

# THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL SCHEMA AND READING ACTIVITIES ON READING COMPREHENSION

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension. It was carried out at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at the department of ELT through a 2X2 true-experimental research design where the participants were homogenously placed in different groups according to their GPAs. The first group were given the original story while the second group were given the nativized one. To find out the effect of reading activities on the comprehension of nativized and original stories, the third group read the original story with reading activities while the fourth group read the nativized story with the same activities. Post-tests were administered. ANOVA test indicated that the treatment groups who received the nativized version of the story, regardless of whether they received any activities or not, outperformed the other two treatment groups who received the original story. This implied that cultural schema appears to have a significant effect on the comprehension of short stories. Nevertheless, the treatment groups who were supported with reading activities outperformed the others who did not do any activities, which indicated that the lack of cultural knowledge can be compensated for through the use of reading activities.*

## INTRODUCTION

The paper starts with a brief discussion of some basic literature concerning the definition of reading, the reading process, and also reading activities. Later on, short-term memory will be defined and its effect on reading comprehension will be discussed. Nevertheless, the notion of schema will be followed by its effects on reading comprehension. Then the paper introduces a study that investigates the effects of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension. Finally, the findings of the study will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn.

### 1. THE DEFINITION OF READING

Being defined as the most important academic language skill (Carrell 1988a; Grabe and Stoller 2001), Richards and Renandya (2002: 273) point out the special focus that reading receives in foreign language teaching. To them, there are two important reasons for this. "First, many foreign language students often have reading as one of their most important goals". Second, various pedagogical purposes served by written texts help reading to receive this special focus.

Although there have been a number of definitions of reading, it is not so easy to define it just in a single sentence. For example, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 9) define reading as "... the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately".

Nunan (1999) questions why people read and he lists the things that he reads in an ordinary day. According to the list, he argues that he reads different things with different aims; so he uses different strategies for different tasks. For example, reading a label on a bottle of wine does not require the same strategies as reading academic texts.

## **2. READING PROCESS**

Harmer (2001) states that a reader uses a variety of clues to understand what the writer is implying or suggesting, in that way the reader is able to see beyond the literal meaning of the words. *Schema*, which is defined as background knowledge that enables the reader to make predictions for more successful interactions, plays a vital role in that interpretation since successful interpretation depends to a large extent on shared schemata.

According to Chastain (1988), the reading process means an active cognitive system operating on printed material in order to comprehend the text. He states that during the writing process, the writer tries to activate background and linguistic knowledge to create meaning; and then the reader's task is to activate background and linguistic knowledge to recreate the writer's intended meaning. Then the reader should go beyond the printed material to get the writer's intended meaning.

Goodman (1988: 11) mentions two views on reading. The first view accepts reading as "...matching sounds to letters", whereas the second view defines it as a mystery, that "nobody knows how reading works". MacLeish (1968: 43) proposes that "[t]he readers of all written languages are "getting" sounds from the printed page". He describes a writer as one who encodes meaning to sound. It does not matter whether encoding is oral or silent; encoding then is carried on from sound to orthography. He describes a reader as one who first decodes from orthography to sound (oral or silent) and later on from sound to meaning.

## **3. METAPHORICAL MODELS OF READING**

Wallace (2001) discusses the development of reading models and examines the role given to the reader in these models. According to her, the role of the reader changed in the 1980s and 1990s. Reading was accepted as a *passive* skill in early accounts, then the role of the reader changed and was "...typically described as 'extracting' meaning from a text" (Wallace 2001: 22). Lately, reading has started to be described as *interactive* rather than simply being *active*. Wallace defines the bottom-up model reader as passive, the top-down model reader as active, and interactive model reader as interactive.

Samuels and Kamil (1988) point out that the history of reading research starts with Javal's (1879) paper on eye movements. However, they claim that until the mid 1950s and 1960s, no serious attempts were observed to build any explicit models of reading. The authors maintain that the development of reading models accelerated after the 1960s.

Metaphorical models of reading include bottom-up, top-down, and interactive processes (Grabe and Stoller 2002).

### **3.1 BOTTOM-UP MODELS**

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), the reader goes through a mechanical pattern by creating a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text (Anderson 1999) where the interaction between the reader and the text includes little or no inference from the reader's own background knowledge. Anderson states that, in this piece-by-piece mental translation process, the reader is expected to recognise letters at first, then recognise the words, and in the end the reader gets the meaning intended by the writer by combining the words that the reader recognised earlier. In other words, the bottom-up process of reading is defined as a serial model where the reader begins with the printed word, recognises graphics stimuli, decodes them to sound, recognises words, and decodes meanings (Paran 1997; Alderson 2000).

### **3.2 TOP-DOWN MODELS**

Contrary to bottom-up models, in top-down models the reader is expected to bring her background knowledge to the text. Grabe and Stoller (2002) stress that top-down models

assume that reading is primarily directed by reader goals and expectations, that is why top-down models characterise the reader as someone who has a set of expectations about the text information and samples enough information from the text to confirm or reject these expectations.

