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**The Effects of Cultural Schemata on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Ability: The Case of First-Year EFL Students at Ibn Khaldoun University Tiaret**

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## **DEDICATION**

*To my parents respectfully*

*To my dear brothers and my sister*

*To my beloved husband, my sons Amir and Adam*

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Abstract

This research study investigates the impact of cultural schemata on the process of reading culturally-loaded texts and whether the use of pre-reading activities recompenses for the absence of cultural familiarity. In this regard, EFL readers bring to the text a wide range of experiences. Consequently, such diversity of prior knowledge influences their perception and interpretation of foreign language texts. Here comes the role of cultural schemata, which is indeed a very critical role. How do cultural differences in background knowledge influence student's reading comprehension ability? To recognise the effect of cultural schemata on comprehension, it is essential first to understand the significant role that background knowledge plays in the reading process. Therefore, to carry out this research, a selection of reading comprehension tests was assigned for an experimental and a control group in a quasi-classroom experiment of first-year EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University (Tiaret). While the experimental group was provided with pre-reading tasks to activate their background knowledge, the control group received no treatment. We collected data from 40 participants. The results show that many EFL learners belonging to the control group display a lack of cultural schemata since their prior knowledge is not activated, which may well impact their reading practices. By contrast, the experimental group participants performed better in the comprehension test than those in the control group. In brief, there is a correlation between activating students' background knowledge and the increase of reading comprehension ability.

**Keywords:** cultural schemata, conceptual knowledge, interactive process, reading comprehension, schema theory

## **List of Abbreviations**

EFL: English as a foreign language

DVC: Decoding Vocabulary Comprehension

AI: Artificial intelligence

GTM: Grammar Translation Method

CLT: Communicative Approach to Language Teaching

ICT: Information Communication Technology

ELT: English Language Teaching

MAA: Maitre-Assistant A

MAB: Maitre-Assistant B

MCB: Maitre de conférences B

K-W-L: What we know, what we want to learn, what we learned

ESP: English for specific purposes

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

MA: Master of Arts

Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy

EXG: Experimental Group

CG: Control Group

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UK: United Kingdom

DRTA: Directed Reading Thinking Activity

QA: Questioning the Author

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# **General Introduction**

## *General Introduction*

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Researchers in the field of education have argued that Schema Theory is one of the influential theories of reading comprehension. Conceptually, this fact necessitates mediation between language skills, culture, and cognition. Thus, the application of Schema Theory model is required to facilitate such mediation.

In terms of language pedagogy, Schema Theory has been an indispensable element for helping learners process and organise information, interpret meanings. Besides, it prepares them for successful comprehension of culturally-loaded texts in which they are likely to encounter linguistic and cultural deficiencies.

Reading, the prime ingredient in EFL learning. Mainly, reading culturally loaded texts plays a vital role in raising EFL learners' cultural awareness. Then, it may even influence his way of thinking and viewing the others. This study aims to highlight the process of reading and understanding cultural-based content by relying on the students' cultural schemata. Moreover, it tries to evaluate the extent to which schema activation can be significant or not in the comprehension of culturally loaded texts.

It is worth noting that the idea of reading foreign language texts has a cultural dimension. In this vein, several researchers (Byram and Kramch, 2008) have highlighted the need and the relevance of raising cultural awareness in EFL classrooms. They argued that in order to assure the learners an effective understanding of the target language, teachers should not focus only on linguistic knowledge and neglect cultural knowledge, which is generally not given equal attention as language features. They, likewise, presume that reading foreign language texts is more than a matter of language proficiency. An adequate understanding of it occurs unless the foreign language learners have considerable knowledge about the foreign language's culture.

Following the conclusions drawn by Byram (1978), Alderson and Urquhart (1988), there should be no exaggeration to say that satisfactory schemata are required when EFL learners are acquainted with foreign-language texts. Therefore, any attempt to read a foreign language text implies background knowledge activation.

Even though several studies of foreign language experts and researchers Byram (1978), Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), Anderson and Pearson (1984) have argued that learners' background knowledge is of the essence to enhance learners' reading comprehension, the learners' lack of cultural knowledge would result in misunderstandings of foreign language

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texts. However, some foreign language teachers and students still neglect the conclusions drawn from such studies. The researcher draws attention to this neglect and attempts throughout this study to profoundly investigate the use of Schema Theory (cultural schemata), which can help students activate the schemata in their brain and construct new schemata to have a clear understanding of culturally loaded texts.

One problem is that teachers still focus on teaching words, sentences, and grammar while neglecting the students' reading skills training. Reading is a complex activity in which learners should understand the surface structure of reading materials and know the deep form, like cultural background knowledge.

Eventually, the learners' cultural schemata are not likely to increase, especially if we consider teachers themselves non- specialised in raising cultural knowledge and facilitating understanding. In this respect, students are not allowed to activate the background knowledge in the most efficient way.

In line with the investigation of such a pedagogical issue, our impetus for this research is as follows:

- To reveal how schemata can affect learners' reading comprehension ability;
- To examine the way EFL learners read cultural-based content materials;
- To identify the barriers that hamper and demotivate first-year EFL students to be effective readers;
- To address the relevance of activating background knowledge in increasing students' reading comprehension;

In order to achieve these objectives and investigate the rationale of the present thesis, three research questions have been formulated:

- **Q1:** Does the lack of cultural background knowledge of EFL learners affect their reading comprehension ability?
- **Q2:** Does the activation of background knowledge of learners ensure a better understanding of reading comprehension texts?

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- **Q3:** Does the use of pre-reading activities influence the process of reading comprehension?

As an attempt to answer these research questions, the researcher conducted an exploratory study concerning a set of formulated hypotheses. To be precise, I assume that cultural familiarity may have a considerable impact on learners' comprehension and interpretation of meaning related to the target culture. To put it differently, the process of reading comprehension determines both text-based and background knowledge processes of readers to interpret and understand the text.

As a second assumption, I hypothesise that learners' lack of background knowledge affects their reading comprehension ability. In other words, learners' insufficient knowledge about the topic's content, being incapable of identifying cultural clues inserted within the target culture texts may hinder their comprehension. Therefore, I refer to the relevance of Schema Theory and its potential contribution to the development of EFL learners' reading comprehension of culturally-based content. Besides, supplying students with culturally and socially distant texts without raising their schemata makes the reading process difficult. In this light, this study attempts to illustrate a thorough analysis of this fact by experiencing it on first-year EFL students.

Concerning the last assumption, I presume that pre-reading activities are significant for ensuring successful comprehension. Thus, the informants' experiences of this research study, which involves both students and teachers, will be required to reveal whether the use of pre-reading activities motivates learners and prepare them for the task of reading comprehension or not. Based on the data gathered, we will be able to suggest some implications in the general conclusion.

Generally, this research investigation involves five chapters intended to provide a detailed description and examination of this issue. The first part, which comprises two chapters, is intended to describe the theoretical background that I find relevant for my research study. The reader is unconscious of the practical procedures I adopt in this research. It may lead readers to estimate the factors behind my selection of the theoretical concepts to shape this thought from my perspective. The second part contains the last three chapters, which reveal the empirical stages of this study, data analysis, and pedagogical implications.

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The first chapter provides a literature review of both reading skills and schema theory. In this light, I provide various definitions of reading comprehension from different perspectives, related studies, a detailed explanation about reading comprehension features, reading comprehension theories to clarify the different views and concepts. On the one hand, the first part of this chapter tackles the reading components and reading comprehension processes. On the other hand, the second part of this chapter involves the notion of Schema Theory and reading comprehension, schemata in reading comprehension, and variables affecting reading nature. In the same chapter, I point to the value of learners' background knowledge. As different scholars have claimed, the consideration of the latter is relevant in teaching reading. In this path, I pave the way for schema theory by focusing on the significant value of cultural background knowledge. This issue is of valuable interest to my field of investigation that I raise here and on which I will conduct this empirical investigation.

The second chapter is devoted to the literature review related to language and culture in foreign language teaching pedagogy. Indeed, in this section, a variety of definitions of culture from different perspectives is highlighted. Moreover, we provide an insight into the interconnectedness between language, culture, and context of its use. Significantly, the second chapter of this research study identifies the most critical areas related to the history of culture teaching, approaches, and teaching culture goals. More importantly, it explains the notion of integrating the cultural dimension within the reading skill. Additionally, part of this chapter illustrates the indispensable role of cultural background knowledge in the process of reading comprehension.

The third chapter deals with EFL learners' reading comprehension of culturally loaded texts at the English department at Tiaret University in particular. It includes the methodological framework, the research design of this study, and the research instruments applied for data collection. Precisely, I conducted a classroom observation, an interview with EFL students, and reading comprehension tests. Furthermore, two questionnaires are administered to 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students and teachers of the university.

The fourth chapter represents the analytical part of the thesis, concentrates on the description and data analysis, providing detailed analysis to the students and the teachers' questionnaires, classroom observation, and students' interviews. Besides, the experimental students' test aims to help the researcher confirm the stated hypotheses. In this respect, the outcomes of this research's experimental investigation would provide a careful analysis of the

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issue. They would pave the way for alternative solutions and suggestions in the subsequent chapter.

Finally, the fifth chapter deals with alternative recommendations that tackle cultural knowledge unfamiliarity and its impact on learners' reading comprehension ability. In this sense, this chapter suggests reinforcing the reading skill teaching/learning at the university level and strengthening the significant role of cultural familiarity. It urges for the reconsideration of reading comprehension content, reconsideration of the way of teaching, and reconsideration of the teaching materials. Precisely, this chapter presents a set of propositions to facilitate the EFL teacher's task in integrating cultural-based content by supplying them with a set of guidelines for the materials to use, the topics to select, and the follow-up activities. In brief, this research study attempts to provide some procedures that help teachers establish significant reading habits.

# ***CHAPTER I***

## ***Reading Comprehension and Schema Theory***

## **1. Introduction**

The present chapter provides the theoretical framework that paves the way for this research. In this chapter, I highlight the notion of reading skills. Furthermore, I explain the features, models, and processes that makeup reading comprehension.

After exploring the interrelated concepts involved in reading comprehension, I then move to one of the influential learning theories applied to language skills learning and teaching: Schema Theory and its contribution to reading skill. Then the chapter explores the impact of cultural schemata on reading comprehension by investigating some issues related to reading culturally loaded texts as they constitute the practical side of this dissertation.

My intention, at this point, is to provide an insight into the interrelationship between the learners' cultural background knowledge and the reading of culturally loaded texts. To put it differently, I try to explain the learner's vital role in such a process and describe the different factors contributing to the reading theory. Therefore, I attempt to make appropriate connections between these theoretical views to stress the maximum dominant reasoning for this investigatory research. This fact leads both the teaching and learning of reading to be culturally-specific in different contexts.

### **1.1 Definition of Reading**

Multiple disciplines, including educational psychology (e.g., Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), cognitive psychology (e.g., Kintsch, 1998) provide us with the notion of reading. Defining what we mean by reading is not an easy task, as it lacks a commonly held view of the precise nature of the concept of reading. Within the same field of study, scholars look at the idea of reading from different angles. The outcome is a diversity of definitions. It is, therefore, not an easy matter to adopt one single explanation for this research because this may be contested within the field of foreign/second language teaching. To put it differently, there are as many definitions of learning as there are fields of inquiry.

A consolidation of these theories can provide a general understanding of the reading process. The present section starts with a fundamental definition of the concept of reading. The most concise description is the one given by Hoover and Gough (1990), *A Simple View of Reading*, which consists of two factors, *decoding, and oral language*. This point of view demonstrates that reading is a form of linguistic knowledge that enters the brain through visual decoding (Hoover & Gough, 1990). Decoding is the process of translating symbols on the printed page into a word in the reader's oral vocabulary. From this perspective, reading is simply a combination of decoding and verbal language comprehension skills. That is to say, if readers can decode the words on printed material, they will be able to monitor what is being read to them orally and comprehend and interpret what they are reading. Therefore, the researchers consider that the ability of decoding can be the same for most readers. Understanding and making sense can differ from one reader to another based on learners' degree of knowledge and intellectual capacities. In the same path, Kamhi (2009) expressively illustrates the differences between two different abilities—word recognition (word-level reading) and comprehension. Word recognition involves a well-defined scope of knowledge (e.g., letters, sounds, words) and processes (decoding) that can be systematically taught. Comprehension, in contrast, is not a skill with a well-defined scope of knowledge; it is a complex of higher-level mental processes that include thinking, reasoning, imagining, and interpreting. These aspects of reading and thinking are thus interrelated in *A Simple View* to produce reading comprehension. Therefore, this simple view of the reading formula provides a good starting point for understanding reading processes.

Traditionally, experts in reading considered reading a mere passive process in which the readers decode or decipher the written symbols. However, for a more refined sense of

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reading, this model is too simplistic. Reading is not a straightforward process of lifting the words off the page. From a cognitive perspective, reading is a complex mental process since the brain engages in several tasks: word recognition, awareness, reading comprehension, and others. Reading, thus, is a combination of physical and mental activity. In this light, Gibson (1972) refers to three functional components of reading comprehension: "cognitive," "conceptual," and "process." Moreover, Smith (1978) explains these components starting with reading comprehension as cognitive in its most elemental sense. To illustrate, it is interior, rationalistic, and hidden. It is conceptual because it does not readily lend itself to reduction into elements or bits of information. Comprehension is a "process" rather than a product that is neither simply measured nor observed. In reading, a cognitively based view emphasises the connection between language and thinking, which occurs at the mind level with an interaction of cognitive skills and processes to make appropriate choices between contextual cues and decode and comprehend texts.

The cognitive perspective focuses on the way readers construct meaning. Thus, reading is a complex, active process of meaning construction through interaction with working memory and cognitive strategies to determine a particular text's purpose. According to Williams and Burden (1997), cognitive strategies represent various mental processes directly interested in monitoring information to learn, for obtaining, storage, retrieval, or data use. Also, cognitive strategies highlight the relevance of the reader's background knowledge during the reading process, so the readers use the text, experience, and prior knowledge to construct meaning.

Experts in foreign language reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pressley, 2000) have contended against the point that reading entails only *decoding and oral language comprehension*. That is to say, readers' ability to decode words does not imply that they understand what they read. So, the reading process may include other methods than the fact of deciphering a word. Several research pieces on reading (Goodman, 1976; Smith, 1971; 1973) showed that reading is an active process. According to Goodman (1976), reading is "a psycholinguistic guessing game." Although many readers are familiar with this theoretical perspective, I present a brief review. According to the Goodman/Smith model, efficient readers develop presuppositions about the content of a passage. Their knowledge of the world and, for example, the title of an article help them develop expectations about what they will read.

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Furthermore, when we expose readers to a written text, they hypothesise about upcoming ideas or facts using available cues, syntactic and semantic constraints while sampling the text to confirm or reject the hypothesis. Both Goodman (1973) and Smith (1973) argued that the psycholinguistic method of reading had provided a new notion to the process of reading. In other words, reading is the fact of constructing meaning through interaction with the text, besides the use of previously stored knowledge. Following the same line of thought, Clarke and Silberstein (1977) demonstrate that the proficient reader is an active, information-processing individual who uses a minimum number of clues to extract the author's message from the page. It becomes teachers' responsibility to train students in using a minimum number of syntactic and semantic clues to obtain the maximum amount of information.

For Dutcher (1990), reading is an interactive process in which the reader's background knowledge, the information deduced from the text, and the reading situation context is gathered to construct meaning. Reading comprehension is a dynamic process in which the reader creates sense based on the text's information. Katherine (1990) defines reading comprehension as:

the holistic process of constructing meaning from written text through the interaction of (1) the knowledge the reader brings to the text .i.e. word recognition ability, word knowledge, and knowledge of linguistic conventions; (2) the reader's interpretation of the language that the writer used in constructing the text; and (3) the situation in which the text is read. (P. 14- 15)

Following the same perspective, Grabe (1991) indicates that reading:

It is a complex process that is subdivided into component skills and knowledge areas: 1) automatic recognition skills, 2) vocabulary and structural knowledge, 3) formal discourse and structure knowledge, 4) content/word background knowledge, 5) synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies, 6) metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring. (p.379)

In this light, I consider all these skills and knowledge areas, including linguistics, culture, and life experiences, necessary components for the comprehension process. The

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reader engages with a text forming a kind of internal dialogue to process a text's content and construct an appropriate message that the author intends.

According to Kintsch (1998), while reading a text, three mental representation levels are created; the surface component, the text-based model, and the situation model. The surface component refers to the ability of readers to decode words and phrases inserted in the text. Then, the text-based model is a mental representation of the actual text discourse. In a pure text-based model, the reader attempt to extract meaning from the text. The third and the last element is the situation model, which combines the text-based and readers' background knowledge to construct meaning.

For Snow (2002), reading is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Additionally, What the reader brings to the reading event is just as important as what the text brings. Another closely related view about the concept of reading is the one given by Anderson (1977), who indicates that texts are not sufficiently explicit for the reader to understand them. Therefore, readers can rely on their language knowledge and previously acquired knowledge to construct meaning. The same perspective is shared by Kim (2010). He states that a text alone doesn't carry meaning, but it can guide readers to gain sense or concepts based on their prior knowledge and experience. Therefore, readers may differ in the purpose and the interpretation associated with a given text. In this respect, many researchers in the field of L2 (Bernhardt, 2005; Carrell, 1985; Grabe, 2009; Urquhart and Weir, 1998) consider the interactive component and the variables of reader including (gender, language proficiency, and socio-cultural background) as relevant aspects in the process of comprehension.

A closer look at the definitions mentioned above reveals that when readers deal with a text, they find it challenging to identify the author's intended meaning since the reading material is in an artificial context, not in its native one, between the hands of different learners' intellectual capacities and schematic knowledge.

Although I explained the interrelated relationship between reader and text, there appears a need for an entire sight of the reading comprehension process. This process necessitates considering the energetic, interactive processes between a reader, text, and the

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reading activity within a range of socio-cultural factors. <sup>1</sup>The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) reveals the interaction between these elements in detail. The act of comprehension involves three main components: reader, text and activity. The functioning part is the reader, who represents who is doing the comprehending task. The written text reflects the material to be comprehended. At last, an activity that is related to the ongoing process of achieving deep understanding.

According to Nunan (1991), " Reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text, in this case, most particularly with the reader's knowledge of the content of the text" (P.70). In brief, the activity of reading determines different levels of cognitive and metacognitive processes. As used in the present research, the term reading refers to something beyond the assortment of decoding and comprehension subskills. It encompasses different factors to build up the meaning of the text. Readers rely on their previously acquired knowledge, language knowledge, and text content to achieve adequate comprehension.

### **1.2 Components of Reading**

Reading comprises various steps that have been substantial to psychological scholars and researchers. Reading a text was previously considered the fact of processing letters to form words, and then the mixture of these words results in sentences. However, after establishing experimental psychology, the process of reading is more than deciphering a word. By this fact, reading scholars have shifted their interest toward cognitive processes. They made countless attempts to give a suitable explanation of the notion of reading. In this section, I identify a set of elements that seem relevant to my study, starting with the description of the various cycles in reading, cognitive processes, and the DVC triangle.

#### **1.2.1 Cognitive Processes**

Reading is a multileveled and interactive process in which readers rely on several processes to construct a meaningful representation of text. According to Irwin (1991), five fundamental comprehension processes take place while reading any given text. These

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<sup>1</sup> The RAND (Research and development) is an American nonprofit global policy think tank created in 1946 to offer research and analysis to the United States armed forces.

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processes simultaneously complement one another: micro-processes, integrative processes, macro processes, elaborative processes, and metacognitive processes.

Primarily, micro-processing represents the reader's initial chunking of idea units within individual sentences. "Chunking" involves gathering words into phrases or clusters of words that carry meaning and requires an understanding of syntax as well as vocabulary. For example, *John brings the red roses and puts them in a vase*. The reader does not picture red and roses separately. But, readers should select which details are essential to remember. Reading only one sentence is relatively easy to capture details, but remembering becomes more difficult after dealing with a complicated and long passage. After this, readers' knowledge progress through their involvement with the meaning of sentences. In this vein, readers actively make connections across sentences. This process of understanding and inferring the relationships among clauses is recognised as integrative processing. Sub-skills involved in integrative processing stress the capacity to identify and to understand pronoun referents, causation, and sequence. The following sentences display how readers apply these sub-skills. *Michael quickly locked the door and shut the windows. He was afraid*. To whom does he refer? Proficient readers seem systematical to know that "he" in the second sentence refers to Michael in the first sentence.

The third component of reading in building up coherent comprehension is related to the macro-process. Readers coherently organise themselves so that ideas can be better grasped and more easily remembered. In this regard, readers are supposed to make summaries of what they read. They may either consciously or subconsciously select the appropriate and related information to remember them and omit relatively less relevant details. The proficient reader also relies on a structured pattern to help him/her arrange these significant ideas imitating the same organisational patterns presented by the author to organise their thoughts.

The fourth stage of reading is the elaborative process in which readers rely on their prior knowledge and make inferences beyond points described directly in the text. Also, they form assumptions that relate to those intended by the author. For more details, we consider the two previous sentences mentioned above about Michael; we do not know why he was afraid. But, we can expect that maybe he was worried that someone had followed him home, or perhaps he was scared of a thief. When making these inferences, we may rely on the text's

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information or drawing upon our previous experiences. This process is called elaborative processing.

The last and fifth component of reading is related to the meta-cognitive process. It implies monitoring understanding, selecting what to remember, and <sup>2</sup>self-regulating strategies used when reading. The meta-cognitive plan that readers use involve rehearsing (i.e., repeating information to improve recall), reviewing, underlining important words or passages, note-taking, and checking to understand.

To sum up, all these components form dynamic interaction between the text and the reader's content. To further understand how these components of reading lead to a proper understanding, I refer to the DVC triangle, which sums up the whole.

### **1.2.2 The DVC Triangle**

The DVC triangle is the interrelated set of cognitive-linguistic components that make up general reading skills: decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each part is a complex constituent rather than an elementary unit. The DVC model is primarily a heuristic way to conceptualise reading skills and illustrate causal relations among these three reading skill constituents. Decoding leads to a word's meaning, but not to understanding beyond the word directly. Comprehension influences vocabulary ( learners identify the meaning of words from context) but not decoding directly. And both the decoding-vocabulary and the vocabulary-comprehension associations are mutually causal.

**Decoding-Vocabulary:** decoding is the first component in the triangle, which affects vocabulary directly. Successful decoding helps readers retrieve meanings of familiar words, thus strengthening form, meaning associations, and establishing context-dependent links between unfamiliar words and meaning residing in the context. Next, vocabulary influences decoding because decoding a word whose meaning is known makes the connection stronger between its spelling and meaning.

**Vocabulary- Comprehension:** the process of comprehension is ultimately related to familiarity with the meaning of words encountered while reading, and the DVC triangle

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<sup>2</sup> Self-regulation refers to the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process. Self-regulation strategies reduce disruptive problems, and help readers to monitor their comprehension.

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reflects this causal direction. When a reader encounters a text, readers are required to deduce the meaning of words with reliance on the context of this particular text. Moreover, achieving comprehension from a segment of text that involves unfamiliar words also can lead the reader to learn something about the meaning of that word. Therefore, the causation runs both ways between word meaning and comprehension.

Decoding – Comprehension: the DVC triangle does not display any causal arrows between decoding constituent and comprehension. We consider this gap by illustrating the significant comprehension stage mediated by the relevant attempt to recognise the meaning of decoded words. The effects of comprehension on decoding are mediated by achieving enough meaning from the text to check a decoded word's identity. For Perfetti (1985), there is a significant causal link between decoding and comprehension in that fluent or automatic decoding allows more processing resources to be available for comprehension. To conclude, the different types of processing are fascinating and worth considering when researching reading skills.

### **1.3 Reading Comprehension**

Considerable advances in understanding the process of reading have been made in the last decade. The majority of scholars in the field now agree on the nature of reading: Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information. For Rumelhart (1985), reading is a process of understanding written language. It starts with viewing the linguistics surface representation and constructing specific ideas or meanings about the writer's messages. Thus, reading is a combination between the perceptual process and the cognitive process.

Anderson, R. C. (1985) views that reading is a process in which the pronunciation of words gives access to their meanings; the meanings of the words add together to form the meanings of clauses and sentences; and the meanings of sentences combine to produce the meanings of paragraphs. In this conception, readers are viewed as always 'starting at the bottom'- identifying letters- and then working up through words and sentences to higher levels until they finally understand the meaning of the text. However, with the progress of research, the foregoing view of reading is only partially correct. Furthermore, reading involves

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selecting and using previous knowledge about people, places, things, and knowledge about texts and their organization to determine the intended meaning.

From the definitions above, reading comprehension can be concluded as the ability to find the stated or unstated writer's idea in the text. The essence of reading comprehension is understanding all information delivered by the writer.

### **1.4 The Evolution of the Concept of Reading**

Throughout history, researchers' efforts gave rise to an extensive literature on reading and the comprehension process that remains an enduring legacy for the domain of reading. Reading has periodically responded to a significant change resulting in gradual and dramatic transformations that have transformed reading study and practice. Our purpose here is to spot those transformations within a historical framework. I hold that such a historical perspective broadens the reading view and adds a critical dimension to reading comprehension issues.

During the 40's, 50's and early 60's, reading was seen as a passive skill where the reader attempts to decipher the prearranged message. According to Carrell (1998), the reader's role was to decode the printed letters and words to reconstruct the author's intended meaning. Readers were expected to build up meaning for a text from the minor textual units at the bottom, letters and words, to larger units at the top like phrases, sentences, clauses. Moreover, Carrell (1998) explains that before 1970, reading comprehension in a foreign language is an oral language skill.

By the late 60's and the start of the 70's, the opinions about reading have been reformed. The mutual belief almost immediately altered to view reading as an active rather than a passive skill, which entails using different strategies to comprehend the meaning of the message. In this vein, Rumelhart (1980), Johnson (1981), Carrell and Eisterhold (1998) revealed that the reading process was not merely a matter of extracting information from the texts. But it is a process in "which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader's mind that he or she uses, and that in turn, may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text" (Grabe, 1998, p. 56).

According to F. Grellet (1981), "reading is an active skill which constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions" (p.08). Reading is an active

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process in which the reader creates meaning from a text. As readers convey different knowledge and experiences to a reading experience, each reader will construct a different text interpretation.

By the late 70's, reading has taken another form. With the research progress, reading has been viewed as an interactive skill where the reader interrelates with the given text to assume the implied meaning. In 1977, Rumelhart introduced the Interactive Model of Reading, which manifested the beginning of a new vision about reading where readers infer the author's meaning. Texts do not always provide complete and explicit information about a topic, a thing, or an event. They do, however, provide clues that readers can use to understand the intended meaning, thus allowing the reader to make inferences based on the information in the text and /or on the reader's background knowledge. The ability to make inferences from given information in a text and from background information has been described as the heart of the reading process (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text to create a meaning that the author does not explicitly state. It is a combination of reader-based inferencing and text-based inferencing to construct meaning. In other words, readers use clues in the text plus their own personal insights and experiences to make meaning of the text. In addition to using several strategies: activating prior knowledge, making predictions, summarizing, and asking questions to engage in building meaning. When readers infer, they are interacting personally with the text. Skilled readers make inferences almost subconsciously by filling in the blanks with logical assumptions based on text clues and prior knowledge. Readers make connections that help them remember and interpret what and how they are reading. They continually monitor their understanding to see if it makes sense (Brown, 1984).

### **1.5 Models of Reading Comprehension**

EFL reading is intensively studied by experts in the field of language teaching. The research results for many years on reading and how readers learn to process textual information led to the contrasting models about how reading comprehension operates. Since the reading process is a complex mental task, it requires several models to construct meaning from the text. Therefore, some researchers have described the reading process by generating three fundamental reading models.

### **1.5.1 Bottom-up Model**

The bottom-up model focuses on the way learners obtain information from texts. In this approach, reading is collecting and synthesising data through various systems: identifying letters, sentences, and clauses. Theories that stress bottom-up processing emphasised how readers extract information from the printed page. According to Gough (1972), in the bottom-up model, the reading process proceeds from letter to sound, to words, to meaning. In this model, readers start with the smallest units by identifying symbols, analysing them into morphological clusters, then these strings of words are analysed into phrases and sentences. That is to say, readers proceed from part to the whole.

According to Hudson (1998), the bottom-up process is independent of context, and poor readers depend heavily on context strategy to make text interpretations. This model requires readers to process the text starting with grammatical and structural units moving to semantic analyses of the text to construct meaning.

Alderson (2000) claims that "Bottom-up approaches are serial models, where the reader begins with the printed word, recognizes graphic stimuli, decodes them to sound recognizes words and decodes meanings" (p.16)

In this respect, the reader focuses on individual words and phrases and combines all the detailed elements to understand a piece of language.

### **1.5.2 Top-down Model**

The top-down model is one of the critical processes of reading comprehension; for Paran (1996), Top-down processing, also known as a concept-driven model that proceeds from whole to part. It is an approach in which students approach the text as a whole, relying on their knowledge of the world, making predictions in interpreting the text's meaning efficiently. In other words, the uptake of information is guided by an individual's prior knowledge and expectations. In this model, Prior concepts and experience are relevant for understanding any given text.

According to (Goodman 1967, Smith 1971), in top-down processing, readers form hypotheses about which words they will encounter and take in only just enough visual information to test their hypotheses. In terms of Goodman, reading is a "psycholinguistic guessing game."

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Harmer (2001) states:

In top-down processing, the reader or listener gets a general view of the reading or listening passage by, in some way, absorbing the overall picture; this is greatly helped if the reader or listener's schemata allow them to have appropriate expectations of what they are going to come across. (p.201)

Harmer (2001) highlights the importance of previous knowledge in increasing the interpretation of a text by activating information stored in the reader's mind. In this vein, top-down processing refers to the reader's ability to look at a text as a whole and connect and relate it to his existing knowledge base. By contrast, bottom-up processing refers to the reader obtaining meaning from the letters and words to reconstruct the intended purpose that way. Both processes are needed to get a message from a text.

Generally, theorists, including Stanovich and Goodman, identify two opposing models in the reading process. One theory is based on a bottom-up process, and the contrasting theory considers reading a top-down process. Accordingly, Rumelhart (1977) claims that neither the top-down nor the bottom-up model of the reading processes represent what occurs during the reading process, and he suggests an interactive model.

### **1.5.3 Interactive Model**

Reading through time has recognised several stages, from passive to active to interactive. In this light, reading is a combination between the bottom-up and the top-down processes simultaneously throughout the reading process. Alderson (2000) states:

Neither the bottom-up nor the top-down approach is an adequate characterisation of the reading process. More sufficient models are known as interactive models. Every component in the reading process can interact with any other component, be it higher-up or lower down. (p.18)

Brown (2001) demonstrates that combining these two models is a successful strategy in improving reading comprehension. Through this interactive model, both letter features or data-driven sensory information and non-sensory information come together in one place. (Rumelhart, 1977). In this light, reading is a multidimensional interactive process. Readers analyse texts at various levels, starting from letter to the text as a whole. In addition to processing the text's apparent features, the reader is required to bring preexisting knowledge

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to the reading comprehension process. In this respect, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) argue that:

Bottom-up processing ensures that listeners/readers are sensitive to novel information. Or does not fit their ongoing hypotheses about the content or structure of the text. Top-down processing helps the listeners/readers resolve ambiguities or select possible alternative interpretations of the incoming data. (p.557 )

In brief, reading is based on cognitive tasks where both bottom-up and top-down approaches interact simultaneously during the reading process. Therefore, recent research about reading supports the theoretical perspective that meaning is not in texts only. In this vein, readers rely on their knowledge of the world or background knowledge stored in their memory to relate it to the new information that comes from the text. The role of background knowledge in reading comprehension is referred to as "Schema Theory. "

### **1.5.4 Schema Theory Model**

I highlight the notion of schema theory and how the term comes into existence. First, the philosopher Kant (1781) "The Critique of Pure Reason." He suggested that words could have meaning only when they were related to something the individual already knew. That is to say, the individual possesses general concepts to which he relates more specific concepts. Then, in (1932), the psychologist Bartlett demonstrates that anticipations and previous knowledge formulate people's comprehending and remembrance of events, and these anticipations are stored in some schematic fashion. In his book, *Remembering* described a schema as:

An active organisation of past reactions must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response. That is, whenever there is an order or the regularity of behaviour. An appropriate response is possible only because it is related to other similar responses which have been serially organised, yet which operate, not merely as individual members coming one after another, but as a unitary mass. (P. 200)

Later, Rumelhart, an American expert in artificial intelligence, further advances Bartlett's theory. He thinks schemata is composed of several variables representing elements of concepts, and it is a kind of knowledge framework and categorising system. In this respect,

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scholars from different disciplines have different visions for schemata, which can explain and use in the field they work. Despite their various notions, there is a shared understanding that schema is a kind of knowledge framework. The sum of schema represents all the knowledge one possesses and how it is organised in the human mind that allows hearers and readers to comprehend things. All these views are vital for this thesis since they stress the mental processes in the human mind.

Following the same line of thought, Kant (1929) refers to schemata as the rules that arrange smaller units of perception into larger unitary wholes to assign given objects to given categories. To illustrate, students bearing in mind a fixed image of the sport would not recognise other sports as constituents of the same game. Instead of holding one "fixed image," we develop schemata in the form of patterned knowledge structures that allows us to match given 'objects' with those schemata and thus perceive them as belonging or not to assigned categories. For Piaget (1952), schema theory is an effective method that explains how people process information and how it links to our behaviour. It contributes fundamentally to our understanding of mental processes. Furthermore, the term "schema" is frequently used as a superordinate label for a wide range of knowledge structures. It has been named differently by different scholars; fame (Minsky, 1975), script (Schank and Abelson, 1977), plan (Schank, 1982), and macrostructure (Kintsch& Van Dijk, 1978). Rumelhart(1980) stated that:

Schemata can represent knowledge at all levels\_ from ideologies and cultural truths to knowledge about the meaning of a particular word to know what patterns of excitations are associated with the alphabet letters. We have schemata to represent all levels of our experience, at all levels of abstraction. Finally, our schemata are our knowledge. All of our generic knowledge is embedded in schemata. (p. 41)

Cognitive proponents use the technical word schema to describe how a person processes, arranges, and stores information in his/ her mind. To put it otherwise, the individuals are responsible for conveying meaning about what they read and hear. They try to find interpretations that match their prior experiences of the way the world is. In reality, humans' capacity to extract meaning from the reading text represents a tiny portion of the entire human abilities to generate sense from the world's life experiences.

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For Cook (1989), individuals' mental capacity is stimulated either by textual elements or by the context, which activates the background knowledge. Thus, we can activate schemata in one of the two following cases. Firstly, new external data mentally perceived with already known and existing data stored in memory through remembering. Consequently, new knowledge is constructed. Secondly, one can build new knowledge depending on new mental processes. For this reason, building bridges between learners' prior knowledge and the new one is significant for the comprehension of a given text.

Generally, Chomsky (1976) refers to background knowledge as the amount of knowledge that an individual has stored in mind. This stored knowledge (schemata) influence our lives. It guides how we may observe, perceive, and also interpret information. In this regard, before coming upon any new information, students develop units of knowledge about everything they experience in life. Contact and experience with people, objects, and events help learners create schematic knowledge. Therefore, encountering repeated actions like travelling helps learners develop a set of predictions about what they will face in the airport, such as showing the flight ticket and identity card at the entry, then; the baggage X-ray, the boarding pass. These things are helpful because if someone tells you a story about travelling via plane, they will not have to provide you with all the details, but your schemata for travelling by plane can fill these missing details. Schemata represent the structured background knowledge that leads learners to predict elements in their interpretation of discourse.

For Alexander and Emmott (2014), Schemata are cognitive structures symbolising general knowledge, arrangements which do not contain information about particular entities, examples, or events but rather about their general form. Most of the time, details are omitted, and readers use schemata to recompense for any text gaps. Thus, our ability to make sense of what we read or hear is related to an interpretation, which is in line with our experience of how we perceive the world.

Furthermore, Smith (1994) claims that students' knowledge and belief organised in a theory of what the world is like, a theory that is the basis of all our perceptions and understanding of the world, the source of all learning, the source of fears and hopes, motive and expectancies, creativity and reasoning. And this theory is the basis because interpreting interactions or written texts are associated with Schema Theory.

### **1.6 Exploring Schema Theory in EFL reading**

Reading comprehension in EFL contexts has been the inquiry focus of various disciplines such as psychology, applied linguistics, linguistics, literary studies, and cultural studies. All these disciplines indicate the existence of different variables in foreign language reading comprehension processes. Several studies point out particular linguistic elements as cohesion in retrieving native and foreign texts (Steffensen, 1988). Besides, recent research in discourse comprehension has shown that background or schematic knowledge plays a crucial role in the comprehension process.

For Anderson and Pearson (1984), the degree of readers' comprehension of a text depends on how much she/he already knows about the topic discussed in the reading material. The more she/he knows, the more she/he can comprehend. Langer (1984) views that the amount of background knowledge a person holds about a particular subject is a good predictor of how much this person can comprehend that text. In other words, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) affirm that the more the reader can make correct predictions i. e, rely on his prior knowledge, the less he will have to confirm via the text. Smith (1978) shared this perspective. He advises readers to use what they already know (nonvisual information) and depend on the print (visual intelligence) as little as possible. In this context, to validate what is stated above about the relevance of Schema Theory in reading comprehension, the researcher considers it of valuable interest to mention the previous studies made by different researchers related to this field. Several studies show that content schemata play an essential role in text comprehension (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Anderson, 1979; Johnson, 1982; Gagne, Yarbrough, Weidemann, and Bell, 1984 and Davey and Kapinus, 1985)

Accordingly, in the mid1980s, many theorists, experimental studies, and related educational issues (Pearson & Stephens, 1994) stress the relevance of schema theory on reading comprehension. It became one of the prominent reading models. Most present-day models of reading comprehension highlight the implication of background knowledge or schemata in reading comprehension.

In this light, Schema Theory neglected the models based on bottom-up reading methods and shed light on the reader's role as well as his/her background knowledge in finding meaning during the process of comprehension. Precisely, the emphasis is on how the reader's schemata of knowledge already stored in memory function in interpreting new

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information and allowing it to enter and become part of the knowledge stored. Its permanent and strong influence is widely recognised by cognitive and socio-cultural theorists (Vygotsky,1978) during the early 1990s. Such evidence infers a drop in using the term "Schema" or "Schema Theory" in academic journals (Gaffney & Anderson, 2000) and progressively substituted by these researchers as content knowledge, topic knowledge, previous knowledge, and background knowledge.

Additionally, Schema Theory assumes that written text does not carry meaning itself. Instead, a text-only provides readers' directions to retrieve or construct meaning through their previously acquired knowledge. Another perspective that supports the contribution of schema theory to reading comprehension is the one held by Brewer (1999). Readers use their schemata as a tool to understand information, which is both explicit and implicit in texts. As an illustration, let us say that we read (or hear) the following sentence: "The Karate champion broke the cinder block." The sentence does not inform us about the Karate champion's instrument for breaking the block.

Nevertheless, our schemata for the term break, correlated with our schemata for karate champion, leads us to infer that the instrument for breaking the block was the champion's hand. This inference is vital for understanding the sentence. It can only be recognised because the schemata for 'break' and 'Karate champion' are already components of the knowledge stored in our minds. Using the jargon of schema theory, we say that 'hand' has filled in the 'slot' for 'instrument.' It was done by default, or automatically, as soon as the schema for 'break' and 'Karate champion' was 'instantiated,' i.e., activated in our minds, by the stimulus of the incoming text.

To further understand the interrelationship between the reading comprehension process and schemata, we may refer to the vital function of schemata based on affording a summary of our experience by abstracting out the basis and durable components while reading appropriate content. For example, we might have a schemata for Big Ben Clock in London that typically contains a tower, clock, and bell. Schemata present a framework for rapidly processing information in our environment. For example, each time we come across such a famous place, we do not have to consider each element in the clock individually (e.g., location, tower, watch, and the bell). Instead, our schemata "fill in" what we naturally expect to be present, helping to reduce cognitive load.

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Similarly, schemata also permit us to expect or deduce new information in entirely new situations. If we read about London in a book, we can use our established Big Ben clock schemata to predict aspects of its appearance, including the presence of the 150-year-old Big Ben Clock Tower in London. Big Ben's name refers not to the clock tower itself, but the 13-ton bell housed within the tower and takes its name from the man who first ordered the sound, Sir Benjamin Hall. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most giant free-standing clock tower in the world. The clock has become a symbol of England, and London also has appeared in many films.

Most students rely on their background knowledge to interpret a text where the discourse is processed. Consider the following example: "John went to a restaurant for lunch. He ordered a salad, coffee and then went to the park for a walk." This short text doesn't describe all the actions, activities, and situational information that a reader must comprehend. Schemata and scripts contribute to the gaps in the reader's knowledge that, for instance, a restaurant is the servant supplies a place which serves food, that food once ordered, and that one must pay before leaving.

Furthermore, when we mention special occasions like thanksgiving day or a particular sport, cricket is famous in England. Only those who possess a certain amount of data can understand those implications because they have the relevant schemata or background knowledge of that special day and sport. Therefore, content schemata are considered the stepping stone of cognition, on which all kinds of data are processed and treated appropriately. A piece of language in a given text provides only orientations for readers as to how they should grasp or generate meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. In this regard, schemata and scripts often help us define and interpret the discourse associated with particular contexts.

Rumelhart & Norman 1978; Cook 1994 consider the relationship between texts and schemata as two-way: while schemata tend to lay the ground rules for how a discourse will be interpreted, discussions themselves may prompt readers to "tune" existing schemata and create new ones. In reality, background knowledge fulfils different functions that help readers to interpret the discourse. Thus, we find it ultimately significant to devote considerable attention to schemata's critical role in assisting the students in increasing their reading comprehension.

### **1.7 Functions of Schemata**

Readers' schema affects both the process of learning and remembering information and ideas from the text. In this vein, (Anderson and Pichert, 1978) point out six functions of schemata: The first essential function is providing ideational scaffolding for assimilating text information. In other words, schemata offer a niche or slot for certain text information. There is a slot for the main entry in a dining room at a restaurant schema, and information that suits slots in the readers' schema is readily learned, perhaps with little mental effort. The second functional aspect of the schema is facilitating the selective allocation of attention. Thus, skillful readers know exactly when to pay close attention. Also, schema enables readers to form inferential elaboration. Readers' background knowledge enables them to make postulations and inferences that go deeply beyond the literary information mentioned in a paragraph. To further understand the full function of schemata, we should have a complete vision of the other roles that can serve. Moreover, the schema allows readers to search for the type of information needed for remembering. For instance, a person trying to remember a wedding ceremony attended in an elegant hotel, he/she can review the bride and groom, the guests, the types of food presented, the wedding cake, and types of soft drinks served to them.

Additionally, schema facilitates editing and summarising. That is to say, it helps readers to select meaningful information and omit trivial ones to resume the text meant for reading. Finally, schema permits readers to make an inferential reconstruction. When there are gaps in memory, readers' schema and specific information in a text generate hypotheses about the missing data. For instance, suppose a person cannot recall what beverage was served with an excellent meal if he can remember that the entrée was fish. He will be able to infer that the drink may have been white wine.

To sum up, several significant functions of schema theory provide an insight into how memory and knowledge are stored in our brains. However, schema theory does not explain how schemata are acquired, and it does not account for new information without linking it to preexisting knowledge. On this basis, the researcher asserts that when readers rely too much on background knowledge, the outcome conceptions may not be what is intended and determined by the text. And even more critically, individuals' background knowledge varies widely, resulting in quantitative and qualitative differences in comprehension outcomes. Wallace (1992) reveals another limitation of a schema, "there will never be a total

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coincidence of schemata between writer and reader” (P.82). Wallace adds that the difference between writer intentions and reading comprehension is most apparent when readers have had different life experiences than the writer's model reader. Readers sometimes also feel that they comprehend a text but have a different interpretation than the author's intended meaning.

### **1.8 Types of Schemata**

Schema has been classified into various categories by many reading researchers (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell, 1987; 1988b; Alderson, 2000). Most of them distinguish between formal and content schema to reveal the strong influence of background knowledge on reading comprehension. The first type is related to the understanding of rhetorical structures used for organising and signalling the organisation of texts. It is known as formal schemata—knowledge of how stories and expository discourse are organised and structured. The second type is content information, representing general knowledge or knowledge of a specific subject field. That is a proficient knowledge of subjects and concepts. Teachers of biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and social studies often help students develop the knowledge required for understanding the technical and specialised vocabulary of their fields. Another type of schema is general world knowledge, which focuses on understanding social relationships associated with persons and situations.

#### **1.8.1 Formal Schemata**

Countless studies are carried out by several researchers, including Clark (1980) and Carrell (1984), to investigate the role of text schemata in reading comprehension. Most of these research studies offer an empirical indication that the rhetorical organisation intermingles with the readers' formal schemata. That is to say, readers' background knowledge of a given topic and familiarity with textual organisation affects the reading comprehension process in a positive way. For Carrell (1987), formal schemata represent organisational forms, including language structures, vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical structures of different text types. Thus, knowledge and acquaintance with varying kinds of writing and genres facilitate the process of reading comprehension.

From Alpetkin's (2006) perspective, the formal schemata represent how texts are organised and what the main features of a particular genre are. In other words, the structured schemata, which reflects the rhetorical structures of different types of written texts, includes

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language structures, vocabulary, and grammar. At this level, readers use their schematic representations of the text (narrative, compare/contrast, cause/effect, newspapers, magazines, journals, textbooks, research books, library books, menus, directions, etc.) to help them interpret the information in the text. For example, when dealing with expository writing, a reader could anticipate a scientific fact with various elements: a hypothesis, scientific concepts, and experiments. In a detective story, a reader could expect the following chain of events: a crime occurs, possible suppositions formulated, the proof uncovered, and the executor arrested.

### **1.8.2 Content Schemata**

Content schema, which is the focus of the current study, deals with an individual's knowledge of the world; it signifies one's background knowledge of the text's content area (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983). It contains conceptual understanding or information about what happens within a particular topic and how these events relate to each other to form a coherent whole. It refers to a variety of factual knowledge, values, beliefs, and cultural conventions. When readers are quite recognisable of the topic under conversation, they can understand the text's meaning by reading just the title or the first part.

For the sake of investigating the significant impact of content knowledge on reading ability, scholars made several experimental studies. Steffensen (1979) takes a group of Indian students and another group of American students for reading two passages, one about a traditional Indian wedding and another about a traditional American wedding. Results demonstrate that students learn much faster and recall much more information from the native passage. Furthermore, Carrel (1987) examines the effects of both contents and formal schemata on reading comprehension and EFL students' recall. Two EFL students are involved; one of Muslims and another belong to Roman Catholics read two texts, one with culturally familiar content and another includes unfamiliar content. The results indicate that students encounter more difficulties with new content than with a familiar one. Also, students find the texts easy to read and perform better on the tests when the content and the form are both familiar, and even when the form is unfamiliar, the content is usual. When subjects read the strange content passage, they find it difficult to read, also when the form is familiar.

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Gagné, Yarbrough, Weidemann, and Bell (1985) also investigate the effects of text familiarity on recall. They find through this experiment that learners' exposition to highly familiar passages made sense to them, and they can learn as well as recall data in a meaningful way. In other words, Gagné et al. (1985) affirm that the knowledge a reader has about a subject promotes the elaborative processing of novelties, which helps when reconstruction is needed at recall or retrieval.

All the studies reviewed reinforce the importance of text familiarity and prior knowledge for comprehension and retrieval. Understanding can only occur when the new information is connected to concepts already existent in cognitive structure. In this vein, readers' familiarity with the topic or the content has a significant impact on their act of text comprehension. The more readers know about subjects, the more reading efficiency they can gain. Therefore if one wants to become a proficient reader, one must read extensively, including various topics such as psychology, philosophy, geography, chemistry, biology, zoology, etc. For example, an EFL reader comes across the sentence "I have a dream," or "Emancipation proclamation," can s/he catch the actual meaning or just its literal meaning? I have a dream, which is a famous sentence said by Martin Luther King in his speech. So if the reader lacks the complete statement's knowledge, they will not understand the intended meaning. On 28 August 1963, this speech was delivered at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C, to motivate his followers to continue to boycott, protest, and demonstrate until they granted full equality and privileges.

Content knowledge plays a considerable role in helping learners to read and understand appropriately. According to Weaver and Kintsch (1991), content schemata emphasise factual knowledge and cultural conventions that readers should possess and actively use when dealing with a particular topic or text content. Although text processing necessitates various processing strategies from perceptual to discourse level, it is indisputable that content knowledge activation in the text's domain is crucial to comprehension.

According to Harrison, 1992, readers do not construct the meaning of a text in a vacuum. Rather, they do so relying on relevant information, which text writers assume when writing a text. The more readily the reader can relate text content with the proper knowledge sources, the more rapid comprehension can be achieved. This is possible when the reader is familiar with the content of the text. In brief, readers' content schema is of valuable interest

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during reading comprehension, particularly prior knowledge of culture-specific text content. Thus, the forthcoming section is devoted to explaining the notion of cultural schemata as part of content schemata.

### **1.8.3 Cultural Schemata**

Several studies of second-language speakers and reading comprehension (Anderson, 1979; Johnson, 1982; Steffenson & Joag-Dev, 1984) indicate that cultural background experiences are enormously significant in comprehending texts. The concept of cultural schemata was the subject matter of various disciplines, and each looks at it from its frame of reference. Basically, in cognitive anthropology, Sharifian (2003) demonstrates that cultural schemata are interchangeably labelled cultural models and are schematic representations of generic concepts allocated among cultural members. Moreover, the Anthropologist Palmer (1996) speculates that cultural schemata developed from social structure, prominent rituals like funerals, weddings, national holidays, and a host of other cultural phenomena. Similarly, cultural schemata can appear in various cultural artifacts, such as paintings, rituals, idioms, and proverbs, as cultural wisdom enclosed them.

Bedir (1992) has defined cultural schemata, “the background knowledge about cultural aspects of the language learned” (p. 8). According to Yule (1996), “cultural schemata are developed in the context of our basic experiences” (p.87). Another closely related view about the notion of cultural schemata is the one given by Ozyaka (2001), who has defined the concept of the cultural schema as culture specific world knowledge. This particular knowledge embraces ceremonial as well as historical culture.

In this light, cultural familiarity represents a person's familiarity with a selection of cultural aspects. Existing research shows various examples of this. Lazar (1993) gives numerous examples of these cultural aspects, including; social structures in society, customs, and traditions. Proverbs and idioms can fall under the category of cultural issues since they often reveal cultural values.

