**.

1. The Statue of Liberty is one of the most famous historical sites in the world.
2. The Statue of Liberty wasn't constructed in the United States.
3. Claire liked the symbol of freedom "The Statue of Liberty"
4. The color of the Statue of Liberty didn't change through time.
5. The Statue of Liberty was constructed in 1886.

B. Match the following words with their appropriate definitions.

1. Statue.
2. Tourist.
3. Island.
4. Climb.
5. Copper.

- a. A piece of land surrounded by water.
- b. A red-brown metal.
- c. A carved or cast figure of a person or animal, especially one that is life-size or larger.
- d. A person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure.
- e. Go or come up a (slope or staircase); ascend.

C. Choose the right answer according to the passage above.

1. The Statue of Liberty is located in:
 - a. Paris, France
 - b. New York, USA
 - c. Rome, Italy
 - d. Istanbul, Turkey
2. Who Gifted the Statue of Liberty to the United States?
 - a. The British
 - b. The Spanish
 - c. The Dutch
 - d. The French
3. The Statue of Liberty was constructed to celebrate:
 - a. Open immigration to the United States.
 - b. The end of the Civil War
 - c. A century of American independence
 - d. Economic recovery from the great depression
4. You can go to the Statue of Liberty using:
 - a) An airplane
 - b) A bus
 - c) A ferry
 - d) A car
5. Claire visited the statue of Liberty:
 - a) With her friends
 - b) Alone

- c) With her family
 - d) With her classmates
6. How many people are permitted to climb the statue's stairs per day?
- a. 240
 - b. 100
 - c. 400
 - d. 150
7. From which part of the statue did Claire receive spectacular views of the city?
- a. The nose
 - b. The eyes
 - c. The crown
 - d. The mouth
8. Why has the Statue of Liberty changed color over time?
- a. Its copper exterior oxidized.
 - b. New York's poor air quality has eroded the statue.
 - c. The statue is poorly maintained by the city.
 - d. It was painted green during restorations.
9. Claire spent the rest of the day:
- a. Attending a class
 - b. Visit her family
 - c. Visit other touristic places
 - d. Staying in the hotel
10. Claire left New York hoping to:
- a. Have her family with her
 - b. Come back to the city
 - c. Do shopping in the city
 - d. Meet famous people there

Appendix C

Training

Sessions



Session One

Food in Japan

New Headway, Beginner 4th ed 2013

Before you read the following passages, apply prediction technique and answer the pre-reading questions.

In Japan we eat rice at every meal. For breakfast, we have rice, fish and soup.

1. What will be the form of the passage?
 - a. A letter
 - b. A dialogue
 - c. A text
2. This passage is about:
 - a. Sports
 - b. Food
 - c. Education
3. The author will describe:
 - a. Japanese dishes
 - b. Desserts recipes
 - c. Mealtimes

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

At 12.00 I have bento, which is a lunch box. My wife makes this for me every day. There are small dishes of rice, fish, vegetables, eggs, and sometimes meat.

In the evening, we have more fish, maybe with beans. I'd like to eat with my children, but I don't get home till 9.00.

4. The text seems to be about Japanese food. Is this what you expected?

Yes No

5. Did you expect that the text will mention mealtimes and dishes?

Yes No

6. What key words showed this?

- a. Eat
- b. Every meal
- c. Breakfast

7. The next passage will be about:

- a. Food in Japanese weddings
- b. Food at weekends
- c. Food on special days

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

At weekends, we like doing things together. We go for walks, and have dinner. We eat lots of small dishes. We don't put a lot of food on our plate, so we don't eat too much.

Pets and chocolate

501, Reading Comprehension Questions 4th ed 2010



Before you read the following passages, apply prediction strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

Dogs and cats should never be permitted to eat chocolate, because chocolate works like a poison in their bodies.

