

The Effect of Cultural Schematic Information on English Language Students Performance in Reading Comprehension Class

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Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of cultural schema and text content on EFL reading comprehension of English as a Foreign Language among undergraduate students. The research is applied to 120 second year students from the Departments of English, Colleges of Arts and Education, at the University of Basrah. The participants were equally distributed by institution and gender. That is, 60 students per college; 30 males and 30 females per group by using a quasi-experimental designed test combined with a descriptive questionnaire.

The experimental test involved two reading comprehension tasks that concentrated on the theme of elections; the first of which is embedded in an Iraqi cultural context, whereas the other in an American cultural context. Each text was followed by an assessment of 15 items in order to measure the depth of comprehension. The statistical analysis showed that the learners' preexisting cultural schema and background knowledge are significantly influence their reading performance. Additionally, the results indicated that independent variables, namely the place of residence, gender, and the period of internet and the consumption of television, had a serious part in shaping the students' access to the target culture knowledge. These results, moreover, suggest that the additional exposure and demographic factors are, specifically, instrumental in developing the cognitive schema which is necessary for effective second language reading comprehension.

Keywords: Schema Theory, Cultural Knowledge, University of Basra, EFL Reading Comprehension, Sociolinguistic Variables.

تأثير المعلومات المرجعية الثقافية على أداء طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في درس الاستيعاب

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الملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة تأثير المخطط الثقافي ومحتوى النص على فهم القراءة لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. طُبِّقَ البحث على ١٢٠ طالبًا من طلاب السنة الثانية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بكليات الآداب والتربية بجامعة البصرة. وُزِعَ المشاركون بالتساوي بين الكليات والجنس، بواقع ٦٠ طالبًا من كل كلية، ٣٠ ذكرًا و ٣٠ أنثى، باستخدام اختبار شبه تجريبي مُصمَّم بالتزامن مع استبيان وصفي.

تضمن الاختبار التجريبي مهمتين لفهم المقروء تركزان على موضوع الانتخابات؛ الأولى ضمن سياق ثقافي عراقي، والأخرى ضمن سياق ثقافي أمريكي. تلا كل نص تقييمًا من ١٥ فقرة لقياس عمق الفهم. أظهر التحليل الإحصائي أن المخطط الثقافي والمعرفة الخلفية لدى المتعلمين يؤثران بشكل كبير على أدائهم في القراءة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أشارت النتائج إلى أن المتغيرات المستقلة، كالجنس ومكان الإقامة ومدة استخدام الإنترنت والتلفزيون، كان لها دور هام في تحديد مدى إلمام الطلاب بمعرفة الثقافة المستهدفة. كما تُشير هذه النتائج إلى أن التعرض الإضافي والعوامل الديموغرافية تُسهم بشكل خاص في تطوير المخطط المعرفي اللازم لفهم القراءة الفعّال باللغة الثانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية المخططات المعرفية، المعرفة الثقافية، جامعة البصرة، فهم القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المتغيرات اللغوية الاجتماعية.

1- Introduction

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in learning the second and the foreign language, especially in academic contexts where students rely heavily on written information. Contemporary research in applied linguistics views reading as an interactive process that involves not only linguistic decoding but also the activation of prior knowledge and culturally ingrained schemas. Schema theory posits that readers construct meaning by integrating textual information with prior knowledge stored in cognitive structures, which significantly influences comprehension outcomes. (Sultan, 2003) .

In English as a Foreign Language context students are frequently exposed to texts laden with references, values, and cultural assumptions from the target culture. When this cultural knowledge is unfamiliar or inaccessible, comprehension can be hindered despite adequate language proficiency. This problem is exacerbated in foreign language settings, where students have limited exposure to the target culture outside the classroom. (Razi, 2006) and (Widdowson, 2008).

Although previous research has emphasized the importance of cultural schema in reading comprehension, English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction often prioritizes vocabulary and grammatical competence at the expense of cultural understanding. As a result, students may struggle to interpret authentic texts that reflect sociocultural realities beyond their immediate experience. This study seeks to address this deficiency by examining the effect of cultural schema and textual cultural content on EFL reading comprehension among Iraqi university students. (Zhang, 2008).

