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Cultural Significance in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching with Special Emphasis on Reading Comprehension through Cultural Schemata

Hasan Bedir

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Cultural Significance in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching with Special Emphasis on Reading Comprehension through Cultural Schemata

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Hasan Bedir

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Çukurova University

I certify that this thesis is satisfactory for the award of the degree of Master of Arts.

Doc Dr. John Terrance Webb

Supervisor

Prof Dr. Özden Ekmekçi

(Member of Examining Committee)

Doc Dr. Vildan Akan

(Member of Examining Committee)

Certified that this thesis comforms to the formal standards of the Institute of Social Sciences.

Prof. Dr. Nejat Erk

(Director of the Institute)

I certify that this thesis is satisfactory for the award of the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

(Member of Examining Committee)

(Member of Examining Committee)

Certified that this thesis comforms to the formal standards of the Institute of Social Sciences.

Prof. Dr. Nejat Erk

(Director of the Institute)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to define the relationship of culture and language through the review of related literature, on one hand, and to show how significant cultural background is in reading comprehension by studying on university students, on the other.

Chapter One deals with the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, hypothesis, and the definitions.

Chapter Two consists of two parts, and focuses on the review of the related literature. The first part includes the relationship of culture and language. The second one is about the affect of cultural background in reading comprehension.

What sort of method was used to test the hypothesis is shown in chapter three.

Data gathered from the subjects were analyzed and displayed in tables and graphs in chapter four.

In the last chapter, conclusions, the results and the implications reached at were stated. Appendixes, and bibliography are also attached to the end of this chapter.

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INTRODUCTION

Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Language is at the same time an outcome or a result of the culture as a whole, and also a means by which other facets of the culture are shaped and communicated. A language does not exist in a vacuum. It is integrated into the culture of a people, and reflects the totality of beliefs and sentiments of the speech community.

Children growing up in a social group learn ways of doing things, ways of expressing themselves, ways of looking at things, what things they should value and what things they should regard as worthless, or avoid, what is expected from them and what they may expect from others. These attitudes, reactions, and unspoken assumptions become part of their life without their being conscious of them. The culturally determined features may be recognized in their actions, social relationships, moral convictions, and dislikes. A language is learned and used within such a context, drawing from the cultural content meanings and functions which must be assimilated by language learners if they are to control the language as native speakers control it.

In a country where there is one predominant culture, students will have learned, as they grow up, to react in certain ways and to value things. When they come across a different set of behavior patterns and different set of

values, this may come out as a shock, causing them to consider the speakers of the language they are learning as strange, bad-mannered, rather stupid, or even morally lax. For example, a man eating cheese and drinking tea at eleven in the morning would be thought of as a man eating breakfast in Turkish society. But if the cultural concept "breakfast" is to be described, we would probably say "it depends." It depends upon the time of the day, the type of food being eaten, and many more cultural considerations built into the linguistic form. In Turkish culture it could be considered a late breakfast, but in another culture it could be considered a different breakfast, eaten after one has worked from eight a.m to ten a.m

The cultural concept is an underlying pattern, not the specific act, and usually contains or reflects all of the major elements of most basic patterns. In every language, even at the elementary stage of learning, features such as mentioned above would probably be a problem to handle for monolingual students. This can be often observed in written texts such as textbooks, advertisements, literary materials. Rivers (1968) tells of African students learning English who were shocked when they read a dialogue in which a person refused a drink which was a offered second time. In many societies this would indicate that the visitor had not enjoyed the drink the first time, whereas in others such a refusal is considered polite behavior in a formal situation, or a natural response in an informal situation.

One particular area of language learning and teaching in which new questions are being asked about the relationship between language and thought is in reading comprehension. Goodman (1971) has posited a psycholinguistic view in which reading is viewed as an interactive process between language and thought. According to Coady (1979: 7), this interactive process involves three factors: "conceptual abilities, background knowledge, and process strategies." In other words, for successful reading to occur, an individual must possess basic intellectual ability, knowledge of the world, and reading strategies such as familiarity with the phonology, graphemes, and lexicon of language. Until recently, reading classes in language learning have tended to focus on the process strategies.

According to Fries (1963), in reading a foreign-language text, we extract three levels of meaning: lexical meaning, structural or grammatical meaning, and sociocultural meaning. For lexical or grammatical meaning students may turn to a dictionary or a grammar textbook. It is sociocultural meaning that is the most difficult for a second-language learner (SLL) to perceive, for this involves the values, beliefs, and attitudes of speech community. These aspects can be considered as cultural knowledge, and cannot be ignored in a model of reading. Reading is a complex skill and contains many different aspects or characteristics. It is not simply a decoding operation. It is not enough for students only to figure out meaning, despite ambiguity of the vocabulary

employed in the text. Therefore, teaching a foreign language poses a serious problem, especially in a country where cultural prejudices are great. For example, a Greek student of English, inculcated in beliefs of Turks being wild, illiterate, and barbarian savages would tend to refuse to come terms with a reading passage that claimed Turks are not the way he has believed them to be. In addition, the success of a second-language program depends on reducing the culture bondage of a student and motivating him to understand the culture of the target language.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Johnson argues that "how a person comprehends a text is related to how the textual material relates to his own background knowledge," and he points out that "there is a growing amount of evidence that one very important factor affecting the reading comprehension of second-language learners is a lack of necessary cultural background knowledge" (Johnson 1981:169-181).

In foreign-language learning and teaching we assume that our students already know how to read, but we don't pay much attention to whether or not they adequately understand what they read. Readers acquire meaning from a text by analyzing the words and sentences against the backdrop of their own personal knowledge of the world. Such personal knowledge is conditioned by a variety of factors -- age, sex, race, nationality, occupation -- which can be described as a person's culture. Most of us are largely unaware of the effects of culture on our communication with others. What is here meant by communication is not only language, but also ideas that must involve a common understanding.

To find out whether cultural knowledge of the target language affects communication in learning this language, a questionnaire was given to forty students of intermediate-level. Thirty students stated that in learning English a good foreknowledge of the cultural aspects of the countries

(England and the United States) where the target language they have been studying is the dominant tongue, forms a part of their mastering the language. Twenty-five of the students stated that they are having difficulty in comprehending written text such as magazines, advertisements, and so forth, though they are adequate in grammar and lexicon. Twenty-three of the students stated that cultural aspect, of the target language should be taught, in addition to grammar, lexicon, speaking, reading, and listening.

Many written materials used in foreign language classrooms are culturally oriented, thus making it difficult for target language students to arrive at the accurate meaning. The difficulty in getting the accurate meaning is related to a lack of cross-cultural understanding, rather than a lack of linguistic competence. This means that it is not enough for a person to understand the structure of a sentence to communicate; one must also know what s/he knows is contextually appropriate. A cultural pattern is a phenomenon demonstrated often in forms, and is extremely difficult to describe. Given the social context and the specific act, a native speaker seldom has difficulty in naming the cultural pattern. S/he often has difficulty in understanding the cultural concepts of what s/he is reading. In understanding what is going on in a text, as well as having expectations about behavior and attitudes to behavior, we need also to know about everyday experiences in the culture , and have them shared by writer and reader.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

As mentioned above, an overhelming majority of students questioned believe in the necessity of acquainting themselves with the cultural aspects of the language they study, so that the target language can be learnt. From the point of the view of the above findings, it is stated that culture has been a neglected area in language teaching and learning for many years. One aim of this study is to define the relationship between culture and language. In addition, there is an attempt to determine how successful the students trained in the cultural aspects of the target language (textbooks used in language learning and teaching often have to be decoded by Turkish students studying English) are likely to be in comprehending written culture-based texts.

1.3. Scope of the Study

In this study, first of all, the relationship of culture and language will be shown by reviewing of the related literature. Next, to show the importance of cultural knowledge, culture-based texts with a set of reading comprehension questions will be given to the intermediate-level subjects. The subjects will consist of two groups: experimental and control. The experimental group will have a training program of some two months, two hours a week, while the control group goes on with their traditional education. After the two months a posttest (the same as the pretest) will

be given to both groups, and the results will be analyzed. The subjects will all be Turkish university students who have never been to any English-speaking country. Some of the commonest cultural aspects both in British English and American English will be at issue.

1.4. Hypothesis

In this study, it is hypothesized that there exists a correlation between learners' foreknowledge of the target-language culture, and their acquisition of that language. Learners who have been taught, through a training period, about culture of the target language are more likely to achieve greater success in comprehending written culture-based texts than those learners who have not been provided with the above- mentioned training. This hypothesis is based on the "cultural schemata" (the background knowledge about cultural aspects of the language being learned).

Cultural patterns: structured or repeated assumptions, principles, values, beliefs, and courses of action relative to human social interaction (Damen 1987).

Enculturation: culture learning while going on living, and socialization in native culture.

Intercultural communication: acts of communication between individuals sharing given cultural characteristics; communication between subcultural groups.

Pragmatics: study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and the context and situation in which they are used (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics).

Psycholinguistics: study of the mental process that a person uses in producing and understanding language, and how the human learns language (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics).

Sociolinguistics: branch of linguistics dealing with language in relation to social factors, that is, social class, educational level, type of education, age, sex, etc. (Damen 1987).

CHAPTER 2

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

2.1.1. Definition of Culture

Since this thesis is based on language learning and the importance of cultural aspects in language learning, culture may be defined as the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, and so forth of a person who belongs to a particular society.

Scholars often define culture in two different ways. "In the anthropological sense, the definition is often labeled 'small-c culture'... which means that its breadth encompasses the life of population. Another definition focuses on the major product and contribution of a society in general, or of outstanding individuals in that society. With this approach, often referred to as 'large-C culture', students deal with the economic, social and political history, and the great politicians, heroes, writers, artists, etc., of the nation" (Rivers 1968: 318).

Listed below are several definitions of culture. They each reveal some facet of this concept and offer insight for those who would better understand culture's nature,

function, components, and characteristics. The chronological arrangement provides a simplified way of reviewing the changing nature of culture as it has evolved in the field of anthropology and related disciplines, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present time.

Tylor (1871) points out that "culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (cited by Damen 1987: 73). This is the classic anthropological definition of culture; it emphasizes the inclusive nature of the concept of culture as the major combining concept under which all other variables must be placed, including forms of communication, artifacts, belief system, and habits.

Kluckhohn points out that "culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group's knowledge stored up (in memories of men; in books and objects) for future use.... A culture constitutes a storehouse of the pooled learning of the group" (Kluckhohn 1944: 24-25). The above definition was offered at a time when the emphasis was on anthropological field work, highly inductive research, and the discovery of the many variations that cultural patterns might take. The concept of culture, defined above, emphasized what is observable and shared.

In addition to these definitions, some touched on the close relationships of language and culture, and on the individual who bears a culture and given cultural system. Kluckhohn broadens the definition of culture and says that "culture is like a map... No participant in any culture knows all the details of the cultural map... Just as a map isn't the territory but an abstract representation of a particular area, so also a culture is an abstract description of trends toward uniformity in the words, deeds, and artifacts of a human group. If a map is accurate you can read it, you won't get lost; if you know a culture you will know your way around in the life of a society" (Kluckhohn 1944: 29).

According to Hall, "culture is communication and communication is culture" (1959: 169). In this definition the concepts of communication and culture are integrated, and implications are extended. Therefore, if communication is culture, and vice versa, then, human beings cannot adequately communicate. Language and culture have influenced each other. A growing adequate comprehension of peoples' behavioral patterns and their underlying values clearly give a more positive attitude to the person who is trying to learn the target language. Furthermore, language meaning is obscured without some recognition of cultural values.

Definition of culture in recent researches has focused on culture as a system of ideas or organizations of cognitive knowledge. According to Goodenough, "a society's culture

consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (Goodenough 1964: 36).

By such definition, it seems that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotion; it is, rather, an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their model for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Damen 1987).

Other definitions were then to follow even more abstract formulations, concentrating not only on universal properties of the human mind, but also on the process of symbol sharing, and the relationships they generated. For example, Schneider, by 1972s, states that "culture takes man's position vis-à-vis the world rather than a man's position on how to get along in the world as it is given... " (cited by Damen 1987: 70). According to Schneider, culture floats on a higher plane than observable behavior. Thus, culture is defined as a system of symbols and meaning. It comprises categories, or units, and units and rules about relationships and modes of behavior that cannot be put into words.

In 1974, by analyzing cultural symbols and meaning and their usage between individuals, Keesing defined culture as "a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its

specificities, not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his world" (Keesing 1974: 89). This definition addresses the recurrent problem that faces all those who would study culture. Cultural symbols and meanings are shared through interactions between individuals, and yet the full range of meaning is never fully understood by any individual who suffers in understanding culture. In addition, if a person acquires cultural patterns as an individual, then the main part of culture must be in the individual.

Frake, by considering the definition of Kluckhohn in the 1940s, claims that people are not only **map readers** but are also **map makers**. He states that "culture does not provide a cognitive map, but rather a set of principles for map making and navigation... Different cultures are like different schools of navigation designed to cope with terrains and seas" (Frake 1981: 375-376). These definitions of culture emphasized the importance of human diversity and variations in patterns of behavior. The authors, who defined culture as above, stressed the insider's view and the role of culture in human perception.

"Culture refers to that relatively unified set of shared symbolic ideas associated with societal patterns of cultural ordering" (Gudykunst and Kim 1984:11). Here, a definition of culture focuses on the symbolic nature of cultural meaning and its relationship to the way societies are ordered, as well as on the role of culture in this ordering.

All the definitions cited above give different definitions of culture. After reviewing all these definitions , for the purpose of this thesis, culture is defined as the background knowledge about some cultural aspects (attidudes, customs, behavior, values, social relation, differences in age, amount of intimacy, social positon, and emotional tension reflected in the choice of appropriate pronouns and verbs) of the language being learned.

2.1.2. Components of Culture

After such definitions of culture, major areas of culture should be studied. Therefore, components of culture must not be ignored. Edward T. Hall derives one hundred categories from ten primary message systems, which are **1**. Interaction, **2**. Association, **3**. Subsistence, **4**. Bisexuality **5**. Territoriality, **6**. Temporality, **7**. Learning, **8**. Play, **9**. Defense, and **10**. Exploitation.

From these ten primary message systems, Hall has created an interrelated **Map of Culture** (Hall 1959: 174-175). The order of the ten systems (in Figure 1) is supposed to represent theoretically the evolution of culture. Each primary title horizantally and vertically includes ten cultural components, totalling a hundred subtitles.

