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**Investigating the Role of Cultural Awareness in Developing EFL
Learners' Reading-Comprehension**

The case of second year students at Biskra University Department of English

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as a partial

Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master in Sciences of Languages**

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2023/2024

Declaration

I, NouiouaKhouloud certify that this study is a presentation of original work, and was fully authored in my own words. This work has never been published before, at any university or institution. All sources are acknowledged as References. This study took place at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria, during the academic year 2023-2024.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my beloved parents ZEMAILI SALIMA and NOUIOUA

ABDULLAH

My supportive brothers HAMADI, OKBA , MOHAMED and LOTFI

My lovely and sweetest sisters ABLA and WARDA

And especially thanks to my esteemed supervisor Dr. SEGUENI LAMRI whose guidance has

inspired me, thanks for your support.

Acknowledgments

First of all I owe a great thanks to **ALLAH** for helping me to finish and complete this work

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor **Dr. SEGUENI LAMRI** for his guidance, encouragement and wisdom which played a pivotal role in the completion of my thesis.

Genuine sincere gratitude goes for the respectable members of the jury who have accepted to give time to read and evaluate this humble work; namely, **Dr. NasriChahira , Dr. LaalaYoucef and Mrs. DjouamaHouda.**

Finally, without the assistance of Second year students and Teachers of culture this research would not have been finished; we greatly appreciate your efforts. I appreciate your help with this project.

Abstract

The complex relationship between cultural awareness and its impact on reading comprehension of English as foreign language (EFL) learners is the subject of this dissertation. The study examines various viewpoints on culture in educational settings and highlights the importance of understanding cultural aspects of language acquisition and the ways in which culture influences reading comprehension. It is important for both educators and students to understand how culture impacts EFL reading comprehension. Skimming, scanning, top-down reading, bottom-up reading and other reading strategies are influenced by cultural factors, which also have a significant impact on reading skills. The dissertation examines the phases of reading, from the phase before reading to the phase after reading, as well as the effects of culture on reading comprehension. The study emphasizes the value of a cultural background and seeks to improve EFL learners' text comprehension by integrating cultural nuances into reading comprehension techniques. The study highlights the importance of integrating culture into EFL teaching to inspire students, promote intercultural awareness, and improve reading comprehension. We will employ a qualitative research method that includes semi- questionnaires to collect data. The results show how cultural knowledge and reading comprehension are positively correlated in EFL students. By expanding knowledge about different cultures and their impact on reading comprehension, teachers can create a more welcoming and productive language-learning environment.

Key words: EFL context, Schema theory, Cultural awareness, Cultural factors, Cultural nuances.

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General

Introduction

Background of the study

Integrating culture into the development of reading comprehension skills of English as foreign language (EFL) learners is a relevant issue, particularly at the level of higher education. Building on existing studies, a second-year program at Biskra University's Department of English seeks to examine the role of culture in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. This research project is consistent with previous findings demonstrating the strong connection between cultural background knowledge and reading comprehension success.

By focusing on the following key topics, our study will aim to contribute valuable insights to the field of EFL pedagogy. First, we will try to show the impact of cultural background knowledge by examining how cultural background knowledge affects EFL learners' reading comprehension skills, including identifying common misconceptions which are caused by cultural differences.

Second, we will attempt to highlight the effectiveness of culturally informed pre-reading activities by evaluating the effectiveness of using pre-reading activities that aim to activate background cultural knowledge before engaging with reading material.

Third, our study will focus on the role of cultural schematic knowledge by exploring how cultural Schemas shape EFL learners' perception and interpretation of texts, thereby affecting their overall understanding. To answer these research questions, the study could employ qualitative methods. Ultimately, the goal is to provide practical recommendations for teachers who want to optimize their curricula and teaching strategies to meet the needs of culturally diverse EFL learners.

An increasing number of research works emphasizes the connection between language and culture in language learning and communication serves as the foundation for the examination of how culture influences the development of reading comprehension abilities in English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Holliday's research highlights how crucial it is to comprehend culture as a dynamic, all-pervasive force that molds people's communication styles and ways in which they interpret written language. Theoretical frameworks that provide light on how cultural schemata and sociocultural circumstances influence people's understanding processes include sociocultural theory and schema theory. By providing a detailed examination of the precise processes through which cultural influences influence the development of reading comprehension

in EFL learners, this study seeks to further the current conversation on culture and language learning.

Significance of the study

The relationship between reading comprehension and cultural awareness highlights the importance of investigating the role of culture in improving reading comprehension as a learner of English as a foreign language (EFL). It is important to understand the impact of background on EFL students' comprehension of English text because it affects their vocabulary, reading strategies, and identifying different types of reading comprehension. This research is particularly important because of the difficulties modern students face in understanding the culture of acquiring knowledge, especially in reading comprehension. The results of these studies can provide valuable information to teachers and curriculum developers, helping them develop curricula and instructional strategies for the cultural history of English language learners, ultimately improving reading skills.

Aims of the study

The objective of this study is researching the role of culture in developing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reading skills is the broad aims of this exploration. Researchers provide a clear direction and purpose for the study, ensuring that the exploration stays focused and on track throughout the process. In this environment, the point could be to understand the influence of cultural factors on EFL learners' reading comprehension and to identify effective strategies for integrating cultural content into EFL reading teaching. On the other hand, the specific, measurable, and feasible points that the study aims to negotiate within a specified period. They outline the way or conduct claimed to achieve the overall goal of the exploration. For a study on culture and EFL reading perception, the aims could include reviewing applicable literature, conducting empirical study to assess the impact of culture on reading appreciation, and developing practical recommendations for instructors.

Statement of the problem

The problem statement in the study is about the impact of culture on the reading comprehension of EFL learners, particularly second year students at the Department of English Language at Biskra University. It focuses on the influence of cultural factors on students' reading comprehension. This study aims to analyze the effects of cultural schemata, cultural localization, and cultural familiarity on reading comprehension. In addition, it seeks to examine the influence of cultural content in teaching reading comprehension and investigate learners' perceptions of culture on their reading comprehension. The participants in this study will be EFL learners with diverse learning needs and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Algeria.

The identification of cultural elements as significant but sometimes disregarded drivers of language learning outcomes has led to research into the impact of culture on the development of reading comprehension skills in English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Although the importance of culture in language comprehension processes has been acknowledged, there is still a dearth of empirical studies particularly looking at how culture affects EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Research Questions

1. How do cultural factors influence EFL learners' reading comprehension strategies and performance?
2. What specific cultural elements, such as cultural schemata, socio-cultural contexts, and cross-cultural differences, contribute to variations in reading comprehension among EFL learners?
3. To what extent do EFL teaching practices incorporate cultural content and awareness to support reading comprehension development?

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that if we develop EFL learners' cultural awareness, their reading comprehension will improve. In other words, we believe that cultural factors significantly influence EFL learners' reading comprehension strategies and performance.

Methodology

Our study employed a qualitative research method, utilizing semi-questionnaires to collect data. This research focused on the effects of cultural schemata, cultural localization, and cultural familiarity on reading comprehension among second-year students at the Department of English Language at Biskra University. It analyzed the impact of cultural content in teaching reading comprehension and investigated learners' perceptions of culture on their reading comprehension. The participants were EFL learners with diverse learning needs and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Algeria.

1. Population and Sampling

To guarantee diversity in cultural experiences and representation, the study focused on second year students at the Department of English at Biskra University. The participants chosen randomly. We distributed a questionnaire to teachers in charge of the module of reading. The study used probability sampling .

2. Data Collection Method

We offered a clear picture of the role of culture on the development of EFL learners' reading comprehension skills, a qualitative followed. We analyzed of the questionnaires item by item.

Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation investigates the role of culture on the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reading comprehension. The preliminary sections will encompass the title page, abstract, acknowledgments, table of contents, and list of figures and tables. The main body of the dissertation will be divided into three key chapters.

The first Chapter will offer an overview of the research topic, its significance, and will specifically focus on the role of culture in EFL reading comprehension.

The second chapter will examine the literature on culture, reading comprehension, and language learning, it will deal with the influence of culture on the development of EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The third chapter will cover the Methodology chosen to investigate the role of culture in developing EFL learners' reading comprehension, and will contain the data collection and analysis procedures and the research findings.

Chapter one

Cultural

awareness

Introduction

The present chapter explores the important role of cultural awareness in enhancing reading comprehension in foreign language teaching and learning. The chapter attempts to provide the basis on how cultural awareness influences reading by presenting the different aspects of culture and how it can be integrated into teaching reading. It also examines the various aspects that comprise cultural dimensions, such as cultural norms and values, communication styles, and the significance of cultural context.

The chapter starts with defining culture by establishing the foundation of understanding culture which encompasses the shared beliefs, values, social norms, and behaviors that influence how we perceive and interact with the world around us. It then examines various perspectives on the integration of culture in the educational contexts for EFL learners.

Next, the chapter will deal with the specific ways in which cultural factors can influence reading comprehension. The sections explore how learners' cultural background and the cultural context within a text all play a role in shaping understanding. We will also discuss the role of cultural awareness in facilitating the development reading skills. Finally, the chapter will conclude by providing a brief overview of models for teaching culture.

1.1. Definition of culture

Culture has been defined by many authors and from different perspectives. Hall (1976) for instance, defines culture as a group of people's commonly taught information, beliefs, and values. These include their conventions, art, and social standards which combined develop a meaning system that determines how they interact with the world (Hofstede, 1980). Culture has a considerable impact on EFL learners' approaches to reading comprehension tasks, including their grasp of text structure, communication styles, and the underlying values portrayed in the writing.

Culture is a complicated subject that can be explored through two important aspects in your EFL learner studies. Culture applies to a group's shared knowledge base, which includes traditions, beliefs, values, and language use. This includes arts, music, social norms, and religious practices. This shared understanding has a substantial impact on EFL learners' approaches to reading

comprehension. Their cultural background (schemas) can be useful for familiar topics, but it can also lead to misinterpretations of unfamiliar contextual references and writing styles. In addition, cultural differences might result in gaps in previous information, making it difficult for individuals to understand the context and meaning of a work uncommon to another culture.

After all, culture is more than a collection of facts; a dynamic system that affects how individuals perceive the world. Different cultures have particular text organization methods and writing customs (such as humor or sarcasm), which, if unknown, might make it difficult for EFL learners to follow the flow or grasp the author's intent. Similarly, EFL learners may misinterpret cultural communication patterns exhibited in writing, such as directness, formality, and politeness cues, which can hinder comprehension. Moreover, underlying cultural norms and ideas can shape how readers interpret a work. EFL students may miss the intended message if their cultural values conflict with those conveyed in the writing. Considering these cultural characteristics is critical for providing successful reading comprehension teaching to EFL learners.

1.2.Cultural awareness

Cultural awareness involves more than just a fundamental understanding of different civilizations. A complex ability includes knowledge and awareness of many ideas, attitudes, communication styles, and historical and contemporary behaviors (Lustig & Koester 2006). Culturally aware people go beyond mere information to promote sensitivity and appreciation for cultural distinctions. This includes admitting the validity of different cultural perspectives while avoiding the tendency to regard one's own culture as superior (ethnocentrism).

Cultural understanding produces effective interactions. It enables people to change their communication methods, grasp nonverbal clues unique to different cultures, and manage situations with cultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). Critical self-reflection is also an important consideration. Culturally aware people constantly question their own biases and preconceptions, promoting continuing learning and adaptation in multicultural settings. In the context of EFL learners, cultural awareness has a direct impact on reading comprehension. Learners can better understand the context and meaning of written content by solving the gap between their cultural background and that of the target language. They can also recognize and interpret cultural references in the text,

preventing misunderstandings. Cultural awareness enables EFL students to grasp the broad range and variety of cultural perspectives produced in writing.

1.3.Perspectives on culture in educational contexts for EFL learners' reading comprehension

Several cultural perspectives significantly influence EFL learners' reading comprehension. Learners bring their cultural background and knowledge (schemas) to reading tasks, which can be helpful for familiar concepts but lead to misunderstandings of unfamiliar cultural references or writing styles. Cultural differences can also create gaps in background knowledge, making it difficult for EFL learners to grasp the context and meaning of a text. Furthermore, different cultures have preferred ways of organizing text (e.g., chronological vs. thematic) and using writing conventions (e.g., humor, sarcasm). Unfamiliarity with these conventions can hinder EFL learners' ability to follow the flow or understand the author's intent.

Additionally, cultural communication styles reflected in writing, such as direct vs. indirect language, formality levels, and politeness markers, can be misinterpreted by EFL learners, impacting comprehension. Finally, underlying cultural values and beliefs can shape how readers derive meaning from a text. EFL learners might miss the intended message if their cultural values clash with those presented in the writing.

By integrating these cultural perspectives, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This can involve pre-reading activities to build background knowledge on cultural references and text structures, explicit instruction highlighting cultural differences in writing styles and communication, using culturally authentic materials that reflect the target language culture, and encouraging collaborative learning through discussions that compare and contrast cultural viewpoints within the text.

1.4.Importance of Understanding Cultural Dimensions in Language Learning

It is crucial to understand the cultural aspects of language learning in order to promote learners' intercultural competence and enable efficient communication. By recognizing and appreciating

cultural nuances, learners can more skillfully overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and achieve improved language acquisition and comprehension. Additionally, cultural sensitivity, empathy, and respect for other people's cultures are fostered through cultural awareness, which promotes meaningful interactions and global citizenship.

Cultural dimensions in language learning encompass various aspects such as:

1. **Cultural Norms and Values:** Language use and interpretation can be influenced by an understanding of a culture's underlying norms and values.
2. **Cultural communication styles:** Effective intercultural communication requires an understanding of cultural differences in communication styles, such as: Directness versus indirectness.
3. **Cultural Context:** Understanding the social and cultural context of a language helps learners understand it.
4. **Cultural Identity:** Understanding the diversity of cultural identities when learning a language and exploring one's own language strengthens intercultural competence.

1.5.Cultural Influences Reading Comprehension

EFL learners' reading comprehension significantly affected by various cultural factors. One key influence is their **cultural background** (Gudykunst& Kim, 2003). This background shapes how learners interpret text, as their familiarity with cultural references and experiences directly affects comprehension. Additionally, learners rely on their **cultural schema**, a framework of knowledge and experiences, to derive meaning from text (Anderson, 1995). This schema can be helpful for familiar cultural concepts but can lead to misunderstandings of unfamiliar cultural references. Finally, understanding the **cultural context** of a text is crucial (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Deeper meanings and nuances often embedded within cultural references and values that shape the themes and content. By recognizing these cultural influences, educators can create more effective reading comprehension instruction for EFL learners.

1.6.Cultural factors affecting reading skills

Several cultural influences have a significant impact on reading comprehension in EFL learners. One important component is a learner's cultural background (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). This background affects how students perceive literature; familiarity with cultural references and experiences has a direct impact on their ability to comprehend the intended meaning. Learners apply their cultural schema, a framework of knowledge and experiences based on their cultural background, to interpret literature (Anderson, 1995).

While useful for common ideas, this schema might lead to misconceptions when achieving references that are not part of their cultural context. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) emphasize the importance of the text's cultural setting. Deeper meanings and nuances are frequently embedded in cultural references and beliefs that influence themes and substance. Recognizing these cultural influences on reading comprehension is critical for educators in developing successful education customized to the individual demands of EFL students.

1.7.The role of culture in EFL reading comprehension

Cultural awareness plays an imperative role in increasing the reading comprehension abilities of individuals who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It facilitates a more profound comprehension of written materials by providing a framework, assisting in the process of making educated guesses based on incomplete information, and encouraging individuals to understand and share the feelings of others with diverse viewpoints (Smith, 2019). Cultural awareness in EFL reading comprehension fosters the development of intercultural competence, which allows learners to interpret cultural subtleties that are embedded within written materials, thereby enriching comprehension and encouraging the exchange of knowledge and understanding across different cultures (Brown & Lee, 2020).

1.8.Differences between Culture with big C and culture with small c

Culture with a Big C (Culture): This pertains to the extensive and all-encompassing facets of a society that are collectively embraced by a substantial number of individuals. It encompasses the subsequent components as outlined by Lee, Y. M. (2009). Key concepts in intercultural communication are as follows:

- Beliefs: Foundational convictions regarding the world and its mechanisms.
- Values: The varying degrees of significance assigned to different entities.
- Norms: Unwritten regulations that steer conduct within a culture.
- Practices: The established methods of conducting activities within a culture.
- Social structures: The structured configurations of relationships within a culture (for example, family, education system, government).

Culture with a small c (culture): This denotes the routine practices, encounters, and conduct of specific factions or communities within a larger society. It emphasizes the diversity within a culture and the disparities that are present, in accordance with Spitzberg, B. H. (2009). Intercultural communication competence. Here are some important points:

- Emphasis on daily existence: It encompasses the manner in which individuals engage attire themselves, dine, commemorate, and express themselves in day-to-day life.
- Subcultures: It acknowledges the presence of subcultures within a broader society, each with its distinct array of practices and values.
- Discrepancies: It recognizes that cultures are not homogeneous and can exhibit significant variations within a given region or nation.

Comprehending both Culture with a Big C and culture with a small c is imperative for EFL learners because: Culture with a Big C provide this foundational knowledge requisite for comprehending the wider societal backdrop in which the target language is utilized. Culture with a small c assists learners in navigating the daily subtleties of communication within the target culture, which is essential for enhancing reading comprehension.

1.9. The Importance of Teaching Culture in Language Learning

Culture plays an essential role in the process of acquiring language, making its incorporation into language instruction necessary. The significance of teaching culture lies in the following aspects:

- a) **Effective Communication:** Language goes beyond mere grammar and vocabulary; it serves as a medium for conveying cultural values, beliefs, and customs. Profound comprehension of the cultural context enables learners to interpret implicit meanings, humor, and social cues, thereby enhancing communication efficacy (Byram, 1997).
- b) **Deeper Comprehension:** Proficiency in cultural knowledge enables learners to apprehend the subtleties present in written and spoken language. This facilitates a better grasp of allusions, metaphors, and adages deeply entrenched in specific cultural milieus (Spitzberg, 2009).
- c) **Reduced Misunderstandings:** Discrepancies in culture can lead to misinterpretations. The instruction of culture aids learners in navigating these disparities and circumventing misunderstandings stemming from unfamiliar traditions, societal norms, or nonverbal communication patterns (Liddicoat, 1991).
- d) **Intercultural Competence:** Exposure to diverse cultures cultivates intercultural competence, the capacity to interact proficiently with individuals from various backgrounds. This readies learners to operate in a globalized society and partake in meaningful cross-cultural exchanges (Byram & Morgan, 2004).
- e) **Motivation and Engagement:** Acquiring knowledge about different cultures can serve as a catalyst for motivation and engagement among language learners. This engenders a heightened appreciation for the target language and its native speakers, thereby enriching the learning experience (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

The inclusion of cultural awareness in language education provides many advantages to learners. It enables them to communicate effectively, nurtures intercultural comprehension, and prepares them for success in today's interconnected world.

1.10. The History of Teaching Culture in Language Learning: A Journey from Grammar to Communication

The integration of culture into language instruction has undergone significant evolution throughout history. An examination of this development is presented below:

a) In the early stages (Pre-20th Century):

The Grammar-Translation Method, a prevailing approach, concentrated on translating sentences between the target language and the native language. Cultural aspects were minor, prioritizing the rote memorization of grammar regulations and vocabulary lists (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

b) Shifts in the 20th Century:

The Direct Method (Early 20th Century) aimed to foster fluency through oral communication in the target language. Although culture was not explicitly highlighted, learners encountered certain cultural facets during classroom discussions and readings (Richards, 2001).

The Audio-lingual Method (Mid-20th Century) emphasized repetitive drills and dialogues to enhance spoken fluency. Cultural elements were largely disregarded, with the main focus on precise grammar and pronunciation (Richards, 2001).

c) The Communicative Approach and the Emergence of Cultural Awareness (Late 20th Century):

A notable transformation occurred with the emergence of the communicative approach in the late 20th century, acknowledging the significance of real-world communication. This transition emphasized the essential role of cultural comprehension in effective communication (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Incorporation of Culture; Language teaching strategies began to integrate activities promoting cultural awareness, such as role-playing, discussions on cultural customs, and examination of genuine materials like advertisements or news articles.

d) Advancements in the 21st Century and Beyond:

Emphasis on Intercultural Competence: The 21st century prioritizes the cultivation of learners' intercultural competence, enabling effective interactions with individuals from diverse

backgrounds. Educating on culture extends beyond fundamental knowledge to encompass nurturing empathy, respect, and critical thinking abilities (Byram, 1997).

e) The use of Technology and Authentic Resources:

The utilization of technology facilitates the inclusion of a broader array of genuine cultural materials in language education, such as movies, music, and social media content. This offers learners a more immersive and captivating learning experience (Warschauer, 2006).

