

**TOPIC FAMILIARIZATION AND VOCABULARY  
INTRODUCTION IN SECOND LANGUAGE READING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although the field of second language teaching and learning has witnessed an enormous amount of research on reading skills, in general, and on topic familiarity and vocabulary teaching/learning, in particular, almost no attention has been paid to the teacher's role in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction. In an attempt to fill this gap, and in an explanatory mixed methods design, the present study investigated the effects of the teacher's intervention in an L2 reading class by comparing the applicability of written topic familiarization with the effectiveness of teacher-directed topic familiarization in students' performance of comprehension tests. Furthermore, the adequacy of students' dictionary use was compared with the efficacy of teacher's instruction of vocabulary in enhancing students' performance of vocabulary tests. Finally, students' perceptions of teacher-directed versus written topic familiarization as well as their perceptions of dictionary use versus teacher's vocabulary instruction were investigated.

For this purpose, 73 undergraduate students studying English as an L2 in an Iranian university were homogenized into two groups of A (No Teacher) and B (Teacher) based on their proficiency results of the Oxford Quick Placement Test. The participants experienced four treatments, Group B with the presence and Group A without the presence of a teacher. Both groups were provided with pre-reading tasks. For Group A, the activities were in the form of scripts of explanations, including brainstorming questions, an introductory paragraph intended to familiarize the participants with the reading topics, and a list of the key words. Group A students were asked to use dictionaries for vocabulary meaning. However, the pre-reading activities in Group B were teacher-directed. The participants in this group were provided with the same information as that of Group A to ensure consistency, but through the teacher, and were not allowed dictionaries as the teacher taught them the key words. Each time the

participants read a passage of unfamiliar topic, after which they were tested on comprehension recalls and multiple-choice questions, and vocabulary MCQs. The participants also completed a Likert-scale perception questionnaire at the end of the study, and 23 students were interviewed.

Results of independent-samples t-tests did not indicate any significant difference between teacher-directed and written topic familiarization although paired t-tests showed that both of the approaches by themselves were effective on students' comprehension tests results. However, teacher's vocabulary instruction was confirmed to be significantly more effective than students' dictionary use, and paired t-tests once again showed that each method per se caused significant results in students' vocabulary tests performance.

Results of the perception questionnaire triangulated with interview responses confirmed that the students thought teacher-directed topic familiarization and written background knowledge activities were equally effective, which agreed with their comprehension tests results. However, most of the participants thought that there was no significant difference between students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary, which contradicted their vocabulary tests results. Only some students perceived teacher's instruction as more effective than dictionary usage. This might imply that students' perceptions are not always very reliable for decision-making in L2 reading. Furthermore, the study is believed to have useful implications for students, teachers and educators as well as authors and publishers.

## **ABSTRAK**

Walaupun bidang pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa kedua telah menyaksikan banyak penyelidikan tentang kemahiran membaca, secara umum dan perbendaharaan kata khususnya, namun, tiada perhatian diberikan kepada peranan guru dalam membiasakan diri dengan topik dan pengenalan perbendaharaan kata. Dalam usaha untuk mengisi jurang ini, 1 kaedah penerangan reka bentuk campuran diwujudkan bagi menyiasat kesan-kesan campur tangan guru dalam kelas membaca bahasa kedua dengan membandingkan kebolehgunaan membiasakan diri dengan topik bertulis dengan keberkesanan arahan dari guru dengan topik di kalangan pelajar melalui prestasi ujian kefahaman. Tambahan pula, penggunaan kamus pelajar dibandingkan dengan keberkesanan arahan perbendaharaan kata dari guru dalam meningkatkan prestasi pelajar ujian perbendaharaan kata. Akhir sekali, persepsi pelajar terhadap topik dengan kehadiran guru berbanding topik yang difahami serta persepsi mereka menggunakan kamus berbanding arahan perbendaharaan kata guru disiasat.

Bagi tujuan ini, 73 pelajar yang belajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua di sebuah universiti di Iran diasingkan kepada dua kumpulan A (Tanpa Kehadiran Guru) dan B (Dengan Kehadiran Guru) berdasarkan keputusan penguasaan mereka dalam Ujian Penempatan Pantas Oxford. Para peserta mengalami empat rawatan, Kumpulan B dengan kehadiran guru dan Kumpulan A tanpa kehadiran guru. Kedua-dua kumpulan telah disediakan dengan tugas-tugas pra-membaca. Bagi Kumpulan A, aktiviti-aktiviti adalah dalam bentuk skrip penjelasan, termasuk soalan sumbang saran, perenggan pengenalan yang bertujuan untuk membiasakan peserta dengan topik yang dibaca, dan senarai kata kunci. Pelajar Kumpulan A diminta untuk menggunakan kamus untuk makna perbendaharaan kata. Manakala, Kumpulan B menerima arahan guru sebelum aktiviti membaca. Peserta dalam kumpulan ini telah disediakan dengan maklumat yang sama seperti Kumpulan A bagi memastikan ianya konsisten, tetapi melalui guru, dan

tidak dibenarkan menggunakan kamus kerana guru mengajar mereka kata kunci. Setiap kali peserta membaca satu petikan topik yang tidak dikenali, dan selepas itu mereka telah diuji pada mengimbas kembali kefahaman dan soalan aneka pilihan dan soalan perbendaharaan kata. Para peserta juga telah menjawab soal selidik persepsi skala Likert pada akhir kajian, dan 23 murid telah ditemuramah.

Keputusan independent-samples t-tests tidak menunjukkan apa-apa perbezaan yang signifikan antara topic berarahkan guru dan topic yang difahami walaupun paired t-tests menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pendekatan dengan sendirinya mempunyai kesan positif pada ujian kefahaman pelajar keputusan. Walau bagaimanapun, arahan perbendaharaan kata dari guru telah disahkan lebih signifikan daripada penggunaan kamus pelajar, dan paired t-tests sekali lagi menunjukkan bahawa setiap kaedah menghasilkan keputusan penting dalam prestasi pelajar dalam ujian kosa kata.

Keputusan soal selidik persepsi dengan jawapan temuduga mengesahkan bahawa pelajar merasakan kaedah berarahkan guru dengan topik yang difahami dan aktiviti-aktiviti yang mereka punyai pengetahuan latar belakang yang bertulis telah berkesan, and dipersetujui dengan keputusan ujian kefahaman mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, kebanyakan peserta berpendapat bahawa tidak ada perbezaan yang signifikan antara penggunaan kamus pelajar dan pengajaran guru perbendaharaan kata, yang bercanggah dengan keputusan ujian perbendaharaan kata mereka. Hanya beberapa pelajar menganggap arahan guru sebagai lebih berkesan daripada penggunaan kamus. Ini mungkin mencadangkan bahawa persepsi pelajar tidak boleh dipercayai untuk membuat keputusan dalam membaca dalam bahasa kedua. Tambahan pula, kajian itu dipercayai mempunyai implikasi yang berguna untuk pelajar, guru dan pendidik dan juga pengarang dan penerbit.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my wonderful uncle **Mr. Abdul Hameed Zainal** (my mother's brother) with love and gratitude. I have always enjoyed his continuous, heartfelt and fatherly support, both morally and financially, and I will be in his debt forever.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Preliminaries**

Topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge are two important issues in second language reading. It is generally believed that the role the teacher plays in the pre-reading stage with regard to these two variables is crucial to students' performance in the reading class. However, almost no data is available in the literature reflecting on the degree of the teacher's efficiency in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction.

As an English language instructor, the researcher has always agreed with the idea that reading is the most important academic language skill, and that research on reading could contribute a lot to the field of second/foreign language teaching/learning. With the growing number of advocates of learner-centered instruction, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), internet-based English lessons, and self-study English language textbooks, it seems that the importance of the teacher's role in an L2 class is underemphasized. This failure to appreciate the teacher's intervention in the second language class, in general, and in the reading class, in particular, was the most inspiring motive behind the present research.

The aim of the study was threefold. First, it attempted to compare the applicability and effectiveness of presenting introductory data in the form of printed input at the pre-reading stage intended to familiarize students with text topic prior to reading a passage with the efficiency of the teacher doing the same job at the pre-reading stage. In other words, the study attempted to compare the effects of written topic familiarization with teacher-directed topic familiarization in students' performance of comprehension tests.

Second, the study compared the efficacy of students' dictionary use with teacher's instruction of vocabulary in students' performance of vocabulary tests in the reading class. Third, students' perceptions of the teacher's role in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction were probed. In order to find the answers to our research questions, 73 EFL students in a university in Iran, homogenized into two groups of A (No Teacher) and B (Teacher), participated in this study of an explanatory mixed methods design. They experienced four treatments in four consecutive weeks, each one followed by a recall and a multiple-choice comprehension test as well as vocabulary MCQs (multiple-choice questions). After the treatments, a perception questionnaire was administered, and then interviews were conducted. Details of data collection procedure and a discussion of the results will be presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, respectively.

**Keywords:** schema theory, second language reading, topic familiarization, vocabulary introduction, dictionary use, teacher's role, students' perceptions

## **1.1 Definition of Reading and Reading Processes**

It is hardly possible to carry out, or even read, a research on reading without an understanding of the word 'reading' and the processes involved in it, and the present study is no exception. Reading plays such an essential role in educational settings that it has been defined as the most important academic language skill (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). It is a psycholinguistic receptive process of written communication in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning that the reader constructs (Goodman, 1995). It is a process that involves the reader and the text in a dynamic and complex interaction in which a mental

representation is constructed based on the meaning signaled by the writer and the reader's goals and interests (Rumelhart, 1985; Stanovich, 1980).

What is meant by the process is "reading proper", i.e. the interaction between a text and a reader (Alderson, 2000, p. 3). In this process, what the readers do is look at print, decode the written words on the page, and determine their meanings and their relationships. The readers also think about what they are reading, what it means to them, how it relates to other things they have read before and to things they already know. Different readers will develop different understandings of what a text means. This is partly because a text does not contain meaning which has to be detected by a proficient reader as the product of reading.

The product of the reading process is comprehension (Barry & Lazarte, 1995). There may be as many different reading products as there are different readers. This is because readers may differ in their experiences and knowledge. In order for the reading product to be attained, readers employ two different approaches while engaged in the reading process (Nuttall, 2005), namely the bottom-up and the top-down approaches.

Bottom-up, or data-driven, approaches are "serial models" (Alderson, 2000, p.16), where the reader begins with printed words, recognizes graphic stimuli, decodes them to sound, recognizes words and decodes meanings. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), the bottom-up model suggests that reading follows a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little reference from the reader's own background knowledge.

Top-down, or conceptually driven, processing is a complementary method of processing written text in which readers draw on their intelligence and experience to understand a text (Nuttall, 2005). According to the top-down model of the reading process, what the reader already knows is thought to determine in large part what s/he will be able to

comprehend (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). The top-down model assumes that comprehending begins when a reader has access to appropriate background experiences and knowledge to make sense of the print. In other words, unlike the bottom-up model, the top-down model proposes that the reader makes educated guesses to predict the meaning of the print.

As a matter of fact, what is emphasized in top-down processing, according to Alderson (2000), is the knowledge that a reader brings to text. This model is based on the schema theory, which accounts for the acquisition of knowledge and the interpretation of text through the activation of schemata: networks of information stored in the brain which act as filters for incoming information (Ausubel, 1968; Bartlett, 1932; Carrell, 1983a; Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988; Hudson, 1982). In this view, readers activate what they consider to be relevant existing schemata and map incoming information onto them. To the extent that these schemata are relevant, reading is successful.

Nevertheless, neither the bottom-up nor the top-down approach, per se, is an adequate characterization of the reading process (Alderson, 2000). What readers need to employ while attending to texts is a combination of the two approaches, which, in Nuttal's words (2005), are used to complement each other. This inadequacy led to the introduction of a third approach, the interactive model. The interactive model of the reading process incorporates features of both the bottom-up and top-down models. "In practice, a reader continually shifts from one focus to another, now adopting a top-down approach to predict the probable meaning, then moving to the bottom-up approach to check whether that is really what the writer says" (Nuttall, 2005, p. 17). In this context, Alvermann and Phelps (1998) believe that the interactive model of reading process is a good descriptor of how students typically read their content area texts. They connect what they know about language, decoding, and vocabulary, or bottom-up skills, to their background experiences, prior knowledge, and familiarity with the topic being read, or

top-down skills. Interestingly, these skills are compensatory to Stanovich (1980). He argues that when readers lack enough bottom-up skills, they may use top-down knowledge to compensate. Likewise, when they do not have enough background knowledge on the topic they are reading, they resort to their language skills to comprehend the text.

Most of the current models of L2 reading comprehension, according to Nassaji (2007) are interactive in that L2 comprehension is considered to be a process consisting of both bottom-up and top-down processes. However, familiarity with reading models, alone, is not sufficient for the understanding of the factors involved in the reading process. Alongside the significance of the knowledge of the reading process, the importance of reading for ESL learners necessitates the understanding of the variables affecting a learner's comprehension of texts. Research on reading variables has divided them into two major sections: factors within the reader, and aspects of the text to be read (Alderson, 2000). What is of focus in the present study is the former section, the reader variables.

## **1.2 Reader Variables**

Research has looked at the way readers themselves affect the reading process and product, and has investigated a number of different reader variables such as the reader's knowledge, motivation, physical characteristics, and reading strategies (Alderson, 2000). Among them, two very important reader variables are topic familiarity (i.e. prior knowledge on topic), or background knowledge, (Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Carrell, 1983a; Carrell & Wise, 1998; Kintsch, 1992; Leeser, 2007; Moravcsik & Kintsch, 1993; Nassaji, 2007; Young, 1991), and vocabulary knowledge (Alderson & Urquhart, 1985;

Anderson & Freebody, 1983; Carrell, 1984; Koda, 1988, 2005; Qian, 1999). A definition of these variables seems indispensable to this research introduction.

### **1.2.1 Topic Familiarity**

Prior topic knowledge and its influence on readers' text comprehension is one of the variables being investigated in this study with regards to teacher's intervention in the classroom. Therefore, an understanding of the concept seems essential for the reader. There is a substantial body of research in cognitive psychology supporting the idea that topic familiarity has a facilitative role in reading comprehension (e.g. Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Kintsch, 1992; Moravacsik & Kintsch, 1993). This role has been motivated through schema-based models of comprehension (e.g. Rumelhart, 1977, 1980) which posit that pre-existing schemata control comprehension. In other words, readers' background knowledge contributes to their understanding of texts. When the term background knowledge is used, what is usually meant is a reader's prior knowledge of the subject matter of the text. In this regard, Alvermann & Phelps (1998) claim that "What a person already knows about a topic is probably the single most influential factor in what he or she will learn" ( p. 168).

The nature of the knowledge that readers have will influence not only what they remember of text, but also the product, i.e. their understanding of the text, and the way they process it (Bartlett, 1932; Carrell, 1984a; Rumelhart, 1980; Alderson, 2000). The development of schema theory has attempted to account for the consistent finding that what readers know affects what they understand. "Schemata are seen as interlocking mental structures representing readers' knowledge" (Alderson, 2000, p. 33). When readers process text, they integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing knowledge or schemata. In addition, their schemata influence how they

recognize information as well as how they store it (Carrell, 1983). Researchers have distinguished different types of schemata, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Problems arise when a reader has no relevant schemata or an insufficient schema, if relevant schemata are not recalled, or if an existing schema is inconsistent with information in the text. Readers will often ignore ideas in a text that conflict with conventional real world knowledge (Alvermann, Smith, & Readence, 1985). Students with reading difficulties appear to have particular trouble using their prior knowledge to modify misconceptions or to learn new information from reading (Holmes, 1983).

Often, a reader who is struggling to understand a difficult text will follow isolated details in the text and as a result employ an inappropriate schema to fill in the gaps. A factor that has strong potential to affect readers' comprehension, and can cause their misinterpretations is culture (Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson, 1979). Effects of cultural differences on reading recall, test scores and reading miscues have been consistently found in different studies (e.g., Carrell, 1984b; Dimassi, 2006; Rice, 1980).

This will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

### **1.2.2 Vocabulary Knowledge**

The second parameter that is probed in the study, the understanding of which is inevitable to the reader, is vocabulary knowledge. "Successful comprehension is heavily dependent on knowledge of individual word meanings" (Koda, 2005, p. 48). Research confirms a strong connection between readers' vocabulary knowledge and their ability to understand what they read (Anderson & Freebody, 1983; Davis, 1968; Koda, 2005; Qian, 1999). For example, Koda (2005) argues that there is a reciprocal relationship between word knowledge and comprehension. On the one hand vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in text understanding among both L1 and L2 readers, and on the

other, vocabulary learning and processing are equally dependent on comprehension. She adds that the precise meaning of a particular word is determined in large part by the context in which it appears, and that this meaning is closely linked with reader's real-life experience. However, in spite of overwhelming data available on their strong connection there is little consensus as to the exact mutuality between the two (Koda, 2005).

While, traditionally, vocabulary has been viewed as the dominant factor in reading comprehension (Davis, 1968; Whipple, 1925, cited in Hiebert & Kamil, 2005), a more recent view suggests a two-way link where the two are interdependent during their development process (Anderson & Freebody, 1983). Anderson and Freebody evaluated two contrasting hypotheses: instrumental and knowledge. The instrumental hypothesis postulates a direct mutual tie between vocabulary and comprehension, maintaining that word knowledge facilitates comprehension. On the contrary, the knowledge hypothesis assumes an indirect link between the two, positing that their relationship is linked through a third phenomenon, background knowledge. In this view, vocabulary size reflects conceptual knowledge. Once readers have real-world experience, their text understanding is considerably improved. There will be more elaboration on this in Chapter 2.

As was said earlier, vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge, or topic familiarity, are two most important variables affecting students' comprehension. Research has also shown that the most important problems teachers face in a reading class is unknown vocabulary and unfamiliar topic (Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008). In order to have a better understanding of teachers' contribution to the reading class with regard to these two parameters, an awareness of the teacher's role in the reading class, which is another variable in the present research, seems inevitable.

### **1.3 Teacher's Role**

It is believed that the role the teacher plays in reading instruction is significant in the degree of the effectiveness of a reading program (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007). In this regard, Duffy-Hester (1999) is "convinced that the teacher is more important and has a greater impact than any single, fixed reading program, method, or approach" (p. 492). However, it should be noted that it is not enough for a teacher to be a good person who loves working with students. They must be aware of the reading process and the teaching and learning of reading if they want their instruction to yield good results (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007).

Good teachers understand that students need to be prepared to read before they are asked to (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). One way to prepare students for reading new topics is presenting basic background knowledge through brainstorming, question and answer, discussion on the topic, or pictures. Another way is providing students with topic related vocabulary and instructing them prior to reading (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998). These preparatory activities are usually practiced in the pre-reading phase, which, according to Chastain (1988), is meant to motivate students to want to read the assignment and to prepare them to be able to read it.

Pre-reading activities provide a reader with the necessary background to organize activity and to comprehend the material (Ringler and Weber, 1984). These experiences involve understanding the purpose(s) for reading and building a knowledge base necessary for dealing with the content, vocabulary, and the structure of the material (ibid.) Ringler and Weber argue that pre-reading activities elicit prior knowledge, build background and focus attention. In fact, it is in the pre-reading stage that teachers attempt to facilitate and enhance students' comprehension of reading texts by topic

familiarization and vocabulary introduction. Chapter 2 will discuss the pre-reading stage in detail.

#### **1.4 Background to the Problem**

There is a considerable bulk of research on the comparison of the effectiveness and enhancing roles of topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge in second language reading (e.g. Afflerbach, 1986; Brantmeier, 2003; Carrell, 1987; Florencio, 2004; Hammadou, 1991; Hudson, 1982; Johnson, 1982; Park, 2004a, 2004b; Swaffer, 1988). Studies on these two reader variables reveal that there is little consensus among the researchers as for their functions in second language contexts.

Some findings have shown a significant, positive effect for topic familiarity as either a main effect or as part of a complex interaction. For example, Johnson (1982) gave ESL readers a passage on Halloween and demonstrated that topic familiarity had a greater impact on comprehension than the pre-teaching of vocabulary. Also, Swaffer (1988) concludes, in her paper, that background knowledge can be more influential in reading comprehension than word knowledge. She further claims that topic familiarity facilitates language recognition, and recall of concepts.

However, some other research in the literature indicates that vocabulary knowledge may be a more significant variable than prior knowledge on topic in ESL readers' success. For example, Phillips (1990), reported by Hammadou (1991), finds that prior knowledge is insignificant when readers lack vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency. To Phillips, it is only when readers are proficient that high or low background knowledge comes into play and differentiates between readers' levels of comprehension. Perhaps the most comprehensive study on the effects of vocabulary pre-teaching and providing background knowledge on L2 reading comprehension was

done by Park (2004b). He divided his 180 participants into three groups – the vocabulary group, the background knowledge group, and the control group, with different treatments. The results he attained were a) the scores of the vocabulary and background knowledge groups were significantly higher than those of the control group, b) the vocabulary group scored higher than the background knowledge group, although the difference between the mean scores of the two groups was not significant, and c) the effects of pre-reading activities on L2 reading comprehension differed by achievement level and text type.

Nevertheless, to Tuero (1996), unknown vocabulary and prior knowledge play equally decisive roles in reading comprehension. She concludes, in her study, that background knowledge and vocabulary difficulty function independently and affect reading in different ways. Even though prior knowledge facilitates comprehension, vocabulary development is equally crucial to foreign language reading.

As discussed earlier, unknown vocabulary and unfamiliar topic have been found to be the most important problems that teachers encounter in a reading class (Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008). Therefore, to ensure students' comprehension, teachers should concentrate on these two variables, because without comprehension reading would be meaningless. Different learners seem to approach reading tasks in different ways, and some of these ways appear to lead to better comprehension (Tercanlioglu, 2004). Research has shown that learners can be instructed to use appropriate reading strategies to help them improve comprehension and recall (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989), and that this instruction should include more pre-reading strategies than post-reading strategies (Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008).

However, what is of concern to the researcher is the degree of effectiveness of teacher's instruction of these reading strategies. It is true that unknown vocabulary and unfamiliar

topic are the most significant problems in a reading class. But, who should, or can, attend to these problems? Is it the teacher, the student, the author, or other variables that have this responsibility? Although there has been quite a lot of research on topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, unfortunately, to date, there is no data available reflecting on the degree of effectiveness of the teacher's presence at, or absence from an EFL/ESL reading class.

#### **1.4.1 Statement of the Problem**

The role of the teacher in enhancing students' familiarity with texts topics and contents, and his/her role in vocabulary introduction have not been investigated yet. It is not clear to what extent teachers' intervention, or teacher-centered instruction, facilitates students' performance on reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. What if the teacher is not available for a pre-reading instruction? Does this mean that students have to postpone their reading activities, waiting for the unfamiliar topic and unknown vocabulary to be introduced by the teacher?

In fact, the problem that the present study is attempting to investigate is that the teacher's effect in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction has not been challenged yet. No attempt has yet been reported in the literature to find a possible alternative for the traditional teacher-directed topic familiarizing pre-reading activities. Likewise, although research emphasizes the contribution of dictionary use towards students' vocabulary learning and performance, the efficacy of students' dictionary work has not yet been compared with the conventional teacher's instruction of vocabulary. It is not clear to what extent students could learn words and perform well on vocabulary tests independently from teachers, in a learner-centered reading class, and whether teachers' vocabulary teaching could successfully be substituted with

dictionary use. Furthermore, despite the bulk of studies on students' perceptions of L2 teaching and learning in general, there is a dearth of research on students' perceptions of second language reading in particular. It has not yet been investigated whether students prefer the teacher's initiation in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction or they prefer autonomy, and independent reading and vocabulary learning. The problems stated above are the gaps that this study seeks to fill.

### **1.5 Purpose and Design of the Study**

This study was an attempt to investigate in depth, in an explanatory mixed methods design, the degree of the effectiveness of teacher's activation/construction of students' background knowledge and his/her role in vocabulary instruction at pre-reading stage in adult L2 reading comprehension. The study was conducted in a university in Iran, where English is taught and learned as a foreign language. Specifically, the researcher aimed to compare teacher-directed topic familiarizing activities at the pre-reading stage with introductory data/input in the form of printed explanations doing the same job of the activation/construction of students' prior topic knowledge to investigate the advantages, if any, of one approach over the other. The study also attempted to compare students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary to examine their effects on students' vocabulary tests performance, and explore whether or not one of these strategies has superiority over the other. Students' perceptions of topic familiarizing methods and their dictionary use versus teacher's vocabulary instruction were another variable to investigate. In short, the influence of the teacher on the reading class, his/her contribution to students' performance, and the facilitative role that s/he might play, hence teacher-centered reading instruction effect, was compared with the applicability

of training independent readers through student-centered instruction in an L2 reading classroom.

For the experimental treatments, the present research adapted and employed four reading passages of unknown topics and contents, which will be introduced in details in Chapter 3, and the study was run in four consecutive weeks. Following Park's (2004b) study, which explored the effects of vocabulary pre-teaching and providing background knowledge on L2 reading comprehension, it was assumed that the more passages and tests were applied in the study, the more reliable, and perhaps more generalizable, the findings would be. Park had also used four texts. The study also followed him in the idea that only one teacher was employed to teach the four passages to Group B (The nature of the study groups will be discussed later in this chapter). This was practiced to control the teaching variable and eliminate the mediating teacher's effect. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the teacher's effect in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction, the employment of different teachers teaching different passages would have affected the results, making generalizations impossible.

The reason for conducting a mixed methods study is that the researcher has attempted to combine both quantitative and qualitative data for more precise results. The explanatory mixed methods design, which is also called the two-phase model, puts emphasis on quantitative data collection and analysis. In this method, the major aspect of data collection is quantitative, and a small qualitative component follows in the second phase of the research (Creswell, 2008).

The quantitative phase of the study aims to test the following hypotheses:

- Teacher-directed topic familiarization enhances students' performance on L2 reading comprehension tasks more than written introductions do.
- Students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary yield the same results in students' performance on vocabulary tests.

To test the research hypotheses, this study sought to answer three questions (RQs 1A, 1B, and 2), and for the mixed-data (qualitative and quantitative) part of the research, RQs 3A and 3B were supposed to serve the purpose. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1 To what extent does teacher-directed topic familiarization:

- A. help students' recall of reading passages?
- B. enhance students' performance on multiple-choice reading comprehension tests?

RQ2 What are the differences between teacher's instruction of vocabulary and students' dictionary use in students' performance on vocabulary tests?

RQ3 What are students' perceptions of:

- A. the teacher's role in topic familiarization as compared with the efficacy of written explanations?
- B. teacher's instruction of vocabulary as compared with students' dictionary use?

To answer RQs 1A, 1B, and 2, quantitative data would suffice and serve the purpose, and that is why the researcher has applied multiple choice questions and written recall tests. However, for RQs 3A and 3B, it was deemed necessary to mix quantitative and

qualitative data to obtain more detailed and specific information than could be gained from the results of statistical tests. Therefore, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was combined with interviews to answer RQs 3A and 3B. Details will be found in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Through his experience as an EFL teacher, the researcher has noticed that many EFL students face challenges whenever the reading comprehension process is altered by any unfamiliar reading task or assignment. He has also noticed that pre-reading instruction activities, including prior knowledge construction of unfamiliar topics, and teaching new vocabulary, play an important role in preparing students for the task and can help them become more aware of the characteristics of reading that are important to the task.

This study will help teachers and educators find out the effectiveness and significance of teacher's presence at, or absence from, the reading class. It is an attempt to explore teachers' contribution to students' performance in the reading class, and tries to answer the question of whether or not, or to what extent, adult L2 students could be independent readers.

This research has investigated, for the first time, the effectiveness of students' dictionary use as compared with the teacher's vocabulary instruction in enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge in the reading class. Another significant viewpoint of the study is that, again for the first time, the teacher's skill in familiarizing students with unfamiliar topics at pre-reading stage has been compared with the efficacy of written introductory data doing the same job of providing students with background knowledge on unfamiliar topics, hence the applicability of written pre-reading information in helping students' text comprehension.

As stated before, the study was conducted in the Iranian EFL situation. Due to the educational system in Iran and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning, only insufficient attention is paid to training competent, skillful, and proficient English language teachers. This inadequacy has seriously affected English language teaching and learning in Iran, especially at school levels. Since the present study has evaluated written background knowledge activities and dictionary use for the pre-reading stage as an alternative for the teacher's presence in the classroom, Iranian novice English teachers and teachers who are not proficient enough to carry on pre-reading activities in English and have to frequently resort to their mother tongue (Persian) might benefit from this research.

The results of the study will have implications for educators, teachers, practitioners, and researchers in the field of L2 reading, and will also help them design reading skill courses accordingly. It is hoped that the present research will make a positive contribution to the field of teaching second language reading.

## **1.7 Methodology**

The study was conducted with 73 undergraduate EFL students at a university in southern Iran. Based on their scores on the Oxford Quick Placement Test (2004), the participants were assigned to two homogeneous groups: Group A of 38 and Group B of 35 students. They ranged from elementary to upper intermediate in terms of English language proficiency.

To find the answers to RQs 1A, 1B, and 2, the participants were provided with four reading passages of unfamiliar topics and contents, which they read and were tested on, with a week's interval between each test. The difficulty levels of these passages were measured through the Flesch Readability Test. A typical session ran as this: The

participants in Group A received no teacher's intervention. They were provided with a script containing some written brainstorming questions, to which they received no answers, and a written introductory explanation. Both of the activities were meant to help the students activate/construct background knowledge on the text they were going to read. The text this group read had a title, which is believed to have a role in helping students to activate/construct prior knowledge (Hammadou, 1991). They were also given a list of the key vocabulary, and were asked to use their dictionaries to check word meanings. In short, Group A received any information which was thought necessary in reading the text, but in the form of printed data/input, i.e., scripts. The study followed Dole et al.'s (1991) study in which they designed scripts to provide students with important information necessary for understanding texts (It will be reviewed in Chapter 2).

Group B, however, underwent teacher's intervention. That is, it was the teacher who, in some pre-reading activities, familiarized the participants with the topic and content, and taught them the key vocabulary. Moreover, their text did not include a title, and no dictionary use was permitted in this group. To observe consistency, the material taught orally by the teacher was exactly the same as what the 'No Teacher' group received as scripts. This procedure was repeated in the teaching of all the four passages.

The participants were then assessed on comprehension and vocabulary after finishing each text. Each reading passage was followed by a free written recall test and a set of 20 multiple choice questions, 10 on comprehension and 10 on vocabulary. In fact, in the four treatment weeks, the students took 4 written recall tests, 40 comprehension and 40 vocabulary MCQs. Also, to find the answers to RQs 3A and 3B, on the students' perceptions of the teacher's role in topic familiarization and vocabulary instruction in the reading class, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered. Then, through

purposeful sampling, 23 of the participants, 10 from each group, together with an extra 3, were selected for interviews. Details on data collection will be found in Chapter 3.

Applied as one of the data collection tools, the free recall test is a measure in which readers write down as much as they can remember from what they have just read without looking at the passage. According to Johnston (1983) and Bernhardt (1983), the recall measurement is a valid means of evaluating foreign language reading comprehension. This technique has been widely used in second language reading research (e.g., Carrell, 1987; Dimassi, 2006; Leeser, 2007; Young, 1999)

Multiple choice tests, as another research tool, are common instruments for assessing reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000). To Koda (2005), they are the most popular format used in standardized reading comprehension tests. MCQs have been employed extensively in L2 reading assessment (e.g., Bügel & Buunk, 1996; Carrell, 1987; Carrell & Wise, 1998; Oded & Walters, 2001; Park, 2004b; Yazdanpanah, 2007), and, therefore, have been coupled with the free recall test to measure the participants' reading ability.

In addition, Likert scale questionnaires and interviews are two common techniques in measuring perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs in second language teaching and learning (e.g., DeVellis, 1991; Turner, 1993), and they have been used widely in the literature (See Brown, 2006 & 2009; Richardson, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997; Yamashita, 2004, for Likert scale questionnaires, and Barkhuizen, 1998; Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008; Conteh & Toyoshima, 2005; Li & Wilhelm, 2008, for interviews). Thus, the study has applied these tools to find the answer to RQs 3A and 3B. Details on the research instruments will be revealed in Chapter 3.

## **1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Almost all pre-reading activities are teacher-directed (See Chapter 2, section for Pre-reading Tasks). In other words, the teacher initiates, and is at the center of, nearly all activities in the reading class. It is usually the teacher who prepares students to read by giving them background knowledge, familiarizing them with unfamiliar text topics and teaching them unknown vocabulary to facilitate the reading process for them and help enhance their comprehension and performance. However, experience shows that there might be situations where this teacher-centered instruction does not yield fruitful results. Consider an English language classroom in which the teacher is not qualified enough to perform as a competent teacher and play his/her facilitative role. Changing the teacher might not be the only, or easiest, way to compensate for this deficiency. Furthermore, many of us as teachers have at times experienced work with hearing-impaired students or students with hearing problems. To what extent can these students be helped to overcome their language problems, reading challenges in our case, if their only way of receiving comprehensible input from the teacher is through the eyes rather than both the eyes and the ears? There seems to be solutions for the problems of the kind through training independent readers in student-centered instruction.