Top-down approaches emphasise the importance of schemata, and the reader's contribution, to the incoming text (Alderson 2000). Schema theory deals with what readers bring to the text they read and schema plays an important role in bottom-up processes. Schema theory attempts to describe the efficiency of prior knowledge. It is thought that prior knowledge of the readers affects their comprehension of the text. Alderson defines schemata as interlocking mental structures representing readers' knowledge.

Eskey (1988) points out the limitations of top-down models. According to him, top-down models require the prediction of meaning by using context clues and combining them with background knowledge. However, this model is valid for skilful and fluent readers who are autonomous at reading, so the model does not work well with less proficient readers.

### **3.3 INTERACTIVE MODELS**

The criticism against bottom-up and top-down models led the theorists to develop a new approach: the interactive model. Interactive models combine elements of both bottom-up and top-down models (Anderson 1999). In interactive models, the reader needs to be fast in order to recognise the letters. This is similar to what the readers do in top-down models in order to skim a text for the main idea. Not only should the word recognition be fast, but also efficient.

The difference between top-down and bottom-up models is exemplified by Harmer (2001). The former is described as looking at a forest or looking down on something from above, while the latter is described as studying the individual trees in a forest or trying to understand where a person is by being in the middle of something.

Eskey and Grabe (1988) state that many researchers attempt to contrast the two approaches and try to persuade others whether the true starting point for the reading process is bottom-up or top-down. They state Parry's (1987) comment in which reading as a bottom-up process is seen the reader's perception of graphemes, words, sentences, paragraphs and so on; and on the other hand as a top-down process, the reader has a scheme or general idea before starting to read derived from previous experience.

## **4. READING ACTIVITIES**

Since schema theory requires schema activation or background knowledge support before starting to read in order to comprehend the text better, reading activities (especially pre-reading activities) play a vital role in schema theory reading models (Chen and Graves 1995; Demiriz 1998). Karakas (2002) states that reading activities try to prevent failure so that they can support the reader's interpretation of the text. Reading activities are usually subcategorised as *pre-reading*, *while-reading*, and *post-reading* activities (Ur 1996).

### **4.1 PRE-READING ACTIVITIES**

Schema theory research provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of pre-reading activities that include both providing the outline for reading the text and teaching cultural key concepts. According to Chastain (1988), pre-reading activities motivate readers to read the text and when they are motivated – prepared for the reading activity – they complete the activity better and with less effort and are eager to participate in the activity since they have gained confidence. Lewin (1984) recommends that language teachers – like other course teachers – should encourage learners to evaluate what they read. Pre-reading activities may help the teacher to facilitate this.

If the readers do not have sufficient background knowledge then the teacher should provide them with at least some background knowledge. Activating readers' prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read may help students' comprehension (Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Grabe 1991; Ur 1996). Ur also argues that tasks make the activity more interesting since the readers have a purpose in reading and also the reading teacher may see how well the text is understood with the help of tasks given before and/or after reading.

#### **4.2 WHILE-READING ACTIVITIES**

Hyland (1990), Nunan (1999) and Brown (2001) discuss scanning and skimming activities. According to Brown, skimming and scanning are thought to be the most valuable reading strategies. Through skimming, a reader is able to predict the purpose of the passage, and gets the writer's message (Flowerdew and Peacock 2001). In this way readers are asked to predict the whole text, though they do not read all of it. On the other hand, Brown proposes that readers scan to get specific information in a text, such as names, dates, etc. Similarly, Alderson (2000) proposes that skimming is a metacognitive skill that is used by good readers. Bachman and Cohen (1998) and Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) also state that skimming allows readers to read for general understanding. Scanning and skimming work better if they are supported with evaluation activities (Karakas 2002).

Hyland (1990) states that, through surveying, the reader previews the text content and organisation where she uses referencing and non-text material. Basically, it aims to make a quick check of the relevant extra-text categories such as; referencing data, graphical data, and typographical data.

Karakas (2002) proposes that readers better comprehend if they are asked to state their ideas about the topic of the text and then evaluate it with their friends in the class and the activities *reciprocal teaching*, *evaluating*, *inferring* and *re-reading* provide a dialogue between the reader and the writer while the activities *scanning*, *skimming* and *clarifying* draw a clear mental picture for the reader.

#### **4.3 POST-READING ACTIVITIES**

According to Chastain (1988), post-reading activities help readers to clarify any unclear meaning where the focus is on the meaning not on the grammatical or lexical aspects of the text. Ur (1996) discusses *summarize* as a kind of post-reading activity where the readers are asked to summarise the content in a sentence or two. It is also possible to give this post-reading activity in the mother tongue. Karakas (2002) proposes that the readers interpret the text and illustrate the relationship between the questions and their answers by using activities such as *summarising*, *question and answer*, and *drawing conclusions* and it is possible to catch the missing parts of the mental picture through *thinking aloud*, *discussion* and *summarising*.

### **5. SHORT-TERM MEMORY (STM)**

Cook (1991: 49) discusses the processes in using second languages and he defines short-term memory as "...the memory used for keeping information for periods of time up to a few seconds". Since the capacity of short-term memory is limited (Miller 1956) a person can remember seven or eight digits in his mother tongue and fewer than that in a foreign language.