2- Theoretical Framework and literature Review

Schema theory provides the theoretical basis for understanding how readers process texts. It posits that comprehension occurs when readers activate relevant prior knowledge structures, enabling them to interpret and predict textual meaning. Cultural schemas, in particular, refer to culturally acquired knowledge that allows readers to understand the references, practices, and discursive conventions rooted in their culture. (Erten and Razi, 2009). Moreover, Nunnan (1999), states that “schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help us make sense of new experiences”.

Previous studies have shown that culturally familiar texts facilitate reading comprehension, while culturally unfamiliar content can increase cognitive load and hinder comprehension. Research conducted in both "English as a Second Language" and other "English as a Foreign Language" contexts has consistently demonstrated that students perform better when they read texts relevant to their cultural context or when cultural schemas are activated before reading..

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In a study by Savignon (1997), the results showed that the first step in developing a teaching program should be based on the learner's communicative needs and objectives, and on involving them as active participants in the interpretation, negotiation, and expression of meaning. Furthermore, it is believed that success in a communicative task" based on the learners' linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. In another study, Tseng (2002) demonstrated that communication involves sociolinguistic knowledge. Moreover, "language becomes an important element of the language classroom because cultural knowledge" underlies sociolinguistic competence.

Furthermore, a cross-cultural study by Pritchard (1987) clarified the relationship between cultural schemas, reading strategies, and reading comprehension. The students' performance showed that cultural schema has a clear impact on the "processing strategies" that the learners work on the platform of their achieved comprehension. The results also clarified the strategy categories identified in the current paper, it represent a potentially comprehensive framework for classifying the cognitive operations readers perform while trying to process the text .

A study by Byrnes (1991) emphasized the importance of helping students recognize the cultural frameworks associated with the phenomena they encounter. Byrnes noticed that "simulating the appropriate framework" of a second culture in the lecture theater specifically in class where the students are fenced by their native culture knowledge is not that simple job. Another study by Galloway (1992) offers numerous teaching suggestions related to this approach to cultural reading.

3- Problem of the Study

Many educators still prefer traditional and bottom-up processing in reading comprehension courses for foreign language learners. This approach ranks linguistic mechanics such as syntax, spelling, and vocabulary in return of the top-down dispensation, that influences a student's existing schemas and cultural background knowledge. Thus, with the rise of the communicative approach, language pedagogy has transitioned from using manufactured or simplified reading materials to utilizing reliable texts. These real world materials are valued for their ability to simulate genuine reading experiences and to increase the engagement and motivation of the student. However, authentic or reliable texts often contain dense cultural nuances that are foreign to the learner in spite of their benefits. This challenge is compounded by a tendency among instructors to avoid cultural instruction. According to Qawaasamia (2003), this avoidance comes mainly from two primary factors namely time constraints which simply indicates that teachers often feel the curriculum is too crowded to include cultural material.; and moreover, instructor confidence which involves that educators may

feel insecure about the depth of their own cultural knowledge as regarding the target language. Ultimately, it is notable that both the students and the teachers frequently misidentify reading as a purely linguistic exercise in grammar and vocabulary at the time the cultural information is vital for true text comprehension. However, this oversees a substantial research which suggests that cultural schemas basically influences both the understanding of the reader and the specific strategies which they employ when they navigate a text.

4- The Questions of the study

The main question that the current paper tried to raise is whether the schema of English department students influence their reading comprehension or not. This main question collect a group of sub-question to reach its objectives:

1. The impact of the hobbies of the learners on their performance in reading culture related text
2. The impact of the cultural information in the text on the comprehension of the learners as major students who are non-English.
3. The influence of the gender of students on their understanding and then on their performance in general and measuring gender effect in reading the Arabic texts vs. the English texts

5- Cultural Knowledge and Reading Comprehension

Savignon (1997) states that the main step of developing the teaching process or the class is to investigate the needs of communication of the learners and their aims, and the participation of the students as active and vital members in interpreting, dealing and expressing the meaning. Therefore, the achievement in a communicative job is based on the two competences of the students, namely the linguistic and sociolinguistic competences. This is fundamentally important in the situation of a foreign language because the students rarely have the opportunity to be involved in the target culture, which is only through reading textbooks and other materials that they come across in the class.

