THE ROLE OF SCHEMATA IN LIBYAN STUDENTS READING IN ENGLISH

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الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لاكتشاف أثر المعلومات والمعارف السابقة للطلبة الليبيين الذين يدرسون الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند قراءتهم للنصوص الانجليزية. فالمقابلات التي أجريت مع الطلاب أوضحت أهمية هذه المعارف والمعلومات السابقة في استيعاب النصوص الانجليزية المقروءة. وبينت أيضاً أن الطلاب اعتمدوا على المعارف السابقة التي تم تعلمها عند قراءة النصوص العربية حيث تم توظيفها عند قراءة النصوص الانجليزية. كما بينت الدراسة بأن الطلاب اعتمدوا على المعارف اللغوية السابقة نحو علم المفردات ، وبناء الجمل وعلم الصرف والاشتقاق، وعلم الاعراب عند القراءة.

ABSTRACT

This study was proposed to explore the place of schemata or background knowledge in the university Libyan students reading English as a foreign language. The terms schemata, background knowledge, and prior knowledge are used interchangeably in this paper. The semi-structured interview was used for collecting data from students. Transferability of background knowledge from students' first language, Arabic to their target language, English was obviously evident. The interviews data has shown that the students relied heavily on

their linguistic knowledge in terms of vocabulary knowledge, structural knowledge, morphological knowledge, and syntactical parsing to facilitate their comprehension. The data has also illustrated that the students depended upon their prior schematic knowledge while reading involving general world knowledge, socio-cultural knowledge, topic knowledge, and genre knowledge. That is, written texts related to students' background knowledge were interesting to read and easy to understand. However, complicated texts that did not conform to students' background knowledge were boring to read and difficult to understand.

1-RATIONALE AND THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This paper was proposed to investigate the place of schemata or background knowledge in Libyan university students learning English as a foreign language. The data would be collected using semi-structured interviews. All students' reports during interviews would be recorded, transcribed, segmented, and then coded. As reading was mainly silent, teachers did not know whether the students relied on their background knowledge to make sense of what they were reading, so this study would uncover their reading processes in terms of background knowledge or prior experiences during interviews.

This study is proposed to answer about this research question:

To what extent background knowledge have an impact on the Libyan students when reading in English?

2-INTROCUCTION

The main purpose of reading different kinds of written text is to assign meaning from a text being read. In Libyan context; where students learning English as a foreign language, reading is considered the core academic progress, where students learn about the target language with respect to its culture and people only from reading rather than speaking and listening because they do not have contact opportunities with native speakers. "Research in reading over the last 40 years has increasingly emphasized the importance of background knowledge as a significant contributor to the reading ability of middle school students" (Smith et al., 2021, p.1). Reading comprehension is regarded as a complicated process because it encompasses different factors; such as, vocabulary, fluency, culture, and familiarity with topic. "Some scholars stated that there is a relationship between reading comprehension and background knowledge" (Abdelaal &Sase, 2014, p.1). The terms schemata, background knowledge, and prior experience will be used interchangeably in this paper.

3-LITERATURE REVIEW

3-1 SCHEMATIC KNOWLEDGE

The schematic-theoretic view of reading is "based upon schema theory, which accounts for the acquisition of knowledge and the interpretation of text information through the activation of schemata: networks of information stored in the brain which act as filters for incoming information" (Alderson, 2000, p. 17),

It is a process of using "reader's existing knowledge (schemata) to interpret texts in order to construct meaning. Many reading experts agree that the schema theory is one of the reasonable theories of human information processing. Schemata, the plural of schema, are believed to be the building blocks of cognition" (Fahriany, 2014, p.1).

As human beings, people store away all sorts of schemata; such as, scenes, events, activities, etc. That is, people have schemata for travelling abroad, visiting relatives, intimate friends, and enjoying some attractive places, for attending significant meetings, and discussing business matters, for participating in classroom activities and benefiting from varied discipline-specific knowledge, and for going shopping and buying food, clothes, drinks, etc. We also have schemata for visiting our lawyers and our family physicians and how we take care of ourselves. As a result, we build up our experiences

or background knowledge based on those scenes, events, and activities.