Erten (1998: 28) discusses the distinction between controlled and automatic processes and concludes that "[l]earners use controlled processes when they are not familiar with the new information or when they do not have any previous knowledge that is related to the new". It is just the opposite for automatic processes where learners are familiar and do not require too much mental effort. "By practice and frequent exposure, learners develop

automatic processes which free up space in their short term memory for new tasks” (Erten 1998: 29).

The concept of memory is closely related to the process of reading. Grabe and Stoller (2002) outline two relationships between our memory and reading. Firstly, reading involves various processes carried out simultaneously. Readers not only recognise words very rapidly and keep them active in their working memories, but also they analyse the structure of sentences. Analysing skills are determined as assembling “... the most logical clause-level meanings, building a main-idea model of text comprehension in our heads, monitoring comprehension and so on” (Grabe and Stoller 2002: 18). That is why general comprehension is accepted as taking a long time to master; since combining these skills in an efficient manner affects comprehension. The second reason for this interactive process is the interaction of the reader’s activated background knowledge with linguistic information from the text. The reader’s background knowledge exists in her long-term memory; and the interpretation essentially requires both linguistic and background knowledge.

## **6. SCHEMA THEORY**

Schema theory deals with the reading process, where readers are expected to combine their previous experiences with the text they are reading. Since each reader has different background knowledge, it is culture specific. Schema theory was developed by the gestalt psychologist Bartlett “...who observed how people, when asked to repeat a story from memory, filled in details which did not occur in the original but conformed to their cultural norms” (Cook 1997: 86).

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) formalise the role of background knowledge in language comprehension as schema theory, and claim that any text either spoken or written does not itself carry meaning. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983: 556) claim that “... a text only provides directions for... readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge.”

The very important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension is noted by Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) and Anderson (1999), that a reader’s comprehension depends on her ability to relate the information that she gets from the text with her pre-existing background knowledge.

### **6.1 SCHEMA**

Background knowledge – also prior knowledge – is supposed to consist of two main components: “our assimilated direct experiences of life and its manifold activities, and our assimilated verbal experiences and encounters” (Swales 1990: 83).

Schemata are accepted as interlocking mental structures representing readers’ knowledge (Perkins 1983; Zaher 1987; Anderson and Pearson 1988; Cook 1997; Alderson 2000; Brown 2001; Harmer 2001) of ordinary events (Nassaji 2002). In the reading process, readers integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing schemata (Nuttall 1996; Wallace 2001). Not only do schemata influence how they recognise information, but also how they store it. According to Harmer (2001), only after the schema is activated is one able to see or hear, because it fits into patterns that she already knows. The notion of schema is related with the organisation of information in the long-term memory that cognitive constructs allow (Singhal 1998).

### **6.2 SCHEMA TYPES**

Many reading researchers intend to subcategorise the term *schema*, with the most popular categorisation being the distinction between *formal* and *content* schema. Nevertheless, there is no single categorisation for schema.

In order to understand the impact of background knowledge on reading comprehension, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), Carrell (1987; 1988b) and Alderson (2000) draw a distinction between schemata types. By *formal schema*, they point to background knowledge relating to the formal and rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts. Carrell (1985) says reading comprehension is affected by the reader's formal schemata interacting with the rhetorical organisation of a text.

*Content schema* is defined as background knowledge of the content area of the text that a reader brings to a text (Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Carrell 1987; Alptekin 1993; 2002; 2003; Singhal 1998; Stott 2001) such as knowledge about people, the world, culture, and the universe (Brown 2001). Carrell and Eisterhold propose that appropriate content schema is accessed through textual cues. According to Alderson (2000), readers need knowledge about the content of the passage to be able to understand it.

Yule (1996: 87) points out that *cultural schemata* are developed "...in the context of our basic experiences". Bedir (1992: 8) mentions cultural schemata and he defines it as "...the background knowledge about cultural aspects of the language being learned..." Ozyaka (2001) defines cultural schema as culture-specific world knowledge. To comprehend a text, appropriate culture schemata and scripts are considered to be necessary.

## 7. TEACHING CULTURE

Chastain (1988) and Brown (2000) define culture as a way of life that characterises a group of people in a given period of time according to their ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools.

Recently, McKay (2003) discusses the cultural basis of teaching English. McKay states that the growing number of non-native speakers of English makes this language distinct and that results in teaching English in a multilingual context since non-native speakers have no desire to learn the culture of native speakers. That is also similar to what Alptekin (1981) proposes. Becoming an international language has made English denationalised.

Alptekin (2002; 2003) discusses the necessity of teaching culture for EFL learners. He proposes that if it were not English but any other language in the world, then it would be possible to teach the culture with the language; but that is not the same for English as it is a global language. The language of Bulgaria belongs to Bulgarian, the language of Dutch belongs to the Netherlands; but the language of English does not belong to Britain any more. It has more non-native speakers than it has native ones. Alptekin concludes that teaching English culture is not possible since whose culture is going to be taught is not clear.

## 8. THE STUDY

### 8.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to discover the effects of both cultural schema and reading activities on the comprehension of short stories. The research questions and the hypotheses are as follows.