The matter of cultural schema or knowledge and its influence on reading comprehension has got an obvious attention from both instructors and researchers. Several studies have been conducted in this regard. First of all, Pritchard (1987) conducted a cross-cultural study that integrated cultural schemata and reading processing strategies in Palau in the United States. "Pritchard's work has shed light on the relationship among cultural schemata, reading strategies, and reading comprehension". The conclusion which he attained showed that cultural schemata have vast and important influence on the strategies processing the readers employ and the stage of comprehension they can reach.

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Another study was concerned and concentrated on the idea of schema was conducted by Pickens (1982). It was a cross-culture investigation of the relationship between cultural schemata on the one hand reading comprehension on the other. They showed that there were no huge dissimilarities in the speed of reading among the cultural-specific and non-cultural-specific texts by the students of Chicano and Navaho. Further, another result in such study showed that the cultural contextual knowledge is the vital context which relates with the text to reach at comprehension.

Byrnes (1991) highlighted the importance of helping students identify the cultural frameworks that accompany with the phenomena which they encounter.

The observation of the study indicated that "simulating the appropriate framework" of a second culture in a class in which the learners are surrounded by their native culture schema is difficult. Furthermore, the study argues that one must use texts as a vehicle for attaining intercultural understanding. The researcher proposes two ways to deal with the problem of the students' over-dependence on the native cultural frameworks when they interpret the target culture texts. First, instructors have to start with L2 texts that contain "target culture elements that are not far removed from students' own cultural experiences". Second, learners themselves can be stimulated to begin by learning foreign language texts that are alike in more or less points to their native culture or their own schema.

Erten and Razi (2009) further examined whether cultural familiarity influences story comprehension and whether adapting the story to the culture or using reading activities can compensate for a lack of such familiarity. Their study revealed a huge influence of cultural schema on the comprehension of language learners. The results showed that "cultural familiarity facilitates comprehension" and that its effect remains whole, in spite of the fact that the reading activities trigger schematic knowledge and progress in the "strategic reading behaviors".

Another significant study was done by Sultan (2003) who surveyed the influences of culturally-loaded texts on the reading comprehension of EFL learners. This study was directed to discover the outcome of the cultural schema of the target language on the resulting reading comprehension performance. The study contributors were from first level students in Polytechnic University in Palestine who contributed to a test of the reading comprehension which involved four reliable texts that are followed by ten multiple choice questions. The most substantial outcome of this study was observing the significant relationship between the learners general capacity in English language and their performance in all up the texts except only one which is not overloaded with the cultural information of the target language.

Bensoussan (2002) has done a study that surveyed the effects of defective schemata on reading comprehension. The study check the reading

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comprehension of 125 students who contributed in it. The researcher allowed for the students to use their dictionaries to translate the utterances they need to answer the comprehension questions by short answers in English language. The results exposed that a percentage of %24 of the mistaken answers to the questions of reading comprehension were brought forth by schemata that differed considerably from the real content of the text.

6- Methodology

6-1 Test Design

The present study was conducted to show language learners' cultural related schema and the cultural text impact on the reading comprehension of EFL performance among Iraqi students. The researcher operated an experimental project in this study. The participants of the experimental part were 120 second level students in both College of Arts and College of Education at Basrah University for the academic year 2023-2024. The specialization of the participants was English language. Regarding the gender, half of them were males and the others were females. The experimental part of the study aims at investigating the effects of cultural schema on realization and reading the texts which are full of the target culture in the class of reading comprehension for EFL learners. The study has only one dependent variable, it is the students' performance in the reading comprehension test. While that dependent variable is effected by the group of the independent ones, specifically, the factors that influence the access to cultural knowledge and hence, learners, schema like TV programs, internet usage, gender and foreign language proficiency.