Other commentators viewed schemata as building blocks of structures (Rumelhart, 1980). Furthermore, Rumelhart and Ortony (1976) argued that "schemata may be thought of as interacting knowledge structures, which are stored hierarchically in long term memory" (p.100). According to Barnett (1932), The term 'schema' refers to the mental organization of an individual's past experiences. Schema theory discusses the role of past experiences or background knowledge in comprehension. This knowledge is cognitively organized in structures or schemata, which people use to comprehend any message.

Carrell (1983a, 1983b) and Johnson (1982) cited many studies which indicated that researchers have used different labels for the concept of background knowledge; such as, schemata, frames, scripts, event–chains, and expectations. Hudson (2007) used the term 'schemata' to refer to two different types of prior knowledge. The first class of prior knowledge has to do with content schemata related to the content area and cultural knowledge the reader brings to the text while reading. The second type of prior knowledge the reader possesses deals with the formal schemata regarding how syntax is used to structure text, cohesive relations, and

how the rhetorical organization of different text types is formed. In this view, Alderson (2000) said that "readers activate what they consider to be relevant existing schemata and map incoming information onto them" (p.17). The more this existing information is relevant, the more reading will be successful.

Steffensen and Joag-Dev (1984) and Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979) interpreted schemata or prior knowledge as being referred to both global knowledge of the topic of the text (e.g. knowledge of wedding in general) and specific or local knowledge of the topic (e.g. having knowledge on American or Indian weddings). Additionally, these commentators identified the prior knowledge of the personal, the knowledge which only the reader possesses. These three conceptualizations of prior knowledge are likely to interact during the processes involved in reading. However, Macaro (2001) argued that this interaction might create misunderstandings of a text through false elaboration or distortions. Furthermore, McGowan and Turner (1994) wrote schemata or background knowledge might become an inhibitor rather than a facilitator to comprehension when readers made false inferences about text. Lu (1999) also documented some cases, where poor EFL readers wrongly used their background knowledge to overcome their target language deficiencies which, as a result, lead to unsuccessful comprehension. This

"suggests that whilst prior knowledge is an important strategy to apply when reading, it can be misapplied" (Macaro & Erler, 2008, p. 95).

Research on reading has shown the effects of schemata or background knowledge on reading comprehension in many studies. For example, Johnson (1982) used a sample of Malaysian and Tunisian students learning English at the Centre for English as a second language at an American university were investigated. The findings of this study indicated that a lack of prior knowledge or cultural familiarity of a text could not be compensated by exclusively exposing students to target vocabulary words. Thus, "the more topical familiarity the text displays, the better it is inferentially comprehended in that L2 readers who are familiar with its cultural content are more successful in drawing inferences and achieving global comprehension than those who are unfamiliar" (Alptekin, 2006, p. 494).

Additionally, Carrell (1981a, 1981b, 1983, 1987) and Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) reported that L2 readers' ability of using appropriate prior knowledge and involving in interactive processes with texts would lead to a satisfactory reading comprehension. Fincher-Kiefer (1992) argued that this satisfaction would not be possible without delving into schema theory, which accounts for the role of inferences in

comprehension based on the reader's prior knowledge of the topic. In line with these commentators, there were other studies whose findings favoured the use of background knowledge as being a good strategy while reading (Alptekin, 2006; Brantmeier, 2004; Chan, 2003; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Grabe, 1991; Levine & Haus, 2008).