According to Damen, "the Hall grid provides a handy reference to consider major areas of cross-cultural variation,

including such social categories as role, status, class, and hierarchy, as well as the physical and psychological environment. Other variations can be found in perception, patterns of thinking, relationships of individuals, functions of language, and nonverbal communication, including uses of space, time, gestures, and body movement" (Damen 1987: 89-92).

Hall (1959) gives a brief explanation of these ten primary message systems as follows:

Interaction is a primary characteristic of all life, and ultimately everything man does involves interaction with something else.

Association is the basis for the structuring of societies. It has its roots in the joining of individual units.

Subsistence deals with the nutritional requirements of man and the way in which these are met in a particular society.

Bisexuality is the "answer" most life forms adopted to meet the need of a mixed genetic background.

Territoriality and Temporality help man to define himself.

Learning is the deep and wide knowledge gained through reading written texts and study, and is important as an adaptive mechanism.

Play deals with the activities of the people for amusement, and also includes humor.

Defense includes religion, war,law enforcement, medicine, etc.

Exploitation is the extension man makes of his body to utilize the environment (Hall 1959: 46-60).

Primary Message Systems	Interactional 0	Organizational 1	Economic 2	Sexual 3	Territorial 4	Temporal 5	Instructional 6	Recreational 7	Protective 8	Exploitational 9
Interaction 0	Communication Vocal qualifiers Kinesics Language	Status and Role	Exchange	How the sexes interact	Places of interaction	Times of interaction	Teaching and learning	Participation in the arts and sports (active and passive)	Protecting and being protected	Use telephones, signals, writing, etc.
Association 1	Community	Society Class Caste Government	Economic roles	Sexual roles	Local group roles	Age groups roles	Teachers and learners	Entertainers and athletes	Protectors (doctors, clergy, soldiers, police, etc.)	Use of group property
Subsistence 2	Ecological community	Occupational groupings	Work Formal work Maintenance Occupations	Sexual division of labor	Where the individual eats, cooks, etc.	When the individual eats, cooks, etc.	Learning from working	Pleasure from working	Care of health, protection of livelihood	Use of foods, resources, and equipment
Bisexuality 3	Sex Community (clans, etc.)	Marriage groupings	Family	The Sexes Masc. vs.Fem. Sex biological) Sex technical)	Areas assigned to individuals by virtue of sex	Periods assigned to individuals by virtue of sex	Teaching and learning sex roles	Participation in recreation by sex	Protection of sex and fertility	Use of sex-differentiating decoration and adornment
Territoriality 4	Community territory	Group territory	Economic areas	Men's and women's territories	Space formal space Informal space Boundaries	Scheduling of space	Teaching and learning individual space assignments	Fun, playing games, etc., in terms of space	Privacy	Use of fences and markers
Temporality 5	Community cycles	Group cycles	Economic cycles	Men's and women's cyclical activities	Territorially determined cycles	Time Sequence Cycles Calendar	When the individual learns	When the individual plays	Rest, vacations, holidays	Use of time-telling devices etc.
Learning 6	Community lore-what gets taught and learned	Learning groups-educational institutions	Reward for teaching and learning	What the sexes are taught	Places for learning	Scheduling of learning (group)	Enculturation Rearing Informal learning Education	Making learning fun	Learning self-defense and to stay healthy	Use of recreational materials (playthings)
Play 7	Community play-the arts and sports	Play groups-teams and troupes	Professional sports and entertainment	Men's and women's play, games	Recreational areas	Play seasons	Instructional play	Recreation Fun Playing Games	Exercise	Use of materials for protection
Defense 8	Community defenses-structured defense systems	Defense groups-armies, police, public health, organized religion	Economic patterns of defense	What the sexes defend (home, honor, etc.)	What places are defended	The When of defense	Scientific, religious, and military training	Mass exercises and military games	Protection Formal defenses Informal defenses Technical defenses	Use of materials for protection
Exploitation 9	Communication networks	Organizational networks (cities, building groups, etc.)	Food, resources, and industrial equipment	What men and women are concerned with and own	Property-what is enclosed, counted, and measured	What periods are measured and recorded	School buildings, training aids, etc.	Amusement and sporting goods and their industries	Fortifications, armaments, medical equipment, safety devices	Material Systems Contact w//environment Motor habits Technology

Figure 1: A Map of Culture

(Hall 1959: 174-175)

2.1.3. Language and Culture

The native language is learned along with the ways and attitudes of a social group, and these find expression through the language. Thus, the language is an internal part of the functioning social system. The psychologist Osgood set out a theory of language "meaning". He states that full meaning of words for individuals is the result of the sum total of experiences they have had with those words in the environment in which they learned them. When individuals are from the same group, there will be no particular problem, as they have had similar experiences. The meaning of a "word" is shared by them all, but it may differ in certain respects from the meaning this word has for another group (cited by Rivers 1968: 318).

Culture has been attached to language learning and teaching. The language teacher is supposed to be cultured person and the learner is supposed to enhance his own culture as he learns a second language. The culture of a foreign country whose language is being studied, as reflected in its literature, art, architecture, music, dance, and like is the subject of much consideration and is often treated at length in speech through pictures, newspapers, clothing, and other cultural articles and in other ways.

Since value judgements are acquired in the culture in which the individual has grown up, and are accepted without

much question by most members of a major social group or perhaps more particularly within a sub-group, individuals need to be conscious of the values and attitudes held by speakers or writers with whom they are interacting. When an English speakers say he is a "truck driver" we understand he drives trucks for a living, while few would give the same interpretation to "he is a Volkswagen driver." The embedded cultural information is that people do not normally drive a Volkswagen for a living, as they may trucks, but can only own one to drive to and from another occupation.

To make the communication sensible, meaning of the speech or the sentences should be analyzed and correctly interpreted. In the analysis of the meaning, Bever (1972:101) states that there are four components of meaning that make the communication sensible. These are semantic meaning, cultural ideas (of which linguistic ideas are a subset), linguistic ideas, and personal ideas.

Semantic meaning represents the central meaning or the meaning of the objects related to the real world. This thinking is shared across cultures, because human beings have had similar experiences in a common physical reality. Semantic meaning is drawn by the knowledge of the content of the words involved (plus knowledge about meanings combined in sentences). For example "she cannot bear children" may have two meanings, by dealing with the two meanings of "bear". First it may be understood "she is unable to give birth to

children", second "she cannot tolerate children". The words "bear" used in the above sentences has the same sementic property in its use as a verb.

Cultural ideas represent the meaning of a concept with reference to its user, context and situation. " 'She is mourning' conveys the notion of wearing black to a Italian, but wearing white to a Korean" (Rivers 1968: 319). The semantic meaning conveyed to both is the visible expression of sadness at the death of some person. The cultural ideas of black or white as appropriate for mourning does not affect the essential semantic meaning of "mourning," although lack of knowledge of the cultural idea implied by the statement may result in inappropriate behavior and miscomprehension, as for a Turk, ('She is not mourning! She's wearing white!').

Linguistic ideas refer to the way the structural forms of a language shape the message conveyed and perceived. "Will we go now?" may be expressed in Turkish "Şimdi mi gideceğiz?" The reaction of the parties may be the same, but the form of the message in Turkish throws the stress on nowness, and the immediacy of it, as conveyed by the future tense of the verb. The English expression makes emphasis on who is involved in the going and the who takes part in making the decision. This means that Turkish-speakers stress the going and the time, but on the other hand by a native speaker of English stresses who decides to go.

Personal ideas must be considered within both interpersonal relations and interpreting artistic expression (in songs, poems or other forms of literary expression). With one family "I can't go out! My aunt is coming!" may be clearly understood, because visits by aunts are always preceded by thorough housecleaning. In another family one would expect: "I can see you tonight as long as I'm home by ten. My aunt is coming." In this case no special preparation is required for visits by aunts because they are considered members of the immediate family group who integrate effortlessly into the situation as they find it.

By analyzing the components of meaning, Rivers states that "students acquiring another language must learn how to express the semantic meaning (through acquisition of vocabulary, idioms, verb forms, articles, and so on); they must learn the connotative meaning of these expressions as used in the new culture (the evaluative and reactive aspects of meaning) along with the special linguistic devices employed within culture for the expression of these meanings" (Rivers, 1968: 320-322).

Whether it is realized or not, conveying impressions of another culture can not be avoided. Rivers states that "language can not be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded, and any listening to the utterances of native speakers, any attempt at authentic use of the language to convey the messages, any reading of original

text, any examination of pictures of native speakers engaged in natural activities will introduce a cultural element" (Rivers, 1968: 320).

Arguing that foreign-language teaching aims to instill new values in the learner, values associated with the language and culture, Alptekin and Alptekin (1984) suggest that teaching English as a foreign language in Third World countries can lead to cultural colonization, because the culture of the English-speaking world is not clearly contrasted with that of the learner's own. They suggest that the model which the learner is required to carry on should be clearly that of the successful bilingual rather than of the monolingual and monocultural native speaker of English.

Buttjes (1982) identifies three basic positions. The first, "pragmatic-communicative oriented", means teaching about culture which is intended to alleviate problems of communication in the target language. The second approach is to give learners a critical understanding of a foreign people, of their own view of themselves and their values. This is called "ideological-understanding oriented". The third one is called "political-action oriented". This suggests the developing of critical understanding, encourages learners to accept particular historical developments and presents social situations as definite and fixed, to respond critically, analytically, and, as a consequence, to analyze their own social environment with critical understanding. Buttjes then

claims that "culture learning is actually a key factor in being able to use and master a foreign linguistic system, and it is a part of language learning and teaching" (cited by Byram 1989: 60).

Learning to understand a foreign culture should help an individual who learns another language (culture which s/he is trying to understand) to use words and expressions more skillfully and authentically; to understand levels of language and situationally appropriate language; to act naturally with people of the other culture while recognizing and accepting their different reactions. In addition foreign language leads to learning about the native speakers of a language in order to understand, accept or tolerate, or even assimilate their values and way of life.

Language is the most typical, the most represantative, and the most central element in any society. Language and culture are inseparable; it is better to see the special characteristics of language as cultural items and to recognize that language enters into the learning and use of nearly all other cultural elements. Every language makes a relatively narrow choice of the vocal sounds that are available for speech, and, in the same way, every language makes a controlled choice of the possible modes of human living. Every societal group has a culture uniquely its own, just as it has a language that is completely individual and self-sufficient; just as there often many dialects of a given

language, so there often are many subcultures of a given culture. The view that language is the keystone of in the structure of a culture is stated by Sapir as follow;

> Language is an essentially perfect means of expression and communication among every known people. Of all aspects of culture, it is a fair guess that language was the first to receive a highly developed form and that its essential perfection is prerequisite to the development of culture as a whole (Sapir 1970: 1).

2.1.4. The Whorfian Hypothesis

One of the major studies of some scholars for more than a century has been to understand the relationships between this diversity in languages, and human diversity of thought and culture. In present days it is recognized as of interest particularly to anthropology and linguistics, because it relates linguistic forms to culture. In the nineteenth century the German linguist von Humboldt suggested different ways in which a language categorizes, imposing on the mind ways of organizing our knowledge; the diversity of languages, therefore, is not one of sounds and signs but a diversity of world perspective (Stern 1987: 204).

Boas, in studying American Indian languages, pointed out that study of language was of great importance in ethnological study. By comparing the cultures of different societes or small groups of peoples and studying how language is used in such societies, he suggested that:

> ... the study of language must be considered as one of the most important branches of ethnological study, because, on one hand, a thorough insight into ethnology can not be gained without practical knowledge of language, and, on the other hand, the fundamental concepts illustrated by human languages are not distinct in kind from ethnological phenomena; and because, furthermore, the peculiar characteristics of languages are clearly reflected in the views and customs of the peoples of the world. (cited by Damen 1987: 126).

Edward Sapir, suggested that speech is a "non-instinctive, acquired, cultural function," and makes a

instinctive). He compared the functions which human beings acquired, considering instinctiveness and non-instinctiveness, but did not comment clearly on the relation between language and thought. At the end he accepted that there is a close relationship between language and thought, and stated that:

> Culture may be defined as what a society does and thinks. Language is a particular *how* of thought. It is difficult to see what particular relations may be expected to subsist between a selected inventory of experience (culture, a significant selection made by society) and the particular manner in which the society expresses all experience (Sapir 1921: 218).

The writings of Whorf, were particularly influential in keeping the lines open to a wider conception of language in relation to culture, society, and individual. The studies for finding out the relationship between linguistics and anthropology (and psychology) were those which were associated with Whorf's name, sometimes referred to within principle of linguistic relativity, the Whorfian (or Sapir-Whorf) hypothesis, or the linguistic "Weltanschauung" (world view) problem (Stern 1987: 203). World-view problem includes sets of of culturally shared realities. These realities are the culturally constructed world perception, meaning and practice that members of any culture take to be absolutely correct and genuine. World view consists of attitudes, beliefs and assumptions about the environment, human relations, social organization, and all that constitutes human life. Language learners are only too well aware of the fact that certain aspects of a new language -- items of vocabulary, or grammatical features -- often imply concepts for which the

native language has no equivalent. One language may have separate vocabulary items for concepts which are left undifferentiated in another language. A famous illustration of this fact, given by Boas, and later impressively illustrated by Whorf in a drawing in one of his papers, was that the Eskimo language has various expressions for the one English word "**snow**: snow on ground (apout); falling snow (quona); drifting snow (piqsirpog); or snow drift (quiumpsug)" (cited by Stern 1987: 204).

Whorf was deeply impressed with the power of language over man's mind, and attempted to make a theoretical statement concerning the cultural implications of linguistic differences. Whorfian hypothesis states that "a causal arrow can be drawn from language categories and forms to cultural items and meanings, which in turn add up to a unique world view or system of cultural meanings" (Whorf 1956: 214).

Over the last two or three decades several investigators have tested the Whorfian hypothesis, with conflicting results -- in studying different aspects of language in relation to extra-linguistic factors in different cultures, such as kinship terms, color terms, number words, disease terminologies, human relations or modes of address. The consensus on this problem that language develops in a social community. A product of social usage, a treatment of language in the view of cultural differences, is well expressed in the following three statements;

> 1. Language primarily reflects rather than creates sociocultural regularities in values and orientation.
>
> 2. Languages throughout the world share a far larger number of structural universals than has heretofore been recognized.
>
> 3. If we can put aside the issue of what first causes what, or think which one is prior, language or societal behavior, we are left with the fascinating process of ongoing and intertwined conversation and interaction. In these processes language and societal behavior are equal partners, rather than one or the other of them being boss and giving orders to the other (Stern 1987: 206).