1. According to this passage, the text will be about:
 - a. Literature
 - b. Arts
 - c. Science
2. Which of the following seem to be the next idea
 - a. Chocolate is good for dogs and cats
 - b. Dogs and cats love chocolate
 - c. Chocolate is unhealthy for dogs and cats
3. According to the title and the picture, do you think chocolate is good for dogs and cats?
Yes No

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

Chocolate contains a chemical called theobromine, which is similar to caffeine. Human bodies are able to process the theobromine without any ill side effects, but dogs and cats cannot.

Different types of chocolate contain different amounts of theobromine. It would take 20 ounces of milk chocolate to kill a 20-pound dog. The amounts, of course, are much smaller for a cat, whose body weight is typically less than that of a dog.

4. The text seems to be about: “why is chocolate poisonous for dogs and cats?” Is this what you expected?

Yes No

5. What best summarizes this passage?

- a. Look before you leap.
- b. Pet food for pets, people food for people.
- c. Monkey see, monkey do.
- d. A penny saved is a penny earned.

6. What do you expect to read next?

- a. Dogs eat what their owners eat
- b. Dogs hate chocolate
- c. Cats love ice cream

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

Most cats are not naturally attracted to eating chocolate, but many dogs are. Dogs by nature will sample nearly anything that they see their masters eating, so pet owners must take care to keep all chocolate products well out of reach of their dogs and cats.

To be or not to be a Vegetarian
Practical Faster Reading



Before you read the following passages, apply prediction strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

A strict vegetarian is a person who never in his life eats anything derived from animals. The main objection to vegetarianism on long-term basis is the difficulty of getting enough protein- the body building element in food.

1. According to this passage, the type of text is:
 - d. Descriptive.
 - e. Expository.
 - f. Narrative.
2. Which of the following seem to be the next idea?
 - d. The importance of proteins.
 - e. The importance of chicken.
 - f. The importance of vegetables.

3. According to the title and the picture, do you think the text will be about:

1. French cuisine 2. Diet 3. Recipes

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

If you have ever been without meat for some days or weeks, (say, for religious reasons) you will have noticed that you tend to get physically rather weak. You are glad when the fast is over and you get your reward of a succulent meat.

Proteins are built up from approximately twenty food elements called “Amino-Acids”, which are found more in animal protein.

4. The text seems to be about: “the importance of protein in meat. Is this what you expected?

Yes No

5. What best summarizes this passage?

- e. Proteins are found in fruits.
- f. Meats contain more protein.
- g. Protein is unhealthy.
- h. Protein is good for animals.

6. What do you expect to read next?

- d. Protein is expensive.
- e. Meats contain more protein.
- f. Vegetables contain more protein.
- g. Protein is not necessary.

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

This means you have to eat a great deal more vegetable than animal food in order to get enough of these “Amino-Acids”.

Sport in Britain

Read to Speak English Well, 2006



Before you read the following passages, apply prediction strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

Even if you are not interested in sport itself, it is useful to know something about that important part of British life.

1. According to the title and the pictures, the text will be about:

2. According to this passage, the text will tackle

- a. An important subject in Britain.
- b. A practical strategy.
- c. A useful way of studying.

3. Which of the following seem to be the next idea

- g. Football.
- h. Types of sports in England.
- i. The importance of sports in the world.

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

1. Football, also known as soccer.
 2. Cricket, a strange game that few foreigners like or can even understand.
 3. Rugby, also known sometimes as “Football”
- Of these, “Football” or “Soccer” is most popular.
During the football season, one of the most important

things on television is the football match shown on BBC on Saturday evenings around ten O'clock. Cricket seems more peaceful. A man with a small ball in his hand runs up a spot and throws it.

4. The text seems to be about: “the types of spots in England? Is this what you predicted?
Yes No
5. What best summarizes this passage?
- a. Football, the only sport in England.
 - b. Cricket, the most important sport.
 - c. The main types of sports in the world.
 - d. Description of sports in Britain.
6. What do you expect to read next?
- h. How to play football?
 - i. The negative side of football.
 - j. The benefits of football.
 - k. The cricket season.