**RQ1-** *Does cultural familiarity of the participants affect reading comprehension?*

**RQ2-** *Do pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities affect reading comprehension?*

**RQ3-** *Can reading activities make up for the lack of cultural schema (cultural familiarity)?*

**H<sub>1</sub>-** *Cultural familiarity will have a significant impact on reading comprehension.*

**H<sub>2</sub>-** *Pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities will have a less significant effect than the effect that cultural familiarity will have.*

**H<sub>3</sub>-** *Although reading activities contribute to comprehension, the impact of cultural familiarity will remain a significant factor.*

## 8.2 SETTING

The study was conducted in English Language Teaching Department at the Faculty of Education in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The study was carried out during the fall semester of the 2003-2004 Academic Year.

## 8.3 PARTICIPANTS

A total of 60 third year students of the ELT department participated in the study. The students were assigned according to their cumulative GPAs at the end of their fourth term in the department to four random groups so as to create a 2X2 true experimental research design.

Students' cumulative GPAs were calculated by taking account of only English-based courses and English-medium teacher training courses. To do this, marks gained by each student from courses were multiplied by the number of credits of the course and then the sum of multiplied course loadings was divided by the total number of credits earned by the participants. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who had failed any English-based courses were ignored and left out of the study.

Table 1 shows the details of the courses that were taken into consideration while calculating the participants' GPAs.

*Table 1: Courses taken into consideration while calculating participants' GPA*

| Name of the course                    | Credits   | Year | Semester |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| Grammar I                             | 3         | 1    | Fall     |
| Speaking Skills I                     | 3         | 1    | Fall     |
| Reading Skills I                      | 3         | 1    | Fall     |
| Writing Skills I                      | 3         | 1    | Fall     |
| Grammar II                            | 3         | 1    | Spring   |
| Speaking Skills II                    | 3         | 1    | Spring   |
| Reading Skills II                     | 3         | 1    | Spring   |
| Writing Skills II                     | 3         | 1    | Spring   |
| Elective I: Phonetics                 | 2         | 1    | Spring   |
| Advanced Reading Skills               | 3         | 2    | Fall     |
| Introduction to English Literature I  | 3         | 2    | Fall     |
| Language Acquisition                  | 3         | 2    | Fall     |
| Advanced Writing Skills               | 3         | 2    | Spring   |
| Introduction to English Literature II | 3         | 2    | Spring   |
| Approaches for Language Teaching      | 3         | 2    | Spring   |
| Linguistics I                         | 3         | 2    | Spring   |
| <b>Total Credits</b>                  | <b>47</b> |      |          |

Table 2 shows the range of marks at the department. According to the table if any student gets 'FF' or 'FD' she fails. If she gets 'DD' or 'DC' she passes but she is recommended to retake it.

*Table 2: Range of marks*

| Points | Equivalence | Mark | Result           |
|--------|-------------|------|------------------|
| 90-100 | AA          | 4.00 | Successful       |
| 85-89  | BA          | 3.50 | Successful       |
| 80-84  | BB          | 3.00 | Successful       |
| 70-79  | CB          | 2.50 | Successful       |
| 60-69  | CC          | 2.00 | Successful       |
| 55-59  | DC          | 1.50 | Conditional pass |
| 50-54  | DD          | 1.00 | Conditional pass |
| 40-49  | FD          | 0.50 | Fail             |
| 0-39   | FF          | 0.00 | Fail             |

Once the Cumulative GPAs were calculated, the GPAs were grouped into 16 ranges as illustrated in Table 3. However, there were no students in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> groups.

*Table 3: Ranges of GPAs*

| Groups | Ranges      |
|--------|-------------|
| 1      | 4.00 – 3.75 |
| 2      | 3.74 – 3.50 |
| 3      | 3.49 – 3.25 |
| 4      | 3.24 – 3.00 |
| 5      | 2.99 – 2.75 |
| 6      | 2.74 – 2.50 |
| 7      | 2.49 – 2.25 |
| 8      | 2.24 – 2.00 |
| 9      | 1.99 – 1.75 |
| 10     | 1.74 – 1.50 |
| 11     | 1.49 – 1.25 |
| 12     | 1.24 – 1.00 |
| 13     | 0.99 – 0.75 |
| 14     | 0.74 – 0.50 |
| 15     | 0.49 – 0.25 |
| 16     | 0.24 – 0.00 |

Finally, fifteen students from each range of GPAs were assigned to different groups so as to form homogenous groups that were labelled as **Treatment 1** (Original no activity-ONA), **Treatment 2** (Original with activity- OWA), **Treatment 3** (Adjusted no activity-ANA), and **Treatment 4** (Adjusted with activity- AWA). Table 4 shows the mean GPA values for each treatment group.

*Table 4: Scheffe Test Homogeneous Subsets*

| Name of the Group      | Mean Value (GPA) | n  |
|------------------------|------------------|----|
| Original no activity   | 2,3333           | 15 |
| Original with activity | 2,3416           | 15 |
| Adjusted no activity   | 2,3621           | 15 |
| Adjusted with activity | 2,3484           | 15 |

An ANOVA test indicated no significant differences between the treatment groups ( $p < .05$ ). So the average language proficiency of the participants in each group was considered to be almost the same. That was important in processing the study to see the cause and effect relationship.