3-2COMPONENTS OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Hedge (2000) suggested that making a sense of that message requires that the reader is involved in an interactive process with the writer's message, using several types of background knowledge encompass (a) linguistic knowledge; syntactical knowledge and morphological knowledge, and (b) schematic knowledge; general world knowledge, socio-cultural knowledge, topic knowledge, and genre knowledge. Thus, readers bring those already acquired prior experiences and knowledge related to the textual information in order to assign meaning from the text itself, as illustrated in figure 1. It is worth noting that genre refers to different kinds of text, e.g., narrative or expository. In literature, genre involves poetry, drama/play, essay, short story, and novel. These classifications of genre in literature could be tragedy, comedy, thriller, science, fiction, non-fiction, romance, etc,

Linguistic knowledge
- Grammatical knowledge
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Morphological knowledge
- Phonological knowledge
- Syntactical parsing

Schematic knowledge
- General world knowledge
- Topic knowledge
- Genre knowledge
- Socio-cultural knowledg
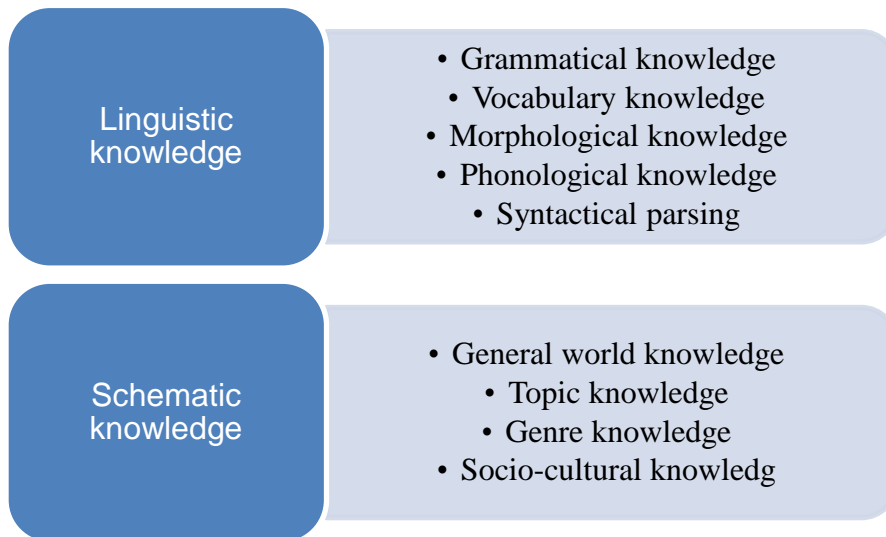
Figure 1 shown the components of background knowledge (Hedge, 2000).

In parallel to Hedge, Hudson (2007) argued that background knowledge or prior experiences are viewed as decisive components in text interpretation because they allow readers to interpret the textual information efficiently. It was also emphasized that the significance of the linguistic knowledge in reading; such as, lexicon, syntax, and phoneme-grapheme correspondence or sound-symbol relationship. "Other views concentrate on the cognitive processes of the reader encountering text and constructing meaning through strategy and skill activation" (Hudson, 2007, p.10). Li et al. (2007) identified three types of schemata; linguistic schemata which refers to proficiency of language in terms of grammar,

vocabulary and idioms; formal schemata which include knowledge of different types of texts; content schemata which refers to the background knowledge of the content area of a text, or the topic a text talks about.

3-3 TRANSFERABILITY OF SCHEMATA AMONG LANGUAGES

According to Cummins' (1979) hypothesis of linguistic interdependence, it is assumed that once reading ability has been acquired in the first language, it would be available for use in the second or subsequent languages as well. In other words, no instruction in second language reading is necessary. Garcia et al. (1998) reported that "information and strategies learned or acquired in one language could be used to comprehend text written in another language" (p.204). "Research has also shown that the literacy skills and strategies acquired in a first language transfer into second and third literacies across languages with similar orthographies; such as, Spanish and English or across languages with radically different orthographies; such as, Arabic and English" (Mokhtari &Reichard, 2004, p384).

3-4 WORKING MEMORY ACTIVATION

As mentioned earlier, our prior knowledges are stored in long term memory and can be activated by short term memory or rather working memory. In reading, the working memory is a

temporary storage of information, playing a crucial role in reading. When we read, we relate the ongoing textural information in the working memory to our own prior experiences stored in the long term memory in order to make sense of what we are reading (Smith et al. 2021). According to Grabe and Stoller's (2002) study, If words are identified, sentences are syntactically parsed, and meanings have initially emerged and are all functioning well, they work effortlessly in working memory, the network of information. That is, if these lower processing components of reading are active for a short period of time in working memory and are all integrated, so the accurate meaning can be formed.