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

The ball bounces in front of him. Sometimes, it bounces up and hits him in the face. It is a very hard ball. And some batsmen have lost a few teeth. Cricket is played in summer.

Top Tips for a Healthy Heart

Face2face Elementary Students Book



Before you read the following passages, apply prediction strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

Heart disease kills more people in Britain than any other disease, including cancer. One adult dies every three minutes from heart disease and it's more common in men than women.

1. The text that you are about to read is written by:
a. a student b. a patient c. an expert
2. According to the **title**, **pictures** and **passage**, what is the main topic of the text?

3. Which of the following seem to be the next idea?
 - a. The prevention of diabetes.
 - b. Statistics about heart disease.
 - c. The importance of a healthy diet.

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

Age is also important. 80 % of people who die of heart attacks are 65 or older. And it's an amazing fact that five times more men die of heart disease in the UK than in Japan. But there are many things you can do to help your heart stay healthy. Here are our top tips for a healthy heart!

d. This passage seems to be about: “facts about heart disease” Is that what you predicted?

Yes No

e. What best summarizes this passage?

- e. How to cure heart disease?
- f. Main facts of heart disease in the UK.
- g. The main types of heart disease.
- h. Heart disease in Europe.
- f. What do you expect to read next?
- l. How to do exercise?
- m. The negative side of heart disease.
- n. Top tips to cure heart disease.
- o. The best doctor of heart disease.

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

- Stop smoking
- Do more exercise
- Don't eat a lot of fried food
- Eat fish twice or three times a week
- Don't eat a lot of salt
- Eat more fruit and vegetables
- Lose some weight

Burns

8th Grade Reading Comprehension



Before you read the following passages, apply prediction strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

There are three different kinds of burns: first degree, second degree, and third degree. Each type of burn requires a different type of medical treatment.

1. The text that you are about to read is written by:
a. a student b. a patient c. an expert
2. According to the **title**, **pictures** and **passage**, what is the main topic of the text?

3. Which of the following seem to be the next idea
a. Third-degree burns aren't serious.
b. There are different kinds of burns.
c. Each type of burn requires a different type of treatment.

Now read the next passage and see if your answers are correct.

The first-degree burn causes the skin to turn red but does not cause blistering. It does not require medical treatment other than a gentle cooling of the burned skin with ice or cold tap water.

Second-degree burns, on the other hand, do cause blistering of the skin and should be treated immediately.

4. This passage seems to be about: “Different kinds of burn” Is that what you predicted?

Yes No

5. Did you expect the passage to describe each type with the appropriate treatment?

Yes No

6. What do you expect to read next?

- a. How to cure first-degree burn?
- b. The negative side of burns.
- c. Third-degree burn and its treatment.
- d. The best doctor of burns.

Now, read the last passage to see if your answers are correct.

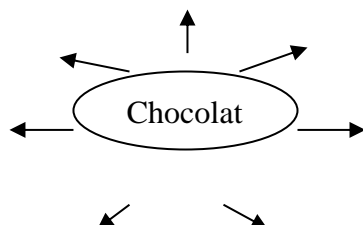
Third-degree burns are those that char the skin and turn it black or burn so deeply that the skin shows white. These burns usually result from direct contact with flames and have a great chance of becoming infected. All third-degree burn victims should receive immediate hospital care.

Chocolate

Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, 2002

Before you read the following text, apply brainstorming strategy and answer the questions.

- Write all words which have a relationship with the title



- Discuss the ideas with your teacher
- Now read the following text:

The cacao tree of Central and South America is responsible for giving us the main ingredient in one of the world's favorite treats, chocolate. The cacao tree produces pods that, when split open, reveal seeds and pulp. The mass is removed and left to ferment and dry. Then the seeds, known as cacao beans, are separated out, cleaned, roasted, and ground. In the process of grinding, cocoa butter is released and the mixture forms a liquid called chocolate liquor. Hardened bars are made by squeezing out the liquid. Raw chocolate is bitter in taste.