In language teaching and learning, the above studies have been extremely important. Analysis of the above results has led to the widespread belief that a language learner should not only study the cultural context, language and culture, but that s/he should also be aware of the interaction between language and culture; language in culture, culture in language. It can be said that there is a close relation between social structure and language. Language is one of the issues, besides the economics, institutions, and the rules of etiquette, morals, and law, which make up the social structure.

Malinowski represented in Britain an anthropological school of thought in which language played a much more significant role. He believed that understanding of the language was impossible without constantly relating it to the culture in which it was operative. Using as an illustration an utterance of a native in the Trobriand Islands who was talking about a canoe trip and superiority of his canoe,

Malinowski observed that such an utterance is totally incomprehensible, unless it is placed into its cultural setting and related to the circumstances in which it occurs. Following this observation Malinowski stated that

> Language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the tribal life and customs of the people and it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance. The study of any language spoken by a people who live under conditions different from our own and involving a different culture must be carried out in conjunction with a study of their culture and of their environment (Malinowski 1923: 305)

2.1.5. Intercultural Communication

When individuals communicate through language, understanding of what is happening relates to the similar interpretation of the words and concepts they use. Misunderstanding often results from the use of the word that can convey more than one concept. Intercultural communication deals with this kind of problem which individuals often come up against. This concept is as old as human society. Porter and Samovar state that this process occurs when a message producer is a member of one culture and the message receiver is a member of another (Porter and Samovar 1982)

Intercultural communication can be defined as acts of communication undertaken by individuals identified with groups exhibiting intergroup variations in shared social and cultural patterns. These shared patterns, individually expressed, are the major variables in the purpose, the manner, the way of acting, behaving, speaking, living, and the means by which the communicative process is effected.

A basic assumption reflected by most writers on the subject is that instances of intercultural communication are more likely to result in miscommunication than in meaningful communication. Porter and Samovar state that intercultural communication can entail "error in social perception brought about by cultural variations that affect the perceptual process" (Porter and Samovar 1982: 42).

Thus, the perception or interpretation of the communicative act by any and all of those involved is essential. Communication may indeed be taking place, but unless it is perceived correctly, problems will arise, and the communication chain will be broken.

For example, an English-speaking American teacher was addressed as "Miss" by a student whose native language was Dutch. The teacher reacted coldly because she perceived the use of the term **"Miss"** with no surname as an inappropriate mode of address, usually reserved for waitresses or clerks with whom impersonal terms could be used. Why this student used this term for teacher is not a difficult question to understand for a person who is acquainted with both Dutch and American culture. He translated the traditional Dutch term for a female teacher, Juffrouw, to the English Miss. The student was very confounded by the teacher's disapproval (Damen 1987: 23)

Following this, Damen claims that "intercultural communication as a process involving an attempt to bridge a cultural abyss is often marked more by pain than pleasure, and less by success than by failure... Different cultural patterns, translated into rules for living, artifacts, values, beliefs, naming, social relations, and all elements of human social life, have evolved to meet universal human problems. These problems are universal; the solutions are culture specific. Besides, while these patterns are

shared to some degree by members of the same cultural group, individual perception and transactions between the public and private worlds of senders and receivers provide a unique frame of reference for every intercultural or intercultural communicative act" (Damen 1987: 24).

2.1.6. Theory and Practice in Intercultural Communication

The field of intercultural communication is supported by various academic disciplines; Figure 2 represents a schematic view of the relationships of theory and practice in the field or discipline known as intercultural communication. This field includes cross-cultural practice, theory, and research. The two-way arrows indicate that the flow of information and knowledge moves both horizontally and vertically, within and outside the "field" of intercultural communication, and between individuals and groups. Thus theoretical contributions may be drawn from outside the field of intercultural communication into the practice of second-language teaching and learning. When thus filtered, "borrowed" concepts such as culture and perception are altered like pieces of glass when shifted by a turn of a kaleidoscope. The relationships of these same pieces, one to another, have been altered; new patterns are formed. Before, the pattern seemed familiar; now it seems unfamiliar. In like manner, theoretical positions have developed in the field of communication. In addition, these positions have been

questioned more rigorously when viewed in an intercultural frame (Damen, 1987).

Although field-specific theory is developing in intercultural communication, the main theoretical support continues to come from sister disciplines. In which manner cultural differences influence communication is closely connected with anthropology and other social sciences, such as sociology, linguistics, psychology, and communication.

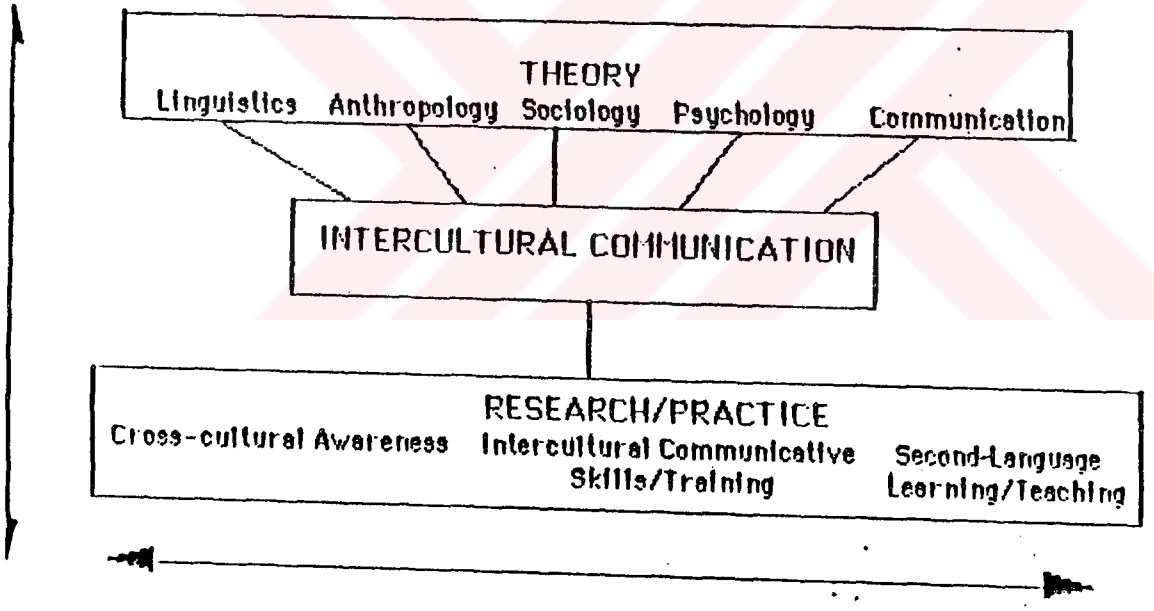


Figure 2 Theory and Research/Practice in International Communication
Damen 1987: 92

Linguistics

Language is a major tool of cultural interaction. Theories of language have been changing. Anthropologist and linguist Pike suggested that field methods used in the analysis of linguistic forms could be applied to the analysis of cultural data. He tried to identify relevant cultural categories for given cultural groups, and stated the role of cultural information, the unconscious but, according to Pike, the source of culturally meaningful knowledge (Pike 1967).

In the 1970s, linguists such as Halliday (1978), and Hymes (1972), stated that in language use (use of language in the environment in which meanings are changed), linguistics (the study of language), and social variations (age, sex, personality, social status, and so on) semantics (the study of meaning), and the function of language (how effective language can be used) have been transmitted to the "borrowers" coming from related disciplines. The influence of borrowers on intercultural communication has brought out the communicative act related to culture-thought-perception into open importance. It has been accepted that these concepts have a vital role in communication.

Current interest in the function of language in use has not only had a major impact on second language but also brought the attention of the language teacher to the influence of cultural differences.

Anthropology

It is difficult to distinguish sociology and anthropology from one another. But it can be said that anthroplogy in human life is wider than sociology. Greenberg defined anthropology as "the description and explanation of similarities and differences among human ethnic groups" (cited by Stern 1987: 195). It includes the study of physical variations among human races. It is not concerned with the individual human organism. It relates to the individual only as a representative of a race or ethnicity. Culture, as a major human adaptive mechanism, in all its world-wide diversity, colors all major variables that must be taken into account in investigating and understanding the process of intercultural communication.

In anthropology the importance of language has been widely acknowledged throughout the present century. Among anthropologists the principle is well established that it is necessary to study the language of any ethnic group and to examine the relations between language and culture. The growth of linguistics and that of anthropology as human sciences in the twentieth century are closely bound up with one another. Anthropologists have recognized that, up to a point, language can be studied as a self-contained system and requires an expertise of its own.

There is a close interaction between linguistics and anthropology. This interaction is reflected in the development of a border field, sometimes referred to as "linguistic anthropology" (i.e., systematic investigation of the relation between language and culture from the point of view of anthropology) and sometimes as "anthropological linguistics" (Stern 1987: 195) (i.e., expertise of the linguist in dealing with language problems in anthropological research). This relation attracted some scholars to study on this matter and find out in which manner anthropology and linguistics influence each other.

Boas, Kroeber, and Sapir, studying languages in the first half of the twentieth century, had become familiar with widely divergent cultures and had learned to accept them as different patterns of living. Kroeber like Boas was as interested in language as in culture and his research and writings have contributed to both (Stern 1987).

Sapir was always interested in the relationship between language and culture as an important problem for anthropology, linguistics, or psychology. He acknowledged language as a valuable guide to the scientific study of a given culture, because "the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language which expressed that civilization" (Sapir 1970: 68). He also claimed that "Language is a guide to social reality" and "a symbolic guide to culture".

Like Sapir, Bloomfield studied anthropological linguistics. In the 1930s he demanded development of a study of linguistics which deliberately abstracted from meaning and the sociocultural environment of language (Bloomfield 1933). It is only in the sixties that linguistic thought rediscovered meaning and sociocultural relations; a renovated interest in semantics and the development of sociolinguistics have had an effect on the study of the above-mentioned concepts. In spite of the emphasis on a study of linguistic structure apart from culture and society, interest continued to be expressed in the interaction between culture, society, and language.

Sociology

Sociology has been concerned with individual sociocultural variables, such as age, sex, attitude, and motivation, and with theories of social organization, description of social groups, and social psychology. These variables have provided the bases for numerous studies with the added dimension of intercultural context by cross-cultural view. Sociology tends to explain aspects of social life, (for example, the changing role of the family or the organization of work in industrial society). It deals with the regulated relationships between different social problems. For example the relations between religious values and economic structure, or between social class and

educational advancement.

Sociolinguistics and the study of language in context has been developed, joining the forces of linguist and anthropologist to those of the sociologist, in a shift of interest from the linguistic competence of the ideal speaker/listener, the primary concern of the generative grammarians, to an interest in the communicative competence/performance of the real speaker interacting in a real world ordered by rules of communicative appropriateness and variability.

In the early 1970s, the theoretical position of anthropologists and linguists in relation to basic concepts such as language, culture, and communication was changed to interest in language study and in culture study. Labov (1972) suggested that sociological variables relating to community, social class, and social norms, should be analyzed: social institution, role, status, group function, social structure, and culture.

Asenta and Vera 1983; Gudykunst et al. 1984, called for the addition of cross-cultural factors in the reassessment of the use of ways, definition, methods of sociological and psychological measurements, and they developed and tested the conclusions comparing and contrasting monocultural context.

Psychology

Psychology is one of the most important disciplines in language learning and teaching. In many ways the field of intercultural communication has been neglected in the somewhat unexpected relationships of professionals in the fields of communication and in psychology and social psychology. Psychologists have long been interested in cross-cultural differences in perception, evaluation, personality and cognition. As language teachers, if we observe the language learning among our students, we will probably find out that some are successful while others seem to struggle rather helplessly. The expressing of this situation is bound to use psychological concepts, because our thinking on learning is inevitably influenced by the psychological knowledge that is the common understanding of human behavior in one's culture. According to Stern, the psychological, terms that can affect our life may be "remembering, forgetting, skill, motivation, frustration, inhibitions, and so on" (Stern 1987: 290).

The role of the psychology on cross-cultural communication was studied by Sapir, and he stated that "the impact of the individual communicator's personality as well as psycho-cultural variations in perception, attitudes and motivations represent major variables in the outcome of any communicative act, as in language learning" (Sapir 1970: 21). In the early times, while studying the relationship of

psychology anthropology and cross-cultural communication, Benedict established cross-cultural variations, some of which have been identified with given cultural and communicative issues and patterns (Stern 1987). These studies take on new meaning and call for reconsideration when filtered through the field of intercultural communication. As in all borrowings of social concepts, the borrowing of psychological constructs, methods, instruments and generalizations has fostered an interest in examining the relationship between communication and psychology.

Communication

Developments in the field of intercultural communication come most directly from those in communication who were first asked to handle the problems in a scholarly way, the problems of understanding those who sought to communicate. Writers such as Hoopes (1979), and Harris and Morran (1979), who were interested in the field insisted that communication involved perception, a physical and social context interaction, and feedback, but, above all, showed cross-cultural variations.

The scholars who were first interested in the field of intercultural communication, were communication professionals. They brought some basic assumptions about the nature of communicating. Gudykunst and Kim (1984) listed several such widely accepted assumptions. They state that "communication is assumed to be symbolic, processional, transactional,

attributional, and sometimes nonintentional. It involves the coding and decoding of messages in different times and places, and at varying levels of awareness" (Gudykunst and Kim 1984: 6-10).

Porter and Samovar state that "communication is an intricate form of interaction, social acts that occur in a complex social environment... The social environment is culture, and if we truly are to understand communication we also must understand culture" (Porter and Samovar 1982:31).