No matter the kind of cultural aspect used, the main objective lies in the fact that learners can note the way such cultural categories take place in different cultures and countries and how they influence the interpretation of meaning. In this respect, the determining study of this type is done by Steffensen, Joag-dev, and Anderson in 1979. In that

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study, two groups of subjects with different cultural heritages have investigated a group of Asian Indians living in the United States and Americans. Each group deals with specific cultural content: one describes a traditional Indian wedding, the other American wedding. In this regard, the participants will have a well-developed background knowledge system about their own culture's marriage customs and a relative lack of knowledge about the marriage customs of more distant cultures. As a result, each group read the material dealing with their cultural background faster and remember more of the content than they perform with unfamiliar content. Furthermore, relative members of the culture provide appropriate cultural elaborations; non-members provide inappropriate cultural distortions. In short, the study shows a clear and profound influence of cultural content schemata on reading comprehension.

Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, and Anderson (1981) made a correlated study to exhibit the role of cultural background knowledge. For example, both urban Black and agrarian white eighth-graders are exposed to read a letter about an incident in the school cafeteria; the message involves quotations of ritual insults called (<sup>3</sup>playing the dozens), universally found in the Black community. As a result, the urban Black readers cheerfully comprehend the passage and recognise the term (playing the dozens). However, the white rural students interpret the events in the cafeteria. This experiment reveals that learners' familiarity with cultural background knowledge affects their process of comprehension. Moreover, Steffensen and associates' trials and tests bring by themselves fierce arguments for the significant positions of cultural and discourse factors in the reading process.

In short, for EFL learners, cultural-specific knowledge sometimes is fundamental in text comprehension owing to cultural differences between the target language and native language. To illustrate, readers who have not grown up in American culture will encounter difficulties when reading, "I found coal in my stocking, cocked the tree over which started a fire, and my grandfather wore a red suit...". Readers with the cultural knowledge of Christmas morning in the U.S. would have few problems understanding. In contrast, others might encounter serious problems. They have no prior concept about the Christmas experience schema that they can activate, which will hamper them from processing the information they are reading more effectively.

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<sup>3</sup>The Dozens is a game of spoken words between two contestants, common in black communities of the United States, where participants insult each other until one gives up. It is customary for the Dozens to be played in front of an audience of bystanders, who encourage the participants to reply with increasingly egregious insults in order to heighten the tension and, consequently, make the contest more interesting to watch.

### **1.9 Application of Schema Theory in Teaching Reading Comprehension**

The Schema Theory is one of the learning theories in the history of human knowledge, which affects various knowledge fields. Long ago, it was introduced in various domains theology (Buri, 1976), then philosophy (Kant, 1781), and then it found its appropriate position in the field of language education.

First, I highlight a notional review of Schema Theory and its educational application. The educational psychologist Richard Anderson introduced Schema Theory into the academic community in 1977. Research conducted by him demonstrated that comprehension is based on Schema Theory, which is widely used to study the mental state of reading. Reading is considered an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. As a prominent theory of learning, Schema Theory has significant consequences for the learning process. Teachers need to recognise that students can recall considerable amounts of new information as long as they can cluster it with their existing ideas. In other words, the reading process, in essence, is building a certain kind of schemata and continually finding out the embedded information in the text to concretise and modify the schemata in readers' minds. When the reader's schemata become complete and keep approaching the writers' writing intention, they will achieve an adequate comprehension level. According to Chamot (2005), abstract concepts are best understood after a foundation of factual and relevant information has been established.

In this light, learners are limited by their schemata if they cannot see indirect relationships between ideas and find relevant alternatives. Schema Theory-based lessons can be operative by challenging students to connect ideas necessary for the transfer of abilities from the teaching space to later life. These many connections help students gain access to their knowledge when they need it in authentic situations, not merely in the classroom context.

Concerning the application of Schema Theory in EFL reading, several methods have been advocated as schema activators or ways to foster meaningful learning. Ausubel (1967) advocated "the advance organizer" as the essential technique for teachers to stimulate students' appropriate schemata so that they can relate new information with existing ideas.

<sup>4</sup>Meaningful learning is based on the learner construction of knowledge rather than teachers' transformation of knowledge to the student.

Schema Theory is mainly associated with students' reading process. Therefore, Schema theory can be used to teach reading skills. Based on the analyses of various scholars and teaching experience of reading. Brummitt- Yale (2011) has suggested various tasks that help teachers about the different ways of teaching reading comprehension texts in the EFL context. And to make the process of reading more effective, teachers should know what to do before, in, and after the reading course.

### **1.9.1 Pre-Reading Phase**

A significant amount of research has also provided reading comprehension teachers with important information about pre-reading, in general. Furthermore, the purpose of using pre-reading activities is to inspire the students to read the assignment and to prepare them for the reading process. Therefore, pre-reading activities should attract students' attention, supply them with adequate background knowledge, and stimulate the schemata that exist in their minds. For Anderson (1999), reading comprehension and skills are enhanced when prior knowledge is activated.

English teachers can activate the background knowledge of EFL students through the following activities. There are primarily dualistic means for readers to start reading. One is

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<sup>4</sup>For Jonassen (1999), meaningful learning comprises five primary characteristics:

- Active (manipulative): We interact with the environment manipulate the objects within it and observe the effects of our manipulations.
- Constructive (reflective): Activity is necessary but inadequate for meaningful learning. We need to reflect on the activity and, and interpret things that we observe to ensure a meaningful learning experience
- Intentional: Human actions are logically goal-directed. When students actively attempt to perform a learning goal that they have articulated, they think and learn more. For students to experience meaningful learning, they must articulate their own learning goals and monitor their own progress.
- Authentic (complex and contextual): Thoughts and ideas rely on the contexts in which they occur to have meaning. Presenting facts that are independent from their contextual clues disconnects knowledge from reality. Learning is evocative, better understood and when it occurs in real-life, complex problems.
- Cooperative (collaborative and conversational): We live, work and learn in communities, naturally seeking ideas and assistance from each other, and negotiating about problems and how to solve them. It is in this context that we learn there are several ways to view the world and a variety of resolutions to most difficulties. Meaningful learning, therefore, requires conversations and group experiences.

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related to a word-by-word reading, and the second is to skim through the text, scanning the content and deducing what the writer intends to convey. Many readers take the first way to read when they are not prepared for new words. Most of the time, learners face difficulties catching the text's main ideas since they are not aware of the writers' objective. In this light, teachers should help students preview the text by raising their awareness of critical words.

Background knowledge is vital for ensuring text understanding. Before reading, teachers can guide students to predict the text's form and content, which can help them monitor their reading process, find out key points, and associate information with what they have already known. In other words, prediction helps in the activation of background knowledge. Moreover, teachers can direct students' attention toward the title, the first and the last paragraphs, the first and last sentences in each paragraph, pictures, and charts, and so on in the text. These activities help students recognise the purpose(s) for reading and constructing the knowledge foundation required to deal with the material's content and structure. Furthermore, Ringler and Weber (1984) label pre-reading activities as enabling activities because they supply readers with relevant backgrounds to comprehend the material.

Carrell (1988) adds that most readers may approach a text with prior knowledge, but their schemata are not permanently activated while reading. So "pre-reading activities" may help readers in stimulating their prior knowledge. In this vein, the researcher indicates that learners' acquisition of background knowledge about a given topic of discussion is not enough. Still, it should be appropriately activated to reach an efficient process of interpretation. Likewise, Zhang (1993) concludes that establishing schemata through pre-reading activities facilitates text understanding.

To be precise, Pre-reading activities should be applied before a careful reading of the text is done. They are vital because they facilitate the process of comprehension, which in turn provides students with self-confidence.

### **1.9.2 While-Reading Phase**

The while-reading phase is responsible for refining students' reading comprehension. In the pre-reading, EFL students have already created some predictions, so they are supposed to test their assumptions' validity and accuracy while- reading phase. At this phase, the teacher can use both fast reading and careful reading. In the first step, EFL teachers can offer

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some attractive and meaningful questions that can activate students' prior knowledge and encourage their imagination. Therefore, the strategy of skimming and scanning are beneficial in this step. In the second step, teachers can assign multiple questions or short answer questions to master the text's content and increase their schemata.

Students already have established a general idea about the topic of the text being read during the reading process. In this context, students are required to continually apply the most appropriate comprehension strategies that lead readers to understand better, such as making connections, monitoring understanding, asking questions, etc. In other words, the fact that teachers involve students in useful while-reading tasks helps them to obtain a view about students' mode of "thinking." In this research study, the while-reading stage consists of comprehension questions that deal with the text's content. These questions determine the learners' comprehension and capacities to express their mastery of target language skills. In this path, learners reinvest their language skills, background knowledge, and experience to comprehend a particular text. Moreover, teachers can help learners perceive the value of text concepts and how they are interrelated.

### **1.9.3 Post-Reading Phase**

After re-reading and reading, EFL students logically have known deeply about the content of the text. Therefore, it is crucial to review what has been learned. Activities such as retelling or producing a piece of writing will help the students internalize knowledge. Moreover, students should also have the opportunity to transfer their acquired knowledge and make self-evaluations to make a favorable modification for their pre-conceived ideas. The Post-reading phase encourages students to connect the text's content and the learners' prior knowledge and experiences. For instance, in the reading material (*why people get tattoos*), the learners are expected to highlight the familiarity between the Algerian culture and the target one (the American culture). And to what concerns the following text (*Bonfire night*), the learners are supposed to draw the extent difference between their culture and the target one regarding Bonfire Night's celebration.

In brief, the three kinds of schemata: formal, content, and cultural schemata, are thoroughly related to the reading process, and the schema theory is mainly under practice to teach the Reading skill. With its direction, teachers need to lead students to preview and predict the text before reading. Then, they can use both fast readings first and then careful reading to help students be familiar with the main ideas and find out relevant details in the

text. After reading, teachers allow EFL students to review and evaluate their reading, adjusting and consolidating.

### **1.10 The Relevance of Schema Theory in the Pre-reading Stage**

Reading in an EFL context requires a comprehensive ability to effectively analyse and interpret information inserted within the foreign language texts. Therefore, the application of schema theory using pre-reading activities in teaching can meet the needs.

Williams (1987) provides three phases for teaching reading: the pre-reading phase, the reading phase, and the post-reading phase. Of these, the most important for building background knowledge is the first pre-reading phase. The instructor can use various devices such as pictures, slides, movies, and videos to activate and build upon the students' schemata. At the pre-reading stage teachers could prepare the students for the tasks and familiarise them with the given topic. The teachers can rely on pre-reading activities to help the students to read the texts.

In this respect, appropriate pre-reading activities are significant elements in fostering an active and productive use of the learners' background knowledge. Thus, these pre-reading or enabling activities aim at stimulating the learners' relevant knowledge to prepare readers for confronting linguistic barriers during the reading process. In this light, various types of activities and tasks can be identified.

#### **1.10.1 Anticipation Guide**

The Anticipation Guide is a significant activity designed to stimulate students' background knowledge about a given topic before reading it and provide a rationale for reading. Besides, it tries to improve students' comprehension level by responding to a sequence of statements about a topic before they start to read or get involved in any other form of information acquisition. Thus, Dubin and Bycina (1991) recommend using "anticipated guides," which hold a series of statements, often provocative. It intends to challenge students' beliefs and knowledge about the content of the passage. It is a predominantly helpful classroom activity because sometimes students may not recognise that they have prior experience on a particular subject. Still, as they listen to other students to share information, they realise that they know something

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about the reading topic. An Anticipation Guide provides a structured forum for students to think cautiously about the key themes or concepts before reading the text. Students state whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements and discuss their classmates' stance. In general, the Anticipation Guide can be adapted by teachers at any level, depending on the following directions for implementing it efficiently.

*1. Identify significant concepts: The initial step that any teacher can do is to Pre-read the text and select the meaningful ideas that he/she wishes the students to know.*

*2. Determine the learners' knowledge of these concepts: the teacher must consider students' experiential background.*

*3. Create statements: generating a selection of sentences that will challenge or sustain students' beliefs.* Generally, three to five statements will usually work. Ideally, the comments are supposed to be in line with students' level with adequate knowledge to understand what the comments say, but not enough to make any of them a known entity.

*4. Decide statement classification and presentation mode:* Order is essential. Frequently the presentation follows the sequence of the concepts that are encountered in the text.

*5. Present the guide:* The guide can be served relying on different tools like a chalkboard, whiteboard, smartboard, overhead projector, or photocopy guide for each student. Orientations for applying the handbook must be involved as well as space for the student responses. Examples of directions may be: "*Below are some statements about drinking Alcohol. Read each sentence carefully and place a checkmark next to each one with which you agree. Be ready to support your thinking as we discuss these statements. At this step, teachers are supposed to read the directions orally. Emphasise that students will share their thoughts and opinions about each sentence, making an effort to defend their agreement or disagreement with the statement. Students can work individually or in small groups to formulate a response.*

*6. Discuss each statement briefly:* At this level, the teacher discusses their agreement or disagreement with students. Involving students to claim why they agree or disagree. Try to recognise contrasting arguments for each statement.

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7. *Direct students to read the text:* Students are required to read the text to discover what the author would state about each of the statements. Students need to bear in mind two things while reading: the discussion they were involved in and how the reading relates to that discussion.

8. *Conduct a follow-up discussion:* The final procedure is related to students' responses to the statement presented to them after reading. This time they respond in light of the actual text. Therefore, students can share how the process of reading has adjusted their thinking and opinions. As a concluding statement, students are not supposed to be agreed with the author.

In this path, the most intricate aspect of constructing an Anticipation Guide is choosing suitable statements. Guide statements should consider students' previous knowledge and, therefore, must be on the experience-based level of comprehension.

### **1.10.2 Semantic Mapping**

One of the main activities that stimulate students' appropriate background knowledge is semantic mapping. For Hall & Strangeman (2002), Semantic mapping is a graphic display that visually illustrates the connections between terms and ideas to learners as they execute the learning task. Semantic mapping is parallel to brainstorming as one of the exceptionally accepted types of pre-reading tasks. This activity is based on providing students with a particular keyword or key concept. Students are encouraged to call out words and ideas they individually connect with the teacher's keyword or terms. Brainstorming has several benefits. First, it necessitates less preparation from teachers; second, it permits learners to feel free to convey their prior knowledge and opinions concerning a particular issue; and third, it can involve the whole class. All students feel involved when any bid is acceptable and are inserted into the framework. For example, these kinds of associations might be called up by the keyword money: 'coin,' 'bank,' 'poverty,' 'payday,' 'interest,' 'purse,' etc. These bids represent diverse categories and levels of generalization. However, the initial random association can be classified and subcategorized. Also, teachers or students can add other concepts to stretch existing ideas. The result of this kind of activity resembles what has been called "semantic mapping." In this respect, semantic mapping allows students to visualize the relationships and classify them. At this level, teachers can introduce semantic maps in a variety of ways, like circles, squares, or ovals with connected lines. To this end, the teacher can mark the main

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idea on the board and ask students to brainstorm the reading topic; at this stage, students can then react and set the words in circles attached to the main idea.

In other terms, semantic mapping serves as a practical way to lecture vocabulary. Also, it enables the teacher to assess students' schemata or how much primary data they have about a given topic. Similarly, Pittelman and Johnson (1985) argue that semantic maps can help teachers assess the learners' prior knowledge and make students ready for reading the text. Eventually, applying semantic mapping exercises can get learners ready for comprehending, assimilating, and assessing the data they come across while reading.

### **1.10.3 Word Splash**

Word splash is regarded as a fun activity. It can be applied by selecting at least 7-10 keywords or phrases from the given text; employ words known and unknown to the students. Then, the teacher is supposed to dictate the words to the students with the intention that they have to try to spell the words. After that, ask students to write down a short story of at least seven lines using all the words. Similarly, providing students with an opportunity to share their stories with a partner; then select several students to read their stories aloud. Finally, have students read the given text to see if any student-generated story was close to the text.

According to the researcher, this activity is significant and helpful to a certain extent, but it is time-consuming. As we still in the preparatory stage, we need to move smoothly to activate students' prior knowledge and not produce a writing piece.

### **1.10.4 K-W-L Plus**

According to Donna (1986), teachers can apply K-W-L charts for reading in content areas. The K stands for "What we *know*," The W for "What we want to *learn*," the L for "What we *learned*." In other words, the K-W-L is a three-column chart that helps encompass the before, during, and after components of reading a text selection. The three-column chart helps learners identify a purpose for reading and classify the information learned while reading. In other words, the basic directions for constructing a KWL chart with students are straightforward. In this phase, teachers introduce the KWL chart to stimulate learners' interest and background knowledge.

Furthermore, while reading the text, learners can record what they have grasped to fill in the chart's third column. This procedure can help students to relate innovative information

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with their prior knowledge. To further apply this strategy, teachers should follow the following methods:

- ✓ Write down the main topic of the text, selection, or story on the top of the chart.
- ✓ Have the students brainstorm what they know (K) about the topic. Teachers can provide each student with a copy of a KWL chart to individually brainstorm their prior knowledge before compiling the whole class's reactions on a more extensive class chart.
- ✓ Elicit the amount of information they are familiar with and record it in the chart's first column.
- ✓ Once a relatively comprehensive list of what students already know about a topic is established, interact with students to consider what they want to know (W) about the subject. They should expect what they are going to read as much as possible.
- ✓ The students try hard to read the assignment. During this phase of reading, they may persist in inserting questions to the "W" column.
- ✓ In this step, students record what they had learned in the "L" column when they had accomplished the reading task.
- ✓ As a follow-up, inquire students to classify the information they recorded in the "L" column, then label the categories. (This last step is referred to as the Plus.)

Generally, the advantages of a KWL chart are far-reaching. That is to say, it is a significant opportunity given to students to think about what they know and to foster connections between previous and novel information. In this case, students pose questions, doubt about information, also generating a purpose that motivates them to read. Finally, the identification process helps students put in order the information they have read.

### **1.10.5 Previewing**

The pre-viewing technique helps learners establish a purpose for reading and focusing on the entire text before looking at specific reading topics. Accordingly, Schank & Abelson (1977) demonstrate that Previewing is a relevant process for explaining students' cognitive structures before reading. It is considered an effective way of improving reading comprehension. For instance, when previewing a technical chapter or a report, students are trained to study and think about the title and subtitles, the writer's name, the exclusive rights,

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the introduction, the headings and subheadings, the graphs, charts, maps, tables, and pictures, the summary, and the questions. If students are supplied with the purpose of learning, they will often be eager and interested in engaging in the learning process. Thus, the teacher can stimulate readers' interest by asking them easy questions before opening a book. For instance, if you intend to share with your students a book about space exploration, you can pose the question, "Have you ever doubted what it would be like to travel to the moon?" Also, encouraging students to speculate about a book's content or passage based on its appearance is of paramount importance.

The previewing technique makes reading enjoyable as it diminishes ambiguity, allows students to gain confidence, learns in a more structured way. Indeed, the previewing strategy makes learners more explicit about what they know previously on the subject and about what they need to know. In effect, they set up an aim for reading before they begin reading. For example, students reading fiction need to preview the title, illustrations, and introduction to formulate assumptions about the story's ending.

The previewing aims to facilitate readers' prediction or formulation of guesses about what is in the text and activate top-down processing for reading comprehension. Initially, the teacher invites the students to read the text title or a book and raise questions such as Do they know something about this topic? Then, have the students read the first few paragraphs, which generally initiate the text's issues. Can they determine the general themes of the reading material? After that, ask them to read each paragraph's first sentence, usually the topic sentence, which gives the passage's main idea. Can they determine the main points of the article? Please read the last passage, which often exposes the author's conclusion and lets the students discuss how the author put the information to present his point of view.

### **1.10.6 Think Sheets**

Dole and Smith (1987) suggest the Think Sheets technique that is based on students' elicitation of ideas and questions which they hold about the main topic or concept of the material to be read. It is also called a response sheet as it contains students' notes of crucial statements on the left and personal responses to them on the right. To further understand the valuable role this activity serves, we need to know the main steps it passes through. As an initial point, making a copy of the Think Sheet and distribute it to the student. Select a text to present it for reading, and ask them to identify the text's main topic in the rectangular box on

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their sheets. Next, on the light bulb side of the sheet, ask students to list all the ideas they think related to the main topic corresponding to their background knowledge. Then, on the question mark side, students are supposed to mention any question they have in their minds about the main topic. In this regard, the teacher helps them to generate questions in this way, "*Based on your prior knowledge of the topic, what questions come to your mind?*" So, this question can provoke them to think deeply. Besides, inviting students to rely on what they have recorded on their think sheets to direct their process of reading the text. Finally, have students read the text since they have fixed information linked to their original pre-reading ideas and have students note down the relevant notes alongside their corresponding original statements to reach an overall level.

To sum up, pre-reading activities offer compensation for foreign language reader's supposed linguistic or socio-cultural inadequacies. Also, they remind readers of what they already know and think to activate existing schematic knowledge.

### **1.11 The Relevance of Cultural Schemata in EFL Reading Comprehension**

It is acknowledged that cultural background is also one of the significant factors that construct one's previous knowledge about the world. Accordingly, Melendez and Pritchard (1985), "if a reader's cultural background differs significantly from that of the author, it is likely that the schemata needed to understand a particular concept will be lacking or ignored" (p. 400). Furthermore, Oller (1995) demonstrates that cultural schemata or abstract schemata involve cultural familiarity, enabling readers to reconstruct the text by referring to more culturally relevant scripts. It is probably because different concepts may have different referents in different cultures and generate different expectations on the reader's part.

A variety of research studies in foreign language reading (Steffensen et al., 1979; Carrell, 1987; Barnet, 1989) demonstrate that cultural familiarity significantly influences readers' understanding of foreign language written texts. All these studies show that cultural schemata play a vital role in foreign language reading. That is to say, learners' familiarity with general culturally-oriented topics, traditions, lifestyles, experiences, and even knowledge about how particular types of texts are constructed for a specific culture is useful for reading comprehension. In the same path, (Alptekin, 2006; Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson, 1979) and vocabulary learning (Pulido, 2003, 2004, 2007) demonstrated that when students are

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familiar with cultural norms, they can make a better interpretation of the text than when they are not.

The knowledge of cultural norms and the social context of learning affect learners' expectations and behaviour. Therefore, the initial point of English language teaching determines the considerations of students' cultures. Furthermore, teachers' awareness of cultural schemata is essential to avoid mystifying poor reading comprehension with cultural confusion.

In this light, Pritchard (1988) explored the influence of cultural schemata on reading comprehension. In this study, 11th graders proficient in English, half of which were American and half of which were Palauan, were tested using the topic of funeral rites in each other's cultures. The results show a positive influence of cultural schemata on students' processing strategies and comprehension level.

From my perspective, Pritchard's research highlights the influence of the cultural parameter on the reading comprehension process. This finding is significant to my study where it is held, in the same way, that tattoo ideology or perception is different for both the native and the target culture. Other parameters seem helpful for this research study, which is the reader's socio-cultural aspect while reading. Furthermore, cultural knowledge is a flexible feature of one's mental representation shared by people of a particular community.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the main concepts relating to reading and schema theory. In the first part, it tried to give relevant information about the notion of reading. It tended to clarify the different concepts that are related to it from the lenses of different authors. Indeed, reading is a highly involved mental process that involves intentional interactions between the reader and the text within a particular context to create meaning. In this respect, reading is of extreme importance for every language learner since it describes how students achieve, grow, engage, motivate, and communicate (i-e through the elements discussed above) until they become proficient language readers. That is to say, reading is vital in various ways to build vocabulary and structural awareness, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence.

To conclude, this chapter was devoted to the importance of schema theory to reading comprehension. Furthermore, it provided different definitions of schema theory, studies related to schemata, types of schemata, and the functions of schemata. In the next chapter, I shed light on the role culture plays in reading culturally loaded texts. Finally, the forthcoming chapter raises cultural schemata as an essential component in reading foreign language texts.

# ***CHAPTER II***

## ***The Relevance of Culture in Reading Comprehension***

## **2 Introduction**

This chapter is predominantly devoted to the literature review that looks at some basic concepts to teach and learn language skills, particularly reading and the cultural aspect. The present chapter provides different perspectives about the relevance of culture in language teaching and learning. Additionally, by teaching language skills, one is already implicitly or explicitly conveying language systems and their culture since values, beliefs, and thoughts are inserted in language. In this chapter, I shed light on the relevance of cultural background knowledge and its potential contribution to the development of EFL learners' reading comprehension of culturally loaded texts. Furthermore, I review the notion of culture in the language classroom. In this regard, the current chapter explains the indisputable relationship between language and culture.

Once these concepts are well-established, there appears a need to integrate the cultural dimension within the reading process of culturally loaded texts. Besides, pointing out the relevance of cultural background knowledge in the process of reading comprehension. In other words, understanding a piece of language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexis but also knowledge of certain features of culture is required.

### **2.1 Definition of Culture**

An interesting starting point would be a delimitation and definition of the concept of culture. It is merely because the term culture is so vast that various scholars, sometimes belonging to the same research study field, see it from different angles.

A variety of research disciplines consider "culture" a fundamental object to be studied. Anthropology, sociology, psychology, ethnography, pedagogy, and cultural studies are all interested in studying culture, but every discipline looks differently. Anthropology studies how people of a particular social community live and behave. Moreover, sociology deals with social patterns from specific events (micro-level to the macro-level of social models). However, cultural studies intend to reveal particular group members' behavior through their cultural products (paintings, sports, poems, music, literature). Scholars in these disciplines provided various definitions, with each stressing one of the many aspects of culture. The outcome is multiple interpretations that exhibit that culture has resisted any agreement among scholars from different disciplines. (Byram, 1989).

In this light, the ambiguity of the term culture draws back to the diversity of disciplines. For instance, within foreign language teaching, educators, textbook or syllabus designers, and even teachers of foreign language regard and hold different opinions about the notion of culture. The cultural aspect of language education started to gain a significant position at the beginning of the 20th century in Germany with the appearance of *Landeskunde* and *Kulturkunde* concepts, which highlights the study of culture and civilisation. During the second half of the 20th century, Europe perceived swift military, political, and cultural movements such as migration, communication outside national borders, etc. The emergence of such factors contributed to the growth of awareness about the prominence of cultural aspects in EFL. In this respect, during the 1990s, Britain recognised this requirement for cultural studies, which stressed the necessity of cultural aspects of foreign language learning and teaching to refine learners' intercultural abilities in the EFL context. In this vein, various scholars such as Michael Byram, Carrel, Eisterhold, Widdowson, Kramsh devote considerable attention to the standing position of the cultural dimension in the field of language teaching. As a result, these investigations have generated several conceptions.

As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, I highlight the most relevant perspectives about the notion of culture in this thesis. A more intricate definition may be the

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widely used or quoted definition from the pioneer English anthropologist Edward Taylor in his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871.

Taylor (1871) defines culture as that complex whole, including knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a society member. The Taylorian conception of culture represents the features of human society in general. However, they debate the ambiguity of the term "that complex whole." Shaules (2007) states that this complex whole refers to a set of shared knowledge, values, and physical products of a group of people."

For Goodenough (1957), culture is a combination of what people have to know and have to believe so that other members of a society accept their way of behaving. Indeed, we consider it a fundamental kind of knowledge that can be both acquired or learned and transferred from one generation to another. In associating culture with "a group of people," the definition signifies that the members of a particular community share culture and that one community differ from the neighbouring one in terms of culture. In other words, the notion of culture lies in man's surroundings, including a set of knowledge, belief, the conception of life principles, and other skills acquired within a particular community. Differences in cultures account for the differences in the behaviour and attitude of students. This perspective emphasises the intercultural dimension that is significant for this thesis.

Sapir (1949) defines culture as "the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives." Different cultures have different views on what constitutes moral and immoral behaviour. For instance, polygamy is immoral in Western Culture, whereas in Islamic one, it is immoral if one objects to it. Moreover, culture is a set of shared norms, rules, and knowledge that govern a particular group. Also, it has patterns; these patterns differ from one society to another. It is necessary to enable learners to understand the target language culture by comparing its patterns related to their native one to comprehend the differences that exist. To further understand this concept, we refer to its distinctive features in detail. Thus, Moran (2001) states, "culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world and set within specific social contexts" (p.24)

In this respect, the definition mentioned above, including that culture is the evolving way of life, signifying that culture is dynamic; it is more flexible, which expands steadily.

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Persons are conceived as active participants in this dimension as they can change and create other aspects such as products, practices, perspectives, and communities. Products imply anything produced by members of the culture involving language, objects, music, education, politics, and religion. Practices are related to various actions, interactions, or whatever engagement each member executes under a particular situation. Then, perspectives consist of attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the cultural context members, which affect their acts and reactions. The fourth dimension is communities that reflect the social status and environment where members perform cultural practices. Different cultural contexts like family, religious groups, political parties can have a different relationship with one another; they can combine forces and collaborate or separate from or even conflict with other groups.

It is seen as a set of mental processes starting with memorisation and ending up with data interpretation from a cognitive view. Accordingly, Hofstede (1991) defined culture as the mind's software, signifying the shared rules that inform us how to behave and act appropriately within a particular group. From a functionalist view, culture is a set of standards governed by behaviour. In other words, it engages an individual member of a specific group or society mentally and effectively.

From a symbolic view, culture is a dynamic system of symbols and meanings. For Greetz (1975), "culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form through which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life" (P. 89)

To sum up, we can say that culture has been the concern of various disciplines, and each sees it from its angle. Therefore, a set of definitions emerged from different scholars. The overall aim of the present study is how to define culture in foreign language teaching and learning.

### **2.2 Culture in Language Teaching**

The abundant linguists' and anthropologists' definitions of culture have not excluded educators from proposing culture regarding its teaching in the SL/FL contexts. Kramsch (2015) claims that "culture is probable schemas of interpretation of actions and events that people have acquired through primary socialisation and which change over time as people migrate or enter into contact with people who are socialised differently" (P.409). It seems that culture refers to the way we perceive and interpret the surrounding world. It is dynamic, and

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we learn it through the socialisation process. Furthermore, we refer to the most straightforward definition, which usually clarifies a small "C" culture and a big "C" culture. The first refers to the invisible forms of culture associated with life, including religion, language, and a big "C" culture, representing the most visible forms, including art, literature, and food.

For Lee (2009), big C' culture "represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society" (p.78). That is to say, 'big C' culture focuses on the great achievements and contributions to society. It is frequently mentioned as a Big/Large/Capital/Macro "C" culture comprising geographical characteristics, politics, historical events, economy, religions, literature, artistic achievements. In this respect, Peterson (2004) relates such type of culture to the classic or grand themes, which include: architecture, classical music, literature, political issues, society's norms, legal foundation, core values, and history of a social group. Brooks (1968) supports Peterson's view and maintains that "big-C" culture is the best in human life restricted to the elitists.

Unlike big 'C culture,' 'little c ' culture focuses on the daily aspects of life. Peterson (2004) defines little "c" culture as the culture focusing on common or minor themes. It includes themes of the two types; the first one is the invisible culture, such as popular issues, opinions, viewpoints, preferences and tastes, absolute knowledge (trivia, facts). The second type is a visual culture, such as gestures, body posture, space, clothing style, food, hobbies, music, etc. To put it otherwise, 'little c' culture includes people's beliefs, values, behaviours and comprises daily practices in general.

Wintergerst and Mcveigh (2010) advocate that students who acquire both 'big C' and 'little c' cultures can successfully participate in intercultural settings. In this respect, the researcher considers that the 'big C' culture themes are more likely to suit EFL students at advanced levels, 'little c' culture is necessary for students at the first-year university levels. It stimulates students' attention in learning at the university, an EFL learning that is entirely diverse from the English they used to learn at Secondary schools.

### **2.3 Interconnectedness between Language and Culture**

In culture teaching, language is the heart of culture, as one of the leading carriers of meanings, and reinforces the argument that language teaching inevitably involves teaching

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culture. Furthermore, explaining culture shows the systems of definitions and the symbols that carry meanings, both linguistic and non-linguistic. Language and culture are firmly attached, and the discussion of this relationship yielded various opinions due to the diversity of disciplinary perspectives. But, our main concern is to reveal the interconnectedness between language and culture to foreign language teaching. Brown, D.H (1994), states " a language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of a language; the two intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (P. 165)

The fact of dealing with any language automatically determines an implicit contact with its culture. One can assume the impact of language on culture and its impact on language representing a bidirectional relationship. It is due to the unsurprising importance of both dichotomies, language, and culture. Several disciplines tackled these concepts from different angles. In anthropology, for instance, the link between language and culture draws back to "the linguistic relativity" of Sapir (1962) and Whorf (1956). They posit that our perception of the world is in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language. What we see in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences. According to Sapir and Whorf hypothesis, the structure of a given language will affect thinking. The implication is that people who speak different languages will think differently. In this vein, the existence of various languages is assimilated with varying patterns of culture and taught. Thus, both teachers and learners must acquire the necessary skills to perform accurately within each society's cultural norms and manners. Furthermore, some modern theories pointed out the language as a reflection of cultural patterns.

Byram 2014; Kramsch, 2006; Risager, 2012, hold a common belief that learning a new language usually includes a cultural component due to its importance and relevance in language teaching. Accordingly, Lund (2014) identifies the reasons behind including culture in language learning in four points. The first refers to the learner's motivation, since knowing about the country where they use the target language can motivate them. The second point has to do with language learning and communicative abilities; cultural knowledge enables students to communicate appropriately and get an overall understanding of the target language. The third point is developing the students' general knowledge as learning about cultural topics in the English subject will improve their level. Finally, the last point is

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intercultural competence; having an overview of the target culture and the native one will help communicate with people from different backgrounds.

The way people think and conceive the world reflects their culture's remote systems, which language insert. Language is a container and creator of meaning. Additionally, an appropriate apprehending of writing is unfeasible without a complete consciousness of the cultural background. Goodenough (1957) shares a similar view. He demonstrates that language is a relevant aspect of culture, and the relationship between language and culture is that of a part to the whole. Thus, according to him, language is an internal component of cultural reality that constructs human thought and enables them to interpret culture.

Based on the views mentioned above about language and culture, one can sum up that language is a carrier of culture that involves their historical and cultural backgrounds, their conception of life and thought, also their values and beliefs. Thus, to be able to comprehend a language requires consciousness about its culture. In other words, language is inseparable from culture, and understanding language determines an understanding of its cultural patterns. It represents a significant component of the underlying complex system that makes up the culture of a community. Language, in this sense, does not only involve patterns of vocabulary, morphology, grammar, phonology, but it also includes other mechanisms: linguistic and non-linguistic elements that may differ from one person to another due to cultural diversity.

Furthermore, culture has a considerable influence on a person's view of the world. Consequently, language and culture need to be learned and taught together since language is a means of communication. The cultural identity of members of a particular community appears within communicative acts.

The interrelationship between language and culture is related to a diversity of interconnected reasons. Firstly, we refer to the foreign language context of teaching/learning English in an artificial setting. This context does not provide EFL learners with adequate opportunities to get involved in real-life communication situations. It is, therefore, considered essential to enable the learners' to develop their cultural factors that are relevant in any act of communication with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Secondly, teaching the English language determines learners' awareness and knowledge of the target language's cultural and social norms and behaviours to achieve intercultural competence. Moreover, the teaching of culture, therefore, should, in the first position, raise

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students' reflection on the nature of the target culture and promote openness and tolerance towards other people's perceptions. Thirdly, the combination of language and culture is an essential step in fostering learners' ability to behave and use language in acceptable manners appropriate to native speakers. Thus, teaching culture via language increase learners' cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding.

The most significant awareness toward the nature of the interrelationship between language and culture has led to the appearance of research studies that encourage educators to stress the significance of teaching about the target culture. In this respect, Byram (1989) claims that his main goal is to develop "an integrated discipline of teaching language and culture" (p.23). He argues that a context of mutual respect is necessary for teaching the target culture and the native one. Students can understand the target language appropriately only when they comprehend the target culture. Moreover, having a general understanding of the target culture inevitably minimises cultural miscommunications and misunderstandings between people from different cultures.

Sercu (2005), bringing a foreign language to the classroom means connecting learners to a culturally different world. The aim behind English language teaching is to invite students to know about this language's cultural dimension, which will help them recognise the world around them. For many years, English has been referred to as a global language, communication, and technology. We use the English language in education, at work, and especially in technological advances. Because of its importance, the English language is taught in Algeria as a foreign language in a formal context. This language has an exclusive and predominant role in all levels and sectors of education due to its valuable objectives that are linguistic and cultural, as described in the following section.

### **2.3.1 The Linguistic Objectives**

Teaching English to foreign language learners for linguistic purposes is a step forward and a broad objective to feed the crucial need of university students in Algeria.

Learners at this level are supposed to learn the basic knowledge of the language, which helps them carry on their learning of the English language and keep them equipped with the required means to improve their linguistic abilities and English skills.

In this regard, the paramount aim of ELT in Algeria is to generate proficient learners able to read, write, and communicate effectively. Therefore, the English language syllabus

develops learners' abilities by improving their knowledge and familiarising them with grammatical structures, language functions, and components. The linguistic aspect is one of the main points of language proficiency. Thus, learners require an excellent linguistic repertoire and grammar that helps them properly comprehend and produce English. Knowledge of vocabulary emerged as an indispensable part of any language learning attempt in general and reading in particular. For that reason, learners should recognise word meaning, word use, word pattern, and word functions.

### **2.3.2 The Cultural Objectives**

Languages make part of cultures. Therefore, teaching the English language in a different context like Algeria requires extreme attention toward the cultural aspect. In other words, any given society represents a particular Culture. Consequently, learners need to know every aspect linked to that society to operate acceptably with its members.

Based on the statement above, the researcher demonstrates a strong relationship between language and culture. Cultural patterns and perspectives operate through the rules of language. Since both are interrelated, teachers can transfer through language beliefs, customs, and relevant practices of the target culture to learners. It may help learners build up a clear view of the foreign culture and improve their cultural competence to contribute to the broadening of their minds by providing frequent exposure to various English culture contexts and civilisation.

In this path, teaching the English language in a non-native context implies that teachers create an appropriate atmosphere in which learners can develop positive attitudes towards learning English and expand their cultural background knowledge. Furthermore, allowing learners to understand diverse foreign cultures increases their awareness of the different ways of life. Also, it makes them develop positive perspectives towards other cultures. It is, therefore, highly significant to relate language teaching to its cultural contexts. That is to say, language use is inevitably cultural and social, and languages are determined and shaped by cultures. Therefore, foreign language learners require the necessary instruments and skills to cope and communicate fluently and accurately under real-life situations.

## **2.4 The Interrelationship between Language, Context, and Culture**

Several scholars indicate the existence of a reliable connection between language, culture, and context in language teaching/learning. Based on this conception, language is much more than the involvement of words and their semantics, much more than what the printed page or the spoken word can enclose. Terms represent beliefs, history, and the context of language use. It becomes visible when dealing with salutations or everyday sayings. It means a considerable weight is on culture than on the words themselves. In this regard, having an idea about the different aspects of situational and cultural contexts in which language is used plays a significant role in helping foreign language learners interpret texts and take part in communication situations effectively.

According to Geertz(1973), foreign language learning provides a unique opportunity to experience and gain insight into new ways of conceptualising and looking at the world. It implies that exposing students to different languages leads them to establish other concepts, explore culture bounded to that newly learned language. Additionally, Kramsch (1993) argues that exposing students to languages and conceptual frameworks different from their own, foreign language education can be seen as a golden opportunity to expose students to expressions of 'otherness' and challenge the students' perceptions and possible ethnocentric attitudes.

To further understand the interconnectedness between language, culture, and context, we may refer to the notion of context that makes up the link between language and culture. On the one hand, Sperber and Wilson (1986) identify the context as a psychological construct, a subset of the world's hearer assumptions. It is these assumptions that affect the interpretation of an utterance. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding statements: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation. In this regard, context is a purely psychological entity, which exists in the mind of the speaker/hearer.

Richards (1992) claims that context occurs before and after a word, a phrase, or even a longer utterance. It facilitates the understanding of the particular meaning of the words, phrases, etc. For example, the term loud in loud music refers to "noisy," whereas in a tie with a loud pattern is understood as "unpleasantly colourful."

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According to Nunan (1993), context refers to the discourse and within which the discourse is embedded. There are two different types of context. The first is the linguistic one involving the language surrounding or accompanies the piece of discourse under analysis. It is worth noticing that the linguistic context impacts a word's meaning or a sentence to be interpreted. The second is the non-linguistic or experiential context within which the discourse takes place and the meanings society attaches to them. Yule (1996), states "context is the physical environment in which we use words" (P. 128)

According to the different opinions voiced by the scholars mentioned above, context is not an organic element of culture; it is a carrier of it. To understand a language is to be aware of the vital role that context plays in determining its meaning. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985), language only makes sense when it is within some context or situation, and language (text) and context are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. Halliday&Hasan use the term 'cycle of text and context' to indicate that the notions of text and context are inseparable; this means that texts and contexts are each other's contexts. The cycle encompasses the text itself and its relations to other texts and contextual factors related to the situation and culture. It means that making any attempt to understand something that is said or written is simultaneously assimilated with interpreting the text's framework. Given an instance of language, learners can immediately construct and understand the situation in which the text functions.

Following the same line of thought, Byram (1988) argues that language has no function independent of its context of use. It always refers to something beyond itself. It seems obvious, then, that learners of a foreign language need to consider the linguistic aspects and the situation of the language used.

### **2.5 History of Culture Teaching**

Language teaching has significantly evolved along with the beginning of the twentieth century, considerably as teaching and communicative learning skills emerged. Moreover, the concept of teaching goals has shifted from teaching a language to teaching culture. So, culture has been integrated into the language teaching context and continuously spread via various modes and approaches to foreign language teaching. In an attempt to trace the history of teaching culture in the field of language teaching, a distinction between culture as part of language and teaching culture, along with language, seems necessary.

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From the beginning of the twentieth century, the foreign language's teaching culture was an important step implicitly used by the grammar-translation method advocates. The teaching of foreign languages, according to this method, is an instrument to get access to the great works in literature and philosophy of the Greeks and Latin. A great emphasis within this method is on the formal study of language forms inserted within various written language texts that foreign language learners receive. In other words, learning the classical languages was extended to the study of their classical literature and fine arts. Alfallay (2007) demonstrates that the main aim of learning a foreign language with GTM is to read literary work written in it. However, Rivers (1981) assert that one of the main drawbacks of the GTM is the overemphasis on grammar rules. The GTM doesn't matter about the concept of cultural awareness. After a while, the reform movement appears, which stressed the importance of mediating culture and language in more than one aspect. Foreign language teaching implies language use as its primary aim. Therefore, a great emphasis is on authentic texts. Jespersen (1904) demonstrates that learning a foreign language is similar to discovering one's first language. That is to say, this method implies that learning a foreign language is an imitation of the first language.

Several critics directed toward the direct method, and the audio-lingual process started to develop in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. It revolves around the idea that language learning is a habit formation. This method stresses the use of daily speech in the form of conversation. The main objective of this method is to achieve communicative competence. Yet, with the earliest 1970s, there have been various attempts to implement a culture in the EFL curriculum, mainly due to the appearance of the communicative approach to language teaching known as CLT, which focuses on the crucial social function of language in society.

### **2.5.1 The Cultural Turn in Foreign Language Teaching**

In the 1970s, there appears a shift of interest from the GTM and the audio-lingual method towards communicative competence. This move was mainly due to the multicultural economic and social conditions in Europe. During the 1970s and the 1980s, economic and cultural exchanges were increasing. People found themselves culturally different from their own, obliged to contact people from different social and cultural values and lifestyles. In this vein, the field of foreign language teaching adopted the communicative approach. For Canale and Swain (1980), "communicative competence" is a synthesis of an underlying knowledge

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system and the required skill for communication. One can assume that learners in this approach learn how to function appropriately in social settings, which implicitly provides them with knowledge patterns about the target culture of the native speakers and their daily lifestyles. Moreover, Richards & Schmidt define communicative competence in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied linguistics (2002) as: “knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also the knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community” (p.90). Despite the simplicity of this definition, it focuses on the importance of context in communication.

According to Richards (2003), communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- 1- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.
- 2- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the participants (e.g.knowing when to use formal and informal speech).
- 3- Knowing how to produce and understand different texts (e.g., narrative, reports, interviews, conversation ).
- 4- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge.

In this vein, foreign language teaching shifted towards the use of communicative competence as it determines what to say in an appropriate manner, time, and setting. Therefore, cultural aspects within its framework stressed replacing traditional literary texts with authentic or non-literary texts. The selections of reading materials are from newspapers and magazines, which revolve around daily life themes. The comprehension of this selection of reading materials requires knowledge of the language and the outside world. In brief, teaching culture under this approach stresses any speech act's appropriateness in a transaction with the cultural aspect.

### **2.5.2 The Shift from Communicative Competence to Intercultural Competence**

Communicative competence reached practical importance among scholars and language educators since the 70s. Later on, Byram views that EFL learners do not need to model themselves on native speakers. Thus, as a reaction to communicative competence, intercultural competence appeared. Accordingly, Meyer (1991) defines intercultural competence as a person's ability to behave adequately flexibly when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of foreign cultures' representatives. This appropriateness and flexibility imply an awareness of cultural differences between the native and the target culture. Byram (1991) considers intercultural education as the process of "comparative ethnographer." The researcher attributes the comparative ethnographer's notion to the learners' exploration of the home culture's national identity and the target culture with a set of parameters: cultural, social, and historical similarities and differences. So, learning a new language doesn't mean that students take on a new identity. But they merely organise boundaries between the native culture and the target culture where a third culture develops. Kramsch calls this person the intercultural speaker, a speaker who can select these forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness in a given social context of use.

According to Byram's model, the researcher deduces that an intercultural approach stresses a set of active ingredients necessary for the learning process. The essential elements that can reflect sustainable development are openness and readiness to know about the other world and critically reflect and analyze cultural diversities' issues, not taking things for granted. The influence of Byram's model has been immense. It is worth noting that teaching culture within intercultural competence emphasises the language learner and the desired outcomes. It becomes necessary to consider the attitudes, morals, traditions, lifestyles, and other socio-cultural elements of the target language.

### **2.5.3 Culture Teaching in the Recent Era**

Along with the 1970s, considerable attention toward the significance of teaching Culture in FL classrooms. The more recent models perceive culture as a dynamic and changeable entity. Therefore, the progressive view of culture necessitates learners to actively get involved in culture learning, rather than only passively learning about the target culture.

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Accordingly, Crawford & McLaren (2003) states that learners are encouraged to view cultural facts as situated in time and space and variable across time, regions, classes, and generations. For Liddicoat (2002), culture is a variety of practices in which people live their lives and continuously produce and re-produce participants in the interaction. These cultural practices symbolise a contextual framework that people use to structure and recognise their social world and communicate with other people. As such, culture is not about information and things; it is about actions and understanding. Thus, learning about culture implies a complete insight into the linguistic and non-linguistic practices of the culture and the mode of living within a particular cultural context. In this respect, teaching culture is not a case of introducing information about the culture; it teaches learners how to engage with it. The scope of cultural learning moves beyond awareness, understanding, and sympathy.

The 1980 s reflect the era of cultural pedagogical development, especially with the appearance of technology and media that support cultural education. During the 1990s, ICT evolution (information, communication technology) strengthened cultural and intercultural learning. Significantly, the internet networks and the growing attention in travel and tourism. Thus the 1990s is said to be the period of internationalisation and the real advance of culture pedagogy.

Finally, from an analytical view, the above discussion suggests that recognising the history of culture teaching means understanding the nature of language vis a vis culture. Without this understanding, there would be a kind of pedagogical deficiency. In this part, we shed light on the vital role of culture all over the different periods; it becomes clear that when learners study a foreign language, they ride the train of its culture without even noticing. It means that the learning of a second/foreign language always goes systematically with its cultural learning. In recognising its effectiveness in the foreign language classes, there appear various teaching approaches.

### **2.6 Approaches to Teaching Culture**

"An approach is a valuable means which refers to theory, philosophy, and principles underlying a particular set of teaching practices." Longman Dictionary of Language teaching and Applied Linguistics, 2001. In the history of culture teaching, there appear various approaches. We categorise these approaches in different ways; those who focus mostly on the country's culture whose language is studied (the mono-cultural approach) and those which highlight the comparison of learners' own and the other culture (the comparative method). In

this regard, the so-called mono-cultural approach is insufficient nowadays since it does not consider learners' understanding of their own culture. On the other hand, the comparative method stresses that the learner's beliefs, values, and knowledge form a basis for successful communication with different cultures. That is to say, the essence of the comparative approach is that students learn that there are several ways of doing things, and their style is not the only potential one.

### **2.6.1 The Mono-Cultural Approach**

It is labelled the foreign-cultural approach, which stresses a single, specific culture of a particular country where we use the target language. It avoids the learners' own (native) culture. This approach is much associated with the grammar-translation method and big "c" culture, which reached its climax in the 1970s. The most known examples of this approach are the Frankenstein approach, the tour guide approach (monuments, rivers, cities). This approach's ultimate goal is to supply learners with only factual information about foreign culture and its country. But, it does not allow them to analyse and understand them.

### **2.6.2 The Intercultural Approach**

Nowadays, teaching a foreign language within an intercultural approach is based on the idea that EFL students can learn about culture through comparison. It deals with the relationships between the learners' own country and the target one. It may include similarities between the two, and it develops learners' understanding of both. Furthermore, the intercultural approach promotes awareness of native culture, target culture, and international culture. The need to establish a link between native culture and target culture constitutes the basis of this approach. At this level, learners cannot reach a native speaker's competence level in the target language. Still, they ultimately serve to be a mediator between different social groups that use different styles.

Moreover, the intercultural approach involves the ability to understand the target community's language and behavior and explain it to members of the "native community" and vice versa. In other words, an intercultural approach teaches learners to be "diplomats," able to see various cultures from a perspective of informed understanding. This approach encourages learners to reflect on particular cultural information relying on the comparison. In this regard, comparison helps learners discover similarities and differences in their own and

other cultures. Consequently, learners' knowledge increases, and they develop a sense of tolerance for others.

The primary intention of the intercultural approach is to learn that there are several ways of performing things, and their style is not the only absolute or possible one. One key goal of this approach remains language development, intercultural understanding, and mediation. So, the fact of relying on such an approach has two opposing sides. It can help learners to know what is allowed and what is not. Similarly to a code of conduct, the system organises and gives priorities to drivers. Also, via the comparative approach of culture, learners will establish a set of patterned knowledge that helps them participate appropriately and recognize the differences and common points in different communities. This approach has become widely recognised since the 1980s. However, Risager considers this approach inadequate since there are sub-cultures within even one country. In this regard, Risager suggests that teachers should use multicultural and transcultural approaches.

### **2.6.3 The Multicultural Approach**

The term multicultural education refers to "multi-ethnic education." This approach highlights that today's modern societies are multicultural, and several cultures exist within one culture. It considers both the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the target country and the home culture of learners. Therefore, the multicultural approach's paramount aim is to help EFL learners appreciate cultural differences and recognise the performance of diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups. It strives to supply learners with more than one perspective of a cultural phenomenon or a historical event. In this respect, Risager (1998) suggests that there should be a balanced and anti-racist view of cultures. To conclude, applying this approach's principle requires learners to be exposed to several cultures of the target language and bear in mind that cultures are not monolithic.