The Aztecs of Central America were the first to make a drink from cacao, spices, and peppers. Later, the Spanish explorers of the early 16th century revised this recipe by removing the peppers and spices and adding sugar to the drink instead.

Over a hundred years later, a Frenchman created blocks of chocolate that soon became a much-loved sweet treat that is still enjoyed by many to this day.

- Now answer the following questions according to the information you got from the discussion and the text.

1. Complete the following table

Topic	Tree	Where	Who	What
Chocolate				

--	--	--	--	--

2. What is the main ingredient of chocolate?

3. What is the taste of raw chocolate?

4. Who were the first to make a drink from cacao?

5. Who revised the recipe of chocolate drink?

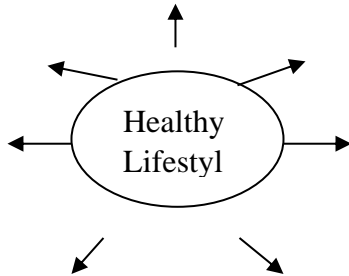
6. Who created the first chocolate blocks?

Healthy Lifestyle

Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, 2002

Before you read the following text, apply brainstorming strategy and answer the questions.

- Write all words which have a relationship with the title



- Discuss the ideas with your teacher
- Now read the following text.

Eating balanced meals and exercising every day are important parts of a healthy lifestyle.

Your body needs vitamins to grow, make energy, and stay fit. A good diet includes grains, vegetables, fruits, low-fat milk products, lean meats, fish, poultry, and dry beans. Avoid fat and sugar and try to eat a variety of different foods.

Exercise is also part of a healthy lifestyle, but safety is a very important concern when it comes to exercise, sports, and kids. About 250,000 children are hurt playing sports each year. Many injuries happen in unorganized games such as street football and backyard baseball, rather than in team sports like Little League and swimming competition. Sports on wheels, like skateboarding, bicycling, and roller-skating can also be dangerous.

Many kids wipe out on skateboards and skates each year and end up in the hospital with concussions and broken bones. Injuries are worse when safety

equipment like helmets, kneepads, and wrist pads are not worn. Be smart, play safe and eat right.

- Now answer the following questions according to the information you got from the discussion and the text.

1. What are the important parts of a healthy lifestyle?

2. What does your body need to grow?

3. Which elements should you avoid?

4. Which elements should you eat?

5. What is the most important concern in exercise?

6. What happens in unorganized games?

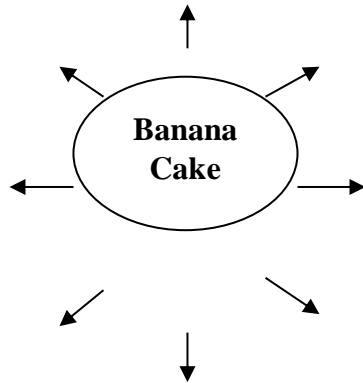
7. How to be healthy?

Banana Cake

Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, 2002

Before you read the following text, apply brainstorming strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

- Write any word that have a relationship with the title



- Discuss the ideas with your teacher
- Now read the text.

First, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Then, Mix the eggs, sugar, milk, mashed bananas and vanilla together. Next, Mix the batter on HIGH mode for 5 minutes or until it becomes smooth. After that, add the flour and put the batter into a greased cake pan. Later, Put the pan into the pre-heated oven. Bake for one hour.

To check if the cake is done, stick a toothpick in the center and see if it comes out without wet batter sticking to it.

When the cake is done let it cool for 1 hour. Finally, decorate the top of the cake with banana slices and serve it to your family.

- Now answer the following questions according to the information you got from the discussion and the text.