To sum up, we easily comprehend and recall any new textual message only when we can relate its content (new experiences) to our past experiences, existing knowledge structures already stored in our long term memory (Hauptman, 1996). Literacy skills and strategies learned in a first language can be transferred into a target language. Working memory helps readers integrate textual information with background knowledge in order to construct meaning. Thus, background knowledge supports readers to understand the writer's message by making possible inferences. However, some researchers said that prior knowledge might be an inhibitor rather than a facilitator, particularly when readers wrongly

connect textual information to their prior knowledge, which, as a result, could lead to false assumptions or inferences.

4-RESEARCH METHODS

4-1 PARTICIPANTS

3 male and 5 female students learning English as a foreign language in a Libyan university were voluntarily asked to take part in this study. Allocating the number of participants in this study was congruent with the purposeful sample strategy suggested by Patton (2002). The researcher approached this research site, where people were willing to cooperate and, where the access was easy to obtain and, where the atmosphere was suitable for the researcher to work with the participants. The participants were informed about the scope and rationale of the study. They agreed to participate and, therefore, gave their consent. The ethical considerations were considered; participants' names remained anonymous or rather pseudonymous names were used instead. Further, students' privacy was taken into account, and their confidentiality was addressed as well.

4-2 INTERVIEWS

A semi-structured interview, research instrument, was adopted in this study to provide the researcher with an access about participants' views, ideas, experiences, and expectations related to the background knowledge or prior experiences the

participants relied on when reading in English. An interview schedule encompassed several questions and their justifications as well as the related areas of the literature review that would guide the researcher during interviews. It comprised of some related themes where a number of questions could be generated, together with the related areas in literature review, as shown in table 1.

1	Prior knowledge	Questions to be posed	Related area of literature
2	Cognates	How do Arabic cognates in English help readers comprehend an English text?	Hudson (2007)
3	Role of Arabic in a foreign language reading	How do students rely on Arabic to assign meaning from an English text?	Cummins (1979); Garcia et al. (1998)
4	Syntactical parsing	Does identifying function of words facilitate reading and if so, how?	Hedge (2000)
5	Morphological knowledge	How does knowledge of prefixes & suffixes facilitates to identify words?	Hedge (2000)
6	Grapheme-phoneme correspondence	How do you identify words?	Hudson (2007)

7	General world knowledge	How does this make sense to construct meaning from text?	Hedge (2000)
8	Topic knowledge	How does familiarity with a text content ease comprehension?	Hedge (2000)
9	Genre	To what extent kind of text is decisive in reading in English?	Hedge (2000)
10	Socio-cultural knowledge	How does socio-cultural factors affect target language reading?	Hedge (2000)

Table 1 Interview schedule

The interviews would contribute to this study by allowing the researcher to address the questions in a flexible way in order to obtain the necessary information and ideas needed for answering the main research question addressed in this paper. Before administrating the interviews, the researcher had already established a good rapport with the participants in order to fully cooperate with him and address their ideas and thoughts in an open atmosphere. The researcher told the participants that it is very important to record their voices, using a small recording device during interviews for the sake of the research so that they freely agreed. The participants were interviewed individually for about 20-30 minutes each. This type of interviews implied a frequent use of open-ended questions complying with some studies investigating reading, e.g. (Levine

& Haus, 2008). During interviews sessions, the researcher avoided interrupting the interviewees and tried to have minimal influence on what they were saying to minimize any threat of reliability. The recorded files were transferred to the researcher's PC for the transcription stage. Then, the researcher transcribed all participants' verbal reports verbatim. Thus, the oral files were converted into written files, using data transcription software called voice walker downloaded from the internet. As the interviewees were interviewed in their mother tongue, Arabic, all their data was translated into English. To organize the data and be familiar with it, the researcher read all the participants' transcripts thoroughly followed Marshall and Rossman's (1999) study procedures for data analysis. This stage entailed engagement with the data. The researcher read all transcripts several times and then broke them into themes, chunks, segments, or categories base on the framework of prior knowledge coding scheme developed from the components of background knowledge discussed earlier in the literature review section (Hedge, 2000). Having transcribed, translated, segmented all participants' transcripts, the last stage was coding the data. With a facilitation of computer software package, called MAXQDA, used mainly for qualitative data analysis; such as, interviews, observation, and think aloud protocol, all transcripts were coded. This software allowed the

researcher to access all the participants' transcripts that were stored in the researcher's laptop and could be retrieved at any time very easily. Thus, all coded segments could be imported to word files for data display. Now, the next section would be discussing the findings section.