1.11. The relationship between Culture and language teaching

Learning a language is like learning about a new way of life! Languages and cultures are connected because language reflects a culture's values and traditions (Spitzberg, 2009). This means understanding things like proverbs, funny sayings, and metaphors (Nguyen, 2021) is easier if you know the culture behind them. For example, a Chinese proverb might say "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," but it might not make sense unless you know the Chinese value hard work. The same goes for things like gestures and jokes, which can be different in different countries (Byram, 1997). New studies (Sercu, 2020) even show it's important to teach students about different cultures so they can communicate effectively. Finally, languages sometimes have references specific to their culture, like the British saying "it's raining cats and dogs" (Liddicoat, 1991). By learning about the culture, students can understand the language better and talk to people from other cultures more easily.

Challenges and advantages arise in this context:

- Misunderstandings may arise due to cultural disparities, such as perceiving a direct communication style as impolite in a culture valuing indirectness.
- Enhanced comprehension results from infusing cultural awareness into language instruction, enabling learners to decipher implicit meanings and nuances of the target language.

- Motivation and engagement are fostered when students delve into cultural aspects, cultivating a deeper admiration for both the language and its native speakers.

Implications for teaching include:

- Incorporating cultural activities within language lessons to heighten learners' understanding of cultural norms, values, and traditions. This could involve analyzing cultural objects, engaging in discussions on customs, or simulating social scenarios.
- Employing authentic materials like news reports, movies, or music to expose learners to genuine language usage embedded in cultural contexts (Warschauer, 2006).
- Promoting intercultural competence as a core objective of language education, aiming to cultivate learners' proficiency in effective communication and respectful interaction with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997).

1.12. Models of Teaching Culture

Byram's Intercultural Competence Model (ICM) distinguished six essential components crucial for the enhancement of intercultural competence. Knowledge involves comprehension of cultural practices, values, and beliefs. Attitudes encompass receptiveness and readiness to engage with diverse cultures. Skills entail the ability to analyze cultural references and interpret nonverbal communication. Discovery Learning emphasizes the active exploration of cultural disparities. Intercultural Interaction involves participating in respectful communication with individuals from varying cultural backgrounds. Intercultural Empathy centers on cultivating the capacity to perceive the world from the standpoint of others.

Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) offers a six-stage progression in intercultural development, whereby individuals transition from ethnocentrism (prioritizing their own culture) to a more inclusive and embracing perspective of diverse cultures.

1.13. Cultural Content and Reading

EFL learners' reading comprehension is permanently linked to the cultural information found in texts. Cultural allusions, beliefs, and underlying assumptions encoded in writing can have a major impact on comprehension (Byram, 1997). Learners who have limited exposure to the target culture may struggle to understand culturally unique references or humor (Carrell, 1983). This can cause gaps in comprehension and misinterpretations.

Cultural values inherent in the text can influence how readers interpret information. Learners' cultural backgrounds may conflict with the ideals portrayed in the writing, causing confusion or resistance to the message (Aldridge, 2006). However, encountering varied cultural content might be beneficial to EFL learners. By confronting unexpected references and ideas, students might gain global understanding and widen their worldview (LeVine & Young, 1990). Identifying the relationship between cultural content and reading comprehension is critical for educators to provide effective learning experiences for EFL students.

1.14. Cultural Dimensions in Foreign Language Teaching

1.14.1. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Cultural Influence

In examining the impact of culture on EFL reading comprehension, it's important to explore established theoretical frameworks. Two prominent frameworks offer valuable insights:

a) Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

This widely recognized framework categorizes cultures based on six key dimensions, including power distance, individualism, and masculinity. By analyzing a culture through these dimensions, educators can gain a deeper understanding of how cultural values might influence communication styles, learning preferences, and ultimately, reading comprehension strategies employed by EFL learners.

b) Hall's High-Context vs. Low-Context Cultures

Developed by Edward T. Hall, this framework distinguishes cultures based on their reliance on explicit verbal communication versus implicit cues and context. In low-context cultures, direct and clear communication is emphasized. Conversely, high-context cultures rely heavily on nonverbal

cues, shared background knowledge, and the surrounding context to convey meaning. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for EFL teachers, as they can tailor their instruction to address the specific communication styles and reliance on context that learners bring from their own cultural backgrounds.

1.14.2 Practical Applications in EFL Reading Instruction

Analyzing cultural dimensions offers a valuable tool set for EFL teachers, enabling them to enhance their instructional practices in several key ways:

a) Identifying Potential Comprehension Challenges

By understanding the influence of cultural dimensions like power distance and communication styles (e.g., indirect communication in high-context cultures), teachers can anticipate potential obstacles that might hinder learners' reading comprehension. This foresight allows them to proactively address these challenges through targeted instructional strategies.

b) Tailoring Reading Materials for Optimal Learning

Insights gained from cultural frameworks can guide teachers in selecting or adapting reading materials. These materials can be chosen or modified to ensure they are culturally relevant and appropriate for the learners' level of cultural awareness. This approach fosters deeper engagement with the reading materials and facilitates a more effective comprehension process.

1.15. Intercultural awareness

1.15.1. Integrating culture in reading

Intercultural awareness is a multidimensional ability essential to managing relationships and communication across cultures. Here's an outline of its main features:

- a) Knowledge and understanding:** Intercultural awareness refers to comprehending different cultures' ideas, values, communication methods, and historical and contemporary behaviors (Lustig & Koester, 2006). This understanding allows people to understand and respect cultural differences.

- b) **Sensitivity and Respect:** It extends beyond basic knowledge. Intercultural awareness promotes sensitivity and appreciation for these differences. This includes accepting the validity of different cultural ideas while avoiding ethnocentrism (the belief that one's own culture is superior). (Benett, 1993)
- c) **Effective interaction:** Culturally understood individuals may efficiently interact with others from various backgrounds. This includes modifying communication strategies (verbal and nonverbal), comprehending cultural nuances, and dealing with circumstances where cultural sensitivities may occur (Deardorff, 2011).
- d) **Critical self-reflection:** Intercultural awareness is not constant. It requires continuous critical self-reflection on personal cultural biases and assumptions. This self-awareness enables people to continuously learn and adapt in multicultural settings (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

1.16.Culture and communication

Culture and communication are inseparable. Culture influences how we communicate, and communication reflects and reinforces cultural norms, values, and beliefs.

1.16.1. Culture as a System of Meaning

Culture occurs as a shared system of meaning that influences how people encode and decode communications (Hall, 1976). This includes:

- **Language Use:** Cultural norms influence appropriate language use, which includes formality levels, politeness markers, and nonverbal cues (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). Miss-understandings can occur when cultural nuances are not understood.
- **Nonverbal Communication:** Different cultures have various non-verbal communication patterns that include gestures, facial expressions, and personal space (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2017). An action considered professional in one culture may be disrespectful in another.
- **Contextual Communication:** The relevance of explicit versus implicit communication varies among cultures. High-context cultures express meaning through context and

nonverbal signals, whereas low-context cultures concentrate on direct and explicit language (Hall, 1976).

1.16.2. The impact on communication styles

Communication methods are influenced by our cultural background, which influences factors such as:

- **Directness VS Indirectness:** Some cultures value clear and explicit communication, while others prefer a more indirect and nuanced approach (Lustig & Koester, 2006).
- **Emotional Expression:** Cultural differences exist in how widely emotions are expressed verbally and nonverbally (Matsumoto, 1999).

1.16.3. Communication and Cultural Changes

Communication is not static. As cultures interact and globalize, communication methods can change and adapt. Media and technology are able to promote cultural norms and communication practices (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2009).

1.16.4. Understanding cultural communication

Recognizing the complex connection between culture and communication allows to develop the intercultural communication skills. This includes developing cultural sensitivity is the ability to perceive and respect differences in communication approaches (Bennett, 1993). Byram (1997) defines critical thinking skills as the ability to examine how cultural circumstances influence communication styles. Adaptive Communication Strategies: The ability to change communication strategies based on cultural circumstances (Deardorff, 2011).

1.17. Reasons for teaching culture

Here are some reasons for teaching culture in various learning contexts, not just foreign language teaching:

1.17.1. Enhanced Learning and Understanding

- a) **Deeper Meaning:** Culture adds context and significance to a variety of topics. Understanding historical events, for example, necessitates knowledge of the era's cultural context (religious beliefs, social structures).
- b) **Critical Thinking:** Learning about diverse cultures helps students develop critical thinking abilities by encouraging them to assess and compare their cultural norms to those of others.
- c) **Interconnected World:** In an increasingly globalized society, understanding different cultures is critical for effective communication and collaboration.

1.17.2. Developing Broader Skills

- a) **Empathy and Respect:** Exposure to different cultures encourages empathy and respect for different points of view and beliefs. This is essential for developing strong interpersonal ties and encouraging peaceful cohabitation.
- b) **Communication Skills:** Learning about cultural communication styles enables people to change their communication to better comprehend others across cultures.
- c) **Problem-Solving Skills:** Examining cultural differences can help students improve their problem-solving skills by encouraging them to explore different perspectives and methods.

1.17.3. Personal Growth and Identity

- a) **Self-Awareness:** Learning about various cultures can help people gain a better grasp of their cultural backgrounds and identities. This self-awareness promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness to a larger global context.
- b) **Open-Mindedness:** Exposure to many cultures fosters open-mindedness and a desire to learn from others. This is vital for personal and intellectual development.
- c) **Global Citizenship:** Understanding different cultures develops a feeling of global citizenship, encouraging people to be responsible and involved in the world.

1.18. Techniques for teaching culture

1.18.1. Bringing Culture into the Classroom Environment:

- a) **Visuals and Facts:** Create a classroom setting that portrays the target culture by incorporating posters, maps, authentic objects, and traditional clothes (if appropriate).
- b) **Cultural Displays:** create announcement boards or specialized spaces to highlight cultural themes such as holidays, festivals, and art.

1.18.2. Activities and Discussions:

- a) **Slice-of-Life Presentations:** Introduce learners to modest, everyday parts of the target culture, generating interest and conversation.
- b) **Critical Incidents:** Present examples in which cultural differences cause misunderstandings, requiring students to examine and propose solutions.
- c) **Cultural Comparisons:** Students should compare the cultural features of their background to the target culture, emphasizing similarities and distinctions.
- d) **Role-Playing:** Create real-life scenarios in which cultural knowledge is critical, allowing students to practice acceptable conduct.
- e) **Discussions and Debates:** Facilitate discussions about cultural values, beliefs, and customs, emphasizing critical thinking and flexibility.

1.18.3. Utilizing Technology and Media:

- a) **Authentic Cultural Resources:** Use movies, music, documentaries, and news items from the target culture to introduce pupils to real-world situations.
- b) **Social Media Exploration:** Guide students through the target culture's social media platforms to get insight into daily life and trends.
- c) **Virtual Exchange Programs:** Connect students with peers from the target culture to facilitate online interactions and cultural exchange.

1.18.4. Project-Based Learning:

- a) **Cultural Research Projects:** Assign students research projects on certain cultural topics, encouraging in-depth inquiry and presentations.
- b) **Cultural Simulations:** Create simulations in which students assume roles in the target culture, challenging them to manage cultural norms and barriers.

- c) **Creative Projects:** Encourage learners to convey their understanding of the target culture via creative endeavors such as art, music, and writing.

1.18.5. Guest Speakers and Cultural Experts :

- a) **Invite Guest Speakers:**Presenters should be native speakers or cultural experts who can provide firsthand stories and answer questions.
- b) **Organize Field Trips:** Plan field trips to cultural sites, museums, or ethnic communities to provide comprehensive learning opportunities.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have tried to provide arguments for the importance of cultural awareness in enhancing EFL reading comprehension. By fostering a deeper understanding of the multifaceted role culture plays in shaping meaning and influencing interpretation, educators equip learners with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of written language across diverse cultural contexts.

The exploration of cultural dimensions, cultural influences on reading, and the significance of "high culture" and "low culture" provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between culture and language. Furthermore, by examining the historical line of integrating culture into language instruction and the evolving relationship between culture and language teaching, the chapter highlighted the importance growing cultural awareness as an essential component in the teaching learning process.

Moving forward, the following chapter will delve into the practical applications of cultural awareness in the EFL classroom. We will explore various models for teaching culture, examine strategies for incorporating culturally rich content into reading activities, and analyze the specific cultural dimensions that hold particular relevance for EFL reading instruction. By equipping educators with these tools, we can bridge cultural divides and cultivate a generation of EFL learners who are not only proficient in the English language but also possess the intercultural competence necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Chapter Two

Reading

Comprehension

Introduction

This chapter deals with the aspects of reading comprehension which seems a simple skill but lies at the heart of successful English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. To effectively understand written text, EFL learners must be able to understand nature of reading. In fact, the reading process goes beyond word recognition and necessitates the active construction of meaning (Anderson, 1999). It also involves various cognitive abilities, including a reader's prior knowledge, decoding skills, and strategic processing to grasp the author's intended message (Carrell, 1983). This chapter will explore the different essential techniques and strategies that can be used to boost learners' comprehension. These include very important skills and techniques like skimming and scanning, alongside valuable reading strategies such as top-down and bottom-up processing.

2.1 Definition of Reading

Reading is one the four key language skills that is classified as receptive. Scholars have proposed many definitions of reading. According to Anderson (1999) reading is a complex cognitive process that necessitates the active construction of meaning from the written English text. This definition reflects the multifaceted nature of reading, which goes beyond the mere word recognition to the reconstruction of meaning and interpreting of the writer's intention. It requires a sophisticated interplay of various cognitive abilities, including a learner's existing knowledge base, decoding skills to process unfamiliar vocabulary, and strategic thinking to decode the author's intended message (Carrell, 1983). Reading comprehension in the EFL context demands a deep engagement with the text. This necessitates critical analysis of information, the ability to draw insightful inferences based on textual clues, and the ability to navigate complex sentence structures.

Reading comprehension, a fundamental skill in language learning which refers to the ability to process written text and extract meaning (Anderson, 1999). This process is basically supported by two interrelated cognitive abilities. The first important skill is word reading or word recognition. Anderson (1999) believes that it is the ability refers to decode the symbols on the page and convert them into recognizable words. The second ability refers to Language comprehension. In this respect, Anderson (1999) argues that it has to do with the ability to understand the meaning of

individual words and sentences within the context of the text. Therefore, the integration of these two abilities helps the reader to grasp the overall message and intent of the written material.

In the same way, Brown (2019) in his turn sees the act of reading as "the process of decoding written symbols to derive meaning, engaging in a cognitive interaction with the text" (p.32). This definition means that reading involves the ability to understand and interpret written language by deciphering the symbols and actively engaging with the content on a mental level. Not far from this, Goodman (1973) defines reading as the interaction between writers and readers. He states that reading is when the reader: "Interacts with a message encoded by the writer. He concentrates all his prior experiences and knowledge that he has learned as well as the language competence he has achieved" (p.162). This means that the reader will learn how to understand the writer 's words and the situation of the written text by the writer. He will also use his prior knowledge and experiences to be able to reach comprehension. All the previous definitions agree that reading involves the ability to understand and interpret written language by deciphering the symbols and actively engaging with the content on a mental level.

2.2The Importance of Reading

Reading is one the fundamental receptive skills that plays a major role in our personal and academic success. And since reading is a fundamental skill in our lives it makes us engaged in different activities and exposes readers to a rich amount of information, diverse perspectives, and new ideas. This of course, is necessary for our academic success and future career. At the linguistic level, an individual can gain many benefits from reading in addition to grammar vocabulary and mechanics. Moreover, reading goes beyond simply memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules. It acts as a cornerstone for successful language acquisition (Anderson, 1999). By actively constructing meaning from written English text, learners gain a deeper understanding of the language's nuances. They begin to see how grammar and vocabulary function in real-world contexts, solidifying their foundation in English. In addition to that, EFL learners can unlock a treasure trove of benefits by incorporating reading into their language-learning journey. Here are some ways of how reading empowers them.

2.2.1. Developing Cognitive Skills

- **Boosts critical thinking:** Reading strengthens your ability to analyze arguments, identify key points, and dissect information in the text (Anderson, 1999).
- **Enhances information processing:** Reading improves how you process information, making it easier to retain new knowledge (Anderson, 1999).
- **Strengthens inference skills:** Reading strengthens your ability to draw logical conclusions and make assumptions based on clues in the text (Anderson, 1999).

2.2.2. Broadening Language Horizons

The exposure to diverse written materials is in fact a good way of broadening EFL learner's vocabulary base and introduces them to different writing styles. This continuous interaction with various forms of English enriches their overall language proficiency and strengthens their ability to communicate effectively in diverse settings.

2.2.3. Providing a World of Knowledge

- **Expands knowledge:** Reading acts as a gateway to a vast world of knowledge (Carrell, 1983).
- **Cultural awareness:** EFL learners gain valuable insights into different cultures and perspectives (Carrell, 1983).
- **Broadened understanding:** Learners can delve into historical events, explore scientific discoveries, or simply broaden their understanding of various topics (Carrell, 1983).
- **Intellectual growth:** This continuous learning fosters intellectual growth (Carrell, 1983).
- **Nuanced worldview:** Reading shapes a more nuanced understanding of the world around them (Carrell, 1983).

2.2.4. Fostering Personal Enrichment

Reading is not just about academics; it can also be a source of enjoyment and relaxation. Immersing themselves in captivating stories or informative articles can provide learners with a mental escape, promoting overall well-being.

2.3. Reasons for Reading

As said in previous sections, reading goes beyond the mere process of decoding words. It requires the readers to engage with a text for different reasons and purposes (Carrell, 1983). In the coming subsections we will have a closer look at the diverse reasons why people choose to read.

2.3.1. Knowledge Acquisition

Reading serves as a gateway to a vast reservoir of knowledge (Anderson, 1999). It allows individuals to explore a wide range of topics, from historical accounts and scientific discoveries to current events and specialized hobbies. This exposure fosters intellectual curiosity and equips readers with the ability to stay informed about the world around them.

2.3.2. Language Learning

For EFL learners, reading is a critical driver of language acquisition (Anderson, 1999). It exposes them to new vocabulary and grammatical structures in a natural context, enhancing their comprehension skills and overall language proficiency. By actively constructing meaning from written text, learners solidify their understanding of the language's nuances.

2.3.3. Personal Development

Reading can be a very important tool for personal growth and development. It exposes individuals to diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences that may not be encountered in their daily lives (Carrell, 1983). This broadened perspective can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself and the world, fostering intellectual growth and personal transformation.

2.3.4. Entertainment

Reading can be a source of pure enjoyment and entertainment. Engaging with captivating narratives, humorous anecdotes, or thrilling stories can provide a mental escape from daily routines

and promote relaxation (Anderson, 1999). The act of reading itself can be a pleasurable experience, offering a way to unwind and de-stress.

2.3.5. Critical Thinking

Reading encourages readers to become active participants in the process of meaning making. They are compelled to analyze the author's intent, evaluate arguments presented in the text, and draw their own conclusions (Carrell, 1983). This fosters critical thinking skills and intellectual curiosity, allowing readers to engage with the text on a deeper level.

2.3.6. Understanding

Reading allows individuals to step outside their own experiences and vicariously live through the lives of others (Anderson, 1999). Exposure to diverse characters and situations can cultivate empathy, compassion, and a more nuanced understanding of different cultures and perspectives.

The diverse reasons stated above highlight the nature of reading. In fact, readers are driven to read for a variety of purposes, and the specific reasons will vary depending on the reader's background, goals, and the type of text they choose to engage with. In addition to that, reading can also improve concentration and enhance creativity and imagination.

2.4. Reading techniques

2.4.1. General Techniques

SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review): This is a popular study technique that involves surveying the text beforehand (headings, subheadings, visuals), formulating questions based on the survey, actively reading to answer those questions, reciting the key points allowed or summarizing them in writing, and finally reviewing the material to solidify understanding (Mangelsdorf, 2010).