### **2.6.4 The Trans-Cultural Approach**

The widespread tourism, migration, worldwide communication systems, economic interdependence, and globalisation urge Risager (1998) to suggest the trans-cultural approach to EFL teaching and learning. The English language advanced and became recognised as a Lingua Franca; the trans-cultural method deals with EFL as an international language. Its primary goal is to prepare learners to get involved in global- intercultural communication settings to cope with their development. Byram (1997) indicates that this approach aims to

introduce a variety of universal significance in all cultures. The present study considers the trans-cultural approach in the EFL context an essential and beneficial step, which ultimately and extensively corresponds with English as an international language.

The transcultural approach, therefore, deals with foreign language as an international language. Its main aim is to teach learners to use it for international communication.

### **2.6.5 The Theme-Based Approach**

A "thematic approach" to the process of teaching and learning culture in the EFL context revolves around specific cultural themes, including; values, humour, love, beauty, intellectuality, the art of living, family, liberty, patriotism, religion, and education.

On this particular point, Nostrand (1974) and Seelye (1993) suggest that we teach the culture of a specific society appropriately when we gather it under significant themes. That is to say, grouping the cultural contents in various themes (e.g., religion, education, family, ethnicity, value) and then focusing on using these themes to teach some intercultural communication elements.

The thematic approach supply students with more cultural knowledge on more than one topic. In other words, a theme is broader than a topic as it includes several components of a particular lifestyle. Saluveer (2004) considers a theme as an emotionally charged concern, which motivates or strongly influences the culture bearer's conduct in a wide variety of situations. However, this approach is sometimes broader for learners to recognise patterns of individual life and understand how to behave in a social context, leading them to stereotype. According to Colasanti and Follo (1992), the theme study will not be successful unless the teacher can communicate to students what they are learning, why they are learning it, and, most importantly, how it fits into the larger scheme of their education and their lives. This approach is considered one of the teaching strategies that create an exciting and creative learning atmosphere.

### **2.6.6 The Topic- Based Approach**

The topic-based approach in culture teaching means that the lessons' emphasis is on a subject, a topic, or a theme. It also focuses on more general and cross-sectional issues, which include a variety of cultural topics. On this particular point, Brooks (1960) suggested a list of topics that he thought are both representatives of a specific culture and would be of practical significance to language learners. His plan involved, among other things, greetings, patterns

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of politeness, verbal taboos, festivals, folklore, music, medicine, and hobbies, learning in school, meals in restaurants, sports, and careers. Nevertheless, the most relevant aspects of culture teaching within a topic-based approach are those topics related to patterns of living, society's everyday life, and the interaction between a person and his immediate social environment, making learning about the target culture more enjoyable. In other words, the use of each topic in the classroom needs proper preparation and introduction. Introductory or pre-reading tasks should raise students' interest and give them a clue about the subject.

Likewise, Saluveer (2004) demonstrates that a topic-based approach can provide an initial encounter with culture within its appropriate context. It deals with critical components of a particular nation's current life, such as class, education, and health, not in isolation but within a series of unifying contexts. Furthermore, the topic-based approach to the teaching and learning of culture is an attempt to involve learners in a real-world situation and develop EFL learners' cultural awareness toward the target language and its culture.

To conclude, all these approaches play a vital role in the field of foreign language teaching. However, in our thesis, intercultural and topic-based methods seem more relevant to our case. Students can develop their cultural competence and reading skills by teaching cultural topics in the reading comprehension module. It means instead of focusing on reading any text. It would be better to take some cultural issues for reading. Besides, students should be involved in the learning process and stimulate them to research to extend their knowledge and comprehension.

### **2.7 Integration of Culture in the Reading Skill**

Teaching language skills is a relevant process affected by various language aspects, chiefly among them, the cultural one since there is excellent interaction between language and culture. Furthermore, teachers know a natural link between language and culture; in return, this necessitates them to recognise that language teaching is culture teaching. Learning culture is crucial for ensuring comprehensible input in the target language. It means that the learning of a second/foreign language always goes systematically with its cultural learning. In recognising the cultural aspect's usefulness in foreign language classes, several researchers raised the alarm that although we expose foreign language learners to some cultural knowledge, few know the cultural meaning.

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As far as university students are concerned, one might state that EFL learners are already learning about English people, British or American, through different subjects, such as literature and civilisation. However, teaching culture via this oversimplifying way is inadequate to support EFL learners to be entirely conscious of the cultural sense used by native speakers in interactions or written texts. Therefore, in this thesis, I suggest teaching cultural elements through reading texts. Reading comprehension texts always are demonstrations of a set of aspects and themes of life and cultures. These demonstrations inherently imply frames of reference, value systems, peculiar knowledge, and beliefs socially. Therefore, each cultural context will provide a different reading for a text. Ensuring cultural knowledge transfer through reading; exposing EFL learners to cultural texts provides learners an insight into the target culture. In other words, one of the significant functions of reading is serving as a medium for transmitting features of language and culture of the nation. In this vein, integrating elements of culture in the EFL context is of valuable position. For Damen (1997), "culture learning, along with the four traditional skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking can be accorded its rightful place as a fifth skill, adding its particular dimension to each of the other four" (p.13)

It is incorporating cultural aspects within reading skills focuses on various relevant fields, such as a religious culture formed by the religious belief of a particular nation. Also, knowledge of historical culture is of paramount interest to EFL learners to know about the history of language and avoid further cross-cultural obstacles. Similarly, regional and social culture reflects users of language governed by a particular geographical environment and lifestyle that may create comprehension barriers to EFL learners as they are unfamiliar with it. Inserting these facts can help readers in decoding any cultural symbols related to a particular event under a specific society. Additionally, EFL learners can learn both languages and cultures simultaneously.

Metaphorically speaking, culture is like food. There are different local and international foods. People see, smell, and taste them; many foods we can eat freely, while religion prevents some of them. However, there is no danger in knowing what foods exist in the world. Learning how to deal with them is crucial. Letting the students know how overseas people behave can facilitate the language teachers' work and raise learner's motivation toward language skills learning in general and reading skills. In other words, since culture affects all aspects of life, it certainly has a significant impact on reading elements.

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In short, reading is a tremendous means for teaching culture because reading cultural texts are cultural manifestations and provide unique insights into the target culture, which leads to better understanding and admiration of the target language and culture. Additionally, students' knowledge of culture influences their reading process as well as experience. Thus, reading promotes intercultural understanding, primarily through a comparison of two cultural systems. Let us consider the following examples:

- Privacy: in Britain, people may feel outraged when you tackle their personal life; they usually set limits. However, in Algeria, it is common to talk about something unique to someone you do not know.
- Greetings: It is usual for Algerian men to kiss each other on the cheek even when they do not know the person very well. In large parts of Britain, men shake hands.

These examples show that there is strong evidence that culture is not only represented in civilisation and literature. For comprehending language well, one requires to understand other aspects of culture – visible and invisible ones. Moreover, to read effectively, learners should hold a certain background knowledge about the target language's history, geography, religion, politics, traditions, and beliefs. Furthermore, both linguistic and cultural expertise affects learners' ability of reading comprehension. Sometimes students may recognise the meaning of each word encountered in the text. However, they cannot understand the reading material due to the gap between readers' schemata and the content of the topic.

As far as language is the carrier of culture and background knowledge is the primary ingredient of language. The cultural experience will also replicate national or cultural differences. Colour can be an actual example of the role they play in our lives. They can remind us of a place, a time of year, or our favourite traditions and can also shape the way we feel. But, when it comes to what different colours symbolise in each culture worldwide, these associations can vary greatly. In Chinese, white is a colour, often relates to "pure, noble and moral goodness," and the bride dresses in white during the wedding in most western countries. In Western cultures, white represents purity, elegance, peace, and cleanliness; brides traditionally wear white dresses at their weddings. But in China, the bride must wear red in a traditional wedding, definitely not white. Because Red means "happiness, good luck, flourishing and prosperous" in the future, and people only wear white at funerals when one's family member or relative is dead. By contrast, white in China is associated with "pale, weak and without vitality." Thus, learning a language entails knowing its syntax rules and the

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denotative meanings of words. Still, it involves much more, such as cultural phenomena, lifestyle, habits and customs, history, and everything that embodies culture.

Teaching reading skills within a cultural dimension allows students to comprehend and get introduced to cultural aspects different from their own time and setting. Language is a culture par excellence vehicle, it enables learners to understand better and appreciate the target culture, which is typically different from the native one.

According to Byram (1997), to eliminate the prejudice concerning other people's thinking and behaviours, there should be a focus on identifying the cultural aspects, attitudes of curiosity, and openness. In this respect, during reading cultural-based content, learners are supposed to be ready to approach foreign and unfamiliar cultures to categorise those cultural patterns in ways that are different from theirs. In other words, learners are supposed to read and define themselves and others through comparison and contrast. The selected texts contain various instances in which the targeted participants would recognise and identify themselves in this way. Also, the informants of this study compare their cultural acts and the target ones. (See the analysis of each text in chapter 4). Thus, this notion of diversity and comparison between cultures would pave the way for the participants to avoid cultural obstacles. At this level, the participants would play the role of an intercultural person during reading comprehension.

In this light, the research study supports the assumption that prior knowledge, including cultural background knowledge, offers a rich and fruitful information source to comprehend texts better. Therefore, this exploratory research attempts to test this hypothesis to see such an impact. Alderson and Urquhart (1988) confirmed that learners who belong to a specific discipline would understand and perform better in tests related to previously familiar subjects.

The fact of learning about a foreign language determines to learn about its culture to avoid prejudice concerning foreign people's thinking and behaving. In other words, learners are supposed to be ready and curious to know about the unfamiliar aspects and values of the foreign culture represented in foreign language texts. In this respect, Atkinson (1999) argues that readers urge to categorize those cultural representations differently. Therefore, in their attempt to learn a foreign culture, learners should distinguish between native and the target culture through comparison and contrast. To illustrate, the participants of this study are expected to compare their native cultural acts and the target ones represented in reading comprehension passages. (see the analysis of each text in chapter 4).

Generally, the selected reading texts used in this study paved the way for EFL learners to explore some cultural topics through comparison and contrast with their native culture. Moreover, reading cultural differences can help learners change their perspectives and eliminate cultural boundaries. In this light, the present thesis stresses the relevance of the cultural dimension and its impact on the process of reading comprehension. In short, I summarised above how reading can influence learning about the culture. I hope to have revealed that reading culturally loaded texts is one source of boosting learners' cultural knowledge. Reading cultural texts is cultural manifestations and provides unique insights into the target culture. That is to say, reading promotes intercultural understanding, primarily through a comparison of two cultural systems. The only question missing to answer is what reading materials one should employ to increase the results of this process.

### **2.8 Educational Concerns to Culture Teaching**

Discussions surrounding the notion of culture influence the manner of incorporating it in foreign language classes. The remaining question has always been transforming teaching and learning culture goals into a reading comprehension syllabus. Thus, the various lists of topics, approaches, and teaching resources are still debatable as well. The following section demonstrates how to understand the concept of culture within the teaching methods. What to teach and how to teach?

#### **2.8.1 Concerns Related to the Cultural Syllabus**

The syllabus is one of the pedagogical documents in any process of language skills teaching. It is a source and reference for teachers to the different parts of the language (grammar, vocabulary) and a source of activities. In other words, teachers can rely on the syllabus since it is reliable, valid, and written by professionals and experts. The primary function of it is to serve as a contract between the instructor and the students. Furthermore, the syllabus can be a useful means of exposing learners to the features of the target culture and supplying them with authentic samples of language use that account for the target language's linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics.

A comprehensive reading comprehension syllabus should consider the different language elements and help develop the learners' skills of interpreting and constructing knowledge about various topics within the target language context. The syllabus should involve some subjects concerning the target culture, how they live, think, and behave.

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Incorporating cultural dimension in the reading comprehension syllabus enables EFL students to associate what they learn with real people and real contexts.

There have been several topics to develop the value of cultural syllabus for foreign language learners. Yet, cultural content in foreign language education is discussed several times due to its interest. When it comes to practice, it is usually problematic for teachers to choose what kind of aspects to involve at various education levels. Should the primary attention be put on people's daily life and practices or the history and people's achievements in different times and domains, so the fact of selecting appropriate cultural syllabus to be taught remains a critical question? On this particular point, Brooks (1968) proposes a list of 62 topics that varies between culture product and practices. His list includes greeting, folks, meals, games, music, hobbies, festival, folklore. Brooks adds that we need to consider the learners' age, needs, and language skills before presenting these topics.

As an attempt to recognise the cultural dimension in language teaching and learning, Chastain (1988) extends the cultural topics to be taught and learned; Chastain introduces subjects essential for discussing similarities and differences between the learners' own culture and the target one. Among these topics is non-verbal language. Chastain believes that non-verbal communication is vital for students.

In the same line of thought, Kramersch (1991) states that culture introduced so far has always been referred to as what she appeals 'the four Fs: foods, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts. Likewise, Stern (1992) adds to these topics' customs and manners, such as behaving like eating a meal. Stern highlights that knowledge about such topics makes the language a living reality.

Based on the suggested topics, culture teaching and learning is mostly accessible into three major categories: product, practice, and behaviours. However, Moran (2001) argues that although threefold distinctions are crucial, he has added two dimensions: communities and people. Communities represent the social context in which practices occur. Each city has a distinctive language used to describe and convey particular products and techniques. Lastly, people refer to the community's members; each has a distinct way of using language to express him/herself.

In brief, the lists mentioned above that represent cultural topics aim at elaborating an identified syllabus that supplies teachers with cultural information in a more organised way in foreign language classes. Nonetheless, the absence of a different syllabus can be a problem in many language classes where teaching culture is still inadequate. Teachers are often hampered

and limited by program pressures. Learning language skills is a full-time process in itself. Several teachers may raise a question: How to devote adequate time for teaching all the relevant aspects of culture? Second, teachers are not well prepared to teach culture appropriately. Therefore, foreign language researchers recommend that teachers are supposed to have enough cultural knowledge. They should also know the different techniques and activities for integrating culture in the reading skill.

### **2.8.2 Concerns Related to the Sources of Culture**

The question revolving around adopting the cultural syllabus in teaching the foreign language classes stresses the results and effectiveness of the kind of material used. That is to say, Should teachers use authentic sources in culturally authentic contexts or non-authentic sources that intend to achieve some specific pedagogical purposes?

In this light, Brooks (1968) warns against the inappropriate selection of culturally-related materials. For him, 'What we select for presentation must be authentic, typical, and important; otherwise, somebody may create false impressions.' In this concern, Brooks believes that authentic materials are effective ways of increasing learners' cultural skills. In this vein, using original teaching texts is a significant element in the communicative approach, as authentic sources expose learners to real life.

Along with the same thought, Artal, Carrion, & Monros (1997) identify two essential factors when selecting cultural material: first, materials that encourage intercultural learning; second, the culture that appears in the material. Therefore, teachers must consider all these factors when teaching cultural aspects to foreign language learners effectively, which usually are not in touch with native speakers and lack the opportunity to discover how others think and interact in certain situations.

The fact of selecting suitable materials for teaching culture is vital for efficient reading. In that, a group of educators and scholars stressed the importance of choosing appropriate texts. Accordingly, Williams (1986) claims:

In the absence of exciting texts, very little is possible. A central principle, but one that is often forgotten, is vital, for it increases motivation, which is a significant factor (p. 42).

In addition to selecting any texts or content to be read, the reader should be conscious of the different reading materials (Letters, Newspapers and magazines, articles, reports) devoted to various purposes. In this respect, Simenson (1987) classifies the reading texts into

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three types: ‘*authentic*’ (not aimed for language learners and published in the original language); ‘*pedagogic*’ (meant for language learners with various types of control which depends on the writing itself); and ‘*adapted*’ (adapted from authentic texts).

Within this dissertation's framework, the cultural-based content texts are selected after a detailed overview of the types of reading comprehension texts provided to first-year EFL students. Although the availability of different genres of texts, I opt for simplicity. I tend to use short texts instead of literary texts due to time constraints and syllabus instructions. Furthermore, literary texts such as novels, poems, and short stories require the use of a highly figurative and sophisticated language, which tends to take more time to be understood. About these claims, the selection of these short texts for this study does not consume much time; the learner can read it in one session to comprehend it. Therefore, students should be introduced to short and straightforward texts rather than long stories, drama, or poetry. Concerning this study, the shortness of the selected reading material is necessary for the students. It enables them to read, understand, and accomplish the tasks provided to them.

This research study considers reading comprehension texts as being relevant for self-improvement and parts of language learning classes. On this particular point, teaching reading comprehension in the EFL context requires an appropriate selection of texts. In this path, this research aims to investigate the relevance of background knowledge in the reading process. In this light, reading comprehension texts contain cultural foreign concepts and ideas. As a result, EFL students are expected to rely on their schemata in understanding those culturally loaded texts. Thus, in light of this thesis, various scholars admit that the schema theory is vital in teaching reading comprehension texts. This exploratory study aims to either validate this claim or invalidate it.

To sum up, there exist different kinds of suitable reading materials available for EFL learners; the central role of teachers is to select the ones in which their language and concepts correspond to the students' knowledge; what is so-called ‘Language Learner Literature.’ In the same path, one should bear in mind that no text is complete, so the reader should convert the text into meaningful discourse. Consequently, readers vary in their interpretation of texts because they are governed by different factors such as purpose, topic familiarity, and the relationship established in reading between the reader and the writer.

## **2.9 Cultural Awareness and Reading Skill**

For the sake of efficiency in handling the matter at hand, immersing students in the culture of a native-speaking country is conceived to be the first preference for learning its culture. Therefore, raising cultural awareness is needed where language and culture study is closely integrated and harmonised. In other words, developing cultural awareness and cultural sensitiveness is a relevant element during teaching and learning EFL. The target language needs to be taught appropriately with attitudes and norms of the social group to help learners use words and expressions more skillfully; to behave naturally with persons of the target culture.

According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), cultural awareness refers to raising learner's understanding of another cultural group: their induced behaviour, their expectations, their perspectives, and their values. Moreover, Tomlinson (2001) states that cultural awareness embodies an increased sense of understanding of native and target people's cultures and lively interest in how cultures connect and differ. Likewise, Tolinson and Masuhara (2004) assert that increased cultural awareness helps learners broaden the mind, increase tolerance, and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. Additionally, cultural awareness is a predominant factor for a successful process of reading comprehension. On this particular point, Fenner (2000) has stated that "cultural awareness is based on knowledge of the foreign culture, but also the knowledge of one's own culture. And that any process of comparison or contrasting has its starting point in the learner's-knowledge."(P.144-145).

In this light, learners' perception of their own culture and the foreign culture are vital factors in developing their cultural awareness. Moreover, Agar (1994) refers to three internalising culture steps: mistake, awareness, and repair. Generally, committing mistakes is an ordinary step in learning; step two is when the learners know the new culture's frame and possible alternatives; step three, repair, is when learners try to adjust to the new culture.

On the same path, cultural awareness stresses progression. In this progression, students, step by step, develop an understanding of "self" and "other." This notion of comparing one's own culture and other cultures helps students perceive and cope with differences. In this return, cultural awareness supplies students with keys for successful interaction with other cultural groups.

Though it is not possible to teach culture thoroughly in English language classes, teachers can raise students' awareness of cultural learning whenever opportunities emerge. Teachers must initiate cultural knowledge in an exciting and naturally occurring context to

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stimulate students' interest in learning the culture. Role-playing about some interesting stories, tales, fables, legends, or festivals in English-speaking countries will serve the intention quite well. For instance, having introduced some basic knowledge of Christmas, teachers can raise students' cultural knowledge about how American people celebrate this festival. That is to say, teaching reading comprehension via cultural themes has its inner dynamic in helping EFL students to broaden their cultural knowledge on more than one topic. Our suggestion is to take some themes as the content of the course. Then, emphasise these themes to teach intercultural competence elements, as Byram (1997) suggested. The following are some proposed topics that we can introduce to EFL learners in reading comprehension.

- **Social Organisation:** introducing learners to this topic is an opportunity for them to know how society is organised in terms of social status. Students will be able to understand why it is organised in such a way. Moreover, the notion of a social organisation involves a variety of relevant concepts. Chiefly among them are: class, authority, status, prestige, and power. These concepts are significant for understanding differences across cultural groups. Therefore, these themes help students understand the social structure of British and American societies.
- **Family:** families exist in every society, in the past and the present. Like any other human institution, families of their culture, beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles. So, the family is regarded as an essential cultural subject to learn, and it seems beneficial to understand the different families within these societies.
- **Education:** education is one of the necessary themes for EFL students. They should be allowed to know about the country's educational system whose language is taught and how the procedure operates so that they can contrast it to their own.
- **Art and music:** this is another typical subject that can be discussed as students will recognise the different music styles in other parts of the world and their arts.

In this respect, we should change from time to time topics involved in the syllabus since some of the texts through time become outdated. Topics should be of existing interest.

### **2.9.1 Using Cultural Experiential Learning Cycle**

Moran (2001) proposes incorporating cultural experiences throughout the experiential learning cycle. For Moran, the "cultural experience" is related to any encounter between learners, and another way of life through learning materials in the language classroom or

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through the discussion of news, events of the target culture. When students go through the "cultural experience," four kinds of cultural "knowing" are obtained: (i) knowing about, (ii) knowing how, (iii) knowing why, and (iv) knowing oneself. In other words, learners undergo an interactive cycle to attain cultural information.

Firstly, knowing stage, students are supposed to manage data about the target culture. This stage is the source of cultural learning. Secondly, "knowing about" Moran (2001) suggests that teachers play numerous roles to facilitate their learners' learning process. A teacher is supposed to be a source of knowledge. An elicitor who asks students to share their information with the class and an intermediary clarifies the difference between cultural facts and opinions. Moran (2001) demonstrates that this part of the cultural learning process may be demanding for teachers because teachers need to know sufficient information to supply students with accurate data. However, many EFL teachers cannot know all about the culture they teach, especially if they are non-native speakers, and they didn't get the opportunity to travel to native countries. In this case, Moran (2001) suggests using teachers' own cultural experiences as a tool for teaching culture. Such tools as authentic cultural stories, anecdotes, and personal narratives can be handy. Besides, knowing how to transmit these cultural practices, such as gestures, behaviours, and actions. Here students acquire skills that help them know how to act in varying situations in the target culture. Teachers are supposed to help learners appropriately develop cultural practices. Thus, Moran (2001) suggests using the role-playing technique in which students learn as "actors on stage," expressing themselves as native speakers of the target culture. A teacher should help learners to take fundamental roles to model cultural practices using body movement, facial expressions, and gestures, all in ways that encourage students to progress. Moran argues that "knowing how" is a matter of practice, in which students are engaged with their thoughts, actions, and feelings. Students cannot learn how to communicate in the target culture by learning theory alone correctly; they need to practice it.

Thirdly, the "Knowing why" stage is related to comprehending essential cultural perspectives, such as beliefs, feelings, and values. Learners should analyse cultural phenomena through a comparative analysis of the target and native cultures. Indeed, applying these stages of the cultural, experiential learning cycle leads students to explore the distinctive features of the target culture and understand the new cultural phenomenon appropriately. Additionally, teachers are supposed to play several roles, such as guiding and co-researcher in

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"knowing why." At this step, teachers raise questions to lead students to find relevant answers. In this way, students learn to explain, generalise, justify the cultural concepts and underlying cultural perspectives.

Finally, the stage of "Knowing oneself" requires students to comprehend the target culture from their personal opinions, values, feelings, and thoughts. Evolution in this stage comes from increasing self-awareness. Students learn to understand themselves better and master their native culture, which, in turn, serves as the foundation for rising themselves as cultural beings. This stage is conceived as the most critical because it entails students making their own choices on reacting to the target culture. At this level, the teacher mainly plays a listener's role, to whom students convey their thoughts, views, beliefs, and perspectives. The cultural and experiential learning cycle sequence can supply students with truthful information about a particular kind of cultural learning. A teacher is supposed to play different roles to help students acquire cultural awareness based on their preferences. When students undergo the cultural, experiential learning cycle, they acquire cultural skills to develop cultural behaviours, discover cultural explanations, and express personal responses to their learning. The strategies and tools discussed in this section make the process of language teaching valuable. Moreover, following the Standards for Foreign Language Learning through the cultural, experiential cycle, including the five dimensions of culture, emphasising authentic materials, will facilitate students' acquisition of language and cultural skills.

In brief, in teaching a foreign language, various techniques need to be taken into account to promote cultural understanding and cultural awareness. Consequently, Seely (1993) suggests the following methods: culture assimilators and culture capsules.

### **2.10.1 Culture Assimilator**

CulturalAssimilator is a well-known technique in cross-cultural psychology designed for assessing an individual's consciousness and knowledge of cultural diversity. Moreover, this method helps individuals or groups to understand and act appropriately in a different cultural context by exposing individuals to some of the basic concepts, values, customs, attitudes, and behaviours of others. In this return, the cultural Assimilator describes cultural incidents of cross-cultural interaction due to misunderstanding of artistic ways.

To sum up, the cultural Assimilator is a cross-cultural training that focuses on assessing an individual's awareness and knowledge of cultural differences. The cultural

Assimilator also provides an assessment of the extent to which an individual understands the impact of operating in an unfamiliar cultural context. It is an effective way of promoting cultural understanding and a sense of empathy towards other cultures. For Chastain (1988), this technique's main advantage is creating an insight into and tolerance of cultural diversity.

### **2.10.2 Culture Capsule**

This technique is generally teaching culture through comparison by illustrating one essential difference between native and a foreign cultural custom (i.e., dating, cuisine, sports). Essentially a culture capsule is a brief description of several aspects of the target language culture (E;g what is preferable for eating, traditions of marriage followed by, or incorporated with comparative information from the student's native language culture. On this particular point, Liddicoat (2005) claims that raising learners' cultural awareness is introducing the learners to participative tasks that encourage the learner to compare the new culture with their practices.

Cultural capsules are generally prepared outside of the classroom but presented orally with teachers in the class in a few minutes. Cultural capsules involve writing (a table of two colons or paragraphs) that tackle a set of similarities and differences between the home and the target culture. It includes various topics (wedding ceremonies, Christmas in the USA, Superstitious beliefs). The student can illustrate his work using visual aids that demonstrate the difference and a set of questions to stimulate class discussion.

Teachers can apply this technique in small groups or with the entire class. To construct a culture capsule, Seelye (1984) suggests the following steps:

- Select a topic of cultural contrast, harmonised it with issues dealt with in the textbook.
- List differences and similarities between the target culture and local cultural traditions to this point of contrast.
- Organise and outline specific content.
- Write the capsule in language that will be understandable to the students who will use it (i.e., at an appropriate proficiency).
- Organise or gather appropriate multimedia aids (visuals, slides, artifacts, realia, etc.)

The teacher can record the capsule for students to listen to in groups or independently at this level. Such an activity affords good practise in listening comprehension and speaking skills.

## **2.11 Cultural Barriers**

EFL students come across significant barriers as they read foreign language texts. These barriers are either for linguistic factors or cultural factors. Language is a carrier, which not only carries the language information but also carries information on culture.

### **2.11.1 Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is the pillar of the entire language system. It reveals the differences in culture most visibly and extensively. The word vocabulary has been defined as follows: “the knowledge of words and their meaning.” Laufer (1989). There exist several words in one culture without equivalent in other cultures. Even though we find the equivalent term, the significance of a word and its implication are not entirely equal due to the diversity of cultures.

For example, (1) In English, the word privacy means a state of being away from others, alone and undisturbed. However, it usually denotes personal secrets and unusual behaviours of personal life in Chinese.

(2) morning in English refers to the time section from midnight to twelve o'clock in the twenty-four hours' system. Still, in Chinese, morning refers to the time section from dawn to noon. In this vein, vocabulary is a functional element in the learning process but not an end.

### **2.11.2 Sentences**

Cross-cultural obstacles are related to the great vocabulary that exists in sentences (including proverb and slang). Although some EFL learners are competent, they fail to interpret the intended meaning. Algerian students often meet comprehension barriers while reading English proverbs because the proverbs contain abundant connotations of culture. For example,

- 1) Every cloud has a silver lining.
- 2) An Englishman's home is his castle.

According to English culture, People say this when things are going badly or sad in the first proverb. Clouds stand for bad situations. Every bad situation has some right parts to it. You just have to look for them. According to English culture, everyone's home is sacred in

the second proverb and cannot be infringed. In ancient Britain, even the police could not enter one's house to make an arrest.

Slang is also a constituent of culture, which may create obstacles to understanding reading. Here is a conversation expressive of some of these encounters that an EFL reader might have to deal with English slang.

A: Will you come?

B: You kill me.

It is very tough for Algerian students to comprehend this discussion since sentence B is slang. It means (If I won't come,) you kill me. In other words, I will certainly come.

### **2.11.3 The Relationship between the Reader and the Context in Reading**

The reading process is widely affected by various factors, primarily the reader's sociocultural background, which influences the way readers view themselves and others. According to Haggis (2009), the socio-cultural context refers to "everything going on outside the classroom, which might impact upon learning outcomes" (p.380). In this regard, language plays a considerable role in social behaviour since it is based on reciprocity and mutual engagement within the language in a behaviour discourse. Therefore, readers' comprehension of themselves and the target group is necessary for EFL cultural reading. Another socio-cultural factor is related to readers' knowledge about different fields such as education, work, society. All these elements shape the reader's beliefs and traditions, which play a significant role in EFL reading engagement. Besides readers' identity, the reader relies on textual elements, context, motivation, and background knowledge to interpret a particular topic. In this light, private life experiences strongly affect the process of reading. Therefore, meeting new people, travelling abroad, new interests influence the reader's perspectives and comprehension.

### **2.12 The Internal Causes of the Cross-cultural Barriers**

In addition to the external factors comprising the reader's vocabulary and grammar, and cross-cultural background, I find it necessary to identify internal factors. It includes thought pattern and value as the two most essential ones.

### **2.12.1 Thought Patterns**

It is estimated that many EFL learners rely on their practices and habits related to their native language and apply them to foreign language learning mechanically. Sometimes it works, but sometimes it does not, owing to the differences between the mother language (Arabic) in Algeria and the foreign language (English). The habits here represent the thought patterns, which differ from one language to another. Consequently, the differences in thought patterns lead to cross-cultural barriers.

### **2.12.2 Linear Thought and Indirect Thought**

It is acknowledged that people from so-called English-speaking and culture-based countries favour linear thought. They convey their thought directly, and they rely on their writing on the use of the topic sentences and then supplying materials to support it. In contrast, Algerian nationals prefer indirect thought. They describe the external environment first and point out the topic at last. The differences in thought patterns impact the structure of the text. English texts focus on the entire paragraph as a complete unit; the topic sentence should first be pointed out. Then the meaning of the text should be identified in a particular arranged and reasonably straight-line manner.

In short, Eastern and Western people not only live diverse lifestyles but also their mode of thinking about life differs from one culture to another. Understanding all these characteristics would help EFL students to comprehend the target language culture.

### **2.12.3 Comparison of Eastern and Western cultures**

It is assumed that the differences between Western and Eastern cultures vary because easterners and Westerners live in different environments and are educated differently. Every culture's features are reflected in its people's actions, attitudes toward life, and religion. Therefore, Eastern people usually encounter culture shock, misunderstanding, and stereotyping when reading about Western culture. In this respect, it is very significant for EFL students to be aware of the differences that exist between Western and Eastern cultures. The lack of this knowledge may affect the effectiveness of reading comprehension.

First of all, the attitudes toward love in the East and the West aren't the same. Eastern people consider that love is mute. For example, when Algerian people love a person, they don't say directly, "I love you." They just try to display their love in actions. In contrast,

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Western people think that love is verbal. They express their emotions freely, and when they want to show how much they love a person, they would say it loudly and create romantic scenes such as buying a big bouquet of roses.

Additionally, Eastern people do not take decisions of marriage just for love. They would select their marriage partner that matches their educational, social, and economic background. In other words, they are interested in these factors than the romantic feelings in marriage.

Nonetheless, Western people seldom get married before making sure they are in love with each other. That is to say, romantic love is part of Western people's lives, and they cannot live without it. According to Liu (2016), persons from the East tend to hide their feelings, mainly when they are unhappy or uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Westerners show their feelings through language, facial expressions, and tone.

Secondly, independence is one of the relevant features of western culture. In this light, the youth ages from 18 to 21 become independent, and they solve their problems by themselves, for they consider that depending on parents is ashamed of. The decision of marriage, making friends, or other personal affairs is their business, and they need not get their parents' permission. At the same time, parents do not interfere with their children's lives and decisions.

On the contrary, in Algeria, parents impose their views on their children most of the time. Furthermore, the older generation always states to the younger generation what they should do and what they should not do. Before making any decision, the younger generation often takes into consideration the opinion of their parents. Parents in Eastern countries think they should select the best for their children; however, parents in the West think their children should be dependent on making their own decisions.

Finally, individualism and collectivism is another essential cultural feature. According to Hofstede (1991), individualism refers to those societies in which individuals' relations are loose: everybody is estimated to look after themselves or their immediate family. 'Collectivism,' as its reverse, relates to societies in which people from birth are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups. In this vein, In British and American culture, the individual's interests are more important than the interests of the group; on the contrary, Algerianemphasise collectivism. The interests of collectivism are considered to be more

important than the interest of the individual. In fact, Individualism is a legitimate right and independence in English culture, which others cannot infringe. So, there are abundant English words that contain the prefix of ego and self, such as egocentric, egoism, egoist, self-esteem, self-reliance.

### **2.12.4 Misunderstanding**

Most of the time, foreign language learners are exposed to a foreign culture; in such situations, they may have some prejudices to the target community with some preconceived ideas, negative attitudes, and misconceptions of their values and beliefs. This performance is generally the result of the subjective and immature perception of the target culture. In this context, everyone has gone through the experience of misunderstanding a text, being misunderstood, or misunderstanding others. Therefore, cultural teaching should alter such attitudes to eliminate any obstacle that may hamper learners' understanding and push them to accept and respect cultural differences.

### **2.12.5 Culture Shock**

Culture shock is an obstacle when dealing with a foreign language culture context. Hornby (1995) defines culture shock as a feeling of confusion and anxiety caused by contact with another culture. It is a natural process that anyone exposed to a foreign cultural environment different from their own will go through this step. Furthermore, one of the significant factors of culture shock is Schumann (1975) has termed 'social distance' to provide a practical explanation of the status of culture in language learning. Brown (2000) argues the more two cultures oppose in terms of discourse and patterns of behaviour. The more challenging it will be for a learner to acquire the target language and become accustomed to the new culture; and vice versa, the closer the two cultures, the more effortless it will be.

From this perspective, the researcher demonstrates a significant impact of cultural knowledge on language learning. Therefore, it is decisive on the part of the individual experiencing culture shock to set aside his / her previous acquisitions in their native environment, regarding behaviour and communication with others, as what they have learned is different in the target culture. If one is aware that they are experiencing culture shock, they will have a superior aptitude to defeat the emotional and physical feelings.

The fact of being tolerant and open-minded toward the target culture, even if it contradicts what one has learned, is necessary. Rather than viewing it with mockery and disapproval as acknowledged in culture shock, the learner empowers to survive this phase.

### **2.12.6 Stereotyping**

Perceiving someone's social identity is very much culturally determined. We identify a person's language and culture assimilated with what we have been conditioned by our own culture to see and the stereotypical models already built around our own (Kramsch, 1998). Stereotyping is a pejorative attitude people hold toward the target culture community members. Additionally, Samacá (2002) demonstrates that stereotyping is related to the tendency to build an oversimplified image of the other culture from our vision of the world. He points out that this fact makes individuals see wildly exaggerated cultural differences, which, in turn, leads them to build stereotyped cultural features of others.

In the light of the mentioned statement, the researcher considers cultural stereotypes as unavoidable simplified visions of the foreign culture that foreign language learners tend to construct, drawing on their own cultural identity and the image of the world they have. However, learners are supposed to be conscious of cultural diversity to avoid stereotypes about a particular culture.

To conclude, learning a foreign language and its culture is not an easy task. Therefore, foreign language teachers are required to help learners reduce or put an end to these obstacles, establish a comfortable learning atmosphere, and encourage them to learn about the target culture's features and environment. Teachers must first adopt and show a neutral attitude towards the target culture to show full respect to learners' values and convictions.

### **2.13 Possible Benefits of Teaching Culture in English Language Classrooms**

The international role of the English language and globalization in the modern technological world in the 21st century pose different demands on EFL teachers. Several ELT researchers have acknowledged the reciprocal relationship between language and culture since the mid-1980s. Brown (1994) states that “a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p.165). Furthermore, Krasner

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(1999) recognised the necessity for language learners to develop linguistic competence and an awareness of the language's culturally-appropriate features.

In the same vein, Wang (2008) asserts that foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers. Therefore, FL teachers need to be conscious of culture's advantageous position in the EFL context and boost students' cultural awareness of their native culture to interpret and understand other cultures.

Teaching culture is a vital step for EFL students to understand the what, why, and how things happen in the target language community. Thus, EFL teachers will be challenged to exploit this situation by creating occasions for communication founded on the values, cultural standards, and needs of learners. Most importantly, both culture and communication are supposed to be inseparable since culture not only examines who talks to whom, about what, and how communication occurs; it also helps to determine how people interpret messages in different conditions and circumstances. Moreover, understanding culture may inspire sympathy towards that target culture to affect the target language positively. In this path, Brown (2000) has asserted that language learner's positive attitudes alone are not adequate; but must also feel optimistic about the target culture; in contrast, negative attitudes decrease motivation. This deficiency of motivation may lead to diminished input understanding, communication, and production.

Considerable research suggests that teaching culture plays a vital role in helping EFL students become successful language learners. Therefore, teachers are required to design their lesson plans carefully and incorporate teaching culture. Furthermore, teachers need to be flexible to play different roles. He should be able to present and elicit cultural information as an intercultural mediator.

## **2.14 Conclusion**

This chapter opted for culture teaching in foreign language classes, hence its importance for reading comprehension process improvement. Along with this literature review, the emphasis is upon two main points.

Firstly, culture teaching in the foreign language classroom is an indispensable step that increasingly fascinated and continues to captivate researchers' attention toward the relevance of implementing culture during teaching language skills. Secondly, in this study, I refer to the aim behind culture teaching, which is raising learners' cultural awareness while exposing EFL learners to a set of reading comprehension texts. In this return, the intended aim is to overcome the geographical boundaries and judgment, leading to empathy, cultural enrichment, and tolerance of differences. This aim is widely claimed on the theoretical ground. To sum up, incorporating culture in the EFL context intends to help learners' overcome geographical boundaries and misunderstandings of culturally loaded texts.

# ***CHAPTER III***

## ***Field Investigation***

### **3. Introduction**

This chapter is a description of the examination of the theoretical and pedagogical framework of this research study. It provides a systematic description of Algeria's educational context with close reference to the EFL reading skill teaching/learning situation at the university level. I also give a general overview of the issue of teaching reading comprehension, particularly cultural-based content. Among the remarkable changes that teaching and learning language skills have witnessed is the cultural dimension's relevance. It has raised modifications in the path of teaching and learning languages.

As has been mentioned so far, the present research study investigates the significant role that background knowledge plays in the reading comprehension of cultural-based texts. This chapter is devoted to the empirical stage, which strives to present a detailed account of the methodology and design. It illustrates the different methodological steps followed in carrying out this exploratory study and the analytical instruments used for data collection to show its impact on the methodological choices that concern data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Given those data, I will draw some conclusions about the impact of cultural schemata on learners' reading comprehension of culturally loaded texts.

### **3.1 Description of the Current EFL Teaching/Learning Situation**

Seeking a flourishing educational environment for a teaching career and building a thriving learning environment seem endless quests for any society. Through this journey, we might note that EFL students' social climate and the evolution of the educational philosophy can be considered a determinant factor for reaching an ultimate position in higher education. In other words, the development of the Algerian university focuses on the pedagogical interaction between these fundamental elements teachers, students, and the learning processes. The university offers an educational place to entrant students at the expense of pedagogical concerns and facilities. (adequate teaching time, same ability classes, and qualified teachers). Consequently, the recently enrolled university students have encountered serious issues such as (linguistic, cognitive, and social obstacles). In contrast, others try to adapt and adjust to the process of change; the majority of them appear unable to cope with the demands of a new academic context where raising awareness is the critical factor to success.

Teaching at the university level is firmly based on a set of Algerian teachers with different fields of interests and levels starting by the first year, which aims at consolidating the basis of the language already acquired in Middle and Secondary schools. Therefore, the subjects introduced to students emphasise the target language system and skills: grammar, written expression, reading comprehension, and oral presentation, phonetics, linguistics, also methodology courses, and literature. The researcher in this study focuses on the reading skill and the integration of the cultural aspect.

Teaching any subject involves more than a mere act of teaching. Instead, it requires knowing learners' needs, interests to involve them in the process of learning, besides specifying the expected aims and objectives to be achieved. Unlike lower levels of education, wherein the ministry of education determines curriculum guidelines and course objectives, at the university level, things are quite different. There are general guidelines for each subject, and it is up to teachers to collectively or individually design the content of the course and, hence, applying the adequate teaching methodology.

In this light, teaching reading skill at university focuses on the belief that teachers hold objectives and techniques to implement them selectively in their courses that are different from middle and secondary schools. Moreover, in any English department, teachers are free to select and adopt various teaching methodologies that suit learners' needs and their interest in the teaching/learning process. Indeed, teaching reading is selecting a suitable text relevant to the students, designing a set of activities associated with the reading material, and asking

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students to read and do the exercises. These activities involve vocabulary, grammar, and content assessment.

In this account, the classroom is vital or an ultimate place where most students learn about the target language under the teacher's guidance. They are required to implement effective strategies during the process of teaching. However, the lack of experience in teaching a particular subject at the university level often hampers teachers to present an efficient course and restricts their sense of creativity. Most EFL teachers prioritise grammar and content in teaching reading, leaving students no opportunity for cultural awareness. Consequently, they are left ill-equipped or versed with the necessity of cultural background that allows them to learn how to read and learn from their readings.

### **3.2 Overview of the Research**

Reading is a complex developmental challenge that requires many developmental accomplishments: language proficiency, background knowledge, and motivation. Therefore, EFL students' reading comprehension processes vary from one to another. In this respect, the researcher in this study intends to cast light upon the impact of schema theory on the process of reading culturally loaded texts. Thus, this research study's motive was that many EFL students face some deficiencies when reading cultural-based content. In this regard, many studies demonstrate that reading difficulties are due to the reader's sociocultural background, lack of adequate vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. Therefore, I focus on this investigation on two fundamental elements; cultural knowledge as a helpful factor in understanding words or expressions in their appropriate context. Besides raising learners' cultural awareness and enriching their background knowledge from their first-year studies, they learn more about the native culture and language.

I conducted a research study to investigate the potential relevance of cultural schemata in reading culturally loaded texts. Throughout this empirical study, I may provide you with overall evidence of how cultural schemata affect the processing and comprehension of foreign language texts. I may also identify some other effective teaching techniques and materials for better teaching culture via culturally loaded texts. In this vein, several studies on schema theory demonstrate that the schemata embodying readers' background knowledge about the content of culturally familiar materials facilitate the integration of local understandings and enables readers to develop a unified meaning of the text. When reading culturally unfamiliar materials, readers lack the relevant schemata, which leads to a misunderstanding. These

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remarks indeed reveal that reading is quite problematic for first-year EFL university students. This situation has led us to ask the following questions:

**Q1** Does the lack of cultural background knowledge of EFL learners affect their reading comprehension ability?

**Q2** Does the activation of background knowledge of learners ensure a better understanding of reading comprehension texts?

**Q3** Does the use of pre-reading activities influence the process of reading comprehension?

The above research questions have enabled us to formulate the following hypotheses:

- 1- Cultural familiarity may have a considerable impact on learners' comprehension and interpretation of meaning related to the target culture.
- 2- Stimulating learner's background knowledge enables learners to read better and comprehends appropriately.
- 3- Enabling activities can be a vital step and a key to increasing learners' reading comprehension ability.

Putting forward all these hypotheses in mind intends to identify first-year EFL students' proficiency level in reading culturally loaded texts. Furthermore, explore the use of pre-reading activities and their potential impact on stimulating learners' background knowledge. Consequently, we propose a set of pedagogical implications to help first-year foreign language learners improve their reading competence.

### **3.3 Research Aims**

The ultimate objective of this exploratory work is to reveal how schemata can affect learners' reading comprehension ability. Accordingly, the study investigates the reading process and attempts to seek answers and solutions to the research questions. Indeed, reading instruction is partly targeted to examine the methods, techniques, and materials applied in the reading class.

Also, the research study identifies the way learners read cultural-based content and tries to reveal the barriers that hamper and demotivate first-year students to be effective readers. Moreover, this study sheds light on learners' achievement and teachers' practices in reading skills. To put it differently, it intends to address the relevance of activating

background knowledge in increasing students' reading comprehension. The study also examines the syllabus of reading comprehension, the reading materials currently applied by teachers.

### **3.4 Context of the Study**

The English department at the University of Tiaret was chosen as a case study. It involves several teachers specialising in various EFL fields, including language skills, didactics, linguistics, literary studies, civilisation, psychology, and pedagogy, etc.

The establishment of the English Department at Tiaret university goes back to 2012. It is considered a fresh one. At first, it was a section managed by four teachers with some part-time teachers; each year, the university receives new teachers until 2014, where it has grown up as an independent department with its canvas and system.

On this basis, the university implements the LMD system, and the English department makes efforts to reach the following:

- To increase the students' intellectual capacities through the study of a foreign language
- To supply students with advanced instruction in English language ranging from linguistics subjects to cultural subjects;
- To increase students potentials and capacities to master language skills in analytical and critical thinking;
- To boost the students' understanding of the functioning of language;
- To broaden skills in research and information access.
- To offer students the skills and the experience of expressing themselves linguistically and culturally with people of other nationalities.
- To integrate students in situational contexts to understand people across national barriers by giving them a sympathetic insight into the ways of life and ways of thinking of the people who speak the language they are learning.

The Department of English at Ibn Khaldoun university represents one central pedagogical pillar, among others. It works hard to offer encouraging conditions for the realisation of the already stated objectives. Moreover, the English Department aims at reaching the evolution of the outside world. It works on the adaptation of relevant reforms in different domains. Furthermore, it seems possible that reforms in higher education are a necessary step to achieve these goals. For this purpose, the English department directly adapted the LMD

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system (License/Masters/Doctorate). Practically, this department uses this operating system, which encompasses three stages.

- The BA<sup>5</sup> degree is obtained after three years of study (corresponding to 180 ECTS European Credit Transfer System)
- A master's degree is within two years of studies (corresponding to 120 or 300 ECTS credits received). Learners study different specialities. They are mainly: didactics, linguistics, civilization, literature, and linguistics.
- Doctorate is within three to five years of research study

In general, as mentioned that the BA degree is within three years of studies, including several units. The first element is the fundamental unit, which comprises all the relevant subjects to a given discipline: Written Expression, listening and oral Expression, Grammar, Linguistics, Phonetics, social and human sciences, and Introduction to the Literature and Civilization of the target language. The second element represents the methodological unit, which is study skills (research methodology). It helps students to conduct any scientific research appropriately through their studies and years of graduation. The third element is related to the discovery Unit: it deals with studying another foreign language (French, Spanish, and German). The fourth and last component is the transverse unit, which involves the study of computer science. All these units are inserted and organised along the study year to form students' backgrounds and increasing their level.

The department of English language also contains a master's degree, which is the first promotion. In this context, the attention of the researcher is oriented particularly toward first-year LMD students. In this path, the overall number of EFL students is 1140 over five levels. Four hundred sixty-four first-year students (BA), 315 second-year students (BA), 88 third-year students (BA), 200 first-year (MA) students, and 73 second year (MA). This research study is conducted at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, in the department of English. Thus, the following table presents Ibn Khaldoun university students' division according to their level and gender.

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<sup>5</sup> BA : Bachelor of Arts is the holder of a bachelor's degree awarded for an undergraduate program in the arts and sciences

<b>Students' level</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>First year</b>	8	113	351	464
<b>Second Year</b>	5	61	254	315
<b>Third Year</b>	1	18	70	88
<b>1<sup>st</sup> year MA</b>	1	65	135	200
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year MA</b>	1	17	56	73

**Table 3.1 English Language Learners of Ibn Khaldoun University**

### **3.5 Description of the Syllabus of Reading Comprehension**

Teaching any subject implies a syllabus that covers the content as well as an entire guideline. In this respect, the reading comprehension course has long been one of the main subjects taught from the first year to the second year based on a particular syllabus. Hutchinson (1987) has claimed, "The selection of materials is the most important decision that language teacher has to make because these materials are not just tools; they express the aims, values, and methods of the particular teaching/ learning situation"(p.73)

In this vein, the selection of materials is not an easy task. There should be an overall consideration. Thus, the present syllabus is devoted to 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL learners who have already learned English for seven years. This syllabus is the outcome of the collaborative work of university teachers. It is a valuable aid for teachers who exploit it positively by selecting appropriate procedures they see of much relevance and benefits. Furthermore, the syllabus includes a variety of texts about different topics and comprehension questions. It aims at preparing students to understand, interpret, and construct ideas and concepts inserted within the text.

The English Language Syllabus specifies the contents for students to enhance their language proficiency. Moreover, the first-year EFL students of reading comprehension subjects consist of fifteen texts demonstrating various topics, as presented here in the chart.

Text One	Why Read?
Text Two	Education
Text Three	The Classroom
Text Four	What's Wrong with us?
Text Five	A Place to Live
Text Six	Home is Best
Text Seven	The Neighbours
Text eight	Miracle
Text nine	Lucky Brake
Text ten	Advertising
Text eleven	A Mysterious Letter
Text twelve	Health
Text thirteen	Animal Farm
Text fourteen	Art and Social Life
Text fifteen	Town Life

**Table 3.2 The Syllabus of Reading Comprehension of First-year EFL Students**

In this program, language learning is a developmental process in which learners construct new concepts and ideas, which are a natural part of that progress. Besides, the mastery of grammar and lexical items' knowledge is the foundation of good reading comprehension. Therefore, learners must recognise language functions.

The syllabus of reading comprehension provides many valuable texts and activities related to text comprehension through which learners perceive, understand, and interpret the English language texts.

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According to Dubin and Olshtain (1992), the syllabus is a document that ideally describes:

- 1) What we expect learners to know at the end of the course;
- 2) What is to be taught and learned during the course (in the form of inventory items)?
- 3) When is it to be taught, and what rate of progress?
- 4) How is it to be taught, suggesting procedures, techniques, and materials?
- 5) How is it to be evaluated, suggesting testing, and assessing mechanisms?