The present research has attempted to find a solution through testing an alternative for common teacher-centered instruction in the reading class to find out to what extent reading instruction could be learner-centered. In order to assist one group of the study participants in comprehending unfamiliar reading passages, the researcher provided them with written background information on the texts they wanted to read, and asked them to read, independently, brainstorming questions, an introduction and explanation prior to reading each passage. This form of activities is not common in reading classes since they are traditionally undertaken orally for the most part in the form of question

and answer, concept mapping, brainstorming, providing background knowledge, and other teacher-centered pre-reading activities initiated by the teacher.

The study also attempted to evaluate students' dictionary use as an alternative for, or replacement of, teacher's conventional vocabulary instruction. Students usually use dictionaries when reading on their own, at their own pace, in the absence of the teacher. Although dictionaries are not frequently used in common reading classes because it is the teacher who, traditionally, teaches vocabulary, dictionary use is a useful strategy (See Chapter 2, section for Dictionary Use) which may compensate for teacher's insufficient vocabulary instruction.

It should be emphasized that the present research mainly focuses on the role of the teacher's instruction at the pre-reading stage rather than at the other two stages, namely, while-reading and post-reading (See Chapter 2, section for Second Language Reading Strategies, for a description of the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading phases). Therefore, this study has in fact examined only a somewhat more limited role of the teacher in an L2 reading classroom, since topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction, the variables under investigation, are normally presented at the pre-reading stage. As a matter of fact, probing into the teacher's role of monitoring students' comprehension and vocabulary learning at the while-reading stage, and exploring his/her role of evaluating students' comprehension and vocabulary knowledge at the post-reading stage are outside the scope of the present study.

In addition to statistically analyzing the idea of an alternative for teacher's instruction, the present study also asked for students' perceptions of this alternative. They were specifically asked to express their beliefs and feelings as to whether or not, or to what extent, this substitute might be practical and beneficial to them.

It should be noted that the study was carried in the Iranian context where English is learned as a foreign language and is not the medium of instruction in the educational system. As a result, the researcher is cautious about using the terms ‘EFL’, ‘L2’, and ‘second language’. According to *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (Richard & Schmidt, 2002), L2 is another term for a target language or a second language in a broad sense, which is the language a person is learning, in contrast to a first language or mother tongue. Thus, whenever the term ‘second language’ appears in the study, it does not necessarily refer to English as a second language that plays a major role in a particular country or region (ESL), rather it has been used interchangeably and synonymously with L2. It should also be noted that the results of the study, which was conducted in an EFL situation, might not be generalized to ESL contexts.

Another limitation of the study is that since the participants’ English language proficiency ranged from elementary to upper-intermediate, it is not certain whether the results could be generalized to advanced L2 reading classes. Also, only adult learners were considered in the research. Studies on younger EFL learners might lead to different results. Finally, the gender effect was not investigated in the present research. Thus, there is no evidence as to whether males or females benefit more from the idea of teacher’s substitute, which is another limitation of the study.

## **1.9 Summary**

To summarize, the present study has compared the applicability of written pre-reading background information with teacher-directed topic familiarization in an L2 situation. It has also evaluated the efficacy of students’ dictionary use against conventional teacher’s instruction of vocabulary. Furthermore, students’ perceptions of teacher-initiated topic

familiarization versus written topic familiarization, and their perceptions of teacher's vocabulary instruction as compared with students' dictionary use have been investigated.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERARUTE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses and reviews the relevant literature on the aspects of second language reading involved in the study. This includes the influence of schema theory on reading comprehension, different types of schemata, the effects of topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension, and second language reading strategies, specifically pre-reading activities and dictionary use. The literature on the teacher's role in second language teaching and learning, in general, and the role s/he might play in the reading class, in particular, will be reviewed. Finally, students' perceptions of second language teaching and learning will be reviewed and different views will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **2.1 Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension**

The role of background knowledge in reading comprehension has been formalized as schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980; Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977). The fundamental principle of schema theory is that text does not carry meaning by itself. The reader brings information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and culture, i.e. schemata to the print (Brown, 2001), and it is only as a result of an interaction between the reader's previously acquired knowledge and the text that comprehension is achieved. Much of the meaning understood from a text is not actually in the text, per se, but in the reader, in the background or schematic knowledge of the reader (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

Some studies on schema theory make a distinction between background knowledge and schemata. For example, Bartlett (1932), Adams and Collins (1979), and Rumelhart (1980) call the previously acquired knowledge the reader's 'background knowledge' whereas they introduce previously acquired knowledge structures as 'schemata'. However, L2 researchers like Alderson (2000), Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), Hudson (2007), Leeser (2007), and Nassaji (2007) sometimes equate the two notions of schemata and background knowledge, and use them interchangeably. Grabe even doubts that schema theory is much more than a metaphoric interpretation of the role of prior knowledge combined with prototype research (2008, personal correspondence).

Hudson (2007) argues that although the term *schema* is sometimes used as a singular term with *schemata* as the plural noun form, the word *schema* has been widely used in the literature "in a generic or non-count sense in terms such as 'schema theoretic' or 'types of schema'" (p. 141). He further gives an example of the schema of all the things that might take place in church, and asserts that sermon, Sunday school, and communion all belong to one schema, not to various schemata. He claims that he only uses the plural, *schemata*, when "distinctly referencing multiple instances" (p.142).

Regardless of the question of whether the proper terminology is background knowledge, schema, or schemata, research on schema theory began to appear as early as Bartlett (1932) and continued with later studies (e.g., Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). But, the relationship between schema theory and second language reading owes a lot to Patricia Carrell (e.g., Carrell, 1981; 1983; 1984a; 1984b; 1987; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell & Wise, 1998). These researchers see schemata as interlocking mental structures representing readers' knowledge. When readers process text, they integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing schemata, which influence how they recognize information as well as how they store it (Alderson, 2000).

The literature on reading distinguishes different types of schemata that the reader brings to bear on a text. The most popular characterization is the distinction between content schemata and formal schemata (Carrell, 1983), a detailed description of which sheds more light on their characteristics.

### **2.1.1 Content Schemata**

While Carrell (1983) defines content schemata as knowledge of the world, including the content area of a text, Alderson (2000) divides content schemata into world knowledge, which may or may not be relevant to the content of a particular text, and subject matter knowledge, which is directly relevant to text and topic. Content schemata are related to the factual knowledge and cultural conventions which readers are thought to possess and actively use when confronting the topic and/or content of a text (Alptekin, 2003). Despite the fact that text processing requires a large set of processing strategies, from perceptual to discourse level, it is undeniable that the activation of content knowledge in the domain of the text is crucial to comprehension (Weaver & Kintsch, 1991, cited in Dimassi, 2006).

In this context, Dimassi (2006) reports some studies, and postulates that readers do not construct the meaning of a text in vacuum. Rather, they do so against a background of relevant facts as well as linguistic and pragmatic information which text writers clearly assume when producing a text. The more readily the reader can associate text content with the appropriate knowledge sources, the faster the comprehension will be. This is possible when the text topic or content is familiar to the reader. Readers who are familiar with the content of a text, whether written in their first or second language, comprehend and recall more easily than those who are not as familiar with text topic or

content (Dimassi, 2006; Johnson, 1982). Thus, "subject matter familiarity might be expected to have a facilitating effect" in reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000, p. 44).

Different reading specialists have employed different terminology when referring to content schemata. Terms like 'prior knowledge', 'knowledge of subject matter', 'knowledge of topic', 'content knowledge', 'subject matter familiarity', 'prior knowledge of topic', 'schematic knowledge', 'domain knowledge', and 'topic familiarity' all seem to be synonymous with the more general and widely-used term 'background knowledge' (See e.g., Alderson, 2000; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell & Wise, 1998; Leeser, 2007; Nassaji, 2007). The present study has applied 'topic familiarity' following Leeser (2007), who uses the term to mean background knowledge. Therefore, when one agrees that topic familiarity is synonymous with background knowledge, s/he might argue that background knowledge activation and/or construction could be synonymous with topic familiarization, as used in the title, too.

A considerable body of research exists in second language studies which support the idea that topic familiarity facilitates performance on language comprehension. Studies on the facilitative role of topic familiarity propose that readers' background knowledge contributes to the ease with which they comprehend texts. The findings for the effects of topic familiarity on L2 reading comprehension have generally found a significant, positive effect for topic familiarity. The related literature will be discussed and reviewed in 2.2.1, 'Topic Familiarity and Reading Comprehension' section.

## **2.1.2 Formal Schemata**

According to Carrell (1983) formal schemata are knowledge of language and linguistic conventions, including knowledge of how texts are organized, and what the main features of particular genres are. Alptekin (2003) elaborates on this and explains that

formal schemata are often known as textual schemata which refer to the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts. It can include knowledge of different text types and genres, and it also includes the understanding that different types of texts use different organizations, language structures, vocabulary, grammar, levels of formality and registers. Many studies have examined the role of formal schemata in relation to readers' comprehension. Most of these studies employed similar methodologies in that participants read texts and then recalled information, for the most part in writing. Recalled information was analyzed for specific variables such as the number of propositions recalled, and temporal sequence of story components. Studies such as Bean, Potter, & Clark (1980) and Carrell (1984b) suggested that different types of text structures affected comprehension and recall. Some studies also showed that there may be differences among language groups as to which text structures facilitate recall better. For example, Carrell (1984b) showed that Arabs remembered best from expository texts with comparison structures while Asians recalled best from texts with either problem-solution or causation structures.

As another instance of formal schemata, besides text structures, syntactic knowledge, too, plays a crucial role in reading comprehension. Hudson (2007) states, "It appears self-evident that a second language reader's command of grammar is essential to comprehension of text meaning" (p. 168). He argues that one of the reasons why syntactic formal schemata are appealing to L2 researchers is the fact that this knowledge affects the ease or difficulty level of texts that second language readers may come across. However, reporting on some projects, he concludes that it is at the lowest levels of syntactic knowledge that formal knowledge of syntactic features plays the largest role. In other words, once the second language reader has reached some threshold of grammar ability, which is as yet undefined in Hudson's words, its impact is reduced in terms of text comprehension.

Still, another important subcategory of formal schemata, according to the definition given at the beginning of this section, is lexical knowledge. Knowledge of vocabulary has long been recognized to be significant in second language reading. Alderson (2000) asserts that "measures of readers' vocabulary knowledge routinely correlate highly with measures of reading comprehension, and are often, indeed, the single best predictor of text comprehension" (p. 35). He assumes that if unknown words cause a struggle between the reader and the text, the reader's comprehension will definitely be affected and the text will not be pleasing to him/her. He further reports a research by Laufer (1989) and another one by Liu and Nation (1985) showing that readers need to know 95% of the words in text to gain adequate comprehension and to be able to guess unknown words from context.

The relation between vocabulary knowledge and second language reading constitutes a considerable bulk in the present study. The role lexical knowledge plays in text comprehension is so basic that it needs close attention and elaboration. Therefore, it will be discussed in detail, and related literature will be reviewed in the section 'Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension'.

But, before any further discussion, the researcher wants to draw readers' attention to an issue, which he believes is a point of ambiguity that needs to be addressed by reading experts. As was discussed earlier, schemata have usually been equated with background knowledge. If we agree that schemata and background knowledge, or topic familiarity, to use the term employed in the present study, are the same thing, as they have been used interchangeably in L2 research, we should necessarily admit that there are two general types of background knowledge, as there are two general types of schemata, content and formal. Thus, it makes sense to maintain content background knowledge versus formal background knowledge. However, when researchers use the term background knowledge, they usually mean background knowledge of topic/content or

subject matter, and not lexical, syntactic, and textual, that is formal, background knowledge. This use of terminology contradicts the definitions of content and formal schemata. Anyhow, we leave the discussion here since it need not concern us in the present research.

## **2.2 Topic Familiarity and Vocabulary Knowledge in Reading Comprehension**

According to the interactive processing model of reading, meaning is constructed through the interaction between readers' background knowledge and the text (See Chapter 1). This model implies the importance of vocabulary as the fundamental unit of a text, and background knowledge as the component providing interpretive framework for text comprehension. A long history of research shows that topic familiarity and language proficiency, including vocabulary knowledge, significantly affect L1 and L2 reading comprehension. In this section we will review the literature on the role of topic familiarity and language proficiency in reading, and their interactions in the reading process.

### **2.2.1 Topic Familiarity and Reading Comprehension**

Research on background knowledge in reading seems to have started with the work of Sir Frederic Bartlett, *Remembering* (1932). Bartlett's hypothesis which was tested in his book was that when a person reads a story, the schemata embodying his background knowledge provide the framework for understanding the setting, the mood, the characters, and the chain of events. This justifies that readers with different background knowledge will give different interpretations to a story. Particularly, an individual who reads a story that presupposes the schemata of a foreign culture will comprehend it quite

differently from a native, and probably will make what a native would clarify as mistakes. To support his hypothesis, Bartlett offered examples from the protocols produced by educated Englishmen trying to recall the North American Indian folktale, *The War of the Ghosts*. The subjects typically modified the tale in a manner consistent with their own culture. Bartlett explained that this "tendency to rationalize ... gives to what is presented a setting and explanation" (1932, p.84).

Long after Bartlett, Anderson et al. (1977) examined the role of background knowledge in the comprehension of ambiguous texts. They asked thirty physical education students and thirty music education students to read an ambiguous passage that could be interpreted as a prison break or a wrestling match, and another ambiguous passage that could be understood as playing card or music rehearsal. Scores on multiple choice tests and free recall showed significant relationships to the subjects' background knowledge. They found that the physical education students scored more correct wrestling-consistent answers than the music students in the prison/wrestling test, whereas the music students scored more correct music-consistent answers in the card/music test. The evidence obtained in the study indicated that schemata provide the interpretive framework for comprehending discourse. In other words, people's prior knowledge influences the interpretations that they give to prose passages.

One of the earliest studies on the effects of cultural background knowledge, following Bartlett's work, is that of Steffensen, Joag-dev, & Anderson's (1979). In a research on cross-cultural perspectives on reading comprehension, Steffensen, Joag-dev, & Anderson asked American adults and Indian adults (natives of India) to read two letters describing typical Indian and American weddings. The subjects then completed 50 items from a vocabulary test, and after the vocabulary test, they were tested on verbatim recall of the letters about the weddings. Because of the cross-cultural nature of the study and gaps in the experimenters' knowledge of the foreign culture, every recall protocol

was scored by a native American (Steffensen) and a native Indian (Joag-dev). Conflicting scores were resolved by discussion. The results showed that background knowledge about the content of a discourse has a profound influence on how well the discourse will be comprehended, learned, and remembered. Steffensen, Joag-dev, & Anderson maintained that differences in content background knowledge about text material may be an important source of individual difference in reading comprehension. They further asserted that before their study, which they claimed employed a complete design, there had not been a single cross-cultural study of discourse processes with a satisfactory design.

Later, Johnson (1981) investigated the effects of the complexity of the English language and cultural origin of texts on reading comprehension. The participants of her study were 46 Iranian intermediate/advanced ESL students and 19 Americans at university level. The reading passages were a Mullah Nasr-el-Din Story from Iranian folklore, and a Buffalo Bill story from American folklore, both of which contained similar themes, although culturally distinct, yet equivalent in story construction. Half of the subjects read the original English texts of the two stories, while the other half read the same stories in adapted, simplified English. After reading the passages, they were tested for reading comprehension by having to recall the story in written form without reference to the texts, and by answering multiple choice questions on explicit and implicit information in the passages. The findings of the research suggested that the Iranian students with low English proficiency showed no significant differences in comprehension between the original and the adapted texts. They recalled propositions in an order different from that of the texts. For the comprehension of the passages, the Iranians seemed to depend primarily not on their language proficiency but on their cultural background knowledge or familiarity with the topic since their knowledge of vocabulary was reported to be relatively low. In the case of the American story, the

Iranians' schemata for a Buffalo Bill story were either nonexistent or culturally biased. Therefore, the American story was ambiguous or misinterpreted due to a lack of background knowledge. Likewise, the American subjects understood the story of their own cultural background significantly better than the one of the Iranian cultural origin. They also tended to recall the exact words of the linguistic surface structure of both texts, whereas the ESL learners did not. The linguistic and statistical analyses of the performance of both the Iranian and American subjects in Johnson's research demonstrated that cultural background knowledge is crucial to understanding a text, a fact that is illustrated by the use of cultural inferences in the immediate recall and in the multiple choice questions.

In another study, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) discussed the importance of background knowledge in the interpretation of a text. To illustrate this, they examined a mini-text from a previous research:

"The policeman held up his hand and stopped the car."

(p.557)

They argued that when L2 readers read the sentence, they might activate the schema of the traffic policeman and interpret the policeman's holding up his hand as a signal to the driver to stop. However, if the policeman were known to be Superman and the car were known to be without a driver, a completely different schema would be required to understand the text. In this case, readers might perceive the sentence as Superman's holding up his hand as the direct physical mechanism to stop the car. Thus, Carrell and Eisterhold contend that "much of the meaning understood from a text is not actually in the text, per se, but in the reader, in the background or schematic knowledge of the reader" (p.559).

Afflerbach (1990) examined the influence of prior knowledge on the reading strategies used by expert readers to identify and state the main idea of a text when the main idea is not explicit. He asked expert readers from the fields of anthropology and chemistry to read texts from familiar and unfamiliar content domain, and give reports of the strategies they used in constructing a statement of the main idea. He found that the expert readers used their background knowledge to interpret the information in the texts. They automatically constructed the main idea significantly more often when reading texts about familiar topics. Afflerbach concluded that only readers with prior knowledge of topic were able to infer/construct main idea sentences, and therefore prior knowledge might be an important factor in accurate inferring.

Yet, prior knowledge is not always a facilitating factor in second language reading. Roller and Matambo (1992) carried out an experiment to explore Zimbabwean bilingual readers' topic familiarity in reading comprehension. As one part of the research, the 80 participants of the study, who were very proficient second language readers, were asked to read a familiar passage, *Washing Clothes*, and an unfamiliar passage, *Balloon Serenade*, both of which had previously been examined by Carrell (1983). The students were instructed to write a recall after reading the passages. The results showed that the subjects performed better on the unfamiliar passage than they did on the familiar passage. This replicated Carrell's (1983) results for topic familiarity. In Carrell's study nonnative readers failed to use background knowledge, and she suggested that this was because they were linguistically bound. However, in Roller and Matambo's research, the participants were highly proficient L2 readers, and Roller and Matambo found it hard to justify the results. They thought the unfamiliar Balloon Serenade passage might be easier to recall because it had a more consistent and interrelated formal structure, and possibly because the passage differed significantly in the concreteness of nouns.

However, neither Roller and Matambo nor Carrell could determine from their data whether the effect was due to familiarity, formal structure, or concreteness.

In a fairly recent study, in contrast with Roller and Matambo's, Florencio (2004) investigated the effects of background knowledge on the reading comprehension of familiar and unfamiliar passages by EFL Brazilian university students and American university students. The participants were asked to read two passages, one of which was familiar to the Brazilian students but unfamiliar to the Americans, and the other vice versa. The subjects, then, answered multiple choice comprehension questions and worked on a cloze test without referring back to the texts. They also filled in a topic familiarity questionnaire. The results showed that prior background knowledge had a significant impact on the performance of both Brazilian and American students. Florencio's study demonstrated that topic familiarity played an important positive role in the students' reading comprehension, and moreover, it resulted in the participants' faster reading of the familiar text than the unfamiliar. In other words, the readers took less time to read the familiar passage.

Also, Dimassi (2006) studied the effects of cultural background knowledge on Iranian and Emirati undergraduate students' reading comprehension. He randomly assigned the 90 participants of the study into one control group and two experimental groups. The three groups were asked to read and recall a passage about traditional Emirati weddings, and answer multiple choice reading comprehension questions and content familiarity questionnaires. Results confirmed that not only cultural background knowledge but also language proficiency are important factors that enhance reading comprehension.

Thus, cumulatively, the above studies demonstrate that topic familiarity can affect text comprehension. More familiar topics are recalled in more detail and tend to have fewer misinterpretations than less familiar topics. The findings of studies support the view that

background knowledge facilitates the reading process and plays a significant role in comprehension. However, research consistently confirms that vocabulary knowledge is as important as, if not more important than, topic familiarity in the reading process. The facilitating role of word knowledge is so crucial that Koda (2005) maintains "Successful comprehension is heavily dependent on knowledge of individual word meanings" (p. 48). The relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension proves the critical role word knowledge plays in comprehending discourse among both L1 and L2 readers. Therefore, in the next section we will review studies on the effects of word knowledge on reading comprehension.

### **2.2.2 Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension**

A long history of research shows that vocabulary affects both L1 and L2 reading comprehension. The vocabulary formula proposed by Dale-Chall (1948), for example, was based on average sentence length and unfamiliar words. Later, Davis (1972) found that recalling word meanings was the most important factor in the comprehension of a text among several factors he found, including determining meaning from context and drawing inferences.

Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) reported studies concerned with the effects of vocabulary instruction on reading comprehension. One of the research questions they examined and attempted to find the answer to was whether vocabulary instruction has a significant effect on children's comprehension of text. From the research they reviewed, they concluded that vocabulary instruction did appear to have a significant effect on passage comprehension, indicating that vocabulary knowledge generally facilitates growth in reading comprehension.

In a series of three studies, Stahl et al. (1989) investigated the effects of prior knowledge and difficult vocabulary on text comprehension among junior high school students in the United States. They found that although their main effects were significant, topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge did not compensate for each other. In their study, vocabulary difficulty affected literal comprehension and answering textually explicit questions, whereas background knowledge affected recall of idea units. The results also showed that pre-teaching vocabulary and giving students relevant information about an unfamiliar topic appeared to facilitate comprehension, and resulted in the participants' better recall of more information, even though such information was of minor importance in the passage.

In the same line, Tuero (1996) attempted to investigate how vocabulary knowledge related to comprehension and information recall in foreign language reading. The participants of her study were high school students who had been studying Spanish for at least four years. They were asked to read two passages in Spanish, one with a familiar topic and the other unfamiliar. Some of the participants read an easy version of the passage which contained known words, whereas the others read a difficult version which contained words that were less frequently used. After reading the passages, the subjects wrote an immediate free recall, and then answered a set of twelve multiple choice questions to evaluate their comprehension. The results demonstrated that vocabulary difficulty affected the students' recalls of central and supporting idea units and their answers to textually explicit questions. Moreover, prior knowledge influenced the students' recalls of supporting idea units and their answers to script-based questions. Tuero did not find any interaction between vocabulary difficulty and topic familiarity, neither in the recalls nor in comprehension measures. Her study also illustrated that difficult vocabulary affected the development of a coherent text in the students' recall protocols. Tuero concluded that vocabulary knowledge and topic familiarity functioned

independently and affected reading in distinct ways. In other words, although prior knowledge significantly facilitates comprehension, vocabulary development is as crucial to foreign language reading, too.

In a comparative study of L2 listening comprehension and L2 reading comprehension, Park (2004a) investigated the roles of linguistic knowledge and background knowledge in these receptive skills. The participants in this study were 168 students enrolled in an English conversation course in a Korean university. They had already been studying English for at least six years in secondary school. The students took four tests: a linguistic knowledge test (including a grammar test and a vocabulary test), a listening test, a reading test, and a background knowledge test. One of the findings of the study was that linguistic knowledge, especially vocabulary knowledge, played a significant role in L2 reading comprehension. Compared to linguistic knowledge, background knowledge produced only a moderate effect on L2 comprehension. This was unexpected to Park because it was in contrast with most of the other previous studies on the effect of prior knowledge on reading. He was not certain why background knowledge played only a moderate role, but his assumption was that it might be because the participants relied too much on linguistic knowledge in text comprehension. Another finding was that the interaction between linguistic knowledge and background knowledge was moderate in L2 reading comprehension, one reason being that, as mentioned above, the role of background knowledge in second language reading did not reach a level of significance.

A more recent study on the role of vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension is by Webb (2009). He investigated the effects of pre-learning L2 vocabulary on reading comprehension and writing. The participants in the study were 71 native speakers of Japanese from three EFL classes at a Japanese university. They were assigned to two experimental groups to examine the effects of receptive and productive learning of word

pairs on reading comprehension and writing. The students were required to take four tests measuring writing, reading comprehension, and productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge. Some findings of the study indicated that L2 students who had studied target vocabulary might be able to understand sentences containing those words. The participants demonstrated that they understood 80% of the sentences on the comprehension test. Furthermore, the results confirmed that receptive vocabulary learning might be more beneficial than productive vocabulary learning for reading comprehension.

The research reviewed thus far clearly shows the importance of topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge to second language reading. Insufficient background knowledge and inadequate word knowledge seem to result in students' "reading problems" (Carrell, 1984a, p. 334). This implies that the two kinds of knowledge should be taught together to minimize their effects on the comprehension of written texts. The teaching of reading comprehension needs to be more focused on activating/constructing students' background knowledge and vocabulary instruction, and failure to use the two kinds of knowledge could be mainly attributed to the lack of instruction in class (Park, 2004a). Since the most important problems teachers face in a reading class are the difficult vocabulary and topic unfamiliarity (Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008), providing background knowledge and introducing unknown vocabulary for the reader seem to be the most obvious strategies for the language teacher (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). In the next section, we will discuss reading strategies and their implications in the reading classroom.

## **2.3 Second Language Reading Strategies**

According to Barnett (1988), reading strategies are the comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read. They may include skimming, scanning, guessing, recognizing cognates and word families, reading for meaning, predicting, activating background knowledge, making inferences, following references, and separating main ideas from supporting ideas. Barnett found that students who consciously used reading strategies performed better on reading tasks than students who did not.

Williams (1987) holds that "Simply providing learners with a text and asking them to read it is unlikely to achieve the desired engagement on the part of the students" (p. 2). Teachers must provide students with strategies, which he refers to as activities, in order to generate students' motivation, engagement, and effort in the reading classroom. Williams divides these activities into three phases: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading, the most important of which being the pre-reading phase. According to him, the pre-reading phase introduces and arouses students' interest in the topic, motivates them, and provides them with necessary language knowledge preparation for the text. In fact, the pre-reading phase attempts to activate students' existing background knowledge, or build new knowledge on the topic. The purpose of the next phase, the reading phase, is to enable the reader to extract information from the text, and the post-reading phase aims to consolidate or reflect upon what has been read, relating the text to the learner's own knowledge or opinions.

In line with Williams, but in finer detail, Paris et al. (1996, cited in Hudson, 2007) present reading strategies enhancing comprehension in the form of a three-phase design, pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading strategies. These strategies which are applied prior to, during, and after reading are summarized in Table 2.1.

Similarly, but less complicated and thus perhaps more practical, Urquhart and Weir (1998) distinguish between pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading strategies. They also refer to them as planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies, respectively. Urquhart and Weir suggest that their proposed pre-reading strategies include *previewing* and *prediction*, which can help activate schemata prior to the reading process and contribute to this process. They also identify two while-reading strategies and practices, namely *self-questioning* and *self-monitoring* to support students to engage independently and actively with the text. Their post-test activities involve *evaluation* of the text, relating it to students' knowledge and experiences.

**Table 2.1: Comprehension Strategies (Paris et al., 1996, cited in Hudson, 2007, p. 108)**

Pre-reading strategies	While-reading strategies	Post-reading strategies
1 Establishing a good physical environment	1 Checking comprehension throughout the reading activity	1 Appreciation of text and writer
2 Setting reading purpose	2 Identifying the main idea	2 Revisit pre-reading expectations
3 Accessing prior knowledge	3 Making inferences	3 Review notes, glosses, text markings
4 Asking questions based on the title	4 Recognizing patterns in the text structure	4 Reflect on text understanding
5 Semantic mapping	5 Looking for discourse markers	5 Consolidate and integrate information
6 Skimming for general idea	6 Monitoring vocabulary knowledge	6 Review of information
7 Previewing the text: examining headings, pictures, title, etc.	7 Predicting the main idea of each paragraph	7 Elaborate and evaluate
8 Reviewing instructions	8 Glossing	8 Determine what additional information is needed

9 Identifying text structure and genre	9 Comparing what is read with what is known	9 Apply new information to the task at hand
10 Determining what is known about the topic	10 Evaluating value of what is being learned	10 Relate the text to own experience
11 Predicting what might be read	11 Rereading text or skipping ahead	11 Critique the text

The focus of the present study is mainly on the application of pre-reading strategies in the classroom. Specifically, the researcher attempts to investigate the effects of the teacher's instruction at the pre-reading stage in familiarizing students with text topic, i.e., activating/constructing students' background knowledge, and introducing difficult vocabulary of text. Therefore, in the next section, most common and effective pre-reading activities will be discussed, and related literature will be reviewed.

### 2.3.1 Pre-reading Tasks

Floyd and Carrell (1987) contend that before attempting a reading passage, second language teachers must provide students with appropriate schemata they are lacking and must teach students how to construct bridges between existing knowledge and new knowledge. Chen and Graves refer to this as "bridging the gap between the text's content and the reader's schemata" (1995, p. 664). When teachers arm students with the proper tools to take an intelligent approach to a text in the target language, students become more confident about their ability to absorb meaning from a text, they recall what they know about a given topic, and they think analytically about what they know. This may happen in the pre-reading stage of a reading class (Young, 1991). Pre-reading refers to pedagogical techniques whereby readers are engaged prior to reading in order to facilitate text comprehension (Tudor, 1990). The purposes of pre-reading activities

are to provide key or difficult vocabulary, activate appropriate schemata, arouse interest and motivation for reading, and establish expectations about a text to read (Carrell, 1984a; Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough, 1988).

Different researchers have classified different types of pre-reading activities. For example, to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), *providing background information* and *previewing* content for the reader seem to be the most obvious strategies for the language teacher. They also suggest that the previewing activity can also include *presenting difficult vocabulary*. Carrell (1984a) emphasizes the importance of *activating background knowledge*, and *vocabulary instruction* as pre-reading activities. She believes that “vocabulary study should precede reading and should be part of the overall ESL curriculum and *prereading* (italics in the original copy) activities” (p. 337). She also considers *dictionary use* as a fruitful part of these activities. In Tudor's (1990) study, the four pre-reading activities were *summary*, *pre-questions*, *topic familiarity*, and *vocabulary teaching*.

Lazar (1993) identifies four pre-reading activities: *previewing*, *providing background knowledge*, *pre-questioning*, and *brainstorming*. Chen and Graves (1995) focus on *previewing* and *providing background knowledge*. Urquhart and Weir (1998) view *previewing* and *prediction* as the most important pre-reading strategies. Ajideh (2003; 2006) classifies *previewing*, *questioning*, and *semantic mapping* as common pre-reading activities. Park (2004b) used *providing background knowledge* and *vocabulary instruction* as pre-reading activities in his study.

There is a considerable body of research on the effective and facilitating role of pre-reading activities in text comprehension. Johnson (1982) investigated the effects of building background knowledge and presenting unfamiliar vocabulary on reading comprehension. The participants of the study consisted of 72 students from the

advanced reading classes at a university in the United States, and were from 23 nationalities. They were given a passage to read on the celebration of Halloween, which contained familiar and unfamiliar information. In the meantime, a vocabulary list was provided for the students to work on either as a pre-reading activity or a while-reading activity, or both. The participants were randomly assigned to four groups with the following conditions:

"Group 1: reading the passage without a vocabulary list to study before reading or to refer to while reading.

Group 2: studying the definitions of the target words before reading but not being able to refer to this list while reading.

Group 3: reading the passage with the target words glossed in the passage.

Group 4: studying the target vocabulary words before reading with the definitions of the target words glossed in the passage." (p. 507)

After the subjects read the passage, they were asked to write an immediate recall without reference to the text, and to recognize sentences containing true information from the passage. Two weeks after the experiment, the students were given a vocabulary cloze test on the text. The results indicated that the subjects in all four groups wrote significantly better recalls of the familiar information in the passage than of unfamiliar information. In other words, topic familiarity resulted in the students' significant scores in comprehension. However, the exposure to meanings of difficult vocabulary in the passage did not seem to affect significantly the comprehension of the readers in any of the treatment groups.