2.4.2. Techniques for Specific Purposes

Readers frequently use different strategies to facilitate the process of reading and to understand well. In addition, learners benefit from what they had learn by using the correct strategies and that's will give a good reader. Therefore, there are various reading strategies, but all of them are used for the same propose which is helping the learners in reading.

2.4.3.1. Skimming

This technique involves reading quickly to get the general gist of the text. You focus on headings, subheadings, opening and closing paragraphs, and bold or italicized text to grasp the main ideas (Anderson, 2000). In other words, skimming means getting a general idea about the text and the reader role is to turn his eyes rapidly about the text to keep him superficially informed with the topic and neglecting unnecessary information. In addition, this type of reading purpose is to help reader to know whether to continue reading or not, what to read carefully, and where the best place is to begin and this strategy is helpful for students when there is no time to read the text .

2.4.3.2. Scanning

This involves quickly searching the text for specific information, like a name, date, or statistic. You can use the table of contents, index, or keywords to locate the relevant section (Hacker, 2008). This means that scanning is fast reading technique used to extract specific information from a particular text. The reader's roles here is try to locate particular information by moving their eyes over the text rapidly, and then get the required information to complete a certain task. In short, it is viewed as a speed reading technique used when readers are willing to find a certain piece of information without understanding the remaining text or passage necessarily.

2.4.3.3. Close Reading

This technique involves reading the text slowly and carefully, paying close attention to detail, vocabulary, and the author's style. This is typically used for analyzing complex or literary texts (Vacca & Vacca, 2017).

2.4.3.4. Additional Techniques

- **Previewing:** Briefly looking over the text beforehand to activate prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading (Lyons, 2011).
- **Predicting:** Based on the title, headings, and your existing knowledge, predicting what the text might be about (Herrell& Kamil, 2006).

- **Paraphrasing:** Restating the author's ideas in your own words to ensure understanding (Graham & Hebert, 2017).
- **Summarizing:** Briefly condensing the main points of the text in your own words (National Reading Panel, 2000).

2.5. Reading strategies

It is important to distinguish between reading techniques and strategies. The terms "reading techniques" and "reading strategies" are frequently interchangeably. However, a subtle distinction must be made within the realm of reader cognition (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). This distinction clarifies the focus of each approach to enhance comprehension. In fact, Reading Techniques represent specific actions or methodologies employed during the reading process to achieve a defined goal (National Reading Panel, 2000). Techniques often involve direct manipulation of the text itself (highlighting, annotating) or altering the reader's physical interaction with it (skimming, scanning). Reading Strategies encompass broader cognitive processes that guide overall reading comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). Strategies involve leveraging prior knowledge, establishing connections between ideas, and actively constructing meaning from the text. Notably, reading strategies can encompass a combination of different reading techniques.

In the coming subsection, we will highlight some of these techniques along with their cognitive benefits:

2.5.1. Activating Prior Knowledge

Before engaging with the text, readers contemplate what they already understand about the topic. This activates their existing schema (background knowledge), facilitating comprehension by establishing a foundation for integrating new information (Anderson & Pearson, 2014).

2.5.2. Making Predictions

Drawing upon the title, headings, and any prior knowledge, readers predict the text's content. This sets a purpose for reading, focusing their attention and fostering engagement (Afflerbach&Perfetti, 2000).

2.5.3. Asking Questions

As readers progress through the text, formulating questions about the content keeps them engaged and aids in identifying key information (Pearson & Duke, 2002).

2.5.4. Making Connections

Readers establish connections between the ideas they encounter and their own experiences, other texts they have read, or current events. This deepens understanding and strengthens retention of the material (Graham & Hebert, 2017).

2.5.5. Visualizing

Creating mental images of the text's content can be particularly helpful for processing descriptive passages or narrative texts (Pressley, 1977).

2.5.6. Summarizing

Paraphrasing the main points of the text in their own words helps readers solidify their understanding and identify key information (National Reading Panel, 2000).

2.5.7. Monitoring Comprehension

Throughout the reading process, paying close attention to their level of understanding allows readers to identify moments of confusion. This empowers them to employ rereading or other techniques for clarification (Paris, Wasik, & Bain, 2003). By strategically employing a combination of reading strategies, readers can become more effective and efficient, regardless of the specific reading technique used.

2.6. Models of Reading

The human mind employs sophisticated strategies to decode and comprehend information. Two fundamental approaches within this repertoire are top-down and bottom-up strategies (Anderson, 1990; Rockwell, 1994). Understanding the interplay between these strategies offers valuable insights into the cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension and other tasks. Different

scholars in the field of applied linguistics have discussed the concept of reading, its nature, its characteristics and its importance in the teaching learning process. Furthermore, this investigation has led to the emergence of four main models of reading process: the Bottom-up model, the top-down model, the Interactive model.

2.6.1. Top-Down Processing

Top-down processing starts with the activation of existing knowledge and expectations.(Anderson, 1990). Readers utilize their established schemas (mental frameworks) and prior experiences to anticipate and interpret incoming information. This strategy allows individuals to make sense of new information by integrating it with their existing knowledge base.For instance, when encountering a news article on an election; a reader might activate their schema of "elections." This schema encompasses knowledge of political parties, voting processes, and potential outcomes. This activated schema guides the interpretation of specific details presented in the article, facilitating comprehension.

It is a model that concentrates on the reader himself and his prior knowledge .Afterwards this knowledge is broken down into details that are more specific. This type of cognitive process plays a major role in many aspects of everyday life, including language comprehension and reading. Top down Processing can help us make sense of a confusing situation or figure out hidden meanings within something. Examples of top-down processing include:

1. Making assumptions based on prior knowledge
2. Drawing conclusions from limited data
3. Interpreting what someone says based on context clues
4. Using predictions to fill in missing information

Therefore, the top-down focuses on the reader and his/ her interests, world knowledge, and reading skills as the driving force behind reading comprehension.

2.6.2. Bottom-Up Processing

In contrast, bottom-up processing begins with meticulously processing the smallest elements of information (Rockwell, 1994). This meticulous approach focuses on decoding individual letters,

words, or sounds in spoken language. Gradually, this processed information integrated to form a larger understanding.

In fact, in this model, the reading process is considered text-driven decoding process wherein the only role of the reader is to reconstruct meaning contained in the smallest units of the text. It recognized that the text is linguistically and chronologically arranged .It consists of a sequence of isolated elements that are interpreted in isolation Moreover, in the process of decoding, the reader passes from the printed words to some phonological representation of the printed words recognition. In the comprehension process, the reader extracts meaning from the decoded messages.

As an example, when encountering an unfamiliar word while reading, a bottom-up approach might involve sounding it out letter by letter (decoding) or analyzing its grammatical structure to grasp its meaning within the context of the sentence.

Despite their apparent differences, top-down and bottom-up strategies are not mutually exclusive. In real-world scenarios, they often work together in a complementary fashion (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1981). During reading comprehension, top-down knowledge provides a framework for understanding the overall message, while bottom-up processing enables the decoding of individual words and sentences.

The most effective approach often focuses on the specific task at hand and the individual's existing knowledge. According to McClelland & Rumelhart, 1981, this will include the following:

- **Task Complexity:** Tasks with a high degree of complexity often necessitate top-down knowledge to provide a framework for comprehension.
- **Information Clarity:** Unclear or ambiguous information may necessitate a more bottom-up approach, focusing on details for clarification.
- **Individual Differences:** People possess varying levels of knowledge and experience across different domains. This variation can influence their reliance on either top-down or bottom-up strategies.

By understanding the interplay of top-down and bottom-up strategies, we gain invaluable insights into information processing and how we approach new situations or complex tasks.

The diagram below shows a reading comprehension model with two main processes: top-down and bottom-up processing.

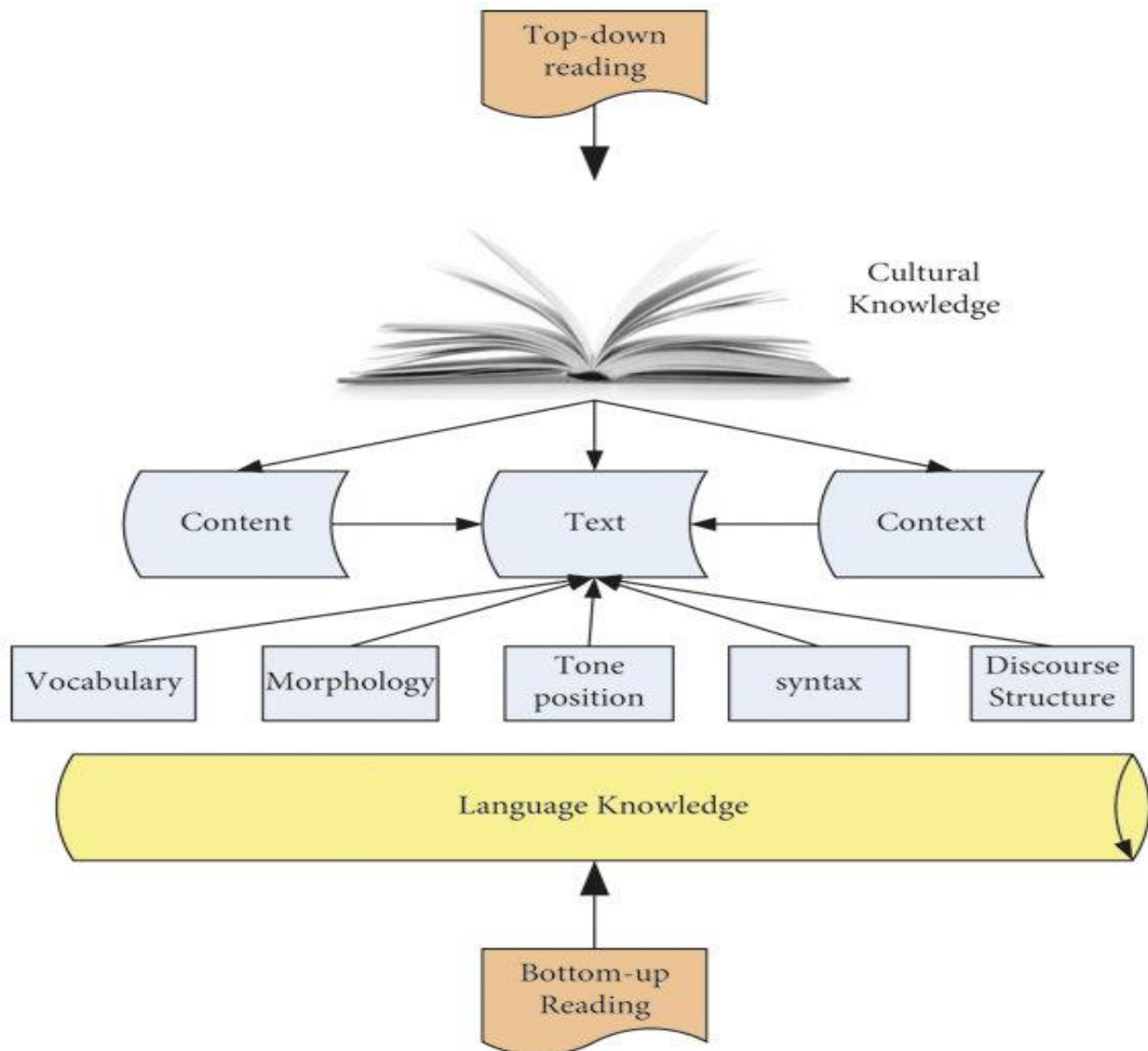


Figure 01: Models of reading

According to Yu and Zhang (2022), the two processes work together to help you understand text. Top-down processing provides a framework for understanding the overall message, while bottom-up processing allows you to decode the individual words and sentences. Here are some additional points to consider:

- The most effective approach often depends on the specific task and the individual's prior knowledge.
- For tasks with a high degree of complexity, top-down knowledge can be crucial for providing a framework for understanding.
- For unclear or ambiguous information, a more bottom-up approach, focusing on details, might be necessary.
- People have varying levels of knowledge and experience in different domains. This can influence their reliance on either top-down or bottom-up strategies.

2.7. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is an important skill in foreign language learning. It consists of a number of tasks that follow any text. Their aim is to decode the text by extracting specific information that shows understanding. This operation takes the form of either skimming or scanning the text. It is a dynamic process that involves making predictions, summarizing the main idea, questioning one's predictions, and clarifying unclear concepts. Moreover, reading comprehension involves using a number of reading strategies. Effective reading comprehension is not a passive act, but rather a dynamic process that unfolds in a series of interconnected phases. This framework explores these three phases – pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading – highlighting their significance in constructing meaning from text (Anderson & Pearson, 2014).

2.7.1. Pre-reading

The pre-reading phase serves as the foundation for successful comprehension. Here, the reader strategically activates prior knowledge by brainstorming relevant concepts, experiences, or information related to the topic of the text (McKenna, McKeown, & Park, 2010). This process essentially primes the reader's existing knowledge schema, which acts as a framework for interpreting new information (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). Additionally, previewing elements like headings, subheadings, or introductory paragraphs can provide a roadmap for the text's structure and content (McKenna et al., 2010). Finally, establishing a purpose for reading, such as seeking specific information or understanding the author's perspective, guides focus and attention while navigating the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). By strategically activating prior knowledge

and setting the stage for what's to come, the pre-reading phase enhances the reader's ability to connect with the text and make sense of the information presented. Before starting reading and performing the prepared tasks the teacher gives a global picture about the text. In teaching, this is called warm up where the teacher presents the type of text, the background knowledge and the necessary concept with their vocabulary. Teachers use different techniques such as brainstorming, visual aids, and question answer.

2.7.2.While-reading

The while- reading phase is the core of reading comprehension. The reader now is supposed to have a general idea about the text and starts concentrating on the content of the text by gathering information, confirming prediction and arranging information. . Here, the active construction of meaning occurs as the reader engages with the text on a deeper level (National Reading Panel, 2000). This phase involves:

- **Decoding and comprehension:** Processing written words, deciphering their meaning, and understanding how they form sentences and paragraphs (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- **Monitoring comprehension:** Paying close attention to understanding as one reads. If there are confusing sections, rereading, utilizing context clues, or consulting a dictionary can aid in clarification (Pearson & Duke, 2002).
- **Employing reading strategies:** Strategic readers actively utilize various tools to deepen understanding. These strategies include making connections to prior knowledge, asking questions, visualizing the content, or summarizing key points (Anderson & Pearson, 2014).

The while-reading phase is an interactive interaction between the reader and the text, where meaning is actively constructed through decoding, monitoring understanding, and employing strategic approaches.

2.7.3.Post-reading

This is another important phase which reflects accurate comprehension of the text was. At this stage, the learners are supposed to have fully understood the text and that they are able evaluate its content. Therefore, they are asked to express personal viewpoints and whether or disagree with its content. In fact, this stage helps them develop new attitude, new concepts and would certainly feel

differently as they have new knowledge and new experience. The post-reading phase allows for the solidification of understanding and reflection on the information gleaned from the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Here, the reader engages in activities such as:

- **Summarizing:** Briefly paraphrasing the main ideas and key points in their own words. This process helps to solidify understanding and identify areas that might require revisiting (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- **Asking questions:** Reflecting on any unanswered questions or lingering doubts about the text. This can lead to further exploration and a richer understanding of the content.
- **Connecting to the world:** Considering how the information in the text relates to personal experiences or broader issues in the world (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). This fosters critical thinking and a deeper engagement with the content.

The post-reading phase allows the reader to consolidate learning, identify areas for further exploration, and connect the text to the wider world. By effectively navigating these three phases, readers can unlock the full potential of the text, fostering comprehension, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning.

2.8. Reading types

Reading encompasses diverse types, with various approaches tailored to purpose and the nature of the text (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). Here, we delve into two primary ways to categorize reading types: by purpose and by approach.

2.8.1. Categorization by Purpose

- **Reading for Pleasure:** This intrinsic form of reading is driven by enjoyment and entertainment. Engaging narratives, humorous comics, or thought-provoking poems fall under this category (McKenna, McKeown, & Park, 2010).
- **Reading to Learn:** Here, the reader's primary goal is to acquire knowledge and understanding on a specific topic. Textbooks, scholarly articles, or informative websites exemplify this type of reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

- Reading to Persuade: The focus in this category is on analyzing the author's viewpoint and the arguments presented to influence the reader's opinion. Editorials, political speeches, or advertisements are examples of persuasive texts (Graesser et al., 1994).
- Reading to Analyze: This in-depth approach involves dissecting the text, examining the author's style, underlying message, and the use of literary devices. This type of reading is prevalent in literature courses where students critically analyze poems, novels, or plays (Hayes & Flower, 1980).

2.8.2. Categorization by Approach

- Skimming: This rapid reading technique prioritizes speed over detail. The reader quickly scans the text to grasp the main idea or locate specific information. Skimming is useful for capturing the gist of an article or pinpointing relevant details within a lengthy document (Carr & Levy, 1980).
- Scanning: Similar to skimming, scanning involves a targeted search for specific pieces of information within a text. The reader might scan a document for names, dates, or keywords to find the desired information quickly (Nation, 2008).
- Intensive Reading: This approach prioritizes meticulous examination. The reader carefully reads and analyzes every detail of the text, often employed for complex materials that demand close attention, such as academic journals or literary works (Anderson & Pearson, 2014).
- Extensive Reading: This category involves reading a substantial volume of text over an extended period, often for pleasure. Extensive reading can enhance fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall comprehension skills (Nation, 2014).

2.9. Influence of culture on reading comprehension

It is important to acknowledge that the process of reading comprehension in EFL contexts extends beyond mastering techniques and strategies. A learner's **cultural background** significantly impacts how they interpret and understand written texts (Bensalah & Guerroudj, 2020; Ozyakup, 2001). Understanding cultural references, background knowledge, and implicit assumptions embedded within a text can be challenging for EFL learners. Culture plays an important role in English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reading comprehension, impacting understanding in both positive and negative ways. Here, we explore the key areas where culture influences EFL reading.

2.9.1.Cultural Schemas

Readers rely on their existing background knowledge, or cultural schema, to interpret text (Carrell, 1983). Disparities between the target culture (English) and the learner's native culture can lead to misunderstandings. For instance, unfamiliar idioms or references to historical events specific to the English-speaking world might be misinterpreted by the EFL learner.

2.9.2. Non-literal Language

Figurative language, humor, and sarcasm can be culturally specific and pose challenges for EFL learners. Jokes or metaphors that hinge on cultural context might be missed, hindering comprehension (Cohen, 2005).

2.9.3.Text Structure and Style

Writing styles and how texts are structured can vary across cultures. EFL learners might struggle with unfamiliar organizational patterns or rhetorical devices used in English texts (Graesser et al., 1994).

2.10.Advantages of cultural awareness on reading

First, culture is a good means of transfer of skills since learners can activate existing reading strategies and literacy skills developed in their native language to boost comprehension in English (Bernhardt, 2014).Second, cultural awareness is raised through the exposure to diverse cultural perspectives through EFL reading materials which can broaden learners' understanding of the world and foster intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).Thirdly, cultural awareness can be a good means to boost learners' motivation and engagement. Reading materials that incorporate aspects of the learner's own culture or bridge the gap between cultures can increase motivation and engagement with the reading process (Scheller, 2004).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we shed light on the complex nature of reading comprehension in English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. We have tried to move beyond the simple notion of reading as mere word recognition, highlighting the active construction of meaning through a complex interaction of cognitive abilities (Anderson, 1999). Skilled EFL readers strategically use different techniques, engaging in critical analysis to decode the author's intended message (Carrell, 1983). Furthermore; we explored the different motivations that drive individuals, including EFL learners, to engage with text. These motivations encompass acquiring information, experiencing enjoyment, and developing critical thinking skills (Anderson, 1999). This chapter has also introduced the essential techniques and strategies, including skimming, scanning, and top-down/bottom-up processing. Additionally, we highlighted the different stages of reading comprehension which include pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages that contribute significantly to successful comprehension

Chapter Three

Field Work

Introduction

In the two previous chapters, we spoke firstly about how cultural awareness enhancing reading comprehension and then about EFL learners in reading comprehension skill. The coming chapter is the fieldwork. Moreover, to collect relevant ideas, we used a questionnaire prepared specifically for this purpose. This quiz was designed to help learners from various backgrounds identify the cultural barriers they face when reading English and we used another questionnaire for teachers to investigate the relationship between cultural awareness and EFL learners reading comprehension. Therefore, we have chosen a sample of five oral expression teachers to work with. On the other hand, we have designed also a questionnaire for twenty students second year LMD.