From an analytical perspective, the syllabus mentioned above represents the selection and sequencing of content. However, it lacks pedagogical procedures (learning objectives, rate of progress, teaching procedures techniques, and materials. In other words, the elements missing in the syllabus of reading comprehension are the detailed objective of each course in operational terms. However, in making practical decisions about syllabus design, one should consider all the possible factors that might influence a particular syllabus's teaching ability. Furthermore, having complete information about the target group (learners) is an appropriate step in preparing any syllabus. Thus, the designer needs to know everything about the learners, their age, social and economic status, previous knowledge, and their interest in elaborating a practical syllabus.

In this light, many questions are formulated to describe, examine, and evaluate the syllabus content. Therefore, to have an idea about the presence of the cultural dimension in the syllabus of reading comprehension, we draw back to Byram's (1989) checklist for evaluating the cultural extent of language textbooks:

- Does the book make any reference to social, regional, or ethnic minorities in the target culture?
- Are the different social, moral values, beliefs, and daily routines identified?
- Does the book refer to the primary social and political institutions?
- Does the book refer to the life cycle and socialising agents like schools, families?
- Are the major historical events and symbols discussed?

Based on an overview of the reading comprehension syllabus, the researcher demonstrates that most of the texts present a very general aspect of information related to the target culture or society. The syllabus raised an essential topic in a reading material called

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"What's wrong with us?" which is about the nature of living creatures and the mess man has made and led him towards self-destruction. It is vital to talk about these qualities, such as aggressiveness and selfishness, to raise learners' awareness about life. Therefore, this topic contains thoughtful ideas that may lead learners to think about themselves and their behaviours. However, it doesn't demonstrate any particular aspect related to the target language and its culture. A text called "A Place to Live" begins with an introductory description of New York City. It is crucial to know about this famous American city because it reflects the foreign society and its living system. More importantly, pupils would unconsciously think of similar Algerian cities and the difference between the two countries' way of life. Also, the text provides a clear image of the issue of housing shortages and how much life is demanding because the property is costly.

Consequently, most ordinary people are obliged to live in a rented apartment. Such text makes students familiar with the social problems and identifies the differences and similarities between their cities and New York City. However, it is worth noting that this issue also exists in Algerian society, which requires a suitable resolution.

"Home is Best" is another standard text that speaks about Capital city and Smithville, two reasonably large towns in the Midwest near Chicago. This text provides a detailed description and characteristics of each town. That is to say, the writer intends to make readers know about the differences between these cities. The capital city represents a state legislature seat with a low crime rate, no ugly slums, and little heavy traffic. At the same time, Smithville is an industrial area because of its factories and smoking chimneys. Consequently, students will benefit and learn a lot of things from this text.

Another sample from the syllabus is the text of "The Neighbours," which revolves around the daily life and activities of a set of neighbours in each apartment like Miss Ann Johnson, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Post ...etc. It also describes their practices. Henceforth, the text provided does not represent the values of the target culture. In other words, this text doesn't imply any particular item that distinguishes life in the target society culture from life in the home culture. In this path, exposing EFL students to English culture traditions and values may clarify their perspectives about the target culture and raise the students' motivation towards learning the English language because such ingredients usually attract teenagers.

For the sake of raising cultural awareness, I find it necessary to refer to the text of "Town Life," which describes a person who is searching for a place to live in some popular

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parts of English towns. Learners need to know about famous places in the target culture because they reflect foreign society and their way of living as well-behaving. More importantly, students would unconsciously think of similar Algerian towns and the difference between them. This text supplies EFL learners with particular towns in London, such as Kensington, a district within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in West London. Another important setting is mentioned, which is called Victoria Station. The station is in central London and close to Westminster, Pimlico, and Belgravia. However, it is worth noting that other popular settings are mentioned in this text, such as Eccleston Square and Belgrave Road.

The cultural aspect is somehow present in this text, which gives the students insights about London streets. In this light, students will compare the popular Algerian places and the English settings. In brief, the content of the texts plays pivotal functions. It can be considered representative of language practice, grammar, vocabulary, activities, and culture. In other words, reading comprehension texts are the entry point through which a certain group in the community reveals its cultural content. It can transmit social ideologies and practices to raise learners' awareness of the target culture.

### **3.6 Research Method and Design**

A common point of departure for choosing a research design is the nature of the research questions the researcher seeks to answer. The objectives to reach during the investigation. Generally, the research strategy takes into consideration the appropriate location, time, and resources. In the current study, the starting point is the ambition to say something about cultural knowledge's effect on EFL readers' comprehension. Also, to make first-year students aware of the cultural context of language and to gain appropriate interpretations.

The research methodology and design represent the various steps followed, such as instrumentation in collecting data. In doing so, we discuss the advantages and the drawbacks of each research instrument and justify our choice for data collection methods and procedures.

The present thesis is a case study involving forty EFL students from the University of Tiaret. Adelman and Kemmis (1976) demonstrate that the case study as a research methodology is a study where one selects an instance from the class of objects and investigates how it functions in context. But at the same time, this research methodology can provide a meticulous study of the case, which can improve our understanding of the issues raised by other cases.

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This case study relies on procedures for collecting and analysing data related to students' reading proficiency. The aim is to investigate in depth the difficulties students encounter when reading cultural content texts. Therefore, we apply an experimental research method, which proved to be very efficient in explaining cause-effect relationships. Meanwhile, deciding on the suitable research methodology and plan urged the researcher to reflect on the four parameters that make up research. These, according to Seliger & Shohamy (1989), consist of four parameters:

Parameter 1: The research approach (*synthetic or analytical*).

Parameter 2: (*Heuristic or Deductive reasoning*). *The research objectives*

Parameter 3: The degree of control and manipulation of the research context.

Parameter 4: Data and data collection.

This research is analytical-deductive since the researcher focuses on constituent parts that make up the phenomenon, i.e., on reading and culture for close analysis, unlike a synthetic (holistic) composite of factors. Then, it is deductive (hypothesis-testing) and not heuristic (hypothesis-generating) because our purpose is to test the impact of cultural schemata on learners' reading comprehension ability of cultural-based content on the pedagogical ground. At this level, and because it is crucial to understand the essential principles of experimental design, we provided a thorough description of the empirical research method and its principles in this section.

Experimental research takes more significant control over the research environment, and in this case, we manipulate some variables to observe their effect on other variables. Moreover, the experimental research relies on groups that are constructed especially for the experiment. According to Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Borg, Gliner & Morgan, 2000; Creswell 2002), there are several categories of experimental research designs: Single group designs, control group designs, factorial group designs, and quasi-experimental designs. Among them, the researcher relies on the control group design. I construct two groups; one of them receives treatment (keys for cultural reading instruction) while the other does not receive any treatment.

An appropriate step in this design is to identify the different variables; in this study, the independent variable<sup>6</sup> (x) represents culturally-oriented texts. The dependent variable (y) refers to reading and cultural background knowledge. Experimenting means that we manipulate at least one independent variable, and its effect can be measured by some

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<sup>6</sup>Independent variable: It is the variable that is manipulated in order to affect a dependent variable.

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dependent variables, while we control other factors in various ways. In this respect, we expose an experimental group to the independent variable for a test and the changes observed and recorded. Meanwhile, the control group is a group separated from the rest of the experiment, where the examination of the independent variable cannot influence the results.

In this light, I relied on various research instruments to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Each one has its priorities and functions to serve in the field of foreign language research. The quantitative method refers to collecting information, which results primarily in numerical data. It is subsequently analysed by statistical methods and represented in tables and graphs. The paramount aim of adopting a quantitative approach is to test prior hypotheses and produce general results. At this level, statistics, analysis can validate or invalidate the assumptions made by the researcher. Conclusions obtained from the study of quantitative data are answers to several questions raised, such as how many are affected, where the most excellent area of impact is, and what the critical sector needs. This method contains both negative as well as positive points for its use.

The main strengths of quantitative data collection are that it provides:

- Numeric estimates
- Opportunity for relatively uncomplicated data analysis
- Verifiable data
- Data that are comparable between different communities within different locations

Weaknesses inherent in quantitative data include:

- Gaps in information - issues (the questionnaire, or secondary data checklist, will not be included in the analysis
- An intensive process of data collection
- Limited participation.

As far as the research method is a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data, it would be worthy of discussing the relevance of qualitative data, which focuses on gathering information in a qualitative term. Qualitative methods of investigation and analysis help the researcher in identifying and exploring intangible factors. Also, qualitative research explores relationships and perceptions held by affected persons and communities, which results in open-ended, non-numerical data for being analysed later using non-statistical methods.

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In this regard, this method also contains positive as well as negative points for its application.

The main strengths of qualitative data collection :

- Rich and detailed information about affected populations
- Perspectives of specific social and cultural contexts
- Inclusion of a diverse and representative cross-section of affected persons
- In-depth analysis of the impact of an emergency
- A data collection process that requires limited numbers of respondents

All in all, this research study seeks to find out the extent to which culturally-oriented texts introduced to EFL learners influence readers' attitudes and ability to understanding. The study also tries to evaluate the English syllabus's reading components, the reading materials currently used in the university.

### **3.7 Case Study**

Using case study research enables the researcher to gather, analyse, and interpret data collected from different sources. The researcher can infer information from communities, groups of people, or individual persons. The case study model is representative, descriptive, subjective, and analytical. It permits the researcher to use various investigation methods and approaches to evaluate and test the processes, practices, and theories in different fields on the pedagogical ground.

According to Yin (1984), the case study is an experimental probe that examines contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts. The case study provides the investigator with detailed accounts, facts about a given research topic. In this vein, this case study is a single-case design as it focuses on a group of participants.

### **3.8 Participants**

The present exploratory study examines the reading comprehension of first-year EFL students of the three culturally different reading texts. Besides, it investigates the learners' and teachers' perspectives and answers about this issue. The following section presents a detailed description of both teachers and students who contribute to this work.

The participants are the most necessary components of any research work. According to Polit (2001), the population is an aggregation of cases that meet specific criteria. In this research study, the researcher used two groups of EFL teachers and first-year EFL students.

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The first group of participants entails 20 EFL teachers belonging to various ELT departments in different universities, including the University of Mostaganem, Tiaret, Sidi-Belabbas, and Aghouat university.

These teachers are of different English language specialties. They are 12 females and eight males. Most of them have taught literature, reading, and other language skills. Five of them have taught English for more than ten years, and three have taught for three years. Most of them are MAA (Maitre-Assistant A ) and MAB (Maitre-Assistant B) teachers, and five of them are MCB (Maitre de conférences B).

The second group of participants is composed of 40 EFL first-year students from Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret. Their age varies between 18 and 22. They were randomly selected to make this experimental study more valid, reliable, and objective.

### **3.8.1 Target Teachers**

Once I described the educational setting, there appears a need to present an overview of the teachers' profile. The teachers taking part in this study hold either the degree of "Doctorate" or "Magister" in English as a foreign language. Some of them have been recently recruited. They post graduated from different universities and are specialised in various fields such as language Sciences, phonetics, linguistics, literature, civilisation, ESP TEFL, and Didactics of literature, and civilisation.

In this research study, most of the participant English teachers who teach reading comprehension to first-year students at English Departments at Tiaret, Mostaganem, Sidi Belabass, and Aghoit were the subject of this study. Their age varies between thirty and sixty years old. Their experience in teaching at the university differs from one teacher to another. Local participants received the questionnaires from the researcher personally, and distant teachers received the questionnaires via email. And the researcher collected their answers altogether.

Due to the insufficiency of the teaching staff, the department offers yearly opportunities to some part-time teachers. They are, in most cases, doctorate students or secondary school teachers to teach some subjects such as listening and oral expression. Specific criteria for part-time teachers are required, such as experience and acquaintance with the subject to join the department. In other terms, mastering the content of the issue and knowing how to teach it has a significant impact on teaching and learning. Indeed, university teachers are sometimes relying on the syllabus offered. However, different situations call for

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other materials, methods, and activities. It makes the task of university teachers, including reading comprehension teachers, a challenging one.

It is persistently noticeable in the Department of English that teaching is still 'teacher-centred rather than 'learner-centred.' The teacher is a manager of change in the classroom and emphasises students' roles and contributions in the learning process. In this light, teachers need to be eclectic in their teaching methodology. Accordingly, Rivers (1981) states that an eclectic Approach allows language teachers to absorb the best techniques of all well-known language teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purpose for which they are most appropriate. They adapt methods related to changing the day's objectives and the types of students they encounter during the teaching process. Thus. Teachers work hard to overcome some of the negative impacts and do their best to select ideas from different sources to keep their lessons varied and interesting.

In this respect, teachers' profiles and methodology reflect any foreign language situation's status within a particular context. Thus, the student's profile is of equal importance. The following section is devoted to the profile of 1st year- EFL students in the same educational setting.

### **3.8.2 Target Students**

The student is a central associate in the teaching/learning process and a significant contributor to his success or failure. Therefore, students' age, interests, attitudes, expectations, motivation, and needs are appropriate steps in education.

In this field of interest, numerous researchers, among them Reinert (1970) and Rivers (1976), point out that teachers should be interested in a variety of points concerning the type of students, such as introvert or extrovert, as well as their learning style and their background knowledge. As far as EFL students of Ibn Khaldoun university are concerned, the researcher demonstrates that all these elements help teachers know their potential capacities and needs. On this particular point, the researcher claims that students' socio-cultural background is fundamental; part of the first-year students are from the rural areas of Tiaret. Some of them are from the centre of the town. Those EFL students have been studying English for about seven years. As a result, some of them are very motivated to learn EFL while others are less motivated and reluctant), attitudes (some of them feel happy and eager to study EFL while others know it because they have no other choice). In this view of things, they require more sustainment and assistance in their EFL learning. Therefore, the following aspects need to be reinforced:

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1. More effort and practice of the language, which is generally related to the classroom's four walls.
2. Enthusiasm and eagerness to learn EFL effectively.
3. To trust their potentials and evaluate their progress
4. To improve their skills and strategies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing the language appropriately.

Data were collected in 2017 and 2018. I have chosen to conduct this research with such students because I taught them the oral expression subject since they were my students; it would help me carry out this investigation. I am already familiar with the students and asked them to collaborate to create a safe atmosphere to conduct this exploratory research. Furthermore, the students' inspiration and involvement helped me produce a respectful atmosphere in the group, and their contribution confirmed smooth participation in the research study.

For the sampling of this study, we have chosen forty (40) students randomly. First, EFL students were required to complete a questionnaire to see their attitudes and opinions about cultural aspects acquisition via reading comprehension. Second, they were supposed to receive three reading comprehension tests. For the first reading text, the reading instruction involves three parts: the pre-reading part, the while-reading part, and the post-reading part. The first step was devoted to examining the background knowledge of learners about the topic of tattoos. Concerning the second step, students read the text and answer the comprehension questions to check their understanding of the text. And for the last step, students also received some post-reading questions for answering them.

For the second and third texts, I followed the same procedure. In the first stage, the students received pre-reading questions to check their schemata about Bonfire Night and Drinking Alcohol. Concerning the second step, they were supposed to read both texts carefully and reflect upon the comprehension questions. Finally, both texts involve post-reading questions to test the amount of comprehension of the text.

### **3.9 Methods of Data Collection Adopted for the Present Study**

In this empirical research study, gathering different kinds of data is an exciting step. In other words, neither type of information is intrinsically better than the other. Instead, the key to conducting appropriate research is raising pertinent questions in a suitable time and manner for the target audiences. It is necessary to achieve reliable, valid, and accurate information. In

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this path, to ensure successful empirical research, four powerful instruments have been used for collecting data. They are:

- a) Students' and teachers' questionnaire,
- b) Students' interview,
- c) Classroom observation,
- d) Reading comprehension tests,

### **3.10 Construction of the Research Instruments**

The fact of selecting the research method and design that fit well within the principal aims of the study. In addition to the complementary steps of collecting data and ensuring reliability in the present research, I opt to use sources and instruments in the form of triangulation. It is essential to use different procedures to gather data from a variety of sources. That is to say, by engaging more than one research instrument or a combination of methods, the researcher could obtain richer and comprehensive data. Accordingly, Burns (1999) demonstrates that triangulation is one of the most commonly used and best checking validity methods. Research instruments in the field of language learning are various. They can help the researcher to have different insights into the problem and may lead him/ her to develop different conclusions, mainly in a field of research like reading skill where it is difficult to unveil what the learner lack when doing a task.

Additionally, to evaluate the reading instruction pedagogy as well as assessing the presence of the cultural aspect in the syllabus currently in use in the department of English, For a successful empirical investigation of the obstacles that students encounter during the reading process of cultural-based content, the impact of cultural schemata on learners' reading comprehension achievement. The research instruments adopted for this study have been selected and designed, focusing on these issues. In this vein, I have consulted different research methodology books for the elaboration of the empirical instruments. The researcher takes into consideration the participants' level of vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the language of the questionnaire is carefully selected. That is to say, I eliminated ambiguous words, and I formulated technical concepts to make the language understandable and straightforward. Furthermore, the questionnaires are divided into sections to facilitate things for the respondents.

The informants' views are a significant part of the investigation process. The researcher promised them that I would not publish their data anywhere except for the thesis's ultimate target. A brief overview of the operation of the administration of the empirical research study is mentioned.

### **3.11 The Questionnaires**

A questionnaire is a popular method of collecting data. It contains a set of questions or statements to send to the respondents to answer them. After answering the questions, the respondents return them to the researcher. The form of questions in a questionnaire may be either closed (i.e., 'yes,' 'no' or multiple point type questions) or open-ended (i.e., inviting free response), and they are typed out and printed (Kothari, 2006: 101).

The main merits of this method, according to Kothari, are:

1. It is a method that can be conducted at a low cost even when the universe is enormous.
2. It is free from the bias of the researchers.
3. Respondents have adequate time to give well-thought-out answers.
4. We can approach remote respondents.
5. This result is more dependable and reliable as the research is on a large scale.

Despite some minor demerits, this method is the most commonly used technique for data collection. Therefore, the researcher in this study designs simple questionnaires for both learners and teachers to gauge students' awareness and knowledge about western culture via reading skills. The questionnaire is one of the most common methods of collecting data from a relatively large group of participants. For Richterich and Chancerel(1980), "Questionnaires are structured instruments for the collection of data which translate research hypotheses into questions" (p.59). This controlled instrument transforms assumptions into questions and enables the researcher to collect data in field settings. This instrument has many advantages. It is economical as well as a practical way of inquiry, a kind of broader sampling.

Moreover, the questionnaire allows the researcher to determine people's attitudes and beliefs by asking all the informants the same questions, giving them more time to think about answers. Then, this helpful instrument provides us with anonymous results that can be analysed and quantified. However, the questionnaire presents some drawbacks: the possibility of being affected by low response rates, the chance of being completed in a rush and not seriously taken, and being a one-way instrument not allowing interaction between the researcher and the respondent.

The ability to design a reliable questionnaire is a difficult task and time-consuming. It is essential to be very clear about the objectives of the study. Likewise, questionnaires are variable and serve different purposes; this instrument can involve a set of closed questions, open questions, or a mixture of both closed and open questions. In this study, the two questionnaires include three types of questions:

- Open questions
- Closed questions
- Mixed questions

In this regard, we can say that the nature of open questions provides the informants more opportunities for expressing themselves. They can decide what to say and how to say it in a less limited and oriented way. Indeed, as Richterich and Chancerel (1980) demonstrate that Open questions do not call in advance for ready-made answers and therefore allow the person freedom of expression. In the second type of questions (closed questions), the respondents are no longer free to suggest anything. Instead, they have to choose from the many possibilities proposed. To what concerns the third type of question, it is more a combination of both closed and open questions.

In brief, designing a questionnaire is not an easy task for two main reasons. The first one is that this activity requires much care and objectivity. The second reason is that the researcher should be as accurate and concise as possible in formulating his/her questions to avoid confusion.

### **3.11.1 Teachers' Questionnaire**

For the sampling plan, I contacted the English teachers of the selected university in the English department. After that, they were kindly requested to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, I sent some questionnaires via email to the teachers belonging to other universities' departments like Mostaganem, Sidi Bellabass, and Laghouat.

This questionnaire was designed and divided into three sections. The first section deals with the informants' personal information. It contains structured questions as an introductory part about their gender, age, qualifications, and work experience. The second section deals with teaching reading skills at the university level. It includes the amount of time devoted to this skill, teachers' views about learners' status, and the factors that affect the process of reading comprehension. On the whole, I spend this section on the reading instruction in ELT departments.

The third section is concerned with the importance of the readers' cultural competence within an EFL context and reading skill achievement. These questions aim to elicit information from teachers about their consciousness and responsibility in enhancing students' capacities towards reading skills. Some items in this part show how cultural competence can ensure reading competence.

### **3.11.2 Students' Questionnaire**

In this research study, the students' questionnaires were administered in Ibn Khaldoun University to a total number of forty students. The questionnaire was administered during one session. It was challenging to get an appropriate setting and time that suit the participants as a necessary part of this study. Therefore, this step necessitated prior arrangements with my students to agree on the session during their spare time. In this light, the researcher introduced EFL students to the aim and procedures of the research study. After that, the researcher distributed the questionnaires all over the participants. The questionnaire aimed to explore the impact of the cultural aspect on reading comprehension. It involves three sections; the first section aims to attain relevant data around students' profiles concerning their gender, age, and stream orientation in secondary school.

The second section tends to show how students can learn reading skills at the university level. Indeed, the researcher attempts to determine whether students' mastery of linguistic and grammatical competence is considered sufficient for reading comprehension. Also, this part tends to identify the strategies used while reading. This section aims to elicit the difficulties encountered while reading, which hinder learners' achievements and developments.

To what concerns the third section, the investigator intends to gather information about the significant reading difficulties that EFL students encounter. The questions raised highlight students' problems, needs, and preferences. Finally, we collected the questionnaire responses from the respondents to analyse them.

### **3.11.3 The Students' Interview**

Interviewing is one of the leading research instruments that we use to gather qualitative data from the respondents. It permits the researcher to be in direct contact with the interviewee and find out things that we could not observe directly. In this study, I applied a

structured interview. Based on this interview, the researcher seeks to find out answers to the following questions:

EFL learners' opinions about reading comprehension tests;

Their feeling and which text they prefer while reading;

The benefits gained from the participation in these tests;

The main reading obstacles encountered;

Their suggestions for future reading comprehension topics;

In this vein, I selected interviewees from the group of participants who answered the questionnaire and were eager to participate in this interview. No student was obliged to cooperate in the interview.

### **3.11.4 The Classroom Observation**

Amongst the available research tools, a researcher can rely on is observation. It permits us to know about the situation of learners, which contributes to overcoming some educational insufficiencies. Generally, all the teachers are supposed to observe and evaluate the learners' behaviour in terms of a series of criteria to make the observations more reliable and precise.

Observation is a preplanned research instrument that is selected purposefully to serve research questions and objectives. Moreover, It enables the researcher to combine it with other tools such as questionnaires and interviews to attain significant results. Indeed, like every other research instrument, observation has its strengths and weaknesses. As a starting point, observational facts represent a firsthand picture of the events recognised in a natural field setting and allow the researcher to obtain contextual factors. However, observing a large population is challenging to handle; there is the possibility of observer bias.

On the whole, observation can take place through two methods: In participant observation, the observers come into the classroom and integrate with the students directly. Burns (1999) asserts that the researcher becomes an integral member of the context and participates in its culture and activities. However, in nonparticipant observation, the observer only looks at things and records the classroom activities without any involvement.

To reach the research objectives and find convincing answers to the research questions, there appears a need for a firm decision about observing, identifying aims, and planning clearly for the activities. The following chart illustrates the classroom observation plan applied by the researcher in this study:

Language skills	Level	Observation sessions	Elements being observed
Reading skill	First-year EFL Students at the University of Tiaret	Two sessions	<p>Types of reading texts presented to the student.</p> <p>The difficulties and barriers that students faced during the reading process.</p> <p>The teaching techniques used for teaching reading comprehension.</p> <p>Using Prior knowledge                      Previewing. ...                      Predicting. ...                      Identifying the Main Idea and Summarisation. ...                      Questioning. ...                      Making Inferences. ...                      Semantic Maps. ...                      Retelling.</p>

**Table 3.3 Classroom Observation Procedures.**

This observation intends to examine the teaching of reading comprehension courses for first-year LMD students. It deals with teaching texts, techniques, and materials used. There are specific aims of what sort of elements to observe. For this reason, the researcher designed an observation chart for use in classroom observation. Therefore, the researcher in this investigation attends reading comprehension sessions and takes notes about the sessions carried out with the participants before testing them. In the first part, the researcher intends to

get an idea about the EFL context situation and the procedures followed in each reading session and its capacity in this module.

In the second part, the researcher seeks to find if the teacher gives importance to the cultural aspect while teaching reading or not. Thus, to obtain some pertinent information, I support this exploration by other tests such as reading comprehension tests.

### **3.11.5 The Reading Comprehension Tests**

By considering the three chosen short reading texts with different themes, i.e., tattoos in America, the celebration of the Bonfire Night, and Drinking Alcohol, different views and cultural heritage are considered. The participants were expected to reflect on their tasks in the pre-reading phase, while-reading, and after the reading phase. More explicitly, the reading response task is related to the reader's frame based on her/his thoughts and understanding of the text. In other words, the process of interpretation is based on the visual representations of textual elements such as the grouping of words, phrases, or sentences with different information already stored in the readers' minds. The reading tests are an exciting tool in examining and measuring the reading comprehension process rather than the traditional method of measurement of the recall process.

Testing is one of the significant characteristics of research intervention, which intends mainly to evaluate the subjects' ability and measure the degree of progress yielded by a Particular intervention, especially in experimental design. In other words, implementing tests in any research is considered a practical tool. It can provide various types of information about the learners' abilities, the testing situation, and the factors that may influence or hinder the process of assessment. In this light, the objectives of the collected data from experimental classroom reading comprehension tests comprised the following:

- a/ Identifying the potential difficulties noticed by the reader;
- b/ Raising learners' awareness of the factors that lead to adequate text comprehension (i.e., explicit awareness and mental formulation of proper reading);
- c/ Activating learners' background knowledge to explore the cultural elements identified in each text;
- d/ The research instruments for each text are stated in the research design to examine the reading process, i.e., how readers view the cultural aspect in all the texts.

In this study, we selected three short reading comprehension texts from different cultural schemata. These texts represent the experimental part of the research, and the description of

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the reading texts appears in the following details. The first text of tattoos is culturally close in content to the participants' culture. This text story is extracted from the internet and written by Charlotte Sheldrake. It deals with the notion of tattoo in America, and the author depicts Jack's story events and his experience with tattoos. The second text deals with a culturally different textual knowledge entitled BonfireNight. It is a British festival celebrated in 1605 and depicts the English Catholics towards King James I' treatment of his people. It deals with the plan made to blow up the houses of the parliament in London. The plan became known as the 'Gunpowder Plot,' and the group leader was called Guy Fawkes. The police stopped the operation and caught all the men involved in the plot. Therefore, King James ordered England's people to have a bonfire on 5 November to celebrate his survival.

The third text deals with the aspect of drinking Alcohol in Britain. It describes the excessive love of drinking alcohol. Accordingly, to read these short reading texts, the participants accomplished various tasks to reach a reasonable interpretation of the three texts' content. Moreover, the attitudes of readers' towards the textual, cultural background knowledge is different from one reader to another. The researcher considers readers' ability to simplify and elaborate cultural information during the analysis of the results.

It is worth mentioning that most first-year LMD students came with little syntactic and conceptual knowledge, if not unawareness of nature and the prerequisite micro-skills, strategies, and processing steps for efficient comprehension of texts that adhere to the norms and conventions of English culture. In this vein, the researcher conducted a set of reading sessions with the participants. In each session, I provided the participants with one type of cultural text. It means that during each session, each participant read the intended text, and I administered the tests to measure learners' skills and abilities.

In this path, I divided the participants involved in the reading sessions into two groups, the experimental group, and the control group. I collected data during their regularly scheduled class times. To make the study manageable and avoid participant fatigue and ignorance, the participants received the reading texts once a week. The order of the presentation of the texts was the same for all groups. Both the experimental and control groups received one of the texts, while the experimental group received treatment and oral directions concerning the background knowledge of the topic. However, the control group does not receive any treatment that raises their awareness. Finally, after the reading task's fulfillment, the answers are analysed and corrected by the researcher. Using the reading comprehension task aims to identify students' weaknesses and pedagogical inadequacies and, therefore, try to remedy the situation at hand.

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The following table illustrates the purpose of each methodological procedure followed in this investigation process.

<b>Data collection instruments</b>	<b>Objective</b>
Questionnaire for both (Teachers/Students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Teachers' and learners' practices in the reading class.</li><li>-Strategies and techniques followed by both teachers and learners for raising cultural awareness and reading effectively cultural-based content.</li><li>-The relevance of cultural schemata for the reading comprehension</li></ul>
Experiment and Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-The reading instructions, as well as the type of content presented to learners.</li><li>-Checking the learners' obstacles in reading comprehension.</li></ul>
Students' interview	An overview of the reading comprehension tests provided to the learners as part of the experiment.
Tasks (Students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-The learners' reading of comprehension tests.</li><li>- the use of background knowledge in the process of reading comprehension texts.</li></ul>

**Table 3.4 The Description of the Methodological Procedures**

### 3.12 Piloting the Study

Piloting the study is an appropriate step to try out the research instrument and determine whether it needs readjustment, as Weir and Roberts (1994) stated. The fact of piloting instruments before actually employing them in final data collection is an essential step in all methods of research. This attempt will facilitate the researcher's task to identify

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ambiguities, detect other problems in wording and inappropriate items, and provide sample data to clarify any difficulties in the proposed methods of analysis before the collection of data in the proper study. In this context, the pilot study leads to discovering some issues and obstacles faced when using any one of these research instruments. The researcher should pilot the questionnaire with a small sample of subjects before being used in its broad sense. It allows the researcher to find out if the questions yield the kind of data required and to eliminate any irrelevant or confusing items to the respondent. The process of Piloting is a prior- expectation and investigation for ensuring the reliability of the intended instrument in scientific research. It allows the researcher to see whether collecting data is suitable and whether the questions are adequate.

In fact, the researcher addresses the students' questionnaire under a pilot process with ten (10) first-year students from different groups. The researcher piloted a teacher questionnaire with two (2) teachers. Then, based on pilot results, the investigator refines some questions, so they came closer to producing the intended data. Once again, the pilot questionnaire contributes to reviewing the data provided and helps the researcher to omit unnecessary questions and clarify ambiguous ones to obtain the needed information.

### 3.13 Processing and Analysing Data

In the process of data collection, the researcher sheds light on the different ways of gathering data. The purpose of treating information is to put it into a form that will later be useful for analysis. Since we conducted the questionnaire at Ibn Khaldoun university at Tiaret, the researcher could not respond from other departments. I decided to contact other teachers from other local universities via email to have access to various responses. In this regard, we treated the answers in the following steps.

#### 3.13.1 Dealing with Closed-response Questions

The researcher decided to use the table to set up a rows-and-columns form to elicit the closed-response questions. Each column represents the entire respondent's frequency of

choosing the answers to a particular question. The table below shows how I did it.

Background knowledge	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not answered
Students' numbers	20	12	4	2
Percentage	50%	30%	10%	2

**Table 3.5 The students' responses**

While transferring data into figures and tables, I found some participants had not answered some particular questions. Those missing answers have also been identified as blanks in the table. It can be recognised from Table 2 that two respondents did not answer this question.

### 3.13.2 Dealing with Open-response Questions

As the nature and aim of open-response questions are quite different from those of closed-response questions, I treated them differently. In the questionnaire, there is a variety of open-response questions. The data obtained from such kinds of questions cannot be coded but described and transcribed.

The researcher focused on accuracy as a relevant component in treating and analysing data appropriately during transcribing data. In other words, transcribing what each participant was writing involving all kinds of mistakes such as incorrect grammatical structures, wrong spelling, punctuation, etc. This exact transcription should be accomplished for the sake of identifying the barriers that students encounter. Here is an example of open response questions;

1-Are you motivated to read about western culture?

Yes

No

Justify your answer: .....

- *It increases my knowledge as an EFL learner*
- *To know more about the language and its people.*
- *Yes, I am motivated to read about western culture to get more information*
- *I'd always been interested in western culture as much as any foreign culture*
- *I read about western culture to cultivate myself.*
- *It helps me with coping with others.*
- *I do like reading but not about western culture; it is a disaster.*
- *Because I want to know more about towns and how people live.*
- *The English language makes me curious to learn more about its culture.*

### 3.13.3 Dealing with Web-based Questions

My intended objective behind using a web-based questionnaire is to reach distant teachers. This procedure has two aspects, positive as well as negative drawbacks. On the one hand, the teachers whom the researcher sent the questionnaire took time to answer them, and

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the work turned out to be very time-consuming. On the other hand, the web-based questionnaires helped the researcher contact other university teachers to express their schemata and reading skills. After I finished this job, I printed the questionnaire in a paper-based form to analyse the collected data.

### 3.13.4 Dealing with Reading Comprehension Responses

The three reading comprehension tests involve open-ended questions as well as close-ended questions. The researcher dealt with each type of question differently. Concerning open response questions, as mentioned previously, are transcribed. However, close response questions are represented in charts illustrating the percentage of each student's success and failure in answering the questions. The following table exhibits how the researcher treated the results attained from the participants' achievements in the reading comprehension test.

Task2 N° Q	EXPG		CG	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	20	0	20	0
3	20	0	20	0
4	20	0	20	0
5	20	0	19	1
6	19	1	18	2
7	18	2	16	4
8	17	3	16	4
9	15	5	12	8
10	13	7	12	8
Mean	18,20	1,80	17,30	2,70
Std,Dev	2,49	2,49	3,20	3,20

**Table 3.6 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the while-reading task**

### 3.14 Survey Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are considered the main criteria for ensuring both the research quality and data collection procedures in empirical research. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is related to the accuracy of action.

As far as reliability is concerned, Carmin and Zeller (1979) demonstrate that reliability examines the extent to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides stable and consistent results. Moreover, for the sake of achieving the reliability of the research, repeatability is

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required. In other words, repeating a research instrument procedure on a sample population of individuals or groups with the same measurements under constant circumstances leads to the same result. This process means retesting reliability. According to Huck 2007, testing for reliability is crucial as it refers to consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument.

On the one hand, reliability is a measure related to the degree of stability or consistency of results achieved during a research method. A particular measure is recognised as reliable if its use on the same measurement object provides similar results. On the other hand, research validity refers to how accurately a research method measures what is targeted to measure. In qualitative research, validity represents various aspects, including the honesty, depth, and richness of gathered data. The participants approached the extent of the reliability of the research instruments and the objectivity of the researcher. In contrast, in quantitative research, validity is reflected in careful sampling, a suitable method for the research needs, and appropriate statistical data analysis.

The research study is both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, the researcher used various research instruments to gather sustainable data. In establishing the validity of all the tools, I had to consider its sampling population, content, and construct, which some researchers like Nunan, 1992 called content validity and construct validity. For Brown (2001), one procedure to defend the content's validity is to clarify how the researcher designed the questions. On this particular point, Nunan (1992) demonstrates that construct validity has to do with the formulation of the question: Is the question addressing the concept it is supposed to be investigating? To reach this type of reality, I required my colleague, a teacher at the University of Ibn Khaldoun, to seek whether the questionnaires covered the objectives of my empirical research or not. She gave me some remarks, but on the whole, the questions raised did indeed suit my research objectives.

Finally, I have to confirm that it is the intended participants who complete it rather than someone else, and the honesty of participants is needed during their participation.

### **3.15 Ethical Issues**

Before conducting any research study, the researcher needs approval or authorities' permission from the head of the department at any university. Secondly, when I designed my research instruments, I considered various aspects, including simple language to inform potential readers about the nature of the research study, the time allocated for this

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investigation, the adopted methods, and the findings. I provide a detailed explanation of the aim of the research and the procedures of this investigation. I treated the respondents respectfully and ensured the relevant atmosphere that led them to feel at ease, generally behave without any deficiencies. Their perspectives and participation were of great help to this exploratory research study for the following reasons:

- The questionnaire contents are mainly concerned with reading skills and cultural schemata rather than addressing personal or intrusive data, making participants feel uncomfortable while responding.
- The participants voluntarily respond to the questions addressed to them without forcing them to do it.
- The anonymity of the participants' comments and answers is confirmed and assured. Furthermore, I informed the participants that either their responses are correct or incorrect. They will enable the researcher and contribute to the accurate findings of the research.

### **3.16 Needs Analysis**

Although teaching reading comprehension occupies a relevant position in the first year, both teachers and learners face some needs and obstacles. One of the most critical requirements is a poorly supplied university library and different books in different fields. Also, students at the university level have no access to technology materials such as the "internet," and there is no photocopying access. Consequently, students find themselves obliged to rely on their fees and resort outside the university. Under this situation, we need to remove these kinds of obstacles and devote a certain amount of money to buy books and cover the lack of resources to enrich the library. Students have more advantages to access different readers for reading and enhancing their knowledge.

Based on contextual analysis and frequent contact with EFL learners, the researcher identifies the lack of extensive reading. Sincerely speaking, the place of extensive reading in the English curriculum is less considered. This current situation is the result of a set of factors among which we can mention the following:

- Many teachers do not possess enough time to orient students to read because they are busy with the predetermined materials specified in the syllabus.

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- Teachers, on the whole, are usually engrossed in completing the syllabus for the mid-year and final year examination
- As extensive reading is not evaluated and scored, teachers do not bother themselves for doing it.

Despite the several limitations that may reduce the possibility of integrating extensive reading in the EFL curriculum at different education levels, it is worth mentioning that teachers should use extensive reading in their classes. Extensive reading thus remains crucial in acquiring reading proficiency. Unfortunately, reading instruction at Ibn Khaldoun University and many other universities across the country is exclusively intensive, including studying several types of texts involving syntactic, semantic, and lexical analyses. We refer to this reading as '*intensive reading*.'

Therefore, it is essential to think of possibilities to improve our reading instruction by introducing extensive reading in the EFL curriculum. For Bamford & Day (1997), reading skill is not different from the other learned human abilities such as driving, cooking, playing golf, or riding a bicycle: the more you do it, the more fluent and skilful you become. Thus, practice makes perfect. Students, therefore, may profit from intensive reading, mainly in learning new vocabulary, grammar, discovering characteristics of texts, discourse markers, and other surface details essential for comprehending the literal meaning of the text.

The researcher noticed the lack of one of the useful pedagogical tools (textbook) at the university level. It seems that many university teachers are using a variety of texts without a text-book. Many designers regard text-book as valuable pedagogical documents. It is a useful aid for teachers who exploit it positively by selecting the appropriate texts that fit EFL students. Moreover, there appears a remarkable fact that many teachers of reading are not aware of the relevance of preparing a reading lesson plan. However, the significance of a lesson plan in the teaching process became a necessity. That is to say; a teacher is required to apply his/ her theoretical knowledge in planning and managing his/her lesson plan. A lesson plan reflects a detailed description of the course of instruction for a lesson. Details will differ based on teachers' preferences, the subject covered, and the students' needs. Teachers of reading comprehension need to prepare a lesson plan that needs to determine the appropriate goal (what we expect students to learn), the method, or the procedure (how to reach the learning objectives) besides identifying the time estimates for each lesson and attributed activities. All these points are typically followed by teachers of secondary schools, unlike

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university teachers. Therefore, it would be better to adopt a lesson plan at the university level to ensure a practical course.

Besides, the lack of teaching materials and the absence or the non-use of the laboratory and audio-visual aids hinder the teaching/learning process. The lack of classrooms leads the administration to accumulate many students under one group or class. So, the actual situation can be a handicap for both teachers to handle teaching and learners to acquire the relevant language skills.

Under this situation, there appears a need to solve these problems. It is essential to devote considerable attention to adjust things and cope with the requirements. Teachers are required to benefit from the available opportunities to prepare their lessons efficiently.

### **3.17 Conclusion**

This chapter is an overall description of the research design of this experimental study. It provides the rationale for the methodological decisions. It explains the research methods, techniques, and choices of the research instruments to allow the reader to recognise the various processes implemented during this investigation. In this respect, I have presented an overview of data collection, including questionnaires, administration of students' interviews, administration of classroom observation, and reading comprehension tests. Moreover, the chapter explains each particular methodological decision and its complementation to render the research more reliable.

In brief, this methodology chapter reviewed the research's specific field and described both qualitative and quantitative approaches adopted in this research. In the next chapter, I present the interpretation and analysis of the gathered data.

# ***CHAPTER IV***

## ***Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings***

#### **4. Introduction**

The present chapter is devoted to a detailed description of the results and data analysis gathered from this exploratory study. The findings obtained are arranged into sections to facilitate their readability. The first section involves the results of the questionnaire. The second section includes the analysis of the classroom observation and the discussion and analysis of the findings of teachers' and learners' practices in a reading classroom and the reading difficulties that EFL learners encounter during the reading process. Furthermore, the statements elicited by the participants during the interview are discussed and transcribed.

Moreover, this chapter sheds light on results obtained from the reading comprehension texts. Thus, I provide a meticulous analysis of the different processes involved in the reading comprehension of such kinds of texts. These processes concern all of the content and cultural understanding since this research aims to examine cultural schemata' effects on learners' reading comprehension ability.

The current chapter summarises the findings gathered from the different research instruments used in tabular form (quantitative data) and commentary paragraphs (qualitative data). Because of those data and measures of analyses, the researcher draw some conclusions about how first-year EFL students read foreign language texts; and yield a clear view of how students and teachers consider the impact of cultural schemata in this research study.

## **4.1 An Overview of the Study**

The present research study is an attempt to seek answers for the main question: does the cultural familiarity of EFL learners affect reading comprehension. I have already mentioned in chapter three the aim of this investigation design. I have also identified the relevance of using various research instruments to explore the process of reading cautiously. In other words, this research study examines how EFL students approach foreign language texts during the reading process itself. It is demonstrated through the different stages the readers pass through; the pre-reading, the while-reading, and the post-reading.

What concerns the classroom observation helped the researcher check the process of reading comprehension in the EFL context. Furthermore, the interview questions are designed to allow the learner to self-assess him/herself in terms of cultural appreciation of such themes as tattoos, drinking alcohol, and celebration of Bonfire Night.

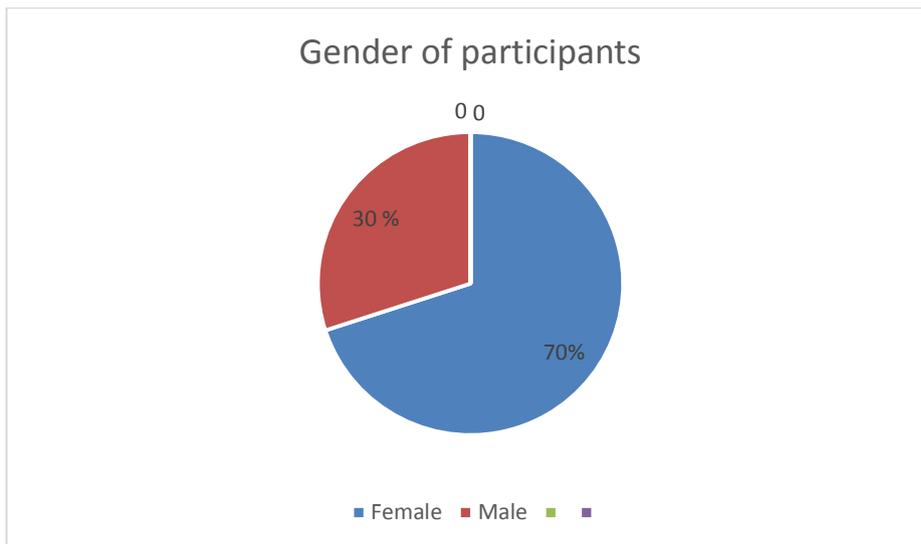
### **4.2.1 The Students' Questionnaire Analysis**

It is widely significant to begin reporting the informants' results before presenting the analysis linked to this research study's objective. The fact of devoting considerable attention to the learners' mastery of the language and background knowledge by being aware of readers' profile and their relation to reading skill enables the researcher to analyse their questionnaires. Therefore, language educators and researchers indicate that language learning should always involve the learners because this process's success should take into account learners' profiles. The results should respect the scope of the learners' profiles. This part gives detailed analyses of the students' questionnaire and brings a summary of its results. The questions of the students' questionnaire are interpreted as follows:

#### **Section 1: Personal Information**

As the title entails, the investigator in this section will analyse some personal information related to the questionnaire's respondents. The first section reveals personal information about the informants. It allows us to see that forty participants represent the sample study, 28 females and twelve males. Females are superior to males if compared to the total number. Most of them seemed to be in their early twenties when the questionnaires were first distributed. The following table presents close details of the participants' questionnaires.

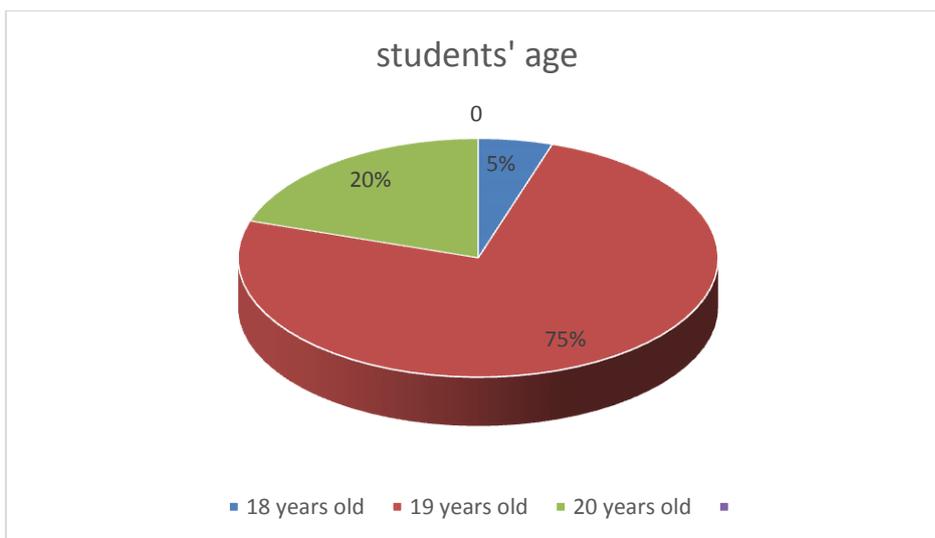
**Question 1:** Sex -Male  -Female



**Figure 4.1 Gender of Participants**

This initial question aims to check the gender of the informants. We believe that most EFL students, mainly females, are more motivated to learn foreign languages, unlike males. In general, students' answers revealed that of the respondents' total number, 30 % are males, exactly twelve students, whereas twenty-eight are females, i.e. (70 %). It is not surprising because, in Algerian society, females are more attracted to foreign language learning than males. Most foreign language classes involve a significant number of females, and we find more males in scientific classes; accordingly, we scored such a result.

**Question 2:** Age.....



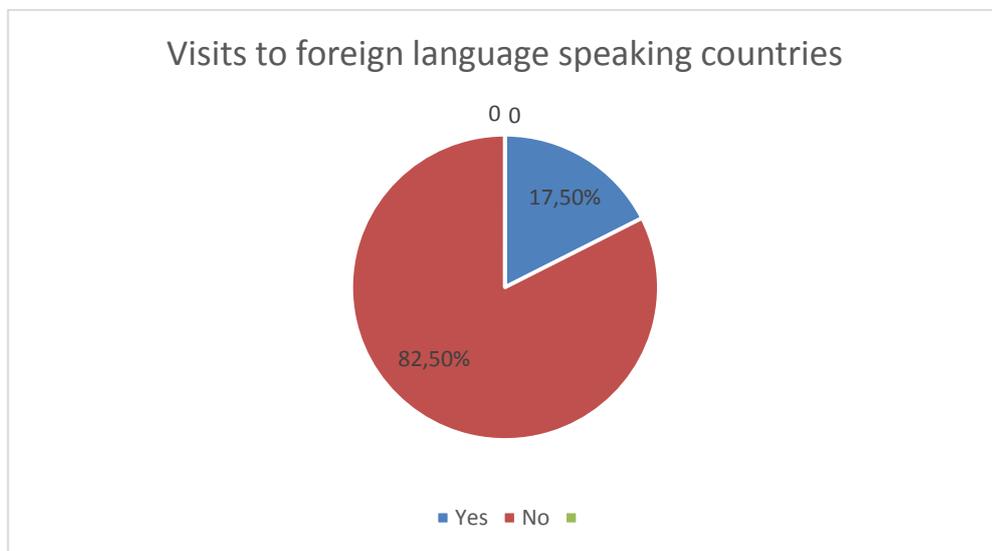
**Figure 4.2 Students' Age**

The results outlined in Table 4.2 displays also that the majority of the students (75 %) are 19 years-old. (20%) of them are 20 years old, and only (5 %) of the participants are 18 years old. It signifies that most of the respondents are peers, and for that reason, they may share similar thoughts and opinions. That is to say, students' age impacts their learning achievement, and this view has been tackled and confirmed by salient works in educational psychology. This factor is an important key to the students' data's reliability, as the latter were supposed to express their expectations vis-à-vis learning about the target language culture.

**Question 3:** Have you ever been to an English –speaking country?

Yes

No

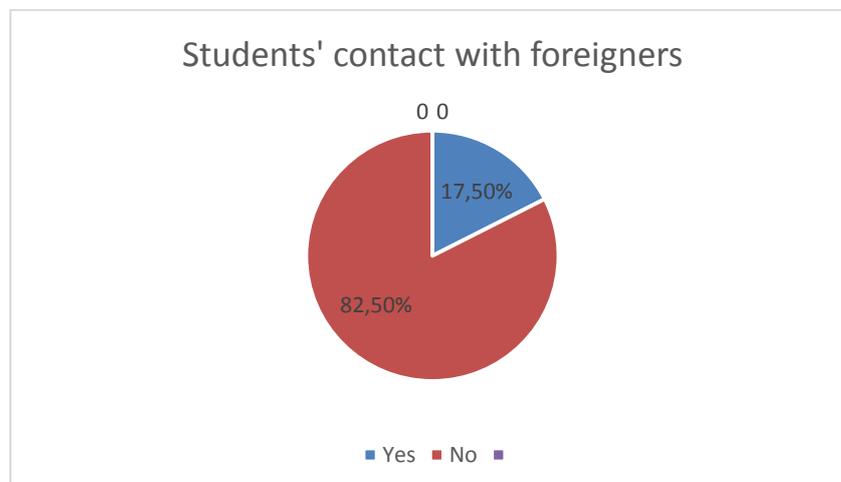


**Figure 4.3 Participants' Trips**

**Question 4:** Do you have any contact with foreigners?

Yes

No



**Figure 4.4 Participants' Contact with Foreigners**

Concerning the participants' questions (Q3, Q4) about their trips abroad and their contact with foreigners, they intend to examine the informants' relationship with foreign cultures. Additionally, they aim to shed light on the extent of their cultural knowledge towards reading cultural-based content, as it aims for this research work. That is to say, the learners' trips abroad and their contact with people from various parts of the world may help them to be more open to discover other cultures and learn new things. The tables above present the statistical results of the participants' answers to these questions. The majority of them do not travel abroad nor have contact with foreigners. In that, 82.5% of the informants have never been abroad though they study English. And only 17.5% of them have travelled to foreign countries. Three of them specified the country with the region and wrote UK (Bristol) and UK (Cambridge), while another participant wrote USA (Atlanta; Florida). Furthermore, 17.5% of the participants do have contact with foreigners via the internet. Whereas most of the participants, 82.5%, do not have any interaction with foreigners.