5-FINDINGS

This section is devoted to answering this research question: To what extent background knowledge have an impact on the Libyan students when reading in English?

The prior knowledge related to the students' Arabic language plays an important role when students read in English. They reported that prior Arabic linguistic knowledge supported them to read in English as well. The students made use of transferability of literacy knowledge between their first language, Arabic and their target language, English. Their linguistic knowledge; such as, prior vocabulary knowledge, syntactical parsing knowledge, and morphological knowledge are also present to facilitate their reading in English. The students also emphasized the role of prior general world knowledge to analyse their English written texts. They said that the knowledge of topic is decisive in reading. The more the topic is relevant, the easier the students will succeed to understand it. Irrelevant topics are boring and hard to comprehend and students spend much time to make sense of

them than usual because the students lack background knowledge about them. However, relevant topics are interesting to read and easy to understand because the students have prior experiences or background knowledge about them. Furthermore, the students revealed that reading in a foreign language is dependent upon genre; or different kinds of text. For example, some students who are interested in reading texts on music might not interested in reading texts on play, poetry, short story, and/or novel. They might have background to support their reading in musical texts; on the other hand, they might lack such background knowledge related to texts in different genre. Finally, culture has also its influential factor on reading in English. The students reported that they prefer to read texts that belong to their own culture than those represent foreign cultures.

Here are some examples from students' interviews chunk data as follows:

- **Past experiences related to Arabic language:**

In this chunk of data, Ebrahim emphasized the role of his prior knowledge of Arabic in reading in English. He employed his past experiences that he learned in Arabic on how to read in a foreign language which means he transferred his knowledge from L1 to L2.

I am, I am, when I know how to read in Arabic, how to analyse the text in order to understand it and extract the meaning from the whole text, I can deal an English text in a similar way because reading is reading. We do the same thing in both languages. I mean my background knowledge in Arabic will help to understand the English text because I am applying the same rules, I if you are weak or rather unable to read in your mother tongue, it will be difficult for you to read in the foreign language either.

Laila reported that she relied on her background knowledge with respect to the employment of reading strategies in Arabic written texts. Reading in Arabic influenced her on how to read in English applying the same strategies. She also depended upon transfer of knowledge between languages.

Yes, Arabic language is important when reading in English as well. I mean, when I read, I usually preview the text and start reading it word by word or sentence by sentence until I finish the whole text for comprehension. This is my approach that I follow to read in Arabic in school. Thus when I read in English I do the same thing because I have already prior knowledge on how to deal with texts. Thus, I do not need to learn how to read in English, however, I need only English vocabulary which is decisive to read and comprehend texts in English. That's all.

● **Prior knowledge related to syntactical parsing:**

Ahmed reported that syntactical parsing that learned in Arabic, as his prior experiences, would assist him to in read in English.

My prior linguistic knowledge in Arabic with respect to grammar and indentify the grammatical function of wards are very important. It helps me to clarify any ambiguity in complex sentences where sometimes an object precedes and a subject and so on. This prior parsing knowledge that I am using Arabic reading will, of course, help me when reading in English as well.

Ali also emphasized the use of syntactical parsing in English reading that he had already applied such prior experiences when reading in Arabic. He said it helped him a lot to understand texts in English.

If you do not know the grammatical structure or syntactical parsing in your mother tongue will not be able to read in any foreign language either. Languages are similar in terms of grammar. For me I would have applied the same grammatical rules that I had used in Arabic reading in reading English texts. This helped me much.