1. What are the main ingredients of the recipe?

2. What is the third step in the recipe?

3. What can we do to check if the cake is done?

4. How much time does it take in baking?

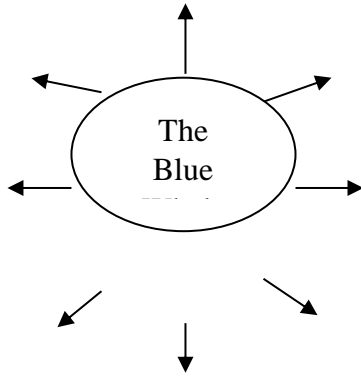
5. How can we decorate the cake?

The Blue Whale

Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, 2002

Before you read the following text, apply brainstorming strategy and answer the pre-reading questions.

- Write any word that have a relationship with the title



- Discuss the ideas with your teacher
- Now read the text.

The blue whale is an amazing animal. This whale can grow to a length of 110 ft. and weigh 190 tons, but on the average, it is much smaller. Blue whales eat krill, a tiny shrimp-like creature. A medium-sized blue whale can eat over 4 tons of krill in a single day. Blue whales are found in all oceans of the world.

Most populations migrate very long distances. Blue whales were heavily hunted for oil, baleen, meat, and other products from the 1930s to the 1960s.

This hunting nearly caused the extinction of the species. They are now protected. The blue whale is classified as an endangered species.

- Now answer the following questions according to the information you got from the discussion and the text.

1. What is the blue whale?

2. How much does it weigh?

3. What do whales eat?

4. Do they like rivers?

5. What do they do?

6. Why are they hunted?

7. How is it classified now?

Appendix D

The Post- Test

The Most Expensive Taco

The most expensive Taco in the world costs more than \$25,000. You can buy it at a resort in Mexico. Chefs have special beef from Japan flown in for this food.

They also use a special ingredient called caviar. Fish eggs are used to make caviar. The fish eggs come from a special white fish.

The taco also has a unique cheese made with wild mushrooms and milk. This very expensive taco even has gold in its salsa. The chefs also use the best peppers, alcohol and coffee from Asia to make the salsa.

Chefs sprinkle more gold on the top. Then, they serve it to hungry guests. Diners say this taco is delicious. Many, however, say it is not worth the price. They say that there needs to be more than one taco to make them full. They are glad the restaurant offers more choices.

The cost of the taco does not include a stay at the resort. Guests spending the night must pay \$990 to spend a night at the resort



Adapted from:

<https://lingua.com/english/reading/taco/>

Questions

A. Say whether the following sentences are: **True**, **False** or **Not Mentioned**.

1. Americans eat billions of tacos every year.
2. Chefs use special imported meat.
3. The taco contains a simple cheese made of milk.
4. The word taco means the “Light Lunch”
5. The Stay at the resort is included in the cost of the taco

B. Match the following pictures with their appropriate definitions.



- a. The flesh of a cow, bull, or ox, used as food.
- b. Salted eggs of a fish called Sturgeon, eaten as a delicacy.
- c. A Mexican dish consisting of a folded or rolled tortilla filled with various mixtures.
- d. Food made from the pressed curds of milk, firm and elastic or soft and semi-liquid in texture.
- e. A hot drink made from the roasted and ground seeds (coffee beans) of a tropical shrub.

C. Choose the right answer according to the passage above.

1. What is **not** used to make the salsa?
 - e. Peppers
 - f. Coffee
 - g. Alcohol
 - h. cheese
2. **Caviar** comes from:
 - e. Sheep
 - f. Cows
 - g. Fish
 - h. Chicken
3. What is the **synonym** of the word chef?
 - e. Headmaster
 - f. Boss
 - g. Owner
 - h. Cook
4. What is **not true** about taco
 - a. It contains fish eggs
 - b. It's made of coffee
 - c. It's from Japan