3.1. Teachers Questionnaire

3.1.1. Aim of the Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire remains a significant tool for future research this could help us to understand current teaching strategies in teaching reading instruction that incorporate cultural awareness. This finding could be beneficial in future studies aimed at developing and testing specific teaching techniques that improve cultural awareness and reading comprehension for EFL students.

3.1.2. Sample of the study

In our research, we worked with five EFL oral expression teachers at the Department of English at Biskra University. As a sample of the study.

3.1.3. Description of the Questionnaire

Teachers questionnaire consist of thirteen question divided into two sections. The first part is about general information which is background information; gender, teachers academic degree, period of teaching at university. The second part consist of ten questions deals with how they integrate cultural awareness into their reading comprehension instruction and teaching methods that address cultural challenges faced by EFL learners.

3.1.4. Analysis of teachers' questionnaire

Section One:General information

Question One:Gender

Gender	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Female	2	40%
Male	3	60%
Total	5	100%

Table 1 Teachers gender



Figure 1 Teachers gender

The first question was about five teachers' participants, with two females and three males. While a larger sample size would be ideal for drawing more definitive conclusions, this data suggests a slight majority of male teachers in this particular group.

QuestionTwo:which degree do you hold?

Degree	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Master's Degree	0	0%
Magister Degree (equivalent to Master's)	2	40%
Doctorate Degree	3	60%
Total	5	100%

Table 2 Teachers Academic Degree

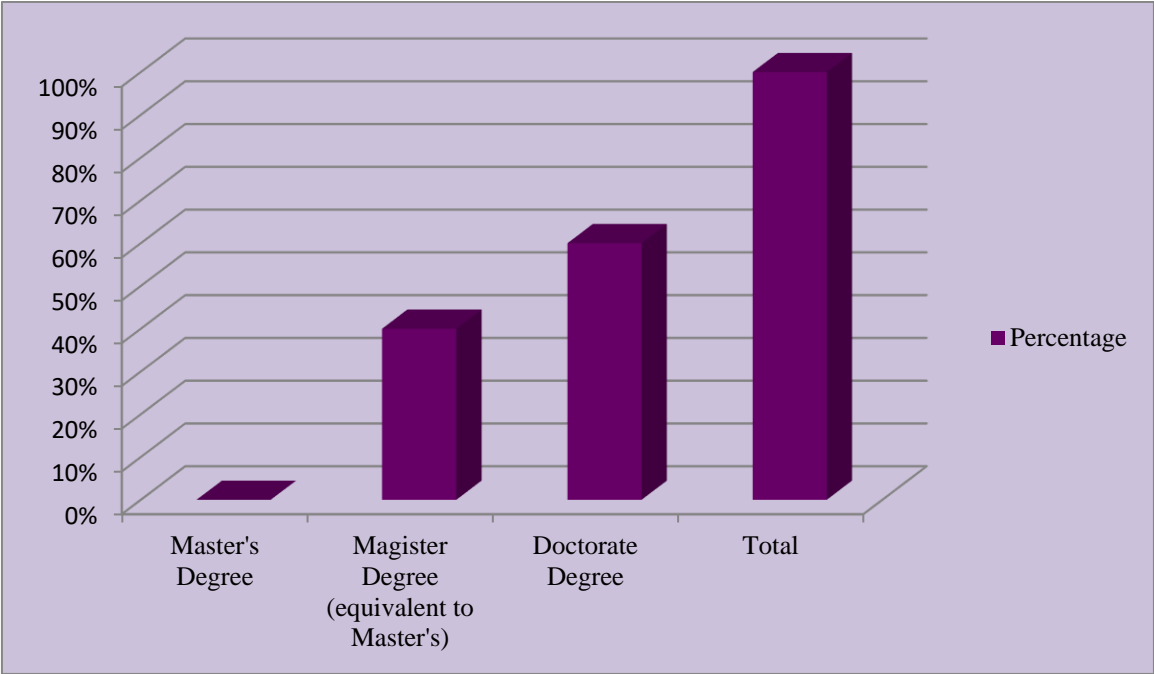


Figure 2 Teachers academic degree

The graph above shows the academic degrees of the five teachers who completed the questionnaire. The results show that none of the teachers have a Master's degree. Two of the teachers (40%) have a Magister degree, which is equivalent to a Master's degree in this context. The majority of teachers (3 or 60%) have a doctorate degree.

Question Three: How long have you been teaching EFL learners?

Years of Teaching Experience	Number of Teachers	Percentage
1 to 2 years	0	0%
3 to 5 years	0	0%
5 to 10 years	0	0%
More than 10 years	5	100%
Total	5	100%

Table 3 Teaching experience

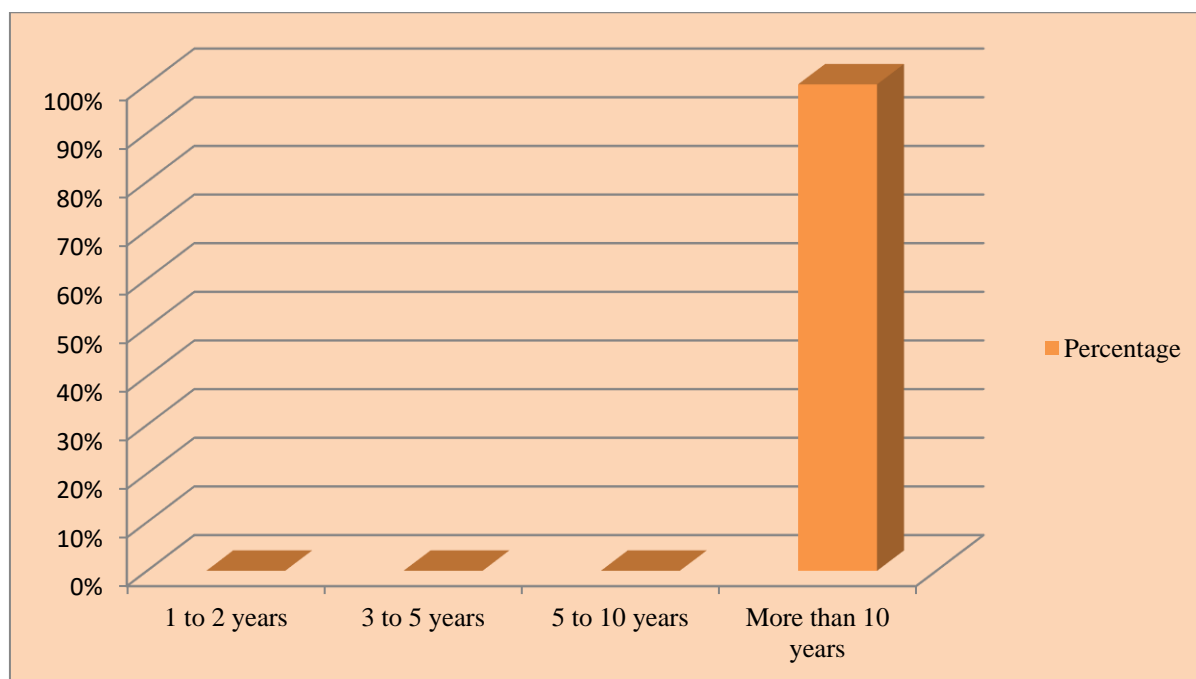


Figure 3 Teaching experience

The bar chart titled "Period of teaching" shows the distribution of teaching experience among the five teachers who participated in the questionnaire. All five teachers (100%) have over 10 years of experience in EFL teaching.

Section Two: Integration of cultural awareness activities

Question Four: How helpful do you find learning about English culture in developing your reading comprehension?

Helpfulness of Learning English Culture	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Not Helpful	0	0%

Somewhat Helpful	0	0%
Helpful	0	0%
Very Helpful	5	100%
Total	5	100%

Table 4 Teacher Perceptions of Learning English Culture for Reading Comprehension

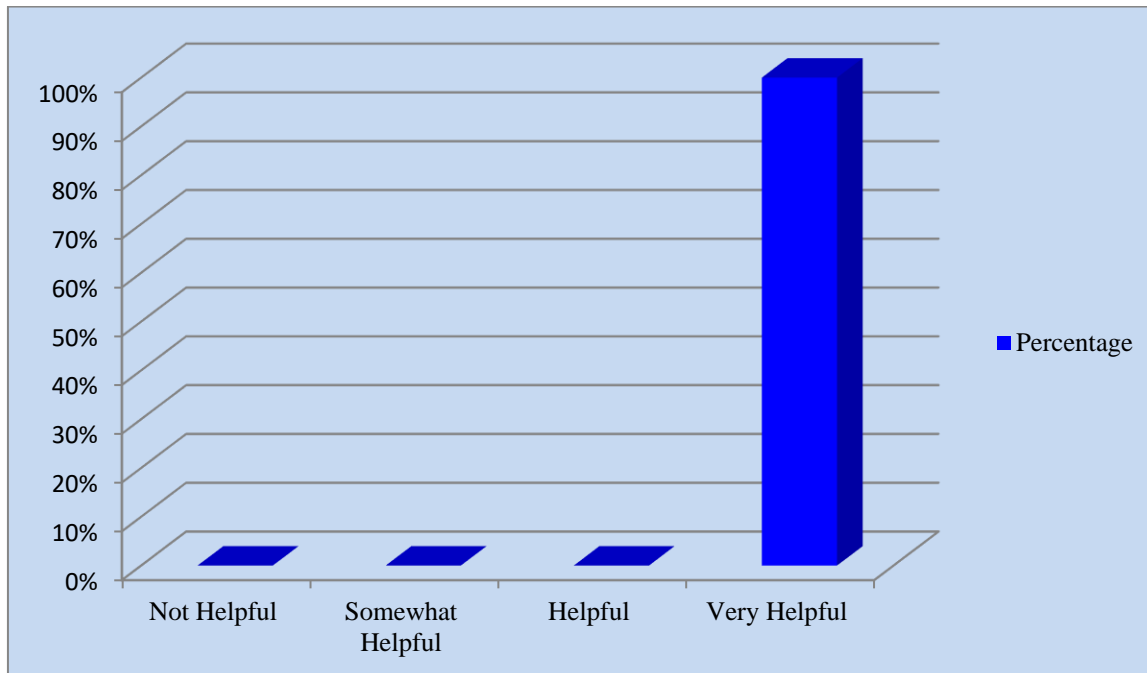


Figure 4 Teacher Perception of Learning English Culture for Reading Comprehension

The bar chart summarizes teacher responses to a question about the value of cultural knowledge in developing reading comprehension. All five teachers (100%) indicated that finding learning about English culture is "very helpful" for their students' reading comprehension.

Question Five: Do you think that your English language classes adequately incorporate cultural content to support learners reading comprehension?

Response	Number of Teachers	Percentage
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Yes	5	100%
No	0	0%
Total	5	100%

Table 5 Teacher responses on Cultural Content Integration

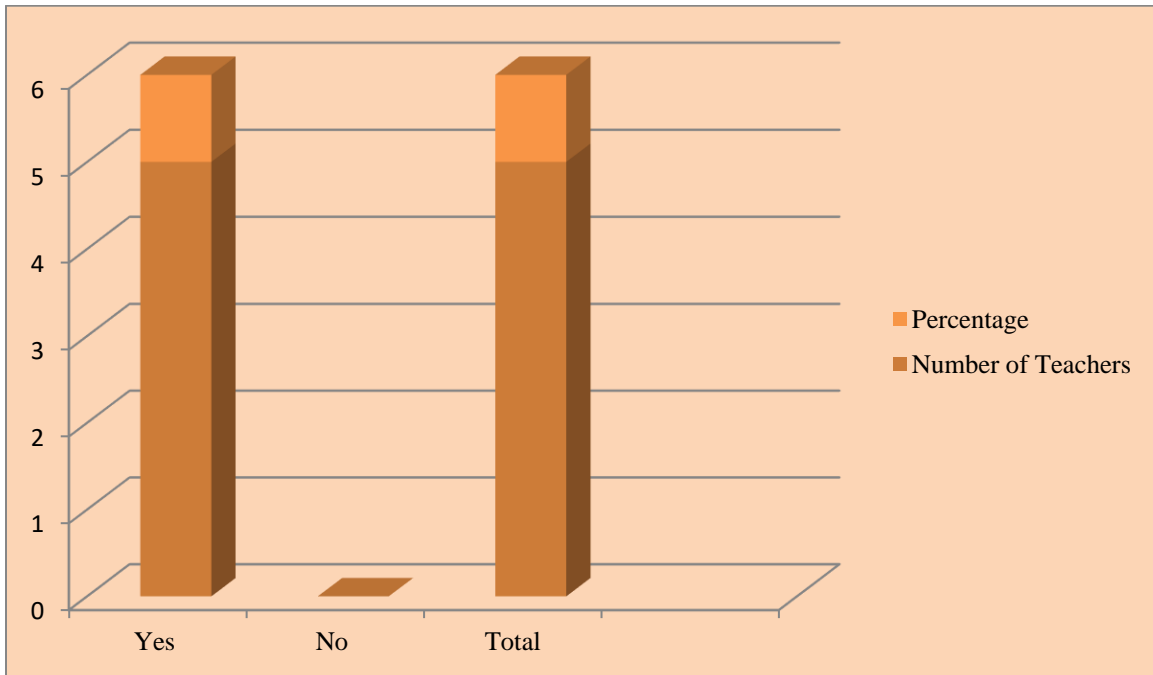


Figure 5 Teacher Responses on Cultural Content Integration

The bar chart titled "Teacher Responses on Cultural Content Integration" displays teacher responses to a question about how well their classes incorporate cultural content to aid reading comprehension. The bar chart shows that teachers (out of 5) responded "[Yes]" (believing their classes adequately integrate cultural content), while teachers responded "[No]" (believing their classes do not adequately integrate cultural content).

Question Six: In your opinion, what types of cultural content would be most beneficial to include in EFL instruction to enhance reading comprehension?

Cultural Content Type	Number of Teachers	Percentage
General cultural knowledge	1	20%
Cultural knowledge related to the target course	4	80%
Specific schematic knowledge	0	0%
Total	5	100%

Table 6 Teacher Preferences

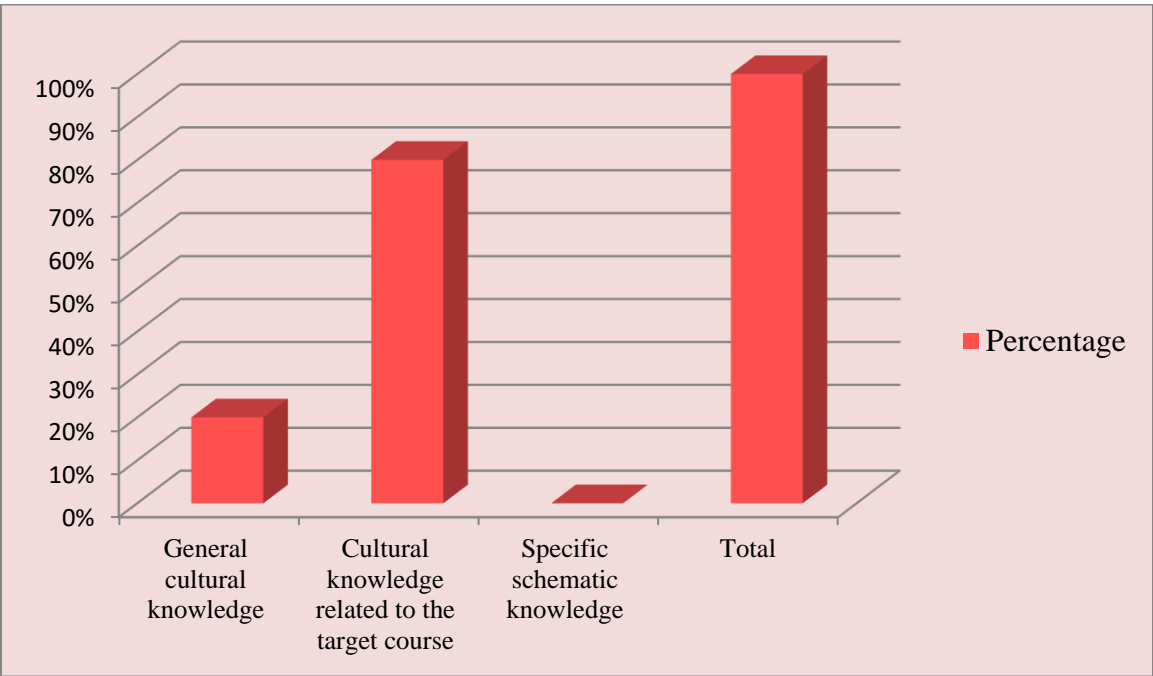


Figure 6 Teacher Preferences

As you can see in this bar chart "Teacher Preferences" summarizes teacher responses to a question about the most beneficial types of cultural content to include in EFL instruction. The bar chart shows a clear preference for cultural content directly related to the target course material.

Question Seven: To what extent do you integrate activities that raise awareness of different cultures into your EFL reading comprehension lessons?

Integration Frequency	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Not at all (a)	0	0%
Occasionally (b)	0	0%
Regularly for specific skills (c)	1	20%
Consistently across lessons (d)	4	80%
Total	5	100%

Table 7 Teacher Integration of Cultural Awareness Activities

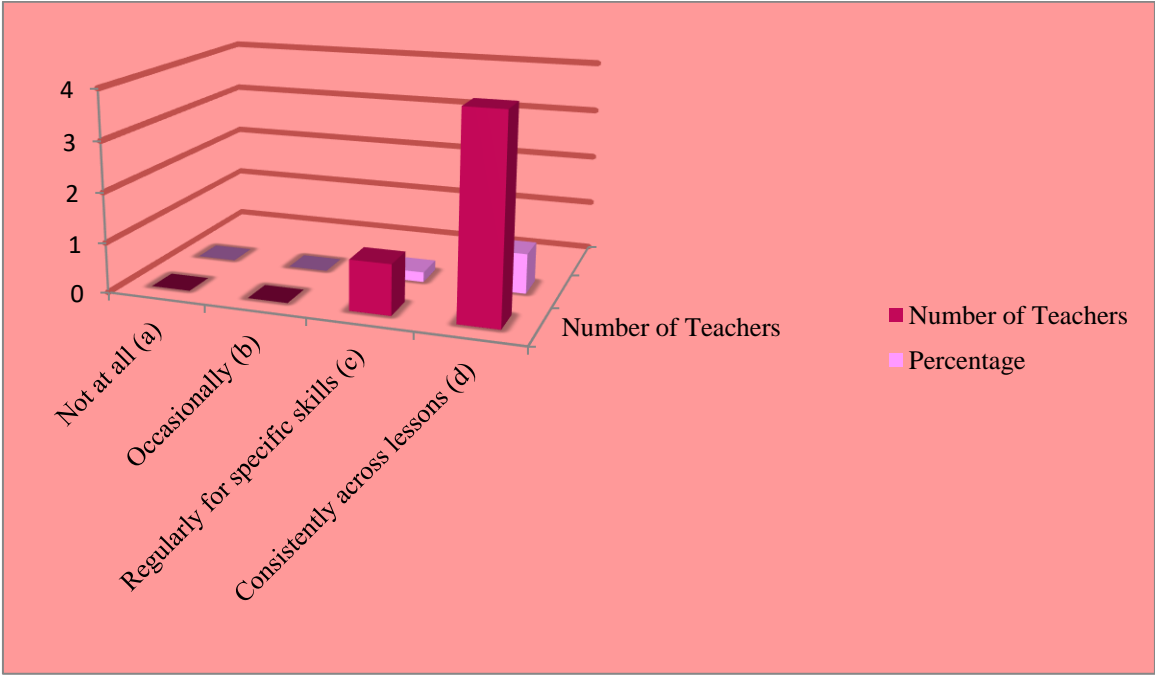


Figure 7 Teacher Integration of Cultural Awareness Activities

The figure above "Integration of Cultural Awareness Activities" shows how frequently teachers incorporate activities that raise awareness of different cultures into their EFL reading comprehension lessons. The data is promising, with none of the teachers reporting never using cultural activities (0% for "Not at all" and "Occasionally").

Question Eight: if you integrate cultural awareness activities, please provide specific examples of the strategies or techniques you use.