● **Background knowledge related to morphology:**

In her chuck of data, Najwa reported that her background knowledge regarding prefixes and suffixes that she had already

learned at school would have assisted her to recognize vocabulary when reading in English.

When I took a course on morphology, I became knowledgeable about affixes, which included prefixes and suffixes. For example when a verb proceeded by "re" such as rewrite, this means to rewrite again and this is a prefix, however, the suffixes: tion, ness, ism, ist, dom, etc, they form nouns. Thus when reading in English, I just related such my prior vocabulary knowledge to text information, therefore, I understood the sentences including these words.

● **Prior knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence:**

Amal's prior experiences in terms of phonics that she had learned at school, when she was learning to read in Arabic, would have supported her on how to read in English accordingly. She said:

When I was in primary school, our teacher of Arabic language taught us how to read and write an alphabetical language. We were taught to make a relationship between letters and their sounds in order to identify words. I also apply this approach when reading English. I vocalized words uttering them in a way that assist me to identify familiar words.

According to Usra's interview segment data, her prior experiences in word recognition with respect to making

association between graphemes and phonemes to identify unfamiliar words supported her also in reading in English.

Sometimes there are some unfamiliar words in a text. I vocalize these words by dividing them into syllables and I vocalize letters and their sounds. This past knowledge sometimes helps me to identify words when reading in English.

● **Prior general world knowledge:**

Sauwad reported in her interviews that her general world knowledge was so important that it support her to identify the general ideas, which need to comprehension when reading in English. She said:

My prior general world knowledge about food, music, literature, languages, history, mathematics, biology, medicine, sociology, travelling, cosmetics, shopping, etc; they all constitute my ideas and knowledge about the surrounding world which consequently, sustain my comprehension while reading in English.

Ahmed emphasized the prior world general knowledge in reading in English. He said that such knowledge ease comprehension. He said:

Of course, when you have prior knowledge about the world surrounding you; this means you are knowledgeable person, so you can speak with other people and exchange ideas with them, reflect on what they are discussing, and therefore, enrich

the discussion. Even when reading in English such prior knowledge will positively support you to read and comprehend a text being read by relating your prior knowledge to the textual information.

- **Background knowledge related to topic knowledge:**

Usra reported that unfamiliar text are intricate and difficult to understand. She said when she came across unknown text, it was hard to analyse it, identify the main ideas from it, reflect on it and make inferences or predict what happens next in it. She said:

Some texts are unfamiliar and they are difficult to understand. For example if a text is on traditional Indian marriages, they are so complicated for me to understand. I neither reflect on the textual information because they are actually new for me, nor did I predict what happens next in those texts. To establish a general idea, you need to read such texts over and over again spending much more time than usual to understand it.

In this chunk of interviews data, Ebrahim reported that reading familiar texts are interesting and easy to understand than complicated or unfamiliar ones. He said:

However, Ebrahim said that familiar texts are easy to understand because they are about things that we have already known, for example the straggle of our ancestors against the colonial Italians during 1911-1943 lead by Omer

Almukhtar, or the Great man-made river, which transfer sprint water from the south part of Libya to the north part of it. While reading, such topics, I can review them, elaborate on them, summarize them, tell someone about them, and even write about them. This is because I already had background knowledge about such topics.

According to her interviews, Najwa said:

In the examination at the end of last semester, the reading topic was on architecture. It was totally unfamiliar for me. It included many words that I have never seen or heard. I spent much time looking for the answer among its lines. I was so frustrated at that time. I couldn't understand it at all, and therefore, I failed to pass.

- **Prior knowledge related to genre:**

In this chuck of interviews data, Amal emphasized the importance of genre in reading. She is more interested in reading a narrative text than an expository one. She reported:

I am interested in reading narrative texts than expository ones. In narrative text I can make use of my prior experiences and relate it to the ideas expressed in the text to understand. I can also imagine its events, interact with its characters and predict what is going to happen. However, reading an expository is a little pit harder. You just have to follow the writer's explanation.

You have nothing to do with the text. You can't predict what the writer wants to say.