Based on the belief that visiting English-speaking countries influence the way EFL learners think and deal with foreign culture learning. For example, students who had an opportunity to travel abroad and interact with the English native-speakers may be more interested in learning about the English cultures and feel at ease when dealing with cultural issues in the EFL context.

## **Section 2: The Reading Competence of EFL Learners**

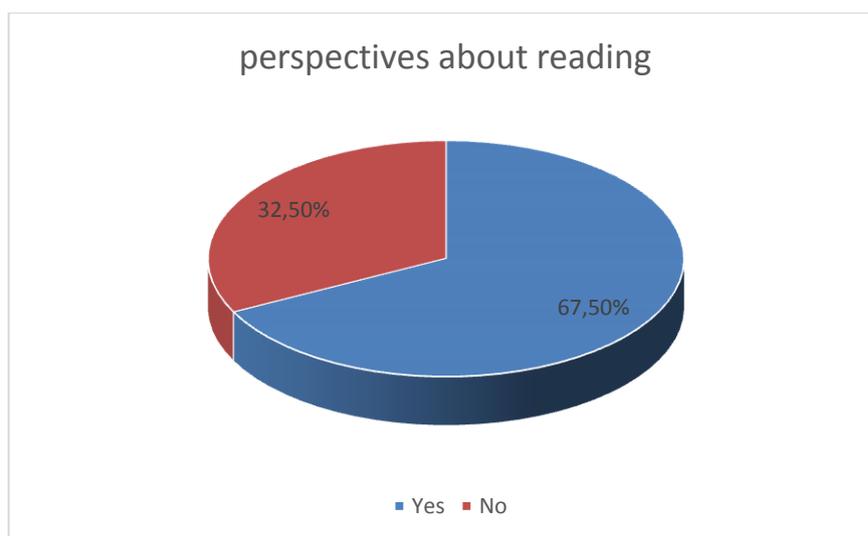
The data analysis and the interpretation of results on the students' expectations vis-à-vis their reading comprehension skills in the English Language Department of the University of Tiaret are presented in tabular forms and commentaries. In this section, the investigator examines learners' reading comprehension ability, motivation, techniques, and obstacles that EFL students encounter while reading texts.

**Question 5:** Do you like the reading course?

Yes

No

Why.....



**Figure 4.5 Participants’ perspectives about reading course**

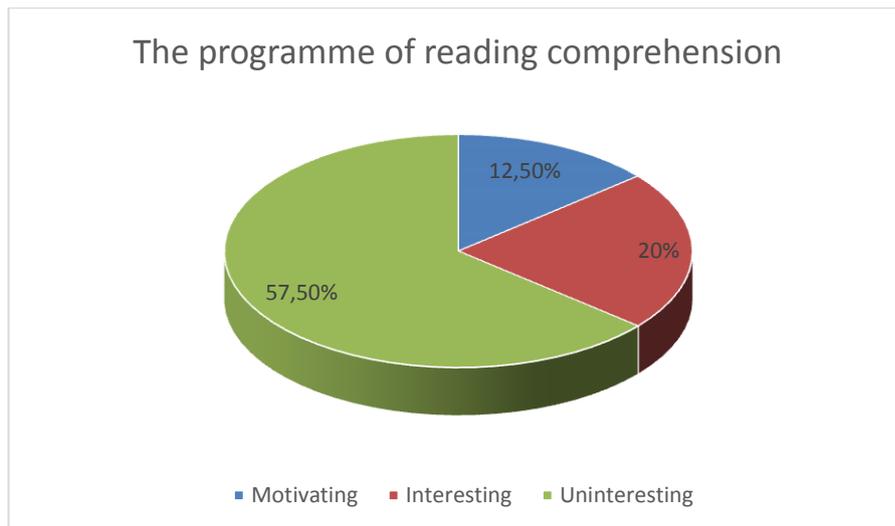
With a view of gaining insights into EFL students' perspective about reading comprehension whether they like it or not. 67.5% (27) of the respondents showed their appreciation for reading. The majority of the respondents revealed the significant role of reading courses in learning new vocabulary. Some justified their answers by demonstrating the advantages of the reading course, including reading comprehension techniques, enhancing the writing skill, improving pronunciation. However, (3) students said that they like reading because they have good teachers in reading.

In contrast, 32.5% (13) of the informants showed their dislike of reading. Some feel that the reading course is dull and uninteresting due to their inefficient teachers' instruction methods and learning weaknesses. Some others said that they are not given enough time to practice real reading in the classroom, and their teachers rarely activate learners' background knowledge.

**Question 6:** How do you find the programme of reading comprehension?

Motivating  Interesting  Uninteresting

Why.....



**Figure 4.6 Evaluation of the Programme of Reading**

With a view of gaining insights into how students find reading comprehension, the respondents were given a range of 3 possibilities. They were asked to choose between ‘motivating,’ ‘interesting,’ and ‘uninteresting.’ We cannot ignore that some students may well enjoy the programme of reading comprehension rather than others, and so they do better. Others, however, said that they see no benefits from a particular programme. For that reason, this question explores respondents' estimations about the schedule of reading comprehension. Based on the participants' responses, 12.5% of them indicate that the programme of reading comprehension is “motivating.” 20% of the informants view the programme as “interesting.”

On the contrary, 67.5% of them find the programme uninteresting. It seems that the majority would prefer other content for the reading comprehension syllabus. Participants may relate this refutation towards the programme to teachers' way of teaching. So, to fix the reasons, we refer to students' arguments.

“ I think the programme of reading comprehension is interesting because it includes fruitful content.”

“I find the programme of reading uninteresting because I hate reading in general.”

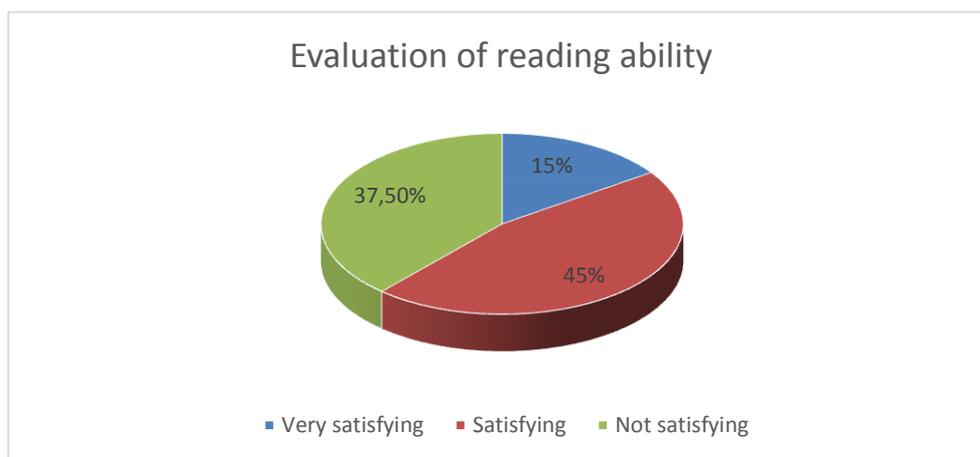
“The programme of reading is boring for two reasons: the topic presented to us as well as the way of teaching this course.”

The gathered data reveal that the students find reading tedious for two reasons: The content and teaching method. The content may not meet their requirements, and the method of instruction may be boring, which makes readers not interested. Of course, when students enrol

at the university, they do not presume that they deal with such a programme. Also, a teaching syllabus like reading comprehension may appear very challenging about some students' language competence, as it entails language competence, including a robust linguistic repertoire.

**Question 7:** Concerning your English language competence, how do you evaluate your reading ability?

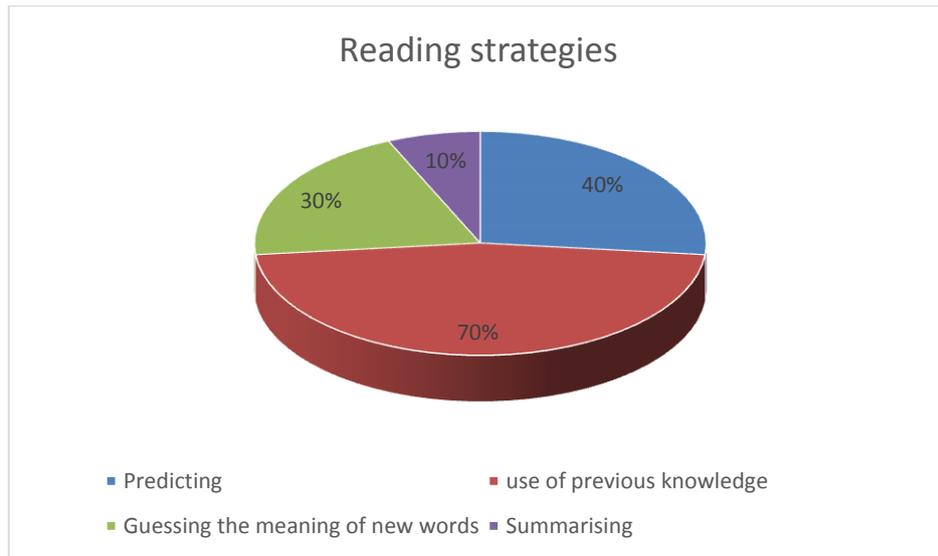
Very satisfying  Satisfying  Not satisfying



**Figure 4.7 Evaluation of Reading Ability**

To investigate what students think about their level of reading ability, they were asked to choose between these gradual degrees (very satisfying), (satisfying), and (not satisfying). One aims to gain insights into whether or not the learners' reading ability meets the first-year EFL requirements. On account of the participants' answers, the vast majority of them (45%) chose 'satisfying' (37.5) of the participants refer to the option of 'not satisfying.' In comparison, only a few of them (15%) opted for 'satisfying,' and only one paper is not answered. It means that not all learners are delighted with their level of reading. In other words, they are aware of their weaknesses in reading skills. Therefore, they should do some extensive reading to improve their reading ability.

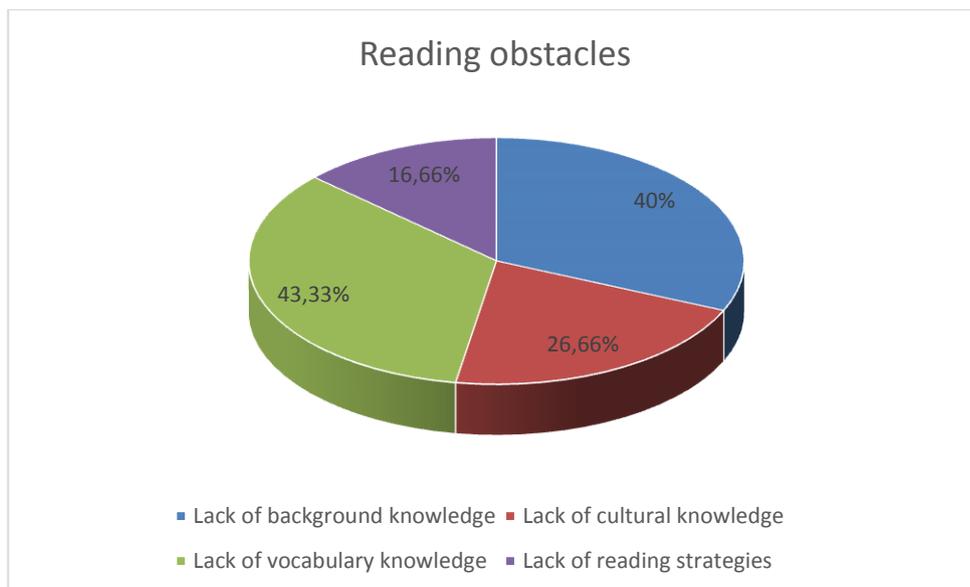
**Question 8:** According to you, which of the following reading strategies would be most useful for your in-class learning about English cultures?



**Figure 4.8 Reading Strategies**

To shed further light on how first-year EFL students perceive reading skill in the English Language Department. The students were asked about the ways (strategies and techniques) that they consider most suitable for their reading after being given a list of some common ones. This question aims at investigating the preferences of the students by selecting the strategy that suits them. After analysing the answers, the results are put in decreasing order of importance and presented in the chart above. A closer examination of the results shows that ‘relating the text to the previous knowledge’ is rated the highest (70%) while ‘relating the text to TV programmes’ is rated the lowest (20%).

**Question 9:** What kind of reading obstacles do you generally face?



**Figure 4.9 Reading Obstacles**

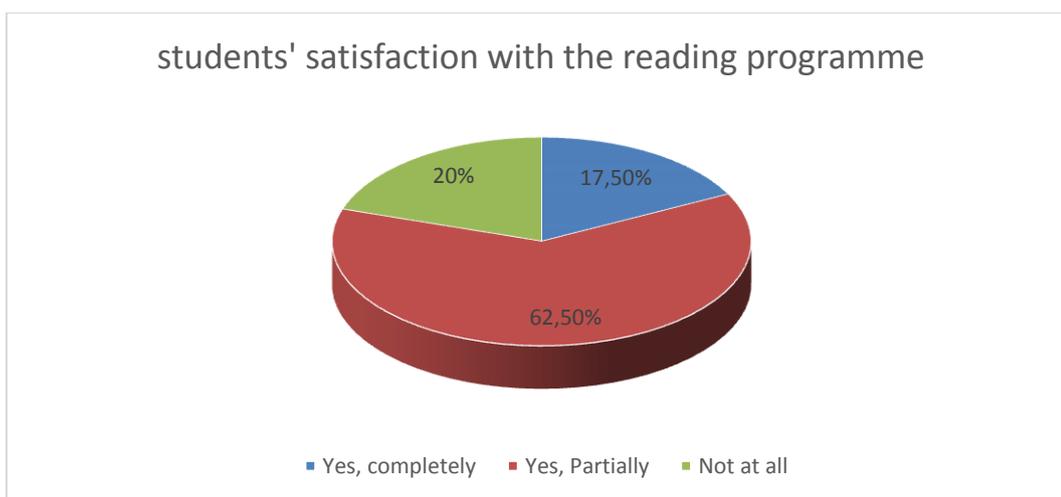
This question is relevant to detect the problems that cause reading deficits. Students' answers demonstrate that most of them, 43,33% have vocabulary deficits. Indeed, this hampers their process of comprehension and causes their reading failure. Consequently, teachers should resolve this issue. A significant number of participants, 40%, think that the lack of background knowledge is the leading cause of their reading problems. Insufficient cultural knowledge is another issue. Therefore, 26,66 % of the students relate their reading material failure to the lack of cultural knowledge. In contrast, 16,66% of them say that they lack the reading strategies that enable them to read appropriately. It is, maybe, due to the reading instruction methods that their teachers apply.

**Question 10:** Are you satisfied with the reading material in the classroom?

Yes

No

Why?  
.....



**Figure 4.10 Students' Satisfaction with the Reading Material**

The investigator in this question asks the students about the degree of their satisfaction with the reading material. They were required to choose between 'completely,' 'partially,' and "not at all" while responding to this question.

The results outlined in Figure 4.10 (60%) of the students believe that the first-year level subjects had partially satisfied them. In justifying their partial satisfaction towards the reading materials introduced to them, the respondents provided the following reasons:

*“ It is quite necessary to deal with simple short texts suitable to our level.”*

## Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

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*“ I think that the material applied in the classroom should represent real-life situations to learn a lot from it.”*

*“There are some topics that stimulate me to read, as there are some reading materials that are boring and uninteresting.”*

*“Because we have not learned new topics, and we feel like there is a lack, we are supposed to learn recent topics related to the English language culture.”*

On a similar ground, only seven students out of forty participants opted for ‘completely,’ while eight respondents opposed them and selected ‘not at all’ as an answer. The students who opted for that option gave the following justifications:

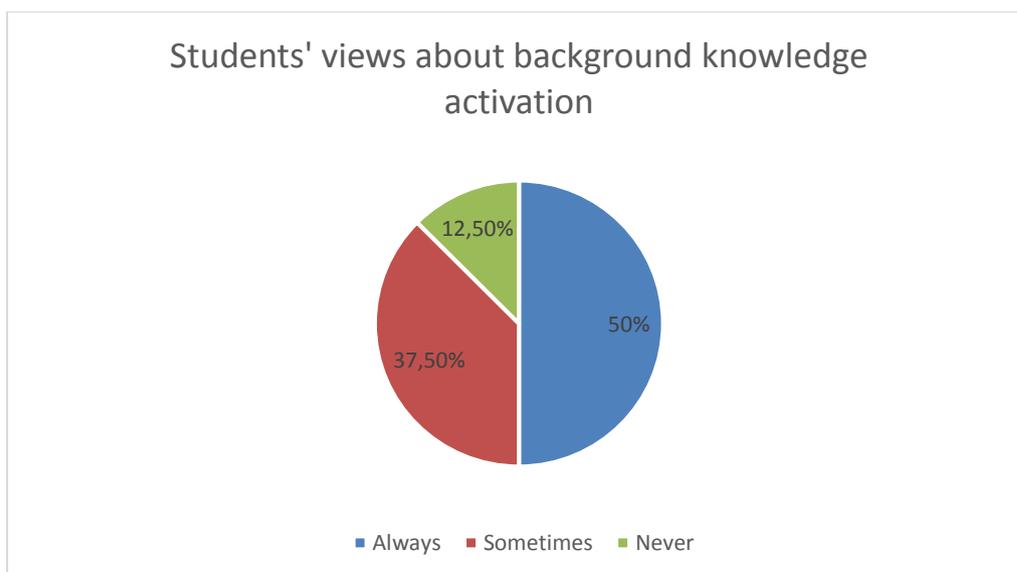
*“ Some topics are dull, not exciting, and demotivating.”*

*“Sometimes, I feel that the reading texts are traditional with intricate comprehension questions, which make the reading lesson boring.”*

As far as we are concerned with studying English as a foreign language, we need motivational topics related to the target language culture.

**Question 11:** Does your teacher activate your background knowledge before starting the course?

Always  Sometimes  Never



**Figure 4.11 Students' View about Background Knowledge Activation**

## Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

To find out about the students' reflections on whether the teacher activates their background knowledge while teaching reading comprehension, they were asked the above question.

Data regarding the significance of activating students' background knowledge were gathered by asking students to choose between (a) 'Yes, always,' (b) 'yes, sometimes' or (c) 'no, never' while answering Q13. The results presented in figure 4.11 show that 50% of the participants asserted that their teachers stimulate their prior knowledge in reading English language texts. The other remaining options were selected with gradual percentages; for example, (b) was chosen by 37.5% while (c) was ticked only by 12.5% of the respondents.

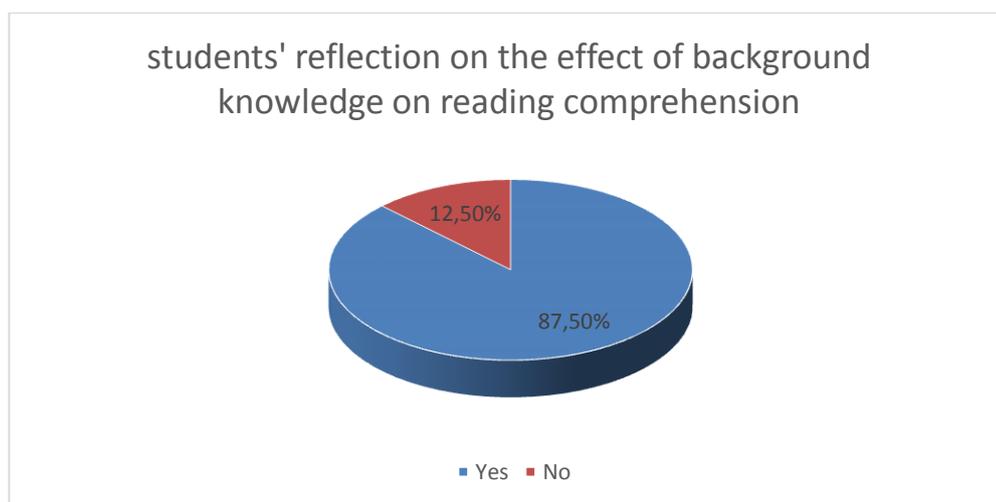
Knowing how much background knowledge is embodied in teaching reading; has contributed to enhancing the students' interest and reading competence. One can now explore whether cultural background knowledge plays a vital role in improving first-year students' interest in EFL learning. And to improve their reading competence while dealing with foreign language texts.

**Question 12:** Do you think that cultural background knowledge has positive effects on improving your reading comprehension?

1) Yes

2) No

Justify your answer: .....



**Figure 4.12 Students' Reflection on the Effect of Background Knowledge on Reading Comprehension**

This question is intended to detect students' consciousness about the role of cultural background knowledge in enhancing their reading comprehension. Students' responses to this question display that they are aware of cultural schemata's significant importance in developing their reading achievements. The vast majority of the participants, thirty-five out of forty, answered by 'yes,' while only five answered by 'no.' In justifying their positive answer, the respondents provided the following reasons:

*"I think that cultural schemata are a strong factor to increase their general language knowledge because it provides them with opportunities to understand foreign culture appropriately and develops their language skills."*

*"cultural schemata play a considerable role in avoiding misunderstanding and stereotype."*

*"Through cultural knowledge, we could understand foreign language texts."*

### **Section 3: Students' Reflection on Cultural Schemata in EFL Reading**

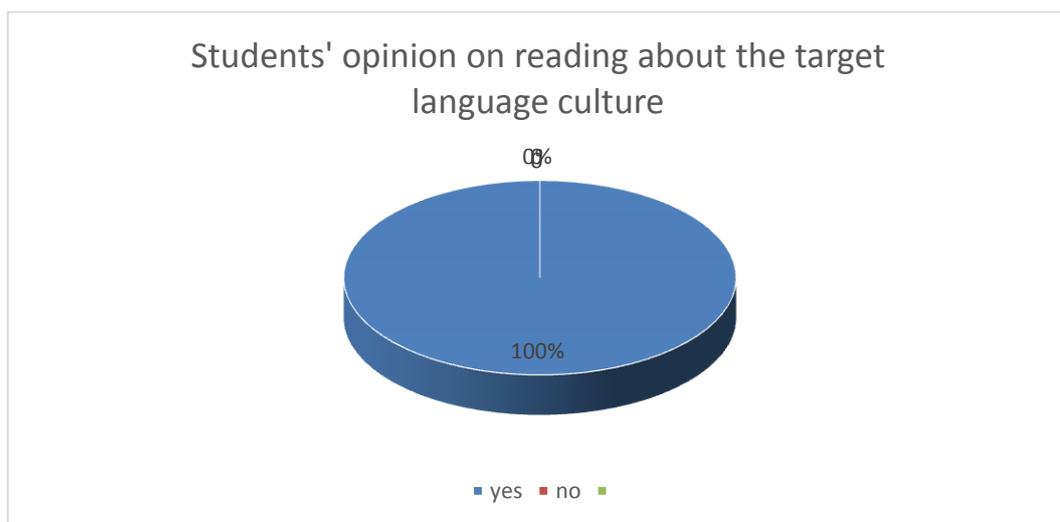
Based on the effect of cultural background knowledge on the process of reading foreign language texts. The investigator asked students (Q15, 16,17, and 18) about their perspectives towards reading the target language culture experience, and the benefits of reading about the target language culture, and the awareness of cultural schemata while reading EFL texts. The respondents' response was as follow:

**Question 13:** Do you like reading about the target language culture?

Yes

No

Justify your answer: .....



**Figure 4.13 Students' Opinion on Reading about the Target Language Culture**

## ***Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings***

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The students who took part in the questionnaire were asked to decide whether it is important for them to incorporate issues about the cultures associated with the FL they learn. The data collected from the participants suggest that no student claimed against the idea that the aspects of the target language culture are necessary for the reading skill. It means that all of them think that teaching culture is as important as teaching a foreign language. The results in Figure 4.13 reveal that 100% of the participants answered with ‘Yes.’ This finding corresponds with the views of Byram (1988); Byram and Flemming (1998); Byran and Kramersch (2008), who are in support of integrating cultural elements into foreign language classrooms.

The participants explained their standpoints on the importance of reading about the target language culture by giving the following reasons:

*“ I think that studying a foreign language implies knowledge of its cultural elements.”*

*“It increases my knowledge as an EFL learner.”*

*“To know more about its civilization and get more information about the language and its people.”*

*“ Yes, I am motivated to read about target culture to get more information about what we are dealing with.”*

*“ I'd always been interested in western culture as much as any foreign culture.”*

*“Because I want to know more about the other culture.”*

*“The English language makes me curious to learn more about its culture.”*

*“ We can't understand a language without having a notion about its culture.”*

*“ We cannot separate a language from its culture.”*

*“ Because culture is the identity of the language.”*

*“ The essential thing in learning any language is to know about its cultural aspect.”*

*“ Because our knowledge about that language will not be enough without its culture.”*

These answers can be considered an index that these participants are conscious of the significant role of inserting culture within language skills.

**Question 14:** What are the benefits of reading cultural-based content in EFL classes?

Benefits of reading cultural-based content	Students' numbers	Percentage
Raising my awareness about the history and its relationship to culture	12	30%
Motivating me to learn more about the language	13	32,5%
It is helping me to know the aspects of other western cultures.	10	25%
Helping me in understanding my own culture and cultural identity.	2	5%
They are providing me with strategies for coping with culture shock.	0	0%
Made me more tolerant of the differences	6	15%
Improving my reading skills since there is a combination of culture and language.	11	27,5%
Developing critical attitudes towards both the western and the native cultures.	4	10%

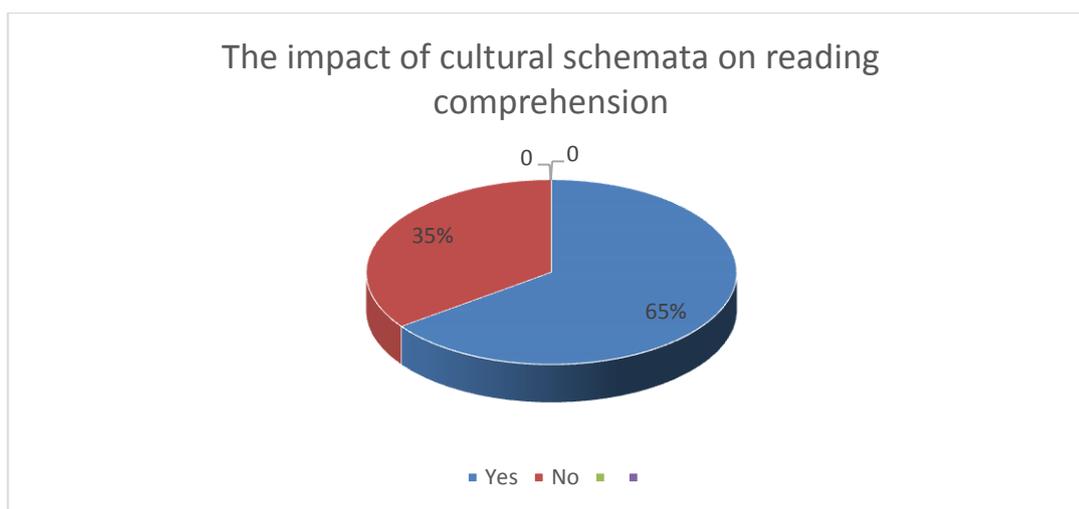
**Table 4.1 The Benefits of reading cultural-based content**

EFL students seem aware of the vital role of the cultural element in a foreign language context. Still, it is likewise relevant to examine the benefits of reading cultural-based content materials in the EFL classroom. To highlight the possible advantages of reading cultural-based content and providing learners with the opportunity of expressing their views. The students were given a list of suggestions, and they are supposed to choose the suitable one.

In this vein, The findings show that most of the respondents (32,5%) believe that culture motivates them to learn more about the language. Another significant number of informants (30%) admit that among the advantages of culture learning is that it raises their awareness about the history and its relationship to culture. Moreover, (25%) of the respondents indicate that reading cultural-based content in the EFL context helps them know several aspects of the target language culture. By contrast, a small number of informants (5%) believe that it helps them understand their own culture and cultural identity. (15%) think that it makes them more tolerant of the differences. (27,5%) identified that it helps them in improving their reading skill. Another category of the informants (10%) indicates that reading culture content develops their critical attitude.

**Question 15:** Does knowledge of cultural schemata improve EFL learners' reading comprehension ability?

Yes       No



**Figure 4.14 Awareness of Cultural Schemata**

The answers show that most participants are aware of cultural schemata's value and its significant role in developing learners' reading comprehension. Indeed, 65% of the participants demonstrate that they are mindful of the contribution to cultural schemata. Only 35% lack this awareness. Indeed, being aware of cultural schemata is the basis of reading as they provide help in getting full-text comprehension and interpretation of foreign language texts. Of course, a reading comprehension course cannot be taught or learned without activating schematic knowledge.

**Question 16:** Comment in a small paragraph of about five or six lines about the effect of cultural background knowledge on your reading ability.

For the last question, it is an open-ended one. It deals with the learner's propositions about the effect of cultural background knowledge on learners' reading ability. Reading is an active process that involves the reader and the reading material to construct meaning. Meaning doesn't reside in the text. It is the reader's responsibility to combine the text's content with his/her background knowledge and experiences. It is an open question addressed to EFL learners to express their views about the effect of cultural background knowledge on their reading ability. In this regard, the respondents provided additional comments as follows: *"Culture is the key to foreign language understanding; culture is the best way to develop our knowledge."*

*"I believe that cultural background knowledge is essential and vital for our reading ability."*

*"Sometimes, I understand the lexis of the text, but I cannot comprehend the message being conveyed appropriately due to my insufficient level of cultural knowledge. I recognized that*

## ***Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings***

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*cultural experience involves more than a mere literal comprehension of the content of the text.”*

*“Cultural background knowledge plays a vital role in the reading comprehension process. For example, when I face unfamiliar cultural norms, I can easily make appropriate interpretations of the text than when I am not.”*

*“If we don't have cultural background knowledge, it would be impossible to understand the text. For example, I am reading a text about "celts," and I don't know the meaning of the term. So, I couldn't understand the content of the text simply because I don't have any background knowledge about such a topic.”*

*“My reading ability is minimal because I was studying in the science stream. So we were not learning the English language so much.”*

*“The cultural background knowledge has a significant effect on our reading ability due to its importance and necessity because it helps to comprehend any text and to develop reading skills.”*

*“Learning the cultural aspect of the English language is very important for improving my reading ability.”*

*“The more we know about the culture, the more we improve our reading ability through time.”*

### **4.3.1.1 Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire is administrated to 40 EFL undergraduate students (1<sup>st</sup> year) in order to elucidate students' perspectives about the reading skill, the relationship between cultural dimension and reading foreign language texts.

According to the obtained results, it is found that the students who hold negative attitude towards the programme of reading comprehension outnumber those who hold a positive attitude, and the reasons are many: Some related to the students themselves and some are pedagogical. It is worthy to mention that the students who enroll the English department may come from different baccalaureate streams: letter and philosophy/foreign languages; others are scientific, math, accounting and economics; they are usually oriented to the English Department on the basis of their average even if they have chosen other streams.

Under this case, EFL teachers, usually find themselves in confrontation with learners with different levels of competence, in which a number of them may possess very limited background knowledge and language proficiency. As revealed in question (6), based on their competence they may find a particular programme uninteresting, and their reading ability not satisfying. In other words, there are a great number of students who find the reading comprehension subject either not interesting or not motivating because of the teaching practices (methods and materials). Although the availability of various teaching resources that can increase students' motivation, it seems that EFL teachers find difficulties in selecting texts. In fact, the aspect of motivation has a significant impact on learners' reading comprehension. Moreover, the lack of adequate vocabulary and schematic knowledge can hamper the process of reading comprehension.

In putting the second hypothesis in connection with the obtained results, it is found that many students are aware of the relevance of cultural schemata in reading foreign language texts. As discussed in section 3(Learners' reflection on cultural schemata in EFL Reading), The participants explained their standpoints on the importance of reading about the target language culture by saying “ *I think that studying a foreign language implies knowledge of its cultural elements.*” In this vein, EFL students' responses reveal that cultural knowledge can be one of the key factors for an appropriate understanding of foreign language texts. Therefore, constructing cultural background knowledge increasing vocabulary knowledge, and using appropriate reading strategies can boost students' reading comprehension of foreign language texts.

To sum up, it can be concluded that the nature of the students, the reading content, and the teaching practices can be considered as one of the main reasons that affect the use of schema theory at the EFL department at the University of Tiaret.

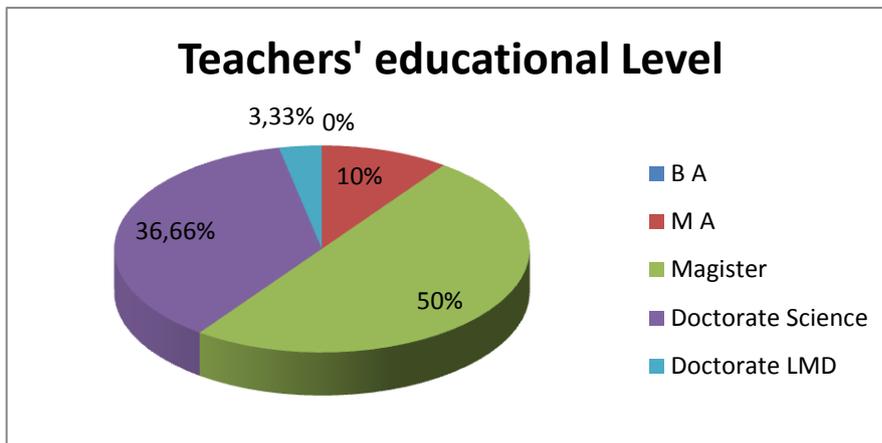
### **4.3.2 Teachers' Questionnaire Analyses**

This part provides a detailed description of the teachers' questionnaire and summarises its main results. The questions of the teachers' questionnaire are analysed descriptively and calculating percentages that are presented in the charts as follows:

### Section 1: Teachers' Professional Background

Believing in the impact of teaching experience and teaching training in affecting language skills teaching, I asked teachers (Q1, 2,3, and 4) about their teaching experience, the field of specialty, and trips abroad. The respondents' response was as follow:

**Question 1:** Educational level:

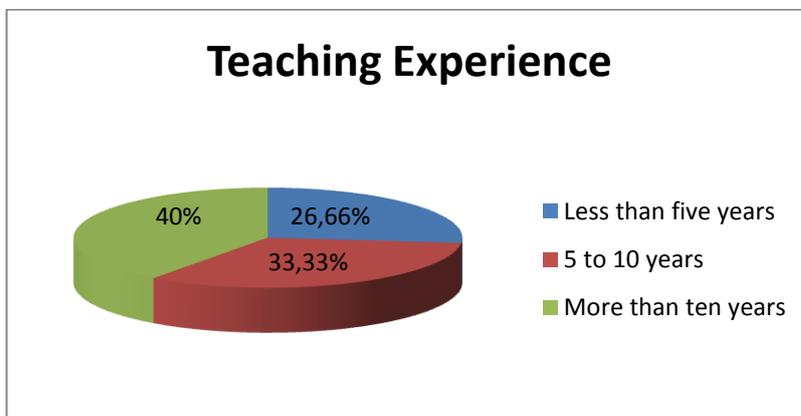


**Figure 4.1 Teachers' Educational Level**

Based on the data illustrated in the table, we noticed that the majority of EFL university teachers hold a magister degree (50%). In comparison, some of the participants have an MA degree (10%), and a total of (36,66%) teachers hold a Ph.D. degree, namely Doctorate science. In contrast, only 3,33% of participant holds a Ph.D. degree entitled Doctorate LMD. Each department contains more Magister teachers who are carrying out their doctorate studies than Ph.D. teachers. Furthermore, teachers' educational degree plays a significant role in helping learners progress and achieve an appropriate level of education.

**Question 2:** How long have you been teaching in the department of English?

- Less than five years  5 to 10 years  More than ten years



**Figure 4.2 Teaching Experience**

The data in association with the respondent's teaching career at the EFL department demonstrates that 40% of the respondents have been teaching for more than ten years. 33,33% of teachers indicate that their teaching experience ranks between 5 and 10 years. Also, (26,66% ) of teachers, their career of teaching is limited to five years. Indeed, experience in language teaching plays an important role. Through experience, teachers learn more about this domain and acquire the necessary skills of such a profession; the more teachers teach, the more they know about the craft of teaching. Therefore, a significant period of experience means a total evolution in teaching methods and techniques, flexibility, and various planning and education resources.

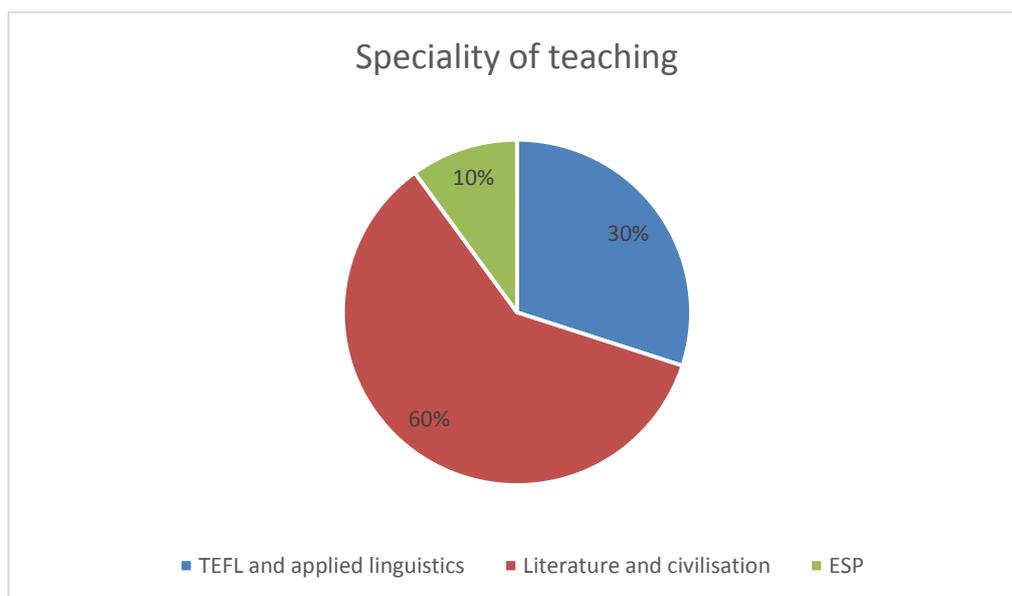
**Question 3: Speciality:**

TEFL and Applied Linguistics

Literature and Civilisation

ESP

Others.....



**Figure 4.3 Speciality of Teaching**

Teaching experience is one of the requirements for successful learning outcomes. The data concerning the teachers' field of the study show that the vast majority of the respondents (60%) are specialised in literature and civilisation studies. It means that their knowledge and experience of teaching literary works may convey efficient learning outcomes. Besides, those categories of teachers can exploit their experience to feed the interest of learners. Concerning the other specialties (30%) of the informants refer to TEFL and Applied Linguistics option, and only 10% selected the specialty of ESP. Teachers also vary in their field of interest from

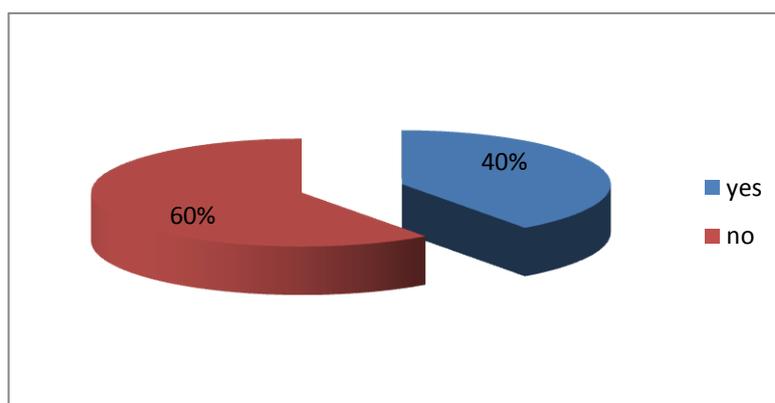
one person to another. This diversity of interests towards English language specialties help teachers to become more competent in teaching language subjects. To conclude, more experienced teachers confer benefits to their colleagues, their students, and the university as a whole.

**Question 04:** Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?

Yes

No

If yes, where? .....



**Figure 4.4 Teachers' visit Abroad**

Believing in the positive impact of the foreign countries' visits, we aimed to elucidate the effects of teachers' travel and contact with foreigners on language skills. Furthermore, to highlight the extent of visiting the native context of the language they are teaching, this visit plays a significant role in getting an overview of the target culture and its people. In other words, the teachers' visits to English-speaking countries and their contact with people from different parts of the world may permit them to be more open to discovering other cultures and eager to read about them. The following figure shows the result of the readers' answers to this question. Most of them do not travel abroad nor have contact with foreigners.

On account of the gathered data from EFL, teachers reveal that only a minority of them (40%) have had the chance to visit an English-speaking country, mainly; England and the USA. However, most of the respondents representing a percentage of (60%) indicate that they don't have the opportunity to travel to such countries.

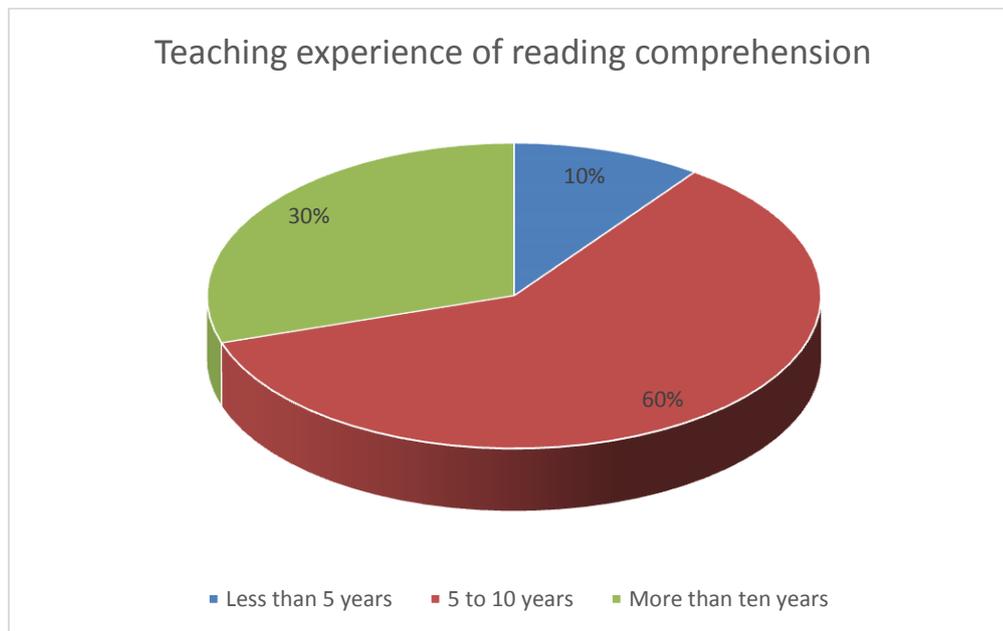
## **Section 2: Teachers' Reflection on EFL Learners' Reading Proficiency**

Believing in the relevance of reading skills, I intend to elucidate teachers' perspectives concerning the role of the reading skill, the frequency of teaching it in EFL classes. Besides,

the various techniques and strategies in teaching reading and the difficulties EFL teachers encounter while teaching reading skills are explored.

**Question 5: How long have you been teaching reading skills?**

- Less than five years  5 to 10 years  More than ten years



**Figure 4.5 Teaching Experience of the Reading Skill**

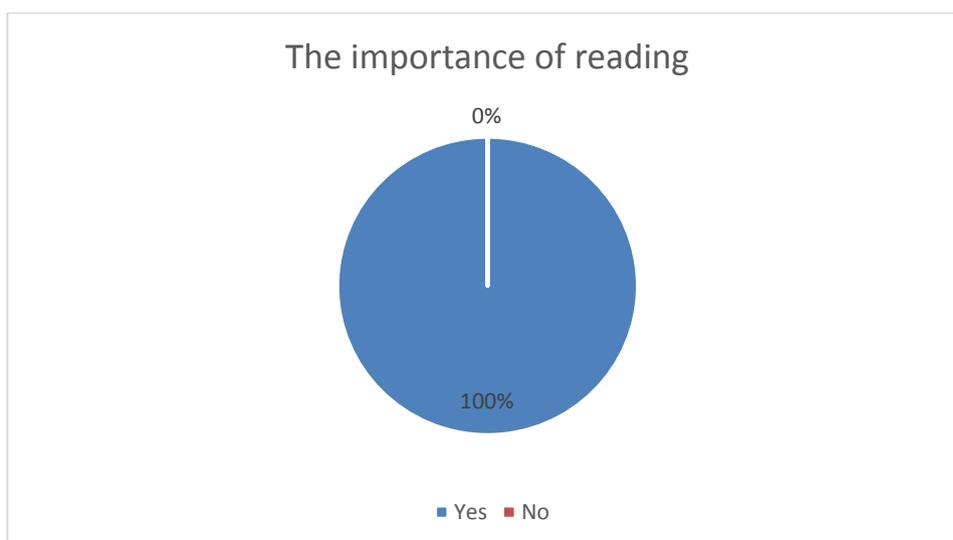
As far as reading skill teaching experience is concerned, the table above shows that most teachers (60% +30%) represent an adequate teaching experience of reading comprehension. And only 10% of the informants reflect short experience in teaching reading skills. I would suggest that novice teachers can cooperate with experienced teachers to enhance the teaching process efficacy.

**Question 6: Do you think that reading is an essential skill for language teaching?**

- Yes  No

Justify, please?

.....



**Figure 4.6 The Importance of the Reading Skill**

To shed further light on how EFL teachers first-year students perceive reading skill in the English Language Department. This question intends to investigate the perspectives of the teachers on the importance of reading skills. According to the results presented in the pie chart above reveals that all the respondent teachers, 100% answered by ‘yes’ that reading is important. The participants explained their standpoints on the importance of reading skill in the EFL context by giving the following reasons:

*“I believe that reading skills help learners to increase their communicative skill as well as their linguistic repertoire.”*

*“I think that reading skill is a stepping stone skill as it is a key to language learning.”*

*“Reading is a means for developing writing, listening, and speaking. For example, it increases learners' vocabulary, inspires new ideas for writing, and enhances reading ability.”*

In brief, these outlined results and justifications imply that EFL teachers are aware of reading skills' relevance and its contribution to other language skills.

**Question 7:** How much instructional time do you devote to reading skill teaching?

- Every day you meet students  Weekly
- Monthly  Each term

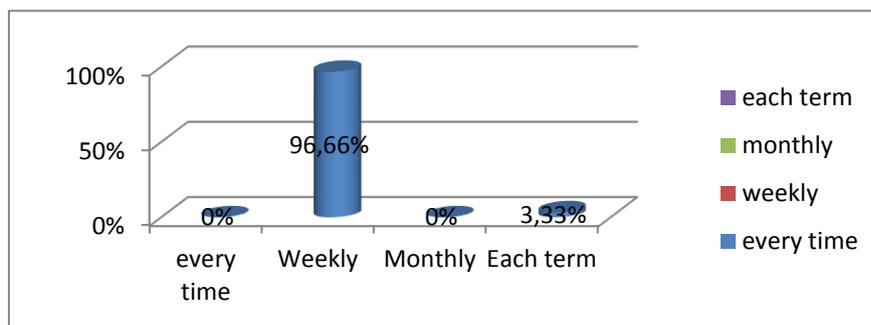


Figure 4.7 The Frequency of Teaching the Reading Skill

EFL teachers may be conscious of the significance of teaching the reading skill in foreign language classes, but I find it relevant to examine how often teachers refer to it in the EFL classroom. For the sake of knowing about the frequency of the in-class discussion of teaching reading comprehension. The teachers were asked to choose between (a) ‘Every day,’ (b) ‘weekly,’ (c) ‘Monthly’ or (d) ‘each term.’ The results outlined in the bar graph above show that more than half of the participants, 96,66 % indicate that reading comprehension is conducted weekly.

In contrast, 3,33 % of teachers claim that the reading skill is introduced to EFL students each term. Therefore, concerning pedagogy, this can imply teachers' respect towards the timing devoted to each module by the ministry of higher education. In this vein, the informants' findings are almost homogeneous, and the other suggestions do not receive any score, such as every time and monthly; no results are noticed for them.

**Question 8:** What kind of techniques and strategies do you use in teaching reading skills?

.....

With a view of gaining insights into the different strategies and techniques that teachers apply to teach the reading skill to EFL students, To find out about these ways, the teachers were asked to elicit the teaching techniques which would best describe how they teach reading.

On account of the teachers’ answers, many of them share the same instructions. The participants use both the silent and reading aloud procedure because it is recognised as the heart of the classroom reading instruction. Furthermore, all the informants emphasise comprehension since it is the main objective of reading using the following procedures as summarized below:

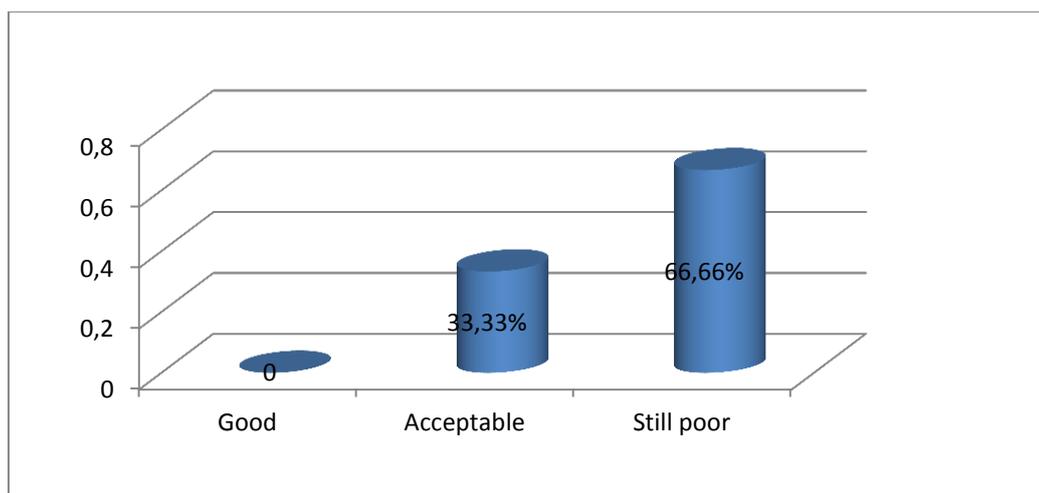
**Teachers' suggestions**

- The attempt of selecting motivational topics which fit students' needs
- Applying both Silent and loud reading
- Emphasising the sense of critical reading
- Emphasising background knowledge activation
- Emphasising vocabulary

**Table 4.2 Teachers' Strategies and Techniques in Teaching Reading**

**Question 9:** How do you evaluate students' level of reading comprehension?

-Good       acceptable       Still low



**Figure 4.8 Students' Reading Comprehension Level**

The investigator in this question inquires teachers to evaluate first-year students' reading ability. In other words, since teachers are in frequent contact with their students, they become familiar with their language skills level. The following scales have been designed for analyzing learners' levels. The first one aims at assessing the level of learners' reading comprehension. The second scale seeks to rank the learners' level of reading comprehension ability. Besides, their assessment varies between 1 and 3; 1 implies "a good level," two refers to "an acceptable level," and three means "still low."