- d. It has gold in it
5. To make this taco, chefs **need special**:
- a. Milk
 - b. Meat
 - c. Bread
 - d. Tuna
6. Caviar is a special ingredient taken **from**:
- e. Chicken
 - f. Sharks
 - g. Pigeons
 - h. Fish
7. This taco contains a unique cheese **made of**:
- e. Two ingredients
 - f. One ingredient
 - g. Five ingredients
 - h. Ten ingredients
8. According to **customers' opinions**, this taco is:
- e. Awful
 - f. Tasty
 - g. Sour
 - h. Unappetizing
9. They hope that the restaurant **offers** more:
- e. Ingredients
 - f. Prices
 - g. Flavors
 - h. Choices
10. In order to **spend the night**, guests have to:
- e. Eat more tacos
 - f. Go to the resort party
 - g. Pay extra money
 - h. Wash their hands

Appendix E

The Teachers' Interview

Interview Schedule for Middle School Teachers

Dear participant, thank you for accepting to take part in this interview.

With your consent, I would like to conduct this interview as part of my research. The interview aims at exploring your experiences and perceptions towards teaching reading comprehension in the Algerian middle schools.

Your participation will be strictly, confidentially and anonymously used for research purposes.

Section One: Biographic Information

1. Participant: Male Female
2. Would you please introduce yourself?
3. How many years have you been in service?
4. Could you mention the area of your service?

Section Two: General Knowledge

1. What can you tell me about 'Schemata'?
 - What about 'Cultural Schema'?
2. Do you think that there is a relationship between 'cultural schema' and reading comprehension? How do you see this relationship?

Section Three: Language of Instruction

1. Do you think that using mother tongue is effective in teaching English in middle school in Algeria? Why?
2. Do you communicate with your pupils using English?
 - If yes, how often do you use it?
 - If no, why not?

3. Do you organize extra activities (such as language clubs, workshops, Jigswaing) for your learners?
 - If yes, can you mention some?
 - How often do you organize them?

Section Four: Language Learning and Reading

1. What do your learners read in English?
2. How do they find reading in English (is it easy/difficult/interesting/boring..?) for your pupils?
 - If the answer is easy (enjoyable), explain why? what do they read in English?
 - If the answer is difficult (boring), explain why?
 - What do you do so that you know how your pupils feel about reading in English?
3. In your opinion, how can reading enhance pupils' language learning level?

Section Five: Reading Comprehension activities.

1. How would you define the term 'reading comprehension' in terms of working principle? (*process {bottom-up} or product {top-down}*) (*tool or skill*)?
2. *As a tool, it might be considered as a frame to teach Grammar, Vocabulary, content, etc.* For you, what is the importance of reading comprehension as a skill in English?
3. To what extent do you think Reading comprehension is targeted as a skill to be developed in Middle school English curricula?
4. In your description, you have mentioned some factors that represent how important Reading is as a skill in learning English, how would you target these aspects? (*How do you address this importance?*)
 - How do you teach reading comprehension for your pupils in class?
 - Can you give me some examples?

5. Do your pupils participate actively in the reading Comprehension class?
6. How do you judge their reading skill development?
7. In case their reaction is not positive (*I mean in case they do not participate as necessary*), what are the possible reasons for you?
8. How would you deal with their weaknesses and difficulties in reading comprehension?

Section Six: Difficulties in Teaching Reading

1. Do you find teaching reading comprehension challenging?
 - If yes, how?
 - In your opinion, what are the possible reasons for this challenge? (*training issue, complexity of the reading texts, level of the pupils, etc.*)
 - What did/do you do to overcome this challenge?

Section Seven: Cultural Schema and Reading Comprehension

1. Do you think your learners are aware of the term 'cultural background'?
 - From where do you think they have acquired this term?
2. Do your learners make use of their 'background knowledge' about 'culture' to understand a text?
 - Could you explain how?
 - In your opinion, how did they know about using 'cultural schema' in reading comprehension?
 - To what extent do you think your learners are successful in this?
3. Have you taught your pupils how to use their previous background knowledge before reading a text?

- If yes, could you explain how?

4. 'Reading strategies such as: guessing and predicting' can be an effective way for learners to achieve understanding in reading comprehension?

5. Do you think that your pupils rely on their cultural schema in anticipating or guessing the meaning of a text?

- How often?