*Table 5: Post-hoc Scheffe Test – mean (GPA) differences between groups*

| (I) Condition | (J) Condition | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig.  |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|-------|
| OWA           | AWA           | -6,81818E-03    | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ONA           | 8,3333E-03      | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ANA           | -2,04545E-02    | ,12679     | ,999  |
| AWA           | OWA           | 6,8182E-03      | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ONA           | 1,5152E-02      | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ANA           | -1,36364E-02    | ,12679     | 1,000 |
| ONA           | OWA           | -8,33333E-03    | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | AWA           | -1,51515E-02    | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ANA           | -2,87879E-02    | ,12679     | ,997  |
| ANA           | OWA           | 2,0455E-02      | ,12679     | ,999  |
|               | AWA           | 1,3636E-02      | ,12679     | 1,000 |
|               | ONA           | 2,8788E-02      | ,12679     | ,997  |

## 8.4 MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTATION

### 8.4.1 THE READING TEXT AND NATIVIZATION

*Figure 1: Differences between the stories*

| ORIGINAL SHORT STORY   | NATIVIZED SHORT STORY  |
|--|--|
| <b>CHARACTERS</b>  |  |
| Michael (Mike) Loomis  | Coskun Umutlu  |
| Frances  | Ozlem  |
| The Stevensons   | Nalan & Tarik  |
| A little Japanese waiter   | A beautiful teenager waiter  |
| <b>THE CITY</b>  |  |
| New York / City of New York / State of New York  | Canakkale / City of Canakkale / City of Canakkale                                      |
| Alice Maxwell' house   | Tarik Uyanık's house   |
| Fifth Avenue   | Kordonboyu   |
| The Brevoort   | Bariskent  |
| Washington Square  | Republic Square  |
| Eighth Street  | Golf Tea Garden / Republic Square  |
| Ohio   | Erzurum  |
| Into the country   | Into Guzelyalı   |
| Town   | City   |
| Football game  | Basketball game – Turkey championship of women   |
| Helping her over curbstones and  | -----  |
| Cavanagh's   | Albatros Fish Restaurant   |
| Subways  | Ferries  |
| On the east side of the street   | Along sea side of the street   |
| Between Fiftieth and Fifty-seventh streets   | Between Bariskent and Kordonboyu   |
| Girls on Forty-fourth Street at lunchtime  | Girls at Kucumen at lunchtime  |
| Actresses  | University students  |
| Italian men in their Sunday clothes and the young women with Scotties in Washington Square Park        | ANZAC tourists jogging along Kordonboyu  |
| Outside Sardi's, waiting for producers to look at them   | Outside Lodos Disco, trying to forget all about lessons                                |
| In Macy's  | At Gima  |
| Flirting with you over socks and books and phonograph needles  | Flirting with you over socks and dried fruits and cakes                                |
| Theaters   | Cinemas  |
| <b>CULTURE</b>   |  |
| Rolls and coffee   | Simit and tea  |
| An extra five pounds of husband  | An extra several kilos of husband  |
| Drinking their / our Scotch  | Drinking their / our raki  |
| The Giants   | Fenerbahce   |
| A steak as big as a blacksmith's apron   | A fish as big as a man's arm   |
| A bottle of wine   | A big bottle of raki   |
| A new French picture at the Filmarte   | A new Turkish picture – O Simdi Asker – at the AFM                                     |
| Subway excavations   | Flying seagulls  |
| Tackle each other  | Defend each other  |
| They make divots   | They move so fast  |
| Furs   | Leathers   |
| Hats / forty-five dollar hats  | Boots / expensive boots  |
| Pretzels   | Pistachio nuts   |
| Brandy / Courvoisier   | Beer   |
| Drank a little water   | Had some pistachio nuts  |
| Million wonderful women  | Thousands of wonderful women   |
| The Jewish girls, the Italian girls, the Irish, Polack, Chinese, German, Negro, Spanish, Russian girls | The Turkish girls from different cities, from İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Antalya, Manisa |
| At three o'clock   | At five o'clock  |
| <b>MODERNISATION</b>   |  |
| Phonograph   | Computer   |
| -----  | Took her mobile phone  |
| Toward the telephone   | Towards the door to make a call in a silent way  |

The short story ‘The Girls in their Summer Dresses’ by Irwin Shaw (see references) was chosen for ‘Turkification’ (Alptekin 2002). The short story was about a couple trying to take a Sunday off in the city of New York. The story was nativized for research purposes in a way that the story takes place in the city of Canakkale.

During the nativization period, the names of the characters were changed to Turkish names; attention was paid while adopting the city plan of New York to Canakkale. All the names of the places, streets, and buildings had to make sense in readers’ minds in order to activate their schemata about the city of Canakkale. However, the names of the places and the sequence of actions had to conform to the original story. For example, in the original story the couple leaves the Brevoort and starts walking towards Washington Square along Fifth Avenue. In the adjusted story, the couple leaves Bariskent and starts walking towards Republic Square along Kordonboyu.

Apart from these changes, some conceptual cues had to be changed, too, in order to complete the nativization process. So in the nativized story, the characters planned to eat fish instead of steak. Also, the short story had to be modernised in order to make nativization possible. While Michael talks about phonographs in the original story, Coskun talks about computers in the nativized one. Ozlem uses her mobile phone in the nativized story where Frances uses the public phone in the bar in the original story. Figure 1 demonstrates the main differences between the original and the nativized versions of the story.