Hudson (1982) examined the role played by induced schemata in L2 reading comprehension. The subjects of his study were 93 adult ESL students who were

proficient readers in their native language. Hudson designed three methods of intervention to provide students with text, and termed them as: pre-reading (PRE), vocabulary (VOC), and read-test/read-test (RT). The PRE method was designed to explicitly induce schemata before reading, and to indicate the effects of background knowledge activities. The VOC method was designed to provide difficult words which were essential for the comprehension of text, indicating the effectiveness of lexical knowledge in pre-reading activities. The RT method was designed to test the effectiveness of utilizing local context to interpret schemata. The texts to be read were nine graded reading passages, for each of which, pre-reading activities were developed. These pre-reading activities included 1) a set of pictures about the general topic of the passage, and 2) a word list for each passage, including essential vocabulary items. Each reading passage was followed by a ten-item multiple choice reading comprehension test. The results showed that the VOC and RT treatments were less effective than the PRE treatment at the beginning and intermediate levels, but were as effective or more effective at the advanced level. Thus, Hudson found that there seemed to be differences between levels of proficiency in the abilities to form schemata from printed input.

In the same context, Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988) explored the effects of pre-reading activities on EFL reading comprehension by Brazilian college students. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the reading comprehension of EFL students would be improved when they did pictorial context, vocabulary pre-teaching, and pre-questioning as three different pre-reading activities. The participants were 40 EFL students at a college in Brazil, who were randomly assigned to four groups of 10. They were asked to read four English passages, and answer 8 open-ended and 10 multiple choice questions immediately after each passage. The findings demonstrated that although the three pre-reading activities investigated in the study significantly facilitated EFL students' comprehension, vocabulary pre-teaching was less effective

than pre-questioning and pictorial context. The results also showed a significant treatment effect on students' reading comprehension only in the multiple choice tests, not in the open-ended tests.

Stahl et al. (1989), as reviewed before, examined the effects of prior knowledge and difficult vocabulary in the comprehension of unfamiliar text. One of their findings was that pre-teaching vocabulary and providing students with relevant information about an unfamiliar topic appeared to facilitate comprehension and resulted in students' recall of more information, both of major and minor importance, in the passage.

Tudor (1990) examined the effects of pre-reading strategies in text comprehension, and the interaction between pre-reading and proficiency level by EFL university students at three levels. The pre-reading activities in the study were summary, pre-questions, topic familiarization, and vocabulary introduction. The findings indicated that although the four pre-reading strategies exercised a facilitating effect on text processing, only summary and pre-questions attained significant levels. Tudor also found that the pre-reading effect was larger at low levels than at high levels of proficiency. However, no significant interaction effect between pre-reading activities and proficiency level was reported.

Dole et al. (1991) compared the effects of two pre-reading instructional treatments on students' comprehension of narrative and expository texts. They randomly assigned the subjects of the study, 63 fifth-grade students in the United States, to three groups. All of the three groups were exposed to three treatment conditions: 1) a teacher-directed condition in which teachers read prepared scripts designed to provide students with important information necessary for understanding the texts, 2) an interactive condition in which teachers activated and discussed students' prior knowledge about the topics of the texts, and 3) a control condition in which no pre-reading instruction was provided.

The students were given three narrative and three expository texts to read. Also, to control for the effects of instructor, three teachers taught across the groups. The results showed that the teacher-directed condition was more effective than the interactive condition at enhancing comprehension, and both of the treatments were superior to the third condition, i.e., no pre-reading instruction. Dole et al. suggested that the reasons why the teacher-directed condition was more effective might be because it focused only on the most important information necessary for understanding the text, and it included direct and explicit instruction. Another reason might be that the teacher-directed condition was more typical of traditional pre-reading instruction and therefore more familiar to the students.

Chen and Graves (1995) examined the effects of previewing and providing background knowledge on Taiwanese college students' comprehension of American short stories. The participants of the study were 243 freshman students who were randomly assigned to four groups, and read two short stories. Before reading each story, the students in group 1 listened to a 200-word preview, group 2 listened to a 200-word presentation of background knowledge, and group 3 listened to both the preview and the background knowledge presentation. Group 4, the control group, read each story without any pre-reading assistance. There was a pretest and posttest condition for each short story. The pretest was designed to measure students' background knowledge and culture specific information required for understanding the story. In the posttest, after reading each short story, the students were required to answer short-answer and multiple choice questions. After the students completed the second story and its posttest, during the last hour of the study, they completed a questionnaire to assess students' overall feelings about the pre-reading treatment they received and their reactions to specific aspects of the treatment. This questionnaire consisted of 8-10 statements on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. There was also an open-

ended attitude question to allow the students to express themselves freely about the treatment and the instruction. The results of the posttest indicated strong positive effects of the previewing and combined treatments on students' reading comprehension. However, background knowledge treatment showed weak positive effects on text comprehension. Also, students' responses to the Likert scale questionnaire and the open-ended question demonstrated that they generally had positive attitudes towards all the experimental treatments.

Ming (1997) compared induced content schemata with induced linguistic schemata to see which was more beneficial for Malaysian ESL students. The subjects in the study were 47 Malay students studying at UKM, who were divided into two groups of LP (low proficiency) and AP (average proficiency) students, based on their reading scores in the university English Language Placement Test. The materials were three sets of reading passages, with two passages for each set, totaling six passages. Ming developed two types of pre-reading tasks for each reading passage and, following Hudson's (1982) study, termed them as the PRE treatment, for the pre-reading activities, and the VOC treatment, for the vocabulary pre-teaching tasks. The PRE treatment involved developing a set of three pictures about the general topic of the passage and a set of questions about the pictures. The VOC treatment involved developing a word list which contained 10 essential vocabulary items taken from each passage, together with their meanings in English. A comprehension test consisting of 9 multiple choice questions was developed for each passage. It included three textually explicit, three textually implicit, and three script-based questions. The results showed that the AP readers performed better, although not statistically significant, than the LP readers in the PRE treatment. However, in the VOC treatment, the AP readers performed significantly better than the LP readers. It was also revealed that the vocabulary treatment was more effective than the pre-reading treatment for low proficiency readers while both types of

treatments were equally effective for the average proficiency readers depending on question types.

In another study, Park (2004b) examined the effects of vocabulary pre-teaching and providing background knowledge on L2 reading comprehension by 180 high school students learning English in Korea. The participants were randomly divided into three groups, each group consisting of low achievement level and high achievement level students. The three groups included 1) the vocabulary group, which received vocabulary pre-teaching right before taking the reading comprehension test to help comprehend the meaning of the difficult words to be examined in the texts, 2) the background knowledge group, which received background knowledge about the texts of reading comprehension to help connect the students' background knowledge and the texts, and 3) the control group, which received no treatment. The reading comprehension tests consisted of four texts, with 8 multiple choice items for each text. The students were also required to answer a background knowledge test and a vocabulary test before taking the reading comprehension tests. The results confirmed that both vocabulary pre-teaching and providing background knowledge significantly contributed to L2 reading comprehension. Another finding of the study was that vocabulary pre-teaching was more effective, although below a significant level, than providing background knowledge. Park also found that the students benefited from vocabulary pre-teaching and providing background knowledge according to their achievement level. In fact, there was a significant interaction between treatment and achievement level, with treatment effects being larger in the high achievement level than the low achievement level. The last finding of Park's study was that the interaction effects between treatment and text difficulty were greater in the high achievement level than in the low achievement level, suggesting that the texts of the reading comprehension tests might be

beyond students' proficiency level, and that text difficulty should be a factor to consider to improve pre-reading effects.

In a slightly different vein, Alessi and Dwyer (2008) examined the role of vocabulary assistance in 76 undergraduate students taking intermediate Spanish at a university in the United States. The purpose of the study was to investigate and contrast two vocabulary assistance techniques: providing a pre-reading vocabulary exercise versus providing a particular type of glossing (contextualized translation to the reader's L1) during reading. The participants were divided into four groups and were instructed to read a Spanish-language newspaper article on a computer in the university's foreign language computer lab. One group received the pre-reading practice on the key vocabulary in the Spanish-language newspaper article. Another group received during-reading assistance in the form of hypertext glossing of contextualized L1 translation. Group three received both types of assistance, and the control group read the newspaper article without any form of assistance. The students in the control group were asked to use their print bilingual Spanish-English dictionaries. An equal number of computers had been programmed to run the *reading-only* condition, the *hypertext-reading* condition, the *practice-before-reading* condition, and the *practice-plus-hypertext* condition. After reading the newspaper article, the participants answered five short-essay questions, and then completed a four-point Likert-scale questionnaire on their opinions about this learning activity. The findings indicated that reading performance was significantly better for those students receiving vocabulary assistance during reading, but not for those receiving it before reading. The researchers also found that pre-reading vocabulary activities seemed to speed up reading without affecting comprehension whereas vocabulary assistance during reading appeared to improve comprehension without affecting speed.

A fairly recent study on the effects of pre-reading instruction seems to be Webb (2009), which was partly reviewed earlier when discussing the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. The participants of the study were 71 Japanese EFL university students who were divided into two experimental groups. As a pre-reading task, one group studied 15 word pairs receptively, and the other studied the same 15 word pairs productively. Four tests measuring writing, reading comprehension, and productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge were administered after the treatment. One of the study findings showed that L2 students who had studied target vocabulary as the pre-reading task understood 80% of the sentences on the comprehension test which contained the target vocabulary.

The research on the effects of different types of pre-reading activities reviewed above illustrates the importance and facilitating role of pre-reading tasks in reading comprehension. However, one of the useful pre-reading strategies that seems to be neglected is the use of dictionary for looking up the meaning of unknown words prior to reading a text. Although Carrell (1984a) suggested that dictionaries might be fruitfully used as part of pre-reading activities, little or no research has been carried out on the effects of dictionary use as a pre-reading task. However, several studies have considered dictionaries as essential instruments in efficient reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. In the next section, we will discuss the efficacy of dictionary use, and review related research.

### **2.3.2 Dictionary Use**

There are different views about the role of dictionaries, either bilingual or monolingual, in language pedagogy. Some teachers see dictionaries as an obstacle that slows down the reading and learning process while others place dictionaries as the single most

important language learning tool. Teachers' views on dictionary use do not always seem to be based on research findings (Luppescu & Day, 1993). What research has confirmed so far is a view between the two extreme views mentioned above (Hudson, 2007). What determines the effectiveness of dictionaries are the context of the learner, the learner's proficiency, the type of the word that is looked up, and the importance of the word for the text comprehension (Hudson, 2007). Some of the relevant research will be reviewed below.

Several researchers view dictionaries as essential to efficient vocabulary learning. Luppescu and Day (1993) focused on the contribution to vocabulary learning of the use of bilingual dictionaries during reading. The subjects were 293 EFL university students in Japan, who were randomly assigned to a treatment group of 145 students, and a control group of 148 students. The researchers selected a short story previously used in another study, which contained 17 target words identified as words that the subjects in that study did not know or found difficult. The participants in Luppescu and Day's study were given the short story and asked to read it. They were not told in advance that there would be any kind of a test. The students were told to take as much time as they needed to read the passage. As part of the reading rate study, the students in both groups were asked to note the time when they started to read and the time they finished the passage. Each of the students in the treatment group had a bilingual English-Japanese dictionary whereas the students in the control group were not permitted to use dictionaries. The results of a vocabulary multiple choice test demonstrated that the Japanese EFL subjects performed significantly better when they were allowed to use a dictionary than those who were not. However, some items were harder for the group that used dictionaries. Luppescu and Day explained that this tendency might be because the students who were unable to locate the appropriate gloss in the dictionary were misled as to the meaning of

the word. The results also showed that the students who did not use dictionaries read nearly twice as quickly as the group that used a dictionary.

Hulstijn (1993) examined the types of unknown words in a text that provoked students to use a dictionary. The participants were eighty-two relatively advanced Dutch high school students, forty-four in experimental group 1, and thirty-eight in experimental group 2. They read a chapter of a novel, and were asked to answer 8 comprehension questions. Eight words of the text were replaced with pseudo-words in a way that it was not possible to answer the comprehension questions correctly without knowing the meaning of the pseudo-words. There were also eight additional pseudo-words in the text the meaning of which were not related to the comprehension questions. The first eight and the second eight pseudo-words were labeled plus relevant and minus relevant, respectively. Four of the plus relevant words and four of the minus relevant words could be inferred from context whereas the remaining eight words could not. The participants read the novel chapter on a computer and had access to an online dictionary. The results showed that the relevant words were more often checked than the irrelevant words. Furthermore, Hulstijn had predicted that inferable words would be looked up less frequently than non-inferable words only if the words were relevant. However, inferable words turned out to be looked up whether or not they were connected with the comprehension questions. In this study, the readers looked up most unknown words, regardless of whether they were relevant or not.

In another study supporting the positive role of dictionary use, Knight (1994) investigated the effect of dictionary access on reading comprehension. 112 students in intermediate-level Spanish classes in a university in the United States were grouped according to verbal ability level, and were randomly assigned to two groups with the reading conditions of dictionary access and no dictionary access. Four authentic Spanish articles were selected for the readings, each of which contained 12 unknown words. The

articles were divided into two sets of two readings each. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the reading sets, with a dictionary group and a non-dictionary group, and read the assigned texts on a computer. After reading the articles, the subjects wrote recalls of the texts in English of what they could remember. Then, they took unannounced vocabulary tests. Two weeks later, the subjects were given delayed vocabulary tests on their target words. The results showed that the dictionary group scored higher than the non-dictionary group, and the high verbal ability group identified more meanings than the low verbal ability group. Furthermore, the dictionary group scored significantly higher on the recall comprehension measure.

Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus (1996) explored the influence of marginal glosses and dictionary use on incidental vocabulary learning by advanced foreign language students. 78 Dutch students who were advanced learners of French as an L2 were given a short story to read. They were assigned to three conditions of Marginal Glosses (MG), Dictionary Use (D), and Control (C). The subjects were instructed to read the text and prepare to answer comprehension questions. However, instead, they were tested for their knowledge of 16 words which had been previously selected as targets. The students were not told in advance that they would later be tested on their knowledge of the word meanings in the text. They were only told that they would have to answer comprehension questions after reading. The researchers wanted to turn away the students' attention from the selected unknown words and direct their attention towards an understanding of the whole text. "This was done to create conditions conducive to incidental vocabulary learning" (p. 331). Therefore, instead of having to answer comprehension questions for which they had prepared, the students were tested on their knowledge of vocabulary. Some findings of the study revealed that marginal glosses resulted in much better retention scores than dictionary use. The MG group generally performed better than the D group. In fact, the subjects in the D group seldom used their

dictionary; they looked up only 12% to 15% of the target words. However, when students in the D group looked up a word, their chance of remembering its meaning was greater than the average retention in the MG group.

Hayati and Fattahzadeh (2006) compared the effects of monolingual dictionaries with bilingual dictionaries on vocabulary recall and retention of EFL learners. 60 undergraduate EFL students studying at a university in Iran were randomly assigned to two groups of bilingual dictionary use and monolingual dictionary use, based on their scores on the TOEFL test. The participants in the study were given a short passage and were asked to read it for meaning. One group used a bilingual dictionary and the other group used a monolingual dictionary. They were not told in advance that there would be any kind of test on the reading. The subjects were allowed to take as much time as they needed to read the text. They were also asked to observe the time they started to read and the time they finished. The researchers had prepared a test of 14 vocabulary items of supply-definition type, which was meant to be taken three times: once immediately after reading the passage as an immediate recall test, the second time after two weeks as a delayed vocabulary recall test, and the third time two weeks after the second as a vocabulary retention test to assess the subjects' word retention as well as validate the results. The findings indicated that dictionary type had no significant effect on students' vocabulary recall and retention. The two groups learned nearly the same number of words while reading whether they used a bilingual or a monolingual dictionary. The results also showed that the bilingual dictionary users finished the reading task at a greater speed than the monolingual dictionary users did.

In a recent study on dictionary use, Prichard (2008) determined how selective Japanese EFL learners were when reading for general comprehension. The participants were 34 high-intermediate and advanced female university students in Japan. They were asked to read and summarize three authentic reading texts of various genres, which varied in

length (382, 420, and 1120 words). One week before the test, the students were given a list of the words in the target readings, and they marked whether or not they knew the words' meanings. This was done to estimate the participants' knowledge of the words in the reading texts. On the day of the test, the subjects read the three passages on a Microsoft Word document while checking vocabulary definitions in an internet-based bilingual English-Japanese dictionary. The students had 1 hour and 15 minutes to read the passages and write a summary. When the students were finished with the task, they printed out the word document and gave it to the researcher. Since each word clicked on was automatically underscored by the Microsoft Word program as a followed link, the hard copy revealed which words were checked in the online dictionary by each participant. The results indicated that high-intermediate and advanced learners used the dictionary selectively as to whether to look up a word or not. However, one-third of the participants in the study used the dictionary excessively. One-fourth of the words consulted in the dictionary neither were relevant to the main points in the passage nor were frequent words. Most of the participants could not complete the task on time because they relied on the dictionary too much. They could have performed more quickly and efficiently if they had used other reading strategies such as guessing vocabulary from context or ignoring technical words not essential to the texts' main points. Prichard concluded that some learners might benefit from training in selective dictionary use.

As reviewed above, research on the employment of pre-reading tasks and dictionary use has emphasized a positive facilitating effect of these two reading comprehension strategies in the reading class. However, different readers might not benefit from the same reading strategies, and they seem to approach reading tasks in different ways, some of which appear to lead to better comprehension (Tercanlioglu, 2004). Research has shown that learners can be instructed to use appropriate reading strategies to help

them improve comprehension and recall (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989). It is believed that the role the teacher plays in reading instruction is significant in the degree of the effectiveness of a reading program (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007). Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of teachers' contribution to the reading class, we devote the next section to the teacher's role in enhancing students' comprehension of texts.

## **2.4 Teacher's Role in the Reading Class: The Problems**

"Methodology aside, the teacher is the most important element in a reading class, for her attitude influences students and their performance" (Mahon, 1986, p. 98). The teacher in a reading program is often faced with the problem of students who do not always recognize the difficulties they face in an academic program, but who experience frustration when these difficulties are encountered. The role of the teacher is to facilitate reading, trying to get students to read and develop skills aimed at improving their ability to read, and helping them overcome their difficulties by supporting their efforts (Grabe, 1986). Jensen (1986) prepared a list of the teacher's functions which might assist the teacher in enhancing students' performance in the reading class. They included:

- “1. making students aware of the importance of reading in higher education;
- 2. building students' self-confidence in their reading ability;
- 3. sustaining student motivation;
- 4. supplying background information for texts;
- 5. reinforcing good reading habits;
- 6. teaching text-appropriate strategies;

7. reminding students of the strategies of fluent readers;
8. pushing students' reading rates/acting as time keeper;
9. providing individualization and one-to-one contact;
10. choosing appropriate texts" (p. 122).

Jensen holds that "The importance of the role of the instructor should not be underemphasized" (p. 122). It is true that students learn to read by reading, but it is not enough to put them in a classroom alone with a bunch of reading materials. Students must be introduced to strategies and skills by a competent and enthusiastic teacher who is knowledgeable and aware of the importance of reading. Also Ghiretti et al. (2007) contend that the instructor's responsibility is not to simply expose students to a variety of strategies. Teachers should assist them in identifying effective reading strategies based on text variables, providing students with instruction which is as learner-centered as possible (p. 50).

It was stated earlier that the most important problems instructors face in the reading class are unfamiliar topic and unknown vocabulary (See Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008). Considering the first problem, teachers might overcome students' topic unfamiliarity by activating or constructing students' background knowledge prior to reading a text through pre-reading activities (See section 2.3.1), thereby preparing students to read and understand a text. For this purpose, research suggests a number of pre-reading tasks such as previewing, activating/building background knowledge, question and answer, brainstorming, and summarizing.

However, almost all pre-reading activities are teacher-directed, to use Dole et al.'s (1991) term. In other words, it is the teacher who initiates and is at the center of the pre-reading practices such as previewing, summarizing, brainstorming, etc. But should topic

familiarization be necessarily done by the teacher? What if the teacher is absent in the reading process? Is there any substitute for the teacher in the process of background knowledge activation/construction? Unfortunately, to date, there is no data on the effectiveness of the reading teacher, his/her presence at, or absence from, the classroom, and his/her influence in the pre-reading phase. The researcher believes this is a gap in second language reading literature, which the present study has sought to fill.

To investigate the problem, the researcher decided to find an alternative for the teacher's introduction of text topic in the pre-reading phase. After careful examination, and carrying out a pilot study, it was decided to explore and examine the applicability and efficacy of printed input, to use Hudson's (1982) term, in the form of written explanations or introductions to texts, used as a pre-reading activity. The study compared the effectiveness of the teacher's initiation and centrality in pre-reading tasks, i.e., teacher-initiated pre-reading instruction, with the practicality and usefulness of printed background knowledge activating information, intended to help students read independently through learner-centered instruction. The purpose was to find out to what extent teacher-directed topic familiarization, as compared with printed input meant to activate/build students' prior knowledge, enhances students' performance in comprehension and recall.

The second most important problem that teachers face in the reading class is unknown vocabulary. Knowing appropriate vocabulary is so essential to good reading that Grabe (in Anderson, 2008) considers it as a top priority for second language teachers of reading to be aware of. He posits that "Explicit teaching of vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies is an important role for teachers in the classroom" (p. 133). In this context, Nation (2008) states:

The positive effects of vocabulary teaching are that it can provide help when learners feel it most needed. This is particularly true for vocabulary teaching that occurs in the context of message-focused activities involving listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and where the teaching deals with items that learners see as being very relevant for the activity. (p. 97)

However, the main problem with vocabulary teaching, Nation adds, is that only a few words and a small part of what is required to know a word can be dealt with at any one time. This inadequacy might be compensated for through dictionary use in the classroom.

According to Zimmerman (2009), one of the word learning strategies that teachers can use to train independent word learners is using the dictionary (See 2.4.2). But, where do dictionaries stand in the reading class? Is it possible to replace teachers with dictionaries for vocabulary introduction? To date, there is no research reflecting on the role of the reading teacher as compared with the efficacy of dictionary use in vocabulary introduction. This is another gap that the present study has attempted to fill. Grabe once said that dictionary work will not yield the same results as teacher's instruction unless teacher's instruction is inefficient (2009, personal correspondence). However, his comment does not seem to be based on empirical evidence since no research has yet been reported confirming this.

In addition to investigating the two variables discussed thus far, i.e., the teacher's direction in topic familiarization, and his/her role in vocabulary introduction, the present study has also probed students' perceptions as to the teacher's effect in the reading class. The purpose was to examine students' feelings and ideas about the teacher's role, and find out their expectations from their teachers. We will discuss students' perceptions in the next section.

## **2.5 Students' Perceptions**

Students' perceptions may cover a wide range of factors that are related to their second language experiences, including opinions about teachers, views of instructional activities and approaches, and expressions of satisfaction with their progress in the classroom (Tse, 2000). Learners' perceptions, sometimes referred to as attitudes (Barkhuizen, 1998), of specific classroom activities or teacher-student interactions can affect decisions on how best to modify and employ various techniques and methods in the classroom (Chávez, 1984).

Barkhuizen comments that second language teachers regularly make many decisions in their classroom about language teaching/learning processes, including activities that their students might enjoy, or find effective and useful. However, he wonders why the learners themselves are rarely asked about their preferences, and usually not involved in the process of this decision-making. Allwright (1984) asserts that "many teachers seem to find it difficult to accept their learners as people with a positive contribution to make to the instructional process" (p. 167). Nevertheless, Nunan (1989) insists that "no curriculum can claim to be truly learner-centred unless the learner's subjective needs and perceptions relating to the processes of learning are taken into account" (p. 177). Block (1994) concludes, in his study of teacher/learner perceptions of task purpose, that learners definitely have an awareness of what goes on in class, and that teachers should therefore attempt to adjust their task orientation to that of the learners. Williams and Burden (1997) claim that "learners' perceptions and interpretations ... have been found to have the greatest influence on achievement" (p. 98), and contend that sometimes students' perceptions of teacher behaviors do not correspond with their teachers' intentions.

One of the prominent researchers on perceptions is Horwitz (1985, 1988). She developed a questionnaire entitled the "Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory" (BALLI), and administered it to both pre-service language teachers in her methodology class and elementary language students. In a similar study, Kern (1995) administered the BALLI to compare second language students' beliefs about language learning with those of their teachers. Both Horwitz and Kern found out that elementary students have unrealistic expectations and perspectives about second language learning.

Later, Barkhuizen (1998) attempted to discover learners' perceptions of ESL classroom teaching/learning activities in a South African context, utilizing a multi-method, qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. He designed a questionnaire and randomly distributed it to 240 students from Grades 8-11 of a high school in South Africa through their teachers in their English classes. All the questionnaires were completed on the same day during the last term of the school year. Furthermore, the researcher asked one class from each grade to write a one-page composition with the title: "What I like and dislike about English classes at school." He received 25 to 40 compositions from each grade. Barkhuizen also observed five English classes in action. In addition, he conducted in-depth interviews with the five English teachers teaching Grades 8-11 about English teaching in the school, their teacher education, their approach to teaching English, their familiarity with the ESL syllabus, and especially about the language teaching/learning and testing activities in their classes. The teachers were also asked about their perceptions of activity types, and about what they thought their students' perceptions of various types were. Finally, a research assistant conducted group interviews with six students from each of Grades 8-11 (two each from the top, middle, and bottom of the class, based on the grades for work done through the year). The students were engaged in general discussion about learning English and their class activities, and were asked to elaborate on some of the points raised in their compositions

and questionnaire. Barkhuizen concluded from his study that students should be encouraged to express their perceptions overtly, both for themselves and their teachers. This would allow them to consider why they are participating in certain activities, how these activities help them learn English, and what use they can make of them both for academic purposes and outside of classroom. He also recommends that teachers regularly monitor their learners' perceptions of classroom life. If teachers are aware of students' perceptions, they can plan and implement alternative activities.

In another study of student perceptions of foreign language study, Tse (2000) examined the effects of language courses and teaching methods on student perceptions of their classroom language study and on their views of their own ability to acquire a foreign language. The participants were 51 university undergraduate and graduate students who had previously taken high school or university FL courses, or both. More than two-thirds of the subjects had studied Spanish, and 10 of them had studied more than one language. The participants in the study were asked to write their responses to 10 open-ended questions about their FL study history, experiences, and opinions. Their responses fell into three major categories of data: a) classroom interactions, b) perceived level of success, and c) attributions of success and failure. Qualitative analysis of the study revealed that the students perceived their instruction as focusing too little on oral communication. They reported low estimations of their level of proficiency, and tended to attribute their failures to their own lack of effort in the FL classroom.

One of the most recent studies on learners' perceptions seems to be by Brown (2009) who compared students' perceptions with teachers' perceptions of effective foreign language teaching. 49 university instructors and 1600 of their students, in a university in the United States, from 83 intact first and second year L2 classes, and from nine different languages participated in the study. The researcher or a research assistant entered each of the 83 classes and administered two questionnaires to the participating

students and teachers: a 24-item Likert-scale questionnaire on perceptions of effective L2 teachers, and a demographic questionnaire. The purpose of the study was to achieve a detailed and direct comparison between teachers' and students' perceptions on the issues in L2 teaching included in the study's questionnaire. The results indicated that while the instructors preferred a more communicative classroom, their students favored a grammar-based approach. There were significant differences between the students' and their teachers' perceptions in such areas as target language use, error correction, and group work. Brown concluded that the significant differences between teacher and student beliefs in relevant areas emphasize the need for foreign language teachers to look for their students' perspectives and ask for their participation in classroom discussions about the logic behind certain instructional strategies.

Unfortunately, the field of L2 reading in second/foreign language teaching does not seem to have benefitted much from the research on students' perceptions. Bruton and Marks (2004) assert that "in foreign-language reading, there is a dearth of research on students' perceptions of what they read" (p.770). Despite the huge body of research in the field of second/foreign language reading, "the affective domain of reading has received much less attention than the cognitive domain" (Yamashita, 2004, p.1). One of the few studies conducted on students' perceptions in the reading class is a part of a research by Bensoussan, Sim, and Weiss (1984). To attempt to clarify the test results in their study on the effects of dictionary usage on EFL test performance, and to understand the perceptions and expectations of dictionary users, the researchers administered a questionnaire on dictionary usage and preferences. The participants were 404 first-year university students in an English reading comprehension course, 10 of their teachers, and a small group of 13 third-year psychology students with very high English proficiency. Students' responses were tabulated according to native language, type of dictionary used at home, and frequency of use. The results showed that the

teachers were more critical of their students' abilities to use dictionaries. They did not think that students could use dictionaries effectively, but students themselves generally thought they could. Answers to the questionnaires further indicated that teachers were aware of students' needs and the limitation of using dictionaries.

In another study, Padron and Waxman (1988) investigated the effect of ESL students' perceptions of their cognitive strategies on reading achievement. The participants in the study were 82 students randomly selected from the population of Hispanic ESL students of a public elementary school in a small town in the United States. As one part of the study, the students were administered a reading strategy questionnaire, which was a 14-item, 3-point Likert scale questionnaire with the responses of: a) Always, b) Sometimes, and c) Never. The survey administrator read the questionnaire items aloud to the students so that reading proficiency would not interfere with the students' ability to respond to the items. The results indicated that students' perceptions of cognitive strategies they use have predictive validity for their reading comprehension. The researchers concluded that the use of inappropriate cognitive reading strategies might be one of the reasons why Hispanic ESL students generally score lower on reading achievement tests than English monolingual students.

Chen and Graves (1995), whose study on the effects of pre-viewing and providing background knowledge on reading comprehension was reviewed in the section "Pre-reading Tasks" earlier in this chapter, also examined students' attitudes as one part of their research to answer their last research question: "What were students' attitudes toward the treatments?" They employed four versions of an attitude questionnaire, one for the pre-viewing treatment group, one for the providing background knowledge group, one for the combined treatment, and one for the control group. Each version consisted of two parts. The first part, which was an 8-10 item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, with the responses: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and

strongly disagree, was designed to assess the students' overall feeling about the pre-reading treatment they received and their interests in, or reactions to, specific aspects of the treatment. The second part, which was an open-ended attitude question: "What kinds of information do you think students should be given about a story before they read it?", allowed the students to express themselves freely, make suggestions about the selections, and describe any problems they faced during the instruction. The students completed the attitude questionnaires during the last hour of the study. To elicit as full responses to the open-ended attitude question as possible, the students were encouraged to write in English, or in Chinese (their first language), whichever they felt they could best express themselves with. The results showed that the students generally responded positively to all the experimental treatments, and no significant differences were found among the pre-viewing, background knowledge, and combined treatments. Most of the students in these treatment groups thought that the explicit instruction they received helped them read the stories. On the other hand, the students in the control group indicated that they would need a good deal of instruction in order to understand the stories. The majority of the students in the control group said that what they needed most to understand the stories better and enjoy them more were explanations of the difficult words and some cultural background information. Furthermore, the analysis of the students' responses to the open-ended question illustrated that a large percentage of the students in all the treatment groups strongly emphasized their need for vocabulary instruction and cultural background information.

Another study on students' perceptions belongs to Bruton and Marks (2004). To examine the perceived reading wants and needs of FL high school students, the researchers selected the participants of their study on the basis of a combination of age and number of years of foreign language learning experience. The participants were 16 to 18 year old students in two nationality groups, from four schools: two in Spain where

the students were taking English as a foreign language, and two in the US where Spanish was the foreign language the students were studying. They included 55 Spanish and 40 American students. The Spanish students were given two questionnaires in Spanish on their L1 and two on their FL (English), and the American students were given the same questionnaires translated verbatim into English on their L1 and FL (Spanish). The first questionnaire was meant to cover the time spent on the reading of different types of discourse, and the second was on students' perceived wants and needs. The students responded to the questionnaires in class time under the supervision of the researchers. The questionnaires were read out in Spanish for the Spanish students, and in English for the American students. The results demonstrated that the perceived wants in FL Spanish were considerably greater than those in FL English while the perceived needs were slightly higher for FL English. For the English and Spanish L1s, the perceived wants and needs were remarkably similar in distribution, especially the needs, and the perceived wants in both cases far outweighed the perceived needs. Bruton and Marks concluded that teachers and educators need to take seriously into consideration students' reading needs and wants across the curriculum in first, second, and foreign language reading.

Yamashita (2004) investigated the relationship between first and second language reading attitudes and their influence on learners' extensive reading. 59 Japanese university students were asked to answer the items on a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire which examined four reading attitude variables: Comfort, Anxiety, Value, and Self-perception, both in L1 and L2. In addition, in order to measure the students' L2 proficiency, the reading section of a practice TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) with 100 multiple-choice items was used. The reading section of the TOEIC consists of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension questions. The data were collected in the intensive reading classes at the university, starting with the

administration of the questionnaire first, and then the TOEIC. After that, the extensive reading program started, and the students were recommended, and required, to read one book per week, totaling 14 per semester, in order to complete the course. They were also required to write a short book report for each book they read. The results of the study supported the transfer of the affective domain of reading (attitudes) from L1 to L2. However, L2 proficiency was not confirmed to affect this transfer. It was also demonstrated that the positive feeling towards reading, both in L1 and L2, facilitates learners' performance in intensive reading. Yamashita concluded that understanding learners' attitudes, particularly feelings, is so important to reading both in L1 and L2 for encouraging L2 learners' involvement in extensive reading.