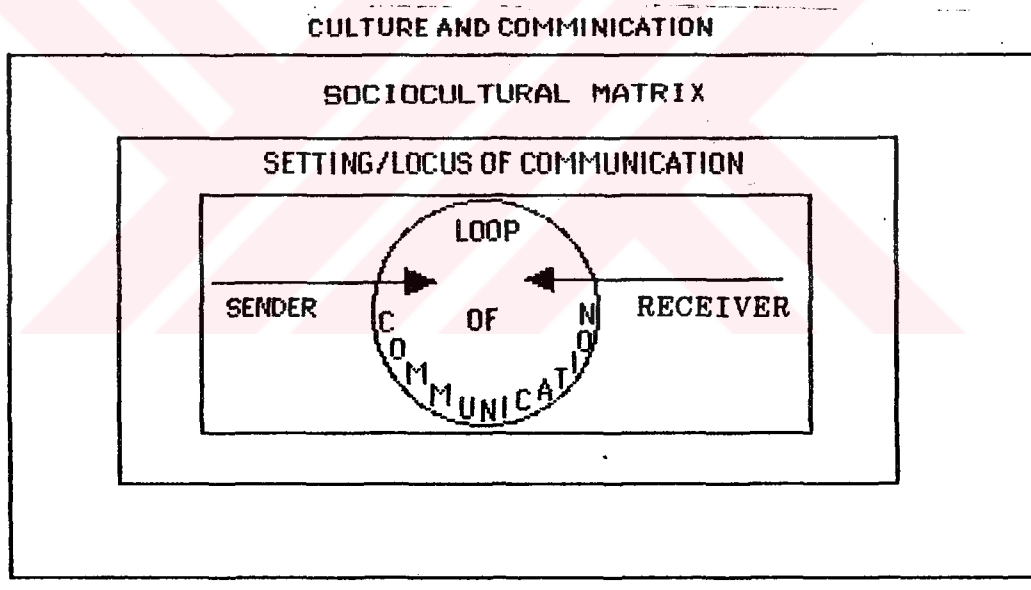


Figure 3 Culture and Communication
Damen 1987: 27

Figure 3 from Damen (1987), shows that a communicative act takes place within the context of a sociocultural matrix whose boundaries are drawn by the identification of a number of individuals as sharing given cultural assumptions, behaviors, patterns. The setting, which operates within the general matrix, provides the locus of communication; it is

also culturally conditioned, for example, in terms of the uses of communication, manner of speech, or styles of communication. The communicative act itself is nestled within this setting and takes place in a circular manner so that sender and receiver roles can be assigned interchangeably.

Practice

The field of intercultural communication has served to filter concepts and perceptions from many disciplines which relates to communication, and, while doing this has provided its own unique perspectives. In practice, these perspectives have been applied to research into cross-cultural differences and similarities in perception, communication styles, socialization, evaluation, cognition, culture change, and many other sociocultural phenomena. In addition, problems of prejudice, acculturation, culture shock and second-language learning, viewed from an intercultural aspects, have taken on new dimension. Finally, the role of the "borrowed" concepts have been redefined in the new field, and are now emerging with greater force and potential as the answer to those which could not be explained before (Damen 1987).

In practice, the main problem is, while developing cross-cultural awareness (as the first step in cross-cultural understanding and communication), to focus on study and training. The communicative act itself including all its many individual, and the meanings of cultural aspects is now

recognized as a major analytical unit. In practice this has meant that success or failure to communicate rests to a great extent upon the combination of personal, social, and cultural characteristics each participant brings to the communicative act.

Consideration of the relationships indicated in figure 2 should sensitize the reader to the fact that there are many theoretical foundations of research and practice in intercultural communication. These can explain those confusing and often contradictory definitions of key concepts found in the literature and research in the field. The difficulty of getting the correct interpretation in communication has led the allied disciplines to have a vital role in intercultural communication.

2.1.8. Cultural Competence and Communicating in Context

In a text the structures and vocabulary are not enough. There are different kinds of knowledge, to be drawn from sources other than the text itself, which readers make use of. Irving points out that "culture and communication cannot be separated from each other, and good communication skills depend on becoming familiar with the cultural context to which a language naturally belongs." (Irving, 1986: 239). The author also seeks to help students bridge the gap between linguistic and cultural competence that often exists for students who have already spent some time (in some cases years) studying the English language by focusing on its linguistic features rather than its cultural features.

Our cultural competence consists of an extremely complicated set of beliefs, knowledge, feelings, attitudes and behavior. Irving defines the terms of cultural competence as "the ability to understand cultures -- one's own and others -- by means of objective, non-judgmental comparisons. It is an appreciation for, an understanding of, cultural pluralism -- the ability to get rid of our ethnocentric tendencies and to accept another culture on its own terms. Many cross-cultural interactions go sour due to a lack of such a competence" (Irving, 1986:31).

Culture competence is crucial when constructing a meaning from a text. Readers bring their real-life experiences to any particular reading experience. A difficulty may arise where there is an insufficient correspondence between the sorts of knowledge, expectations and purpose which the reader brings to the text, and the kinds of knowledge, expectation, and purpose assumed by the writer. This is likely to be the case where a reader and writer come together from different cultural or sub-cultural groups.

In a text, words do not solely give the exact meaning on their own. Readers bring meaning with them to texts. Carrel (1983a) points out that the text itself does not carry meaning. A text only provides guidance for listeners and readers as to how they should construct the intended meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. In absence of relevant background knowledge or for lack of using the context, any meaning may fail to be constructed. Here is an illustration:

> Zeno of Elea, a fifth century B.C Greek, was the first to wonder how a specific interval could consist of smaller intervals that could be subdivided endlessly. (Boslough 1990: 55).

Although dictionary definition of each word here could be given, and sentence structure could be identified easily by some people, many others, coming to it without introduction or preparation, could not make sense of it. It can be understood

on one level, but cannot be interpreted, for a simple reason: One may not clearly understand what it is about. To be able to understand a text (in other words to communicate in context), we must know the **source** of the text (from a book, newspaper, and so forth) what **genre** it is (folk tale, article, advertisement, report), what the subject matter or **topic** is... and more.

Second language learners of linguistic and cultural minority groups often have a further difficulty in drawing on their stock of knowledge as they try to make sense of the content of text in a target language, if they aren't competent with the above-mentioned categories. There may be unsuitable understanding between what the reader interprets from the text and supposed cultural competence on a number of levels. Firstly, second-language readers may not know about certain kinds of culture-specific behavior. This was the case with the following part of a story written for teenagers with some reading difficulty. In the story, Linda insists on going on holiday, but Dad refuses to give her any money:

> "In that case," said Linda, "I'll hitchhike."
>
> "Hitchhike?" said her Mum.
>
> "You're not hitchhiking," said her Dad. (Wallace 1988: 32).

Hitchhiking is a culture-specific phenomenon. In some countries, hitchhiking is considered as a bad behavior, and parents do not let their children hitchhike. For the readers

who don't know this term, a lengthy explanation is required, because it is necessary for adequate understanding here.

2.1.9. Culture and Pragmatics of a Text

For a reader, a rather different kind of difficulty arises in considering why the writer of a text states something irrelevant what the writter expects. Why do writers follow one statement with another which is quite unconnected? Why do they describe people doing or saying certain things in response to other things which, on the face of it, bear no relation to what has gone before? In reading texts, as in real life, we expect peoples' responses or reactions to be relevant to what has gone before, that is, appropriate to the situation. The following exteract was taken from the first page of a novel by Wallace. The novel is about the daily life of Asian communities in the West Indies. If this exteract is considered, it can be found that the basic situation is familiar, indeed universal --childbirth. Bapti has gone back to the home of her mother Bissoondaye for the birth of her child:

> "What is it?" the old man asked, "Boy or girl?" "Boy, boy," the midwife cried. But what sort of boy? six fingered, and born the wrong way.
>
> The old man groaned and Bissoondaye said, "I knew it. There is no luck for me".
>
> At once, though it was night and the way was lonely, she left the hut and walked to the next village, where there was a hedge of cactus. She brought back leaves of cactus, cut them into strips.... (Wallace 1988: 24).

The meaning in this extract may be understood by a Western reader. But is it clear for a Turk to understand why Bissoondaye suddenly decides to go off to the next village to fetch cactus leaves? What has that got to do with the birth of the baby? Is it anything to do with the baby's deformity? probably not. The Turkish reader needs more information about cultural aspects of the setting: for example, in which manner cactus leaves are important when a person gets a new baby.

To make sense of a text, it is essential for a person to be able to interpret how language is used in an everyday situation. S/he also needs knowledge not just of what things are, but also why people behave in certain ways or respond in certain ways to the behavior of others. Wallace states that "a knowledge of facts about language use in the real world is needed for good reading. This sort of knowledge of verbal and non-verbal behavior has been called a knowledge of pragmatics or facts about real life" (Wallace 1988: 35). Many of these so-called facts about everyday life are culture-specific. They have to do with social norms -- what roles people may assume in certain situations, what they may say in such roles and what interpretation is made of what is said. Access to that kind of culturally determined meaning is perhaps the most inaccessible for a learner from another culture. What can be interpreted by a reader or what is supposed by a writer is related to these norms. In addition

the answer to why certain responses follow certain questions can be found by considering the following extract;

> "Please," said the lady, "Have you a light"
>
> "Pardon" said the man.
>
> "A light" she said.
>
> The man looked at her.
>
> "How old are you", he said (Wallace 1988: 35).

The appropriateness of the man's questions or responses to the lady's request for a light and why the man asks these questions might be a question in itself. We need to know what the conventional views about smoking are, which other behavior and views about behavior are culture dependent. For example in Turkish society, young people do not smoke when they are with their elders and also women do not smoke in the streets. This differs in another society.

The fact is that different cultural groups have different expectations about both behavior and events in such situations when they read a text. In interpreting what people do or say in texts we need to see their behavior in the context of what is considered commonplace or unremarkable. We need to know not just what counts as conventional or acceptable behavior, but what are conventional attitudes to behavior.

Philips points out that culture-specific knowledge is a concept in which judgement is crucial. We all operate with learned patterns of judgement and have standards for perceiving, believing, acting, and evaluating which are culturally specific. Judgement is crucial because in interaction we are always judging, and other people frequently operate with culturally different standards (Philips, 1983).

Erickson argues that any learning task requires two sets of knowledge: the Academic Task Structure, and the Social Participation Structure. The Academic Task Structure has to do with subject matter, while Social Participation Structure involves knowledge of what social conventions are necessary to learn, to deal with the subject: for example, the question of where the culturally learned expectations should be appropriate in a situation (Erickson, 1982).

So far, culture, its relation to language, and culture in the context of language, have been defined. Culture in context of a text is far more important in reading-comprehension texts. Because reading in general bears purposes such as getting information, learning a second language, and having fun. While doing so, the readers tries to master cultural aspects, and skills of efficient reading are a must. In the next part of this chapter, the importance of culture in reading comprehension will be discussed.

2.2. READING COMPREHENSION AND CULTURE

2.2.1. Definition of Reading

According to Goodman, reading is a "psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader interprets and constructs." There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and reader decodes language to thought (Goodman 1973b: 163).

Reading is a means for learning a language and it is a receptive skill. One can read for different purposes, but the most important of all is reading for information. Proficient readers are both efficient and effective. They are effective in constructing a meaning that they can assimilate or accommodate, and which bears some level of agreement with the original meaning of the author. Readers are efficient in using the least amount of effort to achieve effectiveness. To accomplish this efficiency readers maintain constant focus on constructing the meaning throughout the process, always seeking the most direct path to meaning, always using strategies for reducing uncertainty, always being selective about the use of the cues available and drawing deeply on prior conceptual and linguistic competence. Efficient readers minimize dependence on visual details. Any reader's proficiency is variable depending on the semantic background

brought by the reader to any given reading task (Goodman 1973b).

Widdowson defines reading as "an interaction between writer and reader, which cannot be had without an insight into the culture of the target language." Readers need a sympathetic orientation towards the culture of the target language in order to be effective in what they read. An ethnocentric attitude towards the target culture often retards a student's reading comprehension (Widdowson 1979: 171).

While observing the attitude of his students in reading Smith defined reading as, "reading is simply one of the ways in which human beings go about their basic business of making sense of the world" (Smith 1975: 1). By this definition Smith focuses on the readers and their attitude towards what they read. Unless reader makes a sense of the text s/he will not understand it and lose her/his interest in.

Although some people states that reading is only a matter of phonic (the study of relationships between sounds and their spellings), Badrawi states that there is far more to reading than that. She defines reading as "both a process and a product" (Badrawi 1992: 16). According to Badrawi reading is more than just receiving meaning in literal sense. It involves bringing an individual's entire life experience and thinking powers to try to understand what the writer has

encoded. Therefore, prior sensory experiences have a vital role in comprehending what is read.

2.2.2. Comprehension and Reading Comprehension

Kolers demonstrated that readers tend to perceive words and sentences directly in terms of their meaning. In order to establish this fact, Kolers studied on French-English bilinguals. When he asked his subjects to read aloud a text that mixed segments of the two languages, they read out some groups of words that were in the text of the first language as their translation equivalents in the second language, and vice versa. In view of the above study Kolers commented that "the subjects were treating words in terms of their meanings rather than in terms of their appearance on the page" (Kolers 1970: 28).

According to Anderson, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehending requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. Comprehending words, sentences, and entire text, involves more than just relying on one's linguistic knowledge. As Anderson points out, "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (Anderson et al. 1977: 369).

It is an obvious fact that reading comprehension in one's native language involves the role of knowledge of native

text structure. Brewer (1980) points out that reading is a complex, interactive, hypothesis-generating psycholinguistic process which is tied intimately to the reader's language proficiency. While there are basic similarities in the fluent reading process in various languages, it is natural to expect that non-native language proficiency or language differences may influence reading, and learning to read, a second language.

Comprehension of any kind, such as in reading, listening, depends on what knowledge we get. In view of this, it is clear that reading comprehension is not essentially different from other kinds of comprehension. Comprehension means relating what we know and do not, or new information, to what we already know, which is not a random collection of facts but a world view in each of our heads, called "cognitive structure" (Smith 1982: 84).

Rivers claims that only a small part of the information necessary for reading comprehension comes from the printed page. She points out that readers have expectations about the content of what they are about to read and how it develops, which further stimulates readers as they continue reading by what they have already understood. The function of the symbols on the printed page is to reduce the doubts of the reader, as meaning is derived from the writing. Therefore, an efficient reader needs only schematic (prior knowledge) indications of the actual visual forms (Rivers 1983).

Eskey argues that how well a student may know a language is related to how s/he can comprehend what s/he reads. S/he cannot read in that language with good comprehension if the subject of the text is one s/he knows nothing or very little about, and therefore would have no real interest in it. Reading comprehension is most likely to occur when students are reading what they want to read, or at least what they see as some good reason to read (Eskey 1986).

Learning the meaning of word and their function is not enough, since reading involves more than just identifying the words that the graphic symbols represent. Comprehension of a text relates to a reader's experiences and knowledge of how to bear the words that have been decoded by the writer. Badrawi states that "comprehension is a mental process. It is not getting meaning from the printed page, as there is no meaning there, but only lines and cirves that we call letters and from which we build words" (Badrawi 1992: 16).

2.2.3. The Psycholinguistic Model of Reading

During the past decade, reading theory in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has come under the influence of psycholinguistics and Goodman's (1967, 1971, 1973a) psycholinguistic model of reading. Goodman has described reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game and he observes that the "reader reconstructs, as best as s/he can, a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic

display" (Goodman 1971: 135). In this model, the reader need not (and the efficient reader does not) use all of the textual cues. The better the reader is able to make correct predictions, the less visual perceptual information he requires. Goodman claims that:

> The reader does not use all the information available to him. Reading is a process in which the reader picks and chooses from the available information only enough to select and predict a language structure which is decodable. It is not in any sense a precise perceptual process (Goodman 1973b: 164).