The choice for these exact variables belongs to the researcher thoughts in their effect on the students' performance in general and their effect on the access to foreign culture issues. So two instruments for answering the study question were used; firstly an organized questionnaire or a reading comprehension test and interview . The questionnaire was form to be like an interview to figure out the participants hobbies, place of residency, language proficiency, hours of watching TV and internet usage. regarding the reading comprehension test, it consisted of two reading passages followed by multiple choice questions and short answers questions. The texts of the test included texts about Iraqi and American elections. Both the Iraqi and the American texts involved the same topic for neutralizing the conceivable influence of topic on the performance of the students and to integrate a sort of variation that could fit various students.

Mutually, the two texts applied in the present study fall under on the major interest which is political related text. Also, the test was made in a way to contain only one text to be related to the American culture and another text to deal with data about the native culture of the participants. The native texts were taken from Al-Rassid online site of newsletter and the Times news online American site.

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Both test are about similar topics in order to ensure the highest level of correspondence among the reading texts. Text 1, however, was about the elections of Iraq on 2021 whereas text 2 was about the elections of America on 2008.

6-2 Participants and the Procedures

The test and the questionnaire were detained in two different sessions. On the first day, a session was held in the first week of March 2024 in college of Arts at English Dept. and the subjects were asked to reply to the questionnaire which is organized as a written "interview" to collect information about the students, and then the students answered the "reading comprehension test" on the same day. Next week, the same test and questionnaire were conducted in the college of Education in the English department, also for second class students and for the same number of male and female participants.

The participants who participated in the current study were 120 students from both colleges of Arts and Education in Basrah University. All the participants' specializations are English language, and they were in second level. Regarding their gender, 30 participants were males, 30 of them were females in both colleges . The distribution of the sample regarding their gender is shown in the following table (1).

Gender	N	Percent %
Male (college of Arts)	30	25
Female (college of Arts)	30	25
Male (college of Education)	30	25
female (college of Education)	30	25
Total	120	100

Table (1): Sample Distribution according to Gender in both colleges

6-3 Data Design and Analysis

The study included one dependent variable, which is the students' performance in reading comprehension. The dependent variables that the study work on are influenced by a number of independent ones, the researcher focused on variables that affect the access to cultural information or knowledge and then effect language learners' schema like: gender, TV programmes, internet usage, and place of residency. The choice for these variables was due to the belief of the researcher that they may affect the students' interest in approaching the issues of foreign culture. Next, the researcher got to collect, summarize and synthesize the information that is supplied by all students in the organized questionnaire as the first step. The next step is the statistics which is rather descriptive statistics ; that is standard deviations and means. They were employed to inquire the possible influence of any of the independent variables specifically gender, internet and TV, the place of residence on the performance of the students' language in general in reading comprehension. Such influence is possibly described as indirect. These tests were done to see the direct influence of the above mentioned variables on reading both the Iraqi and the American texts. Since the current study covers a group of independent variables that differ in content, the researcher made a decision to display the details of the distribution of the sample according to such independent variables in the tables which follow. It is , however, worth mentioning that this information was obtained from the students through a organized questionnaire.

Table two below displays the classification of the subject according to their college. The participant or study sample as a person may notice was drawn from two colleges, specifically, college of Education and college of Arts at Basrah University, both of them were in the second level at English department. The sample was chosen equally from both colleges and from both genders to ensure adequacy and validity of the results.

College	No	Percentage %
Arts	60	50
Education	60	50
Total	120	100

Table No. (2). Distribution of the sample by college

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Table three below displays the distribution of the sample in accordance with the place of residence. Because of the different circumstances and life levels. The researcher sees that the location of residency could contain an ancillary influence on the participants' investigation or interest in the information that relates to culture. Obviously, the table displays that 61.8% of the participants who live in the city center of Basra province participated in the test. While the lowest percentage, which is 49.2% was for learners who live in areas that range between villages or city borders

Place of residency	No	Percentage %
City	79	61.8
Village	41	49.2
Total	120	100

Table No. (3). Distribution of the sample by place of residence

Another independent variables (can be seen in table 4 and 5 frequently) concerned about the hours that each participants spend in watching TV and in using internet, it also probed by answering one of the questions in the structured questionnaire. Collecting the information about these two variables was from the previous researchers' conviction information about culture in the situation of foreign language that possibly come from various sources which include watching contents of TV, sightseeing of internet, reading different creative writings and many other informal sources that may be available to the students.