Cultural Awareness Strategy	Number of Teachers (Using This Strategy)	Percentage
Pre-reading activities introducing cultural contexts	4	80%
*Analyzing cultural references within texts	3	60%
Discussion about cultural perspectives	5	100%

Table 8 Cultural Awareness Integration Strategies

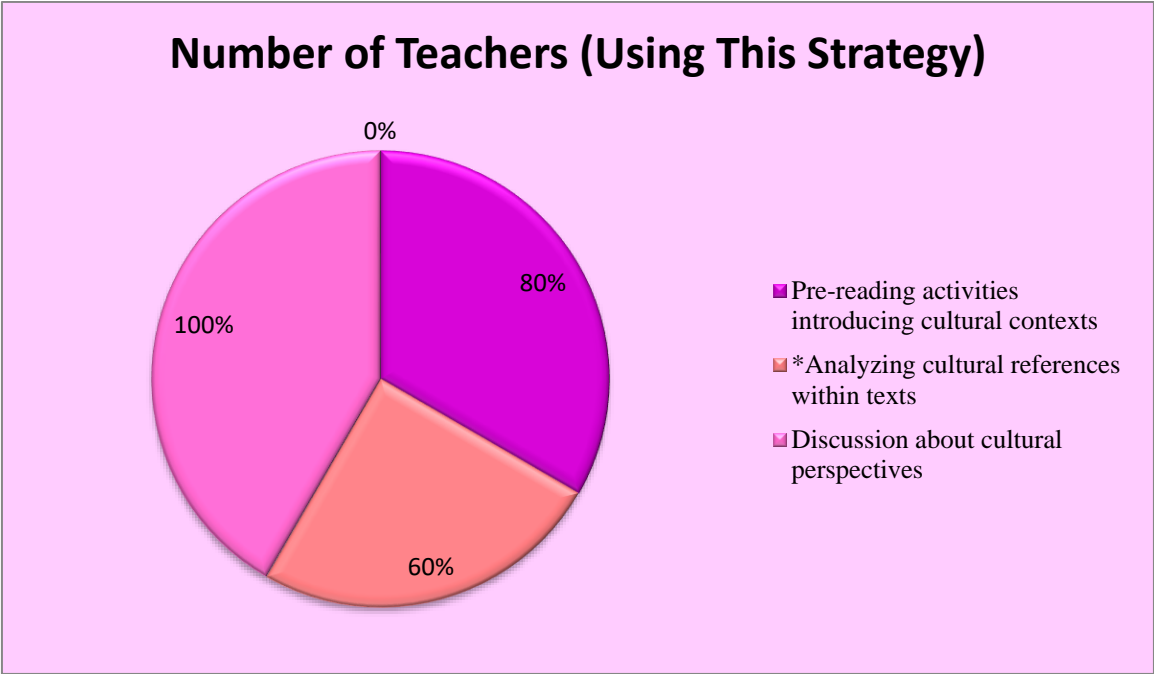


Figure 8 Cultural Awareness Integration Strategies

This pie chart "Cultural Awareness Integration Strategies" displays the specific techniques teachers use to integrate cultural awareness activities into their EFL reading comprehension lessons.

Question Nine: How do you assess the impact of your cultural awareness activities on your students reading comprehension skills?

Assessment Method	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Student feedback	4	80%
Improvement in comprehension tasks	0	0%
Classroom discussions	5	100%
Specific cultural awareness activities	1	20%

Table 9 Teacher Assessment of Cultural Awareness activities

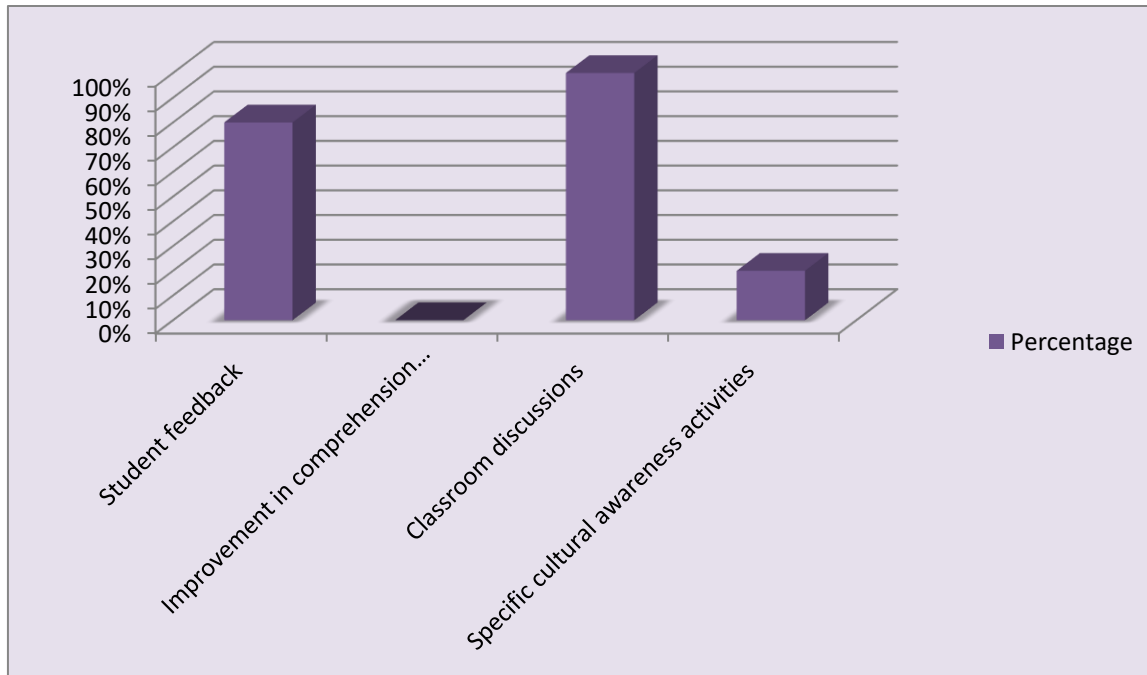


Figure 9 Teacher Assessment of Cultural Awareness Activities

The graph «Assessment of Cultural Awareness Activities» demonstrates how teachers measure the impact of these activities on their students' reading comprehension skills. It is important to note that this data is based on a small sample size (5 teachers).

Question Ten: In your experience, what are the main challenges you face when integrating cultural awareness into EFL reading comprehension instructions?

Challenge	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Limited time for instruction (a)	3	60%
Lack of resources (b)	0	0%
Student resistance to unfamiliar cultures (c)	5	100%

Table 10 Challenges of Integrating Cultural Awareness

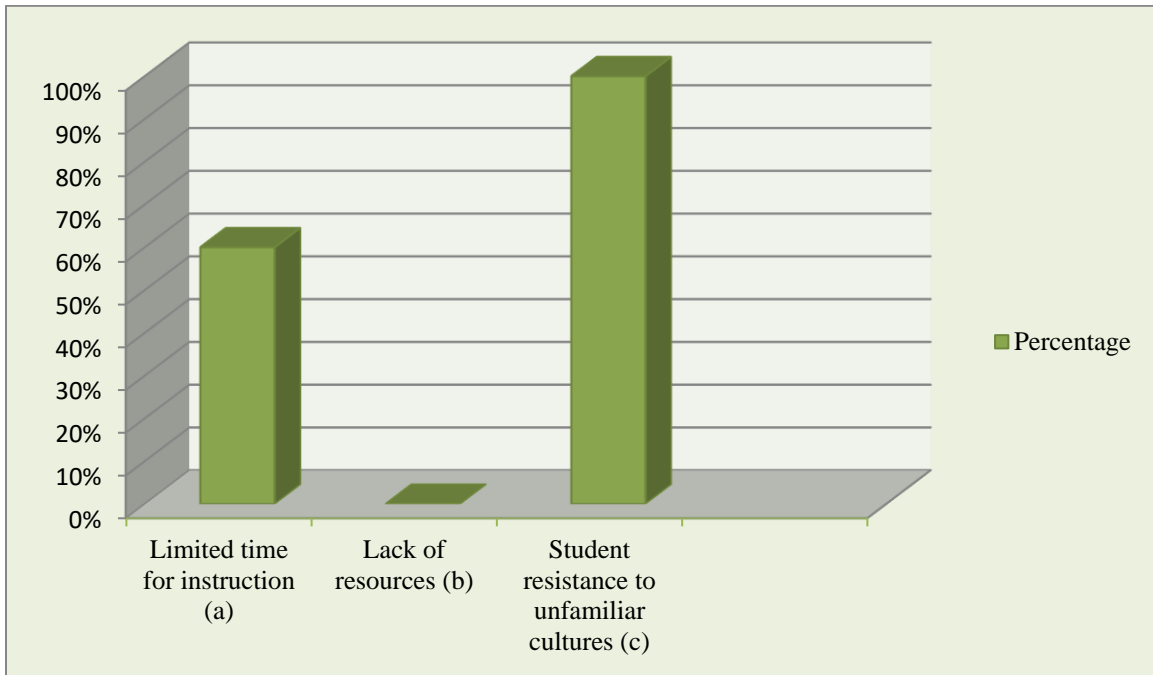


Figure 10 Challenges of Integrating Cultural Awareness

This figure of "Challenges of Integrating Cultural Awareness" presents the primary obstacles teachers face when incorporating cultural awareness activities into their EFL reading comprehension lessons. While the sample size is small (5 teachers), the data provides some interesting insights.

Question Eleven: How important do you believe cultural awareness is for developing EFL learners reading comprehension skills?

Importance of Cultural Awareness	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Not important at all (a)	0	0%
Somewhat important (b)	0	0%
Important (c)	0	0%
Very important (d)	5	100%

Essential (e)	0	0%
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Table 11 Teacher Perceptions of Cultural Awareness Importance

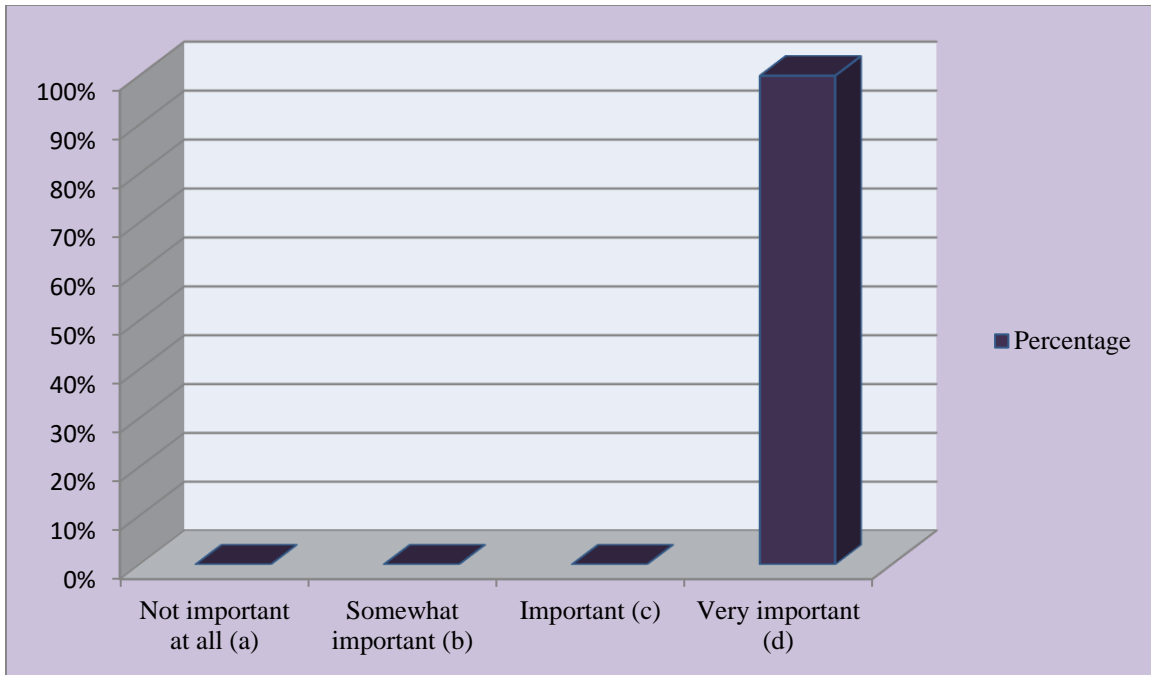


Figure 11 Teacher Perceptions of Cultural Awareness Importance

That figure above which is "Importance of Cultural Awareness" summarizes teacher responses to a question about the significance of cultural awareness in developing EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. The data shows a unanimous response, with all five teachers (100%) marking "Very Important"

Question Twelve: what are the potential drawbacks or limitations to integrating cultural awareness into EFL reading comprehension instruction?

Drawback/Limitation	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Time constraints (a)	2	40%

Potential for cultural misunderstanding (b)	3	60%
Difficulties introducing cultural content (c)	0	0%

Table 12 Potential Drawbacks of Cultural Awareness Integration

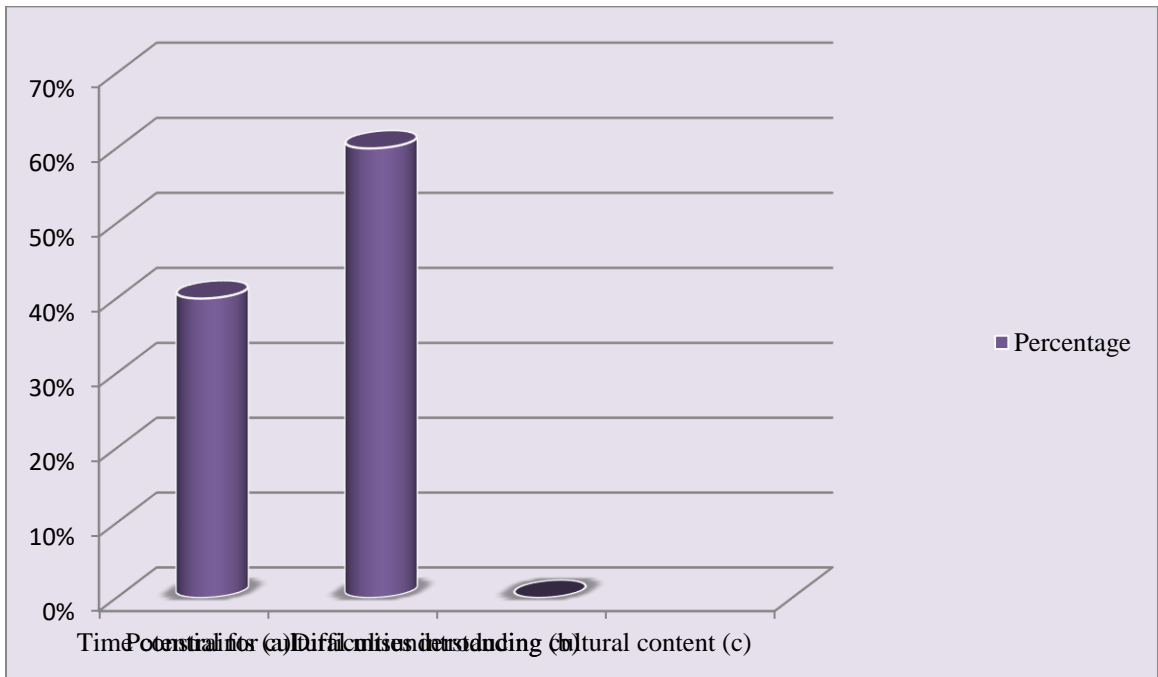


Figure 12 Potential Drawbacks of Cultural Awareness Integration

The bar chart titled "Potential Drawbacks of Cultural Awareness Integration" details the limitations teachers perceive when incorporating cultural awareness activities into EFL reading comprehension lessons.

Question Thirteen: What additional resources or support would you find most helpful in effectively integrating cultural awareness into your EFL reading comprehension lessons?

Resource Type	Number of Teachers	Percentage
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Professional development workshops (a)	2	40%
Online resources for cultural activities (b)	0	0%
Curriculum materials (c)	0	0%
Authentic materials (d)	5	100%

Table 13 Desired Resources for Cultural Awareness Integration

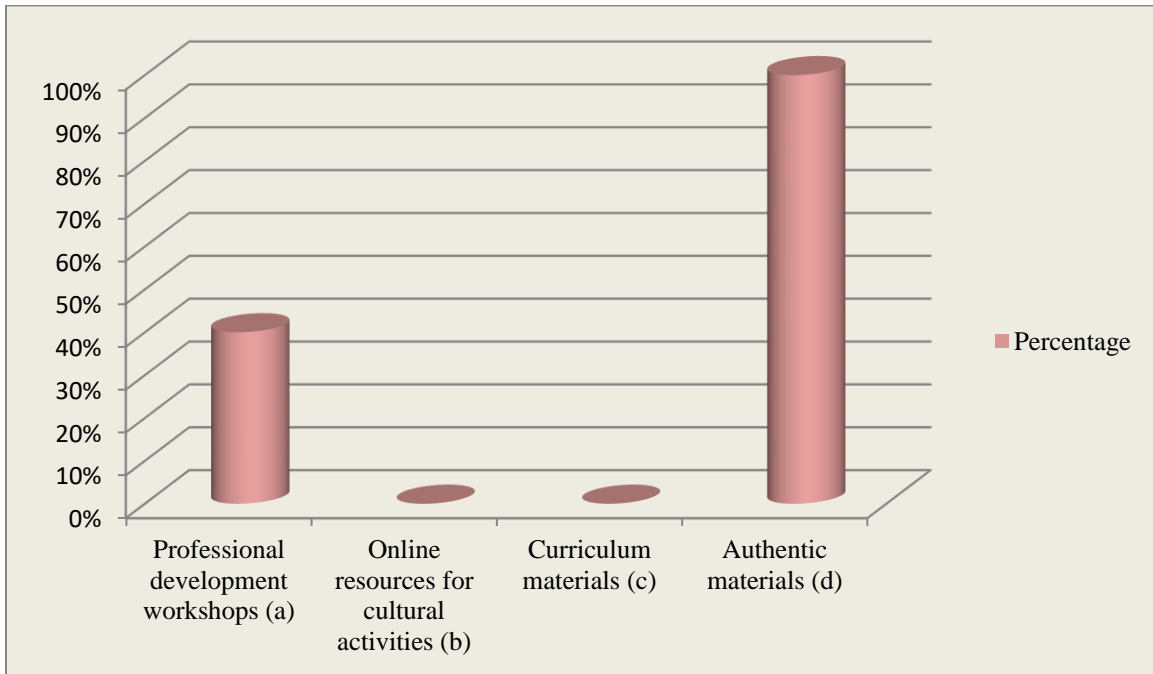


Figure 13 Desired Resources for Cultural Awareness Integration

As you can see in this graph "Desired Resources for Cultural Awareness Integration" details the types of resources teachers find most helpful for incorporating cultural awareness activities into their EFL reading comprehension lessons.

3.2. Students Questionnaire

3.2.1. Aim of questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to understand how students feel about cultural awareness in their reading class, also to know if they have done activities in class that focus on cultural awareness, and if those activities were helpful. It is important to see if students ever struggle with reading because of unfamiliar cultural references. The aim is to see if students think learning about cultures helps them understand their reading assignments better.

3.2.2. Sample of study

In our research, we worked with second year students twenty members as a sample and submitted a questionnaire for them to be filled with their reliable answers.

3.2.3. Description of the questionnaire

Students questionnaire consists of seventeen questions divided into three sections. The first part is about background information, the second part is about cultural awareness, and the third part is mixed by reading comprehension and cultural awareness.