In the psycholinguistic view of the reading process, the reader functions as a user of language. S/he actively seeks to construct from a graphic display a message that the writer has encoded. In this process, readers draw on their pre-existing knowledge and bring their experiential and conceptual development to bear on the task. They try out "graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic information as they interact with the material they are reading." The goal is always some degree of **comprehension**, defined as construction of a message (Goodman 1967: 128). He also states that "readers use the smallest amount of text information necessary in relation to their existing linguistic and conceptual schemata to get the meaning" (Goodman 1973b: 158).

Coady has elaborated on this basic psycholinguistic model, and suggested a model in which the EFL reader's background knowledge interacts with conceptual abilities and process strategies, more or less successfully to

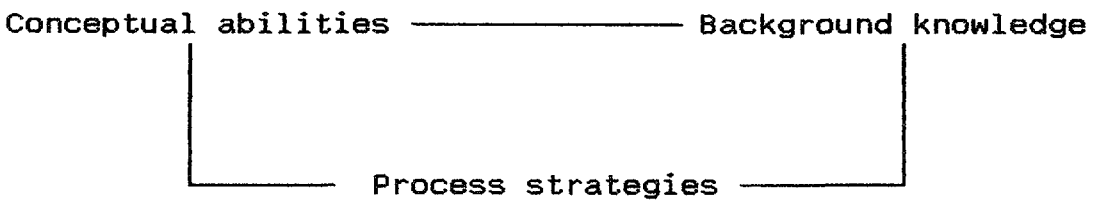


Figure 4

Coady's (1979) Model of the EFL Reader

Conceptual abilities refer to intellectual capacity such as the ability to analyze, synthesize, and infer. **Background knowledge** includes sociocultural knowledge of mainly a reader's his/her own community. **Process strategies** refer to the abilities and skills to reconstruct the meaning of the text through sampling based on the knowledge of "grapheme-morphophoneme correspondences, syllable-morpheme information, syntactic information, (deep and surface), lexical meaning, contextual meaning and cognitive" strategies. For background, Coady states that:

> Background knowledge becomes an important variable when we notice, as many have, that the students with a Western background of some kind learn English faster, on the average, than those without such a background (Coady 1979: 7).

Coady also suggests that background knowledge may be able to compensate for certain syntactic deficiencies:

> The subject of reading materials should be of high interest and relate well to the background of the reader, since strong semantic input can help compensate when syntactic control is weak. The interest and background knowledge will enable the student to comprehend a reasonable rate to keep him involved in the material in spite of its syntactic difficulty (Coady 1979: 12).

In EFL reading the significance of background knowledge has often been the most neglected factor. Bearing reading through the psycholinguistic model in mind is not sufficient to give emphasis to the role of background knowledge. Recent research indicates that what the reader brings to the reading task is more complicated and more powerful than the general psycholinguistic model suggests. On this matter Clarke and Silberstein suggest that:

> More information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. That is, readers understand what they read because they are able to take the stimulus beyond its graphic representation and assign its membership to an appropriate group of concepts already stored in their memories... The reader brings to the task a formidable amount of information and ideas, attitudes and beliefs. This knowledge, coupled with the ability to make linguistic prediction, determines the expectations the reader will develop as he reads. Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world (Clarke and Silberstein 1977: 136-137).

2.2.4. The Schema Theory Model

The role of background knowledge in language comprehension has been formalized as **schema theory**. According to Rumelhart (1981), any text, either spoken or written, does not possess meaning by itself. According to this theory, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should find and bring back from their own, previously acquired knowledge to construct meaning. This previously acquired knowledge is called the reader's **background knowledge**, and the previously acquired structures are called **schemata** (Adams and Collins 1979; Rumelhart 1981).

By the using of a schema, the process of interpretation is guided by the principle that every input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspect of that schema must be compatible with the input information. This principle results in two basic modes of information processing, called **bottom-up** and **top-down** processing.

According to Carrel, Devine, and Eskey bottom-up processing is elicited by the incoming data; the features of the data enter the system through the best fitting, bottom-level schemata. Schemata are hierarchically organized, from most general at the top to most specific at the bottom. As these bottom-level schemata meet higher-level more general schemata, these too become activated. Bottom-up processing is, therefore, called *data driven*. On the other hand, top-

down processing occurs as the system makes general predictions based on higher-level general schemata and then searches the input for information to fit into these partially satisfied, higher- order schemata. Top-down processing is, therefore, called *conceptually driven* (Carrell, Devine, and Eskey 1989).

Bottom-up processing ensures that the listeners/readers will be sensitive to information that is novel or that does not fit ongoing hypothesis about the content or structure of the text; top-down processing helps the listeners/readers resolve ambiguities or select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data.

By considering the following mini-text the effect of background knowledge, schematic interpretation, and simultaneity of top-down and bottom-up processing can be understood;

> "The policeman held up and stopped the car"
>
> (Rumelhart 1977: 267).

To understand this sentence, we try to relate it to something familiar. There are many schemata possible, but the most likely is the one involving a traffic police officer who is signalling to a driver of a car to stop. When it is interpreted against that schema, a number of related concepts come up which are not literally mentioned in the text. In particular, it can be imagined that the car has a driver and

that the policeman got the car to stop through signalling to the driver, who then put on the brakes of the car, which, in turn, caused the car to stop. In this interpretation, the cause of the car's stopping is almost operation of the car's brakes. Further, the significance of the policeman's holding up his hand is that of a signal to the driver to stop. The fact is neither stated in the sentence nor is it even in the direct visual perception of such a situation, but is rather a fact in prior cultural knowledge about the way traffic police are known to communicate with automobile drivers. If the police officer were known to be Superman and the car were known to be without a driver the text would change. A completely different schema would be required to understand the text. At this point the relationship of the policeman's holding up his hand and the car's stopping takes on an entirely different interpretation. When the text is interpreted against the Superman schema, it is interpreted that by holding up his hand Superman used a direct physical mechanism for stopping the car.

The following diagram shows that when a different reading-comprehension question is asked, a completely opposed answer would probably be received through the two schemata that activated in the mind of the reader:

QUESTION	ANSWER	
	Traffic police officer schema	Superman schema
a) Did the policeman's hand touch the car?	No	Yes
b) Were the car's brakes applied?	Yes	No

(Carrel, Davine, and Eskey 1989: 78)

Rumelhart tried to find the evidence to show the effect of schemata on reading comprehension. The following text is one of the samples which he used.

> Mary heard the ice cream man coming down the street. She remembered her birthday money and rushed into the house... (Rumelhart 1977: 265).

By reading only these two lines, most readers are able to construct a rather complete interpretation of the text. It seems that Mary is a little girl who heard the ice cream man coming and wanted to buy some ice cream from this ice cream man. She needs some money to buy ice cream, and suddenly remembered the money which she had been given for her birthday and which, presumably, was in the house. So, she rushed into the house to get some money for the ice cream. The text does not state all of these points; readers are inferring a lot of this by giving the text an interpretation. Other interpretations are also possible (Carrel, Davine, and Eskey 1989).

2.2.5. Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension

New information, new concepts, new ideas can have meaning only when they can be related to something the individual already knows. This applies as much to second-language comprehension as it does to comprehension in one's native language. Traditionally in the study of second-language comprehension (even in the study of first-language comprehension), the emphasis has been almost exclusively on the language to be comprehended and not on the comprehender (listener or reader). In this perspective, each word, each well-formed sentence, and every well-formed text passage is said to "have" a meaning. Meaning is often conceived to be "in" the utterance or text, to have a separate, independent existence from both the speaker or writer and the listener or reader. In this way it can be concluded that many communication failures are attributed to language-specific deficits. These deficiencies may be lack of vocabulary, a grammar rule which is misapplied, and so on.

Piaget states that advances in conception of reading have led to the more novel view of reading as a transaction between the reader and the author. The reader constructs a text during reading through a transaction with the published text, and in this process, the reader's schemata are also transformed through assimilation and accommodation (Piaget 1971).

There is interactive relationship of language proficiency and schemata in second-language comprehension, even though reading is similar across various languages. Anderson et al considering the vital role of comprehension in a foreign language, and specifically reading-comprehension in EFL stated that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (Anderson et al. 1977: 369). Reader tries to construct the meaning from the text by adding whatever s/he knows about what s/he reads.

Au (1979) showed that minority children, who have been instructed by using experience-text relation method (ETR), demonstrate better reading comprehension than children who have not had such opportunity. The ETR method focuses on teacher interaction to help aid the student in verbalizing what s/he knows about a topic. After that step is accomplished, the teacher aids the student in his/her interaction with the text and then helps the students draw relationship between his/her knowledge and material found in the text.

According to Suliman (1980), meaning is not a characteristic of a text. Rather, texts are constructed by authors to be comprehended by readers. The meaning is in the author and the reader. The text has the potential to bring the meaning to mind, but does not contain meaning itself. As all the information necessary for comprehending a text is not in the text, the role of the reader's prior knowledge in

reading comprehension becomes crucial. How well the writer constructs the text and how well the reader constructs, and reconstructs meaning will all influence comprehension. Goodman (1967), argues that because comprehension results from reader-text transaction, what the reader knows, who the reader is, what values guide the reader, and what purposes or interests the reader has, will play a vital role in the reading process.

In one of his reading researches Cziko (1980) suggests that a reader's competence in a second language affects the reading strategies used to read it. Cziko found that junior-high native and advanced readers of French as a second language were able to interact with the text, using bottom-up and top-down processing, relaying on graphic as well as contextual information in reading, while less proficient readers of the second language used more bottom-up strategies.

Stevens (1982) used his subjects to support the idea that pre-existing information affects the readers' reading comprehension. He used two groups of tenth-grade students. The students of the experimental group increased their learning from text for a history passage by teaching the experimental group relevant background information for that passage compared to a control group reading the same history passage.

Hayes and Tierney (1982) did not explicitly give all the cultural items of the text to students as background

information, but they did show how a text can teach or rather draw upon background associations to aid in the comprehension of a new topic. A group of American high-school students attempted to learn about the game of cricket from a text that contained analogies drawn from baseball, while another read newspaper articles about cricket matches. Result indicated that a student's prior knowledge about baseball and review of analogous instructional text explained more of the variance than any other factor alone or in combination with others.

In a comparative study of native and non-native English readers at the university level, Carrel (1983a) points out that native and non-native speakers do not process English prose in the same way. Non-native speakers of English do not appear to use context (top-down) or textual (bottom-up) clues efficiently when reading English, the second language. Nevertheless, Hudson (1982) indicates that existing prior knowledge or induced schemata can override the short-circuiting effect of limited second-language proficiency.

Recent empirical research in reading comprehension has led to **schema theory** which in turn has shown the importance of background knowledge within a psycholinguistic model of reading. Rumelhart (1981) states that schemata represent knowledge at all levels of abstraction. Based on this view, it is hypothesized that the readers who can not mobilize the missing information in the text from their knowledge repertoire will be at a disadvantage. This is reinforced by

Carrel, Devine, and Eskey, as "the schema theory of reading comprehension proposes that structures embodying background knowledge provide the ideational scaffolding for understanding the setting, mood, characters, and chain of events in a text" (Carrel, Devine,and Eskey 1989: 79).

Readers acquired meaning from a passage by analyzing the words and sentence against the backdrop of their own personal knowledge of the world. Such personal knowledge is conditioned by a variety of factors such as age, sex, race, nationality, occupation. Comprehension is achieved as bits of information about an event, being exemplary of a particular class of events, that are incorporated or instantiated into the relevant schemata. The absence of the related schemata that provide the structure for the immediacy of specific facts would be expected to cause breakdown in reading comprehension while a reader is trying to draw the meaning. That is, readers not familiar with the background of the text would not be able to supply the related details between two stated events in every significant case. However, the absence of background information can also be a problem in comprehending even explicitly stated facts: facts presented in the text may not be processed during reading, because they can not be integrated with other bits of information in the text; or may be misinterpreted, in the process of understanding immediately, into the schemata underlying the corresponding **native** event.

2.2.6. Cultural Content Schemata and Reading Comprehension

There is a slowly growing body of literature examining the role of schemata in second-language reading comprehension. By the studies of EFL the new experimental research paradigms in schema theory put cultural schemata into perspective.

One of the early reports of the influence of cultural schemata is that of Barlett (1932), who reported observation of how Americans read and recalled stories based on North American Indian folk-tales. Barlett recognized that when readers process unfamiliar text, manifestations of cultural differences in schemata are evident. Kintsch and Greene (1978) presented American university students with two stories: one a Grimm fairy tale, the other an Apache folktale. The analysis of the data obtained indicated that the American students better recalled the Brothers Grimm story than the Apache folk tale, because they had the background knowledge for a Grimm fairy tale.

Yousef (1968) used Middle-Eastern employees of an American business organization as his subjects. He found that whenever the students were asked to answer objective questions concerning American behavioral patterns directly from a text, they did well; however, when the question related to general aspects of American culture, their performance level decreased dramatically. They continued to see situations, perhaps unconsciously, in terms of their own native culture.

After a period of cultural orientation, their negative attitudes towards the target culture, expressed by their multiple-choice selections in answer to situationally contextualized questions, appeared to be somewhat resolved, and a gradual acceptance of the target language was indicated.

A study by Gatboton and Tucker (1971) was constructed. They compared Filipino and American high school students' interpretation of American short stories, suggested that Filipino students have misunderstandings due to the application of inappropriate values, attitudes and judgements. In order to see if cultural barriers could be overcome, the Filipino group was subdivided. One group was instructed using a traditional literature approach: teach the target culture through literature text in that culture; while the other group received a cross-cultural approach, and behaved more like the American group after training. The experimenters hoped that the cultural orientation approach would alert students not only to the meaning of certain attributes of specific stories, but would also help them to generalize to other signals when approaching new materials. The data partially supported their expectations.

In a similar study in this area, Anderson (1977), and Steffenson (1979) demonstrated that implicit cultural knowledge interacts to make text based on one's own culture easier to read and to understand than syntactically and rhetorically equivalent texts based on less familiar, more

distant cultures. In the Steffensen study, subjects from the United States and India were asked to read letters about an American and an Indian wedding. Weddings are rituals of general as well as particular significance. Every adult, regardless of cultural orientation, has well-developed schemata for the concepts of a marriage and for the ceremonies through which people wed, although the details of these schemata will vary with cultural differences. Both groups of subjects read their "native" passage more rapidly, recalled a larger amount of information, and produced more culturally appropriate elaborations. On the other hand, when the subjects read the "foreign" passage, more culturally inappropriate distortions surfaced.