Finally, in a recent research on vocabulary assistance in reading, which was reviewed in the section "Pre-reading Tasks", Alessi and Dwyer (2008) created a 4-point Likert-scale opinion questionnaire, as one part of their research, to ask students to rate particular features of their online reading program and prior knowledge of the topic of the article they read. Some of the findings revealed that the students who only received hypertext glossing liked it much more than the students who received both hypertext glossing and the pre-reading activity. Also, the students who received hypertext glossing significantly rated online reading better than regular books, more than the students who did not receive hypertext glossing.

A review of the literature reveals that an investigation of students' perceptions of topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction is another gap in the field of second language reading, which the present study attempts to fill. For this purpose, an explanatory mixed methods approach has been taken to triangulate the quantitative results of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with qualitative data of interview responses. This will be discussed, argued and analyzed in chapters 3 and 4.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in this study reveals that although there is a huge body of research on the effects of topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge on second language reading, no evidence is available on the degree of the effectiveness of the teachers' initiation with regard to these two important reader variables. In other words, the teacher's effect in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction has not been challenged yet. No attempt has yet been reported in the literature to find a possible alternative for the traditional teacher-directed topic familiarizing pre-reading activities. Likewise, although research emphasizes the contribution of dictionary use towards students' vocabulary learning and performance, the efficacy of students' dictionary work has not yet been compared with the conventional teacher's instruction of vocabulary. It is not clear to what extent students could learn words and perform well on vocabulary tests independently from teachers, in a learner-centered reading class, and whether teachers' vocabulary teaching could successfully be substituted with dictionary use. Literature also suggests that despite the bulk of studies on students' perceptions of L2 teaching and learning in general, there is a dearth of research on students' perceptions of second language reading in particular. It has not yet been investigated whether students prefer the teacher's initiation in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction or they prefer autonomy, and independent reading and vocabulary learning.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explicates the various aspects of the methodology undertaken in the study. This includes the results of a preliminary pilot study, a description of the participants, the research instruments and rationale, the process of preparing and pilot testing the instruments, and the procedure for collecting the data. The section for data collection procedure will include, among other things, a description of the instructor who taught the students in Group B.

#### **3.1 Preliminary Pilot Study**

The idea of teacher-directed, as opposed to written introductory, topic familiarization, and teacher's instruction of vocabulary versus students' dictionary use in an L2 reading class was first operationalized and evaluated through a very small scale pilot study. For this purpose, upon the researcher's request of the few Iranians he knew in the vicinity, as he was a foreign student in Malaysia, only four people agreed to participate in the study. By chance, the participants were of different genders, age groups, and educational status, although the researcher did not intend to test these variables with regard to the teacher's role in a reading class in the actual study. The respondents comprised of two adult females and two teen-aged males with the particulars shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: The Pilot Study Participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Educational Status
Parham	Male	15	International School – Year 9
Arman	Male	18	'A' Level Student
Maryam	Female	25	B.S. in Biology
Leila	Female	38	B.A. in English

Because of the restrictions imposed on the study as a result of the small number of respondents, data was collected from the same subjects twice, with a three week interval.

In the first phase, the participants were asked to read "*The History of the Fiji Museum*", a 454 word passage, with Flesch readability grade level of 10.31, and ease level of 55.87, which is considered suitable for intermediate students. Before they read the passage, the researcher, in the pre-reading stage, provided the respondents with some brainstorming questions, an introduction, a list of the key vocabulary, and key concepts of the reading selection. He did not intervene in this stage, in that, he did not teach the participants directly, but asked them to use the written data to familiarize themselves with the topic and content of the text, which turned out to be absolutely new and unfamiliar to them. The participants were also asked to use their dictionaries for the unknown vocabulary, or guess the words meanings from the context, as there was no help to them on the teacher's part for vocabulary meaning, either.

Since this was a pilot study, the respondents were given ample time to finish the reading passage. They were then asked to write an immediate recall as a test of their comprehension of the passage. Following this, they received an MCQ test of 10 items, 5 on comprehension, and 5 on vocabulary.

The passage used in the second phase was "*Greek Wedding Traditions*", with 445 words, grade level of 10.12, and ease level of 55.16. As can be observed, the second text, which again was content unfamiliar to the testees, was of nearly equal length and difficulty level to the first passage. Unlike the first phase, the teacher had a direct intervention in the pre-reading stage. He initiated brainstorming questions and background activation/construction tasks, along with introducing the key concepts of the text, and also instructing the key words and phrases. Moreover, the participants were not allowed to use dictionaries.

The procedure was all the same as the first stage, i.e. the respondents had sufficient time to read through the text, and then wrote an immediate recall followed by 10 multiple choice questions. The only difference was that the second text did not have a title, as titles enhance readers' activation of prior knowledge (Hammadou, 1991), the reason being that the study was meant to evaluate the teacher's facilitating role in students' prior knowledge activation/construction of unfamiliar topics as compared with the efficiency of written introductory data. The results of the first and second phases of the pilot study are shown in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3, respectively.

**Table 3.2: First Phase Results (Without Teacher's Intervention)**

Pseudonym	Reading Time	Correctly Recalled Idea Units	Incorrect Ideas	Comprehension MCQs (of 5)	Vocabulary MCQs (of 5)
Parham	70 min.	4	6	3	3
Arman	70 min.	8	6	3	3
Maryam	55 min.	13	5	3	4
Leila	48 min.	16	3	4	4

**Table 3.3: Second Phase Results (With Teacher's Intervention)**

Pseudonym	Reading Time	Correctly Recalled Idea Units	Incorrect Ideas	Comprehension MCQs (of 5)	Vocabulary MCQs (of 5)
Parham	33 min.	12	6	5	3
Arman	32 min.	16	6	4	4
Maryam	25 min.	31	4	5	5
Leila	26 min.	28	7	4	5

A comparison of the two tables reveals that the teacher's intervention positively affected the respondents' reading comprehension. For example, Arman, when not assisted by the teacher, could only remember 8 idea units, from total 68 idea units, whereas he managed to correctly recall 16 idea units, out of 65, when the teacher provided the pre-reading activities. In addition, a look at the time he spent reading the texts demonstrates that in the first phase he spent 70 minutes to finish the reading, while in the second it took him only 32 minutes to finish the text almost the same length as the first one. Similarly, all the other participants showed significant improvements in their recall of "*Greek Wedding Traditions*" as compared with "*The History of the Fiji Museum*".

The same positive difference could be observed in the MCQ tests too, although not as significant as the recall test. One reason might be that the number of the multiple choice comprehension and vocabulary questions was limited to only 5 for each. For example, Maryam, who scored 3 and 4 in comprehension and vocabulary, respectively, in the first stage MCQs, showed better results when she scored 5 and 5 in the second phase. But, Parham's vocabulary scores were the same in both stages. Also, Leila scored the same, 4, in both multiple choice comprehension tests.

In a group interview at the end of the study, the researcher asked the respondents about their perceptions as to the teacher's role in these two phases. Unanimously, all the participants asserted that they would prefer to receive background knowledge from the teacher, and that it helped them a lot to become familiar with the text topic and content. They further maintained that the teacher facilitated their comprehension of the second text by the pre-reading activities, and also his presence gave them a feeling of security.

However, as for the vocabulary knowledge, they did not state the same strong remarks as they did for comprehension. They were not sure whether the teacher played any more constructive role than their dictionaries. Parham, for example, said he enjoyed working with his dictionary more than being instructed by a teacher for vocabulary meaning. To Leila, they played equally decisive roles, and therefore, she was unable to prioritize one over the other.

In fact, it was contemplating the pilot study results that led the researcher to formulate the two research hypotheses and ask the research questions (Chapter 1). He expected that a large scale study would convincingly test the hypotheses, and could find adequate answers to the questions.

### **3.2 Participants of the Study**

Initially, the participants of the study were 84 undergraduate EFL students, who had enrolled in three reading courses (Reading Comprehension 1, 2, and 3) at a university in Iran. They were studying in their first, second, and fourth semesters. University freshmen in Iran usually have a previous experience of formal English language learning for seven years at secondary level. However, by the time they are admitted to a university, they have only been exposed to little formal English education since the

number of hours they spend learning English in their schools is limited to only 2-4 hours per week.

To start with the study, and in order to assign the participants to two homogeneous groups, the researcher administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (2004, the paper and pen test, version 1), which is photocopiable (See Appendix S), as a proficiency test prior to the commencement of the study. The placement test results showed that the participants ranged from elementary to upper intermediate in terms of English language proficiency (See Table 3.6 for Oxford Quick Placement Test scores interpretation). Based on their scores of the placement test, the students were then homogenized into two groups of 41 and 42 students. An outlier who had scored significantly higher than the other participants was excluded from the study.

The following table shows that the mean scores of the students in the two groups were almost the same, with the standard deviations being very close. Moreover, an independent-samples t-test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups ( $p>.05$ ).

**Table 3.4: Placement Test Results (1)**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
A	41	23.98	6.374	.995	.855
B	42	23.71	6.594	1.017	.855

However, a few students did not manage to complete the course of study for certain reasons. For example, some of them had part-time jobs and since the treatment sessions were held in the afternoon, they could not attend all the classes and take the tests. A few others were not willing to participate in the study, and the researcher respected their decision and did not ask them why since their consent to be involved in the project was

very important to him. Therefore, the number of participants was reduced to 73 students, 38 in Group A (No Teacher group) and 35 in Group B (Teacher group). Nonetheless, this mortality did not affect the homogeneity of the two groups. A second look at the placement test results confirmed this.

**Table 3.5: Placement test Results (2)**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
A	38	23.63	6.157	.999	.721
B	35	24.17	6.693	1.131	.722

It should be mentioned that the students were aware of the nature and purpose of the study, and had agreed to participate in it as part of their reading courses (Reading Comprehension 1, 2, and 3). To cooperate with the researcher and to encourage the students to take the study seriously, the reading courses lecturers whose students were participating allocated extra marks as a classroom activities bonus to those students who attended the treatment sessions and took the tests. Therefore, the students willingly attended the classes, without any obligation. Likewise, they did not feel obliged to fill out the study questionnaire and sit for interviews. They had the choice of leaving the project at any time, as a few of them did.

### **3.3 Research Instruments and Rationale**

#### **3.3.1 The Oxford Quick Placement Test**

In order to homogenize the participants into two groups, this study applied the Oxford Quick Placement Test (Oxford University Press, 2004, paper and pen test, version 1).

This test is a standard test of English language proficiency, which is quick and easy to administer and is ideal for placement testing and examination screening. It can be used by learners from secondary age and above at any level. There are two versions available: a *paper and pen version* and a *computer-based version* (CBT). Due to restrictions of computer lab facilities and technical limitations at the university where the research was carried out, the researcher decided to administer the paper and pen version. There are two photocopiable parallel versions of the paper and pen test, to help minimize the risk of cheating, each version containing 60 multiple-choice items which assess reading, vocabulary and grammar. Table 3.6 shows how to interpret the results of the paper and pen test scores.

**Table 3.6: Paper and Pen Test Scores Interpretation (The Oxford Quick Placement Test, 2004, User Manual, p. 9)**

Scores out of 60	Level Description
55 – 60	Upper Advanced
48 – 54	Lower Advanced
40 – 47	Upper Intermediate
30 – 39	Lower Intermediate
18 – 29	Elementary
10 – 17	Breakthrough
0 – 9	Beginner

### **3.3.2 Reading Passages**

As justified in Chapter 1, this study followed Park (2004b) regarding the number of reading texts to be taught and tested (See Chapter 2, section 2.3.1, for a review of Park's study). It was assumed that the more passages and tests were applied in the study, the

more reliable the results would be (Park had used four passages). In the present research, there were several considerations in selecting the appropriate texts. The first factor was topic unfamiliarity. Since the focus of the study was on the teacher's role in familiarizing students with topic as opposed to the efficiency of written introductory data doing the same job, care had to be taken to select a reading passage, with the topic of which the participants had no, or very little, familiarity. The second parameter was topic interest. The concern here was to avoid the selection of a text whose topic was gender biased. Since the participants were both males and females, the selected passage should appeal to both genders, one with a neutral topic. For example, a topic like 'Boxing' looks more interesting to boys than to girls, and females most probably like 'Cooking' more than males do. However, 'Marriage', 'Historical Places', 'Culture', and 'National Geography, to name a few, are among neutral topics that seem absorbing to both genders (Arkian, 2008). All this was meant to eliminate the topic interest variable from influencing the participants' performance in the study.

The next consideration was text length. The subjects ranged from elementary to upper intermediate in terms of English language proficiency. Therefore, the length of the passage should have been appropriate to meet their different reading abilities. A very long text might have caused the participants' fatigue and could have resulted in their disappointment, leading to their loss of interest in the text and giving up reading or performing perfunctorily. On the other hand, the problem with a short passage was clearly the number of questions that could have been written on it. To lend itself to about 10 comprehension questions, a text should consist of approximately 600 words (Day & Park, 2005).

The last, and perhaps most important, concern was the difficulty level and readability of the texts. The researcher decided to select texts which were to some extent challenging to most of the respondents. A very easy text would be as nonfunctioning as a very

demanding one, since neither could distinguish between less skilled and skilled readers. Moreover, the purpose of the study was to evaluate the teacher's intervention in the classroom while exerting all his expertise to facilitate the reading task to students. Students' performance on an easy reading selection, or even a moderate one, would not manifest the teacher's efficiency in this regard.

Text readability has been calculated, over the years, using various formulae that have been developed for this purpose. For example, the Flesch Readability Ease and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level tests were designed to indicate difficulty of texts of contemporary English (Flesch, 1948). Rudolf Flesch devised two formulae for the two systems which use word length and sentence length as core measures:

**Table 3.7: Flesch Reading Ease Formula**

$$206.835 - 1.015 \left( \frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) - 84.6 \left( \frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right)$$

In this system, scores of 90 – 100 are considered easily understandable by an average 11-year-old native speaker student. A passage with a score of 60 – 70 could be easily understood by 13 to 15 year old students, and native speaker college graduates could easily understand passages with results of 0 – 30.

**Table 3.8: Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula**

$$.39 \left( \frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) + 11.8 \left( \frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right) - 15.59$$

The result obtained from Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula corresponds with a grade level. For example, a score of 8.2 would demonstrate that the text is understandable by an average student in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the American educational system.

Although readability formulae are useful, a look at the formulae just explained indicates that calculating text readability is by no means an easy task, rather, time and energy consuming. But fortunately, there is free computer software available online at <http://flesh.sourceforge.net/> which can compute both Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level in just a matter of seconds. This study owes much to this software as it saved a lot of time and energy.

With all the above considerations in mind, the researcher carefully examined a large number of passages with diverse topics. He read many texts and, after consulting reading experts, selected a few of them which seemed to serve the purpose. Then he closely tested them against the criteria discussed above until he found the following four texts satisfactory:

- 1) "Wedding Traditions in Sudan" (Appendix A) adapted from:

[http://www.worldweddingtraditions.com/locations/african\\_traditions/sudanese\\_traditions.html](http://www.worldweddingtraditions.com/locations/african_traditions/sudanese_traditions.html), which is accessible to the public with no restriction

This is a descriptive passage which takes a look at wedding traditions in Sudan. A *keris*, a *kidung*, a *ninkak endog* and a *kendi* are some of the customs explained in this passage.

For example, a *keris* is a kind of message from the bride's mother to the groom. Or, a *ninkak endog* is an egg breaking ceremony. Readers also learn from the text why pulling apart a barbecued chicken, burning seven broomsticks, and kissing their parents' knees mean so much to the bride and groom.

2) "*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*" (Appendix E) adapted from:

<http://www.geocities.com/yamataro670/pot-bowl.htm>

This descriptive text explains the cultural diversity in the United States. It addresses the question of whether it is easy to differentiate Americans by identifying them by their cultural backgrounds. Are there *African-Americans*, *Italian-Americans*, *German-Americans*, *Middle Eastern-Americans*, etc., or just plain Americans? Using analogies, the writer tries to compare the United States with a salad bowl, on the one hand, and a melting pot, on the other.

3) "*Shin-Pyu: The Novicehood*" (Appendix I) adapted from:

<http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar-culture/myanmar-novicehood-shinpyu.htm>

This is also a descriptive passage which discusses the *Shin-pyu* ceremony in Myanmar. It suggests that in Myanmar, where people practice Buddhism, young boys go through the *Shin-pyu* ceremony. A Buddhist is regarded as no better than an animal until he practices *Shin-pyu*, and this ceremony must only be performed at certain ages. Readers will learn who a *novice* is, what an *order* is, what young Buddhists do in a monastery, and much more information about the *Shin-pyu* ceremony.

4) "*History of the Seychelles*" (Appendix M) adapted from:

<http://www.seychelles-s.info/seychelles-history.php>

This narrative/descriptive text is a short account of the history of the Seychelles. Readers will understand who the first inhabitants of the islands were, when they arrived, and what happened to them. They will also learn when and how the inhabitants gained independence, and will find much more information on the Seychelles' development, including their political and economic ups and downs.

To start with pilot testing, the first passage was given to 30 postgraduate students studying at the University of Malaya. This was because at the beginning of the study, the intended participants were postgraduate students attending English language courses at the Institute of Graduate Studies (IGS), UM. The UM English language program aims to improve students' English language proficiency, and has been designed for those who do not possess any scores on either the TOEFL or the IELTS as the prerequisite for the registration for the university programs.

Unfortunately, however, the English language program coordinator was not willing to allow access to the classes despite the fact that the researcher had already obtained the letter of permission from the Dean of IGS. Therefore, he was forced to run the study at a university in Iran, where he had previously taught for eight years, and had colleagues to assist him in the process of pilot testing and data collection. It bears mentioning that the researcher had already pilot tested the first reading text, "*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*", by the time he was informed he was not permitted to carry out the research at IGS. Thus, the first reading passage had to be pilot tested again, together with the other three, considering the characteristics of the actual participants. This will be explained in detail later in this chapter.

Yet, fortunately, all the four texts proved to successfully meet the criteria of a suitable passage for the present study. Firstly, their topic unfamiliarity was examined by giving them to 30 undergraduate Iranian students majoring in English Language Literature in a university in Iran, as the research was going to be carried out in Iran. Without an exception, all the readers stated that the topics and contents of the first, third, and fourth texts were unfamiliar to them. They neither had any background knowledge on wedding traditions in Sudan, nor could they find anything in common between a typical Sudanese wedding and the wedding traditions practiced in Iran. Likewise, the idea of *Shin-pyu* was new to them, and they asserted that they had no knowledge what the *Shin-pyu* ceremony was. They had not heard about the Seychelles Islands, either.

However, the result for "*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*" was slightly different. This text describes America's cultural diversity and immigration history. The only superficial knowledge the readers had about America was confined to the view that "America is an ideal country to live and work" and that "Immigrants to America are from different parts of the world". After reading the text, the students confirmed that their limited knowledge did not help them very much in comprehending the text.

The second consideration was topic interest and gender bias. The four selected topics are among those that are neutral, and gender does not affect comprehending them. In other words, sex does not influence interest in reading about different countries' history, traditions, and cultures.

The texts were also appropriate in terms of length, and readability index. As is observed in Table 3.8, each passage could lend itself to about 10 comprehension questions, a criterion recommended by Day & Park (2005). Concerning the number of multiple choice questions, this study followed as a model reading research which applied 10-14 MCQs (e.g. Carrell, 1987; Carrell & Wise, 1998; Dimassi, 2006; Peretz & Shoham,

1990). The readability of the texts was measured through the *Flesh readability software*, version 2. The Flesch Readability Ease Level scores of the passages ranged from 56.79 to 62.32, with the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level scores of 9.41 to 10.15.

**Table 3.9: Texts' Length and Readability**

Text	Length	Readability Index	
		Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	Flesch Readability Ease Level
Wedding Traditions in Sudan	589 words	10.15	56.79
Melting Pot Or Salad Bowl	592 words	9.80	59.66
Shin-Pyu: The Novicehood	596 words	9.62	61.14
History of the Seychelles	596 words	9.41	62.32

According to the Flesch classification, texts of 60-69 reading ease levels are categorized as "standard", and texts of 50-59 reading ease levels are "fairly difficult". This meant that the selected texts were understandable by an average American student in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, and easily understood by native speaker students of approximately 16 – 17 years of age. However, this was only raw data, and the researcher could not be sure whether these readability scores were also applicable and reliable in the case of the study participants, who were adult L2 learners. Therefore, he further evaluated the reading selections in pilot tests, which will be discussed later.

### **3.3.3 Immediate Written Recalls**

"There is general agreement that free recall is the most straight forward procedure for assessing the outcome of reader-text interaction" (Koda, 2005, p. 236). The free recall test, sometimes called the immediate recall test (Alderson, 2000), is a measure which requires the readers, without looking at the passage, to write down as much as they can remember from what they have just read. Compared to multiple choice questions, a free recall provides a purer measure of comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt, 1991). Cohen (1998) comments that the immediate recall requires the reader to comprehend the passage well enough to be able to recall in a coherent and logical manner, and to Alderson (in Nuttal, 2005) it is a method for testing comprehension "which may provide a more integrated picture of understanding" (p. 224).

However, according to Alderson (2000), "there is no best method for testing reading" (p. 203). Therefore, in the selection of the testing methods for the study, the researcher benefited from the previous studies run in second language reading. The focus on quantity of correct information recalled with the written task has been widely used in the literature (e.g. Barry & Lazarte, 1995; Carrell, 1987; Dimassi, 2006; Hammadou, 1991; Leeser, 2007; Roller & Matambo, 1992; Young, 1991). It has also been favored by Johnston (1983) and Bernhardt (1983) as being a valid means of evaluating foreign language reading comprehension, and according to Johnston (1983), it is "the most straight forward assessment of the result between text-reader interaction" (p.79). Furthermore, the immediate recall protocol allows readers to manifest what they remember from the text without the prompt of questions (Bernhardt, 1983). Of course, there might be an objection to free recall (Alderson, 2000) that it looks more like a test of memory than of understanding, "but if the task follows immediately on reading, this need not be the case" (p. 232).

Alderson (2000) believes that recall should be in the first language, otherwise it might change into a test of writing as well as reading. However, he also reports that in many EFL studies, readers have been asked to recall in the second language. This study followed both views, in that, to avoid testing the participants' writing ability, the students were asked to write the recall in any language they were more comfortable with, being L1 (Persian, their mother tongue) or L2. Details will be found later in this chapter under data collection procedure.

As for scoring the free recall test, the study followed the model proposed by Alderson (in Nuttal, 2005), which is based on counting idea units, or "propositional units" in Leeser's terms (2007, p. 244). To illustrate how idea units might be identified and counted, an excerpt from Alderson's (in Nuttal, 2005) is quoted below.

In free recall, students are asked simply to read a text, to put it to one side, and then to write down everything they can remember from the text. The comprehension score is the number of 'idea units' from the original text that are reproduced in the free recall.

For example, the previous paragraph contains the following idea units:

1. In free recall, students read a text.
2. Students put a text on one side.
3. Students write down all they can remember.
4. Comprehension score is the number of idea units reproduced (p. 225)

Based on Alderson's model of idea units, and upon the researcher's instruction, three experienced native speaker lecturers, two Americans and one Canadian, specialized in TEFL, were asked to read the four passages and decide on the idea units contained in them. The texts were emailed to them, together with a copy of Alderson's model. On each and every idea unit suggested by the reviewers in any of the passages, the researcher randomly checked and compared the idea unit suggested by only two of the

evaluators. If they agreed on a specific idea unit, it was accepted as a complete correct idea unit. If there was a discrepancy, the researcher resorted to the idea unit proposed by the third reviewer. Any idea unit agreed upon by two of the readers was accepted as the final one.

As an example, in the passage “*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*” (Appendix E), one of the reviewers assumed that number 50 and number 51 (See appendix G) form only one idea unit whereas the other two readers believed that they should be considered as two separate units:

- Society is like a pot of stew.
- Society is like a cauldron of porridge.

Therefore, the decision of those two lecturers was accepted. Or, in the text “*Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*” (Appendix I), the following two idea units were considered as one unit by one of the reviewers (See Appendix K, numbers 11 and 12):

- Parents who have no male offspring very often initiate the sons of others.
- Parents initiate the sons of those people who cannot afford to do their own.

After all this inspection of the suggestions sent by the lecturers, it was decided that the texts “*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*”, “*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*”, “*Shin-Pyu: The Novicehood*” and “*History of the Seychelles*” contained 78, 72, 61, and 85 idea units, respectively (See appendices C, G, K, and O).

### **3.3.4 Multiple Choice Tests**

Although the value of multiple choice questions (MCQs) is questionable for different reasons, they are still a common instrument for assessing students' reading ability

(Alderson, 2000). MCQs are probably the most popular format used in standardized reading comprehension tests (Koda, 2005). There is a wide range of research in the literature in which multiple choice tests have been employed as the only device, or one of the devices, in measuring the participants' reading comprehension (e.g., Bügel & Buunk, 1996; Carrell, 1987; Carrell, Pharis & Liberto, 1989; Carrell & Wise, 1998; Dimassi, 2006; Ming, 1997; Oded & Walters, 2001; Park, 2004b; Peretz & Shoham, 1990; Yazdanpanah, 2007; Young, 1991).

Some studies have coupled MCQs and one or more instruments to evaluate students' reading. For example, Carrell (1987), Dimassi (2006), and Young (1991) combined multiple choice questions with the free recall test; Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989) utilized MCQs along with open-ended questions; Yazdanpanah (2007) applied fill-in-the-blanks, and true/false questions together with MCQs; and Oded and Walters (2001) used multiple choice questions with the summary test as means of reading comprehension assessment. This is in line with Wolf's (1993) argument that more than one type of reading comprehension measure should be given, and that a relationship between the two should be established to address the validity of the comprehension measures. This study has followed Wolf's view and the testing methods employed by Carrell (1987), Dimassi (2006), Johnson (1981), and Young (1991), and has applied as measurement MCQs together with the free recall test, the use of which was justified in the previous section.

Each of the four reading texts the participants read was followed by 20 multiple choice questions, 10 on comprehension and 10 on vocabulary, totaling 80 MCQs, 40 comprehension and 40 vocabulary questions. The MCQs had carefully been prepared and constructed by the researcher, and then reviewed and revised by the supervisor of the study. In vocabulary tests, care was taken so as to present the questions in a range of easy to more difficult items in a way that the test takers would not feel disappointed at

coming across challenging questions right from the beginning. In the construction of multiple-choice comprehension tests, only textually explicit and textually implicit questions were prepared, and writing of script-based items was avoided since, according to Alderson (2000), script-based questions might hardly be considered as comprehension questions (See section 3.4.2, this chapter). The MCQs were then cautiously pilot-tested for test reliability, item facility, and item discrimination. The process of items construction and validation, types of questions and the rationale behind them will be discussed later under the section Tests Construction and Piloting.

### **3.3.5 Questionnaire and Interview**

As was justified earlier on, this study has applied an explanatory mixed methods design. In this design, the major proportion of data collection and analysis is quantitative, and a small qualitative component follows the quantitative part (Creswell, 2008). To answer research questions 1A and 1B, and 2, the selected quantitative data collection instruments, that is, the free recall test and MCQs, were adequate and served the purpose. However, for more detailed results and specific information as for the students' perceptions of the teacher's role in the reading class, hence a response to research questions 3A and 3B, the researcher deemed it necessary to mix quantitative and qualitative data.

One of the common quantitative techniques in measuring students' and teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs in second language teaching and learning is the use of Likert-scale questionnaire (DeVellis, 1991). Likert scales, which use the format of closed-ended questions, were first developed by the psychologist Rensis Likert in 1932 in order to assess subjects' attitudes towards social issues, and have been widely used in research ever since (Busch, 1993). Second language teachers and researchers have

extensively used Likert-type scales when conducting surveys of perceptions and attitudes in needs analyses, teacher/student evaluation, and beliefs about language teaching/learning (e.g., Brown, 2006 & 2009; Richardson, 1996; Williams & Burden, 1997; Yamashita, 2004).

Therefore, to probe into the participants' perceptions of their reading class in this study, a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was cautiously developed. Initially, with the assistance of two testing experts, fifteen items were constructed in order to elicit the respondents' views about the four variables that the study was attempting to investigate, which included:

1. The effect of the teacher's initiation in vocabulary introduction
2. The efficacy of students' dictionary use in L2 vocabulary learning
3. The teacher's function in providing students' with background knowledge
4. The adequacy of written introductory explanations in topic familiarization

After the first pilot-testing, because the reliability of the questionnaire was not acceptable for the study, the items were revised, and a new item was added to form a total of sixteen items for the second and further piloting. The process of test validation will be elaborated on in the next section.

However, Likert-scale questionnaires are not the only option available to a researcher measuring subjects' perceptions. Another popular technique which is used in qualitative data collection is interviewing (Creswell, 2008). An interview occurs when a researcher asks the participant(s) general, open-ended questions and records their answers. Open-ended questions allow respondents to express any opinion or attitude on a topic, not merely those offered in a closed format, as in a Likert-scale questionnaire. Well-planned, open-ended questions might be even more informative than the closed-ended

ones (Turner, 1993). In fact, an interview enables the researcher to dig deep into a problem and carry out in-depth research. In this regard, Nunan (1992) states:

While responses to closed questions are easier to collate and analyze, one often obtains more useful information from open questions. It is more likely that responses to open questions will more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say. (p. 143)

Interviews have been widely used for the evaluation and analysis of students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes in L2 teaching/learning (e.g., Barkhuizen, 1998; Cabaroglu & Yurdaisik, 2008; Conteh & Toyoshima, 2005; Li & Wilhelm, 2008). Therefore, they were selected as one of the tools at the researcher's disposal.

To conduct qualitative interviews, the researcher selected, through purposeful sampling, 23 participants, 10 from Group A, 10 from Group B, and extra three students. Details as for the nature of the questions and the interviewees will be revealed later under data collection procedure.

### **3.4 Instruments Construction and Piloting**

#### **3.4.1 Devising Pre-reading Tasks**

Upon the advice of a reading expert, it was decided that the pre-reading activities appropriate for this study consist of three sections (See appendices B, F, J, and N). Part A consisted of brainstorming questions which were supposed to get the students to think about the text topic and content. Part B was an introductory paragraph to the passage which was assumed to familiarize the students with the passage topic/content and activate/construct their background knowledge. And in part C, there was a list of 14 target words (See section 3.4.3, this chapter) for each of the four reading texts to be taught by a teacher or looked up in a dictionary by students.

The first two parts, A and B, of the pre-reading activities were significant to the study since they were going to be presented to the No Teacher group (Group A) in the form of scripts, and to the Teacher group (Group B) in the form of activities initiated by the teacher. The purpose behind this was to find out whether written topic familiarization could replace teacher-directed topic familiarization at the pre-reading stage of a second language reading classroom. Therefore, the researcher was very cautious about preparing appropriate materials. In order to write materials for sections A and B for passage 1 “*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*”, the researcher enjoyed the assistance of a Sudanese Master’s student, studying at the University of Malaya, for a clearer picture of a typical wedding in Sudan. For “*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*” and “*Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*” passages 2 and 3, respectively, an American colleague helped a lot in devising the tasks, especially on passage 2, which explains cultural diversity in the United States. And finally, an Algerian friend and colleague, who had previously lived and taught in the Seychelles Islands for six years, assisted the researcher with invaluable information about the “*History of the Seychelles*”, passage 4.

### **3.4.2 Construction of Comprehension MCQs**

As stated before, the researcher wrote 20 multiple-choice questions, including 10 comprehension and 10 vocabulary items, for each of the four reading passages, totaling 80 MCQs. Concerning the construction of reading comprehension questions, the study followed Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) view cited in Alderson (2000). According to this view, there are three types of reading questions: 1) *Textually explicit* questions, where both the question information and the correct answer are found in the same sentence, 2) *Textually implicit* questions, in which the respondents are required to combine information across sentences, and 3) *Script-based* questions, where readers

need to integrate their background knowledge with text information since correct answers cannot be found in the passage itself.

Alderson doubts that script-based questions are comprehension questions since they rely on information outside the text. Following Alderson, the researcher prepared only textually explicit and textually implicit comprehension questions for the reading passages since the passages were unfamiliar to the participants, and therefore they did not have background knowledge to integrate with text information in order to answer script-based questions correctly. As explained before, texts of about 600 words might not lend themselves to more than ten comprehension questions (Day & Park, 2005), thus we had a limitation in devising equal numbers of textually explicit and textually implicit questions. Nevertheless, care was taken, as much as possible, to keep a balance between the two types of questions. Table 3.10 shows the number of the textually explicit and implicit questions constructed for each of the four passages.