#### 8.4.2 POST-TEST

A recall type post-test was administered at the end of the reading session. The post-test was also written for the two different versions of the story: nativized and original version. The post-test included three different elicitation techniques. The first group of questions included True/false/not given. The second group of questions involved putting some scrambled actions into correct order. Finally, some open-ended pen and paper type of comprehension questions were used as the third set of questions. Students were not allowed to refer to the reading text during the post-test period. Nor were they allowed to use their dictionaries. A pre-test was not used because the students had not read the story before the experiment.

#### 8.5 PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Figure 2: Procedures for each group of students ("=minute)

| TREATMENT 1<br>ONA                                   | TREATMENT 2<br>OWA  | TREATMENT 3<br>ANA                                   | TREATMENT 4<br>AWA  |
|--|---|--|---|
| The original text was given without activities (40") | <i>Pre-reading activities:</i><br>Brainstorming (2")<br>Pre-questioning (2")<br><i>Reading the story</i> (25")<br><i>While-reading activities:</i><br>Scanning (1")<br>Skimming (1")<br>Clarifying (2")<br>Reciprocal teaching (1")<br>Inferring (2")<br><i>Post-reading activities:</i><br>Thinking aloud (2")<br>Question / Answer Relationships (2") | The adjusted text was given without activities (40") | <i>Pre-reading activities:</i><br>Brainstorming (2")<br>Pre-questioning (2")<br><i>Reading the story</i> (25")<br><i>While-reading activities:</i><br>Scanning (1")<br>Skimming (1")<br>Clarifying (2")<br>Reciprocal teaching (1")<br>Inferring (2")<br><i>Post-reading activities:</i><br>Thinking aloud (2")<br>Question / Answer Relationships (2") |
| Post-test given (15")                                | Post-test given (15")   | Post-test given (15")                                | Post-test given (15")   |
| Total 55"  | Total 55"   | Total 55"  | Total 55"   |

Different groups of students were given different treatments. The second and the fourth treatment groups were provided with reading activities whereas the first and the third treatment groups were exposed to silent individual reading. Figure 2 illustrates the lesson plans followed with each group of students.

## 8.6 PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

### 8.6.1 MARKING THE PAPERS

The open-ended question part of the students' post-tests was marked by two independent raters who rated papers only for comprehension and ignored grammatical mistakes.

### 8.6.2 INTER-RATER RELIABILITY

Marks given to student papers by the raters were analysed through Pearson Correlation Coefficient Procedure. A high correlation coefficient was found between the two sets of marks ( $r: .807$  and  $p < .01$ ), which was considered to be consistent enough to proceed to further statistical analysis.

### 8.6.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Post-test scores of the participants were analysed by using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure on SPSS to find out any between-group differences.

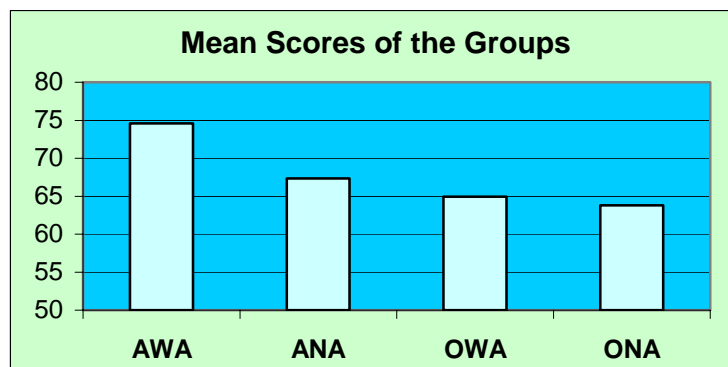
## 8.7 FINDINGS

Results of a *One-Way ANOVA test* for the study supported hypotheses. Table 6 illustrates the mean scores gained by each group in the study. As can be seen in the table, the participants who read the adjusted short story with reading activities scored higher than the other groups and outperformed them. The participants who read the adjusted short story without reading activities scored higher than those who read the original short story both with and without reading activities and the ANA group outperformed the other two groups who read the original short story, regardless of reading activities. Figure 3 demonstrates the scores gained by each group.

Table 6: Mean scores gained by treatment groups

| CONDITION | Mean  | N  | Std. Deviation |
|-----------|-------|----|----------------|
| AWA       | 74,60 | 15 | 8,16           |
| ANA       | 67,33 | 15 | 12,18          |
| OWA       | 64,93 | 15 | 12,23          |
| ONA       | 63,80 | 15 | 7,19           |
| TOTAL     | 67,67 | 60 | 10,80          |

Figure 3: Post-test mean scores of groups



As Table 6 indicates and Figure 3 demonstrates, there are some differences among the mean values of the groups gained in the study. Table 7 indicates statistically significant differences between groups where  $p < .05$ . The results of One-Way ANOVA Test point out that the mean values of the treatment groups gained in the study are not the same.