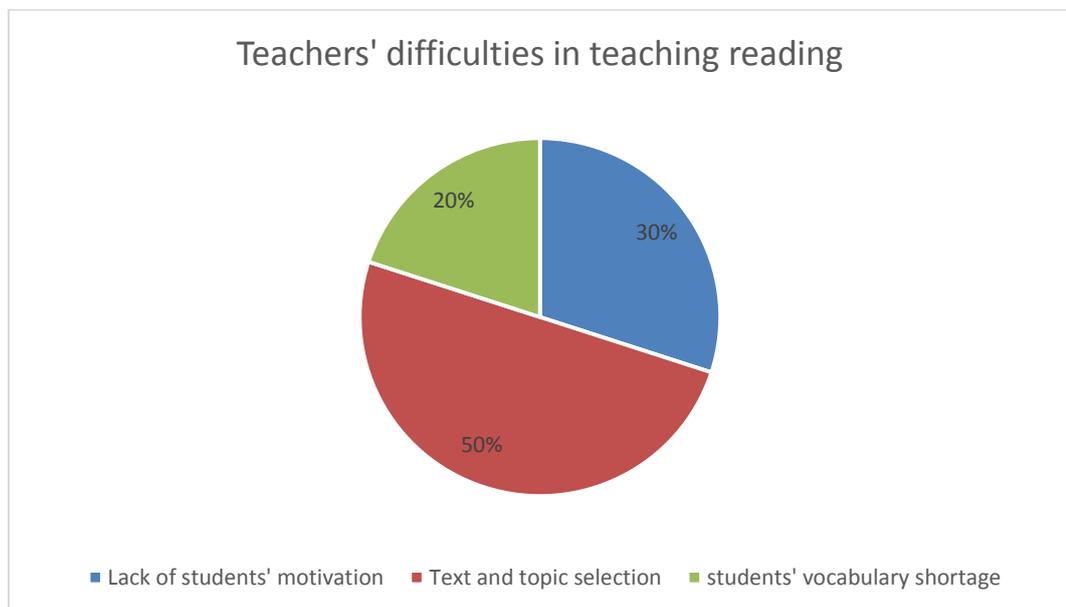
In this regard, results delineated in the bar graph above indicate that none of the teachers mentioned that the students' level is good. 33,33% of the respondents consider students' reading comprehension level acceptable, whereas a significant number of the respondents, 66.66%, demonstrate that students' status is still insufficient. In justifying their students' inadequate level of reading comprehension, the respondents provided the following reasons:

- Lack of interest
- The majority of learners are not motivated to read; they are not interested at all.
- Lack of reading training
- Lack of practice and interest of the student.

**Question 10:** What kind of difficulties do teachers of reading face?

(You can tick more than one)

- -Lack of students' motivation
- -Text and topic selection
- - Students' vocabulary shortage
- Others:.....



**Figure 4.9 Teachers' Difficulties in Teaching Reading**

This question is important to detect the kind of barriers that teachers of reading face. They may not be, or they may be linguistic, structural, or cultural. By analyzing such difficulties, we can search for some strategies to overcome their reading problems. Therefore, in analysing such a questionnaire, the findings showed that teachers' answers illustrate that

50% of them face text and topic selection issues. Furthermore, a considerable number of participants, 30%, think that the lack of students' motivation is another obstacle that teachers of reading encounter. Surely, this hinders students' comprehension and causes their reading failure. Therefore, this issue needs to be targeted by teachers of reading. Student's vocabulary shortage is another issue that should be considered. Moreover, 20% of the teachers indicate that EFL students' insufficient linguistic repertoire is another barrier, which hampers learners from reading effectively. Some participants demonstrate that some students do not employ the appropriate reading strategies to read and understand the intended meaning.

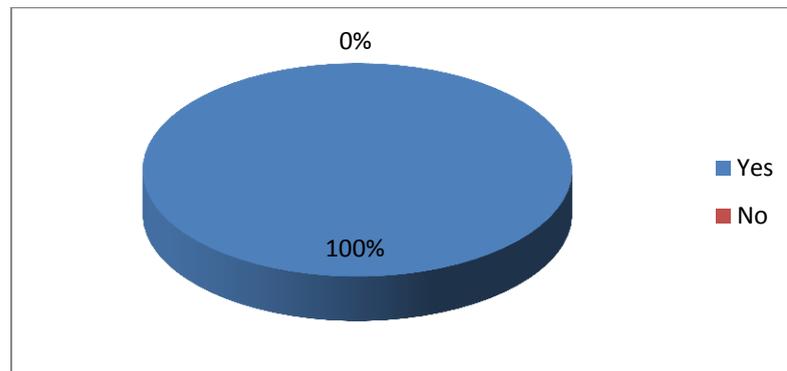
**Question 11:** How does reading relate to the following areas of language?

- Grammar.....
- Vocabulary.....
- Culture.....

By raising such a question, the researcher aims to know teachers' opinions about the link between the reading skill and these language skills, ensuring comprehension effectiveness. Indeed, the participants' responses reveal that many EFL teachers shared the same replies, which indicate the link between the reading skill and language areas. Concerning grammar, students' knowledge of the grammatical system of the language, and the functions of tenses, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, help them understand the text. As for vocabulary, it is clear that reading is one of the active means that exposes them to new words and expressions. For first-year students, texts are rich in unfamiliar items, and the use of a dictionary while reading helps them a lot to learn about the multiple meanings and the roots of each difficult word. As for grammar, students can learn about the forms, uses, and functions of tenses, adjectives, adverbs, articles, prepositions, and all other elements in context.

Furthermore, the participants consider that culture within language teaching can be a useful means to improve cultural competence. We should mention that the majority of teachers share this opinion. Culture can be fostered by involving EFL learners in the target context. Accordingly, the collected data reveals that most EFL teachers consider culture as a relevant aspect of the process of language learning that can be developed through reading, listening, and speaking. Certainly, this occurs through getting ideas, reading expressions related to the target culture, discovering traditions and lifestyles.

**Question 12:** Is cultural background knowledge an important factor in reading comprehension skill enhancement? Yes  No



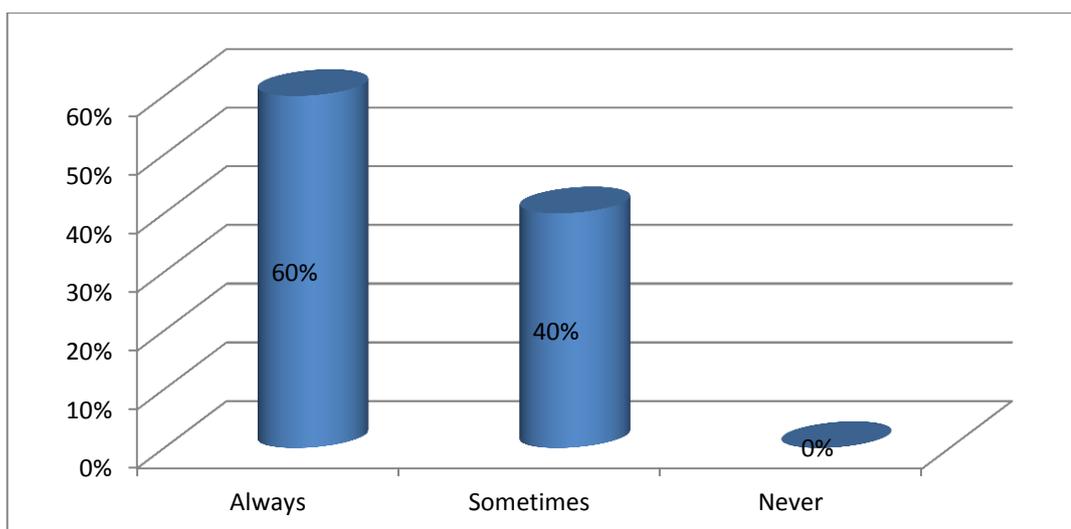
**Figure 4.10 The Importance of Cultural Background Knowledge**

The figure reveals that all the participant teachers believe that background knowledge is an essential reading comprehension process. All teachers share the same perspective, which demonstrates the link between classroom reading and background knowledge. Concerning background knowledge, it is clear that the process of reading exposes learners to both familiar as well as unfamiliar topics. In this vein, teachers are supposed to activate learners' background knowledge before reading to help them read efficiently.

The research finding presented in the table and the pie chart above shows that all the participants (100%) believe that cultural background knowledge is an essential factor in reading skills. Generally, this is the only question that all EFL teachers hold standard views in this questionnaire. All the participants are aware of cultural schemata' relevance and impact on the students' achievement in the reading skill.

**Question 13:** Have you ever directed your students' attention toward the significance of cultural knowledge for successful reading?

Always  Sometimes  Never



**Figure 4.11 Raising Students' Attention towards Cultural Knowledge**

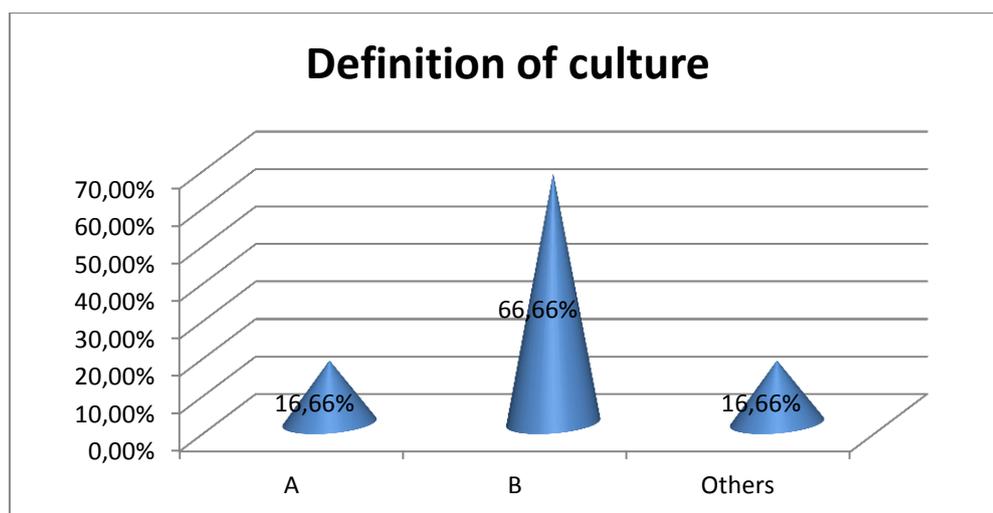
EFL teachers may be aware of the important role of cultural background knowledge in foreign language learning. Still, it is likewise important to check how often they refer to it in the EFL classroom. To know about the frequency of raising students' attention towards cultural schemata, we asked teachers to choose between (a) 'Always,' (b) ' Sometimes,' (c) 'Never.' The data collected from the teachers' questionnaire are represented in a bar graph.

The results in Graph 4.12 show that more than half of the participants (60%) stated that they always direct students' attention toward the significance of cultural knowledge for successful reading. In contrast, the other half of the teachers indicated that they sometimes do that. Among these teachers, none of them refers to the possibility of "never." It seems that teachers are trying to do their best to involve EFL learners in the target culture.

### **Section 3: Teachers' Reflection on Culture in the EFL Context**

**Question 14:** How do you define the word "culture"?

- a) The whole set of artistic achievements and activities: music, theatre, dancing, poetry....
- b) The way of life common to a given group is generally illustrated by a set of norms and customs (the type of food, clothing, and ceremonies) that differentiate one group from another.
- c) Others (please specify).....



**Figure 4.12 The Notion of Culture**

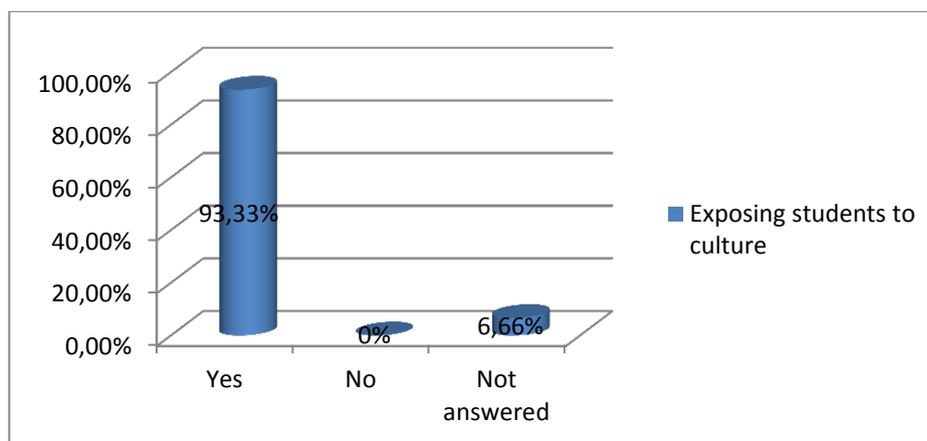
To shed further light on the way EFL teachers perceive the notion of culture in language teaching. The teachers were given some propositions related to culture definition, and they were supposed to choose the one they consider most useful. A closer examination of the results demonstrated in the pie-chart shows that all the participants have multiple views about the notion of culture. In this regard, (66,66%) opt for the suggestion (b) that is provided to them, demonstrating that culture refers to the way of life common to a given group, which is generally illustrated by a set of norms and customs (the type of food, clothing, and ceremonies) that differentiate one from another. Another category of the participants opts for the suggestion (a), which defines culture as the whole set of artistic, achievement, and activities: music, theatre, dancing, poetry....etc. Furthermore, other EFL teachers, far from those suggestions provided to them they present their perspectives about the notion of culture, which are grouped in this table below;

Definitions of the term "culture."
1) Culture is the characteristics and the knowledge of a particular group of people defined by everything from language, social habits, music, art, cuisine, customs, and religion.
2) The sum of customs and personal criteria facilitating community inclusion for individuals.
3) Culture encompasses a complex system of concepts, beliefs, values, behaviours, lifestyles shared by a group of people, besides the artifacts they managed to create and the institutional laws they submit.

4) Culture is the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a specific time.
5) Culture is the system of knowledge shared by a large group of people.

**Table 4.3 Various Definitions of Culture**

**Question 15:** Do you think exposing students to the FL culture improves their cultural competence and reading competence? Yes  No



**Figure 4.13 Exposing Students to the Culture**

It is widely assumed that exposing students to the FL culture does affect learners' cultural competence and, therefore, their reading comprehension, and several scholars have confirmed this belief. The informants are asked to express their point of view about this issue. The gathered data shows that nearly all the participants (93,33%) respond positively to such a question, indicating their firm belief that exposing learners to FL culture helps students enhance their cultural competence and reading competence. However, none of them said no, and only two papers are not answered. Moreover, the participants provide their arguments as they are mentioned below.

*“Language items acquire specific meaning depending on certain cultural implications.”*

*“Language and culture are bounded together.”*

*“We can never understand the real meaning of some expressions and a particular language without having an idea about the culture of that language.”*

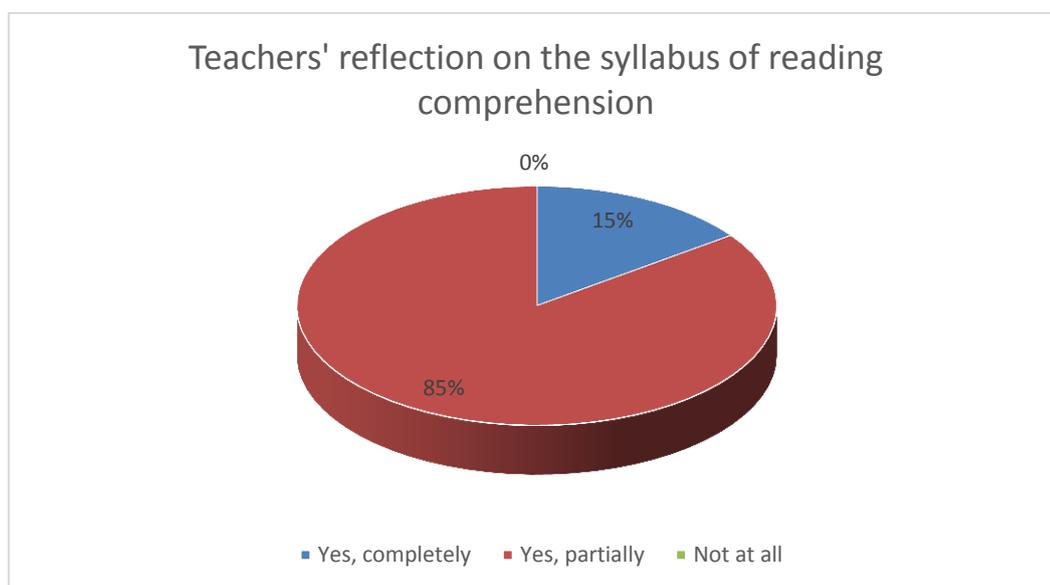
## Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

*“A language is a culture, bearing the history and literature of a given country. It can't be separated.”*

*“Language and culture are intimately related and can never be separated. Therefore, learning a language without knowing its underlying culture is nonsense.”*

**Question 16** Does the syllabus of the first-year reading comprehension subject involve cultural topics that excite students' interest?

Yes, completely       Yes, partially       Not at all



**Figure 4.14 Teachers' Reflection on the Syllabus of Reading Comprehension**

Since our study revolves around the significance of cultural schemata and their impact on reading comprehension, knowing whether reading comprehension offers enough cultural knowledge or not helps get an overview of what kind of content EFL students are dealing with. Furthermore, data regarding the above question were collected by asking students to choose between these propositions (a) ‘Yes, completely,’ (b) ‘partially’ or (c) ‘not at all ’ while answering Q16. The results presented in the pie chart above show that more than half of the participants, 85% asserted that the syllabus of reading comprehension involves only cultural aspects partially. The other remaining options were selected with very little percentages; for example, (a) was chosen by only 15% of teachers while (b) was not ticked.

**Question 17:** Comment in a small paragraph of about five or six lines about the effect of cultural background knowledge on EFL Learners' reading comprehension ability

The last question in the present questionnaire is an open one to allow teachers to express their reflection on the impact of cultural background knowledge. The participants proposed some comments concerning this topic, and all these points are detailed in what follows:

*“To ensure useful cultural issues teaching, EFL teachers should be aware and convinced of the critical impact of the cultural dimension on EFL learning. Teachers should be “culture-passers.” The mastery of any language, either spoken or written, is tightly linked to the cultural issues mastery.”*

*“The possession of the target language's cultural background plays a significant role in Foreign language learning. As far as the reading skill is concerned, the more a learner is culturally competent, the more able he becomes to handle any reading text, and the better scores he attains.”*

*“ There is a considerable effect of cultural background knowledge on EFL learners reading ability; that is, the power of reading of learners who have already cultural background differ from those who lack the cultural experience. The first type of learners are characterized by in-depth reading. They understand the real meaning behind the words, however, in the second type, they get just a superficial reading, and they never understand the real sense.”*

*“ I think teaching language along culture is not an easy task; it requires special training. The reasons that some teachers may focus on cultural skills while ignoring the language. Others may integrate culture in a way that leads the learners to imitate them.”*

*“Foreign language learners should not abandon their own culture for the sake of the target one. We need to integrate culture to help our learners be able to compare, analyse, and mediate between both, then develop critical ability.”*

*“Exposing our learners to culturally unfamiliar readings could be detrimental to their performance.”*

### **4.3.2.2 Interpretation of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire is administered to EFL teachers to detect the significant challenges and constraints that hamper learners in reading cultural-based content materials. In

connection with the first hypothesis, it has been assumed that cultural familiarity might have a considerable impact on learners' comprehension and interpretation of meaning related to the target culture while underestimating its vital role in developing their students' intercultural skills. The obtained results from the questionnaire prove the existence of some challenges.

First, most teachers have satisfactory teaching experience to reach their students' learning outcomes. That is to say; they are aware of the importance of cultural background knowledge in teaching language skills. However, practically speaking, it seems that this awareness is manifested in introducing some cultural topics. For instance, their response to section four (Q 15, Q16), for example, proves this fact. When they are asked about their opinions towards exposing EFL learners to the target language culture, most of the teachers said yes, arguing that language and culture are intimately related and can never be separated. Therefore, learning a language without knowing its underlying culture is nonsense.

Moreover, when teachers are asked about EFL classes' cultural aspects, most of them admit that they partially talk about the target language culture. The data collected from the teachers' questionnaire recommend that no teacher claimed against the idea that EFL teachers should refer to the target language culture(s) in their teaching practices. It means that all of them think that teaching culture is as essential as teaching a foreign language.

A glance at the previous results, precisely Q14, makes us realise that some teachers compete with themselves in that they all contemplate culture as a crucial component in foreign language context (Q14). Most teachers in Q13 expressed that exposing students to the FL culture affects learners' cultural competence and, therefore, their reading comprehension. The results of Q14 demonstrate that cultural-related issues are partially discussed by the majority of teachers in their lectures.

The greatest outstanding point here is why most of the teachers who took part in answering the questionnaire do not often involve culture in their classes. According to the researcher, this incompatibility can be explained by some of the obstacles that can hamper reading comprehension teachers. In this light, the reading comprehension subject's time is restricted to only one hour and a half per week. This amount appears to be far from being enough for such a subject that can be widely invested in teaching both language and culture. In addition to time constraints, the students' low level, the scheduled examinations, and mark-oriented goal in teachers and learners' mentalities may be the most pertinent troubles that

clarify why these teachers disregarded culture in the EFL context. However, they acknowledged the significance and necessity of foreign culture teaching in EFL classes.

Beneath this situation, covering all the student's needs can be demanding; if to say incredible, teachers sometimes find difficulties in keeping learners on task as they work in pairs or groups due to the large number of students who lack motivation. The outnumbering of students cause a lack of motivation. The fact of teaching any subject in a classroom that consists of 50 to 60 students, the following circumstances may occur:

- Teachers will not be able to work with a large number of students, and they may find themselves obliged to use traditional teaching method;
- Disciplinary problem and noisy class
- Lack of teacher-student interaction.

Generally, large classrooms create a lot of issues and necessitate more effort to meet the lesson objective.

#### **4.4 Classroom Observation Analysis**

As far as this research study is concerned, the researcher carried out two sessions of observation. The previous table (p. 109) illustrates the observed elements and the collected data. It exhibits what the researcher observed during the classroom observation period. Using classroom observation, the researcher tried to analyse the reading instruction, the types of reading texts presented to the student, and the kind of pre-reading tasks used by teachers to activate learners' background knowledge. Also, the difficulties and barriers that students encounter during the reading process.

In the classroom, the teacher gave his students handouts, including short text and reading activities. Furthermore, teachers were observed during their reading lessons to figure out what procedures they use to activate their students' prior knowledge. According to Wallace (1992), one trendy type of pre-reading task is brainstorming. It may take the form of giving the class a particular keyword or key concept, or it may be a newspaper headline or book title. Students are then invited to call out words and ideas they associate with the teacher's keyword or terms. In this respect, the results show that the observed teachers initially use brainstorming strategies to activate their students' prior knowledge. In other words, this result is consistent with the literature review, where we found that brainstorming was one of the main strategies that teachers frequently use in their reading classrooms. However, the

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researcher has noticed that one of the teachers does not use brainstorming efficiently. He does not spend much time eliciting precise information about the topic by asking questions or using the title to introduce the reading text. The second most commonly used step is EFL students' involvement in a discussion about the topic raised. That is to say, allowing learners to take part in a debate can boost their self-confidence and encourage them to develop the cognitive skills for generating ideas and enhancing their intellectual knowledge. Another remarkable fact is that teachers during the reading course require EFL students to relate textual information to their personal experiences and background knowledge to process data and read effectively. Furthermore, the teachers used different texts with different questions, activities, and instructions that took the following forms:

- Scan and skim over the text to answer the following questions
- Read the text carefully and answer the following questions.
- Read carefully the sentences below and guess the appropriate meaning. (guessing).
- Read and answer the following questions using your own words.

These activities reveal that teachers aim at assessing the students' comprehension of the reading text presented to them. In this respect, students can increase their understanding by answering comprehension questions via reading, skimming over the text, and scanning it.

Concerning the practical obstacles that learners face during reading comprehension, they lack vocabulary knowledge, syntactic competence, and insufficient background knowledge. In this context, all these barriers hamper learners from reaching the intended level of appropriate comprehension. On the one hand, I have noticed that most EFL students are accustomed to relying heavily on dictionaries when dealing with unfamiliar words during the task of reading. Consequently, learners' reading speed is plodding and may lead to poor comprehension. It is even evident through their oral and written answers to the reading tasks and questions. On the other hand, teachers' attention is usually based on the content they are supposed to teach and the amount of information to be delivered, but not on recognizing students' background knowledge and activating it due to time constraints.

Also, first-year students are outnumbered, which can cause a pedagogical obstacle to both teachers and learners. In this account, efficient reading instruction requires an appropriate context with a fair number of students to allow all learners to participate in the lesson. It provides them with the right to read aloud, raise questions for discussion, get involved in interactions with the teacher, and give ideas. Also, motivation is an essential factor in the

process of language learning and teaching. In this path, some of the observed participants do not show interest in the course.

#### **4.5.1 The Analysis of the Learners' Reading Comprehension of "Why people get tattoos?"**

This text, entitled "why people get tattoos?" presents information on the various reasons behind getting a tattoo in North America. The text entails cultural information to purvey an image of tattoos by youth, referring to peer pressure, media influence, and personal expression as the most common reasons for wearing tattoos. In this text, each reason is explained in detail to help the readers understand the nature of having a tattoo. The text portrays the story of Jack getting a tattoo. Furthermore, the questions that follow this text require answers that would lead students to know more about North America's tattoos.

It is widely recognised that wearing a tattoo is practised in every society for several reasons and cultural implications across cultures. For instance, in Egypt, tattoos were commonly found on women, usually showing their social status or on people who were being punished. In Japan, men were tattooed as a punishment for committing a crime. Another perspective of using a tattoo in the Algerian society dates back to the elder generation of women who received their tattoos mainly from travelling female gypsies called "adasiya." At that time, men desired women with tattoos. Traditional facial tattoos served as markers of beauty. Each society has a particular perspective toward tattoos. In the present text, tattoos can be used to belong to a specific group or a sign of fashion and status value. Furthermore, young people in American societies tend to wear tattoos to express their artistic nature, beliefs, or feelings. Although EFL learners are familiar with tattoos because of their Algerian culture, the researcher presents this text to raise their cultural awareness and provide them with essential data about tattoos in American society.

In this respect, the following tables and graphs represent the informants' findings of the various dimensions of their reading comprehension of "why people get tattoos?". The table reports the participants about their reading comprehension ability and cultural understanding during the three reading comprehension stages. In the pre-reading step, the researcher prepares learners for the topic in a set of questions that took the following form:

- Do you like tattoos? Why, why not?
- Do you have a tattoo?

- Do you know anybody who has a tattoo? Describe it.
- What is your perspective about tattoos? Do you find them attractive, ugly?
- Why do people have tattoos done?

In the pre-reading task, the participants of the experimental group expressed their opinions about tattoos freely. As a response to questions two and three, most of them said that they like tattoos to express their beliefs, feelings, and fashion. One of the participants indicates that if she is allowed to wear a tattoo, she will put a butterfly sign on her body. In addition to that, all the participants revealed that they do not have any tattoos on their bodies. In this case, the majority of EFL students like to have a tattoo on their bodies. However, they are not allowed by their religion. Indeed, this was the ultimate obstacle for EFL respondents to wear a tattoo. On the other hand, most of the participants (girls) demonstrate that they use a non-permanent form of tattooing called (Henna) to practice, such as in marriage ceremonies.

In this vein, wearing a tattoo is raised, but this time is more particular to the learners' belief. Thus, the respondents belonging to the experimental group expressed their opinions differently as well as vividly. The majority of their answers reveal that they believe that tattooing is not only found in American society; it also exists in their community. Despite the alleged religious prohibition, tattoos are common among Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and some Maghreb countries. Moreover, most of the respondents believe that “*tattooing is a sin because it is changing the creation of God.*”. Another participant states that “*the fact of doing a tattoo is a sign of imitating non-Muslims.*” Also, one of the respondents claims, “*tattoo is a symbol of imitating "Kuffar" because only non-believers adorn themselves this way.*”

Concerning learners' reactions to this question, we notice a firm rejection of the act of wearing a tattoo. Few participants consider tattooing something good to decorate their bodies with and express their beliefs freely because they are free to do what they like and want with their bodies. As stated by one of the students, “*I feel free to do whatever I enjoy with my body.*” Another perspective expressed by the respondent is that “*wearing a tattoo causes many diseases.*” So, another category of students considers it as something dangerous and not suitable for their health. By contrast, students' answers belonging to the control group showed a sign of being too passive and no sign of enthusiasm, unlike the first group. They showed limited involvement through these statements: “*tattoos are banned in our religion.*” Also,

another student said, "I have seen somebody wearing a tattoo which contains an image of Allah and Mohammed."

3) Do you know anybody who has a tattoo? Describe it

As a response to this question, most participants stated that many people wear tattoos regarding several myths and beliefs. They described their grandmothers' tattoos as a symbol of the sun, placed on the cheek. Also, other signs like a chain. Another participant refers to his foreign friend Allen from America, who has a musical note tattoo, and he is studying music technology.

4) What is your perspective about tattoos? Do you find them attractive, ugly...etc.?

Based on this question, EFL participants revealed that visible tattoos are rarely widely accepted in Algerian society, unlike other institutions. Besides, each student has his vision of tattoos. A category of them (boys and girls) find tattoos as something attractive that can be used to decorate their bodies. However, other participants find it ugly and consider tattooed people as risk-takers, promiscuous, heavy drinkers. According to students' responses, we see two different views (positive and negative perspectives).

5) Why do people have tattoos done?

The respondents react towards this question, referring to several reasons such as holding the attention of others, personal freedom like drawing the initial letter of their beloved one. There are other reasons like self-expression, visual display of political or religious affiliation.

#### **4.5.1.1 Descriptive Statistics**

Tables 4 and 5 show the distribution of data and their frequencies of the while-reading task and post-reading task among control and experimental groups.

Task2 N° Q	EXPG		CG	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	20	0	20	0
3	20	0	20	0
4	20	0	20	0
5	20	0	19	1
6	19	1	18	2
7	18	2	16	4
8	17	3	16	4
9	15	5	12	8
10	13	7	12	8
Mean	18,20	1,80	17,30	2,70
Std,Dev	2,49	2,49	3,20	3,20

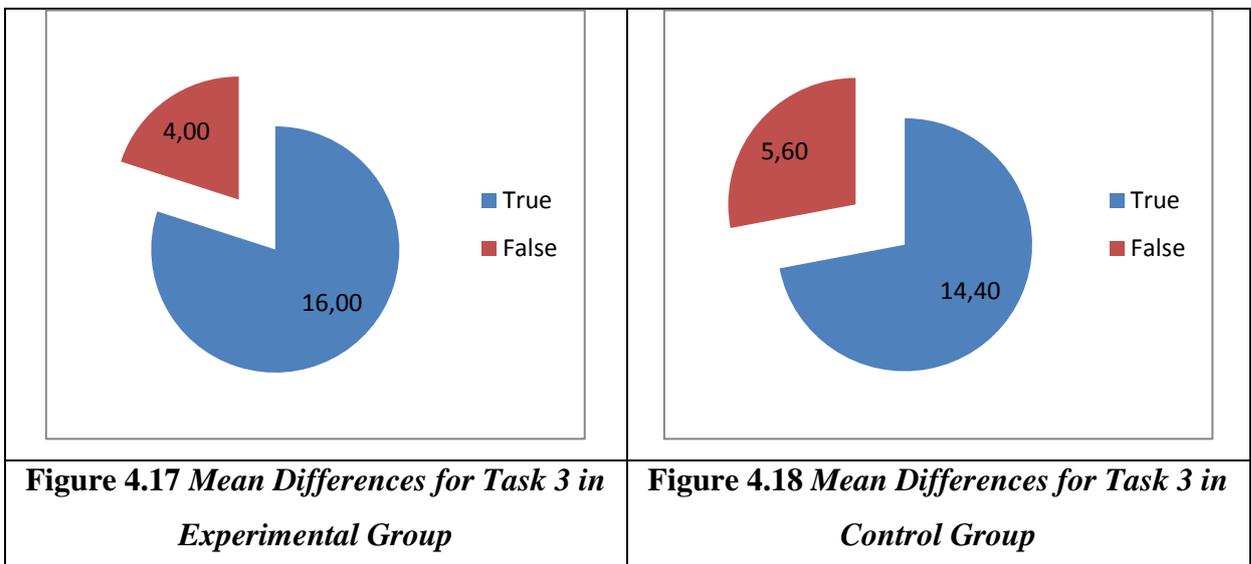
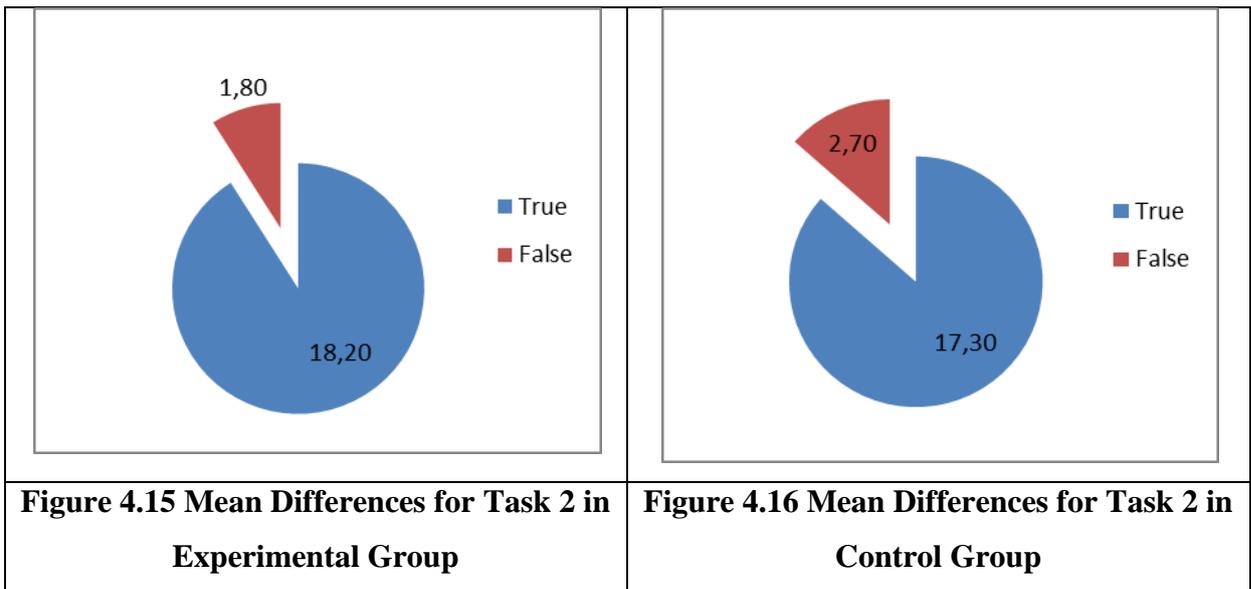
**Table 4. 4**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the while-reading task**

Task3 N° Q	EXPG1		CG2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	20	0	20	0
3	19	1	19	1
4	19	1	19	1
5	17	3	16	4
6	17	3	16	4
7	15	5	9	11
8	15	5	9	11
9	9	11	8	12
10	9	11	8	12
Mean	16,00	4,00	14,40	5,60
Std,Dev	4,11	4,11	5,27	5,27

**Table 4. 5**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the while-reading task**

The participants' while-reading task scores were analysed using SPSS to see whether there were differences among the experimental and control groups according to their gained scores. After the results of SPSS revealed that there were differences across the results.

Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate descriptive statistics giving the mean scores gained by each treatment group included in the study. As seen in the table, the experimental group had a higher mean score than control group regarding text of tattoos in the while-tasks (experimental mean = 18,20, control mean = 17,30 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 1,80 , control mean = 2,70). Furthermore, in the third while- reading task (experimental mean =16,00, control mean = 14,40 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 4,00 , control mean = 5,60). It is clear from the illustrative tables that the means of experimental group participants who received a pre-reading task outscored the highest mean scores. However, the participants who read the text without the pre-reading task scored lower results. Although the students had good background knowledge about tattoos, schema-based activities improved their comprehension of the reading materials, which was reflected in the while-reading tasks. This result provides an affirmative answer to support the claim that schema activation can enhance comprehension ability among EFL learners. Figures 15, 16, 17, and 18 show the charts based on the Tables above results.

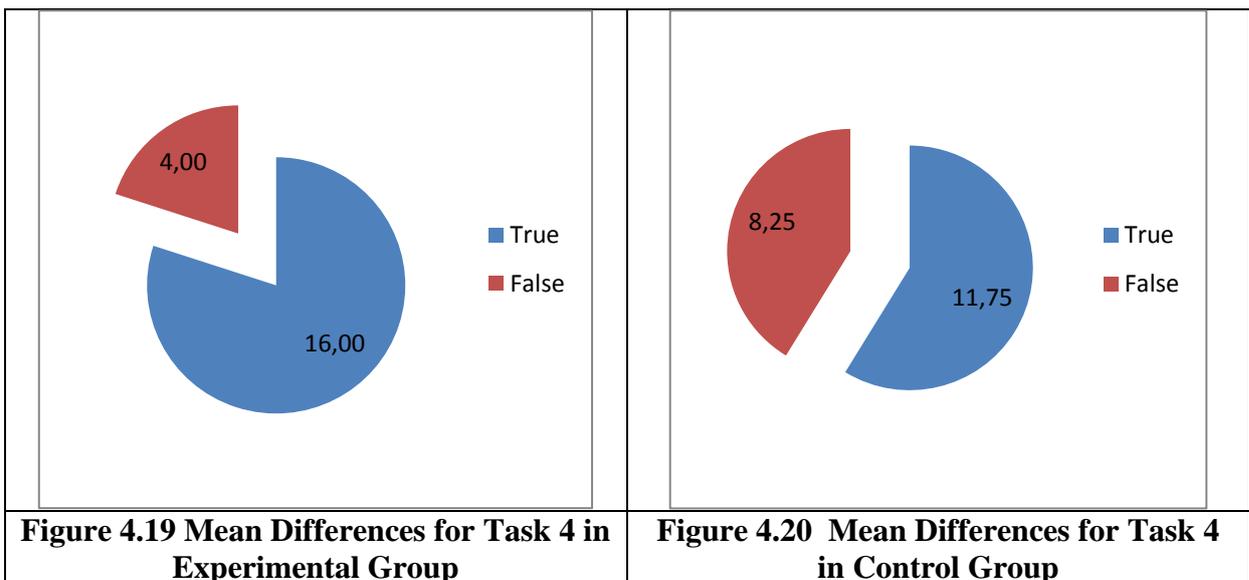


Task4 N° Q	EXPG1		CG2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	19	1	14	6
3	14	6	10	10
4	11	9	3	17
Mean	16,00	4,00	11,75	8,25
Std,Dev	4,24	4,24	7,14	7,14

**Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the post-reading task**

As the data in Table 4.6 shows, the experimental group's mean score on the post-reading task was 16.00 and 4.00. Most of the students' scores fell between 11.57 and 8.25 in the post-reading task in the control group. This table indicates statistically significant differences between groups. The results point out that the mean values of the treatment groups gained in the study are not the same.

Based on the post-reading task results, there appears a significant difference between the control and experimental groups. The statistical information showed evidence that activating learners' cultural schemata via pre-reading activity instruction was successful. One can notice from the above answers that the experimental group's successful performance in the post-reading questions indicates that the participants benefited enormously from pre-reading instruction and cultural awareness reading instruction in developing their reading comprehension.



The present study was meant to investigate the effect of cultural schemata on EFL students' reading comprehension ability. In general, the results indicate that readers' cultural background knowledge plays a significant role in their comprehension of culturally-loaded texts. Readers are estimated to reach the writer's intended meaning by linking prerequisite knowledge with what they read (Nuttall, 1998; Anderson, 1999; Alderson, 2000; Grabe and Stoller, 2002). The results of the current study revealed similar results to the ones mentioned in the review of Alderson (2000), Alptekin (2006). They emphasised that background knowledge has a positive influence on the process of reading comprehension ability. The difference between the control and experimental groups' performances in comprehension proposed a strong probability that the students whose background knowledge of the reading text is activated, EFL learners can easily understand the text's content. The findings can be interpreted based on the following reasoning.

One assumed reason could be that the pre-reading task enables experimental group readers to activate their suitable schemata more efficiently than the control group readers. To put it otherwise, the experimental group participants could activate their schemata concerning the text's content more successfully. In comparison to the control group because the culture-specific textual and contextual cues that reflected the text's culture were explained in the step of schema activation received by experimental groups, which enhances their comprehension of the text.

Additional support for the outcomes of the study derives from Stanovich's (2000) interactive compensatory model. The experimental group who received a pre-reading task could likely recompense for the absence of cultural familiarity and possible vocabulary deficiencies by relying on their prior knowledge to deduce the meaning of the unknown words or expressions. This claim is supported by Pulido's (2004, 2007) empirical research, which stated that readers' background knowledge and their cultural background knowledge could enable lexical inferencing during reading.

#### **4.5.2 The Analysis of the Learners' Reading Comprehension of "Bonfire Night."**

The second text is about the celebration of Bonfire Night across the UK. It supplies the participants with the reason behind this yearly celebration. By reading this text, the participants can discover unfamiliar aspects related to this celebration as well as symbolic

## ***Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings***

signification such as "Queen Elizabeth," "Roman Catholics," "King James." In this regard, Bonfire Night or Guy Fawkes is an unforgettable occasion among the United Kingdom citizens.

### **Task 1: Guess the meaning of the following words**

- blow up
- cellars
- bonfire
- execution
- fireworks
- gunpowder
- parliament

In the pre-reading step, the researcher used a semantic mapping task to provide the students with a keyword or key concept. Then, students are encouraged to call out words and ideas they individually connect with the keyword or terms provided by the teacher. The purpose of the instructor in the EG is to stimulate students' background knowledge about the topic. In this regard, only two students were familiar with the event of Bonfire Night. The results achieved by the participants in both groups were not similar. In other words, the EG participants could deduce the relationship between the terms given to them and the targeted event.

In contrast, the participants in the CG didn't receive any treatment. Thus, they failed to associate words with their appropriate event. It is one reason that makes the majority of our EFL students have a limited understanding of the text's content. In this light, if learners are not supplied with a pre-reading task, their performance in the reading skill will be affected. Here are patterns of the answers provided by learners in both groups:

<b>EG</b>	<b>CG</b>
Every year, a celebration of Guy Fawkes night or Bonfire night on 5 <sup>th</sup> November across the UK.  The anniversary of the Gunpowder plot.  Rebellion  British traditional event	Celebration of the new year  A bonfire is a fire that is made outdoors for celebration.  Gunpowder: explosive substance  Parliament: group of people make laws  Execution of Larbi ben Mhidi

**Table 4.7 Students' Responses of Experimental and Control group**

**4.5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics**

Tables 8, 9, and 10 show the distribution of data and their frequencies of the while-reading task and post-reading task among control and experimental groups.

Task2 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	20	0	20	0
3	20	0	20	0
4	19	1	16	4
5	18	2	10	10
6	13	7	4	16
Mean	18.33	1.67	15.00	5.00
Std,Dev	2.73	2.73	6.66	6.66

**Table 4.8 Descriptive statistics of the experimental and control group**

Task3 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	20	0	20	0
3	20	0	20	0
4	20	0	20	0
5	20	0	19	1
6	18	2	12	8
7	14	6	11	9
Mean	18.86	1.14	17.43	2.57
Std,Dev	2.27	2.27	4.08	4.08

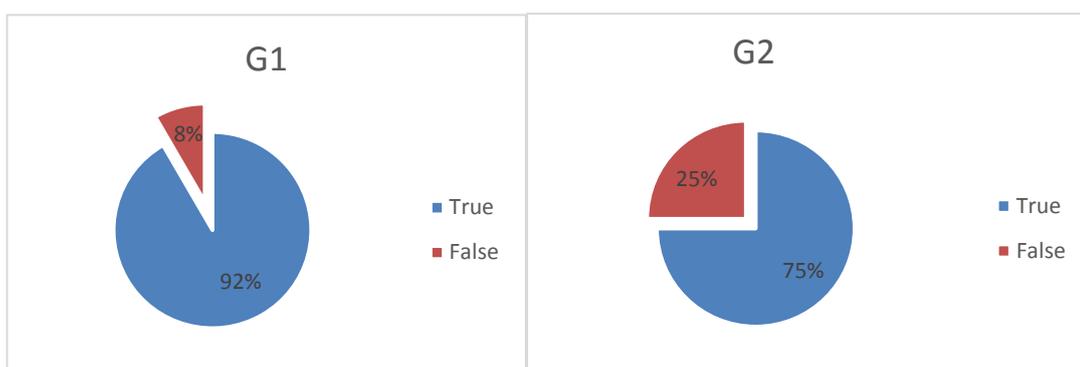
**Table 4.9 Descriptive statistics of the experimental and control group**

The participants' while-reading task scores were analysed using SPSS to see whether there were differences among the experimental and control groups according to their gained scores. After the results of SPSS revealed that there were differences across students' performance. Table 8 and 9 demonstrates descriptive statistics giving the mean scores gained by each treatment group included in the study. Based on the table above results, we deduce that many participants belonging to the experimental group performed well in this activity.

In this respect, (experimental mean = 18,33, control mean = 15,00 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 1,67 , control mean = 5,00). Furthermore, in the third while- reading task (experimental mean =16,00, control mean = 14,40 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 1,14 , control mean = 2,57). It is clear from the illustrative tables that the means of experimental group participants who received a pre-reading task outsourced the highest mean scores, and the participants' results demonstrate their ability to read the text provided to them. It seems that students were involved in the process of reading. However, the participants who read the text without the pre-reading task scored lower results. In this vein, in examining the learner's ability to answer the multiple-

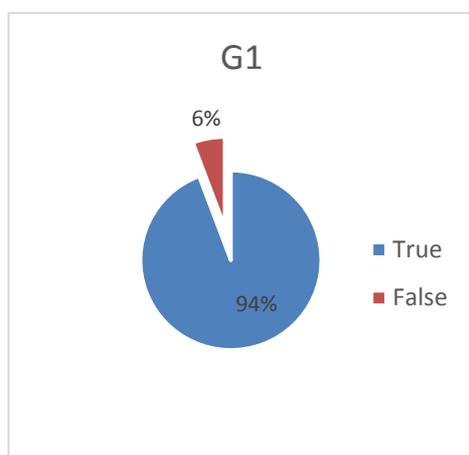
choice questions differentially in the control group, we have recognized different results. In this path, a considerable number of EFL learners failed to answer all the six questions appropriately; each one committed at least one or two wrong answers. So, there was a significant difference between students' performance in both groups due to the insufficient involvement and interaction with the reading text to generate the appropriate answer.

As far as learners' background knowledge is significantly activated, they understand the text better and react quite appropriately toward the majority of the questions raised. Indeed, the findings showed that readers find answers to the questions relying on their knowledge of the world, the structures, and language patterns to interact with the text and understand appropriately. On the other hand, a category of EFL students belonging to the CG displayed inadequate performance in answering comprehension questions. Figures 21, 22, 23, and 24 show the charts based on the Tables above results.

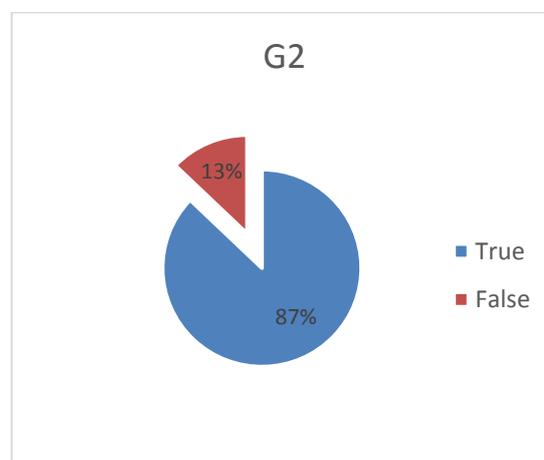


**Figure 4. 21 Mean Differences for Task 2 in the Experimental Group**

**Figure 4.22 Mean Differences for Task 2 in the Control group**



**Figure 4.23 Mean Differences for Task 3 in the Experimental Group**

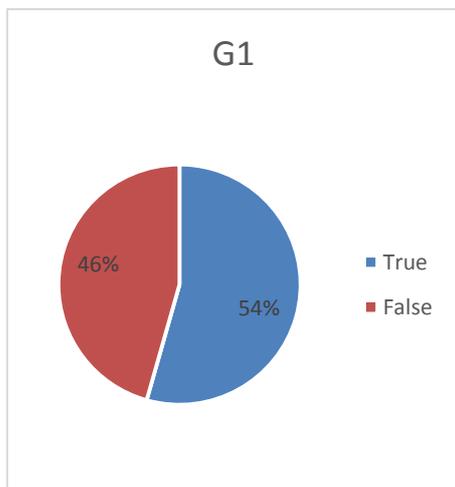


**Figure 4.24 Mean Differences for Task 3 in the Control Group**

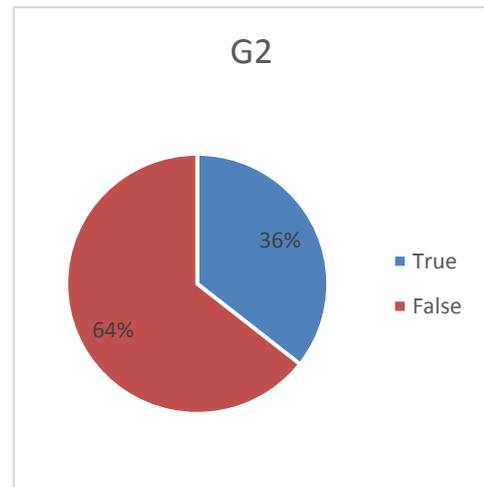
Task4 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	19	1	18	2
2	18	2	10	10
3	16	4	9	11
4	12	8	7	13
5	11	9	5	15
6	8	12	5	15
7	3	17	2	18
8	0	20	1	19
Mean	10.88	9.13	7.13	12.88
Std,Dev	6.90	6.90	5.38	5.38

**Table 4.10 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups in Task 4**

As you can see in the descriptive part of these tables, the results achieved by EFL learners in the experimental group were nearly similar to the control group. None of the participants succeeded in determining the relevant synonym and opposite of each word. That is to say; the participants were unable to provide correct answers; they committed several mistakes. On the other hand, many CG participants failed to find suitable lexical items and opposites through their exposure to the text. Indeed, only one participant succeeded in finding accurate answers. One can notice from the findings obtained from both groups that there is no apparent distinction in reading ability at this task level. The figures below demonstrate the participants' performance in this task.