**Table 3.10: Textually Explicit and Implicit Questions (out of 10)**

Test	Textually Explicit	Textually Implicit
1	5	5
2	6	4
3	4	6
4	4	6

Consider, for example, item number 4 of the reading comprehension test (Appendix D) on passage 1 “*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*” (Appendix A):

- The 'maid of honor' .....
  - a. organizes the egg breaking ceremony
  - b. prepares and serves the dish of rice and chicken
  - c. pulls the barbecued chicken apart with the couple's help
  - d. explains to the couple the importance of working together

This is an example of a textually implicit question which requires the respondents to combine information across sentences. An example of a textually explicit question would be item number 9 of the comprehension MCQs (Appendix L) on passage 3 “*Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*” (Appendix I). Both the question and the answer are found in the same sentence in the text.

- The admitted novices .....
  - a. may visit the monastery if they like it
  - b. undertake the life of austerity with their parents
  - c. live in the monastery as long as they are willing to
  - d. have to stay in the monastery for a certain period of time

### **3.4.3 Construction of Vocabulary MCQs**

Regarding vocabulary instruction and test construction, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) provide a framework for selecting words. They view vocabulary as falling into three tiers. The first tier consists of words of high-frequency use (e.g., *come*, *go*, *happy*, *some*). The third tier is comprised of rare words that are specific to particular content domains (e.g., *xylem*, *medulla oblongata*, *chlorophyll*). Beck and her colleagues believe

that vocabulary instruction should focus on second-tier words. Words in the second tier characterize the vocabulary of mature language users when they read and write. However, Beck et al. do not precisely express how to select Tier 2 words, and it was by no means an easy task for the present study to decide on which words to instruct and assess.

To overcome this problem, the researcher decided to follow Taglieber et al.'s (1988) study which was reviewed in Chapter 2. He asked four EFL instructors at the university where the study was going to be conducted (Taglieber et. al. asked five instructors) to select 14 target words for each of the four texts on the basis of (a) their importance to understanding the passages and (b) the likelihood that they would not already be known to the students. The 14 words (See part C, appendices B, F, J, and N) were meant to be introduced in the pre-reading phase of each reading session. The lecturers then selected 10 words out of the 14 target words for vocabulary assessment, including words with both contextual clues (words the meaning of which can be guessed from the context), and no contextual clues (words that cannot be guessed from the context). The number of words that were introduced was intentionally larger than the number of words to be assessed so that the students would not be sure which words they might be tested on. It should be noted that the teacher was asked to be cautious not to use the same definitions and/or synonyms written as items options in the instruction of the target words in order to eliminate the chance of guessing the correct answers by the students.

An example of a vocabulary item with contextual clues is item number 7 of vocabulary MCQs (Appendix H) on passage 2 "*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*" (Appendix E).

- If you **simmer** something, you .... .
  - a. cut it up in order to study it
  - b. make it become part of a liquid
  - c. cook it by keeping it at boiling point
  - d. make it pure by heating it until it becomes a gas

For an example of an item with no contextual clues, consider vocabulary item 5 (Appendix P) on text 4 “*History of the Seychelles*” (Appendix M):

- **Celebrities**, paragraph 3, are .... .
  - a. big companies
  - b. common tourists
  - c. famous people
  - d. government officials

For variety, and to have different types of vocabulary items, clues were provided in the item lead for some of the words to which there were no clues in the context. For example, see vocabulary item 7 (Appendix D) on passage 1 “*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*” (Appendix A).

- He inherited a share of the family ..... He received a large amount of money.
  - a. honor
  - b. fortune
  - c. traditions
  - d. symbols

#### **3.4.4 MC Tests Piloting**

At any point of time that the researcher finished writing 10 comprehension and 10 vocabulary MCQs for any of the passages, he sent them to the supervisor of the study to check and review the items. Each time, she meticulously examined and commented on

the questions, which helped the researcher a lot and saved him much time and energy. Then for further inspection and comments, the tests were sent, one at a time, to some native and non-native speaker colleagues teaching in the UAE and Iran, where the researcher had previously taught. Using their constructive comments and suggestions on the items leads, the correct and/or possible answers, and acceptable distracters, he carefully revised the questions, and prepared them for pilot-testing. This was done one at a time, i.e., each time a set of comprehension and vocabulary multiple-choice questions (20 MCQs) was ready for each of the passages, it was pilot-tested. The order of the passages that were selected and adapted, on which tests were constructed, revised and pilot-tested was as follows:

1. *Wedding Traditions in Sudan*
2. *Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*
3. *Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*
4. *History of the Seychelles*

In order to validate the multiple-choice questions, the researcher pilot-tested each set of the MCQs, in turn, by giving it, together with the associated reading passage, to 30 undergraduate EFL students in an Iranian University. The respondents were also asked to write immediate recalls on the passages for time allotment considerations. After analyzing the tests results, revising the malfunctioning and non-functioning items, amending too easy and too difficult items, examining the correct choices and distracters, and editing the questions, the researcher pilot-tested the questions for the second time by giving them to another group of 30 undergraduate Iranian EFL students. The reliability of the tests was then measured on SPSS, version 16. The following table shows the reliability of the MC tests (See appendices D, H, L, and P for the comprehension and vocabulary multiple-choice tests).

**Table 3.11: Tests' Reliability**

Reading Passage	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Comprehension Test	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Vocabulary Test
<i>Wedding Traditions in Sudan</i>	.72	.80
<i>Melting Pot or Salad Bowl</i>	.70	.75
<i>Shin-pyu: The Novicehood</i>	.73	.71
<i>History of the Seychelles</i>	.74	.70

Cronbach's Alpha reliability of .7 and above is acceptable according to Pallant (2007).

Furthermore, items analyses confirmed that the item facility and item discrimination of the multiple choice questions ranged from .4 to .8 for facility, and from .4 to .9 for discrimination, which are acceptable according to Alderson (1995).

### 3.4.5 Perception Questionnaire Construction and Piloting

Initially, to elicit the participants' perceptions of the four variables discussed earlier, a 15-item 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was cautiously developed, with the assistance of two testing experts. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested and revised four times to examine and increase its reliability. In the first pilot-testing, the questionnaire was administered to 30 undergraduate EFL students in Iran, where the study was going to be conducted. However, because the reliability of the questionnaire was not acceptable for the study ( $r=.41$ ), the items were revised, with the help of the two experts, and a new item was added to form a total of sixteen items for the second piloting, the result of which was still not satisfactory ( $r=.61$ ). To increase reliability, one of the suggestions was to omit the neutral response (3= Neither agree nor disagree) and change the questionnaire into a 4-point in order to be able to collect more reliable

data. However, one of the experts advised that the neutral point be kept since, in this study, knowing whether a participant had a neutral position was informative. Accordingly, the questionnaire was further revised (Appendix Q) and pilot-tested two more times, each time with a larger number of students, until the Cronbach's alpha reliability reached an acceptable level ( $r=.75$ ).

Needless to say, the process of the instruments construction and piloting was laborious, time- and energy-consuming. The choice and adaptation of the four reading passages, devising suitable pre-reading tasks, recalls piloting, writing, revising and piloting of the comprehension and vocabulary MCQs, and the perception questionnaire preparation and pilot-testing were by no means easy tasks. They comprised the bulk of the research and took about one academic year to handle.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

To find the answers to research questions 1A, 1B, and 2, the participants were provided with the four reading passages of unfamiliar topics/contents, which they read and were tested on, in four consecutive weeks. The participants in Group A (No Teacher group) received no teacher's intervention. Through pre-reading activities, and in the form of scripts, following the technique used in Dole et al.'s (1991) study (reviewed in Chapter 2), they were provided with five brainstorming questions in section A, to which they received no answers. For example, the brainstorming questions for passage 3 "*Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*" (Appendix I) were:

- What cultural or religious ceremonies of your country do you know?
- Do you know any cultural events in other countries?
- What ceremony is most interesting to you? Why?
- Do you have any information about cultural ceremonies in Myanmar?

- Have you heard of the *Shin-pyu* ceremony in Myanmar? (See appendix J)

These students were also provided with written introductory paragraphs which were supposed to help the students construct/activate background knowledge on the texts they were going to read. Consider as an example the following paragraph (Section B, Appendix B) for the passage “*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*” (Appendix A):

*While traditions and ceremonies vary greatly, marriage is a custom that is practiced by almost every single culture in the world. The ages of the man and woman to be married, the wedding clothes, the food served and the gifts given are just some of the things in a wedding ceremony that differ significantly from one culture to another. The passage you are going to read takes a look at a typical wedding ceremony in Sudan. A ‘keris’, a ‘kidung’, a ‘nincak endog’ and a ‘kendi’ are some of the customs you will learn about in this passage. For example, a keris, is a kind of message from the bride's mother to the groom. Or, a ninkak endog is an egg breaking ceremony. You will also understand why pulling apart a barbecued chicken, burning seven broomsticks, and kissing their parents' knees mean so much to the bride and groom.*

The texts which this group read had titles, which are believed to have a role in helping students to construct/activate prior knowledge (Hammadou, 1991). The subjects were also presented with a list of 14 key words and phrases (discussed earlier) in the scripts, and were asked to use their dictionaries, either bilingual or monolingual, or both, to check word meanings (See appendices B, F, J, and N for the scripts of pre-reading activities). The researcher had brought to the testing sessions enough dictionaries, monolingual and bilingual, to provide the participants with, in case any of them had forgotten to bring theirs. They were also allowed to use their dictionaries while reading

the passages. In short, Group A received any information and tools which were thought to be necessary in reading and understanding the texts, but in the form of printed input.

Group B, however, underwent teacher's instruction. That is, it was the teacher who, in some pre-reading activities, familiarized the students with the topics/contents, and taught them the key vocabulary. In order to insure the consistency of the methods applied, the instructor asked the students the same brainstorming questions, provided them with the same introductory background knowledge information, and taught them the same key words as those used in Group A. However, their texts did not include titles, and no dictionary use was permitted in this group but the students could ask the teacher for word meanings while reading the texts. Thus, despite in Group A, there was interaction between the teacher and the students in Group B. Table 3.12 summarizes the teaching procedure for groups A and B.

**Table 3.12: Teaching Procedure**

Group A (No Teacher)	Group B (Teacher)
1. Printed brainstorming questions	1. Teacher-initiated brainstorming questions
2. Printed background knowledge information	2. Teacher-directed background knowledge activation/construction
3. A list of the key vocabulary	3. Teacher's instruction of the key vocabulary
4. Text title	4. No text title
5. Dictionary use (both before and while reading the texts)	5. No dictionary use
6. No assistance on the teacher's part for vocabulary meaning	6. Teacher's assistance for vocabulary meaning while reading the text

In vocabulary instruction, the subjects were presented with the 14 target words on the board with meaningful, but unrelated sentences. The students took turn reading the sentences and predicting the meanings of the words. When a word was not adequately

defined, it was defined through teacher's instruction and class discussion. Much care was taken by the teacher to avoid as far as possible definitions, synonyms, and explanations that were used in the vocabulary tests. Since vocabulary instruction and testing were done in the same class session, the students might have memorized the exact word meanings as provided by the teacher, which could have seriously affected their vocabulary test results.

The time allocated to the different activities was kept the same for both groups, and the classes and tests were held at the same time for both groups, but in different halls. Each treatment session lasted 100 minutes: 30 minutes for pre-reading activities, including topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction, 30 minutes for reading the text, 20 minutes for the recall test, and 20 minutes for the MCQs. In order not to change the comprehension nature of the recall test into a memory test, the students were allotted just enough time, and not ample time, to finish reading the texts. It might look, at first glance, that 30 minutes is too much for a text of about 600 words. However, it should be noted that Group A were required to use their dictionaries, and Group B were allowed to ask for the teacher's assistance for vocabulary meaning while reading the texts, which would normally take longer time for the students to finish the reading tasks. Time allotments had previously been measured carefully in the pilot tests.

To avoid bias, the researcher asked a lecturer to teach and then administer the tests in Group B, and an assistant to administer the comprehension passages and tests in Group A. The researcher, himself, was supervising this procedure to ensure everything was on the right track and going on smoothly. Regarding Group A's invigilator, who was an M.A. in TEFL, no specific skill was needed on his part as his job was merely the administration of the passages and tests, and proctoring.

However, the instructor who taught Group B was a typical English language lecturer of the university where the research was carried out. He was 38 years of age with sixteen years of teaching experience, six years at secondary level and ten years at tertiary level. He held a master's degree in TEFL, and was a proficient and competent instructor. The results of a teachers' evaluation survey conducted by the university the previous semester showed that he enjoyed 89% student satisfaction.

The participants were clearly instructed about the procedure and what they were expected to do in the four treatment sessions. After finishing each passage, the students were assessed on comprehension and vocabulary by first writing a free recall, while the text was taken away from them, and then answering a set of 20 questions, 10 comprehension and 10 vocabulary MCQs. To prevent students' writing ability from affecting their recalls, they were allowed to write their recalls either in Persian (their mother tongue) or English, or a combination of both, whichever they were more comfortable with. It should be noted that the students wrote the recalls before taking the MCQs so that the prompt of the questions would not aid them in remembering the idea units. After the recall task was completed, the participants received the text back in order to take the multiple-choice questions.

Furthermore, in order to find the answers to RQs 3A and 3B on the students' perceptions of the teacher's intervention in topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction in a second language reading class, the quantitative results of a perception questionnaire were supposed to be mixed and triangulated with the qualitative data of the interview responses. Therefore, the five-point Likert scale questionnaire of the research (Appendix Q) was administered at the end of the study after the last test was completed, in the fourth session. Moreover, to conduct the interviews, 20 participants, 10 from Group A, and 10 from Group B, were selected based on their total scores of the comprehension and vocabulary tests. There was a fair distribution of the students from

the lowest scores to the highest scores. The interviewees were asked 4 questions in Persian so that their English speaking ability would not influence the expression of their perceptions (See appendix R for the translated questions). The interviews were audio-taped for further transcription and analysis.

In addition to excluding from the research a few participants who did not complete all of the tests, the researcher eliminated from the study the scores of three students who did attend all the sessions. These students were selected based on their reading tests results in the first two experiments. Two of them were from Group B, and one from Group A, equally from among the low-, mid-, and high-scorers. They were intentionally asked to shift to the other group for the second two tests, and therefore attend both treatment classes. The purpose of this task was to elicit the perceptions of those students who had experienced both methods and could comment on and make a comparison of the efficiency of both approaches. Thus, these 3 students were interviewed as well, totaling 23 interviewees.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In summary, Chapter 3 provided an explanation of the methodology applied in the present research. It also reported a pilot study which had been conducted prior to the actual research. Moreover, Chapter 3 described the participants, the research instruments including the reading passages, the recall tests, the comprehension and vocabulary MCQs, the perception questionnaire, and interviews, and the rationale behind them. Furthermore, this chapter explicated the process of instruments preparation and pilot testing, and offered a detailed account of the data collection procedure including a description of the teacher who was asked to teach Group B.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter will describe the statistical analyses that were conducted on the quantitative data as well as qualitative data, and the findings. Each research question will be answered in turn after a brief explanation of the statistical tests and qualitative data that were used. To facilitate the reading and comprehension of this chapter, the research hypotheses and questions are reproduced here.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Teacher-directed topic familiarization enhances students' performance on L2 reading comprehension tasks more than written introductions do.
2. Students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary yield the same results in students' performance on vocabulary tests.

Research Questions:

RQ1 To what extent does teacher-directed topic familiarization:

- A. help students' recall of reading passages?
- B. enhance students' performance on multiple-choice reading comprehension tests?

RQ2 What are the differences between teacher's instruction of vocabulary and students' dictionary use in students' performance on vocabulary tests?

RQ3 What are students' perceptions of:

A. the teacher's role in topic familiarization as compared with the efficacy of written explanations?

B. teacher's instruction of vocabulary as compared with students' dictionary use?

#### **4.1 Procedure**

The purpose of the study was to achieve a detailed comparison between the effectiveness of teacher's activation/construction of students' background knowledge at pre-reading stage and the efficacy of written introductory data performing the same task on the one hand, and between the teacher's role in vocabulary instruction and the adequacy of dictionary use on the other. Therefore, in order to test the research hypotheses and find the answers to research questions 1A, 1B and 2, independent-samples t-tests were employed to compare the means.

To do so, firstly, the participants' written recalls in the four tests were checked for the number of the idea units remembered. As discussed previously in Chapter 3 (See section 3.5), the study was conducted in four consecutive weeks as there were four treatments. In each treatment, the 73 participants, 38 in Group A (No Teacher) and 35 in Group B (Teacher), were asked to write a free recall and answer 20 multiple-choice questions, 10 comprehension and 10 vocabulary items. The recall tests and the MCQs were marked the same week, i.e., before the next treatment started, by the researcher and double-marked by two assistants.

Each correctly recalled idea unit received one point, and each partly remembered idea unit received half a point (See appendixes C, G, K, and O for lists of idea units). For example, when writing her recall on passage 2 “*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*” (Appendix E), a student in the No Teacher group (A) wrote:

*In a bowl of salad, the ingredients are mixed together.*

This was equivalent to idea unit number 18 (Appendix G): “In a bowl of fresh salad, all the ingredients are mixed together”, and was given one full mark. However, another student in the Teacher group (B) wrote, when doing his recall task on passage 4 “*History of the Seychelles*” (Appendix M):

*The prisoners were enjoying the tropical life.*

Compared to idea unit number 33 (Appendix O), “Exiled Brits enjoyed living a tropical life”, this received half a point.

The inter-rater reliability of the recall tests was .89 for the first, .91 for the second, .86 for the third, and .87 for the fourth test. Similarly, each multiple-choice question carried one mark, totaling 20 for each test. Then, the raw data were entered into the SPSS software, version 16, for statistical analyses through means comparisons using inferential statistics. This was considered to be an appropriate statistical analysis for the purpose of the present study.

To answer research questions 3A and 3B, a mixed-methods approach was taken. For this purpose, the results of a 16-item, 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire (Perception Questionnaire) were mixed with interview responses to four questions, hence triangulating quantitative data with qualitative data. Concerning the questionnaire, which was administered in the fourth week after the last treatment, Group A and Group B students’ responses to each individual item were examined and the means on each item were compared. Furthermore, interview responses of 23 participants, 10 from

Group A, 10 from Group B, plus 3 extra students (those who had experienced both treatments, as justified in Chapter 3) were audio-taped and then transcribed for further evaluation. As for the interviewees' reading ability, there was a fair distribution of the students from the lowest scores to the highest scores of the comprehension and vocabulary tests. They were asked 4 questions in Persian (their mother tongue) so that their English speaking ability would not influence the expression of their perceptions.

#### **4.2 Research Question 1A**

*To what extent does teacher-directed topic familiarization help students' recall of reading passages?*

Results of independent-samples t-tests indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students in Group A (No Teacher) and Group B (Teacher) in any of the four recall tests. In fact, pre-reading activities directed by the teacher produced the same results as topic familiarization through printed input in helping students recall reading passages, and there was no superiority of one approach over the other. As illustrated in Table 4.1, the t-values of recall tests 1 – 4, shown in the column Sig. (2-tailed), are all above .05 ( $p>.05$ ).

**Table 4.1: T-tests (Recall Tests)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
R1	Var. assumed	.131	.719	-.983	71	.329	-1.644	1.672
	Var. not assumed			-.989	70.879	.326	-1.644	1.663
R2	Var. assumed	.209	.649	-1.663	71	.101	-2.613	1.571
	Var. not assumed			-1.656	68.703	.102	-2.613	1.577
R3	Var. assumed	1.970	.165	-1.754	71	.084	-4.119	2.348
	Var. not assumed			-1.740	65.864	.087	-4.119	2.368
R4	Var. assumed	.000	.989	-1.854	71	.068	-5.420	2.924
	Var. not assumed			-1.855	70.627	.068	-5.420	2.922

In addition to running independent-samples t-tests, a paired t-test was employed twice, once with No Teacher group and the second time with Teacher group. The purpose was to find out whether the treatments per se had any effects on students successive recall tests. Results of Group A paired t-tests showed no significant difference ( $p>.05$ ) between students' performance in recall test 1 and their performance in recall test 2 (Table 4.2). This is probably because writing free recall is not a very common technique of testing reading comprehension in regular L2 classrooms, and the study participants did not have much experience in writing recalls. However, as they took more recall tests, their performance seemed to improve significantly.

**Table 4.2: Paired T-tests (Recall Tests, Group A)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-.632	5.711	.926	-.682	37	.500
2	2 - 3	-5.237	6.153	.998	-5.246	37	.000
3	3 - 4	-3.842	7.838	1.271	-3.022	37	.005

These students showed progress and their mean scores seemed to improve significantly in recall test 3 as compared with recall test 2 (t-value= .000), and in test 4 compared with test 3 (t-value= .005). This might indicate that topic familiarization through written introductory data (not initiated by the teacher) was effective in helping Group A students recall more and more idea units of the reading passages, resulting in their better performance on recall tests.

Furthermore, results of paired t-tests for Group B illustrated that these students enjoyed progress in all their recall tests (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Paired T-tests (Recall Tests, Group B)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-1.600	3.743	.633	-2.529	34	.016
2	2 - 3	-6.743	7.052	1.192	-5.657	34	.000
3	3 - 4	-5.143	6.856	1.159	-4.438	34	.000

Comparisons of tests 1 – 2 ( $p=.016$ ), 2 – 3 ( $p=.000$ ), and 3 – 4 ( $p=.000$ ) showed that students' mean scores were different each time, confirming the possible positive effects of teacher directed topic familiarization on the students recalls of the four reading passages. Unlike the results in Group A, the participants' mean difference between recall 1 and recall 2 seemed to be significant in Group B. The presence of the teacher and the facilitative role he played might justify this difference between Group A and Group B paired t-tests.

### **4.3 Research Question 1B**

*To what extent does teacher-directed topic familiarization enhance students' performance on multiple-choice reading comprehension tests?*

Similar to the results of the recall tests, comparisons of students' mean scores on the multiple-choice comprehension tests confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between Group A and Group B in any of the four tests. As illustrated in Table 4.4, all the t-values in the Sig. (2-tailed) column are above .05 ( $p>.05$ ). In other words, topic familiarization performed by the teacher and the role he played in background knowledge activation/construction in Group B (Teacher) did not yield better results in enhancing students' performance on multiple-choice reading comprehension tests, as compared with pre-reading activities in the form of scripts, or written data, meant to activate/construct students' background knowledge of the texts topics in Group A (No Teacher).

**Table 4.4: T-tests (Comprehension MCQs)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
C1	Var. assumed	2.196	.143	-1.454	71	.150	-.626
				-1.471	68.061	.146	-.626
C2	Var. assumed	.007	.933	-.341	71	.734	-.137
				-.342	70.917	.733	-.137
C3	Var. assumed	.390	.535	-.658	71	.512	-.364
				-.658	70.040	.513	-.364
C4	Var. assumed	4.543	.037	-1.081	71	.283	-.602
				-1.073	66.160	.287	-.602

As a matter of fact, the presence of the teacher in the pre-reading stage of Group B and the absence of the teacher from Group A, hence employing the two approaches, did not generate different effects. It seemed that students in Group A did not necessarily need a teacher in their L2 reading class, as the teacher's absence was tolerated and did not influence students' scores negatively.

Further analysis of the data, through paired t-tests, revealed that both groups scored better in test 2 compared with test 1 ( $p<.05$ ). That is to say, the treatments, both with and without the teacher, seemed to be effective themselves and positively improved the students' marks in test 2. However, the participants' mean scores on test 2 and test 3 in both groups were not significantly different from tests 3 and 4, respectively (Table 4.5 & Table 4.6). In other words, the treatments in week three and week four did not improve the student's results in tests 3 and 4. One reason to explain might be that the reading passages were of almost the same readability index, and the multiple-choice questions were of the same difficulty level, and the students did not seem to need new reading and test-taking skills since MCQs are the most common form of testing reading

comprehension in second language classrooms and the students were quite familiar with them. Furthermore, the researcher thinks that one possible reason why both groups had significantly better results in test 2 compared to test 1 might be the nature of the second reading passage, *Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*. As was discussed in Chapter 3, reading texts 1, 3, and 4 were of quite unfamiliar topics for the students, but the participants had some basic background information on text 2, which described the cultural diversity in the United States (See 3.3.2 for details). This familiarity might have affected their scores in test 2.

**Table 4.5: Paired T-tests (Comprehension MCQs, Group A)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-1.632	2.098	.340	-4.794	37	.000
2	2 - 3	.316	2.361	.383	-.825	37	.415
3	3 - 4	.553	2.023	.328	1.684	37	.101

**Table 4.6: Paired T-tests (Comprehension MCQs, Group B)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-1.143	1.438	.243	-4.703	34	.000
2	2 - 3	.543	1.771	.299	-1.813	34	.079
3	3 - 4	.314	1.510	.255	1.231	34	.227

#### **4.4 Research Hypothesis 1**

*Teacher-directed topic familiarization enhances students' performance on L2 reading comprehension tasks more than written introductions do.*

The answers to research questions 1A and 1B confirmed that there was no significant difference between teacher-directed topic familiarization and written introductory background knowledge activation/construction pre-reading activities in enhancing students' performance on second language reading comprehension tests. This was against the first hypothesis of the study, which had been formulated on the basis of a previous small-scale pilot study. The findings suggested that whether the teacher was present in or absent from an L2 reading class did not make any difference in improving students' scores on reading comprehension tests applied in the study, i.e., recalls and MCQs, and the students in Group A and Group B showed almost equal performance. Therefore, research hypothesis 1 was rejected.

#### **4.5 Research Question 2**

*What are the differences between teacher's instruction of vocabulary and students' dictionary use in students' performance on vocabulary tests?*

Unlike the results of recall and multiple-choice tests of reading comprehension, teacher's instruction of vocabulary was confirmed to produce significantly better results than students' dictionary use in students' performance on multiple choice vocabulary tests. Table 4.7 illustrates the results of independent-samples t-tests for vocabulary MCQs of groups A (No Teacher) and B (Teacher).

**Table 4.7: T-tests (Vocabulary MCQs)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
V1	Var. assumed	3.736	.057	-2.419	71	.018	-1.320
	Var. not assumed			-2.437	70.449	.017	-1.320
V2	Var. assumed	7.871	.006	-3.922	71	.000	-2.078
	Var. not assumed			-3.987	64.576	.000	-2.078
V3	Var. assumed	6.313	.014	-5.560	71	.000	-2.705
	Var. not assumed			-5.637	66.760	.000	-2.705
V4	Var. assumed	3.885	.053	-4.501	71	.000	-1.651
	Var. not assumed			-4.532	70.464	.000	-1.651

All the t-values in the column Sig. (2-tailed) of the table are below .05 ( $p<.05$ ). In other words, teacher's instruction of vocabulary was more beneficial than students' dictionary use, and the students who were taught vocabulary in Group B had significantly better results in all the tests than those who did not have a teacher and used the dictionary for vocabulary meaning in Group A.

Once again, paired t-tests were run to determine the effects of the treatments per se on the students' results of vocabulary tests. As is demonstrated in Table 4.8, the students in Group A performed better in test 2 compared to test 1 ( $p=.006$ ). Likewise, their fourth test results were significantly better than their third ( $p=.000$ ). However, the difference between their test 2 and test 3 was not significant. This might imply that dictionary use may not always produce the same results. Parameters such as the nature of vocabulary items, words being tested, types of dictionaries, and students' concentration on dictionary entries, which are outside the scope of the present study, might play decisive roles.

**Table 4.8: Paired T-tests (Vocabulary MCQs, Group A)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	1.158	2.433	.395	2.934	37	.006
2	2 - 3	.026	2.716	.441	.060	37	.953
3	3 - 4	-1.711	2.205	.358	-4.783	37	.000

In the paired t-tests for Group B, the difference between test 2 and test 3 ( $p= .029$ ), and between tests 3 and 4 ( $p= .004$ ) seemed to be significant (Table 4.9). That is, teacher's instruction of vocabulary affected students' results positively in tests 3 and 4. Nevertheless, no significant difference was found between the students' performance on the first and second tests. There seems to be other variables than teacher's instruction which influenced student's performance on vocabulary test 2 in Group B. Yet, this need not concern us here since it does not change the answer to research question 2.

**Table 4.9: Paired T-tests (Vocabulary MCQs, Group B)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	.400	1.718	.290	1.377	34	.177
2	2 - 3	-.600	1.557	.263	-2.280	34	.029
3	3 - 4	-.657	1.259	.213	-3.088	34	.004

#### **4.6 Research Hypothesis 2**

*Students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary yield the same results in students' performance on vocabulary tests.*

Contrary to expectations, the second research hypothesis was rejected as well. Results of t-tests and the answer to research question 2 confirmed that students' dictionary use did not yield the same results as teacher's vocabulary instruction. In fact, vocabulary introduction by the teacher was more fruitful and produced much better results than mere dictionary consultation, without any intervention of the teacher, in a second language reading classroom. A comparison of Group A (No Teacher) and Group B (Teacher) indicated that students needed teacher's teaching for vocabulary meaning and dictionary use was not as effective in their performance on vocabulary MCQs.

#### **4.7 Sum of Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Tests Results**

Although the results did not confirm any significant difference between the presence and absence of the teacher in an L2 reading class in terms of students' performance on comprehension tests, including both recall and multiple-choice tests, an analysis of the aggregate of reading comprehension tests and vocabulary MCQs of the No Teacher and Teacher groups revealed that the students' scores were significantly affected by the teacher's presence and instruction. In other words, when a second language reading class was looked upon as a whole entity, considering at the same time both variables of topic familiarity and vocabulary knowledge, which according to Cabaroglu and Yurdaisik (2008) are the most important problems students face in a reading class, it was confirmed that teachers generally play an important facilitative role in L2 reading classes and their instruction affects, to a great extent, students' total scores and performance in class.

Table 4.10 illustrates that except for the results of the accumulation of the first comprehension and vocabulary tests, of the first treatment altogether, the difference between all the other tests of Group A and Group B were significant ( $p < .05$ ), denoting that the Teacher group totally achieved much more than the No Teacher class.

**Table 4.10: T-tests (Total Sum of Results)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
S1	Var. assumed	.532	.468	-1.557	71	.124	-3.590
				-1.566	70.695	.122	-3.590
S2	Var. assumed	.011	.916	-2.217	71	.030	-4.828
				-2.213	69.969	.030	-4.828
S3	Var. assumed	1.773	.187	-2.376	71	.020	-7.187
				-2.359	66.653	.021	-7.187
S4	Var. assumed	.008	.928	-2.104	71	.039	-7.673
				-2.104	70.561	.039	-7.673

Finally, paired t-tests results (Tables 4.11 & 4.12) once more showed possible positive effects of the treatments and the benefits of both methods, with and without the teacher ( $p < .05$ ), except for the first paired t-test of the No Teacher group (A), where the difference between test 1 and test 2 did not seem to be significant ( $p > .05$ ). In short, it can be concluded that although both of the methods applied in the two groups were fruitful per se, there was a probable advantage of teacher's instruction of vocabulary over students' dictionary use whereas teacher-directed topic familiarization did not seem to prove any superiority compared to the efficacy of topic familiarization through written introductions and explanations.

**Table 4.11: Paired T-tests (Sum of Results, Group A)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-1.105	7.225	1.172	-.943	37	.352
2	2 - 3	-5.526	7.551	1.225	-4.512	37	.000
3	3 - 4	-5.000	8.170	1.325	-3.772	37	.001

**Table 4.12: Paired T-tests (Sum of Results, Group B)**

Pairs	Tests	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
1	1 - 2	-2.343	4.640	.784	-2.987	34	.005
2	2 - 3	-7.886	7.828	1.323	-5.960	34	.000
3	3 - 4	-5.486	7.430	1.256	-4.368	34	.000

It was discussed earlier on that in order to find the answer to research questions 3A and 3B, the quantitative results of a perception questionnaire were triangulated with the qualitative data of interview responses. An analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data is presented below, and an answer is provided to question 3A first and then to 3B.

## **4.8 Research Question 3A**

*What are students' perceptions of the teacher's role in topic familiarization as compared with the efficacy of written explanations?*

### **4.8.1 Questionnaire Responses**

Of the sixteen items on the 5-point Likert scale perception questionnaire employed in the study, eight items (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16) tested the students on their perceptions of teacher-directed topic familiarization and written explanations. The mean scores are tabulated below, illustrating the students' means in both groups on a scale of 1 – 5.

**Table 4.13: Questionnaire Means (Items on Topic Familiarization)**

Items	Group A (No Teacher)	Group B (Teacher)
7	2.66	2.74
8	3.47	3.86
9	3.45	3.34
10	3.71	3.83
11	3.66	3.74
12	3.84	4.09
13	4.05	4.06
16	3.21	3.06

The study has applied Mohammadi's (2004) decision scale:

1 – 1.59= Strongly Disagree (SD)

1.6 – 2.59= Disagree (D)

2.6 – 3.59= Undecided (U)

3.6 – 4.59= Agree (A)

4.6 – 5= Strongly Agree (SD)

On item 7, which asked the participants if they could understand unfamiliar reading passages without a teacher's help, the findings showed that both Group A (No Teacher) and Group B (Teacher) were undecided whether or not they needed a teacher's help to understand unfamiliar texts ( $M= 2.66$  &  $2.74$ , respectively).