1. Do you think that cultural schema makes a difference in developing the reading comprehension skill?

Appendix F

Consent

Form

DJILLALI LIABES University, SIDI BEL ABBES, ALGERIA.
Faculty of Literature, Languages and Arts.



CONSENT FORM

For interviewing middle school teachers

Title of Project: Investigating the Impact of Cultural Schema on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension.

Name of Researcher: *Meriem KALI*

Contact details:

Email:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study 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 any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.
5. I agree that my participation will be audio-recorded.

Name of Participant:	Date:	Signature:
<i>Meriem KALI</i>		

Copies: 1 for participant

1 for researcher

Summary

Reading is an essential language skill in EFL learning and teaching. This study investigates the effects of cultural schema on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. It aims at identifying the impact of cultural schema on reading. For this reason, a triangulated study was adopted using a questionnaire, an interview, pre and post-tests in Chahba Mouna Brothers middle school (Medea). The findings have shown that participants face difficulties in comprehension and lack the appropriate strategies to solve these issues in order to improve. In addition, the results have demonstrated that the learners in the experimental group have improved after training sessions. Teachers suggested solutions to EFL learners' problems in the light of their experience in teaching reading comprehension.

Keywords: schemata, cultural schema, reading comprehension, cultural background, activation strategies.

Resumé:

La lecture est une compétence essentielle dans la réussite de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de l'A.L.E. Cette étude envisage d'examiner les effets du schéma culturel dans l'amélioration des compétences de C.E pour les apprenants. Elle vise à relever l'impact du schéma culturel dans la lecture. Une approche méthodologique expérimentale a été adoptée consistant en un questionnaire, un pré- et post-test destiné aux élèves du C.E.M des frères Chahba Mouna (Médéa). Les résultats ont montré que les participants manquent de stratégies appropriées pour arriver à la compréhension d'un texte. Les résultats ont démontré que le niveau de compréhension des apprenants misent en expérimentation s'est amélioré après avoir utilisé des stratégies de lecture et de compréhension. D'après leurs expériences dans l'enseignement de la C.E, les enseignants ont suggéré des solutions pour résoudre les problèmes de la lecture et de la compréhension chez les apprenants de l'A.L.E .

Mots Clés:

Schémas – Schéma culturel – Compréhension - Pré-requis culturels - Stratégies d'activation.

ملخص

قراءة النص وفهمه من أهم المهارات اللغوية لنجاح تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تهدف الدراسة الى التحقق من اثار المفاهيم الثقافية القبلية في تحسين مهارتي القراءة والفهم لدى دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية في التعليم المتوسط بالجزائر. كما تهدف إلى الكشف عن الأثر الإيجابي للمفاهيم الثقافية في تدريب التلاميذ على تلقي نصوص جديدة وفهمها. تم الاعتماد على منهج تجريبي يتضمن جمع البيانات من خلال اختبارات قبلية وبعديّة لتلاميذ متوسطة الاخوة شعبة مونة بالمدينة و استبيان بالإضافة إلى مقابلات مع أساتذتهم. أظهرت النتائج أن معظم التلاميذ يواجهون صعوبات في فهم النصوص الجديدة ويفتقرون للاستراتيجيات اللازمة لمجابهة تلك الصعوبات من أجل تحسين مستوى الفهم لديهم. كما أشارت أيضا إلى أن مستوى التلاميذ في المجموعة التجريبية قد تحسن بعد تلقى تدريب في توظيف استراتيجيات تنشيط المفاهيم الثقافية القبلية. كما اقترح الأساتذة عدة حلول لمعالجة مشاكل قراءة النصوص فهمها لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على ضوء تجاربهم في تعليم هاتين المهارتين في التعليم المتوسط. الكلمات المفتاحية

المخططات، المفاهيم الثقافية، فهم النصوص وقراءتها - المكتسبات الثقافية القبلية، استراتيجيات التنشيط