*Table 7: One-Way ANOVA Test Results*

| Dependent Variable |                | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.        |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------------|
| Post-Test Score    | Between Groups | 1059,067       | 3  | 353,022     | 3,392 | <b>,024</b> |
|                    | Within Groups  | 5828,267       | 56 | 104,076     |       |             |
|                    | Total          | 6887,333       | 59 |             |       |             |

As is seen in Table 8, there is a significant difference between AWA and ONA groups where  $p < .05$ . Also there is a difference between AWA and OWA groups and the difference between them is slightly insignificant where  $p > .05$  and  $p < .1$ . There are also differences between the mean values of AWA and ANA, ANA and OWA, ANA and ONA, and OWA and ONA groups; but they are not statistically significant differences since  $p > .05$ .

*Table 8: Post Hoc Scheffe test for the total score of the post-test*

| Dependent Variable | Condition (I) | Condition (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.        |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|
| TOTAL              | OWA           | AWA           | -9,67                 | 3,73       | ,093        |
|                    |               | ONA           | 1,13                  | 3,73       | ,993        |
|                    |               | ANA           | -2,40                 | 3,73       | ,937        |
|                    | AWA           | OWA           | 9,67                  | 3,73       | ,093        |
|                    |               | ONA           | 10,80                 | 3,73       | <b>,048</b> |
|                    |               | ANA           | 7,27                  | 3,73       | ,294        |
|                    | ONA           | OWA           | -1,13                 | 3,73       | ,993        |
|                    |               | AWA           | -10,80                | 3,73       | <b>,048</b> |
|                    |               | ANA           | -3,53                 | 3,73       | ,825        |
|                    | ANA           | OWA           | 2,40                  | 3,73       | ,937        |
|                    |               | AWA           | -7,27                 | 3,73       | ,294        |
|                    |               | ONA           | 3,53                  | 3,73       | ,825        |

## 8.8 DISCUSSION

### 8.8.1 RQ1

Cultural familiarization of the text has a significant effect on reading comprehension. Readers are expected to achieve the writer's intended meaning by combining existing information with what they read (Nuttall 1996; Chastain 1988; Eskey 1988; Anderson 1999; Alderson 2000; Wallace 2001; Grabe and Stoller 2002; Nassaji 2002). Readers are thought to engage in three metaphorical models of reading (Grabe and Stoller 2002). The familiarization of the names of people and places in the short story contributed to schema activation of the readers (Ozyaka 2001; Alptekin 2002; 2003). The readers who read the nativized version also did not have to deal with unfamiliar names in it and this resulted in better comprehension since they could process new input in their short-term memory. So original text readers in this study used controlled processes that required greater effort. On the other hand, nativized text readers used automatic processes since they were familiar with the new information and that would make it possible for them to free up space in their short-term memory (Erten 1998).

### 8.8.2 RQ2

Reading activities do have an effect on reading comprehension. The participants who read the nativized short story with reading activities outperformed the participants who read

the nativized short story without reading activities and also the participants who read the original short story with reading activities outperformed the participants who read the original short story without reading activities; because pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities helped these two groups of readers for better comprehension. This was in line with statements by Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), Lewin (1984), Chastain (1988), Ur (1996), and Karakas (2002). Pre-reading activities made it possible to give background knowledge about the short story and also to activate readers' schemata before reading. While-reading activities also contributed to the comprehension of the short stories. Post-reading activities helped them to clarify any unclear meaning (Chastain 1988).

### 8.8.3 RQ3

Reading activities have an impact on reading comprehension and they can make up for the lack of cultural familiarity. Reading teachers can activate readers' schemata by pre-reading activities. Schema activation is possible if readers share the same cultural background as the writer. If writer and readers are coming from different cultures then cultural mismatch occurs since readers do not have relevant schemata that match the writer's. In case of lack of schema, reading teachers should provide background knowledge by pre-reading activities for their students. In the study the effectiveness of reading activities for both nativized and the original versions of the short stories was implied, as Grabe and Stoller (2002) point out, that reading activities are useful for poor readers rather than good ones to process reading. However effective reading activities are, the effect of cultural familiarisation remains an important factor and nativizing the text to fit the readers' relevant schemata plays a more significant role than supporting the readers with reading activities.

## 8.9 CONCLUSION

According to the results of the study, four conclusions can be drawn.

First, *cultural familiarization to the text has a significant effect on reading comprehension*. If readers are provided with culturally familiar texts, then they read a text that fits to their schemata. Since their schemata match with the text, they do not encounter foreign names that would limit the process of their short-term memory. So culturally familiar text readers can use automatic processes since they are familiar with the background of the text. On the other hand, culturally unfamiliar text readers are supposed to use controlled processes that require great effort.

Second, *nativization contributes to reading comprehension* since readers are provided with cultural familiar texts. One can easily adapt a nativized short story to her own life while reading it because the short story takes place where she lives and also, she encounters the names of people and places that she is already familiar with. Culturally familiar text readers can use top-down reading models since their relevant schemata are activated but, on the other hand, culturally unfamiliar text readers cannot use top-down reading models since the background knowledge that they bring to the text is different from the writer's.