In question eight, asking the students if they wanted a teacher to provide them with background knowledge on the text topic/content before reading a passage, Group A were undecided ( $M= 3.47$ ) while Group B agreed ( $M= 3.86$ ) that they needed teacher-initiated background information.

Item 9 asked the respondents whether or not they preferred to receive background knowledge on a text in the form of written introduction and explanations. Neither group A ( $M= 3.45$ ) nor group B ( $M= 3.34$ ) could decide if they wanted written background information.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> item, which asked the students if they thought their teacher's oral explanations on text topic/content were more effective than written explanations, both groups agreed that teacher's explanations were more effective ( $M= 3.71$ , Group A & $M= 3.83$ , Group B). This was against the students' results on reading comprehension tests, recalls and MCQs. Contrary to the participants' perceptions, independent-samples t-

tests of the comprehension tests results confirmed that teacher's explanations did not have any advantage over written explanations in topic familiarization.

On item eleven, both group A ( $M= 3.66$ ) and group B ( $M= 3.74$ ) agreed that they generally understood texts better with their teacher's instructions.

In question twelve, asking the students whether the presence of a teacher in their reading class would give them a feeling of support, both group A and B agreed ( $M= 3.84 & 4.09$ , respectively) that they enjoyed being supported by the teacher.

On item 13, both Group A ( $M= 4.05$ ) and Group B ( $M= 4.06$ ) agreed that they could understand a text better if the teacher provided a title for it. This supports Hammadou's study (1991) which found that titles had a role in helping students to construct/activate prior knowledge.

Finally, in question 16, which asked the respondents if they thought they were independent readers and did not need the presence and instruction of a teacher in their reading class, neither of the two groups could decide whether or not they were independent readers ( $M= 3.21 & 3.06$ ).

To further analyze the students' total mean scores on the eight items, an independent-samples t-test was run to compare the means (Table 4.14). Evidence indicated that there was no significant difference between the No Teacher and Teacher groups in terms of their perceptions of teacher-directed topic familiarization versus written background knowledge activation/construction information ( $p>.05$ ). In other words, the students in both groups thought that the two approaches yielded the same results in their performance of reading comprehension tests, i.e., recalls and multiple-choice questions. Actually, their perceptions agreed with their results of reading comprehension tests. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

**Table 4.14: Perception Questionnaire T-test (Items on Topic Familiarization)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
TF Var. assumed	.621	.444	-.364	14	.722	-.08375	.23031
Var. not assumed			-.364	13.739	.722	-.08375	.23031

## 4.8.2 Interview Responses

### 4.8.2.1 Interview Question 1

The first interview question was “*In order to understand an unfamiliar reading passage, do you think you need a teacher to provide you with oral background information about the text, or would you prefer to read about the background information? Give reasons for your choice.*” An analysis of the students’ responses revealed that from the 10 respondents in Group A (No Teacher), four participants preferred to receive the teacher’s oral background information rather than read introductions and explanations on texts. They said that the teachers’ presence and oral explanations are more useful and they would help them learn about the text topic and content much more than written introductory data. Two of them asserted that they could ask the teacher further questions about ambiguities and ask for more information whereas this is not possible in the case of written background information.

Four other interviewees stated that they would prefer written background information. One of them suggested that it was easier for her to gain prior knowledge on text topic by reading about it. She said she could concentrate on printed words more than on the teacher’s explanations. She could remember the words easily when she saw them rather than heard them. Another respondent claimed that she simply felt more confident when

she read on background knowledge. The third student reported that she was more text-oriented. She was more comfortable when reading on text background information. She also said that she could get help from a dictionary if she encountered unfamiliar words while reading explanations. The last student, who was a low scorer on the comprehension and vocabulary tests, stated that she preferred reading introductions to teacher's oral explanations just because she couldn't understand the teacher's explanations in English. She declared that because she was in the elementary level of English proficiency, she preferred to use her dictionary to understand the written introductions on text topic/content.

The last two participants in Group A believed that there was no difference between written introductions and the teacher's explanations of text topic in terms of students' performance on reading comprehension tests. They didn't see any advantage of one approach over the other.

Among the 10 interviewees in Group B (Teacher) answering question 1, five students preferred to listen to teacher's oral explanations rather than read on background information of texts. Two of them said they could concentrate on, understand and remember teacher's explanations better. The other three believed that reading on background information is time-consuming. They further stated that the written introduction itself might contain unfamiliar words and cause misunderstanding.

Three of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to read on background knowledge information. One of them said she could not concentrate on and, therefore, didn't follow teacher's explanations. The other two commented that they were text-dependent and needed to have their dictionaries with them while reading.

Still, two students in Group B could not see any difference between the two approaches. They said that although teacher's oral explanations of background knowledge are very effective, reading on introductions seems as helpful.

Finally, as explained earlier on, the three participants who attended both groups A and B, and experienced both treatments, were interviewed as well. The high scorer preferred oral explanations. She believed that written background information might be misleading, suggesting that if students got something wrong, then their understanding of the whole passage would be affected.

The mid-scorer thought that both methods are useful. On the one hand, teacher's explanations are interesting and help her remember ideas longer, and on the other, reading on her own and focusing on written introductions help her develop independence in reading.

The last student, who was a low scorer, preferred to read on background information. She said, this way, she could take her time, read and re-read the information. She argued that this chance is not available to her with the teacher's presence. When the teacher provides the class with background knowledge on a text, "he can't wait for me. He goes on."

#### **4.8.2.2 Interview Question 2**

The second interview question was, "*Do you generally think you are an independent reader, or do you think you need a teacher? Give reasons.*" Results confirmed that of the 10 participants in the No Teacher group (A), three students believed they were independent readers. They thought that they just didn't need a teacher and could read independently.

Four other interviewees considered themselves as neither quite independent nor dependent readers. One of them argued that she could not say she did not need a teacher at all. Two other students said that if they encountered a difficult sentence or any ambiguity, or if they faced problems with different meanings of a word in a text, then they would need a teacher to assist them. The last one declared that he needed the presence of a teacher. He said he wanted to be an independent reader and work without a teacher's help, but because he didn't have much self-confidence in reading, he thought he was not yet independent enough and needed a teacher.

Three other students said they thought they were not independent readers. One of them suggested that the presence of a teacher gave her a feeling of support. The other two respondents said that they needed a teacher to explain passages and solve their reading problems. These students also argued that they wanted the teacher's explanations in Persian, their mother tongue, because they thought they lacked enough English proficiency to understand the teacher's oral explanations in English.

Results of the interview responses to question 2 in Group B (Teacher) confirmed that, out of 10 participants, three students claimed that they were independent readers. One of them, the top scorer, said that she didn't always need a teacher. She believed that it is only at the beginning levels that students need teachers. But, at later stages, like intermediate, they do not need the teacher that much. She added, "the more the proficiency, the less the need to the teacher." The other two interviewees thought that they felt supported by the teacher in the classroom. They also said that they want the teacher to explain the text content and solve their reading problems, such as understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words.

However, four students suggested that they were neither dependent nor independent readers. Two of them said they could read and understand on their own but they need a

teacher to clarify difficult points. The other two indicated that their reading independence was in direct relation to the difficulty level of the text. For more difficult texts, they declared, they need teacher's assistance.

Yet, the last three students answering question 2 in Group B said they thought they were not independent readers. They, unanimously, believed that they definitely needed a teacher. One of them wanted the teacher to solve ambiguities and reading problems. Another respondent pointed out that if a student could not get the meaning of a sentence, s/he could ask the teacher to explain it. And the last one thought she needs the teacher's instruction simply because she is a beginner and does not know enough vocabulary and reading skills.

Finally, of the three students who attended both classes of groups A and B, the high scorer said she is an independent reader. She believed that she does not need any help from the teacher, neither before nor while reading. She suggested that even if she encounters any unfamiliar idea or vocabulary, she, most probably, resorts to dictionaries and takes care of the problem herself.

The second, mid-scorer, interviewee doubted as being dependent or independent in second language reading. She said she could read on her own, but she needs her teacher's assistance, and would definitely ask her teacher questions about the text she is reading/has read.

The last respondent, the low scorer, was not an independent reader. She said it is difficult for her to read and understand a text without her teacher's instruction and supervision because of her low proficiency in the English language. She stated that she was especially weak in vocabulary knowledge and understanding unfamiliar words compared to her classmates.

To sum up, the results of the responses to interview questions 1 and 2 indicated that an average 35% of the students (4 students for question 1, and 3 students for question 2) in Group A (No Teacher) believed that they were not independent readers and preferred to listen to the teacher's oral background knowledge activation/construction information, hence teacher-directed topic familiarization, rather than read explanations about it. Another 35% of the participants in the same group (4 respondents for question 1, and 3 for question 2) thought themselves as independent readers and stated that written explanations on background knowledge are more effective than teacher-directed topic familiarization. However, an average 30% of the interviewees (2 for question 1, and 4 for question 2) called themselves neither independent nor dependent readers. They also stated that both approaches were equally effective and could not consider any superiority of one over the other.

In Group B (Teacher), an average 40% of the students (5 for question 1, and 3 for question 2) maintained that they were not independent readers, and preferred teacher's oral topic familiarization to written explanations. 30% of the interviewees in this group (3 students for each of the questions) considered themselves as independent readers, and found written explanations on text topic/content more effective than teacher's oral explanations. For the last 30% (2 for question 1, and 4 for question 2), who were neither dependent nor quite independent readers, it did not make any difference whether to listen to teacher's oral explanations or to read written introductions about text topic/content.

As for the neutral group, about 33.3% (1 student for each question) was an independent reader and preferred teacher-directed topic familiarization. Another 33.3% (1 for each question) was dependent and wanted to read written explanations. And the last 33.3% was neither dependent nor independent in reading and did not point out any difference between the two approaches.

From the total 23 students interviewed, 36% preferred to listen to the teacher providing oral background knowledge on the text topic/content. 33% of the participants would rather read written introductions/explanations on the text. And 31% did not see any difference between oral and written background knowledge information.

Therefore, it could be concluded from the above qualitative data that, although the number of the students who favored teacher's oral explanation was slightly more (by only 3% compared to those favoring written explanations) there was generally no significant difference between the students' perceptions in Group A and Group B in terms of the teacher's role in topic familiarization as compared with the efficacy of written explanations. It seemed that both teacher-directed topic familiarization and written explanations were almost equally helpful for both groups.

A triangulation of the above qualitative data of the interview responses with the quantitative results of the perception questionnaire, through the explanatory mixed methods approach employed in the study, confirmed that the qualitative data explained the quantitative results of the questionnaire, which, as well, did not show any statistically significant difference between Group A and Group B students' perceptions of the teacher's role in topic familiarization as compared with the efficacy of written explanations (Table 4.14). In short, a possible answer to research question 3A would be that the participants of the study indicated, in the interviews as well as the questionnaire, that there was no difference between teacher-directed topic familiarization and written explanations, and both methods were effective.

## **4.9 Research Question 3B**

*What are students' perceptions of teacher's instruction of vocabulary as compared with students' dictionary use?*

### **4.9.1 Questionnaire Responses**

The other eight items on the questionnaire, (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, and 15) evaluated and compared the participants' perceptions of teacher's instruction of vocabulary and students' dictionary use. The mean scores are illustrated in Table 4.15.

**Table 4.15: Questionnaire Means (Items on Vocabulary Introduction)**

Items	Group A (No Teacher)	Group B (Teacher)
1	3.42	3.8
2	4.24	3.29
3	2.66	2.14
4	3.24	2.6
5	3.45	3.8
6	2.84	3.11
14	3.63	3.31
15	3.68	3.97

In question one, which asked the participants if they needed a teacher to teach them the unknown words of the text they wanted to read, the findings showed that Group A (No Teacher) was undecided as to whether they needed teacher's guidance ( $M=3.42$ ) while

Group B (Teacher) felt that they needed the help of a teacher to learn vocabulary meaning ( $M= 3.8$ ).

On the second item, asking students' preference for dictionary use to check the unknown words, Group A preferred to use a dictionary ( $M= 4.24$ ) whereas Group B was undecided ( $M= 3.29$ ).

Question three asked students if they thought there was a difference between students' dictionary use and teacher's vocabulary instruction. Evidence suggested that Group A was undecided about whether or not there was a difference ( $M= 2.66$ ) while Group B thought that there *was* a difference ( $M= 2.14$ ).

On item four, where students were asked if they thought vocabulary learning was more fun without a teacher's help, both Group A ( $M= 3.24$ ) and Group B ( $M= 2.66$ ) were undecided.

The fifth question asked the respondents if they thought their teachers would know better than themselves which words they needed to learn to read a text. Results indicated that Group B agreed ( $M= 3.8$ ) that teachers would know this better than students whereas Group A was undecided ( $M= 3.45$ ).

In question 6, both groups were reluctant as to whether or not to ask their teachers for vocabulary meaning while reading a text ( $M= 2.84$  in Group A, and  $M= 3.11$  in Group B).

Item fourteen asked the participants whether or not they checked vocabulary all the time. Results confirmed that the No Teacher group agreed ( $M= 3.63$ ) that they always checked unfamiliar vocabulary in a dictionary, but the Teacher group were reluctant ( $M= 3.31$ ).

And finally, on the last questionnaire item on vocabulary introduction, 15, when the students were asked if they tried to guess word meanings from the context, the responses in both groups were positive ( $M= 3.68 & 3.97$ ).

A further analysis of the questionnaire results confirmed that there was no significant difference between the respondents' perceptions of teacher's instruction of vocabulary as compared with students' dictionary use. Students' total mean scores of the eight items indicated that both Group A ( $M= 3.39$ ) and Group B ( $M= 3.25$ ) thought that students' dictionary use and teacher's vocabulary instruction produced the same results in students' performance on vocabulary tests. An independent-samples t-test, as illustrated in Table 4.16, did not confirm any difference between group A and group B students' perceptions on the two approaches ( $p> .05$ ). Surprisingly, this was in contradiction to the students' results of vocabulary tests. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

**Table 4.16: Perception Questionnaire T-test (Items on Vocabulary Introduction)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
VI Var. assumed	449.	514.	501.	14	.624	.14250	.28439
Var. not assumed			501.	13.252	.625	.14250	.28439

## **4.9.2 Interview Responses**

### **4.9.2.1 Interview Question 3**

The third interview question was “*Do you think you need a teacher to teach you the unknown words of the text you are going to read, or would you prefer to look up the new words in a dictionary yourself? Give reasons for your choice.*” The analysis of students’ comments revealed that seven participants in Group A (No Teacher) preferred to look up words in a dictionary rather than being taught by a teacher. One of them reported that she simply enjoyed working with dictionaries. Another one said she would love to solve her vocabulary problems without a teacher’s help. One of the interviewees said that it all depends on text difficulty. Sometimes, unfamiliar words have different meanings and she needs the help of a teacher. But she generally preferred using dictionaries. Another participant reported that guessing the meaning of words from the context was very important and she could understand some new words from the context. She thought that she could generally understand normal texts without a teacher’s help. One interviewee indicated that she is more comfortable with dictionaries because when she looks up the new words herself, the meanings would stick in her mind. A low scorer participant said she couldn’t understand her teacher’s explanations of new words because her English is not good enough. So she prefers dictionaries. The last student stated that she works more comfortably when she is alone than when in class.

However, two participants thought that both dictionary use and teacher’s instruction are necessary. One of them said she likes to work with dictionaries in the teacher’s presence. When there are many definitions of a word, the teacher can explain ambiguities. The other one indicated that at the beginning stages students need teacher’s instruction of vocabulary, but at later stages, it is preferable to look up words in dictionaries with the supervision of a teacher.

Only one interviewee preferred teacher's instruction. She stated that a teacher's instructions and his/her reading words aloud would help new words stick in her mind, and as a result, she remembers them more easily.

However, results of interviews in Group B (Teacher) were quite different. Six students preferred teacher's instruction of vocabulary. Two of them said that teacher's explanations would help them very much to understand new words. Three participants indicated that they need to have interaction with the teacher. Dictionaries would often give many definitions for a word, and it is only the teacher who can provide them with the exact meaning of the word as used in the context. Another student said that dictionary use is time-consuming.

Among the remaining participants, three students believed that both dictionary use and teacher's instruction are equally important. On the one hand, when the teacher explains word meanings, s/he will provide students with the straightforward meanings, and on the other, when students look up words in a dictionary, they can learn different meanings of a new word as well as other words related to it.

Only one student in this group preferred working with dictionaries. She stated, however, that only in specialized vocabulary, she needs a person to explain words. This person is not necessarily a teacher; it could be anyone who is specialized in that field.

Finally, of the three students who attended both classes, the high scorer preferred to look up words in the dictionary. She said that this would let her learn words' different meanings and parts of speech, resulting in more words sticking in her mind. Strangely, she added that she couldn't remember for a long time words that have been taught by a teacher. Also, the second student preferred dictionaries because they are always available and she can consult them again and again without any limitation in spite of the fact that she thinks she can remember words taught by a teacher for a longer time than

when looked up in a dictionary. However, the third interviewee preferred teacher's instruction because she thought dictionary use is time-consuming and words have different meanings.

#### **4.9.2.2 Interview Question 4**

The fourth interview question was "*What do you think is the best strategy in understanding the unknown words of a text?*" Students' responses indicated that three interviewees in Group A preferred to guess word meanings from the context first, and then consult a dictionary. They sought their teacher's help only as the last resort. Five other interviewees indicated that they preferred using the dictionary right from the beginning, one of whom would rather ask the teacher about slang words and idiomatic expressions. The top scorer, who was among these five students in Group A, stated that she preferred to learn words in context rather than memorizing a word list. She also said she tries to learn vocabulary through the association of meanings.

Another respondent claimed that she does not usually try to guess word meanings from the context. Rather, she looks up in a dictionary every difficult word she encounters. She added, however, that if she still has difficulty with vocabulary, she would ask her teacher. The last participant believed that beginning students need the teacher a lot until s/he teaches them how to use a dictionary. In her opinion, intermediate students need both the dictionary and the teacher; however, advanced students don't need a teacher.

Results of interviews in Group B revealed that three students preferred to have a combination of teacher's help and dictionary usage. Three other participants indicated that their first preference is consulting a dictionary only if guessing fails. In addition, the top scorer in this group stated that the best way to understand new words is through teacher's instruction. The last three interviewees said that they preferred, after trying to

guess word meanings from the context, to ask the teacher. One suggested that, when reading in class, she finds the teacher more helpful than the dictionary.

Among the three students who attended both groups, the high scorer stated that although dictionary use is time- and energy-consuming, she still prefers it to the teacher's help in vocabulary. Another one said she generally prefers teacher's vocabulary instruction, but because she feels shy and embarrassed when asking her teacher, she is more comfortable with dictionaries. The last student said she resorts to dictionaries only if the teacher is not available.

In short, the results of Group A (No Teacher) students' responses to interview questions 3 and 4 suggested that an average 80% of the students (7 students for question 3, and 9 for question 4) believed that dictionary use is the best strategy in learning new words and they preferred it to teacher's instruction of vocabulary. Another 15% of the participants in the same group (2 respondents for question 3, and 1 for question 4) said they would rather use both strategies of dictionary use and receiving teacher's instruction in learning new words. However, only an average 5% of the interviewees in Group A (1 student for question 3 only) preferred teacher's instruction to using dictionary for vocabulary meaning.

In Teacher group (B), an average 50% of the students (6 for question 3, and 4 for question 4) maintained that undergoing teacher's vocabulary instruction is a more effective strategy than dictionary use in learning new words. 30% of the interviewees in this group (3 students for each of the questions) considered a combination of teacher's intervention and dictionary use as the best vocabulary learning strategy, and did not consider any superiority of one over the other. In addition, an average 20% of the respondents (1 for question 3, and 3 for question 4) would prefer to use dictionaries rather than seek teacher's instruction for the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Concerning the neutral group, an average of about 66.6% of the respondents (2 students for each question) thought of dictionary usage as a better vocabulary learning strategy than teacher's instruction. And finally, 33.3% (1 student for each question) preferred teacher's vocabulary instruction to dictionary use as a better strategy and approach in understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words.

From the total 23 students interviewed, 56% preferred to use dictionaries for word meanings rather than undergo teacher's instructions. 29% of the students supported teacher's vocabulary instruction, and 15% would rather have a combination of both.

By comparison, 80% of the students in Group A (No Teacher) preferred dictionary use whereas only 20% of Group B (Teacher) advocated it. Moreover, only 5% of the respondents in Group A, as opposed to 50% in Group B, would rather receive teacher's vocabulary instruction than look up new words in dictionaries. Also, an average 15% of Group A interviewees favored a combination of both teacher's instruction and dictionary use in vocabulary learning, while the percentage was 30% for Group B. In the neutral group, as stated above, about 66.6% preferred dictionary usage and the rest supported teacher's instruction.

Therefore, the qualitative data above suggest that what the students in Group A stated in their interviews did not match their responses to the perception questionnaire. Results of the questionnaire responses of Group A had not confirmed any difference between the role of teacher's instruction and the effects of dictionary use in students' vocabulary learning (See Table 4.16.). In contrast, Group B's students favored, although not very strongly, teacher's vocabulary instruction in their interviews (by 50% as opposed to 20% dictionary advocates and 30% neutral), which contradicted their questionnaire responses, which had not supported any superiority of one approach over the other as per the students' perceptions. In either case, whether being teacher advocate or

dictionary advocate, interview responses did not match questionnaire results. Surprisingly, however, only the Teacher group (B) interview responses were in line with vocabulary test results. As illustrated in Table 4.7, the students' vocabulary tests results in Group B were significantly better than those of the students in Group A. This implies that students' perceptions might not always be true and reliable to make decisions in second language learning. Chapter 5 will discuss this in more details.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

Chapter 4 presented the results of the study by answering each research question and hypothesis in turn, and by summarizing the results in tables and percentages. These results included quantitative results of recall tests, comprehension and vocabulary multiple choice tests, and a perception questionnaire, as well as qualitative data of the interview responses to four questions. Overall, no meaningful difference was confirmed between teacher-directed topic familiarization and written introductory explanations in terms of second language learners' performance on reading comprehension tests, thereby rejecting the first hypothesis of the study. This corresponded with the students' perceptions expressed in the questionnaire and explained in their interviews, in that, they believed there was not any important difference between the two approaches. However, the students who experienced teacher's vocabulary instructions performed significantly better in their vocabulary tests compared to those who used dictionaries to check the meanings of unfamiliar words. Therefore, the second research hypothesis was rejected as well. This was against the students' perceptions, which did not contend any different effects of teacher's instructions and students' dictionary use on students' results of vocabulary tests. Yet, surprisingly, and unlike Group A, Group B's (Teacher) interview responses did not confirm their perceptions expressed in the questionnaire.

Almost half of the interviewees explained that they believed teacher's vocabulary instructions were more effective than students' dictionary use, which was confirmed by the study quantitative data to be true perceptions.

Chapter 5 will elaborate on the findings presented in this chapter, and will compare the results with previous related studies. Chapter 5 will further present the limitations of the current research, suggest the pedagogical implications, and provide recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This fifth and final chapter will first discuss the major findings reported in Chapter 4, and will compare and contrast the results with the findings of previous studies presented in the literature review. In addition, Chapter 5 will elaborate upon the implications of the study, and will then discuss the limitations of the present research. Finally, this chapter will conclude with recommendations for future studies about topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction in the second language classroom.

#### **5.1 Discussion**

This section focuses on major findings addressing the research questions of the present study. Results of previous research are compared and contrasted with the findings of the study here, attending to the research questions in turn.

##### **5.1.1 Research Questions 1A and 1B**

As the results reported in Chapter 4 indicate, there is no significant difference between teacher-directed topic familiarization and background knowledge activation/construction through written explanations in terms of L2 students' performance on recall tests, thereby the answer to research question 1A. In other words, oral and written pre-reading activities produce the same effects on students' recall of

reading passages. A second look at Table 4.1 (Chapter 4) reveals that in all the four recall tests of the four reading passages of unfamiliar topic the mean scores of the ‘No Teacher’ (A) and ‘Teacher’ (B) groups were close (Table 5.1), and the standard deviations of the four tests did not show much difference between the two groups, and therefore, the t-values were not significant.

**Table 5.1: T-tests on Recalls (Reproduced from Chapter 4)**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
R1	Var. assumed	.131	.719	-.983	71	.329	-1.644	1.672
	Var. not assumed			-.989	70.879	.326	-1.644	1.663
R2	Var. assumed	.209	.649	-1.663	71	.101	-2.613	1.571
	Var. not assumed			-1.656	68.703	.102	-2.613	1.577
R3	Var. assumed	1.970	.165	-1.754	71	.084	-4.119	2.348
	Var. not assumed			-1.740	65.864	.087	-4.119	2.368
R4	Var. assumed	.000	.989	-1.854	71	.068	-5.420	2.924
	Var. not assumed			-1.855	70.627	.068	-5.420	2.922

Likewise, the answer to research question 1B suggests that oral and written topic familiarization yield similar results in students’ performance on multiple choice comprehension tests. That is to say, whether the pre-reading activities are directed and performed by the teacher or presented and distributed as a set of written introductory data to help students activate/construct background knowledge about the texts they want to read does not cause any meaningful difference in students’ comprehension output in MCQs. Table 4.4 illustrates that, just like the recall tests results, in all the four multiple choice comprehension tests the mean scores and the standard deviations of Group A and Group B are very close, and the t-values are not significant.

It should be reminded that, following Wolf's (1993) argument that more than one type of reading comprehension measure should be used to assess student's comprehension, in the present study recall tests have been coupled with multiple choice tests as two important measures of students' reading comprehension evaluation. This is in line with the testing methods employed by researchers such as Carrell (1987), Dimassi (2006), and Young (1991), among others (See Chapter 3, sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 for details). In fact, research questions 1A and 1B are both related to the effects of teacher-directed versus written topic familiarization on students' reading comprehension which has been assessed through two means of evaluation, i.e., recall and multiple choice tests.

One reason teacher-directed and written topic familiarization did not produce different results in students' performance on comprehension tests, whether recall or MCQs, might be because the oral pre-reading activities performed by the teacher for Group B were consistent with the written pre-reading materials provided for the study participants in Group A. Great care had been taken in providing the two groups with equal conditions. What was presented to the No Teacher group was exactly similar to what was taught by the teacher in Group B. The variables such as background information content, brainstorming questions, time allotments, and even classroom conditions were all kept consistent, as far as possible, for the students in both groups.

It might seem, at first glance, that the present study has restricted the facilitative role of the second language reading teacher, and has narrowed it down to a limited rigid teacher's role. In normal real life situations, the teacher and teaching process are so flexible that they might not lend themselves to unchanging, pre-planned pre-reading activities, following a definite, inflexible lesson plan step by step, like a programmed robot doing the same job again and again without the ability to think and adjust to a new situation, or a cassette player playing the same material many times with no alteration. In a real reading class, the teacher is involved in all the three phases of pre-reading,

while-reading, and post-reading activities, which are referred to as planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies, respectively, by Urquhart and Weir (1998; See Chapter 2, section 2.3 for details) to provide lively interactive classroom situations, where there are lots of flexibility and variety in terms of teaching materials and methods as well as interaction between the teacher and the students.

However, as was emphasized in Chapter 1, the present study has mainly focused on the role of the teacher's instruction at the pre-reading stage, which according to Williams (1987) is the most important of the three phases, rather than his/her role in while-reading or post-reading activities. Therefore, this research has attempted to evaluate a somewhat more limited role of the teacher in a second language reading classroom. Since there was normally no flexibility in the written pre-reading materials provided for group A students, group B's teacher-initiated activities needed to be as uniform and homogeneous as possible for comparison purposes. In short, the researcher had to control all the variables involved and ensure consistency of the approaches.

As a matter of fact, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the present study is the first attempt to compare teacher's oral topic familiarization with written topic familiarization in second language reading. Therefore, there is no evidence in the literature for the purpose of comparison and contrast. More research seems inevitable in the field to be able to generalize the study findings. The only study that is to some extent in line with the present research belongs to Dole et al. (1991), reviewed in Chapter 2.

Dole et al. compared the effects of two pre-reading instructional treatments on students' comprehension of narrative and expository texts. They randomly assigned 63 fifth-grade students in the United States to three groups. All of the three groups were exposed to three treatment conditions: 1) a teacher-directed condition in which teachers read

prepared scripts designed to provide students with important information necessary for understanding the texts, 2) an interactive condition in which teachers activated and discussed students' prior knowledge about the topics of the texts, and 3) a control condition in which no pre-reading instruction was provided. Results showed that the teacher-directed condition was more effective than the interactive condition at enhancing comprehension, and both of the treatments were superior to the third condition, i.e., no pre-reading instruction. Dole et al. suggested that the reasons why the teacher-directed condition was more effective might be because it focused only on the most important information necessary for understanding the text, and it included direct and explicit instruction. However, in this study, teacher-directed topic familiarization was not confirmed to be superior to written scripts intended to activate/construct students' background knowledge.

Yet, the present work enjoys some interesting research by-products as well that can be traced in the literature (See Chapter 2 for details). A second look at the paired t-tests tables in 4.2 and 4.3 indicates that the study participants show significant progress in all the pairs of tests except only one pair (the first paired t-test of Group A recalls), which could be due to students' unfamiliarity with recall tests at the beginning of the research. This means that, regardless of the fact that there is no meaningful difference between teacher's oral topic familiarization and written topic familiarization, both of them are effective per se in helping students of the two groups recall more and more idea units of the four reading passages, resulting in the students' better performance on recall tests. The research findings contradict Roller and Matambo's (1992) study in which topic familiarity did not have any effects on their students' recall of unfamiliar passages. Roller and Matambo found it hard to justify the results, but one reason could be that the participants were highly proficient L2 readers while the present study participants

consisted of elementary, lower intermediate, and upper intermediate students. Perhaps topic familiarity is insignificant for advanced second language readers.

However, the study findings of recall tests are in line with Anderson et al.'s (1977), Steffensen, Joag-dev, and Anderson's (1979), Johnson's (1981 & 1982), Stahl et al.'s (1989), Afflerbach's (1990), and Dimassi's (2006), where topic familiarity and background knowledge facilitated students' comprehension and resulted in their recall of more information. In Anderson et al., the subjects were physical education and music education students who were asked to read an ambiguous passage. Steffensen, Joag-dev, and Anderson's research was on cross-cultural perspectives on reading comprehension, in which American and Indian Adults read two letters describing typical Indian and American weddings.

In Johnson's (1981) study, 46 Iranian intermediate/advanced ESL students and 19 American university students were asked to read an Iranian story and an American story, both containing similar but culturally distinct themes. Johnson (1982) investigated the effects of building background knowledge in pre-reading activities on reading comprehension. 72 advanced students from advanced reading classes at an American university, but from 32 nationalities, were given a passage to read on the celebration of Halloween, which contained familiar and unfamiliar information.

Stahl et al. investigated the effects of prior knowledge and difficult vocabulary on text comprehension among junior high school students in the United States. Afflerbach examined the influence of prior knowledge on the reading strategies used by expert readers. The participants of his study, who were expert readers from the fields of anthropology and chemistry, were asked to read texts from familiar and unfamiliar content domain. And finally, Dimassi investigated the effects of cultural background

knowledge on reading comprehension of a text on the Emirati wedding traditions by 60 Emirati and 30 Iranian students at an Emirati university.

Interestingly, in all of the studies mentioned, reviewed before in Chapter 2, topic familiarity and background knowledge enhanced students' performance on recall tests regardless of the English language proficiency level of the participants. High school students, intermediate students, advanced students, university students, and expert readers all benefitted from the background information on the text they read. This confirms the findings in the present study, with the participants ranging from elementary to upper intermediate, but does not agree with Roller and Matambo's findings discussed above.

Regarding research question 1B, as discussed above, teacher-directed topic familiarization was not confirmed to have any different effects, compared with written topic familiarization, on student's performance on multiple choice reading comprehension tests, just like the answer to research question 1A. Similarly, since this study is the first one of the kind, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no data is available in the literature to be compared and/or contrasted with the findings of the present study. We could only examine the so called by-products of the study against more or less similar research reviewed in Chapter 2.

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 (Chapter 4) illustrate that in the first paired t-test of both groups, topic familiarization, whether teacher-directed or written, had profound effects on the students' scores on multiple choice reading comprehension tests. The value of the first paired t-test was .000 ( $p < .05$ ) in both groups, A and B. In other words, topic familiarization per se, with or without the teacher's intervention, helped the students in both groups significantly improve their scores in MC test 2 compared to MC test 1. This confirms Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough's (1988) results. They found that pre-

reading activities had significant effects on the multiple choice reading comprehension test scores of their 40 EFL students at a Brazilian college.