Many linguists have questioned the usefulness of non-culture-bound reading materials in foreign-language teaching. In such an approach texts are designed on a subject familiar to the students and reflecting their own culture. This destroys the unity of language, separating it from its social context. The experiment conducted by Abdoljavad Jafarpur et al. (1980) at Pahlavi University (Shiraz, Iran) showed that the students who were given materials that related to the target culture had greater comprehension than those who were provided with English language reading materials artifically based on their own culture.

Carrel (1981) compared advanced EFL Japanese and Chinese subjects on recall of folktales from three different cultural

orientations: native culture (Japanese or Chinese, respectively), second culture (Western European/English), and totally unfamiliar culture (American Apache Indian). Results indicated that the cultural origin of the text and the subjects' prior familiarity or lack of familiarity with that culture affected the EFL subjects' judgments of the level of difficulty of the texts, as well as their recall of information from the texts .

Johnson (1981) demonstrated that the cultural origin of a text has a greater effect on EFL reading comprehension than does linguistic complexity. In Johnson's study, Iranian intermediate-to-advanced-level EFL students and American students read Iranian and American folktales. Half of the subjects in each group read the stories in adapted (into their native language) or simplified (using more understandable structure) English; the other half read the unadapted (into their native language) versions of the same stories. Subjects were tested on their reading comprehension using multiple-choice questions on textually explicit and implicit information, as well as free written recalls. Statistical analysis of the data indicated that the cultural origin of the story had greater effect on the comprehension of the ESL students than did the level of syntactic and semantic complexity of the text. That is, the Iranians performed better on the text from their native culture than on a text from American culture, and there were no differences in their performance between the structurally adapted (appropriate

sentences to their native language) versions of the Iranian text. Johnson concluded from her results that if the EFL readers have the appropriate background schema for a text, they can cope equally well with unadapted, syntactically unsimplified texts.

In another study of the culture-specificity of content schemata and their effects on EFL reading, Johnson (1982) examined the effect of prior cultural experience on EFL student's reading comprehension of information in a text linked to a familiar aspects of an American custom as opposed to information linked to unknown aspects of the custom. Just prior to testing, subjects had experienced a typical American Halloween celebration. The text each student read contained both familiar and unfamiliar (historical) information based on the subjects' recent experience of the custom. Four groups of subjects read the text in different conditions. Group one read the passage without a list of important vocabulary. Group two studied the definition of target words before reading the passage. This group did not have the definition while reading the text. The third group studied the target words before reading a text with the key vocabulary also defined in the text. Group four had the benefit of prior study of word definitions as well as the word defined in the passage. Subjects were asked to participate in free recalls of the passage and recognition tasks. Statistical analysis of the recalls of the passage and of a sentence-recognition test indicated that prior cultural

experience prepared readers for comprehension of the familiar in the passage. (In addition, several different treatments concerning prior teaching of vocabulary in the text seemed not to have any significant effect on reading comprehension). Three different types of vocabulary instruction prior to or existing at the same time with the reading when compared to the absence for text indicated that prior cultural experience prepared readers for comprehension of the familiar in the passage.

A number of English as a foreign-language studies have shown that prior background knowledge of the content area of a text, what Carrel (1983b) has called a reader's content schemata, significantly affects reading comprehension of that text. This result has been demonstrated in particular for prior background knowledge of culture-specific text content.

These studies showed that each group of native and non-native subjects read faster, and recalled more of the culturally familiar text than of the culturally unfamiliar texts... and that cultural schemata facilitate reading comprehension.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Subjects

This study was conducted with two groups of intermediate level EFL students enrolled in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Çukurova. The subjects were from different parts of Turkey and they were all of the Muslim religion. Originally there were 34 students in the study; however, the scores of any subjects who did not attend all the required training sessions were dropped. To get the data, the class was divided into two parts; experimental and control groups. Each group, the Experimental and the Control, consisted of 16 students. Subjects ranged in age from 22 to 24, and were randomly divided between the sexes. None had ever been to the USA, Britain or any English-speaking country.

The Experimental group was trained through the medium of television, role playing, pictures, simulation games, and with a native speaker, during two months of two class-hours a week.

3.2. Tests

Four texts, expressing frequent use of cultural aspects of English, (personal exchanges, differences in age, amount of intimacy, social position, and emotional tension reflected, in the choice of appropriate forms of pronouns and verbs) were chosen. For each text, culture-bound (described above) questions were prepared. These questions appear more likely to create a situation whereby a reader would have to draw culturally appropriate inferences in order to comprehend the text. Therefore, for someone who is not familiar with the cultural background information, this process of making correct inferences should be more difficult.

Pre- and Posttests

In order to rate the subjects' comprehension of the texts, each participant completed an objective reading comprehension test (see Appendix A). This instrument served as pretest and posttest; these were administered under the "same" conditions. The posttest was given one week after completion of training sessions. The whole test consisted of four different texts and twelve multiple-choice questions. Most of the questions were formulated to test the subjects' cultural background.

3.3 Testing Procedure

The Experimental and Control groups were tested at the same time, which lasted 30 minutes. Each person was given a set of texts which included reading-comprehension multiple-choice questions. All the instructions were given before the subjects were allowed to begin. Subjects were told that they were first going to read the texts and choose the appropriate answers.

3.3. Training

Seven training sessions were conducted for the experimental group, between the pre- and posttests. The first session began one week after the pretest. It was held instead of a regularly-scheduled translation lesson, lasting for about one hour. In the first session, subjects were asked to recall any information they could from their pretest reading texts. This information was written on the blackboard and served as a general warm-up exercise and as the basis for discussion, in which they compared their perceptions, and directed questions to both the teacher and other students. Each student was given a text which was about the cultural aspects of often used in English language, such as differences in age, and social position. This text served as a tool with which the subjects were able to follow the instructions of the teacher. Students were encouraged to ask questions throughout

the lesson. During the last few minutes of class, the teacher asked questions from the text, thereby reinforcing new vocabulary.

After one week, the second session was conducted. The purpose of this session was to provide an opportunity for the subjects to take a more active role in familiarizing themselves with cultural aspects of the target language. The subjects again studied the same text they had studied one week before. This time they role-played; participants acted what they read in the dialogue.

In the third session, the subjects were shown pictures which brought out necessary cultural values such as differences in age and amount of intimacy. Then they were asked to act out a scene similar to the pictures they had studied.

The fourth session was conducted one week after the third session. The subjects watched interaction of some people on video. The personalities, relationships and social roles of these people were clearly defined by the teacher. A brief explanation of the situation was given. The students then took the role of particular protagonists, acting as such people do in the target culture.

One month after the first session, a native speaker was invited into the classroom. The teacher and the native

speaker conducted a situation which was about a car accident. They showed their emotional tensions... in the choice of verbs and pronouns appropriate to this situation.

In the sixth session, the native speaker once again was invited. This time the subjects and the native speaker tried to act out the same situation they had watched. All the students had the chance to act out the situation and interact with the native speaker.

In the last session, the subjects revised all the vocabulary, grammar points, and the cultural aspects of the texts they had studied.

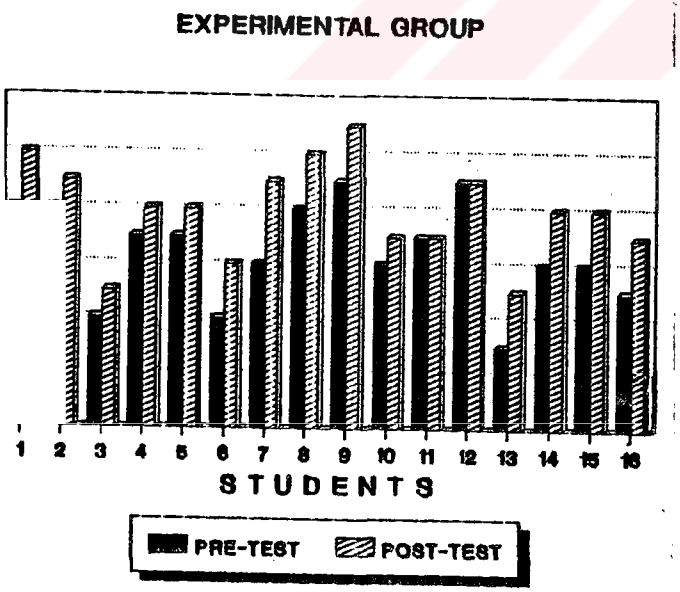
3.4. Control Group

While the experimental group was going through the training sessions, the control group received their regular curriculum. No specific alternative training was provided to the control group between the pre- and posttests.

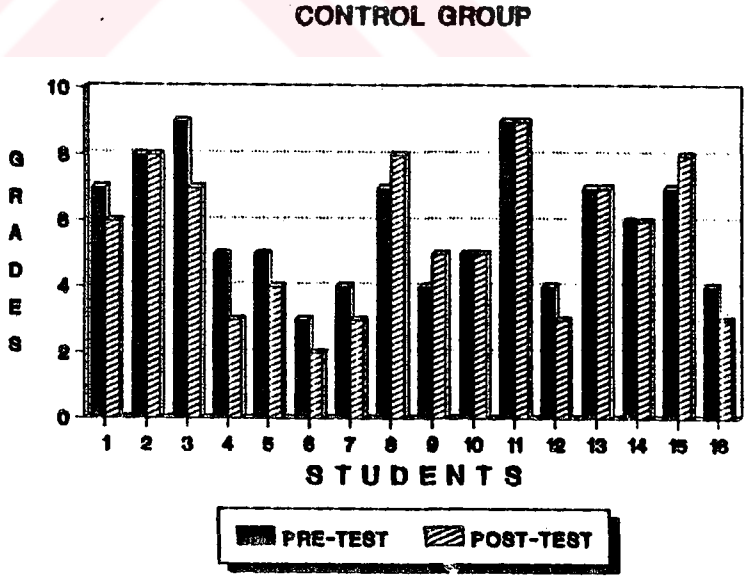
3.5. Scoring Procedure

Pretests and postests were scored by giving every question one point. The answers to the questions were either right or wrong, and scored accordingly; the right and wrong answers were recorded. Since this method of scoring is subjective by nature, a test of inter-rater reliability was conducted over a random sample of 20 subjects. The correlation between two judges on this sample was r=0.96.

The scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group, according to the pre- and posttests can be seen in graph 1, and 2.



Graph 1: The Scores of The Experimental Group



Graph 2: The Scores of The Control Group

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Results and Discussion

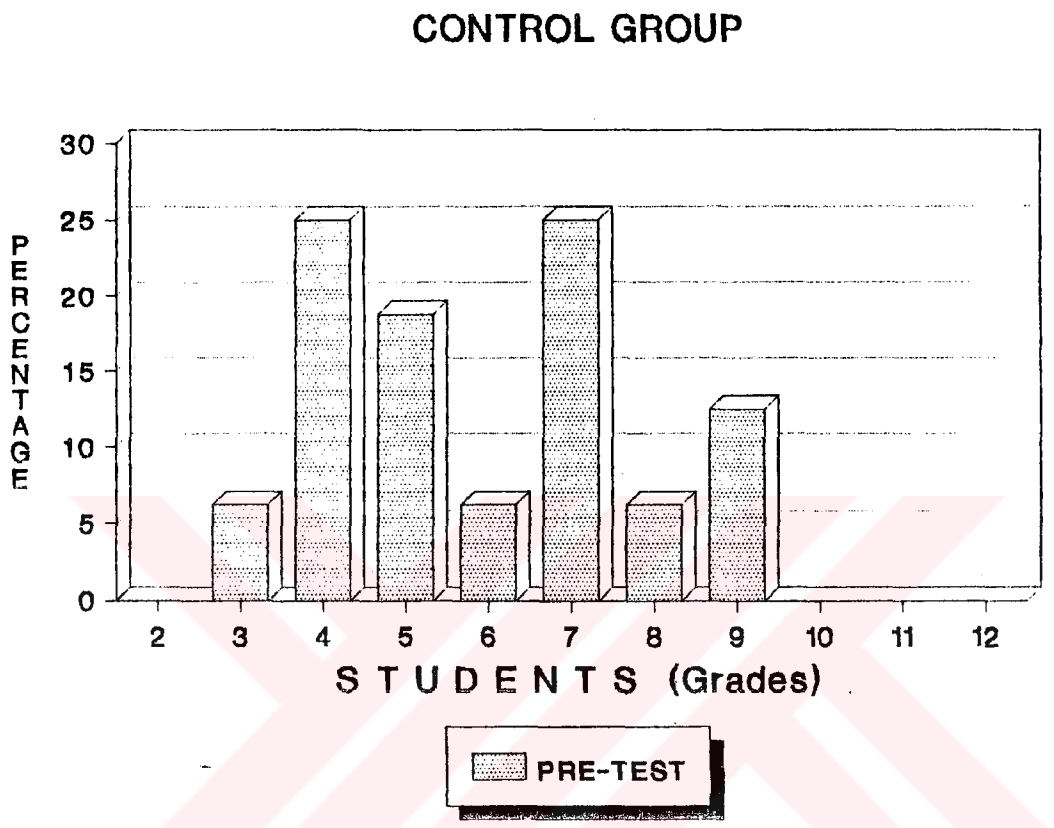
The reading-comprehension test scores of the Control group suggest that the subjects could not determine the relative importance of the cultural units in the texts. This will be attributed to their lack of well-developed cultural schemata. The results of the Control group are shown be seen in Table 1, 2 and graph 3, 4.

TABLE 1

Results of Pretests Given to the Control Group

Number of subjects	Value	Percent	Valid Percent
1	3	6.3	6.3
4	4	25.0	25.0
3	5	15.0	15.0
1	6	8.8	8.8
4	7	25.0	25.0
1	8	6.3	6.3
2	9	16.3	16.3
Total 16		100.0	100.0

Total 16 students took the pretest and one scored 3, four 4, three 5, one 6, four 7, one 8, and two 9 points.