Daily hours in TV watching	No	Percentage %
Less than 3	90	67.5
3-6	25	28.1
More than 6	5	3.4
Total	120	100

Table (4): Participants Distribution in terms of Daily Hours of Watching TV

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Daily usage of Internet	No	Percentage %
Less than 4	7	4.2
4-7	100	86.6
More than 7	13	8.02
Total no	120	100

Table (5). Distribution in terms of the hours in daily usage of the net

7- Results

The present study target is to identify the impact of schema knowledge and cultural information on EFL performance in reading comprehension sections.

Data of the paper were information taken from an organized questionnaire formed to be like an interview for collecting information about the participants and then followed by a reading comprehension test. The results and the scores were analysed statistically by using descriptive statistics and T-test. The aim behind T-test analysis is to measure the influence of participants' gender, TV watching hours, internet usage as variable effect the performance of students in reading comprehension performance. So the first question was (What is the impact of the gender of the participants on their performance in the reading comprehension test? Table 1, nevertheless, displays the outcomes of the t-test which was employed to assess the performance of the students on the reading test in regard to their gender.

Sub- scale.	Gender.	No.	Means.	Std. Deviation.	DF.	T-value.	Sig.
Iraqi election Texts	Male	30	46.83	13.14	122	-2.115	0.001
	Female	30	47.76	11.12			
American election texts	Male	30	56.12	12.87	122	-1.613	0.043
	Female	30	61.50	12.47			
Total Degree	Male	30	53.48	13.08	122	-1.820	0.003
	Female	30	60.13	12.51			

Table (6): Results of the t-test of students' performance from college of Arts in reading regarding gender

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Sub- Scale.	Gender..	No.	Mean..	Std.. Deviation.	DF.	T-Value.	Sig...
Iraqi election Texts	Male	30	53.22	11.67	122	-2.231	0.001
	Female	30	60.34	12.56			
American election texts	Male	30	48.17	12.48	122	-1.514	0.063
	Female	30	55.45	13.38			
Total Degree	Male	30	53.48	13.08	122	-1.720	0.003
	Female	30	60.13	12.51			

Table (7): Results of the t-test of students' performance from college of Education in reading according to gender

Tables 1 and 2 display that there is an obvious difference at point $\alpha = 0.03$ between the males and the females in their total performance in regard to the test of the reading comprehension. However, the score of the means of the males' shares is lower than the means of the females in the same test. Consequently, it can be said that this is an indication of this difference which reveals that the level of female participants in the comprehension of culturally loaded texts is evidently higher than the male participants.

On the other hand the second question was trying to figure out the impact of the place of residency of the participated students and measure its effect on their performance in comprehending culturally related texts. The scores and calculations of means and standard deviation measured this effect. The table below uncovers the statistical details of the performance of the participants in reading comprehension test along with their place of residency.

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Sub.-Scale.	Residency.	No.	Means.	Std.. Deviation..	DF.	T-Value.	Sig..
Iraq election Text	City	79	61.10	14.31	139	0.514	0.418
	Village	41	58.11	13.10			
American Election Texts	City	79	74.25	16.32	139	-0.618	0.369
	Village	41	61.45	10.93			
Total	City	79	68.21	15.22	139	0.023	0.974
	Village	41	68.14	12.67			

Table 8 : T-test, (means and typical deviations) for the participants' performance in the test in terms of their residency

The conclusion for the questionnaire and the reading tests scores expressed that statistically there is certain difference in the performance of the participants in reading comprehension test in the participants interaction with the topic of the two tests effected by their residency. It can be seen from the table above that city residents performed better in both of the study texts.