The present research is also in line with Ming's (1997) study, who worked with 47 Malaysian ESL students in a Malaysian University. Ming concluded that pre-reading activities helped average proficiency readers perform well, although not significantly, in multiple choice reading comprehension tests. In the same context, Park (2004b) examined the effects of pre-teaching background knowledge and topic familiarization on L2 reading comprehension of Korean high school students. The present study had followed Park in the number the reading texts (four passages) of unfamiliar topics and contents that were taught and tested. In support of this research, he observed that background knowledge significantly contributed to L2 MC reading comprehension tests. Likewise, the study results support Florencio's (2004) findings as well. He investigated the effects of background knowledge on reading comprehension by Brazilian and American university students. Florencio's study demonstrated that topic familiarity had significant effects on students' multiple choice reading comprehension tests results.

Once again, it seems that age and the English language proficiency level do not affect the facilitative role of topic familiarization on students' performance on reading comprehension MCQs. College students in Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough's study, Ming's average proficiency university students, Park's high school participants, Florencio's university students, and the present study EFL participants, who were of mixed English proficiency levels at an Iranian university, improved their reading comprehension as a result of topic familiarization.

However, it should be noted that in the same paired t-tests tables discussed above (4.5 & 4.6), the participants' mean scores on test 2 and test 3 in both groups were not

significantly different from tests 3 and 4, respectively ( $p>.05$ ). That is, students' performance neither improved nor regressed through topic familiarization, be it oral or written. This is justifiable since the reading passages were of almost the same readability index, and the multiple-choice questions were of the same difficulty level. Anyhow, these results do not change the answers to research questions 1A and 1B since teacher-directed topic familiarization and written background knowledge activation/construction were not confirmed to be significantly different in enhancing L2 students' reading comprehension in both recall and multiple choice tests.

### **5.1.2 Research Question 2**

The answer to research question 2 had a different story. Results, as illustrated in Table 4.7, confirmed that, in all the four tests, teacher's instruction of vocabulary was significantly more effective than students' dictionary use in students' performance on vocabulary tests. The t-value in all the independent-samples t-tests was below .05 ( $p<.05$ ). In other words, the Teacher group (B), who received teacher's instruction, significantly outperformed the No Teacher group (A), who used their dictionaries for word meanings but did not undergo vocabulary instruction.

This supports Grabe's expectation (2009, personal correspondence) that dictionary use and teacher's vocabulary instruction do not produce the same results. However, although several studies confirm dictionaries as essential to vocabulary learning, no evidence has been reported to compare the effects of teacher's vocabulary instruction and students' dictionary use in EFL students' test performance. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the present study is the first attempt of the kind, and more studies are deemed necessary in the field of L2 vocabulary/reading teaching to support the study findings. However, a comparison of the by-products of the present research

with some studies available in the literature (See Chapter 2, section 2.3.2 for details) is possible.

Table 4.8 illustrates that in the first and third paired t-tests, i.e., test 1 compared to test 2, and test 3 compared to test 4, the results are significant ( $p < .05$ ). That is to say, group A students (the No Teacher group) improved their vocabulary test scores significantly in the second and fourth tests by using dictionaries, and thus dictionary use by itself was a useful strategy in improving vocabulary test results. This finding supports the studies that view dictionary use as essential to efficient vocabulary learning. For example, Luppescu and Day (1993) found that their Japanese EFL subjects performed significantly better in multiple choice vocabulary tests when they were allowed to use a bilingual dictionary, which is in line with the present research although the participants in this study were allowed to use any type of dictionary they preferred, bilingual or monolingual.

The present research also confirms Knight's (1994) study in which the dictionary group scored significantly better than the non-dictionary group in delayed vocabulary tests of their target words. The participants, in contrast with our Iranian EFL undergraduate students, were taking a Spanish course as a second language in a university in the United States. Another study that is partly supported by our findings belongs to Hayati and Fattahzadeh (2006). They compared the effects of monolingual dictionaries with bilingual dictionaries on vocabulary recall and retention of 60 undergraduate EFL learners studying at a university in Iran. Their findings indicated that dictionary type had no significant effect on students' vocabulary recall and retention, and both were equally effective. Hayati and Fattahzadeh also found that the bilingual dictionary users finished their reading task at a greater speed than the monolingual dictionary users did. This dictionary use time distinction between bilingual and monolingual types was not a variable in the present study.

In a slightly different vein, in Hulstijn (1993), the study participants looked up most unknown words in their dictionaries regardless of whether they were relevant to the text they were reading or not. Hulstijn concluded that this might be because the readers were relatively advanced and knew a lot of words they came across in the text. However, in this study, there was no control over the words that the participants looked up, and they could check any number of words they wanted in their four reading passages. In addition, the participants in this study were not advanced students but ranging from elementary to upper- intermediate based on the Oxford Quick Placement Test employed at the beginning of the research.

In Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus's (1996) study, which explored the influence of marginal glosses and dictionary use on incidental vocabulary learning by advanced foreign students, the findings revealed that marginal glosses proved to be a better vocabulary learning strategy and resulted in much better retention scores than dictionary use. And finally, Prichard (2008) determined how selective Japanese EFL learners were in the choice of words. Results indicated that high-intermediate and advanced learners used the dictionary selectively as to whether to look up a word or not. The study showed that most of the participants could not complete the task on time because they relied on the dictionary too much. However, in the present study, all the participants finished their task on time, perhaps as a result of the researcher having carefully pilot-tested the study for time allotments.

The second paired t-test (Table 4.8) comparing test 2 with test 3, showed that the difference was not significant ( $p>.05$ ). That is, the students' vocabulary scores in test 3 were not much better than their scores in test 2. This might imply that dictionary use may not always produce the same results. Parameters such as the nature of vocabulary items, words being tested, type of dictionaries, and students' concentration on

dictionary entries, which are outside the scope of the present study, might play decisive roles.

Similarly, Table 4.9 demonstrates that in the Teacher group (B), the difference between test 2 and test 3, and between test 3 and test 4 was significant. In other words, the teacher's vocabulary instruction yielded fruitful results in the second and third paired t-tests, and resulted in the students' significant performance on vocabulary MCQs. This might indirectly confirm Parks' (2004b) study, part of which evaluated the effects of vocabulary pre-teaching on second language reading comprehension by Korean high school students learning English. Park found that vocabulary pre-teaching significantly contributed to L2 reading comprehension.

This positive effect of teacher's instruction of vocabulary might also be comparable, to some extent, with Alessi and Dwyer's (2008) study. They examined the role of vocabulary assistance in 76 undergraduate students taking intermediate Spanish at a university in the United States. Some of their findings indicated that reading performance was significantly better for those students receiving vocabulary instruction while reading, but not for those students receiving it before reading. In contrast, although the teacher group was provided with vocabulary assistance both before and while reading, the present study did not intend to examine this distinction of before reading and while reading vocabulary assistance.

In a somewhat similar vein, Webb (2009) studied the effects of pre-reading vocabulary instruction on students' performance on reading comprehension of 71 Japanese EFL university students, who were divided into two experimental groups. One of the study findings showed that L2 students who had studied target vocabulary as the pre-reading activity understood 80% of the sentences on the reading comprehension test which contained the target vocabulary. The scope of the present study did not seek to evaluate

the effects of students' vocabulary knowledge on their reading comprehension performance.

Nonetheless, in the first paired t-test in Table 4.9, the difference between test 1 and test 2 was not significant ( $p = .177$ ). There seems to be other variables than teacher's instruction which influenced students' performance on vocabulary test 2 in Group B. Although this is not within the scope of the present study, it can be explored by other researchers in the area. In any case, this does not change the answer to research question 2, which confirmed teacher's vocabulary instruction to be significantly more effective than students' dictionary use in students' performance on multiple choice vocabulary tests.

### **5.1.3 Research Questions 3A and 3B**

In order to find the answers to research questions 3A and 3B, students' perceptions of teacher-directed versus written topic familiarization, on the one hand, and teacher's vocabulary instruction versus students' dictionary use, on the other, were investigated. As discussed earlier on in chapter 2, despite the huge number of studies in the field of second/foreign language reading, research on students' perceptions of their reading is unexpectedly inadequate (See Chapter 2, section 2.5, for details on students' perceptions). This dearth makes it really difficult for the present researcher to find similar studies in the literature for comparison and contrast.

The answer to research question 3A, achieved from the quantitative data collected from a perception questionnaire triangulated with the qualitative data of the responses to interview questions 1 and 2, suggested that there was no significant difference between Group A and Group B students in terms of their perceptions of teacher-directed topic familiarization and those of written explanations, and both approaches were perceived

as being equally effective. As a matter of fact, according to the questionnaire results, the students in both No Teacher group (Mean= 3.50) and Teacher group (Mean= 3.59) thought that the two methods yielded the same results in their performance of reading comprehension tests, i.e., recalls and multiple choice questions, which was further confirmed by an independent-samples t-test (Table 4.14). Similarly, interview responses revealed no serious difference between the students' perceptions although the number of students who favored teacher's oral explanations was slightly more (by only 3%) compared to those favoring written explanations.

Interestingly, the students' perceptions agreed with their results of reading comprehension tests. The study findings had previously indicated that the students in No Teacher and Teacher groups performed equally well in recall tests as well as in multiple choice tests and, in the same line, they also believed that the two approaches produced the same positive effects. This supports the studies that encourage probing into students' perceptions in order to realize what they actually need in second language (L2) reading.

In their research of students' perceptions of their reading class, Chen and Graves (1995) found that students generally responded positively to all their experimental treatments. They did not report any significant differences among the previewing, background knowledge, and combined treatments. Chen and Graves also reported that a large percentage of the students in all the treatment groups strongly emphasized their need for cultural background knowledge. The findings of the present study are somewhat supported by Chen and Graves' findings although the participants in this research insisted on receiving general background knowledge either by the teacher or through written information.

The findings might also support, in a way, Bruton and Marks (2004) who concluded that teachers and educators need to take seriously into consideration reading needs and wants across the curriculum in first, second, and foreign language reading. Likewise, and in indirect support of the present research, Yamashita (2004) suggested that understanding learners' perceptions is so important to reading both L1 and L2 for encouraging L2 learners' involvement in extensive reading, although the investigation of L1 reading was not in the scope of the present study.

Nevertheless, the answer to research question 3B was not as clear-cut and straightforward. Results of the perception questionnaire, as discussed in Chapter 4, indicated that the students in both No Teacher group (Mean= 3.39) and Teacher group (Mean= 3.25) thought that students' dictionary use and teacher's vocabulary instruction had the same effects on students' performance on vocabulary tests. An independent-samples t-test (Table 4.16) did not confirm any meaningful difference between Group A and Group B students' perceptions of the two approaches ( $p>.05$ ). It was discussed earlier that no previous research has probed into students' perceptions of the effects of dictionary use as compared with teacher's vocabulary instruction. The only study that might somehow support the present findings, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, is Bensoussan, Sim, and Weiss's (1984) study (See Chapter 2, section 2.5). They attempted to clarify the test results in their study on the effects of dictionary usage on EFL test performance, and to understand the perceptions and expectations of dictionary users. To do so, they administered a questionnaire on dictionary use and preferences. Results demonstrated that the students generally thought they could use dictionaries effectively, but their teachers thought they could not. Responses to questionnaires further revealed that teachers were aware of students' needs and limitation of using dictionaries.

However, responses to interview questions 3 and 4, regarding students' perceptions of dictionary usage and vocabulary instruction, could not comprehensively explain students' responses to the questionnaire items. The qualitative data through interview responses (See Chapter 4, section 4.9.2 for details) suggests that what the students in Group A stated in their interviews did not match their responses to the perception questionnaire. Results of the questionnaire responses of Group A had not confirmed any difference between the role of teacher's instruction and the effects of dictionary use in students' vocabulary test performance. However, in their interviews, Group A favored dictionary use by 80% (as opposed to 5% teacher advocates and 15% a combination of both). In contrast, Group B students favored, although not very strongly, teacher's vocabulary instruction in their interviews (by 50% as opposed to 20% dictionary advocates and 30% neutral), which contradicted their questionnaire responses, which had not supported any superiority of one approach over the other as per the students' perceptions. In either case, whether being teacher advocate or dictionary advocate, interview responses did not match questionnaire results. Surprisingly, however, only the Teacher group (B) interview responses were in line with vocabulary test results. As illustrated in Table 4.7, the students' results in Group B were significantly better than those of the students in Group A.

It might be implied from the above discussion that students' perceptions might not always be true and reliable to make decisions in second language learning. The findings support Horwitz's (1985, 1988) and Kern's (1995) studies that found out students have unrealistic expectations and perceptions about second language learning. In other words, what students perform does not always manifest what they believe.

Yet, despite the interesting results of the study, it should be admitted that the findings of the perception questionnaire and interviews are inconclusive, which paves the way and calls for future studies. Research on students' perceptions of topic familiarization,

dictionary usage, and teacher's vocabulary instruction seems to relatively essential in the field of second language reading. Studies such as Chávez (1984), Allwright (1984), Nunan (1989), Block (1994), Williams and Burden (1997), Barkhuizen (1998), Tse (2000), and Brown (2009), among others reviewed in Chapter 2, have investigated students' perceptions of language learning in general. But, few studies have examined students' perceptions of second language reading in particular, almost none on topic familiarization and vocabulary learning. For example, Williams and Burden maintain that students' perceptions have the most important effect on their learning. Barkhuizen believes that if teachers are aware of students' perceptions, they can plan and implement alternative activities. He recommends that teachers regularly monitor their learners' perceptions of classroom life.

In the same context, Nunan insists that "no curriculum can claim to be truly learner-centered unless the learner's subjective needs and perceptions relating to the processes of learning are taken into account" (p. 177). And Block concludes that learners definitely have an awareness of what goes on in class, and teachers should therefore attempt to adjust their task orientation to that of learners. Thus, it could be assumed that in order for L2 reading teachers to be aware of what goes on in class, and to be able to design various appropriate class activities accordingly, more research on learners' perceptions of vocabulary learning and topic familiarity, which are two most important issues in a second language reading class according to Cabaroglu and Yurdaisik (2008), is inevitable. The next section will deal with the implications of the study.

## **5.2 Implications**

The present research attempted to test an alternative for the common teacher-centered instruction in the second language reading class to observe to what extent reading

instruction could be learner-centered. Traditionally, in the teacher-centered instruction, it is the teacher who prepares learners to read a text through providing them with sufficient background knowledge on the text and introducing unfamiliar vocabulary in the pre-reading stage. However, the study presented written topic familiarization activities to act as a substitute for teacher-initiated pre-reading tasks in order to investigate the effects of the teacher's presence in, or absence from, an L2 reading class. The findings confirmed that learners could be independent readers when it comes to topic familiarity, and do not necessarily need the teacher's presence and instruction. Written explanations, and background knowledge tasks through scripts, if designed and prepared carefully, could be as effective as the teacher's pre-reading instruction, and might be a suitable substitute for the teacher's facilitative role. Results of the recall and multiple choice comprehension tests, together with the participants' questionnaire and interview responses, indicated that there is no significant difference between teacher-directed topic familiarization and written topic familiarization without the intervention of a teacher, and both are equally effective. This might lead to several implications.

One of the possible implications of the study is that the second language reading class could be run and controlled without the presence, or at least with limited intervention, of a teacher. There are situations, like the Iranian EFL context where the study was conducted, in which insufficient attention is paid to training competent, skillful, and proficient English language teachers due to educational systems and attitudes towards English language teaching and learning, especially at school levels. The study could have an implication for novice teachers and/or teachers who are not proficient enough to carry on teaching and manage their classes in the English language, and frequently resort to their mother tongues for the clarification of ideas. Such teachers might benefit from this idea of teacher's substitute. As long as students are provided with clear, well-planned, and meaningful pre-reading activities, there should not be any worries as for

students' topic familiarity and background knowledge. This learner-centered teaching practice will certainly help train more independent readers.

The study has an implication for the authors of reading textbooks and publishers as well. Writing appropriate pre-reading activities and explanations for each lesson in a reading book will definitely contribute a lot to students' preparation for reading and comprehending the reading lesson. In this case, writers could be sure that readers would follow and understand the texts' contents and topics even without the intervention of a teacher. This will help them plan and write more helpful and practical books for learners' self-study, and also publish them worldwide in places where English is studied as a second language (L2).

Another group of people who might benefit from this study are students who enjoy better visual perceptions than auditory perceptions. Several studies on learning styles (e.g., Felder & Silverman, 1988; Felder & Henriques, 1995; Krätzig & Arbuthnott, 2006; Reid, 1987) define visual learners as those who remember best what they see, such as pictures, scripts, films and diagrams, and auditory learners as those who remember much of what they hear. Visual learners will most probably forget what is said to them and prefer that information be presented visually whereas auditory learners prefer verbal explanations to visual demonstration (Felder & Henriques, 1995). According to Felder and Silverman (1988), "Most people of college age and older are visual while most college teaching is verbal ..." (p. 676). Therefore, it is hoped that visual college age students will find the study proposed approach useful.

Hearing-impaired students might benefit from this study as well. Many teachers, or at least some of them, as teachers of English have at times encountered, and experienced work with, students having hearing problems, who may or may not be wearing hearing aids. These students receive comprehensible input, if any, from the teacher mostly

through their eyes rather than both the eyes and the ears, and teachers usually have a hard time explaining the concepts to such students. The study findings, if operationalized and implemented, could specifically assist teachers and educators in training students with hearing problems. It was found that teacher's traditional teaching of reading could be successfully substituted with adequate written introductory tasks, which can suit the needs of those students with special needs.

The idea of the teacher's substitute by dictionaries for vocabulary introduction may not prove to be satisfactory. This appears to contradict the second research hypothesis. Although results indicated that dictionary use per se significantly enhanced students' performance on vocabulary tests in most of the cases, just like teacher's instruction did, a comparison of the two approaches showed that teacher's instruction is significantly more effective than students' dictionary usage in vocabulary learning. The study may, therefore, have an implication for the advocates of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), and for those who believe that the current era has put an end to the traditional language teaching. The findings support the idea that L2 students definitely need the presence and instruction of a teacher, at least for vocabulary meaning, in their classes, and there is no alternative for him/her yet. This confirms Jensen's (1986) statement, who once said, "The importance of the role of the instructor should not be underemphasized" (p. 122). Educators and educational experts who assume that teachers may no longer play their facilitative role in this world of computer technology with various teaching software available in the market, integrated with the internet and developed educational technology, may revisit their attitudes and notice that, unless for the purpose of self-study, the teaching human resources, i.e., teachers, are by no means replaceable with the modern technology in the second language classroom, at least for the present moment, and at least for vocabulary teaching and learning as indicated in this study.

Finally, the study might have implications for researchers as well. Although there is a huge body of research on topic familiarity and vocabulary teaching and learning in the field of second language reading, no evidence is available in the literature regarding a comparison of teacher-directed versus written topic familiarization on the one hand, and students' dictionary use versus teacher's vocabulary instruction on the other. It is hoped that the present study might have opened a new door in L2 reading research, which will hopefully result in more similar research aimed to contribute to the teaching of second language reading and vocabulary. The researcher has been encouraged and motivated a lot by several renowned reading experts for conducting this study, and it is hoped that other researchers will find this study promising, and replicate it in similar and/or different contexts to obtain more profound results for a stronger and more reliable generalization. In the next section, the limitations of the study and the problems encountered in the process of research and data collection will be discussed.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

Based on its nature and the purpose behind it, any research at any scale may have its own limitations and shortcomings, and the present study is no exception. One of the limitations of the study is that it was only carried out in a university in Iran, where English is taught as a second (L2) language. Because all the participants were Iranian, it is not possible for the study results and findings to be generalized to different L2 contexts. Initially, the intended participants were the students registered for an English course at the Institute of Graduate Studies (IGS), University of Malaya. UM is a multi-cultural international university, where many students coming from various countries, especially EFL contexts such as Iran, China and many middle-east countries, are pursuing their studies. If the study had been conducted with international students from

different second language backgrounds, the findings could have been more profound, and the results might have been more reliable, and perhaps generalizable to any L2 context. Unfortunately, the researcher was not allowed access to these students, as explained in Chapter 3, and upon a colleague's advice, he had to travel to Iran for pilot testing and then data collection in a university where he had previously taught for eight years, and where the researcher's colleagues kindly agreed to assist him in carrying out the research, thanks to their heartfelt cooperation.

Another limitation was the number of the students participating in the study. There remained 38 students in Group A (No Teacher) and 35 students in Group B (Teacher) out of 41 and 42 volunteers, respectively, with whom the study was started. Because of the nature of the research, the treatment classes could only accommodate around 40 students. Group B class had to be taught by a teacher, and experience has shown that it is not really wise for a second language class to exceed 40 students, the ideal being far fewer. Teachers often find it hard to teach and control an overcrowded classroom, especially a reading skills class, and expect optimum results. Needless to say, there seemed to be no limitations as for the number of the students who could participate in Group A, but to observe consistency of the conditions, it was decided to have almost equal number of learners in each group.

Gender and age are other limitations of the present research. Only twelve of the participants were males and the rest were females. Because the study had asked for volunteers, there could be no control and choice over the sex of the subjects, and after all, gender effect was not a variable to be investigated in the study. Therefore, there is no evidence as to whether males or females benefit more from the idea of teacher's substitute. Regarding age, since the participants were undergraduate EFL learners, they mostly ranged from 18 to 21 years of age, with three students in their late twenties and two in their thirties. Studies on older adult learners and/or younger learners might lead

to different results. These age and gender choice limitations might have had decisive effects on the study results, and thus would not allow a sound generalization of the findings.

The last limitation of the study, as far as the researcher is aware, is the proficiency level of the participants. At the commencement of the study, the Oxford Quick Placement Test was employed in order to determine the students' proficiency based on which the researcher could assign them to two homogenous groups. The subjects were accordingly divided into two classes of mixed English proficiency ranging from elementary to upper-intermediate. Therefore, we are not certain whether the results could be generalized to second language reading classes in which advanced students are involved as well. Another point is that because we had a limited number of participants, as discussed above, it was not possible to investigate and distinguish which proficiency group might benefit more from the idea of written versus teacher-directed topic familiarization on the one hand, and dictionary use versus teacher's vocabulary instruction on the other. If the study had concentrated on a certain proficiency level, say intermediate, different results might have been achieved.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

This research is an explanatory mixed methods study exploring topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction in second language reading. Regarding the research questions addressed by the present study, more in-depth investigations will be needed to explore the efficacy of students' dictionary use compared with the effects of teacher's vocabulary instruction, and the applicability of written topic familiarization compared to background knowledge activation/construction by the teacher. One of the future research issues may involve the applicability of combinations of students' dictionary

use and teacher's vocabulary instruction on the one hand, and teacher-directed topic familiarization and written background knowledge activities on the other, coupled with an investigation of the three approaches with regard to the time variable. That is to say, the present study could be replicated with three treatment groups of No Teacher (A), Teacher (B), and Combined (C), taking time into consideration to find out which group might perform better and/or faster, hence the effectiveness of the approaches.

The same study could also be conducted in a large scale, with ample number of students in different classes of separate proficiency level groups, and employing different teachers. It is recommended that various teachers teach different proficiency level classes, say one teacher teaches an elementary class, another one teaches a low-intermediate group, and so on and so forth. The benefit of this design is that the researcher(s) could have more in-depth awareness of the degree of the effectiveness of the teacher's substitute idea for different proficiency level students, and at the same time controlling the teacher variable effect.

Another important research issue is students' perceptions of the second language reading class. Language teachers regularly make many decisions in their classrooms about language teaching/learning processes, yet learners themselves are rarely asked about their preferences, and usually not involved in the process of this decision-making (Barkhuizen, 1998). Despite the huge body of research in the field of second/foreign language reading, there are very few studies in the literature probing into students' beliefs and feelings about the above issue. A useful research topic would be to investigate students' perceptions of the second language reading class in general in a large-scale research employing a mixed methods, qualitative as well as quantitative, approach. Questionnaires could be sent to different institutions, and many students might be invited for interviews. This is a study which the researcher believes can contribute a lot to the field of L2 reading.

Likewise, very few studies have tackled teachers' perceptions of second language reading, almost none on teachers' perceptions of topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction. This second topic will be a really interesting study because teachers' views of the issue would most probably be different from students' perspectives. Once again, questionnaires could be sent to various teachers worldwide, and interviews might be conducted for an in-depth investigation of teachers' perceptions. In the same context, yet in a single research design, both teachers' perceptions and students' perceptions can be explored and compared with one another so that a better conclusion would be made. This will certainly be a solid measure in second language reading which could unveil both teachers' and students' thought and beliefs, and in doing so more sound and reliable decisions would be made as for students' needs in a second language reading class.

## **5.5 Concluding Remarks**

Although the field of second language teaching and learning has witnessed an enormous amount of research on reading skills, in general, and on topic familiarity and vocabulary teaching/learning, in particular, almost no attention has been paid to the teacher's effect in background knowledge activation/construction, or topic familiarization, and vocabulary introduction. In an attempt to fill this gap, the present study investigated the effects of the teacher's intervention in an L2 reading class by comparing the applicability of written topic familiarization with the effectiveness of teacher-directed topic familiarization in students' performance of comprehension tests. Similarly, the adequacy of students' dictionary use was compared with the efficiency of teacher's instruction of vocabulary in enhancing students' performance of vocabulary tests. Results of independent-samples t-tests did not confirm any difference between teacher-

directed and written topic familiarization. However, paired t-tests indicated that both of the approaches by themselves were very effective and influential on students' comprehension tests results.

Yet, the findings indicated that teacher's vocabulary instruction was significantly more effective than students' dictionary use. Moreover, paired t-tests once again showed that each method per se caused significantly successful results in students' vocabulary tests performance. Since the present study is the first of the kind, the literature lacks evidence for the purpose of comparison and contrast with regard to the answers to research questions 1A, 1B, and 2.

Students' perceptions of topic familiarization and vocabulary introduction, addressed in research questions 3A and 3B, are another gap in second language reading. Results of a perception questionnaire triangulated with interview responses confirmed that, in line with tests results, students thought teacher-directed topic familiarization and written background knowledge activities were equally effective. Nonetheless, with regard to vocabulary introduction, most of the participants thought that there is no significant difference between students' dictionary use and teacher's instruction of vocabulary, which did not explain and manifest the actual vocabulary tests results. Only some students perceived teacher's instruction as more effective than dictionary usage. This implies that students' perceptions are not always very reliable for decision-making in L2 reading.

It is hopefully believed that the present study has opened a new door in the research on teaching second language reading. The dearth of evidence on the facilitative role of the teacher in topic familiarization and vocabulary instruction, and inadequate available data about students' perceptions of these important issues would call for more

researchers' attention, and necessitate further studies and investigation worldwide in places where English is taught/learned as a second or foreign language.

Finally, although the present study, like any other research, has its own limitations and shortcomings, it has useful implications for students, teachers, educators, authors and publishers as well. It is hoped that this study has helped find out the effectiveness and significance of teacher's presence at, or absence from, the reading class. It is also believed that the research has been a successful attempt to explore teachers' contribution to students' performance in second language reading, and has answered the question of whether or not, or to what extent, adult L2 learners could be independent readers. And last, the study is sincerely expected to make a positive contribution to the field of teaching second language reading.

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## APPENDIX A

### Passage 1 (*Wedding Traditions in Sudan*)

1 A bridegroom ceremony is a common wedding practice in Sudan. The bridegroom is welcomed to the wedding site with an auspicious decoration called 'umbul-umbul', a type of 'wedding announcement'. The mother of the bride gives the bridegroom a garland of flowers, welcoming him into her family. She also gives him a 'keris', a hidden message encouraging him not to be disheartened while toiling for his family.

2 The bridegroom welcome is followed by a procession of ladies with candles, who pray for the ceremony. The bride and groom sit next to each other under an umbrella in front of the entrance to their future home with a veil covering both of their heads. The umbrella is held over the couple's heads, not only serving a very practical purpose but also symbolizing esteem and respect.

3 The bride and groom bend forward and kiss the knees of their parents, a ceremony called 'sungkem', asking for forgiveness and blessing and promising to continue to serve their parents. This wedding ritual is held in front of a gargoyle fountain. Water flowing from the gargoyle suggests the continuous flow of priceless parental love for their children. A chosen man and woman sing a special song called 'kidung' on behalf of the parents, advising the couple to treat each other well and to live in harmony. 'Kidung' also invokes blessing upon the couple.

4 An egg breaking ceremony, called 'nincak endog', requires the couple to stand facing each other in front of their house. The bridegroom stands outside the entrance and the bride stands inside. The ceremony is conducted by the Sudanese equivalent of an American 'maid of honor', who remains an advisor throughout the marriage. In this ceremony, seven broomsticks are burnt and thrown away, dramatizing the discarding of bad habits which endanger married life.

5 The groom is **pronounced** master of his house when the egg is broken. His bride cleans his feet with water from a 'kendi', an earthen water jug which represents peace. Then she breaks the 'kendi' and crosses over a log into the house, demonstrating willing obedience to her future husband. She is fed a dish of turmeric sticky rice with yellow spiced chicken to symbolize the last time the parents of the bride will feed their daughter.

6 The groom remains outside for another ceremony, which is enacted before him by a couple who sing. During this ceremony, the groom, via the vocalists, requests to enter his bride's house, and she **consents** when he agrees to confirm his Moslem faith. Having done so, the couple is given a barbecued spiced chicken to pull apart on a signal from the 'maid of honor'. According to tradition, the one who gets the larger piece will bring in the larger share of the family **fortune**. The ceremony also portrays the importance of working together to acquire fortune.

7 Following the wedding ceremony, dancers **shower** the bride and groom with wedding flowers, wishing the couple a **fragrant** future. Turmeric rice, coins, and candy, which are kept on a plate, are thrown at the couple. Rice is a symbol of **prosperity**, and yellow is for everlasting love. The coins remind the couple to share their wealth with the less fortunate, and the candy bestows sweetness and fragrance upon their marriage. Seven candles are lit representing the direction the couple should follow to bring about a happy married life. A betel nut set near the couple is a reminder that different customs should not spoil a **harmonious** marriage.

Adapted from:

[http://www.worldweddingtraditions.com/locations/african\\_traditions/sudanese\\_traditions.html](http://www.worldweddingtraditions.com/locations/african_traditions/sudanese_traditions.html)

## **APPENDIX B**

### Pre-reading Activities (Passage 1)

#### **A. Brainstorming Questions**

1. Have you ever been in a wedding?
2. Whose wedding was it?
3. What did you see the bride and the groom do? What traditions were practiced?
4. Do you know any other countries' wedding traditions?
5. Have you heard anything about wedding traditions in Sudan?

#### **B. Background Information**

While traditions and ceremonies vary greatly, marriage is a custom that is practiced by almost every single culture in the world. The ages of the man and woman to be married, the wedding clothes, the food served and the gifts given are just some of the things in a wedding ceremony that differ significantly from one culture to another. The passage you are going to read takes a look at a typical wedding ceremony in Sudan. A *keris*, a *kidung*, a *nincak endog* and a *kendi* are some of the customs you will learn about in this passage. For example, a *keris*, is a kind of message from the bride's mother to the groom. Or, a *ninkak endog* is an egg breaking ceremony. You will also understand why pulling apart a barbecued chicken, burning seven broomsticks, and kissing their parents' knees mean so much to the bride and groom.

### C. Vocabulary List

toil (v.)	veil (n.)	esteem (n.)	priceless (adj.)
on behalf of (idiom)	equivalent (adj.)	discard (v.)	pronounce (v.)
consent (v.)	fortune (n.)	shower (v.)	fragrant (adj.)
prosperity (n.)	harmonious (adj.)		

**Use Your Dictionaries for the Vocabulary Meaning.**

## APPENDIX C

### Idea Units (Passage 1)

1. A bridegroom ceremony is a common wedding practice in Sudan.
2. The bridegroom is welcomed to the wedding site.
3. The bridegroom is welcomed with an auspicious decoration.
4. The decoration is called 'umbul-umbul'.
5. An 'umbul-umbul' is a type of 'wedding announcement'.
6. The mother of the bride gives the bridegroom a garland of flowers.
7. The bride's mother welcomes the groom into her family.
8. The bride's mother also gives the groom a 'keris'.
9. A 'keris' is a hidden message.
10. The 'keris' encourages the groom not to be disheartened while toiling for his family.
11. The bridegroom welcome is followed by a procession of ladies.
12. The ladies are with candles.
13. The ladies pray for the ceremony.
14. The bride and groom sit next to each other.
15. The bride and groom sit under an umbrella.
16. The bride and groom sit in front of the entrance to their future home.
17. The bride and groom have a veil.
18. The veil covers both the bride and groom's heads.
19. The umbrella is held over the couple's heads.
20. The umbrella serves a very practical purpose.
21. The umbrella also symbolizes esteem and respect.