Graph 3

The Percentage of the Grades of the Control Group

In the posttest of the Control Group, all the students who took the pretest joined the posttest. One scored 2, four 3, one 4, two 5, two 6, two 7, three 8, and one 9. The results can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2

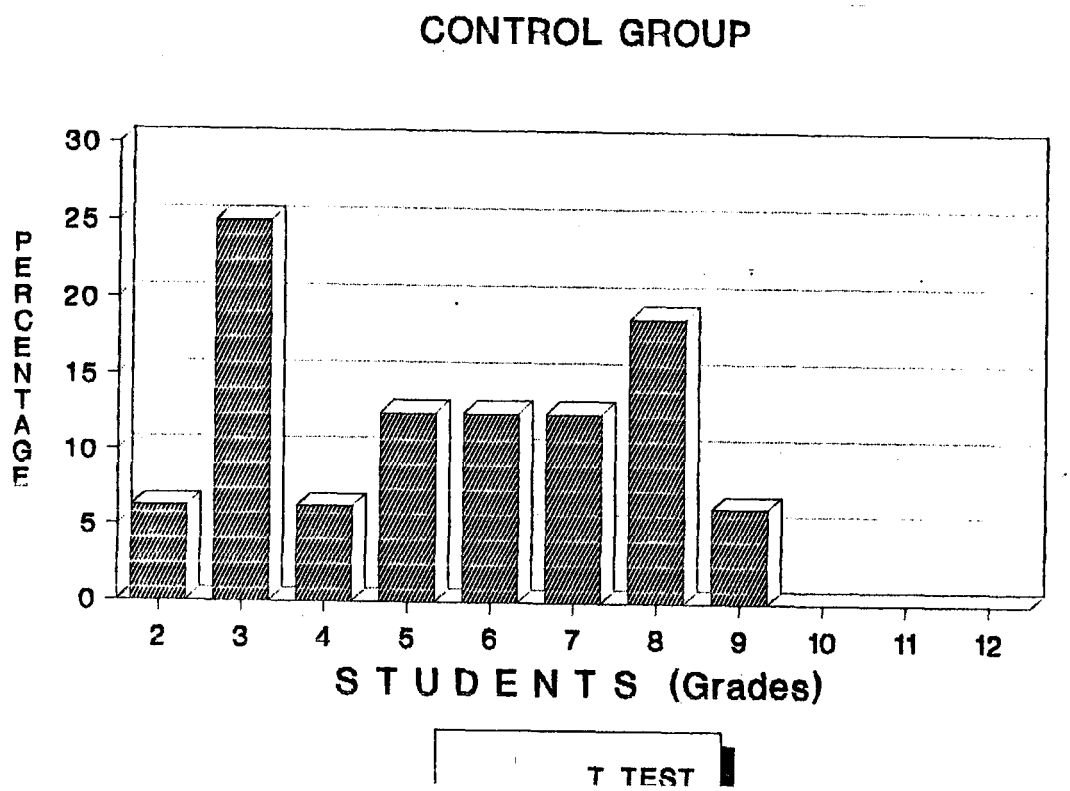
Results of Posttest Given to the Control Group

Number of subjects	Value	Percent	Valid Percent
1	2	6.3	6.3
4	3	25.0	25.0
1	4	6.3	6.3
2	5	12.5	12.5
2	6	12.5	12.5
2	7	12.5	12.5
3	8	18.8	18.8
1	9	6.3	6.3
Total 16		100.0	100.0

When the results of the Control Group considering pre- and posttest were compared, it was pointed out that there were no significant differences between the subjects' comprehensions of posttest.

Graph 4

The Percentage of the Grades of the Control Group

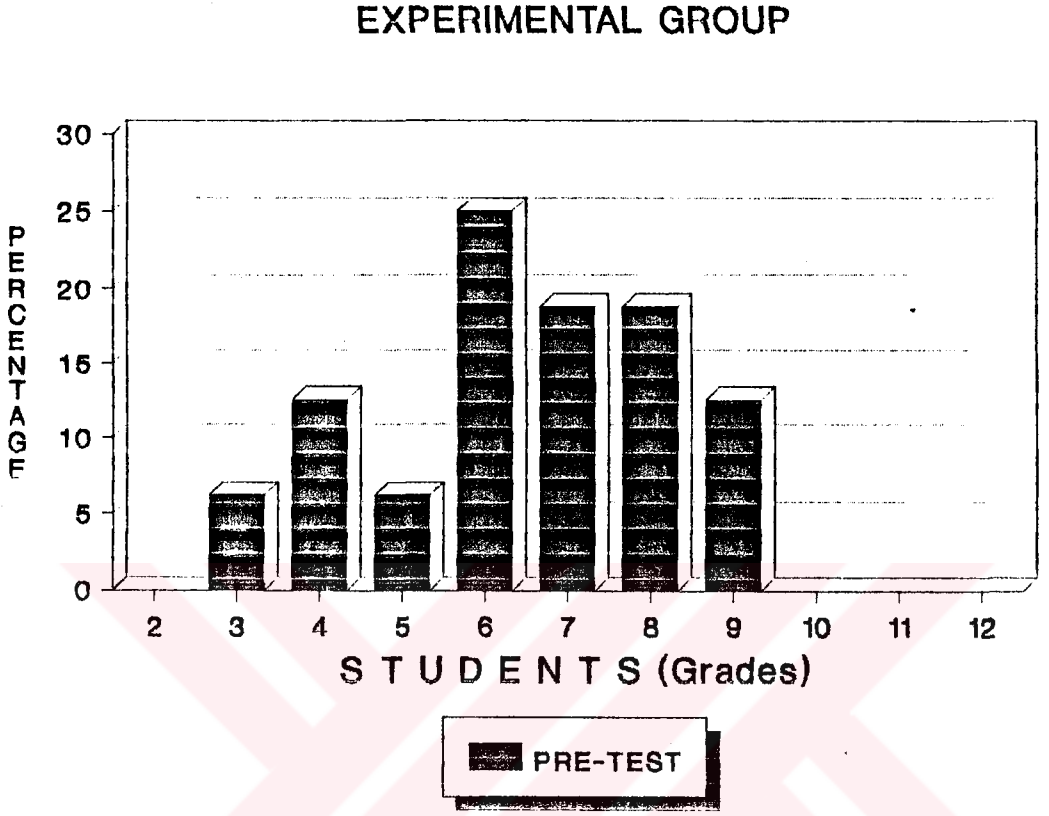


The reading comprehension scores for the two tests were correlated positively and subjects' elaborations (additional information given in the training sessions not provided in the texts) were significantly higher in posttest than in pretest. Because of their well-developed cultural schemata, the subjects of Experimental Group had a significant increase from their pre- to their posttest. Use of cultural background may have played a crucial role in the subjects' significantly better comprehension of the texts. In Table 3, 4 and graph 5, 6 the results of the Experimental Group are shown.

TABLE 3
Results of Pre-tests Given to the Experimental Group

Number of subjects	Value	Percent	Valid Percent
1	3	6.3	6.3
2	4	12.5	12,5
1	5	6.3	6.3
4	6	25.0	25.0
3	7	18.8	18.8
3	8	18.8	18.8
2	9	12.5	12,5
Total 16		100.0	100.0

In the Experimental Group, total 16 subjects took the pre-test. One scored 3, two 4, one 5, four 6, three 7, three 8, and two 9.



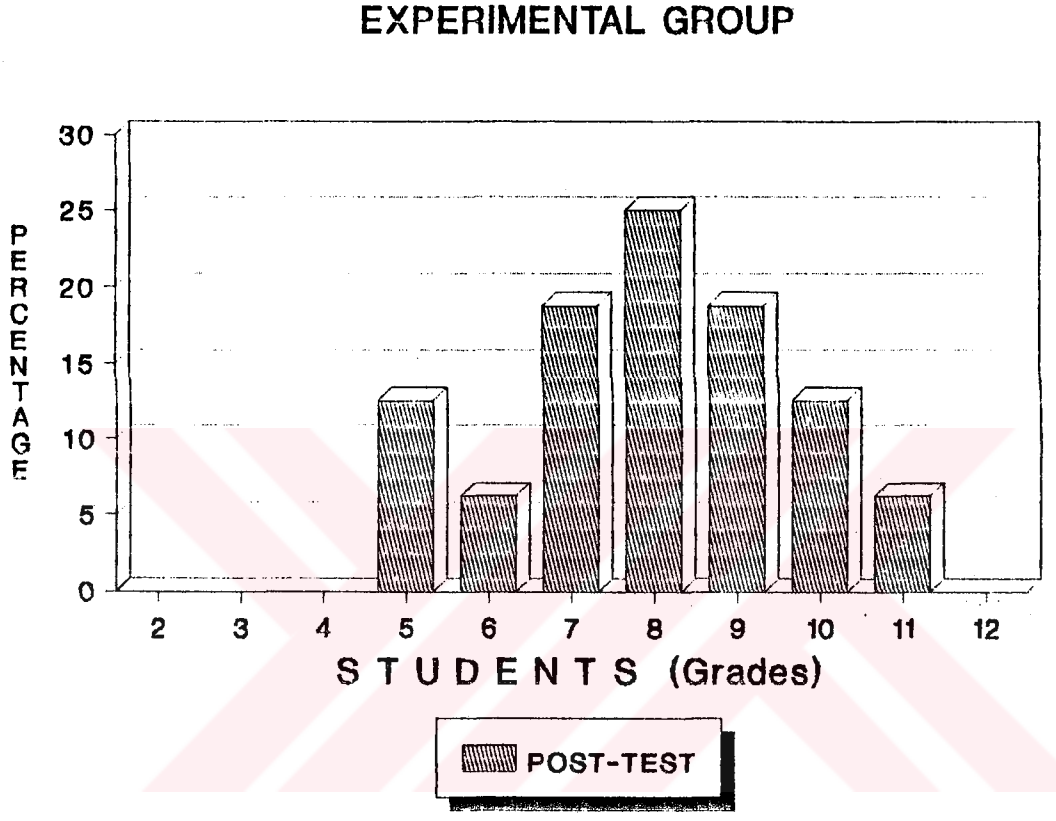
Graph 5

The Percentage of the Grades of the Experimental Group

TABLE 4
Results of Post-tests Given to the Experimental Group

Number of subjects	Value	Percent	Valid Percent
2	5	12.5	12.5
1	6	6.3	6.3
3	7	18.8	18.8
4	8	25.0	25.0
3	9	18.8	18.8
2	10	12.5	12.5
1	11	6.3	6.3
Total 16		100.0	100.0

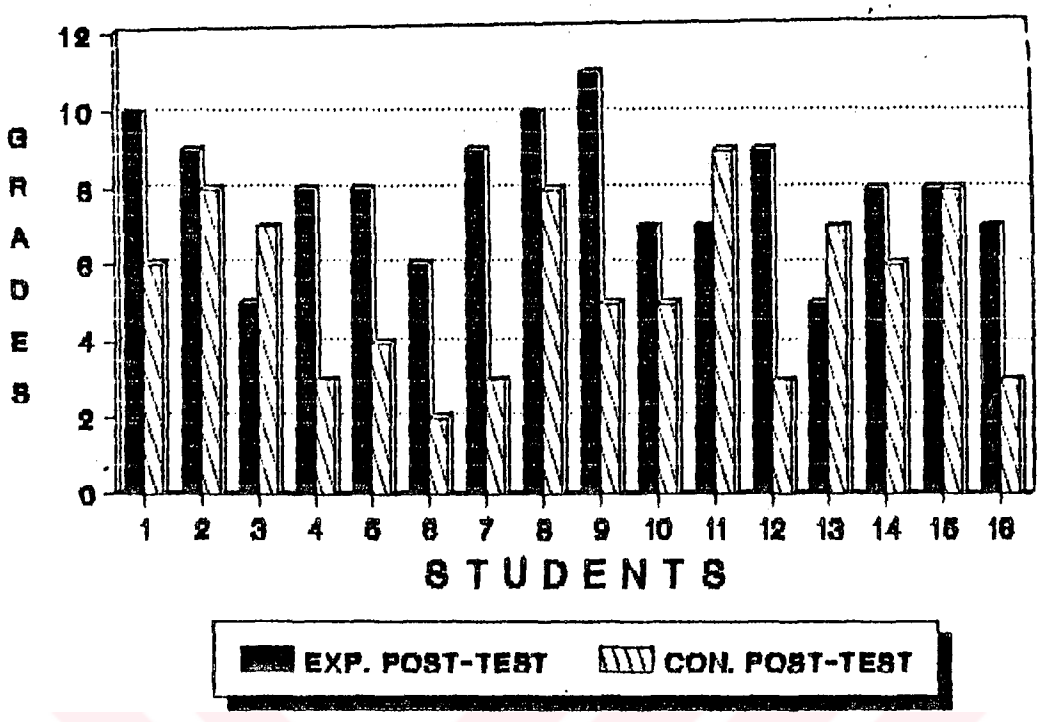
Of the Experimental subjects, total 16 students took the post-test; two scored 5, one 6, three 7, four 8, three 9, two 10, and one 11.



Graph 6

The Percentage of the Grades of the Experimental Group

The positive correlation between Control Group and Experimental Group for the two tests is due to the fact that reading process used in comprehending texts remains constant. Graph 7 shows the achievement of this study by comparing the posttests of two groups.



Graph 7

The Level of Achievement of the Study

The analysis indicates that the significant difference between the pre- and posttests supports the claims that "cultural schemata are important in reading comprehension" stated in the hypothesis. The fact that the calculated *t* value 7.35 is significantly higher than the fixed *t* value 2.120 at $p < 0.005$ level, justifies the value of orientation to culture. The results can be seen in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Means, Standard Deviations, and *t* Ratio of the Subjects of the Experimental Group

Tests	n	m	sd	df	r	t	ls
Pretest	16	6.44	1.79	15	0.89	7.35	p< 0.005
Posttest		7.94	1.73				

TABLE 6

Means, Standard Deviations and **t** Ratio of the Subjects of the Control Group

Tests	n	m	sd	df	r	t	ls
Pretest	16	5.88	1.90	15	0.91	1.82	
Posttest		5.44	2.25				p<0.005

In order to find out whether there was a significant difference between two groups, the calculated **t** ratios 7.35 and 1.82 were, respectively, compared to **t** table value 2.120 at p<0.005 level. While the **t** value for the Experimental Group is over 2.120, that of the Control Group is below it.

On the other hand, it can be seen that the Control Group is below **t** table value 2.120 (Table 6), and there is a significant increase in the **t** value of the Experimental Group. This demonstrates that the subjects trained with cultural aspects are significantly more successful than those traditionally trained. The obtained values also indicate that cultural schemata are inevitable for a successful reading comprehension.

Subjects used the syntactic and semantic information for predicting, and they did differ significantly in the use of confirming/correcting strategies for the test during both administrations. This indicates too much attention and over-correction at sentence level at the cost of use of the

integrating strategies -- the overall integration of the text -- resulting from lack of cultural schemata.