3.2.4. Analysis of students' questionnaire

Section one: Background information

Question one: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	4	20%
Female	16	80%

Table 14 Students Gender

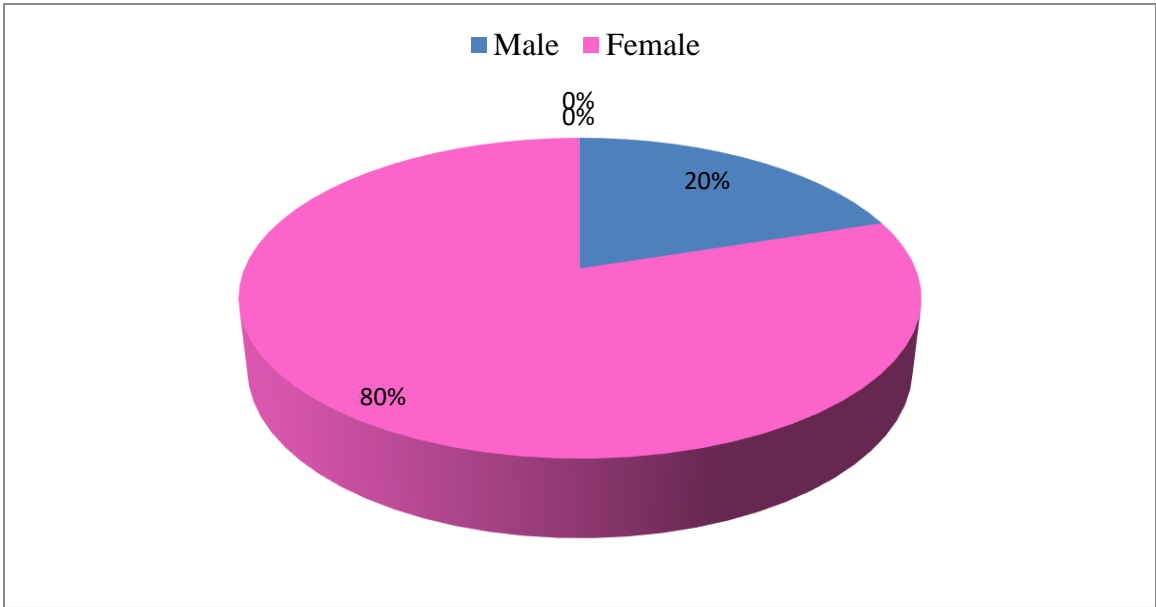


Figure 14 Students Gender

The pie chart above shows the gender distribution of the students who participated in the questionnaire (4 males and 16 females).

Question two: Your choice to study English was.

Choice to Study English	Frequency	Percentage
Your own choice	18	90%
Imposed on you	2	10%

Table 15 Student Motivation for Studying English

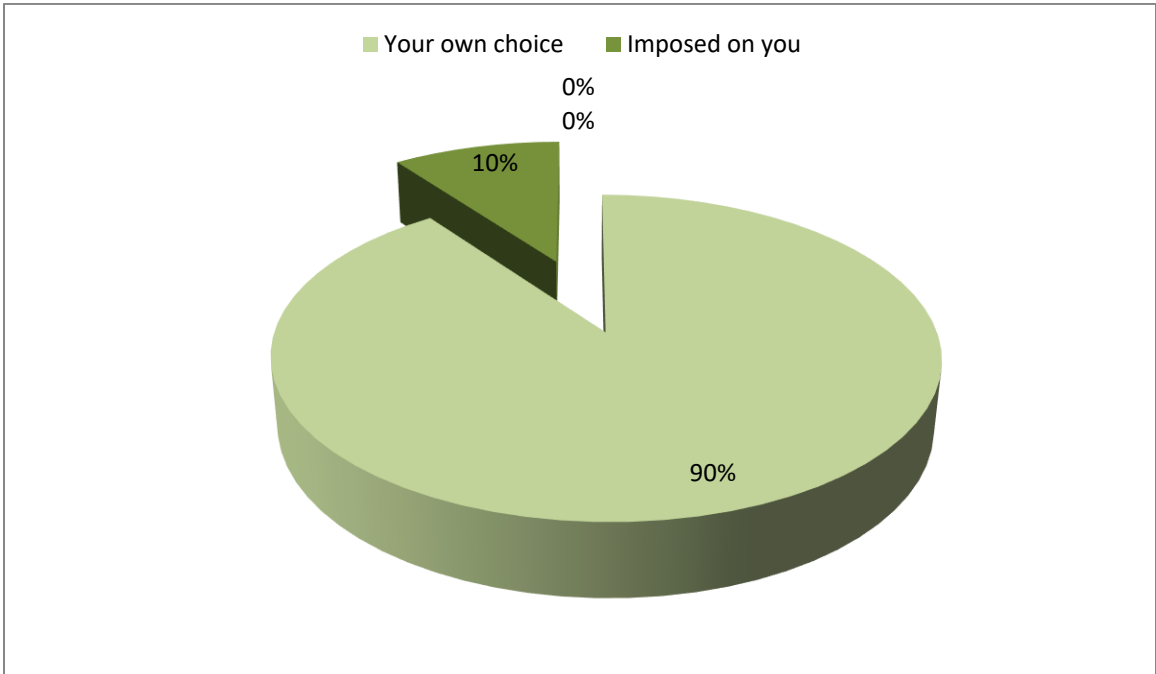


Figure 15 Student Motivation for Studying English

The pie chart "Student Motivation for Studying English" shows a very high percentage of students (90%) indicated that they chose to study English on their own. This suggests a strong internal motivation for learning the language, which can be a positive factor in language acquisition. Only a small percentage of students (10%) reported that English was imposed on them. This may indicate that external factors.

Question three: How would you assess your present level at English?

English Level	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	2	10.00%
Good	11	55.00%
Average	7	35.00%
Low	0	0.00%

Table 16 Student Self-Assessment of English Level

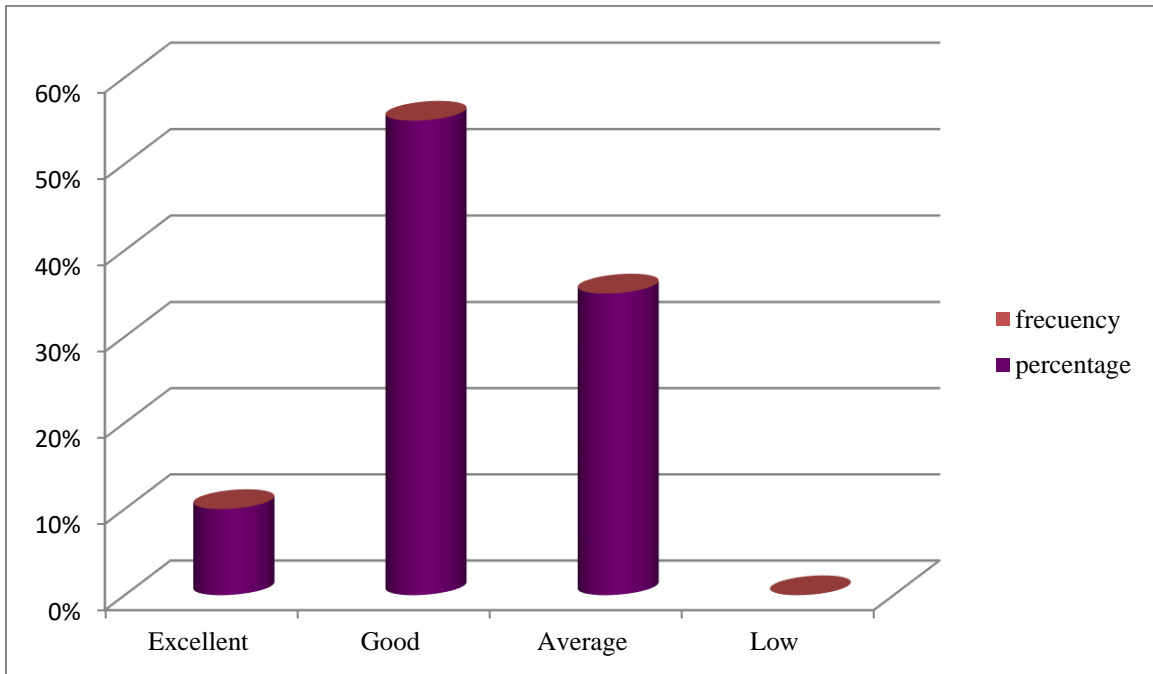


Figure 16 Student Self-Assessment of English Level

This graph above titled "Student Self-Assessment of English Level" shows how students perceived their current ability in English. The majority of students (55% good + 35% average) evaluated their English capability as either good or average. This proposes that most students feel to some degree comfortable with the language but may still be developing their abilities. A smaller percentage of students evaluated themselves as excellent (10%) or low (0%). This may show that the students in this course are self-selecting and may have a common interest in improving their English.

Section two: Cultural awareness

Question four: In your opinion, cultural awareness has to do with:

Perception of Cultural Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Aware of cultural differences	6	30.00%
Characteristics of other cultures	5	25.00%
Similarities between cultures	0	0.00%
Knowing customs, habits, values	9	45.00%

Table 17 Student Perception of Cultural Awareness

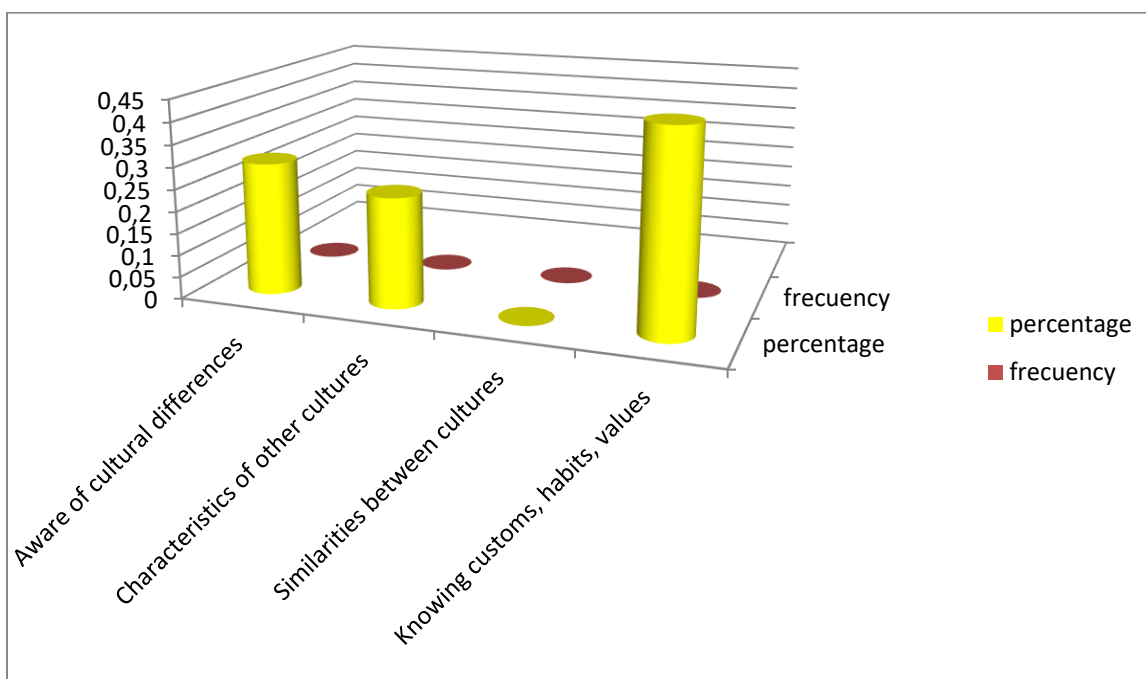


Figure 17 Student Perceptions of Cultural Awareness

According to the data, students show a relatively complex perception of cultural awareness. The most common response (45%) emphasizes knowledge about customs, values, and history. This exists consistent with the idea that cultural awareness involves understanding the customs and traditions that shape a culture. Cultural differences were a significant concern for 30% of students, according to the survey. This suggests that they recognize the importance of understanding how their culture differs from their own, none of the students selected understanding similarities between cultures as part of cultural awareness. This may indicate a lack of comprehension among students or the wording of answer choices.

Question five: How do you feel about learning about other people culture?

Feeling About Learning Other Cultures	Frequency	Percentage
Necessary (a)	20	100%
Not Necessary (b)	0	0%

Table 18 Student Attitudes towards Learning other Cultures

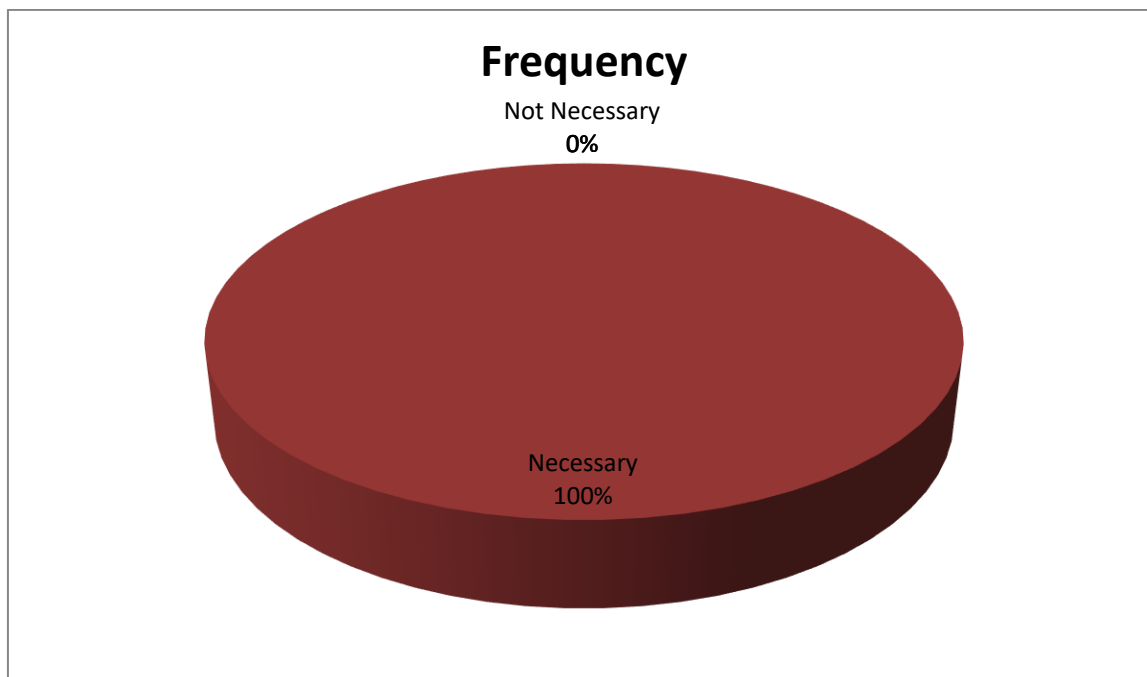


Figure 18 Student Attitudes towards Learning other Cultures

The circle titled "Student Attitudes towards Learning Other Cultures" shows a very positive response from students (100%) regarding learning about other cultures. All students indicated that they believe learning about other cultures is necessary.

Question six: How important do you think cultural awareness is in understanding English Texts?

Importance of Cultural Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Not important at all	1	5.00%
Somewhat important	1	5.00%
Moderately important	8	40.00%
Very important	8	40.00%
Extremely important	2	10.00%

Table 19 Student Perceptions of Cultural Awareness in Reading

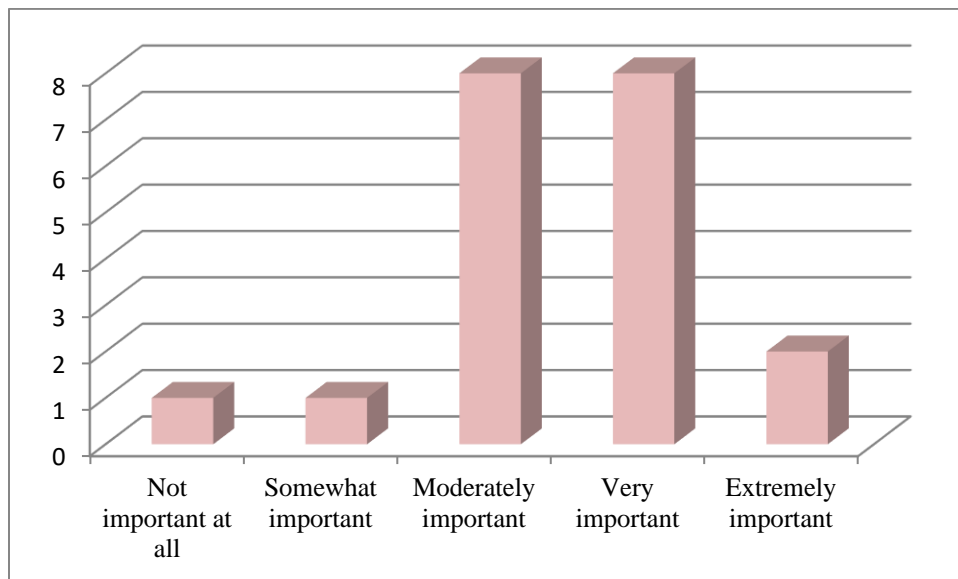


Figure 19 Student Perceptions of Cultural Awareness in Reading

As it appears "Students' perceptions of cultural awareness in reading" shows that students have somewhat different opinions about the importance of cultural awareness in understanding English texts. The majority of students (80%, very important + moderately important) agreed that cultural awareness is at least somewhat important in understanding English texts. This suggests that most

students are aware of the potential benefits of cultural awareness for reading comprehension. Within this majority there is a wide range of opinions, with two equal groups (40% indicating moderate and very important). A smaller proportion (10%) thought it was very important, while only 5% thought it was somewhat important or not at all important.

Question seven: How important do you think cultural awareness is for understanding English Texts?

Importance of Cultural Awareness (Likert Scale)	Frequency	Percentage
1 (Not Important at All)	2	10.00%
2 (Somewhat Important)	0	0.00%
3 (Moderately Important)	10	50.00%
4 (Very Important)	4	20.00%
5 (Extremely Important)	4	20.00%

Table 20 The importance of Cultural Awareness

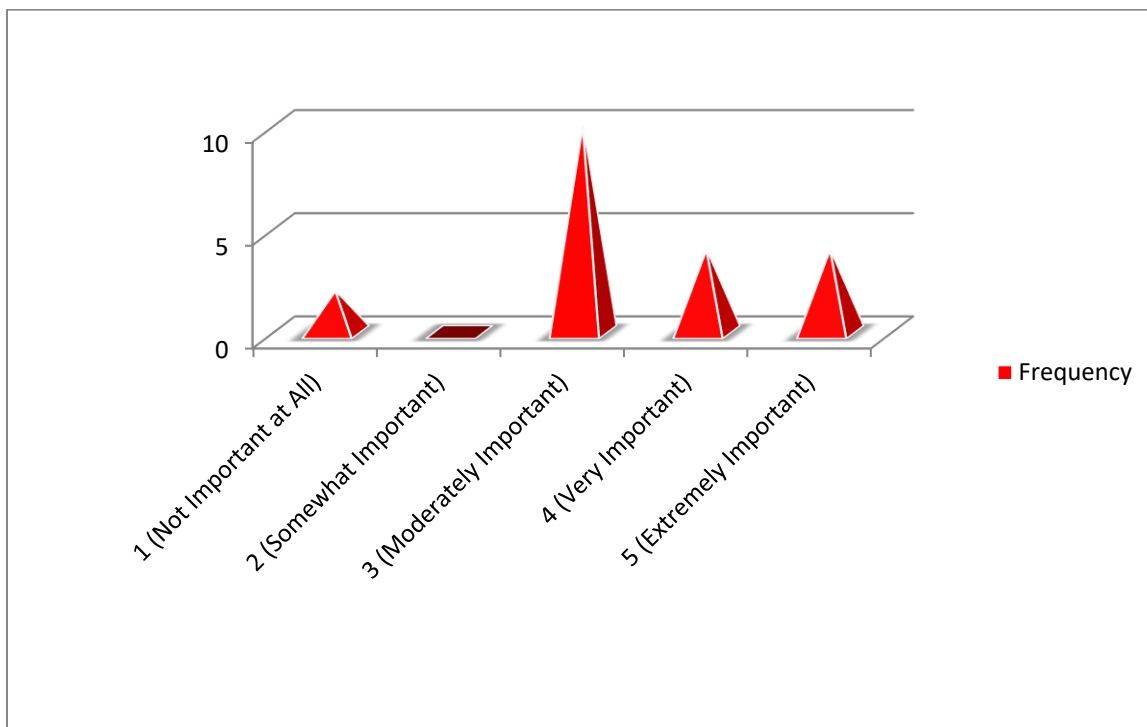


Figure 20 The Importance of Cultural Awareness

The bar graph titled "the importance of cultural awareness" shows that students have somewhat varied opinions on the importance of cultural awareness for understanding English texts.

Question Eight: Have you ever encountered difficulties in understanding English texts due to cultural differences? If yes, please provide an example.