**Figure 4.25 Mean Differences for Task 4 in the Experimental Group**



**Figure 4.26 Mean Differences for Task 4 in the control group**

### **Post-reading Task**

**Do you have a similar event in your native culture? If yes, describe it.**

The present question represents the Post-reading phase that encourages students to reflect upon what has been read and make connections between the text and their prior knowledge and experiences. Thus, students' answers differ from one person to another according to their understanding of the text. The majority of EFL students belonging to the EG group provided common answers, below are samples of the responses:

*“There is a lot of similar event in my native culture. For example, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1954; It is the most significant event in Algeria, known as the “Algerian revolution” because this event was the first step of Algerians to get their freedom.”*

*“Yes, we have a similar event in our native culture every year on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. Algerian people celebrate the day of independence since Algerian people get their freedom on 5 July 1962.”*

*“Yes, we have a similar event in my native culture; we celebrate it on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July because it is a symbolic day for us.”*

*“Each year, the Algerian people celebrate the independence of Algeria on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. On this day, people remembered the sacrifices of heroes. They fought the French colonization, which lasted several years.”*

EFL participants belonging to CG answered differently from EG due to their inadequate background knowledge, as is illustrated below. A considerable number of the participants frequently used this answer “no, we don't have a similar event in our native culture.” Another one said, “*In 12<sup>th</sup> Rabia al Awal our prophet Mohamed was born. He came to us to guide the road of faith, and the real peace of mind and mercy that should humanity lives in*”.

To what concerns the readers' comprehension, it is based on their awareness of Bonfire night's cultural cues. The latter is manifested in their understanding of the concepts of the event. In analysing the results of the questions, the informants showed their full comprehension of these elements. The majority of the experimental group participants could interpret the intended meaning correctly. In the same light, the participants' style in answering the questions seemed to be quite acceptable. However, we noticed vocabulary mistakes in students' answers, such as the Algerian revolution instead of the Algerian revolution. Some

grammatical errors have been detected, i.e., many students seem to face some difficulties in writing appropriate sentences. In short, According to the post-reading task, results revealed that there were significant differences between the control group and the experimental group. The responses showed evidence that raising learners' cultural awareness and activating their background knowledge powerfully via a pre-reading task is a determinant factor in ensuring the understandable reading process.

### **4.5.3 The Analysis of the Learners' Reading Comprehension of "Drinking Alcohol."**

The third text is about drinking alcohol in Britain. It informs EFL learners about the habits and the culture of drinking in such a society. Furthermore, this text illustrates how much British people love alcohol and their manners to celebrate any social event. So, drinking alcohol is a can't miss component from their traditions and an unavoidable product during their ceremonies. Indeed, this passage demonstrates the importance of Alcohol drinking for British people. However, the one who doesn't drink is considered suspicious, odd, and bland. In other words, he/she will feel marginalised and make fun of those who do not drink for the entire time.

By reading this text, EFL learners can discover unfamiliar aspects of drinking, and reasons will be so clear and different from the Algerian society. The most common reason for drinking is that they consider it as the only way to express themselves freely and saying everything that springs to their minds without obstacles. In another sense, drinking alcohol is a means of psychological relaxation.

#### **Task1:**

- 1) What springs to your mind when you hear these words 'alcohol' 'drinking'?
- 2) Write down all of the different words you associate with the word 'drinking'. Put the words into different categories.

The majority of the participants responded to these questions using various concepts with the researcher's help while activating their background knowledge and raising their cultural awareness toward the topic. Thus, the results obtained from the participants are presented in the table below;

Category of Lexis	Lexis	frequency	Explanation
Positive	Forbidden	10	<p>A significant number of participants believe in the act of drinking as totally something forbidden in the Islamic religion. Thus, the term is reported frequently by EFL learners in their response. On this basis, we deduce that EFL learners pass through a psychological state of defiance and challenge. The student learns the language and the culture of British people that he/she despises and considers as the antithesis of his own.</p> <p>The participants who reject the aspect of alcohol drinking use negative lexis expressing their dissatisfaction with alcohol drinking. They consider it a deviation from norms and challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Furthermore, each term that they state signifies a particular conception. For example, the word "unacceptable" has two accepted implications, neither religious nor societal.</p> <p>The term "unethical" is related to the aspect of education. In other words, if the person is not well educated, he will not commit unethical or inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Some participants described the act of drinking as an enjoyable moment that makes them feel happy. Similarly, the various answers of the respondents represent the reason behind</p>
	Against values and religion	11	
	Inacceptable	4	
	Unethical	12	
	Inappropriate	9	
	Harmful	10	
	Bad attitude	5	
Negative			

Feel happy	4	<p>drinking alcohol. For example, escaping from problems and giving them the courage to express themselves freely.</p> <p>A significant number of the participants reveal their inclusion in the Islamic religion by using such term “we are Muslims,” indicating their ethnicity and dissatisfaction about the act of drinking alcohol.</p>
Enjoying time	3	
Drinking for fun	2	
Fighting problems	3	
Escaping from problems	4	
Addiction	1	
Muslims	12	

**Table 4.11 Frequency of students’ Lexis**

Tables 12, 13, and 14 show the distribution of data and their frequencies of the while-reading task and post-reading task among control and experimental groups.

Task2 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	18	2	19	1
3	17	3	16	4
4	15	5	10	10
5	9	11	5	15
6	8	12	4	16
Mean	14.50	5.50	12.33	7.67
Std,Dev	4.93	4.93	7.00	7.00

**Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the While-reading Task**

Task3 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	19	1	20	0
3	19	1	19	1
4	19	1	17	3
5	17	3	13	7
6	15	5	9	11
7	9	11	6	14
8	7	13	5	15
Mean	15.63	4.38	13.63	6.38
Std,Dev	4.98	4.98	6.28	6.28

**Table 4.13 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Groups on the While-reading Task**

Table 12 and 13 demonstrates descriptive statistics giving the mean scores gained by each treatment group included in the study. The experimental group results differ from the results of the control group due to the different types of questions regarding the text of Drinking Alcohol in the while-tasks (experimental mean = 14,50, control mean = 12,33 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 5,50, control mean = 7,67).

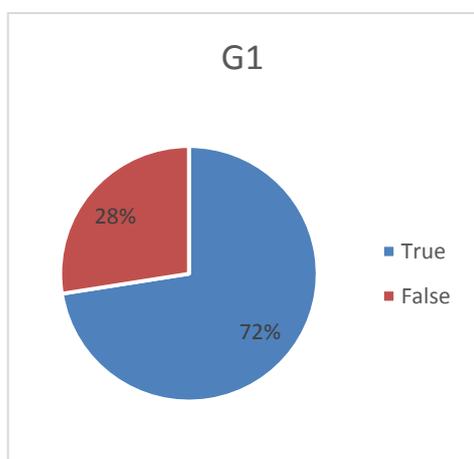
In general, this task's findings showed clearly that students in the experimental group achieved average results. In other words, they were not able to determine accurate and false statements correctly. In this concern, many of the informants face comprehension difficulties. The main obstacle that causes reading failure is that learners do not hold enough vocabulary and background knowledge to understand texts accurately. Moreover, the remarkable fact is the lack of concentration, which is reflected in the obtained results. Only four students answered correctly, and a considerable number of them (16) answered at least 5 or 4 out of 6 questions appropriately. The experimental group's unsatisfactory performance in the task indicates that their answers were spontaneous through the obtained results.

Based on the above results, we come that students' performance in the control group here again showed similar results in determining right and false statements. Only three students succeeded in answering the overall six statements. However, most of them failed

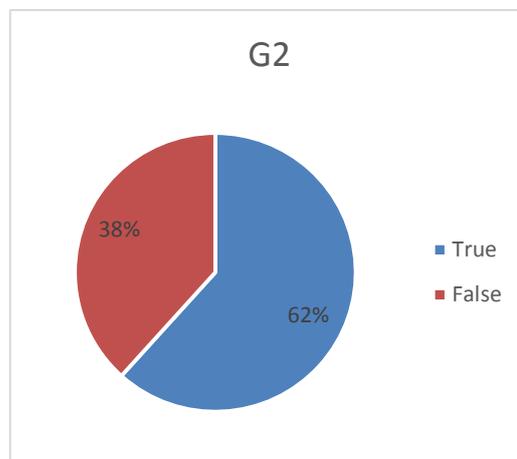
simultaneously varied in their answers from three, four, and five out of six correct answers. So, no improvement or increase in results was noticed.

The statistics shown in Table 4.12 concerning the experimental group demonstrates that ten participants succeeded in finding the appropriate answers. It implies that learners could extract synonyms and opposites of words through their exposure to the text. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is a determinant factor for the success of a reading comprehension activity. In other words, learners' ability to determine the keywords can help them be active meaning-makers. However, the other participants reflected their lack of knowledge in word substance, which results in being unable to process certain information, which is crucial to understanding the whole text.

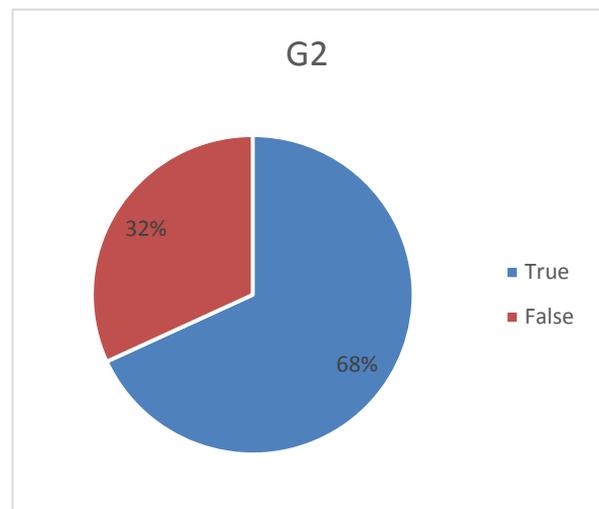
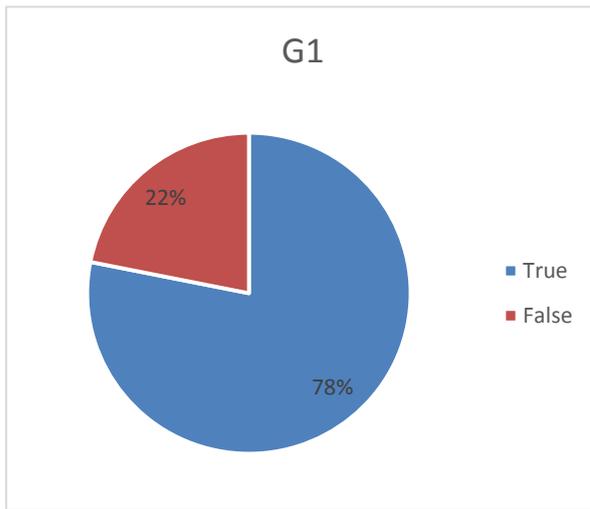
By contrast, the control group's findings demonstrated that only five students answered correctly, implying that the words were familiar to them. However, several participants (15) were unable to identify the overall synonyms and opposites of words due to their insufficient linguistic background knowledge, which can hamper students' comprehension. In this light, figures 27, 28, 29, and 30 show the charts based on the Tables above results.



**Figure 4.27 Mean Differences for Task 2in Experimental Group**



**Figure 4.28 Mean Differences for Task 2in the Control Group**



**Figure 4.29 Mean Differences for Task 3 in The Experimental Group**

**Figure 4.30 Mean Differences for Task 3 in the Control Group**

Table 4. 14 shows data distribution and their frequencies of while-reading tasks among control and experimental groups.

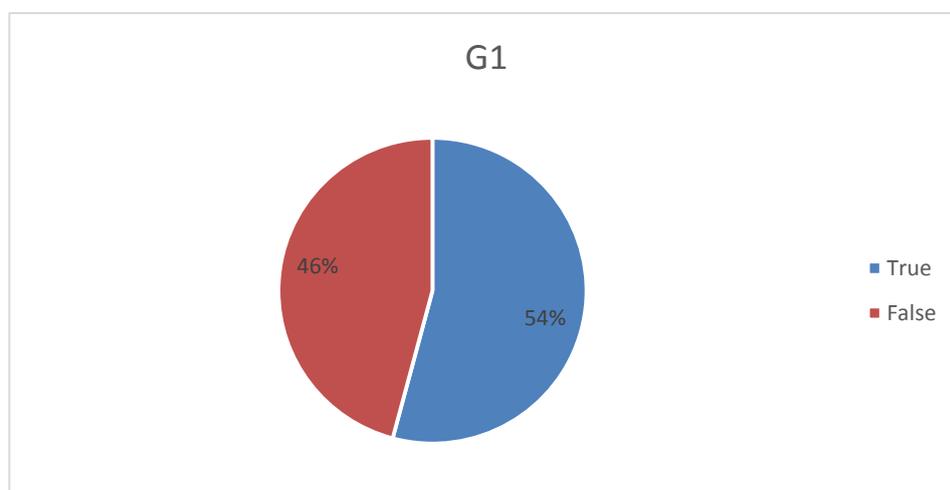
Task 4 N° Q	G1		G2	
	True	False	True	False
1	20	0	20	0
2	19	1	17	3
3	14	6	16	4
4	9	11	11	9
5	3	17	6	14
6	0	20	3	17
Mean	10.83	9.17	12.17	7.83
Std,Dev	8.28	8.28	6.68	6.68

**Table 4. 14 Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Group in Task 4**

Descriptive statistics delineated in the table above demonstrate mean scores gained by each treatment group involved in this task. In this respect, (experimental mean = 10,83, control mean = 12,17 for correct answers), incorrect answers (experimental mean = 9,1 7 , control mean = 7,83). Based on students' results in the experimental group, we come up that a minority of the participants fail to provide accurate answers. Nevertheless, another category of thirteen students (13) performed well and showed their significant interaction with the text due to learners' familiarity with the text topic. Thus, the more learners activate their background knowledge, the more they understand the text and react quite appropriately

toward most of the questions raised. In line with Giles (1987), reading is an extension of thinking, perceiving behaviour. Thus, the findings showed that readers rely on their knowledge of the world and the structures in finding answers for their reading comprehension questions.

On the contrary, half of the CG participants displayed unsatisfactory performance in answering comprehension questions. In other words, the results obtained match with scholars' view (Steffensen Joag-dev and Anderson 1979; Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Barnitz 1986); the significant problem of learners are reading texts in which the cultural background knowledge and assumptions are different from their own. In this regard, when cultural schemata and constructs are missing, reading becomes a time-consuming, laborious and unsatisfactory enterprise. However, the other half of the participants answered the comprehension questions appropriately. Reading comprehension ability differs from one student to another for various reasons such as cognitive ability, motivation, and background knowledge. Accordingly, Vipond (1980) demonstrates that the reader's comprehension of the text implies the reader's ability to construct hypotheses, rules, schemata, and mental models. In brief, the charts below summarise the results achieved by EFL participants.



**Figure 4.31 Mean Differences for Task 4 in the Experimental Group**

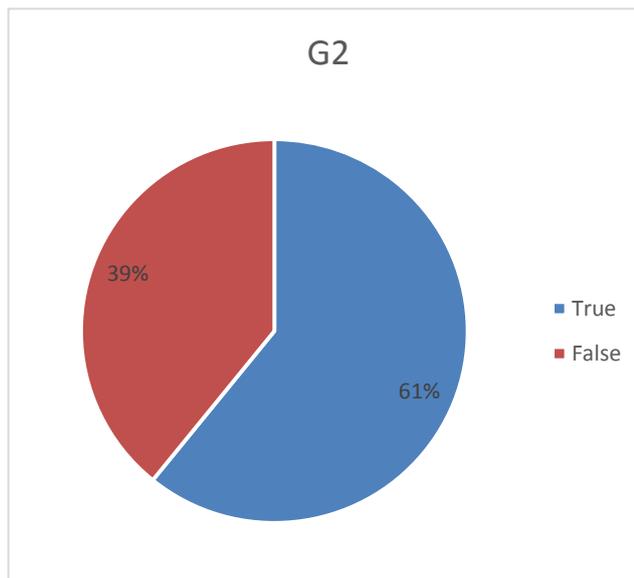


Figure 4.32 Mean Differences for Task 4 in the Control Group

**Post-reading Task 5:**

- a) The text is about what?
- b) Write about the status of alcohol drinking within your country (Islamic society).

Generally, all the participants belonging to both groups achieved homogeneous answers. Students succeeded in grasping the main idea of the text. However, each individual expressed his/her concept differently using their styles and representations of thought. So, students' answers differ due to the amount of knowledge they have grasped, as is illustrated below.

- *The text is about the etiquette of drinking Alcohol in Britain*
- *The text is about aspects of drinking Alcohol in British society*
- *British people and the status of alcohol drinking*
- *The cultural value of Alcohol drinking*
- *The pleasure of Drinking Alcohol*
- *Social events, weekends, and alcohol drinking*

In the second question, many respondents in the EG responded to this question by negative comments revealing their dissatisfaction about the act of drinking. Here are some of the answers stated by them:

*“Drinking alcohol is strongly prohibited by God in Islamic religion because of its bad consequences on the human being as well as the entire society.”*

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Another one also explained why banning Muslims from drinking alcohol by saying, *“In our religion, anything that is harmful is forbidden. Therefore, the Islamic religion forbids its consumption in either small or large quantities. It affects the mind and the body as it clouds the mind and causes illnesses, wastes money as well as destroys individual families and communities”*.

*“I see in our society that there is a strong relationship between alcohol and gambling.”*

*“Although Algeria is an Islamic country, young men do drink alcohol a lot.”*

*“Recently, Algerian teenagers increasingly imitate western people and the celebration of social events with the consumption of a great amount of alcohol and neglecting their religious values.”* Similarly, students belonging to the CG also expressed their opinions towards alcohol drinking within an Islamic society by rejecting this act and consider it disrespectful against the values of religion. To illustrate, here are samples of students' answers:

*“Many people dare to drink alcohol to forget their problems, but this is wrong because reading some verses of the Quran is a helpful factor.”*

*« Our society is unlike the Western and European Societies in which alcohol is traditionally an accepted, unremarkable, and morally neutral element of everyday life. Thus, we should not accept or support the act of drinking. »*

The remarkable thing through these findings is a common belief and taught among all the participants, which can be seen in their strong rejection of drinking alcohol using different expressions or words to reveal their opinions and imposing their religious perspective. It is seen in their answers to post-reading questions where most of them expressed the empathy that exists between the Algerian culture and the British one.

The results obtained from the participants during their performance in the reading comprehension tests revealed that learners' negative beliefs and attitudes toward Western culture significantly impact learners' interpretations and responses to the questions presented to them. There is a tendency that students with positive attitudes perform significantly better than those with negative attitudes. Similar results were reported by Gardner (1980), indicating that attitudes are a significant determinant of foreign language acquisition. They can have profound influences on both individual students and the communities they come from. The researcher concludes that students with appropriate schemata and positive attitudes perform significantly better than other students.

In other words, the results obtained confirmed our assumption that readers' familiarity with a particular topic helps them to recall information and think critically. It is because their background knowledge may be more prosperous than those readers with negative attitudes. The students' responses reaffirmed the significance of two factors involved in reading comprehension: the students' motivation and their exposure to rich background knowledge. The reading comprehension tests also revealed that the highest scores were obtained by those students who were highly motivated and had adequate background knowledge.

### **4.6 Analyses and Interpretation of Reading Comprehension Tests**

The following discussion presents a close analysis of learners' answers about the overall reading comprehension tests. It will encompass language, comprehension of the text, and empathy or tolerance towards the topic.

In analysing student's answers, I can notice that most of them have well comprehended this topic, and they were empathetic towards these topics. However, as for some participants, we have seen some language and grammatical deviations. For example, punctuation mistakes or errors where a comma should be put to give a further explanation for the sentence as: *In our religion'. Besides, '.... anything harmful is forbidden..', when....',* here, the informant should put punctuation in this sentence to clarify the meaning of the sentence; he is supposed to put a comma before stating '*anything harmful is forbidden*' and a full stop after it. In addition to some grammatical mistakes, such as religious influence, which plays, the respondent should not use 'which' since there are no two sentences to be joined.

Furthermore, *jack gets a tattoo*". , in this case, he has to add 's' because it is the present simple. In the fourth question, in Sami's description of the mother, he claims: '.....the British people drinking alcohol....', it is an action that should be put in the present simple as 'the British people drink.' In this light, in some answers to the while-reading task, the informants used two different tenses: the past and the present simple. In this same example, the description necessitates the use of the present simple. I noticed some language mistakes in the second question of the post-reading question. He states: '*Recently, Algerian teenagers increasingly imitate western people and celebrate social events with the consumption of a great amount of alcohol.* Here, the statement is incomplete since it requires action; it may be put as follows: '*Recently, Algerian teenagers increasingly imitate western people in consuming a great amount of alcohol during the celebration of social events.*' Again, in this sentence: '*There is a lot of similar event in my native culture. Here, the informant should use 'there are many 'instead of 'there is a lot of.'* However, by taking these deviations into

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account and the informant's choice and use of vocabulary appropriately, we can say that they did not prevent him from comprehending the story and answering questions appropriately.

Participants' answers involve semantic mistakes. For instance: " *I feel free to do whatever I want with my body,*" in this case, we can notice that the respondent is somehow influenced by his mother tongue (Arabic) in using 'with' rather than 'in' in describing tattoo on the human body. Again, one of the participants claims in the question of the post-reading phase: "*Many people dare to drink alcohol to forget their problems, but this is wrong because reading some verses of the Quran is a helpful factor.*" Here, he wants to say that reading Quran can help people to forget their problems. However, he misinterprets his thought or idea, probably because of his low mastery of the language.

Generally, participants' answers were satisfactory, in that most of the participants were able to reasonably interpret the texts and their themes (tattoos, Bonfire night, and drinking alcohol). Moreover, Students succeeded in making a comparison between their own culture and the target one. In the post-reading part, they shed light on the contemporary Algerian society and the British one concerning their fear of the society's judgments and religious domination. Thus, some of the participants seem to understand appropriately the cultural aspect expressed in these texts. Some of them appeared to be tolerant towards the topic of tattoos. Nevertheless, the lack of vocabulary knowledge, language, and grammatical mistakes or errors, the respondents conveyed their understanding and tolerance towards the cultural aspect expressed in Jack's story about getting a tattoo.

It is important to stress some grammatical and language style deviations. They are manifested in their use of punctuation where it should not be as in: '.....that the women had to assure the housework and it refers to her forget it is better than attending it.' Here, in addition to this sentence's incoherence, we can notice that punctuation is needed to clarify its meaning. In this vein, the respondents seem to make an exact comparison between their native culture and the target one. As mentioned in the second answer of the pre-reading phase: I believe that *tattooing is a sin because it is changing God's creation*, but it is forbidden by our religion (Islam). Another participant states that *the fact of doing a tattoo is a sign of imitating non-Muslims*. Also, one of the respondents claims, "*tattoo is a symbol of imitating "Kuffar" because only non-believers adorn themselves this way.*" It means that such a practice is undoubtedly accepted neither by the informant's culture nor religion (Islam). In other words, they expressed their intolerance towards the target language culture by mentioning the religious and cultural background that allows them neither to make tattoos nor to drink

alcohol. Concerning the tests' findings, I can deduce that both the distant socio-cultural background with the target culture and their vague language mastery prevent them from well understanding and well interpreting the themes appropriately.

In short, the results of the reading comprehension questions revealed their acceptable and correct answers that reflect her satisfactory level of understanding of the three reading texts. As for one of the respondents, despite his language mistakes, Amir interpreted the reading texts correctly. More importantly, despite the cultural distance or unfamiliarity between the Bonfire night event and Amir's cultural schemata, it did not inhibit him from a successful attempt of understanding and interpreting the text appropriately.

Concerning the previous analyses, I can deduce that schema theory is valid in this case. Therefore, this research study's results validate the hypothesis that has been tested for this research work. In other words, the informants' results show that they can comprehend foreign language texts appropriately when the topics are familiar to them or when their prior knowledge is well activated through pre-reading tasks. By admitting that this investigation's informants are first-year students of English, they are presumed to be at an intermediate level in the target language. Accordingly, activating learners' schemata of the texts to be read is vital as they are supposed to master the language, comprehend any foreign language text, and interpret it correctly.

Furthermore, they should be compassionate and tolerant of any foreign text since they are studying EFL. Hence, all these factors allow them to understand foreign language texts correctly. In brief, as it is the example of this study, we can conclude that schema theory is significant in selecting foreign language texts to be taught.

Besides, the participants' findings during their performance in the reading comprehension tests revealed that learners' negative beliefs and attitudes toward Western culture significantly impact learners' interpretations and responses to the questions presented to them. There is a tendency that students with positive attitudes perform significantly better than those with negative attitudes. Similar results were reported by Gardner (1980), indicating that attitudes are a significant determinant of foreign language acquisition. They can have profound influences on both individual students and the communities they come from. The researcher concludes that students with appropriate schemata and positive attitudes perform significantly better than other students.

In conclusion, the results confirmed my assumption that readers' familiarity with a particular topic helps them recall information and think critically. It is because their background knowledge may be more prosperous than those readers with negative attitudes.

The students' responses to the questionnaire reaffirmed the significance of two factors involved in reading comprehension. The highest scores were obtained by those students who were highly motivated and had adequate background knowledge.

#### **4.7 Analysis and Interpretation of Students' Interview**

This sub-section concerns itself with the data analysis and the interpretation of the results attained from the students' interviews. With a view of gaining insights into the way, students go about reading the English language texts provided to them in first-year level classes of the English Language Department, a whole part of the interview was devoted to that. Questions on this part are about the students' perceptions of reading cultural-based content in the EFL classroom and their preferences towards the topics. The potential benefits from reading these texts; and the barriers they encountered in reading texts about the target language culture and their suggestions of reading topics for future implementation in the subject of reading comprehension.

**Q1:** Do you think it is important for EFL students to read about English-speaking countries' cultural matters in their courses?

First, the students who participated in the interview were asked to decide whether they need to include issues about the cultures associated with the FL they learn. The information gathered from the students' interview proposes that no participant is against the idea of learning about foreign language culture. It means that all of them think that learning culture is as important as learning a foreign language. The results reveal that five students answered with 'Yes, very important,' and two said 'yes, it is important as an answer. This result matches scholars' views about the relevance of incorporating culture in language teaching, mainly Byram (1988).

The interviewees were extremely positive because all of them indicated their willingness and acceptance to read about the target language culture and explained their perspectives about the importance of integrating culture-related issues in their EFL classes by giving the following reasons:

- *"Learning about the foreign language culture allows me to master the vocabulary of the target language."*

*"Cultural knowledge help us in thinking, speaking, and writing in English."*

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*“Learning a foreign language culture is an opportunity to become open and tolerant of other cultures.”*

The participants' answer is an index that they are completely aware of the relevance of learning the foreign language culture.

**Q 2:** Did you like the reading comprehension texts?

Concerning this question, the interviewees were required to express their views about the reading texts they have read. The data collected from the students' interviews suggest that all of them indicate that all the texts presented to them are interesting and very motivating to read. Particularly, Mohamed and Nadia revealed that they liked most reading about the topic of tattoos. The students explained their standpoint on account of the following arguments:

*“All three texts are interesting, but I liked reading the story of Jack getting a tattoo.”*

*“I prefer the topic of tattoos because I follow fashion, and I like these topics.”*

**Q 3:** What were the benefits you gained from reading these tests?

To collect data about the benefits students expanded while reading foreign language texts. The interviewees were asked to specify the types of advantages from reading cultural aspects within the EFL context. Most of the participants indicated that they had benefited from reading these texts. Since they find them exciting and motivating, they have understood these topics appropriately and tolerant of the cultural aspect raised.

Moreover, Nadia has succeeded in making a comparison between her culture and the target one. In that, she mentioned the use of tattoos that is shared between the Algerian and British society. In this light, we can notice her understanding of the cultural aspect expressed in this text. Furthermore, Mohamed seemed to be highly tolerant towards tattoos and, in that he contrasted British society to the Algerian one in their way of thinking about the use of tattoos. It is because of the reading texts which are appropriate for their age and interests. They like finding similarities between themselves and others from American or British culture. In this way, we avoid misunderstanding.

The informants expressed their advantage from reading the topic of alcohol drinking. They recognised that alcohol is necessary and can't miss any occasion or celebration since it is part of their culture. By contrast, in Algerian society, only some people drink alcohol though

the Islamic religion forbids it. In this respect, two participants expressed their total intolerance towards the topic of drinking alcohol. To put it differently, they referred to their Islamic faith in refusing the target cultural attitude (Drinking alcohol); they expressed their refusal of alcohol consumption within the Algerian society and claimed their engagement to change that practice if it was possible. Additionally, the interviewees admitted that they had learned something new: bonfire night in British society.

Briefly, considering the students' responses and feedback, it can be said that the process had a positive effect on the attitudes and approaches of students towards the target culture(s). Also, there is considerable development in their cultural knowledge.

**Question 4:** What were the main obstacles you encountered during reading comprehension tests?

The interviewees were asked to mention the obstacles that would best describe their difficulties while reading these texts. The students' answers, vocabulary shortage, prejudice, misunderstanding are the top three barriers that hampered EFL students while reading these three reading comprehension texts. The majority of the interviewees claimed that they encountered some difficulties concerning vocabulary understanding in the text of drinking alcohol. To illustrate, binge, pissed, smashed. Concerning the Bonfire night text, three informants mentioned that they didn't have any information about this historical event. In that, unfamiliarity with the topic can influence learners' reading comprehension. However, Mohamed claimed that he encountered a kind of inner conflict between his beliefs and religion and reading about western culture. He said that the fact of wearing tattoos, alcohol drinking exist in both societies. However, in the Islamic religion, such aspects are not allowed by God. Furthermore, our beliefs and religious principles influence our attitudes in answering the questions raised in these reading tests.

**Question 5:** In your opinion, which cultural topics do you think are suitable for improving your interest and cultural competence? (Please, rate from 1 to 5 for each selection; 1- Least useful, 2- less useful, 3- average, 4- useful, 5- most useful).

After examining all the given rates for each topic, the obtained results were put in Table 4.15 by respecting the regular order of the given selection. The top four topics are represented in the coloured columns. If one analysis the rates of students, an interesting fact is observed. All the interviewees' students selected these four topics by referring to the "most

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useful” option. However, only two participants selected literature as ‘useful,’ and one participant refers to politics, music, art, food, and eating habits as ‘average’. This finding implies that first-year EFL students are eager to study these cultural topics, and their teachers should bring up culture in their content to raise students’ interest in English language learning and improving their competence while communicating interculturally.

<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Cultural Aspects</b>	<b>Rates</b>
5	History	most useful
5	Family life	most useful
5	Education	most useful
5	celebrations	most useful
2	Literature	useful
1	Music and art	average
3	Food and eating habits	average
5	Politics	average

**Table 4.15 Students’ Scores for the Topics**

## **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter describes the analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings. The findings relate to the research questions that guided the study. Data were analysed to identify, describe and explore the relationship between cultural schemata and reading comprehension of foreign language texts. For more details, Data were obtained from self-administered questionnaires, completed by 40 EFL students and 20 EFL teachers. In addition to the findings of the experimental test, classroom observation, and students' interviews.

After browsing and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data provided by the participants, a number of constraints were found, which explained the reasons behind students' misunderstanding of foreign language texts. The sociocultural background of the reader, students' negative attitude, the lack of vocabulary and cultural knowledge, the teaching content, and the teaching practices were the main reasons for such results.

Based on the aforementioned teaching and learning challenges, I will present in the following chapter some alternative teaching and learning considerations that might help teachers apply the skills, their learners need for raising their cultural schemata to read culturally loaded texts.

# ***CHAPTER V***

## ***Pedagogical Implications and Suggested Recommendations***

### 5.1 Introduction

I devoted the preceding chapters to the theoretical assumptions behind the reading skill, schema theory, and data collection analysis. Based on the research findings, a further question, which arises from such an exploration, is how to teach the programme of reading comprehension to refine our EFL learners' cultural schemata. In light of this question, I review some of the teaching procedures that I consider beneficial in cutting the boredom of reading comprehension courses.

It is worth mentioning that the remedial suggestions lie primarily on the relevance of raising cultural awareness and its significant impact on learners in our EFL reading classrooms .In this regard, this chapter presents a set of propositions and recommendations to facilitate the task of the EFL teacher in integrating effectively cultural-based content by supplying them with a bunch of guidelines for the main procedures to consider, the materials to use, the topics to select, and the follow-up activities to include.

I suggested some pedagogical implications to attract teachers, decision-makers, and syllabus designers in the present chapter. The recommendations involving this chapter are meant to bring some ideas to enhance the teaching/learning situation of reading culturally loaded texts.

### 5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

The findings of the study are synthesised and outlined in this section under the following headings:

- a) Problems of students as encountered in the study,
- b) Syllabus, Texts used in the class
- c) Approaches currently used for teaching reading

The findings of the research study demonstrate that various difficulties and obstacles hamper students' reading skills. The major problem is their lack of cultural schemata. Cultural topics with new expressions can be a burden for EFL learners. Moreover, insufficient knowledge of vocabulary meaning in every sentence emerged as the main barrier to understanding texts. Many students depend on the dictionary, meaning more than the contextual meaning of words. As a result, they fail to understand the implication of words assumed in the context of a text.

Moreover, students usually feel that the reading subject is dull because they are more ordinary and traditionally taught. It lacks many cultural aspects. Therefore, the standard part has to be reduced to permit other cultural elements (family constitution, beliefs, and traditions). The reading comprehension subject needs to introduce recent issues to attract readers' attention and motivate them to read eagerly in this vein.

In this respect, the outcome of learning involves knowledge, attitude, and skills that EFL learners should accomplish and show at the end of the programme. Primarily, it is worth mentioning that the current teaching reading comprehension approaches neither seem adequate to activate our learners' schemata nor acceptable in helping them become motivated to read.

Based on the collected data from the various research instruments, namely the questionnaire and the classroom observation. EFL teachers supply their students with handouts of reading texts with different tasks to be accomplished. Moreover, teachers do not help students employ the appropriate reading activities. Therefore, the primary aim of the following considerations is to help EFL learners to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

- To help them recognise the nature of language and culture connection;
- To help learners construct a positive attitude towards learning the target culture;

- To understand the presence of resemblances and differences between Different cultures;
- To express acceptance and tolerance towards the other;
- To help them understand and interpret well the target language;

### **5.3 Recommendations for Materials**

The need for a textbook at the university level is a vital source that teachers can rely on to create a useful lesson. It may offer a framework of guidance and orientation to get more organised in their class lessons. The textbook collects the knowledge, concepts, and principles of a selected topic or course. It is usually written by one or more teachers and education experts in a specific field. In this light, I recommend teachers to rely on a textbook as it provides confidence and safety for an inexperienced teacher and students since they hold a kind of road map of the course: they know what to expect, and the textbook helps teachers about what to teach and in what order.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Methodology and Teaching Procedures**

Based on the findings of this study, there appears to be a need to develop several things, including reading ability, creating an appropriate learning environment, and supplying them with effective reading strategies. Therefore, teaching this subject should then be reconsidered; teaching reading comprehension should be based on a lesson plan and updated reading texts. As teaching reading is disappointing, lesson plans for reading will prove more effective. A lesson plan should be well developed and detailed to cover the topic during a lesson. Additionally, an effective lesson plan should focus on learners' interests, and the objective of preparing this document is to select the suitable methods and tasks of teaching that the teacher will instruct to activate learners' schemata and achieve the target objectives of the lesson. On this account, teaching language skills can be both enjoyable and essential when suitable conditions exist. To be precise, reading is a valuable skill because it can increase students' ability to listen, speak, and write. Writing paragraphs, essays, and assignments may enhance students' capacity to speak the language without fear, shying, or anxiety. Therefore, reading as a relevant skill should be reconsidered to allow students to learn deeply about how language is made-up and how to communicate with the text. For that reason, Aebresold and Field (1997) assert that the teaching of reading is a deep understanding of the working procedures of reading. It indicates that the task of reading comprehension is not random. Still,

readers should possess solid background knowledge and know-how to activate relevant schemata to reach a significant result.

### 5.4.1 Setting Clear Goals for the Reading Course

In light of how we teach reading effectively and how successful EFL students interact with texts. An efficient attempt at reading means the ability to emphasise the text's ideas rather than focus on individual words. In classroom reading, teachers need to help their learners use the reader's context to predict and comprehend the meaning of words. Besides, learners need to use their background knowledge to reach a satisfactory comprehension of the text. Furthermore, a reading course in English could include the following learning goals:

- To be able to decode words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- To increase reading fluency.
- The use of different reading comprehension strategies skimming and scanning.
- To reach adequate text comprehension.
- To familiarise learners with different types of texts, including; texts, discourse, literary works
- To improve vocabulary and to construct schematic knowledge to make adequate text interpretation.

Teachers should play active roles in inspiring their students by selecting appropriate reading materials, planning beneficial reading activities, and creating helpful classroom procedures.

### 5.5 Reconsideration of the Way of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Developing learners' ability to understand is one of the necessary components in the teaching/ learning situation. Additionally, the attempt to read effectively is the intention of many learners. Thus, they need to approach texts with a *critical* eye: evaluating what they read for not just *what* it says, but devoting an amount of interest toward the way (*how*) and the reason (*why*) it says it. In other words, compelling reading is a crucial step for any language learner to understand and evaluate what he/she reads; readers can work to include those techniques in their writing.

In this regard, my proposition of reconsidering teaching reading comprehension is related to reading strategies to get students to activate existing knowledge, thereby creating a mental framework to which new text, terms, ideas, etc., can be attached. This mental

framework begins before reading even begins, strengthened as students get involved and interact with the text during the reading, and reflected upon after reading as students integrate what they have just read into their core knowledge. It is essential to train students on how to approach a text following various reading strategies. In other words, these strategies are specific actions, behaviours, stages, or techniques students use to develop their ability to study foreign language skills. They are essential to students because they help them in the memorisation and retrieval of data. Besides that, students become engaged in the learning process by themselves.

In brief, teaching this subject should then be reconsidered; various strategies can involve learners. I suggest that applying the following classroom procedures can help learners interact with the text.

### **5.5.1 Skimming**

Skimming is defined by Richards (1997) as a quick, superficial reading of a text to get the gist of it. In this skimming strategy, learners may skim through titles, subheadings, words written in bold, italics, or underlined diagrams, the first sentence of every paragraph, text questions. In other words, skimming is a rapid and silent reading to obtain the main ideas. Students are supposed to learn how to read very quickly to get an overview of the passage. Therefore, readers will exploit any instrument accessible to them to comprehend the text, such as cognates (e.g., words similar in English and Spanish), any words they already know, prior knowledge of the topic, and the context itself to understand the content of the text. In this context, skimming helps get a general idea of a text, particularly when the reader does not have time to read it unhurriedly or when he wants to decide if careful reading is worthwhile. This strategy can help readers to identify whether they continue to read or not. Skimming an academic text before reading it can help consider the previous knowledge and help readers develop a purpose for reading.

### **5.5.2 Scanning**

The strategy of scanning refers to the ability to read quickly, searching for, or locating certain information. However, learners should know how to apply Scanning to find a specific piece of information in the material and also be able to discount the irrelevant information.

In general, the researcher indicates various strategies and procedures to be applied by both teachers and learners simultaneously. However, each one of them needs special

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treatment and an aim and a way to be performed. Thus, teachers and learners may have all these skills, but they may differ in their reading or teaching reading application. In other words, it may seem to us that these strategies are simple, but they are the stepping stone for an efficient introduction to the reading comprehension phase. Therefore, considerable attention must be devoted to each one of these strategies to be fully exploited.

### 5.5.3 Coding Text

Coding text is a beneficial technique that teachers use to train students to mark margin that helps them practice the metacognitive processes. Initially, teachers may teach students to put an exclamation point subsequently to something that astonished them. A question mark next to an underlined statement they don't comprehend, and a double-headed arrow as well as a brief statement beside something that prompts them to make a connection to something ordinary. Students are not required to apply all of the margin marks in a particular text.

✓	Confirms what you thought	*	Strike you as very important
X	Contradicts what you thought	→	Is new or exciting to you
?	Puzzles you	R	Remind you of something
??	Confuses you	A	Answers a question you had

**Table 5.1 Symbols of coding text**

### 5.5.4 Chunking

Chunking is a reading strategy based on breaking up the whole reading text into smaller passages into "chunks" (1 paragraph - 2 paragraphs). Furthermore, this strategy intends to make students assign to reading under the supervision of the teacher. Chunking makes the reading task more controllable, chiefly for weaker readers, who might be depressed by lengthy assignments.

### 5.5.5 Re-Reading

Re-reading is another significant strategy based on re-reading sentences and passages that don't initially make sense. In other words, the attempt of readers to reread is to go through a slower rate, reflect on what they have read, and make an effort to generate the meaning of the text, flip back a page or two to spot where else that vocabulary exists. Therefore, struggling readers need to be aware of the valuable advantages of re-reading.

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To further help students recognise the significance of re-reading, teachers might give them a short passage and ask them to read it three times. After every attempt of reading, ask them to rate their intensity of understanding of the text. Then, ask them to share their various degrees of knowledge and the reason behind their thought of development from the first to the third reading. In this vein, students will say: "*the second time I already generated a universal idea of what the passage was about, so I could devote considerable attention to the details*" or, "*I knew what the difficult words were, so by the second or third time I emphasis on the use of context clues to identify what the words meant.*" You might also associate the re-reading process with the re-listening or re-watching process that students continually and excitedly get involved with music and movies. Teenagers will argue the reason behind their listening to songs frequently: with each new hearing, they determine more of the words, master more of the melody.

Similarly, with movies, teenagers re-watch them to catch more details every time around, and since they enjoy anticipating what is going to occur next. In other words, showing students why re-reading is essential is not the ultimate way to raise their awareness, but teachers also have to give them assistance on how they should reread. Consider the following directions: Teacher: all right guys, let's look at the beginning of Chapter 5; that's what you're going to read tonight. [The students are reading a novel called *The Animal Farm*.] Before you get into your literature circles to talk about what you read last night, I would like to devote less time to talk about something I want you to do tonight as you read this chapter. Okay, this chapter is only eight pages, so I want you to read it three times. When you get to the ending of it the first time, I want you to stop and write down any questions you pose, your expectations, or your reactions. Then read that same chapter. This time, I want you to devote particular attention to information about Jones. What do you know about him at the end of that chapter that you didn't know before? Finally, I want you to read the chapter one more time, this time focusing on finding out about Napoleon. After each reading, write down notes about what you learned about those two characters. Students might wonder why they can't perform all three things in one read-through; it seems like they are supposed to memorise the passage. Restate that you want them to reallocate their attention to something different with each re-reading, and doing so will lead to a rich understanding of the text.

Generally, applying Rereading can assure a significant impact on student's performance in reading skills. It can be a process forward to find additional supporting

evidence. Besides, it helps students reinforce their ability to rapidly locate information by using titles, headings, and text typography.

### 5.5.6 Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)

The DRTA is an efficient task that can be applied to eliminate comprehension obstacles. Thus, teachers should follow the steps below when creating a DRTA;

- *Preparation for reading:* as an initial step, teachers direct and activate students' thoughts about the topic, introducing new lexis and concepts, also stimulating interest and motivation to read the selection.
- *Guided Silent Reading:* The teacher supplies learners with the statement or uses open-ended questions to direct students' reading as they make expectations about the text.
- *Comprehension development and discussion:* This step begins with a restatement of the previous step's questions, followed by discussion questions that encourage a more in-depth understanding of the text, characters, plot, features of setting, or concepts.
- *Purposeful re-reading:* The paramount aim of this step is to provide learners with frequent opportunities for oral reading after they have already read the text silently. Rereading occurs as learners promote answers to questions ("It says right here...."), Teachers may guide them to read orally a preferred part or paragraph of the text, a passage that describes a particular event, or an exciting concept.
- *Follow-up activities and skill extension:* The final step of Skills may bring word analysis, lexis, understanding, literature concepts, or writing improvement. In this respect, activities introduce skills or give practice. In the reading syllabus, follow-up activities are often available for students reading at a similar ability level.

### 5.5.7 Synthesizing

Competent readers determine the essence of a text, constructing meaning and organising ideas to make short summaries of their understanding of the text, relying on their background knowledge and the new information.

According to O'Malley and Chamot, summarising is making a mental, oral, or written summary of new information gained through listening or reading. Summarising is considered one of the relevant techniques that enable students to produce their version after understanding a text. Moreover, summarising makes it possible for the student to analyse and criticise the text. It can be an opportunity for readers to express themselves and distinguish between necessary elements and peripheral details.

### 5.5.8 Identifying the Reason for Reading

Knowing the reason behind reading a given text can help students put in order both their reading and how they can make use of what they read.

Before they read a text, attempt to ask and answer the following kinds of questions:

Are you reading merely for general content?

Are you reading for detailed information or public thematic concerns?

Are you reading for arguments that sustain or challenge your thesis in a writing assignment?

Are you reading for data that you recognise you'll need for a task or for information to make you think *about* what you'll need?

Therefore, many learners start their reading with particular attention according to their needs. As an example: I need to read chapter "6" here it goes. It is crucial to be very clear about precisely what you are searching for because it is time-consuming when someone reads aimlessly. Right from the beginning, it is better to look for answers for your questions, gain a general understanding of a topic or issue, detailed knowledge, definitions, explanations, quotes, arguments that support or oppose your position. Purposeful reading can facilitate the task of reading by being more selective and aware of the primary purpose.

### 5.5.9 Reading from Different Perspectives

Reading from different perspectives is another valuable re-reading strategy, which can be applied to various subject areas, particularly language arts and social studies. Using this technique makes the student feel involved in the text thoroughly to examine the text's events from more than one perspective. One formulation of the directions for this approach is as follows:

- Order students to read the selected material for the first time.
- Identify several perspectives that could be associated with significant ideas or concepts of the passage. (With narrative text, give students a unique character or the narrator.)
- Separate the class into groups of three or four students and give each group a different perspective.
- Orient every group to read the passage another time, looking for statements that reveal their assigned character or perspective's needs and concerns. Have each group record the worries that someone with their view might have about the topic and the requirements a person of that perspective might have.
- Then, ask them to record how they would respond to each statement from the text in character as if they were part of it. Finally, students generate a one or two-sentence summary statement that transmits their perspective.

### 5.5.10 Involvement with the Text

- Read with a pen or pencil, highlighting critical statements, parts, or points – even those you find confusing. Also, write down words or expressions you don't comprehend so you can search for them later.
- Mention where and how the text relates to lectures or discussions, as well as general or specific questions you may desire to ask your teacher in class.
- Note down your questions, elements of agreement or disagreement references to related ideas, and identify which images correspond with each other. In other words, work to enter into a *conversation* with the text, mark it up, and make it your own.

### 5.5.11 Questioning the Author (QA)

Beck, McKeown, Hamilton,&Kucan (1997) developed questioning the author relying on a constructivist perspective of learning. It is a way to enhance readers' engagement of both narrative and expository text. In general, questioning the author provides students with the

opportunity of revising their texts to make them more understandable. There are three steps to using QA.

First, Planning as an appropriate step focuses on teachers' attempt to read the materials they are inquiring the students to read and predict the students' difficulties. Three goals in planning a) classify main understandings and potential problems, b) segment the text, and c) develop queries. The students need to take into account that the author is there to be questioned by them. The goal of QA is to understand better the most important ideas that the author is exposing. Second, teachers are responsible for deciding where to interrupt and stop the students reading so that discussion can occur. The ideas should determine where the ruptures occur, not paragraphs or pages. Third, queries aid students in dealing with the text as they are trying to build meaning during the reading process. Besides, questions are raised to evaluate students' comprehension after reading performance. Queries facilitate conversation about the author's ideas and support the student-to-student interactions. Questions are used at the points where segmentation occurs in the text. Tierney & Readence (2000) provides the following examples of questions:

- ✓ What is the author attempting to state here?
- ✓ Does the author explain evidently?
- ✓ Does this make sense with what the author told us before?

### **5.5.12 Think-Pair-Share Strategy**

Think-Pair-Share is one of the vital reading comprehension strategies. It derives its name from the three steps in which they work together to resolve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. To further understand this strategy, we illustrate what students are to be DOING at each of these stages.

- 1) As an initial step, the teacher selects writing for the students to read and comes up with questions or problems that provoke students' thinking.
- 2) When students receive a question from the teacher, they must first think about their answer.
- 3) Students will then pair up with designated partners or a group of students. They PAIR up to talk about the answer each came up with. They try to compare their mental or written notes and categorise their responses to be appropriate or most convincing.

4) Finally, after students interacted in pairs for a particular time, they require students to share their answers, thoughts, or knowledge with their partners or small group.

Think-pair-share is a valuable strategy that helps students structure their thinking on a given topic, enabling them to make individual ideas and share them with a peer. Also, it encourages classroom participation by supporting a high degree of learner response, rather than relying on a primary presentation method in which a teacher raises a question and students respond. In this strategy, the most crucial aspect that needs to be taken into account to achieve effective outcomes is to devote students' time to *think* about the topic or question individually and then direct them to work in *pairs* to resolve the problem and *share* their ideas.

### 5.6 Pedagogical Implications

There appear several implications from the main findings of the present investigation. There seems a need for reconsideration of teaching the reading skill to first-year EFL students. Not only in terms of “knowing what to teach” but also in terms of knowing “why” and “how” dimensions. Another suggestion is to introduce cultural-based reading materials in the syllabus of first-year subjects (reading comprehension). In this context, teachers are supposed to devote considerable attention to teaching cultural aspects in their classes to inspire students towards both language and culture learning.

To ensure a suitable atmosphere of teaching/learning the English language skills, the investigator recommends specific suggestions for syllabus designers and others for instructors and learners, seeing that the performance of culture teaching and learning is the duty of all the parties mentioned above.