There were no significant differences in syntactic and semantic understanding at sentence level. In addition, the results suggest that reading comprehension at sentence level was not affected. Moreover, the cultural aspects of the text affect the overall comprehension due to lack of schemata. This can be interpreted to mean that reading comprehension is much more than understanding at word and sentence level. It is relating and integrating new information with the background knowledge and effectively utilizing predicting, confirming/correcting, and integrating strategies to construct meaning.

n: number of subjects
x: mean
sd: standard deviation
df: degree of freedom
r: correlation of coefficient
t: t value
ls: level of significance

Data were analyzed by the SPSSx Batch System on the computer.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The basic findings of this study may be summarized as follows. In the first part of this study it is stated through the related literature that language is a key component of culture. It is the primary medium for transmitting much of culture. Learning a second language also involves learning a second culture to varying degrees. Second, prior background knowledge of culture-specific information presupposed by a text affects reading comprehension of that text. There is a relationship between the background knowledge that the students bring to the text and his/her ability to interpret it. Third, teaching of relevant background information may significantly facilitate reading comprehension. The results also support the idea that similar to the findings in first-language studies, we could improve students' reading comprehension by helping them build background knowledge on a topic prior to reading, particularly with culture-specific background knowledge. As was seen in the methodology part of this study, though there were not any significant changes of the subjects of the control group in the comprehension of the texts, the subjects of the experimental group made a significant increase.

As for the implication of this study for ESL reading teachers, reading without comprehension is sheer

when comprehension is poor. For the building of bridges between a student's existing knowledge and new knowledge needed for text comprehension, a number of organized pre-reading approaches and methods have been proposed in the literature for facilitating reading through activation of background knowledge (Carrell 1984). The experience-text-relationship (ETR) method of Au (1979) consists of students expressing their own experience or knowledge about the topic prior to reading. After the students have adequately shared their knowledge, the text becomes the focus of the class. During this segment of the lesson, the teacher asks the students to read short stories of the sample text and then questions them about the content. The teacher must be sensitive to those text areas that could elicit misunderstandings, and work through any difficulties that the students may have.

Although not directly within the scope of my study, the implication for EFL teachers who come across cultural aspects of the target language (stated in the Methodology chapter of this study), in classroom situations, could be as follows. In the past, the commonest method of presenting cultural materials has been by exposition and explanation. Teachers have talked at great length about the geographical environment, the history of the people, their literary, artistic, and scientific achievements, the institutions of their society, and even about small details of their everyday life.

Teaching the culture of target language usually begins at the elementary stage. In the class, teacher and students discuss the daily life of the peer group in the target language community; their families, their friends, their leisure-time activities, the festivals they celebrate, the ceremonies they go through, dating and marriage customs. At intermediate and advanced levels attention may be drawn to geographical factors and their influence on daily living, major historical periods, how the society is organized, production (which one should be vital important, which one comes next), transport, buying and selling, workers' conditions, major institutions (education, the law, government, religion), aspects of city and country life, the history of art, music, dance, and film.

Since most students live in a monolingual and monocultural environment, they are "culture bound." This places a heavy pedagogic responsibility on the foreign-language teacher to reduce their cultural biases towards the language s/he is teaching, and to lessen their antipathy towards other social behaviors. S/he should impress upon students that there are many ways of looking at things, and that cultural differences do not necessarily involve moral issues of right and wrong. As a foreign-language teacher, s/he must have thorough insight into the culture of his/her students (the native culture) as well as the culture of the

teaching. This bicultural understanding is essential to identify those areas of cultural background that will be unintelligible to his/her students if presented without explanation.

The most essential component of introducing a cultural element in the classroom is that foreign-language teachers must maintain complete neutrality (the situations which a students interprets as familiar patterns of her/his own culture). S/he must not give her/his students the impression that s/he is selling a foreign culture to them. His/her approach should be informative, analytical, and objective, not to have a negative impression on the students to break their motivation in learning the target language. For being neutral in the class Rivers suggests that:

> The teacher's approach to culture, whether he be foreigner or native speaker, should not be a chauvinistic one: he must overcome any temptation to try to prove the superiority of one culture over another. He is not in the classroom to confirm the prejudices of his students nor to attack their deeply held convictions. His aim should not be to win converts to one system or the other (Rivers 1968: 324).

Finally, a review of related literature showed that very little research has been done on the reading proceses and strategies used by the readers, who learn English as a foreign language, (EFL) as subjects. More research is, therefore, needed using EFL readers as subjects. This study may be replicated on a larger sample with subjects from diverse cultural background. The review also showed that very few studies have been done using culture-based texts. The

area where the EFL readers are likely to encounter more difficulties is in the reading of their content-area materials that involves culture-based texts. Hence, culture based texts should be used that are selected from different cultural content. This study has demonstrated that providing cultural background knowledge could increase students' success in the reading process. Therefore, it is recommended that the significance of background knowledge be considered in such future studies of the reading process and strategies involving EFL readers.

APPENDIX A

TEXTS AND QUESTIONS USED IN PRE- AND POSTEST

I. EXPRESSING AND RECEIVING SYMPATHY

MIke: Hi, honey. How did it go at work today?

Yoko: I'm so upset, Mike! I found out I did not get the promotion I was hoping for!

Mike: I can't believe it! I'm really sorry, honey. I know how much you were counting on it. And if anyone deserved it, you did!

Yoko: Thanks, Mike. I really did think I was going to get it That's what makes the disappointment so much worse!

Mike: Don't let it get you down. There'll be other promotions.

According to the dialogue,

1. What is Mike and Yoko's relationship?

a. They are friends.

b. They are a couple.

c. They are colleagues.

d. They are classmates.

2. **Which of the following words or phrases shows they are intimate?**

a. I can't believe it!

b. Thanks, Mike.

c. Hi, honey.

II. EXPRESSING THANKS AND COMPLIMENTS

A: Miss ...

B: ... Are you ready to order now?

A: Yeah, I'd like ... a piece of peach pie and a cup of coffee.

B: ... Will that be all?

A: Yes thanks.

B: Cream or sugar for your coffee?

A: Black's fine.

B: ... Thank you.

(After several minutes, the waitress brings the order)

B: There you are...

A: Thank you. By the way, could I have my uh...check now?

B: Sure...

(The waitress writes out the check and lays it face down on the table) Thank you.

A: Mmhmm...

(Speaker A has now just paid his bill at the cash register with a five-dollar bill).

B: OK ... one seventy-five out of five. That's one seventy-five, ... two ... three, four and five. Thank you.

A: You bet. Bye now.

1. **According to the dialogue the situation is**

a. formal.
b. informal.
c. semiformal.
d. too formal.

2. **The phrases "thanks" and "thank you" in the dialogue**

   a. show gratitude.

   b. display pleasure.

   c. are a formal way of showing awareness

   d. show a great satisfaction.

3. **A's way of calling the waitress "Miss ..." is**

   a. strange. c. rude.

   b. inappropriate d. polite.

III. ACCEPTING AND DECLINING INVITATIONS

Paula: Good morning, Mr. Barnes. It's good to see you again.

(They shake hands)

Mr. Barnes: Hello, Paula. Nice to see you again, too. Did you have good flight?

Paula: Fine. I thought we'd circle Atlanta forever, but I've come to expect that at this airport, Mr. Barnes. I'd like you to meet Tim Myers, my associate. Tim is goimg to be helping me on the advertising campaign.

Tim: (offers his hand) How do you do, Mr. Barnes?

Mr. Barnes: My pleasure, Tim. Let's have some lunch, so we can start talking.

According to the dialogue, choose the best answer.

1. **Why do you do think Paula does not give more background information on both men when she introduces them?**

   a. This is a formal situation.
   b. This is an informal situation.
   c. Thay have met before.
   d. She does not need to give more background information.

2. **Although Mr. Barnes addresses Tim and Paula with their names, they don't, Why?**

   a. They have just met.
   b. They don't know Mr. Barnes' full name.
   c. This is an informal meeting.
   d. There are age differences between them.

3. **What is the status or position of Mr. Barnes?**

   a. He may be Paula's colleague.
   b. He may be Paula's father.
   c. He may be a relative of Paula.

IV. AGREEING, DISAGREEING AND CORRECTING

A: Well ma'am, it looks like we've sold it.

B; ... what? ... are you kidding me?

A: Yes, it says right here ... we sold it just this morning.

B: Now, wait a minute ... You mean you sold my TV.

A: Well. I'm sorry, ma'am, but we have a policy that if you don't pick up your set within four weeks after notification, we have the right to sell the unit.

B: I beg your pardon, but I've got the notification to pick it up right here, and its date's last Monday.

A: Well. I'm awfully sorry, but it's sold already.

B: Well. You're just going to get me a new set, and that's that.

According to this conversation, choose the best answer.

1. **A addresses B as ma'am. What is the degree of intimacy?**
   a. A and B know each other very well.
   b. A and B work at the same place.
   c. A and B have never met before.
   d. A and B are two people who have met for a purchase problem.

2. **Why does B use the "Are you kidding me" expression?**
   a. B doesn't believe what A has already said.
   b. B enjoys what A says.
   c. A makes a joke.

3. **Considering the phrases "wait a minute", and "that's that". How do you think B feels?**

   a. very pleased.
   c. very indignant.
   b. very friendly.
   d. very helpful.

4. **How can we describe the attitude of A in a single word?**

   a. tolerant.
   c. lousy.
   b. principled.
   d. sympatethic.

APPENDIX B

THE DIALOGUES USED IN THE TRAINING.

MEETING

Paul: Hello, Don. How are you?

Don : Fine, thank you, and you?

Paul: Fine, thanks. Do you know my brother Michael?

Don : No. Hello, Michael. What do you do?

Michael: Well, I work in a library -- in New York.

Don : Have you got a flat there?

Michael: Oh no; I live in digs. What do you do?

Don : I'm a student. I'm at Columbia University.

Paul: OK, guys, stop talking and decide where to spend this afternoon.

Michael: What about seeing that film the one that's been on for two weeks?

Don: OK, Michael, that's a good idea.

Paul: OK, let's go.

****

IN A JEWELLER'S

Jeweller: Good afternoon, madam. May I help you?

Mary : Yes, I brought my ring in to have it repaired last week. You said it'd be ready by Monday. Here is the ticket.

Jeweller: Ah, yes, madam. Would you wait just a minute, please?

Bob : What's happening? He's a long time, isn't he?

Detective: Excuse me, madam. We're police officers. Is this the ring you brought in last week?

Mary : Yes, it's my engagement ring. What's this all about?

Detective: Would you please come with us, madam? We'd like to ask you few questions. And you, sir, if you please.

****

THREATENING

A. Hey You! I was waiting to back into that space.

B. Were you? Bad luck, mate.

A. But I was indicating...I've been here for ages...

A. Well, you were too slow, weren't you?

B. Look, I'm not letting you get away with this. You'd better move or else.

B. Or else what?

A. Or else I'll...

B. Clear off, chum. I haven't got time

A. Here, you'd better watch it.

B. Leave it, mate. Don't be so stupid.

A. Just watch it...or I'll

B. Will you? You, and whose army?

A. Right, come on, then. I'll give you one.

B. Is that a threat or a promise, darling? Look I'm off. I haven't got all day.

A. Come back here! I'll...I'll...

DAVE IS ANGRY

It is seven o'clock on a Saturday evening. Dave is waiting for his girlfriend, Carol, to arrive.

Dave: What's the time?

Mrs Bates: Seven.

Dave: Where's Carol, then? She said she'd be here by 6.15.

Mrs Bates: Well, she isn't here. She might have missed the bus.

Dave: We're going out, though!

Mrs Bates: She may still be at home. Why don't you give her a ring?

Dave: No, I rang her half an hour ago and there was no answer.

Mrs Bates: Then she must have missed the bus or something. Or she could have been in the bath.

Dave: Well, she's a damn nuisance!

Mrs Bates: You know, she might have stopped off on the way to see her sister. I would't worry if I were you.

Dave: Huh. I'm going to have a shower.

Mrs Bates: What if she rings?

Dave: If she does, tell her to hurry up. Otherwise we'll miss the concert.

Mr Bates: I expect she's forgotten about it.

Dave: What do you mean?

Mr Bates: Well, she may have something better to do.

Dave: Like what, exactly?

Mrs Bates: No, Dave, she must be on her way. She'll be here soon. She won't have forgotten.

Dave: Well, I don't care. She bought the tickets. She's got them. It's her money.

Mr Bates: Well, perhaps she's taken someone else.

Dave: Look, dad, give it a rest, will you! I don't want to discuss it any more.

Mr Bates: I was only saying...

Dave: I'm going to have my shower!

Mr Bates: (calling) Are you going to stay at home and watch the football on the telly with me, then?

****

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN A MORNING?

A: Hello...hello Is anybody there? Oh, lord, my head's splitting. Ah, Mary. There you are. Bring me some coffee.

B: You should be in bed, ma'am. That's what the doctor said. He did.

A: Bed! How can I sleep with all this going on? Bring the coffee, Mary.

C: Ah, this is a surprise. We haven't seen you at breakfast for years. What's happened?

A: That's enough! You're just like your father, you know. Just like him.

C: But a bit brighter, eh? just a bit brighter.

A: I sometimes think you're worse. You are not like me. Not at all like me.

C: Thank goodness for that.

D: Hello, nice to see you up so early... good morning. Has anybody seen my husband yet?

C: Why? Has he left you?

D: Very funny. No, I just thought he'd be here. He said he was going straight down to breakfast.

C: Perhaps he's run away. (It wouldn't be the first time for you, would it).

D: What do you mean? Come on, what are you trying to say, exactly?

A: Yes, leave her alone. There's no reason to start on her.

E: Hello, everybody. What's all fuss about, eh?

D: It's nothing, darling. Just your delightful brother, as usual.

C: Just my sense of humour, that's all.

E: I thought I told you to leave her alone.

C: Do you often have to say that to people?

E: Why, I'll...

****

A TELEVISION PROGRAM

Quizmaster: Good evening, friends. Welcome to another edition of *Your Choice*. We've got some more wonderful contestants here tonight and some fantastic prizes. Don't forget, ladies and gentlemen, that I don't know what's in the envelopes. Now let's meet the first contestant who wants to play *Your Choice*. Good evening,

madam. Would you like to tell us what your name is?

Contestant: Mrs Jenkins.

Quizmaster: Mrs Jenkins. If you stand a little nearer to the microphone, the viewers'll hear you a little bit better. Now your first question is: can you tell me how many days there are in March?

Contestant: Oh, now let me see. Thirty days have September... so, er, 31.

Quizmaster: That is it, Mrs Jenkins. You've got the correct answer. Now your second question is: can you tell me where the last Olympic Games were held? Take your time; there is no hurry.

Contestant: Oh dear, er, er ... It was, er, Tokyo, wasn't it?

Quizmaster: Oh, no, Mrs Jenkins. I'm afraid that's the wrong answer. Never mind. Here is five-dollar consolation prize. Better luck next time.

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