Encountered Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage	Example
Yes	8	40.00%	Idioms
No	12	60.00%	-

Table 21 Difficulties with Cultural References

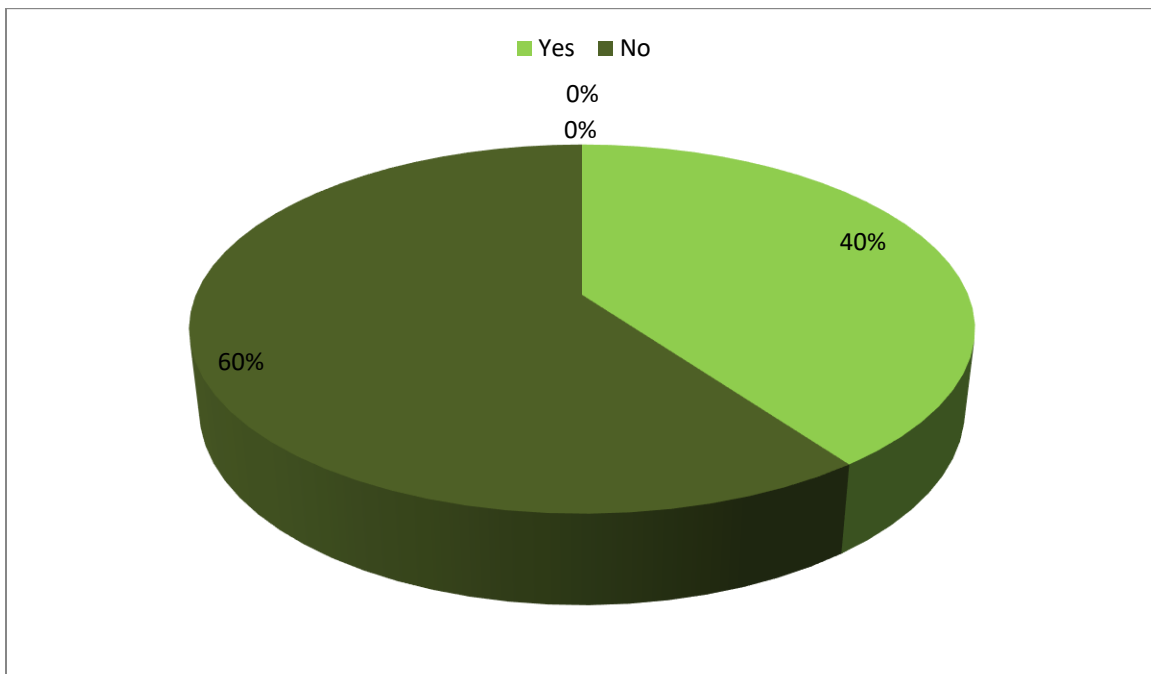


Figure 21 Difficulties with Cultural References

The pie chart reveals that a few students (4 out of 20) have trouble understanding English content since of social contrasts. The most common issue they specified was figures of speech. Expressions are idioms with uncommon meaning that cannot be understood by knowing the individual words. For example, the saying "It is raining cats and dogs" does not mean there are actually cats and dogs falling from the sky! It is clear that most students (60%) said they haven't had trouble understanding English content because of social differences.

Question Nine: How important do you believe cultural awareness is for understanding English texts? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important.

Rating (Importance of Cultural Awareness)	Frequency	Percentage
1 (Not Important)	1	5.00%
2 (Somewhat Important)	0	0.00%
3 (Moderately Important)	0	0.00%
4 (Very Important)	0	0.00%
5 (Important)	6	30.00%
6 (Somewhat Important)	1	5.00%
7 (Important)	4	20.00%
8 (Very Important)	4	20.00%
9 (Important)	4	20.00%
10 (Extremely Important)	0	0.00%

Table 22 Importance of Cultural Awareness in Reading



Figure 22 Importance of Cultural Awareness in Reading

The pyramid chart shows the "Importance of Cultural Awareness in Reading" which means how students rated the importance of cultural awareness for understanding English texts. The information uncovers a range of views, with most students (80%) setting cultural awareness some place between "to some degree important" (rating of 6) and "important" (rating of 9) on a 10-point scale. This suggests that most students recognize at least a few degree of significance for cultural awareness in reading comprehension .no students evaluated cultural awareness as "extremely important" (10). It would be important to investigate why this may be the case in future research.

Question Ten: How often do you consider cultural factors when reading English Texts?

Frequency of Considering Cultural Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Never	0	0.00%
Rarely	2	10.00%
Sometimes	13	65.00%
Often	5	25.00%
Always	0	0.00%

Table 23 Frequency of Considering Cultural Factors

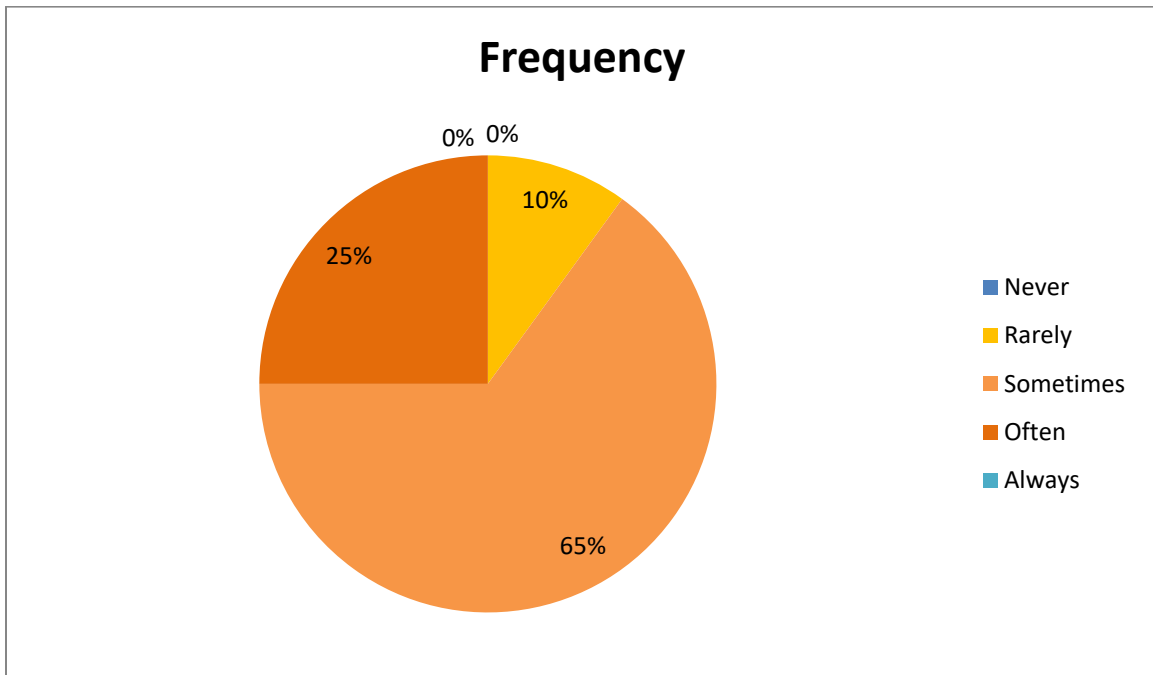


Figure 23 Frequency of Considering Cultural Factors

This circle shows "Frequency of Considering Cultural Factors" it means how often students consider cultural factors when reading English texts. The majority of students (65%) shown that they consider cultural factors at least sometimes when reading English texts. This proposes that most students recognize the potential impact of culture on understanding written content.

There is a range inside this larger part, with more students reporting "sometimes" (65%) than "often" (25%) considering cultural factors. A little portion (10%) said they rarely consider them. No students showed never considering cultural factors in their reading.

Section Three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Awareness

Question Eleven: When reading English texts, do you encounter any difficulties related to cultural references?

Cultural Reference Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	2	10.00%
No	5	25.00%
Sometimes	13	65.00%

Table 24 Student Difficulties with Cultural References

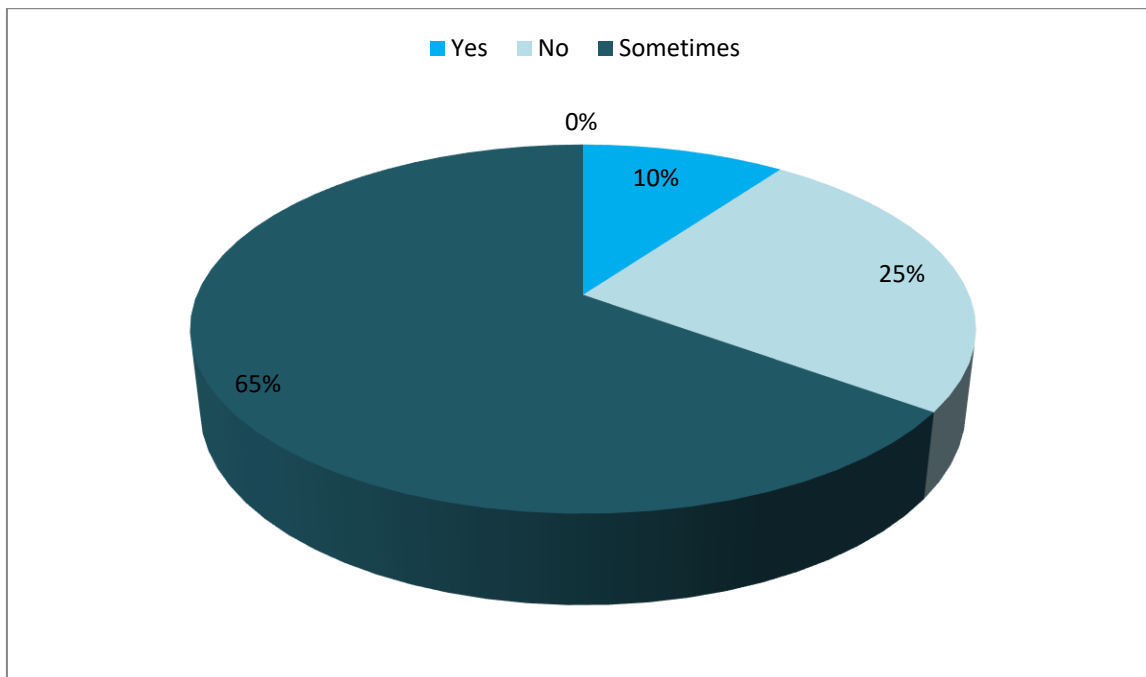


Figure 24 Student Difficulties with Cultural References

It is evident from the pie chart above "Difficulties with Cultural References" shows that cultural references can cause difficulty for some students when reading English texts. Over half of the students (65%) shown that they experience troubles with cultural references sometimes while reading. This proposes that indeed students who are generally successful with reading comprehension can be challenged by cultural references on event.

There is a range of experiences, with a few students (10%) experiencing challenges always and others (25%) announcing no troubles with cultural references.

Question Twelve: How helpful do you find learning about English culture in developing your reading comprehension?

Helpfulness of Learning English Culture	Frequency	Percentage
Not Helpful	0	0.00%
Somewhat Helpful	2	10.00%
Neutral	4	20.00%
Helpful	10	50.00%
Very Helpful	4	20.00%

Table 25 Helpfulness of Learning English Culture

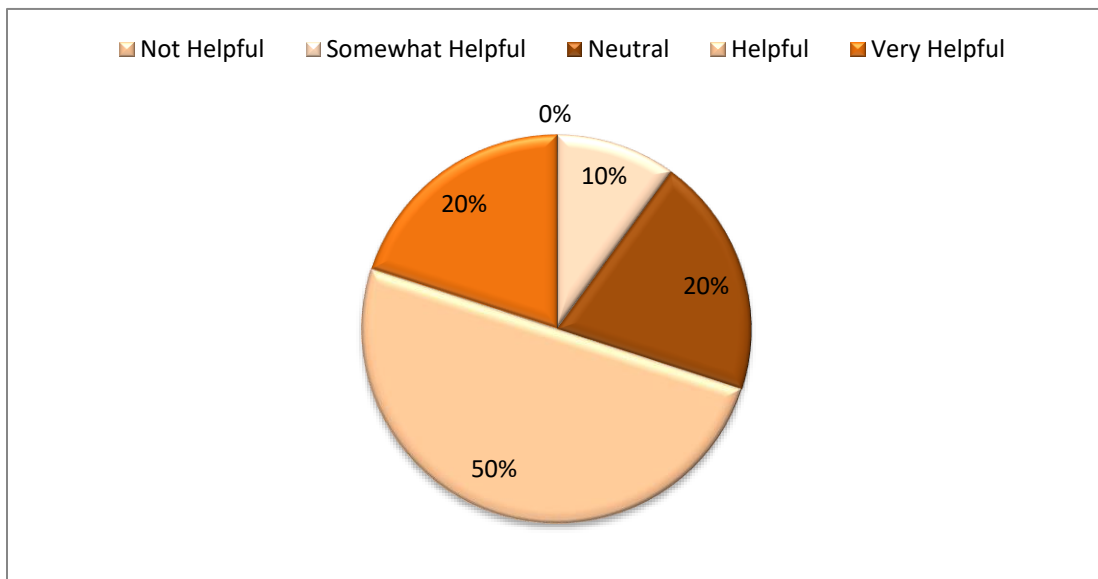


Figure 25 Helpfulness of Learning English Culture

This circle "Helpfulness of Learning English Culture" shows that students view learning about English culture as beneficial for developing their reading comprehension in English. The majority of students (70%, helpful and very helpful) shown that learning about English culture are at least somewhat helpful for understanding English texts. This proposes that students recognize the

potential value of cultural knowledge for reading comprehension. There is a range of views inside this majority, with half of the students (50%) finding it helpful and another 20% rating it very helpful. The fifth of students (20%) seen it is neutral, and none considered it not helpful.

Question Thirteen: Would you like to see more emphasis on cultural understanding in your English reading classes?

Increased Emphasis on Cultural Understanding	Frequency	Percentage
Yes (a)	20	100.00%
No (b)	0	0.00%

Table 26 Student Interest in Increased Cultural Emphasis

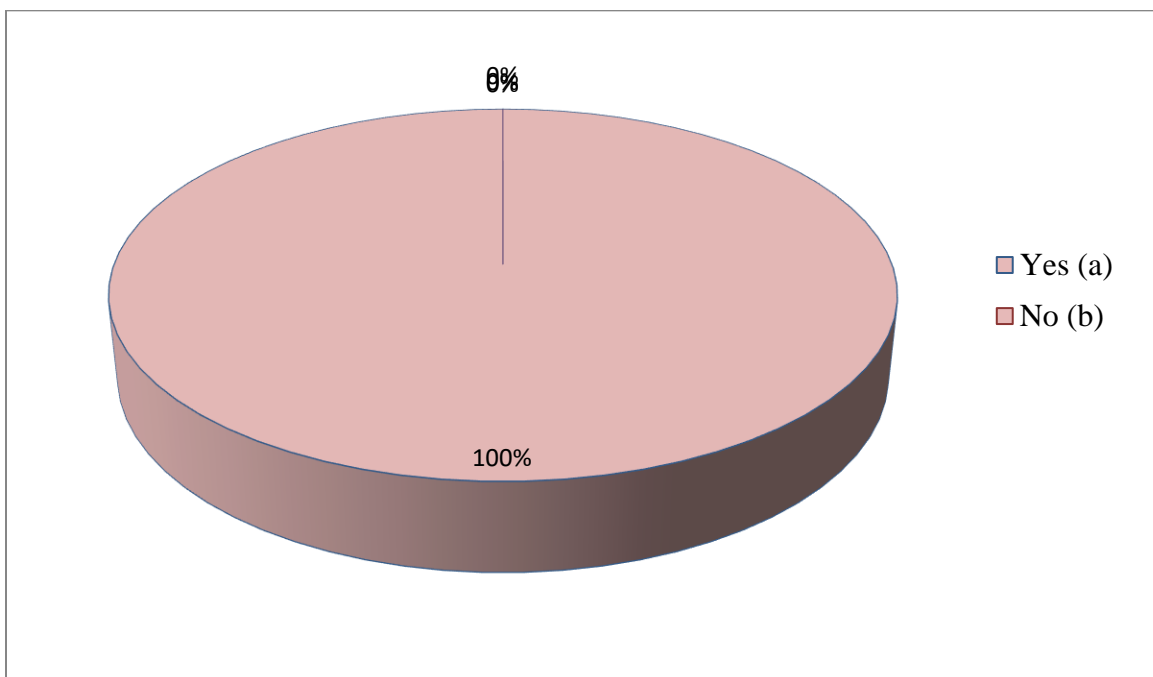


Figure 26 student Interest in Increased Cultural Emphasis

This pie chart titled "Student Interest in Increased Cultural Emphasis" shows that all students (100%) want to see more emphasis on cultural understanding in their English reading classes.

Question Fourteen: When encountering unfamiliar cultural references in English texts, what do you usually do to improve comprehension?

Strategy for Unfamiliar Cultural References	Frequency	Percentage
Look up online/dictionary (a)	13	65.00%
Ask native speaker (b)	3	15.00%
Guess from context (c)	5	25.00%
Skip unfamiliar parts (d)	0	0.00%

Table 27 Strategies for Unfamiliar Cultural References

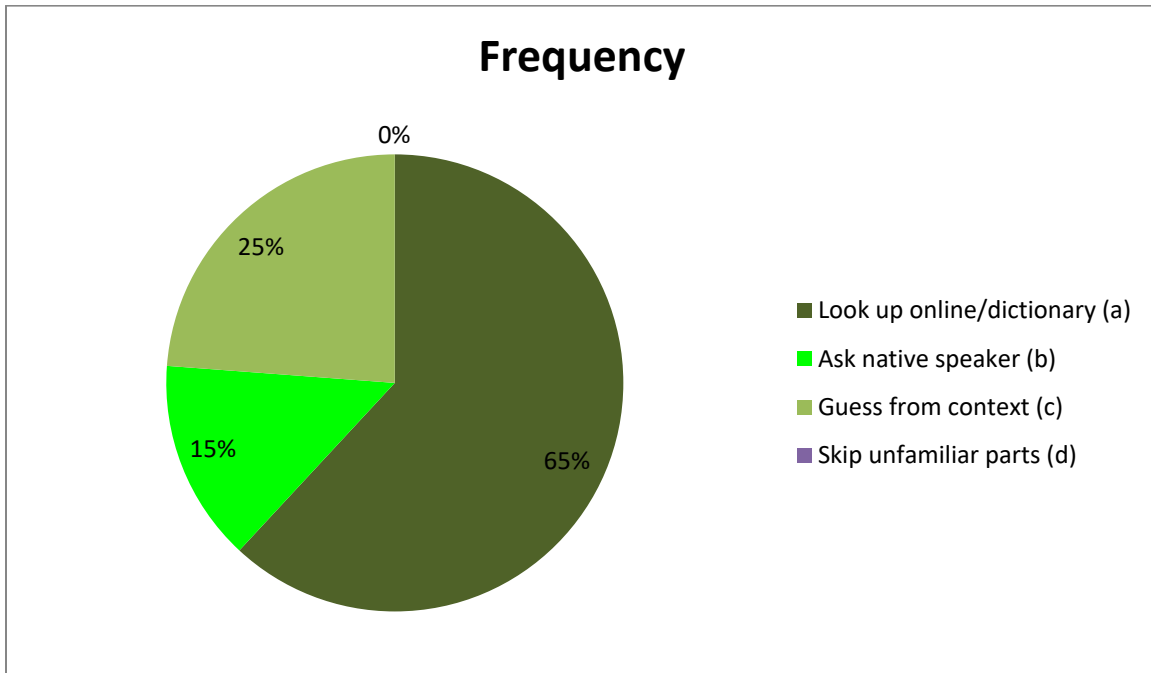


Figure 27 Strategies for Unfamiliar Cultural References

This shown circle titled "Strategies for Unfamiliar Cultural References" shows how students tackle unfamiliar cultural references when reading English texts. The most common technique (65%) is to look up references online or in a dictionary. This proposes that students value utilizing external resources to understand cultural meanings they experience while reading. While looking up references is the preferred approach, a few students (25%) moreover depend on setting clues (guessing from context) to figure out the meaning. Smaller portion (15%) asks a native speaker

for clarification. It shows up students utilize a combination of procedures depending on the circumstance

Question Fifteen: Do you feel that understanding the culture behind an English text helps you comprehend it better?