Accordingly, another research question explored the influence of the participants' interest in watching TV and the kind of programs they like to watch, in addition to their daily usage hours for internet. The aim behind these questions is to measure their impact on creating the schema that can enhance their performance in reading comprehension class. Means and typical deviations were used also to measure the answer for the above questions. Tables 9 and 10 revealed the means and typical deviations scores for the performance of the students in reading comprehension test in terms of their interest in daily watching of TV and usage hours for the internet.

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Sub.-Scale	Watching. TV.	No.	Means.	Std.. Deviation.
Iraqi Election Text	Less than 4	90	60.65	15.30
	4-7	25	66.30	14.66
	More than 7	5	54.11	9.36
American Election Text	Less than 4	90	64.36	11.55
	4-7	25	70.10	10.60
	More than 7	5	69.55	16.77
Totals.	Less than 4	90	64.66	13.40
	4-7	25	68.13	12.45
	More than 7	5	65.82	13.70

Table (10): Means and typical deviations of the daily hours in watching TV by the participants

Sub.-Scale.	Daily internet usage.	No.	Means.	Std. Deviation.
Iraqi election Text	Less than 4	7	53.33	14.50
	4-7	100	64.82	15.72
	More than 7	13	49.83	11.02
American Election Text	Less than 4	7	65.39	12.80
	4-7	100	70.31	11.58
	More than 7	13	59.52	10.30
Total Degree	Less than 4	7	63.39	13.97
	4-7	100	67.61	13.02
	More than 7	13	54.73	9.58

Table (11): Means and STD. for the daily usage of internet by the participants

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It can be noted from the above two tables namely (10 and 11) that the measurements of the means for the participated students who are watching TV Programmes for 4-7 hours is the highest across all of the other groups. It was clear also that their meaning is higher regarding the reading performance in dealing with the text related to the American elections. It is clear also in Table 11 the measurements for the means of the participants' daily usage for internet that range between 4-7 hours is the highest. The means of their performance in reading the American culturally loaded test is better than their performance in the Iraqi culturally loaded text. On the whole, the participants did better on Iraqi texts exclusively the two groups that employed the internet and watched TV for 4-7 hours.

The questions that the current paper raised in above have searched the impact of sources of culture related schema that involve the participants' gender, internet usage and so on, on their performance in reading comprehension. Then, the researcher works on finding out the effect of cultural matters inserted in the texts on the participants' achievements in reading comprehension class. Accordingly the raised question was (how does the cultural content of each text effect the performance of the reading comprehension among the participants). However, the table that follows will display the means and STD. scores for the students achievement in answering the tests and comprehending it. Table no (12) explains the students' accomplishment in the sub-scales of the study test as follows from the mean scores in the table below. The participants did their best in the passages which relate to the American culture with a mean of (63.55) in reading the text that relate to the American elections. on the other hand, the participants' mean in reading comprehension of the text about Iraqi election is (61.34).

Texts topic.	No.	Means.	Std. Deviation.
Text a (Iraqi elections)	120	61.34	14.18
Text b (American elections)	120	63.55	11.52
Total Degree	120	64.89	12.14

Table12: Means of the Students' Performance in the Two Reading Comprehension Tests

8- Discussion

The researcher tries to analyze and describe the results of the study performance and to combine them with earlier studies conducted in the area of reading comprehension connection and culture schema. The discussion will advance for the same questions raised in the previous sections. To start with the discussion of the results of the study, it shows firstly that the participants' residency has certain influence on their performance in reading comprehension scores across the two texts of the study. In other words, subjects' place of residency whether in the village or city center influenced their reading comprehension of the passages containing both American and Iraq culture. In fact, the participants who live in the center of the city performed better in the American election texts than in the Iraqi election texts. The researcher sees that this case may be attributed to the high average of free or available time and sort of the activities or sort of group-making that the students get involved in as a result of residing in the different areas. Furthermore, the researcher sees that the residency of the participants hold certain importance in the Iraqi context due to the influences on personal mobility and access to cultural information. In the current study, nevertheless, all the types of residents (either village or city) have done better in dealing with the American texts. These results can be clarified in light of the fact that with the availability of internet access and satellite TV channels, the majority of the students have access to similar or familiar internet materials and TV programs.