#### 5.6.1 Implications for Syllabus Designers

On account of the findings in chapter four, which reveal EFL learners' readiness to learning about the target language culture, and a reconsideration of content and the way to teach reading comprehension, particularly, cultural-based materials to first-year students of the English Language Department at Tiaret University. In this vein, syllabus designers should review the educational objectives of English language skills teaching and typically foreign culture teaching. Most of the teachers' priorities prove to be far from developing the learners' cultural competence. Time constraints and exams precondition the decisive objective of foreign language skills teaching. In light of this, teachers transmit to their students that EFL

learning is an overall process for attaining culture. It can be realised by raising students' interest in the foreign language's cultural aspects and encouraging positive attitudes towards foreign cultures.

The availability of various technological resources facilitates teachers' task to supply EFL learners with a native-like culture learning environment. Furthermore, EFL students make direct contact with native English speakers. This circumstance was inaccessible before, leading both learners and teachers to ignore culture and consider it as additional material.

It is worth stating that syllabus designers should supply teachers with relevant reading materials to raise learners' cultural knowledge to inspire critical thinking and avoid stereotyping. Furthermore, syllabus designers should supply teachers with teaching materials with methodological insights into teaching cultural-based reading materials. In the following section, I devote considerable implications to teachers, given that teachers are the mediators responsible for conveying the features of the target language and its culture.

### **5.6.2. Implications for Teachers**

In chapter four, it has been found that the majority of teachers indicate that introducing cultural elements in teaching language skills is a challenging task because of several reasons, including time constraints, exams and scores, overcrowded classrooms, and the existence of various cultural themes. Therefore, teachers encounter difficulties in selecting suitable themes and how to teach them. In light of these matters, it is recommended for teachers to seek orientations of all categories, pedagogical documents, training professionals, or coworkers that can help teachers in 'what to teach' and 'how to teach.'

In this respect, the aspect of "what to teach" is one of the necessary procedures that EFL teachers should consider from various angles, namely the themes they select, the learners' age, level, needs, and interests. It is also recommended for teachers to select topics related to 'little c' culture rather than 'big C' culture themes. It is worth noting, Stern (1992) identified six areas of culture: "places, individual persons and way of life, people and society in general, history, institutions and art, music literature and other major achievements" but argues that the second area, i.e., individual persons and way of life, is the most critical category. Such cultural area represents all the detailed aspects of individuals (expressions, behaviour, eating habits, dress, and expressing emotions in typical life situations). It is also necessary for teachers to evaluate the quality of the content of the reading material. Also, to check to what extent the content motivates EFL students and suits their needs.

Concerning the dimension of ‘how to teach,’ teachers are recommended to create a suitable learning atmosphere by bringing interesting real-life topics into the classroom. Furthermore, we recommend instructors to look for alternative teaching methods that suit as much as possible all their learners’ learning styles and strategies.

### **5.6.2.1 Considerations for Planning Efficient Reading Comprehension Lessons**

Reaching reading efficiency is based on creating various tasks that make EFL learners actively involved in reading. Students require practical strategies that genuinely improve their level of comprehension. In this section, we shed light on some considerations that seem vital for successful learning outcomes:

1) **Setting the Teaching Objective:** The objective describes the specific skills students should demonstrate by the end of the lesson. Indeed, teachers need to be clear and concise when setting goals. Experimental studies showed that setting goals increase learners' achievement. Therefore, we suggest that when teachers fix each lesson's learning objective explicitly, they will give them an idea about the course expectations, in which they will be able to concentrate their efforts more towards the lesson. It is exceptionally significant to set a goal before the actual reading. At this step, teachers identify what they expect from the students, whether it can be skimming through the text to get some general comprehension of the text's topic, or it can be scanning the text; or some particular information. That way, students can mentally get ready for the task and do it more proficiently.

2) **Activating learners' prior knowledge:** It is a helpful step for teachers to begin their lessons by questioning their students what they know about the previous course. The intention is to create a relationship between the preceding topic and the new one.

3) **Developing Thinking Skills:** The teacher can build their students' thinking skills by raising questions: what, when, where, and why.

4) **Including Students:** a perfect strategy to involve students in reading is to ask them what they feel or think about the text they are about to read and their predictions about the text's subject.

5) Time Limit: teachers are supposed to provide students with a precise amount of time to achieve the reading passage and then devote considerable attention to answering a set of questions. The time frame can be extended when most students encounter difficulties and are struggling with the task.

### **5.7. Selecting Reading Materials**

Regardless of the availability of various reading materials, teachers need to be conscious that not every text they encounter is worthy of teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, teachers need to devote considerable attention while selecting texts for their students. They should select texts according to the linguistic as well as the cognitive ability of students. In fact, several criteria are significant in the choice of texts. In other words, selecting reading materials for EFL class is a thoughtful process rather than a random one. This section sheds light on the most appropriate criterion for selecting reading materials before applying them in the class.

#### **5.7.1 Students' Level**

The instructor should devote considerable attention to the students' level and acknowledge that when selecting the reading class's reading materials. In other words, the level of the students will influence the selection of written texts. Providing students with reading material that doesn't suit their status might be counterproductive since they may feel unable to read in the target language. Therefore, teachers need to simplify texts to make them accessible to the students. Moreover, the instructor can help students with efficient reading comprehension strategies. Also, they should start using less complicated texts. Later, they can use more complex texts to develop their reading fluency and texts with various difficulty grades. In this regard, during the selection of reading materials, teachers should consider students' interests.

#### **5.7.2 Students' Interests**

The interest of students plays a considerable role in the selection of reading materials for EFL students. That is to say, the primary step for material selection is finding an exciting text which stimulates students' attention. At the beginning of the year, Instructors can make needs analysis or an assessment of the student's interests; the instructor leaves the opportunity for the students to propose appropriate topics for the class. This process makes students feel responsible, as well as involved in the selection of reading materials.

Generally, the factor of interest is closely related to motivation. Therefore, when the reading text's topic is not engaging enough for students, they will feel demotivated. Without this motivation, it is challenging for students to understand the text.

### **5.7.3 Students' Background Knowledge**

Another essential condition for selecting suitable material for the EFL reading class is the students' background knowledge. To supply the students with appropriate material, the instructor must be familiar with their background knowledge. In other words, the aspect of background knowledge and reading skill are interrelated. Furthermore, the lack of background knowledge may cause an obstacle for the EFL reader than language complexity.

In light of this, the teacher can facilitate reading by either activating students' background knowledge and reading material or requiring them to read extensively or rely on technological means to enrich their background knowledge.

### **5.7.4 Content**

The content of a text is one of the most crucial criteria for selecting reading material for the EFL class. Nuttall (1996) affirms that the most critical measure is that the text should interest the readers-preferably and delight them". In other words, teachers should offer their students motivating materials. If students find the selected content interesting, they will be successful in the reading process, no matter how difficult the text might be. Even though students are required to read a convoluted text that is at the same time interesting for them, they will possibly make an effort to understand it.

It is essential to take the students' interests and needs into consideration. We can say that the content is suitable when it attracts students' interest and level. Thus, teachers should investigate to find out students' reading tastes and make reading comprehension class enjoyable. According to Nuttall (1996), we need texts that will interest most students and not bore others.

### **5.7.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity is another significant criterion for the selection of readings for the EFL class. The use of authentic materials is based on the idea of "*exposing*" the EFL learner to as much natural language as possible. Many researchers (Guariento and Morley, 2001; Paltridge, 2001; Shrum and Glisan, 2000) shed light on authentic materials' effectiveness to support

language learning and teaching. Most of them assert that this type of material raises the learners' motivation towards reading. Also, original materials help learners to bridge the gap between the language being taught in the classroom and the language used by native people in real situations.

Brooks (1968) warns against the inappropriate selection of culturally-related materials. For him, 'What we select for presentation must be authentic, typical, and important; otherwise, somebody may create false impressions.' In this concern, Brooks believes that authentic materials are effective ways of increasing learners' cultural skills. In this vein, using original teaching texts is a significant element in the communicative approach, as authentic sources expose learners to real life. Following the same line of thought, Artal, Carrion, & Monros (1997) identify two essential factors when selecting cultural material: first, materials that encourage intercultural learning; second, the culture that appears in the material.

The fact of selecting suitable materials for teaching culture is an important step to be taken into consideration. Therefore, teachers should consider all these factors when teaching cultural aspects to foreign language learners effectively, which usually are not in touch with native speakers and lack the opportunity to discover how others think and interact in certain situations. In this respect, McGrath (2002) identifies eight criteria for the appropriate choice and use of authentic texts. These are (1) Relevance to the coursebook and learners' needs, (2) Topic interest, (3) Cultural fitness, (4) Logistical considerations, (5) Cognitive demands, (6) Linguistic demands, (7) Quality, and (8) Exploitability. Among all these elements, there are three main criteria applied to choose texts to be used in the classroom: suitability of the content, exploitability, and readability. Suitability is considered the most important because it implies that reading materials have to stimulate the learners' attention, meet their needs, and motivate them. Exploitability stands for how we use the text to develop learners' reading competence, while readability is related to the intricacy and complexity of a text. In other words, the reading text must not include too complicated or demanding words and structures. Otherwise, it might demotivate the learners and have a negative effect. The following table shows the criteria that help teachers select authentic material:

<b>Suitability</b>	<b>Exploitability</b>	<b>Readability</b>	<b>Presentation</b>
- Does the text interest the students? - Is it relevant to Students' needs? - Does it represent the type of material that the student will use outside the classroom?	- Can the text be Exploited for teaching purposes? - For what purpose should the text be exploited? - What skills/ strategies can be developed by using the text?	- Is the text too easy/difficult for the student? - Is it structurally Too demanding/ complex? - How much new vocabulary does it contain? Is it relevant?	- Does it look authentic? - Is it attractive? - Does it grab the Student's attention? - Does it make him want to read more,

**Table 5.2 Important Factors in Selecting Authentic Reading Materials. (Anthony, 2006,63)**

The table above involves the criteria teachers need to consider when selecting interesting, motivating, and authentic texts for classroom reading. In the same vein, Harmer (1994) argues that authentic material has positive effects on learners, in the sense that it assists learners to be able to produce better language and attain an appropriate level of language. Besides, making learners feel more confident to confront real-life situations.

The majority of theoretical studies and the results of this study confirms that the point of adopting the concept of authenticity in the Algerian context where English is a foreign language is useful in this process for the following reasons: (1) they pave the way and expose learners to real language; (2) they can feed learners' needs; (3) they have a positive effect on learners' motivation; (4) they bring cultural information to the students' attention.

On this account, Sherman (2003) mentions the significance of using authentic materials because it is a window into the culture. However, when teachers use original materials, they should take into consideration four types of authenticity within the classroom:

1. The authenticity of the texts, which we may use as input data for our students;
2. The authenticity of the learners' interpretations of such texts;
3. The authenticity of tasks conducive to language learning;
4. The authenticity of the actual social situation of the classroom language. (Breen 1985:61)

In brief, the pedagogical attempt to adopt authentic materials into the classroom requires an educational goal. Furthermore, authentic materials are supposed to be used in harmony with students' capacity. To put it otherwise, Teachers should be careful when selecting reading materials that affect students and their motivation directly. They should have plans for selecting reading materials according to the aim they want to achieve. Teachers need to take a critical look at each text they use for reading comprehension.

### **5.8 Implications for Students**

As far as first-year EFL students are the definite receivers of the reading material that is generally planned and reviewed by respective authorities and teachers, it is essential to assign some students' suggestions. Therefore, learners should do their best to attain successful interaction with the text. Aebersold and field (1997) propose four prominent roles that effective students apply in the reading classroom: Planner, builder, monitor, and adjuster.

Firstly, in any reading classroom session, students are responsible for planning an effective strategy to deal with the texts encountered. It means that effective students select quickly and mentally the appropriate strategy to interact with the text. Secondly, as active participants in the learning process, students select appropriate strategies and skills to facilitate the reading process and construct their understanding. They read the text; examine how sentences are interrelated, and organise the ideas to clarify the author's perspective.

At this level, an effective reader attempts to build his/her understanding by applying these strategies to build comprehension appropriately. The researcher demonstrates that learners must use multiple synonyms, paraphrasing to maintain their position and understanding. Thirdly, another sensitive role that the student needs to perform is monitoring comprehension. The process of monitoring comes as a result of building comprehension. It implies that students first should build their understanding, then he/she comes to monitor their comprehension. Students should make pauses (stops) to examine if their strategies are still working or not monitoring comprehension. Also, they should make a relationship between what they have understood to what they are going to say. Finally, after building and monitoring comprehension strategies, students need to alter the previous strategies that are applied before. So, students should play the role of adjusters in which they need to modify their strategies to improve their learning situation. These are the most important roles that the students need to play in reading.

There are other significant aspects that effective readers need to take into account to reach appropriate comprehension. So, language readers need to apply their skills appropriately

during the task of reading. Researchers called it metacognition awareness. At this level, good language readers pass through different stages such as decoding quickly and accurately grammatical sentences, linguistic aspects consciously. According to the researcher, any good language reader should possess the ability to master the metacognitive skills consciously and effectively. For this reason, Grabe (2009) identifies various characteristics that a good language reader employs, such as fluency, efficiency, comprehensibility, interactivity, and flexibility.

In other words, the process of comprehension is based on good interaction with the text. Interactivity represents a good language reader who communicates with the text effectively due to applying a range of reading strategies that lead students to reach an appropriate comprehension level. Moreover, being a good reader implies a sense of critical mind by making a careful analysis of the text by reading the lines and reading between the lines. Thus, the researcher demonstrates that a good language reader's ability is extended to discovering the implicit meaning besides the explicit meaning with critical awareness and evaluation of the text. In other words, a good language reader can determine when he/she reads and what to read, relying on several strategies and skills that already have to build and monitor comprehension.

In this regard, EFL students are supposed to reform their perspectives concerning EFL learning and the relevance of the foreign culture element. Students need to understand that their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is only a short-term language learning goal; but not adequate for reaching long-term goals. Therefore, students should recognize that language learning is culture learning.

Knowing about the daily routines, social norms, celebrations, customs, and values related to English-speaking countries is as important as the knowledge of lexis and grammar. In this vein, involving learners in cultural-based content and intercultural activities can help learners understand and act naturally while interacting with foreigners. It is worth noting that teachers are advised to foster learners' cultural knowledge to develop cultural sympathy towards the target language culture.

Based on the consulted literature recommendations, I can conclude that learners should focus on the practical procedures of dealing with cultural content in the classroom. Furthermore, learners can reinforce their cultural knowledge through authentic materials, including television shows, watching films, connecting with foreigners, and using different websites such as travel brochures, newspapers, magazines, and restaurant menus to enrich their cultural schemata of the foreign language culture.

### **5.9.1 Teaching Reading through Technology**

Technology has affected all aspects of life. Particularly the domain of education; has even changed the nature of instruction and learning. Therefore, EFL Teachers are supposed to explore digital technologies to make learning more effective and engage students actively. This technology era provides both teachers and learners with various ways that actively engage them in multiple authentic contexts due to its accessibility, flexibility, connectivity speed, and independence of the methodological approach. According to Gonzalez (2009), technology offers foreign language teachers various opportunities to create useful instructional materials to teach the language structure and the target culture. Technological devices such as smartphones, laptops, computers, and Web technologies should be widely used to sustain student learning in a classroom setting. One of the exciting benefits of technology is that it helps students become less dependent on the printed word and more engaged with authentic cultural content.

Furthermore, technological resources allow students to carry on learning the target language and improve their cultural background outside the classroom through interaction with native speakers. Both teachers and students can take advantage of technology to achieve a better result. Technological devices allow language learners to maximise the opportunity to be exposed to the English language in meaningful and authentic contexts. In this respect, Cullen and Sato (2000) encourage an approach, including tactile, visual, or audio-based, to touch on many of students' various learning styles. They suggest using newspapers, songs, videos, and stories, to name a few, typically the use of authentic materials that represent the language and its culture within different communicative contexts.

### **5.9.2 Teaching Reading through Literature**

Using literary works in English teaching has been a matter of concern for many years as part of the search for better results and development. There are various types of written materials on paper and electronic sources such as letters, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, official documents, emails that may be used in reading comprehension lessons. Still, apart from those, literature is a powerful instrument in improving reading comprehension. In addition to the variety of written material, literary works are valuable materials to be exploited for reading comprehension activities since literary texts supply

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students with the opportunity to read beyond the text's limits by adding the experience and belief of readers into the meanings of the text.

Byram (1997) asserts using literature to transmit culture to foreign language students and provide them with opportunities to develop their intercultural skills. Following the same line of thought, Hismanoglu (2005) mentions that once students read a literary text, they begin to inhabit the text. They are involved in the text. Students become more interested in the events of the story rather than the meaning of lexical items. Furthermore, in reading literary text, different concepts of time and space can be shown very clearly in conversational strategies, ways of socialising and thinking are discussed and described, and various social systems are presented. In other words, the literature includes authentic texts and rhetoric language with sophisticated linguistic elements such as similes, metaphors, vocabulary, and other features of language use.

According to Brumfit and Carter (1986), literature in EFL classes provides authentic foundations and contributes to students' cultural enrichment. Lazar (1993) suggests that literature motivates students, offers access to cultural background, encourages language acquisition, expands language awareness, develops students' interpretative abilities, and educates the whole person to enhance their imaginative and affective capacities (pp.9-15). As far as teaching reading as a foreign language skill is concerned, reading between the lines is challenging for EFL students. Therefore, language teachers need to help students with the cultural context that facilitates deciphering literary texts. Providing students with cultural context by extensive reading of literary texts enriches students' ability to understand texts.

Literature-based teaching may involve classic or modern literary works. Indeed, learners' academic skills can be developed when they become acquainted with the specific lexis and conception of literary analyses. In this regard, they can learn the literary language and use aesthetic jargon in their writing paragraphs and interactions. Furthermore, literary texts, comprising poems, prose, novels, fiction, promote abundant opportunities for learners to engage in philosophical thinking concerning the foreign ethics, beliefs, traditions, lifestyles, and cultures across different parts of the world and times. In other words, students acquire language styles, but they also explore the various aspects of history and the social traits portrayed in literary works. Indeed, reading literature outspreads students' understanding of the complexities of language and human life. Also, it helps them to develop their critical thinking. For this reason, teachers of reading should acquaint students with different literary texts such as poems, novels, and stories and recommend books of literary genres for extensive reading.

In reality, the use of stories and poems plays a vital role in increasing students' language level as they provoke their thinking and expand their metaphors. Poetry offers learners various language aspects, different meanings, unusual word order, and unfamiliar intonation. As poems include uncommon language, students become compelled to develop strategies to find out imaginative meanings by making appropriate phonological and semantic connections.

In brief, it is a good experience for EFL students to study literary texts as they supply them with various academic backgrounds, that is, metacognitive awareness, activation, and application of previous knowledge, making predictions, making inferences, synthesising information, and summarising, also, developing and answering their questions. For that reason, literature is fundamental in reading comprehension and, therefore, in ELT. Moreover, reading literature is a valuable means of improving students' communicative skills.

### **5.9.3 Extensive Reading**

One of the most relevant techniques that teachers can apply in teaching reading is extensive reading. According to Day and Bamford (2004), Extensive Reading is a technique in teaching reading. Students read many materials in their level in a new language; they read for general, for overall meaning, and information at one with enjoyment. This technique aims to help students build a positive attitude toward reading, improve good reading habits, learn new vocabulary, and enrich their structure knowledge. In other words, extensive readings mean exposing students to a rich input for improving learners' level of language knowledge and increase their interest in reading.

When students read extensively, they develop their reading fluency and enrich their previously acquired knowledge of language aspects. It permits them to process language faster and improves comprehension and enjoyment. Furthermore, several researchers provide different terms to the concept of extensive reading as "free voluntary reading." In other words, students who read for pleasure are better readers, and they enrich their linguistic repertoire in a low anxiety situation. Students feel relaxed while reading outside the classroom.

There are various reasons why Extensive Reading is worthy of language development. Extensive Reading:

- Allow students to encounter the language in its natural context and realise how it works in extended discourse.

- Construct a vocabulary. When students read a lot, they encounter several words and lexical (word) patterns repeatedly, enabling them to remember and predict what vocabulary and grammar may come next.
- It helps students develop the reading ability and reading fluency, allowing them to process the language more mechanically.
- 4. Raised self-confidence, motivation, pleasure, and a love of reading, making students more effective readers. It also helps students to reduce any anxieties about language learning.

Good reading means the ability to focus on the ideas of the text rather than emphasising individual words. Teachers need to train their learners to use the text context to guess and understand the meaning of words instead of being slowed down by using the dictionary every time. Besides, learners must practice the reading task for various purposes, such as: using their background knowledge to reach an adequate understanding of the text, recognising key ideas, extracting specific information, and discovering the writer's goals and attitudes.

Also, research has revealed that extensive reading is a valuable way to improve language literacy. In this regard, Krashen (2004) claims, "Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar competence, and the only way we become good spellers"(p.226)

Through extensive Reading, EFL students become less dependent on their teachers, developing their Autonomous learning. Indeed, extensive reading is an independent approach to the development of reading, and therefore, we should incorporate it in a foreign language programme as a separate instruction. Further, several studies (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988) revealed that extensive reading enables students to develop their language proficiency and fluency. Indeed, reading expands comprehension, increases intuition skills, provides experiences, and offers better language learning opportunities.

### **5.9.4 Critical Reading**

Several English language experts called for the development of critical reading skills as part of the reading curriculum. They maintain that the attempt to read critically requires the awareness of how writers operate elements of language. In reality, critical reading necessitates good mastery of the language to identify what the author intends by the text.

Harris & Hodges (1981) define critical reading as:

(1) The process of making judgments in reading; evaluating relevancy and adequacy of what is read. (2) an act of reading in which a questioning attitude, logical analysis, and inference are used to judge the worth of what is read according to an established standard; and (3) the judgment of validity or worth of what is read, based on sound criteria of standards developed through previous experience. (p.74)

In this regard, teaching EFL students to be critical readers helps them challenge the writers' expectations but does not prescribe alternatives to ideas demonstrated in the text.

A critical approach to reading any reading material is, therefore, essential if we are to evaluate the value of the work it reports. The most fundamental aspect in texts or journal articles is that we find arguments based on evidence. So, the reader raises questions: "does the writer give me satisfactory arguments for accepting their claim?" Such a question doesn't imply that writers are deceptive. It is not a matter of truth but perspectives, interpretation, and importance in most inquiry fields.

Moreover, Elliot (1991) provided some guidelines for teachers aiming to develop critical reading skills:

- Teachers should not exert their authority to impose their views.
- The mode of inquiry in controversial ideas should be based on discussion rather than instruction.
- The discussion should protect the divergence of opinions among students.

According to Sally and Katie (2008), students need to determine the intention of the writer. It is essential to mention that the purpose of the text is not always stated directly in any part of the text; however, we can consider grammar and vocabulary as indicators. A text that aims at advising the reader includes modals of obligation and imperatives, whereas a text intended to entertain the text entails narrative tenses. In the same sense, we can organise a classroom debate by separating the class into groups and asking each group to read, summarise, and comment on the reading material.

### **5.10 Setting a Classroom Library**

Setting a class library refers to a simple box involving various titles, which are appropriate for first-year students' language proficiency. In other words, there are several aspects that teachers should take into consideration to organise a class library. The primary point that teachers may think about is; how to select books appropriate to students? And how

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to manage the library? In this respect, a reading course teacher can select titles chosen from the faculty library and require his learners to select from this list.

Furthermore, this library should include selecting books with different topics to match students' needs and interests. That is to say, the use of materials is related to the level of students. Definitely, for university students, it is suitable that the library comprises books, research papers, magazines, and articles written for native speakers. It necessitates authentic reading materials that involve reliable vocabulary and literature. Besides, teachers should select the most motivating books that fit students learning styles, interests, and levels.

Teachers need to involve their students in the process of selecting books for the library. Both teachers and learners need to develop useful strategies to preserve the collection of the library. In other words, they should act as partners to set and administer this library.

As students can choose their reading materials from the library according to their preferences and interests, teachers can ask them to review what they have read and give summaries about their readings. Students can increase skills such as; retelling, synthesising, making inferences, reflecting, clarifying, recalling details, and reviewing personal impressions.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

In this final chapter, some pedagogical implications have been suggested to cover the needs, and shortcomings teachers and students associated with the teaching and reading of culturally loaded texts in the English language department that are pinpointed in the previous chapter's findings. Then, different teaching techniques, types of activities have been selected and suggested by the researcher following the issues raised by the research informants. Furthermore, this chapter provides functional suggestions about how to select appropriate reading materials for EFL students, how to set clear goals in a reading subject, and how to inspire students to be efficient readers.

At the end of this chapter, the implications recommended by the investigator in the current chapter are in no way comprehensive. Still, they are expected to convey some ideas to syllabus designers, teachers, and learners to improve the EFL teaching/learning situation in the Algerian academic context. The overall objective would be to invite EFL learners to know more about both the target language and its culture via reading culturally loaded texts. It simultaneously intends to enhance students' awareness about reading cultural content.

## General Conclusion

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The current research entitled "The Effects of Cultural Schemata on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Ability ." tried to cast light upon the impact of Schema Theory (cultural schemata) on the process of reading cultural-based content. In fact, there are many concerns regarding the indisputable relationship between language and culture, and the emphasis on raising cultural knowledge has not yet got equal attention as other language features in EFL classrooms. Motivated by the problem mentioned above, I conducted a research study to investigate to what extent cultural schemata and pre-reading activities contribute to reading culturally loaded texts. In this respect, I refer to several scholars' views about the importance of schema theory in the teaching of reading comprehension. It is worth citing that the theories in favour of this subject led to testing the formulated hypotheses on Algerian University students.

In order to objectively gain useful results, the researcher used a case study as a research style and combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches in collecting and analysing data. Four main research instruments were used: classroom observation, questionnaires, students' interviews, and reading comprehension tests. The research was conducted in the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret where first-year EFL students and teachers were involved. For reliability reasons, other teachers from the universities of Mostaganem, Sidi Belabbas, and Laghouat participated in this study. The main objective of this work is to find answers to the research questions. In other words, this study tried to seek the effect of cultural schemata on EFL learners' reading comprehension of culturally loaded texts.

At the end of this research, it was concluded based on analysis of data collected from different research tools, namely the questionnaires and the reading comprehension tests, the existence of several aspects related to students' engagement in reading culturally loaded texts. The findings reveal that first-year EFL students face various difficulties that could hamper their reading comprehension and lead to poor achievements. The main obstacles are the lack of cultural schemata, topic unfamiliarity, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and diminutive syntactic knowledge. These findings are convenient with our hypothesis that the lack of learners' cultural knowledge impacts learners' comprehension and interpretation of meaning related to the target culture.

## General Conclusion

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By conducting reading comprehension tests, I noticed that most EFL students expressed considerable interest when they were engaged in reading culturally loaded texts. The research findings demonstrate that learners' familiarity with the content of the topic has a significant influence on their comprehension process. In this respect, students admit that tattoos and drinking Alcohol are wide commons in the Algerian culture. However, they are not aware of the topic of the Bonfire night celebration. Hence, this is substantial evidence that sharing the same cultural background knowledge with the target culture text promotes reading comprehension. The findings revealed that the familiarity of learners with the content of the texts helps them significantly in recalling information and relating the target texts to their prior knowledge, which enables them to read faster with better understanding. In other words, readers activate mental processes that enable them to understand a new foreign text.

Following the same line of light, the findings have emphasized that comprehension of a target text is not limited to the readers' linguistic knowledge. Still, activation of the content schemata also plays a vital role in helping the readers to understand the written text.

Another parameter in this study is the role of pre-reading activities. The results confirm our hypothesis, which says stimulating learner's background knowledge enables learners to read better and comprehend appropriately. Still, the findings endorse our hypothesis concerning the inclusion of enabling activities within the reading instruction. Indeed, a pre-reading task help students prepare for the reading activity by activating the relevant schemata and motivating them to read. Pre-reading activities can also help learners anticipate the topic of the texts. It can be concluded that pre-reading activities are a valuable gift that teachers can give to their students as an efficient means for improving the students' achievement in reading comprehension texts.

In sum, the findings lead us to say that pre-reading activities are necessary for successful reading instruction. That is to say, pre-reading activities are seen as an efficient means for readers to compensate for the absence of cultural schemata and possible vocabulary deficiencies. Indeed, they can develop a sense of commitment to their reading comprehension process. Furthermore, the research findings lead us to say that extensive reading can be a valuable strategy for first-year EFL students to enrich their background knowledge, developing vocabulary knowledge, and improving writing abilities.

## General Conclusion

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To conclude, EFL teachers can use schema theory to enhance the students' reading comprehension of foreign language texts. Moreover, it seems appropriate that the teachers should try to provide their students with schema-theory-based reading instruction, emphasizing the activation of readers' background knowledge. Effective implementation of this kind of pedagogy will compensate for the absence of schematic knowledge and enable Algerian EFL learners to be efficient readers. That is to say; Schema Theory is relevant for intermediate EFL students to boost their reading comprehension of foreign language texts.

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## Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Dear Students,

I am carrying out a survey for my Doctorate Thesis, and I call upon your help to answer the following questionnaire. Please, have the kindness to provide us with the necessary answers to the following questionnaire either by ticking the appropriate boxes or making full statements whenever necessary.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

### Section One: Personal Information

#### Q 1-Sex

- Male  - Female

Q 2: Age.....

Q 3: Have you ever been to an English – speaking country?

Yes  No

Q 4: Do you have any contact with foreigners?

Yes  No

### Section 2: The reading competence of EFL learners.

Q 5: Do you like the reading course?

Yes  No

Why.....

Q 6: How do you find the programme of reading comprehension?

Motivating  Interesting  Uninteresting

Why.....

Q 7: Concerning your English language competence, how do you evaluate your reading ability?

Very satisfying  Satisfying  Not satisfying

Q 8: According to you, which of the following reading strategies would be most useful for your in-class learning about English cultures?

- Predicting
- Using your previous knowledge
- Guessing the meaning of new words
- Summarising

**Q 9:** What kind of reading obstacles do you generally face?

- Lack of background knowledge
- Lack of cultural knowledge
- Lack of vocabulary knowledge
- Lack of reading strategies

**Q 10:** Are you satisfied with the reading material in the classroom?

Yes  No

Why?

.....

**Q 11:** Does your teacher activate your background knowledge before starting the course?

Always  Sometimes  Never

**Q 12:** Do you think that cultural background knowledge has positive effects on improving your reading comprehension?

Yes  No

Justify your answer: .....

**Section 3:** Learners' reflection on cultural schemata in EFL Reading

**Q 13:** Do you like reading about the target language culture?

Yes  No

Justify your answer: .....

**Q 14:** What are the benefits of reading cultural-based content in EFL classes?

Benefits of reading cultural-based content	Students' numbers	Percentage
Raising my awareness about the history and its relationship to culture		
Motivating me to learn more about the language		
It is helping me to know the aspects of other western cultures.		
Helping me in understanding my own culture and cultural identity.		
They are providing me with strategies for coping with culture shock.		
Made me more tolerant of the differences		
Improving my reading skills since there is a combination of culture and language.		
Developing critical attitudes towards both the western and the native cultures.		

**Q 15:** Does knowledge of cultural schemata improve EFL learners' reading comprehension ability?

Yes       No

**Q 16:** Comment in a small paragraph of about five or six lines about the effect of cultural background knowledge on your reading ability.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

**Dear Teachers,**

This questionnaire is designed to provide data for thesis research to investigate the issue of cultural schemata and its impact on teaching reading comprehension of foreign language texts. Please, have the kindness to provide us with the necessary answers to the following questions either by ticking the appropriate boxes or making full statements.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

### Section One: Teachers' Professional Background

Full name:.....
Gender: Male: <input type="checkbox"/> Female: <input type="checkbox"/>
University/ Institution:.....

#### Q 01: Educational level

- BA
- MA
- Magister
- Doctorate Science
- Doctorate LMD

#### Q 02: How long have you been teaching in the department of English?

- Less than five years  5 to 10 years  More than ten years

#### Q 03:Speciality:

- TEFL and Applied Linguistics
- Literature and Civilisation
- ESP
- Others.....

#### Q 04: Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?

- Yes  No

If yes, where? .....

#### Q 05: How long have you been teaching reading skills?

- Less than five years  5 to 10 years  More than ten years

#### Q 06: Do you think that reading is an essential skill for language teaching?

Yes  No

Justify, please? .....

**Q 07:** How much instructional time do you devote to reading skill teaching?

- Every day you meet students  Weekly
- Monthly  Each term

**Q 08:** What kind of techniques and strategies do you use in teaching reading skills?

.....

**Q 09:** How do you evaluate students' level of reading comprehension?

- Good  acceptable  Still low

**Q 10:** What kind of difficulties do teachers of reading face?

(You can tick more than one)

- Lack of students' motivation
- Text and topic selection
- Students' vocabulary shortage
- Others:.....

**Q 11:** How does reading relate to the following areas of language?

- Grammar.....
- Vocabulary.....
- Culture.....

**Q 12:** Is cultural background knowledge an important factor in reading comprehension skill enhancement? Yes  No

**Q 13:** Have you ever directed your students' attention toward the significance of cultural knowledge for successful reading?

Always  Sometimes  Never

**Section 3:** Teachers' reflection on culture in the EFL context

**Q 14:** How do you define the word "culture"?

- a) The whole set of artistic achievements and activities: music, theatre, dancing, poetry.

- b) The way of life common to a given group is generally illustrated by a set of norms and customs (the type of food, clothing, and ceremonies) that differentiate one group from another.
- c) Others (please specify).....

**Q 15:** Do you think exposing students to the FL culture improves their cultural competence and reading competence? Yes  No

**Q 16** Does the syllabus of the first-year reading comprehension subject involve cultural topics that excite students' interest?  
Yes, completely  Yes, partially  Not at all

**Q 17:** Comment in a small paragraph of about five or six lines about the effect of cultural background knowledge on EFL Learners' reading comprehension ability

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## **Appendix C: Students' Interview**

**Q 1:** Do you think it is important for EFL students to read about the English-speaking countries' cultural matters in their courses?

**Q 2:** Did you like the reading comprehension texts?

**Q 3:** What were the benefits you gained from reading these tests?

**Q 4:** What were the main obstacles you encountered during reading comprehension tests?

**Q 5:** In your opinion, which cultural topics do you think are suitable for improving your interest and cultural competence? (Please, rate from 1 to 5 for each selection; 1- Least useful, 2- less useful, 3- average, 4- useful, 5- most useful).

Thank you for your cooperation

## Appendix D: Why People Get Tattoos



Jack lay, quiet and unmoving, for thirty minutes while a stranger repeatedly stabbed him with sharp needles, causing blood to pour steadily out of his leg. Jack was getting a tattoo. His friend Tony had recently gotten a tattoo, and Jack was so impressed by Tony's bravery and his tattoo that he decided to get one too. Getting a tattoo because your friends and peers have it is just one reason why many young people in North America get tattoos today. Peer pressure, media influence, and personal expression are common reasons for wearing tattoos today.

The desire to be part of a group, to be accepted by one's friends or peers, can greatly influence what a person does. Sometimes, wearing a tattoo can be a sign that you belong to a certain group. Gangs often use special clothes and tattoos to identify their particular group. For example, in one gang, all the members may wear green army jackets and have large 'Xs' tattooed on their arms. It is not only gangs that have this type of special 'uniform'. Young people often belong to a certain group of friends. Some of these groups wear only brand-name clothes. Some wear only black clothes. Others wear tattoos. When a person's friends are all doing something, such as getting a tattoo, that person is more likely to do the same thing and get a tattoo.

The media is another big influence behind the popularity of tattoos in North America. A wide variety of media images show tattoos. Tattoos can be seen in people appearing in commercials selling expensive cars. Famous sports heroes with tattoos are shown in magazines. Fashion models are often seen in magazines and on TV wearing designer clothes that show their bodies tattooed with detailed and colourful patterns. These media images link

tattoos to ideas of wealth, success, and status. As a result, many people decide to get a tattoo for its fashion and status value.

It is not always the influence of other people or the media that results in a person getting a tattoo. Many people decide to wear tattoos to express their artistic nature, their beliefs, or their feelings -- in other words, to show their individuality. A musician in a rock band may get a tattoo of a guitar on the arm. Some environmentalists may tattoo pictures of endangered animals on their shoulders. Lovers may tattoo each other's names over their hearts. A tattoo can be a public sign to show what is important in a person's life.

As you can see, there are many reasons why young North Americans get tattoos. A tattoo can be part of a group's uniform. It can be a sign of fashion and an expression of individuality. The decision to get a tattoo is most often a result of friends or media's influence or the desire to express oneself. For Jack, it was a mixture of all three.

**Task 1:** Answer the following questions

1. Do you like tattoos? Why, why not?
2. Do you have a tattoo?
3. Do you know anybody who has a symbol? Describe it.
4. What is your general opinion of tattoos? Do you find them attractive, ugly, e t c?
5. Why do people have tattoos done?

**Task 2:** Match the vocabulary word with the best synonym or definition.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1 Peers                 | <b>A</b> -Rank or level in society.   |
| 2 Stranger              | <b>B</b> People in a similar group are usually based on age or status.              |
| 3 Identify environment. | <b>C</b> People who are interested in issues related to protecting the environment. |
| 4 Status                | <b>D</b> To be cut with a knife or sharp object.                                    |
| 5 Beliefs               | <b>E</b> A persons' values of right and wrong.                                      |
| 6 Media                 | <b>F</b> Something unique to each person.   |
| 7 Bravery               | <b>G</b> A person that you don't know.  |
| 8 Environmentalists     | <b>H</b> Sources of communication such as TV, radio, or the internet.               |
| 9 Stabbed               | <b>I</b> Acting with courage and confidence, without fear.                          |
| 10 Individuality        | <b>J</b> To show, or name, who or what something is.                                |

**Task 3:** Read the text and answer the following questions,

1. According to the text, what are the three most common reasons why a person gets a tattoo?
  - A. pressure from their peers
  - B. it is healthy
  - C. influence from the media
  - D. a way of personal expression
2. According to the text, which of the following are common ways people show they belong to a particular group?
  - A. wearing a tattoo

- B. wearing special clothes
- C. wearing a distinctive uniform
- D. wearing a special kind of socks

3. According to the text, media images are linked to \_\_\_\_\_. Choose all that apply.

- A. wealth
- B. status
- C. success
- D. debt

**Task 4:** Read again and answer the following questions.

- 1) Why do people get tattoos?
- 2) How does Jack think about people who get tattoos?
- 3) What are the possible artistic reasons for getting a tattoo?

**Task 5:**

- 1. What are your personal beliefs about tattooing?
- 2. What has influenced your ideas on tattoos?
- 3. How does your particular cultural group view tattoos? (Ethnic, Religious, Youth vs. Adults,
- 4. Express your opinion: You work at a music store. Everyone dresses very stylishly. Most people have piercings and tattoos. You start to make new friends; they suggest you get a tattoo. You don't like tattoos. What do you say?

.....

.....

.....

.....

## **Appendix E:**

### **BONFIRE NIGHT / GUY FAWKES NIGHT**

Every year on 5<sup>th</sup> November, people across the UK celebrate Bonfire Night or Guy Fawkes Night. They enjoy fireworks and bonfire parties. Still, not many people know the reason behind the celebration.

Its history began more than 400 years ago. After Queen Elizabeth, I took the throne of England in 1558. She made some laws against the Roman Catholics. They were treated unfairly and hoped that the new king, James I, would change the laws, but he did not. Instead, he passed even more laws against the Catholics when he became the King of England after Elizabeth I's death in 1603. At that time, Catholic people in England were discriminated. For example, Catholics were not allowed to practise their religion in secret. There were even fines for people who did not attend the Protestant church on Sunday or holy days.

Guy Fawkes was one of those who did not feel happy with Catholics' ways were treated at that time. So, in 1605, a group of 14 Catholic men led by Robert Catesby plotted to kill King James and his leaders. They wanted to blow up the House of Parliament in London on the day set for King James to open the Parliament. The men bought a house next door to the House of Parliament. The house had a cellar, which went under the parliament building. They placed 36 barrels of gunpowder under the house and waited for the king to arrive. Guy Fawkes was given a job to keep watch over the barrels of gunpowder and light the fuse. However, the guards found out about the secret plan after an anonymous letter was sent to one of the lords telling him not to attend the Parliament's opening.

On the morning of 5 November, soldiers discovered Guy Fawkes hidden in the cellar and arrested him. Guy Fawkes was taken to the Tower of London, where he told the plot's truth after he was tortured. Guy Fawkes and his people were executed.

In celebration of his survival, King James ordered that the people of England should have a great bonfire on the night of 5 November. In 1706, the 1st year to follow Guy Fawkes failed Gunpowder Plot, a dummy of the Pope was burned on the bonfire. Since then, a dummy has been burned, even though Guy Fawkes was not put to death that way.

Since then, every year, on the 5th of November, the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, Guy Fawkes, is remembered. Throughout England, in towns and villages, people light huge bonfires, let off magnificent fireworks, burn an effigy (a homemade model of a man, like a scarecrow) and celebrate the fact the Parliament and James I were not blown sky-high by Guy Fawkes. The celebration is known as Guy Fawkes Night or Bonfire Night.

**Task 1: Guess the meaning of these words**

- Blow up
- Cellars
- Bonfire
- Execution
- Fireworks
- Gunpowder
- Parliament

**Task 2: Skim through the text and answer the questions choosing the correct option**

1. Where did “Guy Fawkes” take place?

- A) Canada    B) Mexico    C) Great Britain    D) Australia

2. When is Bonfire Night celebrated?

- A) 21st of March 1990  
B) 5th of November 1605  
C) 12th of October 1492  
D) 16th of September 1810 3.

3. How did “Guy Fawkes” die? A) Tortured B) Executed C) Burned D) Drawn

4. Who was “Guy Fawkes”? A) A traitor B) A hero C) A King D) A teacher

5. Why were Catholics discriminated against?

- A) Because of their race B) because of their disability C) because of their religion

6. What year did the Gunpowder Plot take place?

- A) 1505    B) 1605    C) 1705

**Task 3: Read the text and answer the following questions.**

1. How many people set the Gunpowder Plot?

.....

2. Who was the leader of the Gunpowder Plot?

.....

3. What did they plan to do?

.....

4. Who did they want to kill?

.....

5. What religion were the plotters?

.....

6. Who was arrested on 5 November 1605?

.....

7. Who ordered to celebrate the failed plot?

.....

**Task 4:**

Do you have a similar event in your native culture? If yes, describe it.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Appendix F: Drinking Alcohol

The British love alcohol so much that every social event is about how much they can drink. You might have noticed that any story a Brit tells you about what he or she did over the weekend or during a particular holiday mostly starts with: ‘I’m too hungover today and will end with ‘We ended up getting too drunk.’ If they tell you about their weekend by starting with ‘I had a quiet one,’ that just means they did not get incredibly drunk, but they are too embarrassed to admit it.

In British culture, having fun is synonymous with drinking as much alcohol as humanly possible. So, going out to bars or clubs at weekends is less about exploring new places and dancing to music while having a drink or two as it is about getting as much as possible. People start their evenings on a conscious mission to be wasted.

Do not get me wrong; it is not that I do not drink; it is just that I do not go out to get drunk. There may have been a few nights out when I ended up drunk that was good for me, but that is not my intention as a rule.

I did learn the term ‘binge-drinking at school before I moved out here, but I didn’t know you guys do it all the time!

We were taught that pubs in the UK close early and therefore young people in Britain are under pressure to drink a lot and fast. In my experience, though, people drink at home before going to clubs to save money, but drink as much and as fast anyway; and I learned that binge drinking is by no means confined to young people.

The only difference, as a friend in his 40s once told Me that ‘the older you get, the more you have to drink. You can tell how much they love alcohol by the sheer number of words that mean ‘drunk’: smashed, pissed, wasted, fucked, and shit-faced, obliterated, gazeboes, and retraced are just some of them.

Alcohol is so ingrained in the life of British people that anyone who does not drink is immediately seen as suspicious and odd and, more importantly, boring unless they abstain for religious reasons, which is acceptable.

However, there is one other exception: being foreign. You could always blame your not-drinking habit on the culture of your country, but beware that this will always stand between you and them as a sort of invisible wall. So if you are not religious, you don’t want to play the foreign card, but you also don’t want to drink on a night out, be prepared to be bullied into having an alcoholic drink, or be made fun of for not drinking for the whole time. Declining to partake in the drinking, especially on occasions like a birthday, is almost a personal insult.

I once went to a wedding where I was glad to catch up with a few old friends after not seeing them. But, I was driving, and so I didn't drink. Before I knew it, the whole table gave me a disapproving look, and one of my mates said: "Come on! You have to have a drink! We haven't seen each other in ages!" I thought: 'what difference does it make if I have a drink or not? It is still nice to spend time together. I said: "OK, I'll leave my car here and order a taxi" and pretended to sip some wine. Everyone was happy.

Probably half an hour later, I didn't even have to pretend to be drinking anymore because everyone was so drunk they had no idea what was going on anymore. I saved about £30 by not ordering a taxi home and ordering a taxi to get my car back. It was a great party.

Why do they love to get drunk so much? Because it is the only way they can have real conversations – sorry heart-to-hearts. It is the only way to build up the courage to dance to music, chat with strangers, and tell people what they think of them.

After a night like that, the next day will probably be a 'quiet one,' which will be seen as acceptable by all.

**Task 1:**

- 1) What springs to your mind when you hear these words 'alcohol' 'drinking'?
- 2) Write down all of the different words you associate with the word 'drinking' . Put the words into different categories.

What are the things that you know about drinking alcohol in British culture?	Things you are not sure of drinking alcohol in British culture	Things you would like to know about drinking alcohol in British culture

**Task 2:** Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. Correct the false one(s).

- 1) Social events in Britain are assimilated with drinking a certain amount of alcohol.  
(.....)  
.....

- 2) In British culture, having fun is synonymous with attending parties and dancing as much as possible. (.....)  
.....
- 3) Teenagers in Britain are eager to drink. (.....).....
- 4) In the life of a Brit, that anyone who does not drink is considered a serious and wise person. (.....)  
.....
- 5) People prefer to drink at clubs to enjoy their life rather than accumulating money. (.....)  
.....
- 6) Binge drinking is extended to a variety of people. (.....)  
.....

**Task 3:**

**A) Supply the words, phrases, or expressions (from the text) that are closest in meaning to the following:**

recognized = ..... limited = ..... refrain = ..... imperceptible = .....

**B) Supply the words, phrases, or expressions (from the script) that are opposite in meaning to the following:**

native ≠ ..... part ≠ ..... approving ≠ ..... exciting ≠ .....

**Task 4: Read and answer the following questions**

- 1) What is specific about British weekends and holidays?  
.....
- 2) What did they learn at school?  
.....
- 3) Pick out the expressions, which show that British people love alcohol.  
.....
- 4) How do British people conceive anyone who does not drink?  
.....
- 5) Why did he pretend to be drunk?  
.....
- 6) What is the need to drink alcohol so much?  
.....  
.....

## Résumé

Cette étude de recherche vise à étudier l'impact des schémas culturels sur le processus de lecture de textes culturellement chargés, et si l'utilisation d'activités de pré-lecture compense l'absence de familiarité culturelle. À cet égard, les lecteurs d'Anglais comme langue étrangère apportent au texte un large éventail d'expériences. Par conséquent, une telle diversité de connaissances antérieures influe sur leur perception et leur interprétation des textes en langue étrangère. Voici le rôle des schémas culturels, qui est en effet un rôle très critique. Comment les différences culturelles dans les connaissances de base, influencent-elles la capacité de compréhension en lecture des apprenants ? Pour reconnaître l'effet des schémas culturels sur la compréhension, il est essentiel de comprendre d'abord le rôle significatif que jouent les connaissances de base dans le processus de lecture. Par conséquent, pour mener à bien cette recherche, une sélection de tests de compréhension en lecture a été assignée à un groupe expérimental et à un groupe témoin dans une expérience en quasi-classe d'étudiants de première année à l'Université Ibn Khaldoun (Tiaret). Alors que le groupe expérimental a reçu des tâches de pré-lecture pour activer ses connaissances de base, le groupe témoin n'a reçu aucun traitement. Nous avons collecté des données auprès de 40 participants et les résultats montrent que de nombreux apprenants appartenant au groupe témoin affichent un manque de schémas culturels car leurs connaissances préalables ne sont pas activées, ce qui pourrait bien avoir un impact négatif sur leurs pratiques de lecture. En revanche, les participants du groupe expérimental ont obtenu de meilleurs résultats au test de compréhension que ceux du groupe témoin. En bref, il existe une corrélation entre l'activation des connaissances de base des apprenants et l'augmentation de la capacité de compréhension en lecture.

**Mots Clés:** Schémas culturels, Connaissances conceptuelles, Processus interactif, Compréhension de lecture, Théorie des Schémas

## الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة تأثير المخططات الثقافية على عملية قراءة النصوص المحملة ثقافياً وما إذا كان استخدام أنشطة ما قبل القراءة يكافئ غياب الألفة الثقافية. في هذا الصدد ، يجلب قراء اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إلى النص مجموعة واسعة من الخبرات. وبالتالي ، فإن هذا التنوع في المعرفة السابقة يؤثر على إدراكهم وتفسيرهم لنصوص اللغات الأجنبية. هنا يأتي دور المخططات الثقافية ، والتي هي بالفعل دور حاسم للغاية. كيف تؤثر الاختلافات الثقافية في الخلفية المعرفية على قدرة الطالب لاستيعاب النصوص الاجنبية؟ للتعرف على تأثير المخططات الثقافية على الفهم ، من الضروري أولاً فهم الدور الهام الذي تلعبه المعرفة الخلفية في عملية القراءة واستيعاب النصوص. لذلك ، لإجراء هذا البحث ، تم تخصيص مجموعة مختارة من اختبارات الفهم القرائي لمجموعة تجريبية ومجموعة ضابطة في تجربة شبه صافية لطلاب السنة الأولى من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة ابن خلدون (تيارت). بينما تم تزويد المجموعة التجريبية بمهام ما قبل القراءة لتفعيل معارفهم الخلفية ، بينما لم تتلق المجموعة الضابطة أي تفعيلات. جمعنا البيانات من 40 مشاركاً. تظهر النتائج أن العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية المنتمين إلى المجموعة الضابطة يظهرون نقصاً في المخططات الثقافية نظراً لعدم تنشيط معرفتهم السابقة ، مما قد يؤثر على ممارسات القراءة لديهم. على النقيض من ذلك ، كان أداء المشاركين في المجموعة التجريبية أفضل في اختبار الاستيعاب من أولئك الموجودين في المجموعة الضابطة. باختصار ، هناك علاقة ارتباط بين تنشيط المعرفة الخلفية للطلاب وزيادة القدرة على فهم النصوص الاجنبية.