- **Prier Socio-cultural knowledge:**

Ali reported that so socio-cultural factors influence people on how to read. He said:

Yes it true. When you read an article on your own culture, you can interact with it. You can elaborate on it because it belongs to you; to your your own identity. It is a part of you. It is really interesting topic to read. However, when you read, for example, something on Chinese, it is hard to understand it on one hand, and you can't reflect on it on the other hand.

6-DISCUSSION

The interviews uncovered that my participants relied on their prior knowledge in reading in English and this congruent with what discussed in my literature reviews section, e.g., (Abdelaal & Sase, 2014; Carrell, 1983, 1987, 2003; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Hedge, 2000; Hudson, 2007; McGowan & Tuner, 1994; Smith et al., 2021). While reading in English, the participants reported that they have transferred their prior literacy skills and strategies learned in their first language, Arabic into their second language English, as discussed in the literature review section (Garcia et al., 1998; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2004). The interviews data has also shown that the participants relied on their prior linguistic knowledge encompassing, for example,

vocabulary knowledge, structural knowledge, morphological knowledge, and syntactical parsing knowledge when reading in English written texts and this conforms with what the researcher has already discussed in literature review section (Hedge, 2000; Hudson, 2007; Li, 2007). Moreover, the participants reported in their interviews that prior schematic knowledge plays a significant role in reading in English. That is, Prior general world knowledge supported the participants to read in English, so they were able to generate ideas, make inferences, and predict what was going to happen in the text. The knowledge of topic is a precursor to comprehension. The participants reported that familiar texts were interesting to read and easy to understand; whereas, unfamiliar texts were boring to read and tough to understand. They also emphasized in their interviews that genre in reading was problematic. For example, reading a narrative text was unlike reading an expository one. In the former, students could imagine the events of the text, interact with its characters, make inferences, and predict what was happening in a text, however in the later, they said they just followed what the writer wanted the text to read. Making inferences and predicting what happens in a text was not possible. This discussion is coincident with what the researcher addressed in the literature review as well (Hedge, 2000).

7-CONCLUSION

This study was proposed to investigate the place of background knowledge in Libyan students reading in English. A semi-structured interview was implemented to collect data related to prior knowledge from eight Libyan university students, who voluntarily took part in the study. Transferability of students' prior knowledge from Arabic to Enlgish was undoubtedly present. The chunks of data have shown that the participants relied on their prier linguistic knowledge comprising vocabulary knowledge, structural knowledge, morphological knowledge, as well as syntactical parsing knowledge when reading. It was also evident that students' prior general world knowledge, topic knowledge, genre knowledge, and socio-cultural knowledge were also significant if not decisive in reading English written texts. The more written texts related to students' prior knowledge the more they were interesting to read and easy to understand. However, students were unwilling to read unfamiliar texts where they experienced lack of prier experiences, therefore, those texts became boring to read and difficult to comprehend.

This study uncovered some implications for teachers teaching reading. Students' prior experiences and knowledge are decisive in reading and a good strategy in which students rely on to make sense of what they are reading, so that teachers

should be aware to select topics relating to students' family, culture and society. For example, selecting texts like the Libyan struggle against the Italian invasion of Libya during 1911–1943 or the Great man–made river in Libya, where students definitely have prior experiences, on such topics, which enable them to relate the textual information to their prior experiences so as to they can easily understand what the text is about. It had better for reading teachers to select texts that are interesting for students and easy to understand and avoid asking students to read texts that are boring to read and difficult to understand. It is worth pointing out that some students might be interested in reading a narrative text than an expository one. Thus, teachers should raise the students' awareness on reading a different kind of texts, which are align with the students' preferences and desires. Lack of vocabulary knowledge can hinder students to assign meaning from a text being read, so that teachers should direct students to deploy other compensatory techniques in order to them construct the meaning of unfamiliar words; such as, relying on the context to infer the meaning of unknown words or guessing the meaning. When students fail to understand a complicated sentence, teachers should teach them on how to overcome such a problem by dividing the sentence into small parts or pieces and identify the function of words because this process will facilitate their comprehension.

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