Another research question demonstrations the effect of each of the students' range of interest in TV watching and the use of the internet on their results in reading texts related to numerous kinds of cultural information. The results of this question display that the means of the students who watch TV between 3-6 hours is the maximum. This possibly refers to the fact that TV watching produces to them the chance to access a wide range of knowledge. This is due to the information collected through the questionnaire related to the sorts of programs which are viewed by students who are in favor of TV watching for other hobbies and free time activities that help them in the development of their language. The English programs they like to watch include news, talk shows, movies and TV series

Explaining such results is possibly not easy unless one keeps in consideration that when the learners read in English whatever the material is, they in fact read about other cultures rather than their own. The same observation was seen about the process of watching TV programs. Students like watching programs in L2 as part of their intention to strengthen their language, such programs may, in turn, be linked with the elements of the target culture. Moreover, it can be argued that when the students watch TV programs and visit internet sites which are related to their own culture, they use most of the time their mother language, i.e. Arabic,

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and thus they may lack the idiomatic expressions and lexical items that prepare them to read about such concerns in English.

TV channels is another rich source of cultural knowledge. It was figured out that the majority of students who participated in the current study watch many TV shows that are related to the American culture such as the doctors, the daily show, Dr. Oz and The Biggest Loser. Another factor which may possibly have influenced the performance of the students in reading these texts is the subject of each text. Students could have scored less in the Iraqi elections text because it was a somewhat unlovely topic if compared to the American text about elections, because they trust integrity in the American elections more than it in the Iraqi one, this may have influenced their total comprehension.

The findings of the question which deals with the gender of the participants exhibit that there is a substantial association between the gender of the subjects and reading comprehension in general. Additionally, there is a noticeable association between the gender of the subjects and their performance in the reading passages that are concerned with the native and the target cultures. However, the mean score of female students was notably higher than that of male students in the two texts.

The existing study outcomes could conceivably reflect certain social issues that the males in the Iraqi society participate in out-of-doors social events and they tend to join certain social groups more than females. Therefore, they devote less time learning and reading than females. Likewise, it can be said that it is due to their social obligations, the males can afford less time for internet use and TV watching. Economically, the male students are from time to time in charge of supporting their families financially for the reason of the hard circumstances of life. Consequently, many of them devote much time to make living rather than promoting their academic performance.

9- Conclusion and Suggestion

The conclusions that can be derived from the current study may be summarized in the following points:

- The results revealed the significant association between the place of residency of the subjects and their text-reading performance.
- Besides, another association existed indirectly between the scores of the participants in comprehension and their interest in watching TV shows of interviews, specifically of talk.
- There was a statistically substantial relationship between the students' belonging to the college of Arts or Education and their performance in reading culturally connected texts.
- There was a substantial relationship between the gender of the participants and their performance in reading both the Iraqi and the American texts. So there were substantial differences between males and females in terms of their performance in reading cultural texts.

So, it is pointed out that EFL teachers need to take into consideration the following points when teaching reading comprehension passages.

- Instructors should support their students to raise their awareness of the idea that reading is a highly interactive process.
- instructors have to stimulate learners' schemata when dealing with materials or topics that are unfamiliar to them in their native culture.
- A very essential matter to be taken into consideration by instructors is to help students to be more independent and self-directed readers.
- Instructors need to guide university students to have contact with the target culture texts as equally possible as their local ones through using different vocabulary and techniques.

Finally, future research may work wider on investigating the impact of background knowledge or schema and many other factors such as TV program-watching and the use of the internet social application on promoting their performance in reading comprehension class of EFL learners at different levels. Besides, future research needs to study many essential subjects concerning teaching culture matters and reading cultural specific texts, as the best income to read culture oriented texts, and the best methods for inspiring students to expose themselves more to the target culture.

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