Third, *reading activities have an effect on reading comprehension*. Pre-reading activities make it possible to give background knowledge about the text if readers' schemata do not match the writer's and they can also activate readers' schemata before reading if they share the same background knowledge with the writer. Pre-reading activities also motivate readers to read the text (Chastain 1988). While-reading activities can contribute to reading comprehension since they allow readers to get the writer's message through skimming and specific information about the text through scanning (Brown 2001). In the last stage, post-reading activities help readers to clarify any unclear meaning (Chastain 1988).

Fourth, *reading activities have an impact on reading comprehension and they can make up for the lack of cultural familiarity*. Pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading

activities all contribute to reading comprehension since they help readers in comprehending the text. Although reading activities contribute to reading comprehension, the effect of cultural familiarisation remains as an important factor and nativizing the text to conform to the readers' relevant schemata plays a more significant role than supporting the readers with reading activities.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: *POST-TEST THE GIRLS IN THEIR SUMMER DRESSES (ORIGINAL)***

#### **TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN**

If the given statement is correct put 'T', if it is not correct put 'F',  
if it is not mentioned in the story then put 'NG'.

- ..... 1) Michael & Frances have known each other for two years.
- ..... 2) Michael never makes love with other women.
- ..... 3) The Stevensons know what Michael feels for other women.
- ..... 4) Frances does not want to see anybody all day because she wants to have a rest.
- ..... 5) Michael looks at other women only in the streets.
- ..... 6) Frances feels good all day when she has breakfast with Michael.
- ..... 7) The waiter was very kind to them in the bar.
- ..... 8) They didn't go to the cinema to see a French picture.
- ..... 9) Michael asked Frances to have a drink when they were on the way to Cavanagh's.
- ..... 10) The Stevensons will come to the bar to pick them up.

#### **PUT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS INTO NARRATION ORDER**

Below are eight statements from the short story you have just read. Put them into the narration order by adding numbers into the spaces.

- (.....)They walked to a bar on Eight Street.
- (.....)Frances began to cry, silently, into her handkerchief.
- (.....)Frances & Michael had slept late and had a good breakfast.
- (.....)They decided to call The Stevensons.
- (.....)They started to walk from the Brevoort toward Washington Square.
- (.....)Frances got up from the table and walked across the room.
- (.....)Frances planned a day of activities that Michael would enjoy.
- (.....)Frances asked Michael to stop talking about women and to keep it to himself.

#### **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

- 1) Why does Frances want to take Michael to a football match?
- 2) What does Michael think of when he thinks of the city of New York?
- 3) Where did Frances & Michael meet for the first time? Describe Michael's feelings at that time.
- 4) What's the first thing Michael noticed when he first came to New York from Ohio?
- 5) Why does Frances feel good on that Sunday morning?
- 6) How has Michael physically changed since he moved from Ohio?
- 7) What does Michael do when something bad happens?
- 8) Why do the salesgirls in Macy's pay attention to Michael?
- 9) What is the favour that Frances asks Michael to do for her?
- 10) What does Michael feel about Frances when she gets up from the table?

## **APPENDIX B: POST-TEST THE GIRLS IN THEIR SUMMER DRESSES (ADJUSTED)**

### **TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN**

If the given statement is correct put 'T', if it is not correct put 'F',  
if it is not mentioned in the story then put 'NG'.

- ..... 1) Coskun & Ozlem have known each other for two years.
- ..... 2) Coskun never makes love with other women.
- ..... 3) Nalan & Tarik know what Coskun feels for other women.
- ..... 4) Ozlem does not want to see anybody all day because she wants to have a rest.
- ..... 5) Coskun looks at other women only in the streets.
- ..... 6) Ozlem feels good all day when she has breakfast with Coskun.
- ..... 7) The waiter was very kind to them in the bar.
- ..... 8) They didn't go to the cinema to see a Turkish picture.
- ..... 9) Coskun asked Ozlem to have a drink when they were on the way to Albatros'.
- ..... 10) Nalan & Tarik will come to the bar to pick them up.

### **PUT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS INTO NARRATION ORDER**

Below are eight statements from the short story you have just read. Put them into the narration order by adding numbers into the spaces.

- (.....)They walked to a bar near Republic Square.
- (.....)Ozlem began to cry, silently, into her handkerchief.
- (.....)Ozlem & Coskun had slept late and had a good breakfast.
- (.....)They decided to call Nalan & Tarik.
- (.....)They started to walk from Bariskent toward Republic Square.
- (.....)Ozlem got up from the table and walked towards the door.
- (.....)Ozlem planned a day of activities that Coskun would enjoy.
- (.....)Ozlem asked Coskun to stop talking about women and to keep it to himself.

### **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

- 1) Why does Ozlem want to take Coskun to a basketball match?
- 2) What does Coskun think of when he thinks of the city of Canakkale?
- 3) Where did Ozlem & Coskun meet for the first time? Describe Coskun's feelings at that time.
- 4) What's the first thing Coskun noticed when he first came to Canakkale from Erzurum?
- 5) Why does Ozlem feel good on that Sunday morning?
- 6) How has Coskun physically changed since he moved from Erzurum?
- 7) What does Coskun do when something bad happens?
- 8) Why do the salesgirls at Gima pay attention to Coskun?
- 9) What is the favour that Ozlem asks Coskun to do for her?
- 10) What does Coskun feel about Ozlem when she gets up from the table?