Perception of Cultural Understanding	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree (a)	0	0.00%
Disagree (b)	0	0.00%
Neutral (c)	7	35.00%
Agree (d)	12	60.00%
Strongly Agree (e)	1	5.00%

Table 28 Perception of Cultural Understanding for Comprehension

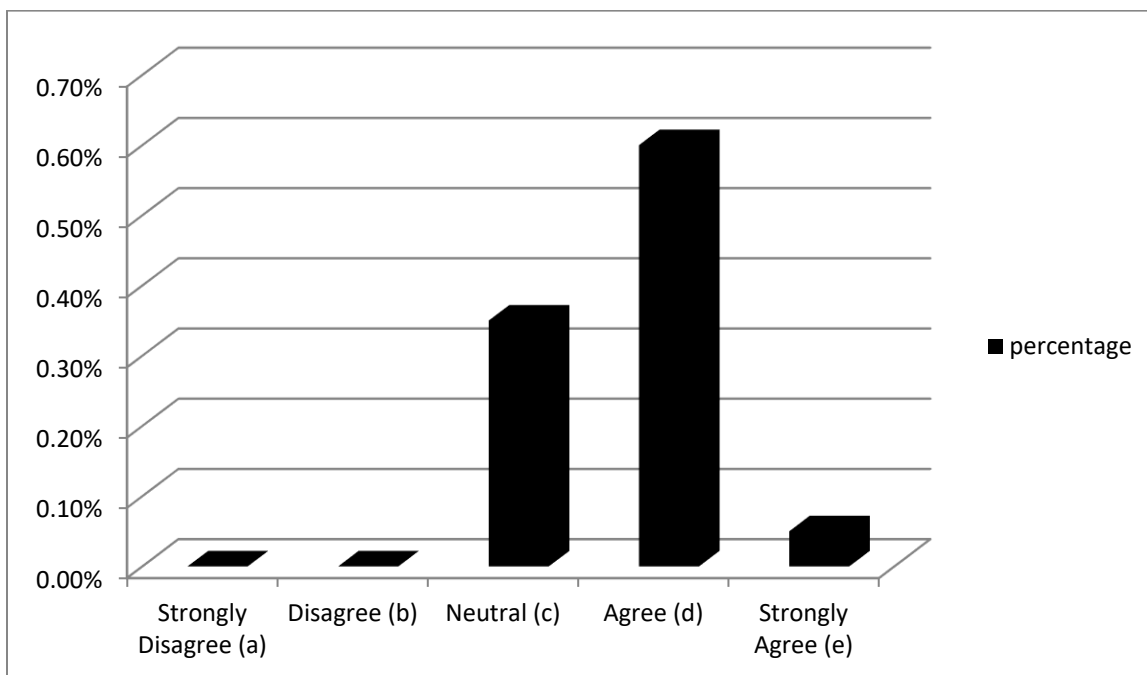


Figure 28 Perception of Cultural Understanding for Comprehension

The bar chart titled "Perception of Cultural Understanding for Comprehension" shows that most students believe understanding the culture behind a text helps them comprehend it better. No students disagreed (strongly disagree or disagree) and a majority (60%, agree) felt that understanding the culture is helpful for comprehension. An additional student (5%) strongly agreed. This proposes that most students recognize the value of cultural knowledge for reading comprehension in English. It is interesting to note that a sizable portion of students (35%) were neutral on this issue.

Question Sixteen: Do you feel that your English language classes adequately incorporate cultural content to support your reading comprehension development?

Perception of Cultural Content	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	85.00%
No	3	15.00%

Table 29 Adequacy of Cultural Content in English Classes

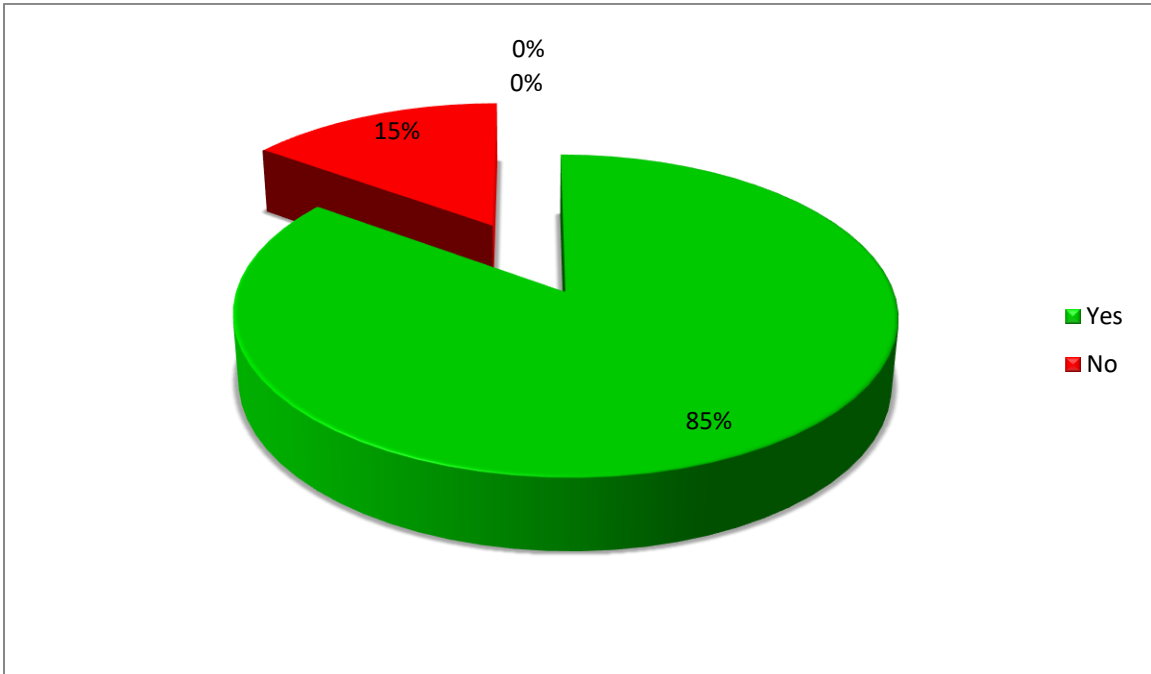


Figure 29 Adequacy of Cultural Content in English Classes

As you can see from that pie chart "Adequacy of Cultural Content" that students believe their English language classes incorporates cultural content that helps them understand their reading assignments. The majority of students (85%) felt that their classes included cultural content that was beneficial for their reading comprehension. While a large part finds the current content adequate, a smaller group (15%) feels that more cultural content would be helpful.

Question Seventeen: How confident are you in your ability to infer meaning from culturally nuanced English texts?

Confidence Level in Inferring Meaning	Frequency	Percentage
Not confident at all (a)	1	5.00%
Somewhat confident (b)	5	25.00%
Moderately confident (c)	11	55.00%
Very confident (d)	3	15.00%

Extremely confident (e)	0	0.00%
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Table 30 Student Confidence in Inferring Meaning

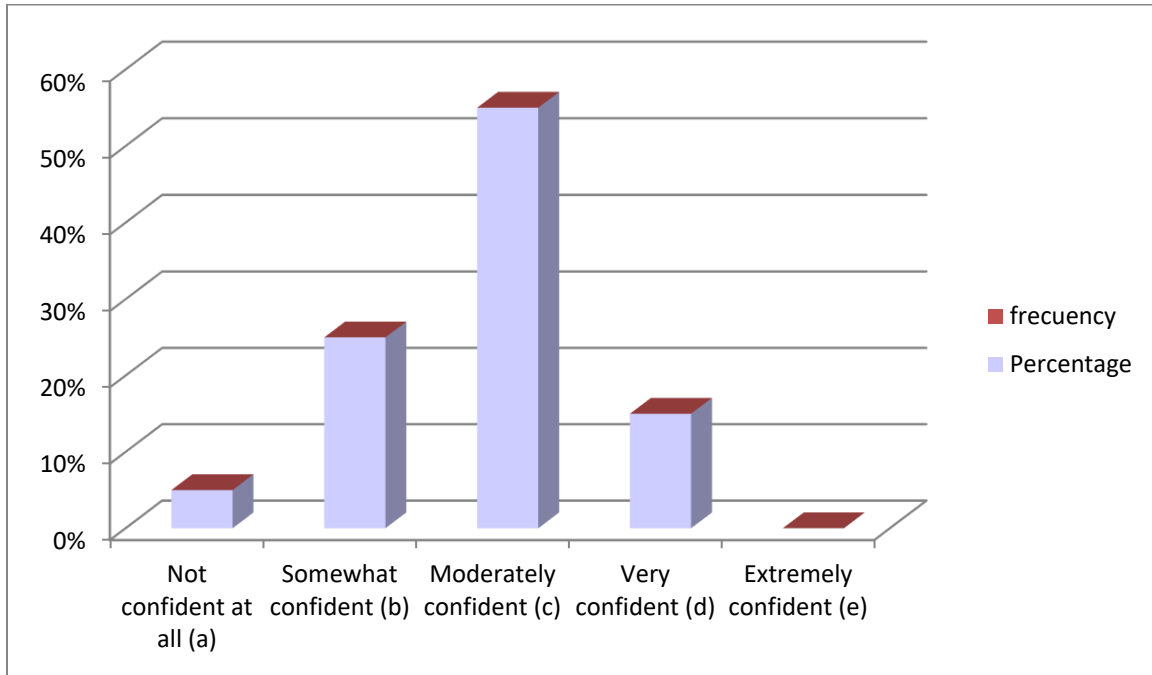


Figure 30 Student Confidence in Inferring Meaning

According to this bar graph "Student Confidence in Inferring Meaning" shows a range of confidence levels among students regarding their ability to understand meaning from culturally nuanced English texts. Most students (55%) informed moderate confidence in their ability to infer meaning. Smaller parts (25%) were somewhat confident, and another group (15%) expressed high confidence. Only a very small number of students indicated a lack of confidence (5%) or extreme confidence (0%).

3.3. Finding Discussion

This study identified areas for improvement in future surveys designed to understand how teachers and students view cultural awareness in EFL reading classes. While a potential gap between teacher perceptions and student preferences was found, the reasons behind this gap remain unclear. Follow-up interviews with both groups could provide richer data on their specific needs and preferences

for integrating cultural awareness. Additionally, the current questionnaire lacks a clear definition of "cultural awareness," potentially leading to misunderstandings and less accurate data. Future iterations should include a precise definition or examples within the context of EFL reading comprehension. Furthermore, the potential for biased responses due to social desirability is a concern. Implementing anonymous surveys or a Likert scale with a neutral midpoint alongside stronger disagreement and agreement options could encourage more honest feedback. The teacher data's generalizability is also limited by the unspecified sample size. A larger and more diverse group of teachers would provide a more accurate picture of teacher preparedness and the challenges they face. Finally, the current survey doesn't adequately assess the effectiveness of teacher assessment methods. While self-reported methods were identified, the survey doesn't explore how well these methods measure the impact of cultural awareness activities on student reading comprehension. Future questionnaires should delve deeper into how teachers assess cultural awareness and its connection to developing reading comprehension skills.

3.4. Finding Results

This study looked at how students and teachers view learning about culture in English reading classes. Most students (90%) wanted to learn English and understood the importance of culture (45% valued knowing customs). Yet, some students (35%) were not sure if learning culture directly helps them understand what they read, even though most students (85%) said their classes included cultural content. Teachers also said culture is important (100%) and included it in lessons (100%), but some (60%) felt they did not have enough time. All the teachers (100%) wanted more help (like workshops and real-life materials) to teach culture better. Overall, the study suggests that teachers and students could work together to make sure culture lessons are helpful and interesting for students, leading to better reading skills.

3.5. Pedagogical Recommendations

The analysis of student and teacher surveys suggests a need to bridge the gap between acknowledging the importance of cultural awareness and incorporating it effectively into EFL

reading instruction. While most students (80%) recognize its value, some (35%) are unsure of its direct impact on comprehension. Similarly, teachers' value cultural awareness (100%), but limitations like time constraints (60%) might hinder its effectiveness. To address this, collaboration is key. Equipping teachers with additional resources, such as professional development workshops (desired by 40%) and authentic cultural materials (desired by 100%), can enhance their ability to integrate cultural awareness. This approach aligns better with student preferences for broader cultural learning and fosters a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural context strengthens reading comprehension skills.

3.6. Limitations of the study

This study faced some difficulties when collecting data. It was difficult for the teachers to participate in the survey. Even if some teachers were interested, they might have been too busy answering all questions carefully. Another limitation is the lack of existing research and resources on this topic. Obtaining additional information from other research studies would have enhanced the analysis and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the findings. Regrettably, the absence of sufficient data limited the scope of the study, and the outcomes might not necessarily be applicable to all educators and learners.

Conclusion

This study investigated student perceptions of the role of cultural content in enhancing reading comprehension within English language classes. The analysis of student questionnaires (n=20) revealed a strong student desire for increased emphasis on cultural understanding in reading

instruction (Question 13). This finding suggests that students recognize the potential value of cultural knowledge for improving their ability to grasp the nuances of English texts.

While students expressed a preference for more cultural content, the majority also reported that their current classes adequately addressed cultural aspects of reading (Question 16). This might indicate that teachers are already incorporating some cultural elements into their curriculum. However, a more comprehensive understanding of student preferences and teacher practices is necessary. Future research could delve deeper into the specific types of cultural content students find most beneficial for reading comprehension (follow-up to Question 17). Additionally, investigating teacher perspectives on integrating cultural content could provide valuable insights into current practices and potential challenges.

Overall, the findings suggest the potential for improved reading comprehension by strategically incorporating cultural content that aligns with student interests. Further research is necessary to explore this connection in greater depth and develop effective strategies for integrating cultural learning into English reading instruction.

General Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how cultivating cultural awareness can enhance reading comprehension abilities for university-level English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. By building on prior research that underscores the significance of cultural background knowledge, this project sought to offer valuable insights into EFL teaching practices.

The research delved into three key areas. Initially, it explored how prior cultural knowledge affects reading comprehension, with a focus on identifying cultural discrepancies that may lead to misinterpretations. Second, it evaluated the effectiveness of incorporating culturally-focused activities before reading to activate students' background knowledge. Lastly, the study examined how cultural schemas, or mental frameworks, influence how learners perceive and interpret texts, ultimately affecting their comprehension.

To achieve its objectives, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative techniques like surveys with quantitative methods involving controlled experiments. The aim was to provide practical recommendations for EFL educators, focusing on optimizing curricula and teaching strategies to better cater to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. This research adds to the growing body of knowledge that emphasizes the connection between language and culture in EFL learning. By drawing on theoretical frameworks such as sociocultural theory and schema theory, the study aimed to shed light on how cultural factors shape reading comprehension development in EFL learners. Ultimately, the findings from this research aim to further the discussion about the importance of incorporating cultural awareness into effective EFL reading instruction.

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Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear teachers,

The present questionnaire is part of a Master Dissertation which investigates the relationship between cultural awareness and EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. Your insights as an EFL teacher will be crucial in understanding current practices and perspectives. Your contribution will be of great help and will be kept anonymous. Your honest responses will be extremely invaluable to this research. Please read each question and select the answer that best reflects your experiences. I will be grateful if take time to share your experience by ticking the right answer or by making full statements whenever necessary.

Section 1: Background Information

1. Gender :

a) Male

b) Female

2. Which degree do you hold?

a) Master degree

b) Magister degree

c) Doctorate

3. How long have you been teaching EFL learners?

a) 1 to 2 years

b) 3 to 5 years

c) 5 to 10 years

d) More than 10years-

Section 2: Integration of Cultural Awareness Activities

4. How helpful do you find learning about English culture in developing your reading comprehension?

- a) Not Helpful
- b) Somewhat Helpful
- c) Helpful
- d) Very Helpful
- e) Neutral

5. Do you think that your English language classes adequately incorporate cultural content to support learners' reading comprehension?

- a) Yes
- b) No

6. In your opinion, what types of cultural content would be most beneficial to include in EFL instruction to enhance reading comprehension?

- a) General cultural knowledge.
- b) Cultural knowledge related to the target course.
- c) Specific schematic knowledge.

7. To what extent do you integrate activities that raise awareness of different cultures into your EFL reading comprehension lessons?

- a) Not at all
- b) Occasionally
- c) Regularly for specific skills
- d) Consistently across lessons

8. If you integrate cultural awareness activities, please provide specific examples of the strategies or techniques you use.

- a) Pre-reading activities introducing cultural contexts.
- b) Analyzing cultural references within texts.

- c) Discussions about cultural perspectives.

9. How do you assess the impact of your cultural awareness activities on your students' reading comprehension skills?

- a) Student feedback.
- b) Improvement in comprehension tasks.
- c) Classroom discussions.
- d) Specific cultural awareness activities.

10. In your experience, what are the main challenges you face when integrating cultural awareness into EFL reading comprehension instruction?

- a) Limited time.
- b) Lack of resources.
- c) Student resistance to unfamiliar cultures.

11. How important do you believe cultural awareness is for developing EFL learners' reading comprehension skills?

- a) Not important at all
- b) Somewhat important
- c) Important
- d) Very important
- e) Essential

12. What are the potential drawbacks or limitations to integrating cultural awareness into EFL reading comprehension instruction?

- a) Time constraints.
- b) Potential for cultural misunderstanding.
- c) Difficulties to introduce cultural content.

13. What additional resources or support would you find most helpful in effectively integrating cultural awareness into your EFL reading comprehension lessons?

- a) Professional development workshops.
- b) Online resources for cultural activities.
- c) Curriculum materials.
- d) Authentic materials.

Thank you for your time and invaluable contribution to this research!

- a) Not important at all.
- b) Somewhat important.
- c) Moderately important.
- d) Very important.
- e) Extremely important.

7. How important do you think cultural awareness is for understanding English texts?

(1-5 scale)

1 2 3 4 5

8. Have you ever encountered difficulties in understanding English texts due to cultural differences? If yes, please provide an example.

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. How important do you believe cultural awareness is for understanding English texts? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. How often do you consider cultural factors when reading English texts?

- a) Never
- b) Rarely
- c) Sometimes
- d) Often
- e) Always

Section 03: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Awareness

11. When reading English texts, do you encounter any difficulties related to cultural references?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Sometimes

If yes, please say what are these difficulties

.....
.....
.....
.....

12. How helpful do you find learning about English culture in developing your reading comprehension?

- f) Not Helpful
- g) Somewhat Helpful
- h) Neutral
- i) Helpful
- j) Very Helpful

13. Would you like to see more emphasis on cultural understanding in your English reading classes?

- a) Yes
- b) No

14. When encountering unfamiliar cultural references in English texts, what do you usually do to improve comprehension? (Select all that apply)

- Look up cultural references online or in a dictionary.
- Ask a native English speaker for clarification.
- Guess the meaning based on context.
- Skip over the unfamiliar parts and continue reading.
- Other (please specify): _____

15. Do you feel that understanding the culture behind an English text helps you comprehend it better?

- a) Strongly Disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neutral
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly Agree

16. Do you feel that your English language classes adequately incorporate cultural content to support your reading comprehension development?

a) Yes

b) No

17. How confident are you in your ability to infer meaning from culturally nuanced English texts?

a) Not confident at all

b) Somewhat confident

c) Moderately confident

d) Very confident

e) Extremely confident

Thank you for your collaboration.

List of appendices

Appendix 01 : Teachers Questionnaire

Appendix 02 : Students Questionnaire

ملخص الدراسة

تتناول هذه الأطروحة العلاقة المعقدة بين الوعي الثقافي وتأثيره على فهم قراءة المتعلمين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL). يبحث البحث في وجهات النظر المختلفة حول الثقافة في البيئات التعليمية ويسلط الضوء على أهمية فهم الجوانب الثقافية لاكتساب اللغة والطرق التي تؤثر بها الثقافة على فهم القراءة. من المهم لكل من المعلمين والطلاب فهم كيف تؤثر الثقافة على فهم قراءة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تتأثر استراتيجيات القراءة المختلفة، بما في ذلك القراءة التصفحوية والقراءة الضوئية والقراءة التنبؤية والقراءة التأسيسية، بعوامل ثقافية لها أيضاً تأثير كبير على مهارات القراءة. يبحث البحث في مراحل القراءة، من المرحلة التي تسبق القراءة إلى المرحلة التي تليها، وكذلك تأثيرات الثقافة على فهم القراءة. يركز البحث على قيمة الخلفية الثقافية ويسعى إلى تحسين فهم المتعلمين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للنصوص من خلال دمج الفروق الثقافية في تقنيات فهم القراءة. يسلط البحث الضوء على أهمية دمج الثقافة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتحفيز الطلاب وتعزيز الوعي بين الثقافات وتحسين فهم القراءة. تظهر النتائج وجود علاقة إيجابية بين المعرفة الثقافية وفهم القراءة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. من خلال توسيع المعرفة حول الثقافات المختلفة وتأثيرها على فهم القراءة، يمكن للمعلمين خلق بيئة تعليم لغة أكثر ترحيباً وإنتاجية.