22. The bride and groom bend forward.
23. The bride and groom kiss the knees of their parents.
24. This ceremony is called 'sungkem'.
25. The couple ask for forgiveness and blessing.
26. The couple promise to continue to serve their parents.
27. This wedding ritual is held in front of a gargoyle fountain.
28. Water flowing from the gargoyle suggests the continuous flow of priceless parental love for their children.
29. A chosen man and woman sing a special song.
30. The song is called 'kidung'.
31. The chosen man and woman sing 'kidung' on behalf of the parents.
32. The song advises the couple to treat each other well
33. The song also advises the couple to live in harmony.
34. 'Kidung' also invokes blessing upon the couple.
35. There is an egg breaking ceremony
36. The egg breaking ceremony is called 'nincak endog'.
37. The egg breaking ceremony requires the couple to stand facing each other in front of their house.
38. The bridegroom stands outside the entrance.
39. The bride stands inside the entrance.
40. The ceremony is conducted by the Sudanese equivalent of an American 'maid of honor'.
41. The 'maid of honor' remains an advisor throughout the marriage.

42. In 'nincak endog', seven broomsticks are burnt.
43. The burnt broomsticks are thrown away.
44. This dramatizes the discarding of bad habits which endanger married life.
45. The groom is pronounced master of his house when the egg is broken.
46. The bride cleans the groom's feet.
47. The bride uses the water from a 'kendi'.
48. A 'kendi' is an earthen water jug.
49. The 'kendi' represents peace.
50. The bride breaks the 'kendi'.
51. The bride crosses over a log into the house.
52. The bride demonstrates her willing obedience to her future husband.
53. She is fed a dish of turmeric sticky rice with yellow spiced chicken.
54. This symbolizes the last time the parents of the bride will feed their daughter.
55. The groom remains outside for another ceremony.
56. This ceremony is enacted before him.
57. A singing couple enact this ceremony.
58. During this ceremony, the groom requests to enter his bride's house.
59. The groom requests this via the vocalists.
60. The bride consents when the groom agrees to confirm his Moslem faith.
61. The couple is given a barbecued spiced chicken.
62. The couple should pull the barbecued spiced chicken apart.
63. They do it on a signal from the 'maid of honor'.
64. The one who gets the larger piece will bring in the larger share of the family fortune.

65. The ceremony also portrays the importance of working together to acquire fortune.
66. Following the wedding ceremony, dancers shower the bride and groom with wedding flowers.
67. The dancers wish the couple a fragrant future.
68. Turmeric rice, coins, and candy are kept on a plate.
69. They are thrown at the couple.
70. Rice is a symbol of prosperity.
71. Yellow color is for everlasting love.
72. The coins remind the couple to share their wealth with the less fortunate.
73. The candy bestows sweetness and fragrance upon their marriage.
74. Seven candles are lit.
75. The candles represent the direction the couple should follow.
76. Following this direction will bring about a happy married life for the couple.
77. A betel nut is set near the couple.
78. The betel nut is a reminder that different customs should not spoil a harmonious marriage.

## **APPENDIX D**

### MCQs (Test 1)

#### A. Comprehension Questions

**Select the best choice.**

1. In Sudanese weddings, the umbrella, which is held over the bride and groom's heads,  
.....
  - a. encourages the groom to love the bride
  - b. shows the couple's respect towards their parents
  - c. is a message to the bride asking her to be a good housewife
  - d. may also be used to protect the couple against the sun and rain
2. 'Sungkem' is a .....
  - a. symbol of love for God
  - b. place in front of a gargoyle fountain
  - c. ceremony in which the couple ask God to forgive them
  - d. tradition in which the couple promise to take care of their parents
3. Which sentence is true?
  - a. The bride and groom's parents sing 'kidung'.
  - b. 'Kidung' asks the bride and groom to live together peacefully.
  - c. A man and a woman sing 'kidung' and the couple's parents repeat it.
  - d. In 'kidung', it's the couple's parents who advise them to treat each other well.

4. The 'maid of honor' .....

- a. organizes the egg breaking ceremony
- b. prepares and serves the dish of rice and chicken
- c. pulls the barbecued chicken apart with the couple's help
- d. explains to the couple the importance of working together

5. The bride shows that she obeys the groom by .....

- a. cleaning the groom's feet with water
- b. eating a special dish of rice and chicken
- c. breaking the water jug and walking into their house
- d. burning seven broomsticks and throwing them away

6. The groom remains outside .....

- a. but the bride doesn't like it
- b. and waits until the bride lets him enter the house
- c. so that the vocalists are permitted to enter the bride's house
- d. to sing a song with his friends and relatives confirming his Moslem faith

7. In Sudanese weddings, candles are a symbol of .....

- a. sweetness of the marriage
- b. everlasting love of couples
- c. the road the couples should follow for a happy life
- d. different traditions practiced in Sudan nowadays

8. How many Sudanese words or expressions did you find in the passage?

- a. 6
- b. 4
- c. 5
- d. 7

9. It could be understood from paragraph 7 that .....

- a. dancers drop flowers on the couple as the wedding ceremony goes on
- b. the couple smell sweet as a result of the flowers they are showered with
- c. dancers guarantee that the bride and groom will have a sweet married life
- d. after the wedding ceremony, dancers drop flowers on the bride and groom

10. It is inferred from the text that .....

- a. only Moslems live in Sudan
- b. Sudan is a country in the north of Africa
- c. wedding ceremonies are expensive in Sudan
- d. in Sudanese married life, men are more powerful than women

## B. Vocabulary Questions

Select the best choice.

1. The word **toil**, paragraph 1, means .....

- a. search for
- b. stay away
- c. work hard
- d. run fast

2. She is held in high ..... by her colleagues. They respect her very much.

- a. personality
- b. esteem
- c. veil
- d. experience

3. When two things are **equivalent**, they are .....

- a. similar in value, amount, meaning, or importance
- b. very common at a particular time or in a particular place
- c. good at finding ways of doing things and solving problems
- d. happening or existing for a period of time without interruption

4. The word **discard**, paragraph 4, means .....

- a. get rid of
- b. disbelief
- c. uncover
- d. pay attention to

5. The word **pronounce**, paragraph 5, means to .....

- a. give a decision about something
- b. jump up and down on something
- c. make the sound of a word in a particular way
- d. say or give something formally, officially or publicly

6. The word **consent**, paragraph 6, probably means .....

- a. disagree
- b. request
- c. run out of
- d. give permission

7. He inherited a share of the family ..... He received a large amount of money.

- a. honor                    b. fortune                    c. traditions                    d. symbols

8. **Fragrant** flowers .....

- a. have a pleasant smell                    b. are of different colors  
c. grow in tropical climate                    d. need rich soil to grow

9. The country is enjoying a period of peace and ..... This is to say that the country is very successful in making money.

- a. quiet                    b. advances                    c. independence                    d. prosperity

10. The word **harmonious**, paragraph 7, means .....

- a. helpful and encouraging  
b. enjoying being with other people  
c. friendly, peaceful and without any disagreement  
d. having very strong opinions that you are not willing to change

## APPENDIX E

### Passage 2 (*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl*)

1 Some people describe American society as a salad bowl while others see it as a melting pot. In a sense both are correct depending upon one's point of view. This cultural **multiplicity** is a result of the history of immigration. Until the Immigration Law of 1924 the country was a "melting pot" of nations. The original settlers of the Atlantic colonies were chiefly from the British Isles. In addition, numerous black African slaves were imported to work on the plantations in the South. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as settlement of the West was **accelerating**, Irish and German immigrants came in great numbers soon to be followed by Scandinavians. After the Civil War the new arrivals were mainly from east and south Europe. Since World War II there has been an influx of Spanish speaking people especially Mexicans. In recent years there have been large numbers from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

2 In a bowl of fresh salad, all the **ingredients** are mixed together. Yet they never lose their shape, form or identity. Together, however, the ingredients make up a unity. In a sense, all the ingredients of a salad **contribute to** the finished product. They may be covered with the same **dressing**, but the green vegetables, tomatoes, lettuce and eggs can all be seen for what they are.

3 From this point of view, America is very much like a salad bowl where individual **ethnic** groups blend together, yet maintain their cultural **uniqueness**. They may work together during the day at similar jobs and in **identical** companies, but at night they may return to their ethnic communities where the flavor of their individual culture **dominates** their way of life. This is why perhaps there is so much **diversity** within America. Each ethnic group has its own special interests, language, food,

customs and traditions to protect and defend. This idea of the salad bowl is referred to by sociologists as cultural pluralism. It simply means that American society is a collection of many cultures living side by side within one country.

4       The other concept which is also used to describe American society is that of the melting pot. In this usage, society is like a pot of stew or a cauldron of porridge. All of the ingredients mix and blend together losing their identity and yield a bit of what they were to become a new reality. A pot of stew is very different from a bowl of salad. Within the stew, the meat and vegetables in the cooking process give to each other a bit of their own flavor. The longer the stew is allowed to simmer, the better the taste and the more likely it will be for the mixture to dissolve.

5       In this sense America can surely be seen as a melting pot where people from all over the world come to live and work together forming one nation. In such a culture there are dozens of shared symbols which serve to develop all of the various ethnic groups to create a larger unified culture. The flag, the national anthem, the Pledge of Allegiance all serve to break down the walls which isolate ethnic groups.

6       The melting pot evokes another image; that of the colonial quilt which is made out of fragments of different material but fashioned into one blanket. Whether a salad bowl or a melting pot, America can best be described as a mixture of both; that is to say, a nation where there is unity in diversity.

Adapted from: <http://www.geocities.com/yamataro670/pot-bowl.htm>

## **APPENDIX F**

### Pre-reading Activities (Passage 2)

#### **A. Brainstorming Questions**

1. Have you ever been to the United States of America?
2. What do you know about cultural diversity in America?
3. Are all people living in the United States originally Americans? If not, what countries have they come from?
4. Can you think of any similarities between American society and a bowl of salad?
5. How can you compare American society with a pot of stew?

#### **B. Background Information**

The United States is a land made up of many different countries. Since the beginning of its history, the United States has attracted people from all over the world for different reasons. Everyone agrees that the diversity of its people has made the United States a unique country. But what everyone doesn't agree on is the end result of all this diversity. Have all the nations of the world that came together to live in America become one homogeneous people called Americans? Or is it easy to still differentiate Americans by identifying them by their cultural backgrounds? Are there *African-Americans*, *Italian-Americans*, *Irish-Americans*, *Middle Eastern-Americans*, etc., or just plain *Americans*? Is the United States more like a salad bowl or a melting pot? Using the comparisons of a salad and a stew, what follows is an introduction to the various peoples who make up the United States of America.

### C. Vocabulary List

multiplicity (n.)	accelerate (v.)	ingredients (n.)	contribute to (v.)
dressing (n.)	ethnic (adj., n.)	uniqueness (n.)	identical (adj.)
dominate (v.)	diversity (n.)	simmer (v.)	anthem (n.)
evoke (v.)	fragment (n.)		

**Use Your Dictionaries for the Vocabulary Meaning.**

## APPENDIX G

### Idea Units (Passage 2)

1. Some people describe American society as a salad bowl.
2. Some people see American society as a melting pot.
3. Both are correct.
4. It depends upon one's point of view.
5. There is ethnic multiplicity in America.
6. This ethnic multiplicity is a result of the history of immigration.
7. The Immigration Law was in 1924.
8. Until that time, the country was a "melting pot" of nations.
9. The original settlers of the Atlantic colonies were chiefly from the British Isles.
10. Numerous black African slaves were imported.
11. They were imported to work on the plantations in the South.
12. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, settlement of the West was accelerating.
13. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Irish and German immigrants came in great numbers.
14. They were soon followed by Scandinavians.
15. After the Civil War the new arrivals were mainly from east and south Europe.

16. Since World War II there has been an influx of Spanish speaking people especially Mexicans.
17. In recent years there have been large numbers from Africa, Asia and Latin America.
18. In a bowl of fresh salad, all the ingredients are mixed together.
19. These ingredients never lose their shape.
20. They never lose their form.
21. They never lose their identity.
22. Together, the ingredients make up a unity.
23. All the ingredients of a salad contribute to the finished product.
24. The ingredients may be covered with the same dressing.
25. The green vegetables can be seen for what they are.
26. The tomatoes can be seen for what they are.
27. The lettuce can be seen for what it is.
28. The eggs can be seen for what they are.
29. From this point of view, America is very much like a salad bowl.
30. Individual ethnic groups blend together.
31. Ethnic groups maintain their cultural uniqueness.
32. Ethnic groups may work together during the day at similar jobs.

33. Ethnic groups may work together during the day in identical companies.
34. Ethnic groups may return to their ethnic communities at night.
35. In their ethnic communities, the flavor of their individual culture dominates their way of life.
36. This is why perhaps there is so much diversity within America.
37. Each ethnic group has its own special interests.
38. Each ethnic group has its own special language.
39. Each ethnic group has its own special food.
40. Each ethnic group has its own special customs.
41. Each ethnic group has its own special traditions.
42. They protect and defend their interests.
43. They protect and defend their language.
44. They protect and defend their food.
45. They protect and defend their customs.
46. They protect and defend their traditions.
47. This idea of the salad bowl is referred to by sociologists as cultural pluralism.
48. It means that American society is a collection of many cultures living side by side within one country.

49. Another concept used to describe American society is that of the melting pot.

50. Society is like a pot of stew.

51. Society is like a cauldron of porridge.

52. All of the ingredients mix and blend together.

53. The ingredients lose their identity.

54. The ingredients yield a bit of what they were to become a new reality.

55. A pot of stew is very different from a bowl of salad.

56. Within the stew, the meat and vegetables in the cooking process give to each other a bit of their own flavor.

57. The longer the stew is allowed to simmer, the better the taste.

58. The longer the stew is allowed to simmer, the more likely it will be for the mixture to dissolve.

59. In this sense America can surely be seen as a melting pot.

60. People from all over the world come to live and work together forming one nation.

61. In such a culture there are dozens of shared symbols.

62. These shared symbols serve to develop all of the various ethnic groups.

63. These shared symbols create a larger unified culture.

64. The flag serves to break down the walls which isolate ethnic groups.

65. The national anthem serves to break down the walls which isolate ethnic groups.
66. The Pledge of Allegiance serves to break down the walls which isolate ethnic groups.
67. The melting pot evokes another image.
68. It evokes the image of the colonial quilt.
69. The colonial quilt is made out of fragments of different materials.
70. Different materials are fashioned into one blanket.
71. America can best be described as a mixture of both a salad bowl and a melting pot.
72. America is a nation where there is unity in diversity.

## **APPENDIX H**

### MCQs (Test 2)

#### A. Comprehension Questions

**Select the best choice.**

1. What has brought about the ethnic multiplicity in America?
  - a. The salad bowl
  - b. The melting pot
  - c. The history of immigration
  - d. The immigration law of 1924
  
2. Blacks were brought to America because they were ..... .
  - a. a source of cheap labor
  - b. escaping discrimination
  - c. required to work on vegetable farms
  - d. needed to work on Southern plantations
  
3. Who were the first to come to America in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century?
  - a. Irish and Germans
  - b. Swedes
  - c. Scandinavians
  - d. Southern Europeans
  
4. A group of people who were in America before the Civil War were ..... .
  - a. Asians
  - b. Mexicans
  - c. from the British Isles
  - d. from Latin America
  
5. After World War II, ..... came to America.
  - a. people from Spain
  - b. many Hispanics
  - c. people from Puerto Rico
  - d. Italians

6. Which concept best expresses the idea of "salad bowl"?

- a. Cultural integration
- b. Cultural pluralism
- c. Ethnic identity
- d. Ethnic homogeneity

7. Which best describes the concept of "melting pot"?

- a. Cultural unification
- b. Social assimilation
- c. Ethnic consolidation
- d. Cultural homogeneity

8. All of the following concepts are shared symbols of American society EXCEPT . . . .

- a. the National Anthem
- b. the American flag
- c. the Pledge of Allegiance
- d. local neighborhoods

9. Another image which best describes the concept of "melting pot" is . . . .

- a. a colonial handicraft
- b. an American quilt
- c. a knitted blanket
- d. the American flag

10. All of the following statements are true about America EXCEPT . . . .

- a. "All Americans belong to the same community."
- b. "There is so much cultural diversity in America."
- c. "America is a unified nation with various cultures."
- d. "America is a country of different ethnic groups with a unified culture."

## B. Vocabulary Questions

Select the best choice.

1. The word **accelerating**, paragraph 1, means .....

- a. following
- b. importing
- c. falling into
- d. speeding up

2. Immigrants have **contributed to** British culture in many ways. In fact, they have ..... British culture.

- a. controlled
- b. improved
- c. refused
- d. identified

3. **Dressing**, paragraph 2, is .....

- a. an ingredient
- b. a piece of clothing
- c. a sauce
- d. a kind of plastic cover

4. **Uniqueness**, paragraph 3, means .....

- a. influx
- b. similarity
- c. being fresh
- d. being exceptional

5. The word **dominate**, paragraph 3, means to .....

- a. maintain
- b. have a lot of influence on something
- c. identify
- d. treat people or things in a different way

6. **Diversity**, paragraph 3, means .....

- a. pluralism
- b. comparison
- c. limitation
- d. discrimination

7. If you **simmer** something, you .....

- a. cut it up in order to study it
- b. make it become part of a liquid
- c. cook it by keeping it at boiling point
- d. make it pure by heating it until it becomes a gas

8. The national **anthem** is the ..... of a country.

- a. official song
- b. armed forces
- c. workforce
- d. resources

9. The word **evoke**, paragraph 6, means to .....

- a. cause a particular reaction or have a particular effect
- b. bring a feeling, a memory or a picture into your mind
- c. shake or turn food in order to cover it with oil, butter, etc.
- d. mention or use a law, rule, etc. as a reason for doing something

10. The main ..... of an Arabic salad are tomatoes, carrots, lettuce and cucumber.

- a. fragments
- b. settlers
- c. mixtures
- d. ingredients

## APPENDIX I

### Passage 3 (*Shin-pyu: The Novicehood*)

1        The word "Shin-pyu" in Myanmar means "Initiating into Buddhist Order as a **Novice**". The Shin-pyu ceremony is a common event, as a family earns great merit when a son **forsakes** his childhood life and puts on the robe of the monk. Few novices remain in the **order** long enough to take their ordained **vows**, but clearly the initiation of the novice is cause for a huge celebration.

2        Since only boys can become novices, parents naturally wish to have at least one son in the family. Therefore, those who have no male offspring, very often **initiate** the sons of others who cannot afford to do their own. Regarding age, there is no hard and fast rule as to when a boy can become a novice. It is said that if a boy is old enough to 'drive away a bird that comes to pick the food laid on one's meal, or scare the birds away from farm', he can become a novice. However, the usual age nowadays is between 5 and 15.

3        The boys who are to become novices are shown to the public and usually go to **pagodas**. There are two reasons for this condition. The first is to let the public know that a certain initiation is taking place and who the proud parents are. Secondly, it is to let the spirits of the family **ancestors** know that they have not been forsaken and that they are welcome to share the merits acquired by the occasion.

4        The first part of the ceremony is to shave the head, which is done by one of the monks in the monastery, while the parents hold a piece of white cloth in front of the boy to collect the falling hair. Next, the boy or boys **proceed** to the senior monk from whom they have to request for admission into the Buddhist Order in Pali, the language of the

Buddhist scriptures. Then the boys change into **saffron** robes and take the vow of ten precepts. They are then required to repeat relevant extracts from the scriptures dictated by the senior monk.

5 Since it is important that the boys repeat these words correctly with proper accent and emphasis on the right syllables, most parents wait till the boys are old enough to repeat the Pali words correctly. However, when parents are getting old and are worried that they may not live long enough to see their sons' initiation, they prefer to have the Shin-pyu at an earlier age. When the boys get older they can again become novices any number of times. It might be added here that a layman cannot be ordained as a **full-fledged** monk without becoming a novice first. Besides, he must be at least twenty years old.

6 After being admitted as novices, they have to live in a monastery but there is no limit as to how long they should remain as novices. It depends on the boy's desire and ability to withstand a life of **austerity**. The difficult part, particularly for the younger ones, is to fast from noon till next dawn. Incidentally, a day for religious purposes begins at dawn and not at midnight as in the western calendar. So a novice cannot get up after midnight and break his fast thinking the day already passed. He can only eat after dawn. There are two main meals for each day; breakfast at dawn, and lunch that must be finished before noon. In the evening, novices and monks are allowed to take soft drinks or juice.

Adapted from: <http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar-culture/myanmar-novicehood-shinpyu.htm>

## **APPENDIX J**

### Pre-reading Activities (Passage 3)

#### **A. Brainstorming Questions**

1. What cultural or religious ceremonies of your country do you know?
2. Do you know any cultural events in other countries?
3. What ceremony is most interesting to you? Why?
4. Do you have any information about cultural ceremonies in Myanmar?
5. Have you heard of the *Shin-pyu* ceremony in Myanmar?

#### **B. Background Information**

Every country has its own cultural ceremonies. A cultural event which seems to exist within almost every culture is a ceremony that marks an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood, or his or her readiness to take on a cultural or religious responsibility. In many Moslem countries, for example, when a boy reaches the age of 15, and a girl reaches the age of 9, they have to take on religious responsibilities. In Myanmar, where people practice Buddhism, young boys go through the *Shin-pyu* ceremony. A Buddhist is regarded as no better than an animal until he practices *Shin-pyu*, and this ceremony must only be performed at certain ages. Reading the passage, you will learn who a *novice* is, what an *order* is, what young Buddhists do in a monastery, and find much more information about the *Shin-pyu* ceremony.

### C. Vocabulary List

novice (n.)

forsake (v.)

order (n.)

vow (n.)

initiate (v.)

pagoda (n.)

ancestor (n.)

proceed (v.)

scriptures (n.)

saffron (n.)

precept (n.)

full-fledged (adj.)

withstand (v.)

austerity (n.)

**Use Your Dictionaries for the Vocabulary Meaning.**

## **APPENDIX K**

### Idea Units (Passage 3)

1. The word "Shin-pyu" comes from Myanmar.
2. "Shin-pyu" means "Initiating into Buddhist Order as a Novice".
3. The Shin-pyu ceremony is a common event.
4. Shin-pyu is held when a family earns great merit.
5. Shin-pyu is held when a son forsakes his childhood life.
6. Shin-pyu is held when a son puts on the robe of the monk.
7. Few novices remain in the order long enough to take their ordained vows.
8. The initiation of the novice is cause for a huge celebration.
9. Only boys can become novices.
10. Parents naturally wish to have at least one son in the family.
11. Parents who have no male offspring very often initiate the sons of others.
12. Parents initiate the sons of those people who cannot afford to do their own.
13. Regarding age, there is no hard and fast rule as to when a boy can become a novice.
14. If a boy is old enough to 'drive away a bird that comes to pick the food laid on one's meal', he can become a novice.

15. A boy can also become a novice if he is old enough to 'scare the birds away from farm'.

16. The usual age nowadays is between 5 and 15.

17. The boys who are to become novices are shown to the public.

18. The boys usually go to pagodas.

19. There are two reasons for the boys going to pagodas.

20. The first reason is to let the public know that a certain initiation is taking place.

21. Another reason is to let the public who the proud parents are.

22. Secondly, it is to let the spirits know that they have not been forsaken.

23. The spirits belong to the family ancestors.

24. Also to let the spirits know that they are welcome to share the merits.

25. The merits are acquired by the occasion.

26. The first part of the ceremony is to shave the head.

27. This is done by one of the monks in the monastery.

28. Meanwhile, the parents hold a piece of white cloth in front of the boy.

29. They use the piece of white cloth to collect the falling hair.

30. Next, the boy or boys proceed to the senior monk.

31. The boys have to request the senior monk for admission into the Buddhist Order.

32. The boys have to request in Pali.
33. Pali is the language of the Buddhist scriptures.
34. The boys change into saffron robes.
35. The boys take the vow of ten precepts.
36. The boys are then required to repeat relevant extracts from the scriptures.
37. The scriptures are dictated by the senior monk.
38. It is important that the boys repeat these words correctly.
39. The boys must repeat the words with proper accent and emphasis on the right syllables.
40. Most parents wait till the boys are old enough to repeat the Pali words.
41. The boys must repeat the Pali words correctly.
42. When parents are getting old, they are worried that they may not live long enough to see their sons' initiation.
43. The parents prefer to have the Shin-pyu at an earlier age.
44. When the boys get older, they can again become novices any number of times.
45. A layman cannot be ordained as a full-fledged monk without becoming a novice first.
46. A novice must be at least twenty years old to become a full-fledged monk.
47. After being admitted as novices, the boys have to live in a monastery.

48. There is no limit as to how long they should remain as novices.

49. It depends on the boy's desire and ability to withstand a life of austerity.

50. The difficult part is to fast from noon till next dawn.

51. It is particularly difficult for the younger ones,

52. A day for religious purposes begins at dawn.

53. A day for religious purposes does not begin at midnight.

54. In the western calendar a day starts at midnight.

55. So a novice cannot get up after midnight and break his fast.

56. A novice shouldn't think that the day ends at midnight.

57. A novice can only eat after dawn.

58. There are two main meals for each day.

59. Breakfast is at dawn.

60. Lunch must be finished before noon.

61. In the evening, novices and monks are allowed to take soft drinks or juice.

## **APPENDIX L**

### MCQs (Test 3)

#### A. Comprehension Questions

**Select the best choice.**

1. Shin-pyu is a ceremony that is held whenever .....

- a. a family earns any great merit
- b. a family takes its ordained vows
- c. a boy forsakes his childhood life
- d. children in Myanmar are initiated as novices

2. It is understood from paragraph 1 that .....

- a. novices may decide not to be a monk
- b. it's not difficult to remain as a novice
- c. all the novices become monks after some years
- d. the celebration is held for those who have taken vows

3. What is the most important factor in becoming a novice?

- a. economic status
- b. the celebration
- c. age
- d. sex

4. The families who do not have any sons .....

- a. initiate poor families' sons
- b. drive away a bird
- c. help the monastery financially
- d. do not take part in the ceremony

5. It is inferred from paragraph 3 that ..... .
- a. the spirits do not have a share in the occasion
  - b. the majority of the people in the region are poor
  - c. money is collected for pagodas in the Shin-pyu ceremony
  - d. in Myanmar, there is a belief in the existence of life after death
6. To become novices, boys practice all of the following EXCEPT ..... .
- a. putting on saffron robes
  - b. having their heads shaved by monks
  - c. requesting the senior monk for admission into the Buddhist Order
  - d. repeating some parts of the Buddhist scriptures in their own language
7. Most parents prefer to have Shin-pyu when their sons are old enough because ..... .
- a. they are worried that their sons may not choose to become a novice
  - b. the boys will be able to repeat the Pali words with correct pronunciation
  - c. when the boys get older, they can again become novices any number of times
  - d. the boys must be able to earn their own money for the ceremony as their parents are poor
8. To turn into a real monk, a boy ..... .
- a. should be between 5 and 15
  - b. must be above twenty years of age
  - c. can undertake Shin-pyu at any time
  - d. does not need to become a novice first

9. The admitted novices .....
- a. may visit the monastery if they like it
  - b. undertake the life of austerity with their parents
  - c. live in the monastery as long as they are willing to
  - d. have to stay in the monastery for a certain period of time
10. According to their fasting tradition, novices .....
- a. may only eat at noon
  - b. break their fasts at dawn
  - c. can eat from evening till dawn
  - d. are not allowed to eat from sunrise to sunset

## B. Vocabulary Questions

**Select the best choice.**

1. The word **Novice**, paragraph 1, means someone who .....

- a. has recently joined a religious group
- b. has no experience in a skill, subject or activity
- c. is paid to clean someone's house, cook for them, etc.
- d. is specially trained to perform religious duties in a church

2. **Forsake**, paragraph 1, means .....

- a. to try to achieve or get something
- b. to say what will happen in the future
- c. to stop doing or leave something that you have or enjoy
- d. to say or think that someone or something is responsible for something bad

3. The word **order**, paragraph 1, is .....

- a. a society of a religious group
- b. a situation in which rules are obeyed and respected
- c. the political, social, or economic situation at a particular time
- d. the way that several things, events, etc. are arranged or put on a list

4. **Initiate**, paragraph 2 , means .....

- a. to choose someone for a position or job
- b. to arrange for something important to start, such as a new plan
- c. to believe that someone is honest and will not harm or cheat you
- d. to introduce someone into an organization, group, etc. usually with a special ceremony

5. **Proceed**, paragraph 4, means .....

- a. to continue to do something
- b. to move in a particular direction
- c. to ask for something politely or formally
- d. to make someone feel certain that something is true

6. **Saffron**, paragraph 4, is a .....

- a. place
- b. color
- c. kind of cloth
- d. powder used in cooking

7. Which is closest in meaning to the word **precept** in paragraph 4?

- a. image
- b. section
- c. principle
- d. extract

8. A **full-fledged** monk, paragraph 5, is probably a ..... one.

- a. sociable
- b. certified
- c. religious
- d. qualified

9. A synonym for the word **withstand**, paragraph 6, might be .....

- a. resist
- b. prefer
- c. obtain
- d. appreciate

10. If a person has a life of **austerity**, paragraph 6, s/he .....

- a. has a desirable life
- b. devotes his/her life to the poor
- c. doesn't like to have a religious life
- d. doesn't live a comfortable and enjoyable life

## APPENDIX M

### Passage 4 (*History of the Seychelles*)

1       The human history of the Seychelles Islands is short, since nobody lived on the islands until the 1700s, when European explorers, traders and pirates began stumbling on the islands. The first to actually claim the Seychelles as their own, and to send settlers, were the French. In 1770, 21 brave French settlers arrived with seven slaves to begin a community on St. Anne Island. This is how the human history of the Seychelles Islands began. They grew local crops and ate tortoises for a few decades until the British decided they wanted the Seychelles. The French gave up the islands without any fight at all. However, this was in name only, and once the British *conquerors* left, the French flag was raised again. The turnover meant very little to the small settlement of people living there. The Seychelles officially became a British dependency in 1814. In the meantime, more and more slaves were sent to the Seychelles. In 1835, when the British abolished slavery, many freed slaves came here to live. The language was still French, since not many white British people came here to live.

2       The Brits did little with the Seychelles Islands but sent their freed slaves and their exiled prisoners here. Exiled Brits didn't see the exile as much of a punishment, though, since they enjoyed living a tropical life, for the most part. In 1903, the Seychelles officially became a colony, which meant government went back to the Queen in England. Politics wasn't much of a discussion topic in the Seychelles, and they didn't even form any political parties until 1964. At that time two parties were formed: Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) and Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP).

3       Twelve years later, the two parties worked together and independence was granted from the British. The founder of the SDP, James Mancham, then worked hard travelling around the globe, establishing the Seychelles as a desirable vacation destination. He was something of a playboy, and his flamboyant ways got him, and the

Seychelles noticed. Soon, **wealthy** Arab investors were buying large areas of land, and **celebrities** were coming to the Seychelles on vacation. Tourism dollars were flowing in. The problem was, the money coming in wasn't getting evenly **distributed**, so some got rich, while others remained cash poor. The Seychelles had become a playground for the rich.

4       The unequal distribution of tourism wealth caused discontent, and the leader of SPUP, which was heavily socialist, organized a **coup**. Albert Rene was his name, and he was also a lawyer. He hired some Tanzanian and North Korean soldiers to back him up, although the coup was bloodless and quick. This was in 1977. He also outlawed Mancham's SDP as well. Four years later, his rule was challenged by Colonel Mike Hoare, a warlord from Congo. The **plot** was colorful: his men posed as South African rugby players on vacation coming to the Seychelles. They packed their guns in their luggage and were **promptly** discovered at the airport. The plot was unsuccessful so they hijacked a plane to **flee** home.

5       Throughout the rest of the 1970s and the 1980s, Rene maintained power through many attempts to take him out of power. He **survived** mutinies and coup attempts and is still in power today. Standards of health and the economy have slowly improved, and Rene has slowly moved towards privatization and a free-market economy. Tourism **waned** in the 1980s while all the power struggles were taking place, but it has made a comeback and is now 18% of the economy.

Adapted from: <http://www.seychelles-s.info/seychelles-history.php>

## **APPENDIX N**

### **Pre-reading Activities (Passage 4)**

#### **A. Brainstorming Questions**

1. Have you ever heard of the Seychelles?
2. What do you think the Seychelles might be?
3. Where do you guess the Seychelles is located?
4. Do you think it is a nice place for tourists to visit? Why?
5. Do you think the history of the Seychelles might be interesting to read about?

#### **B. Background Information**

The Republic of Seychelles is in the western Indian Ocean and lies between 480km and 1600km from the east coast of Africa. It comprises 115 islands, and the capital is Victoria. It is most famous for its tourism facilities and amazing beaches. Seychelles' climate is always warm and without extremes. In this tropical region the temperature seldom drops below 24°C or rises above 32°C. For over two centuries, the islands have remained a mixture of different races, traditions and religions from the four corners of the earth. The passage you are about to read is a short account of the history of the Seychelles. You will understand who the first inhabitants of the islands were, when they arrived, and what happened to them. You will also learn when and how they gained independence, and find much more information on the Seychelles' development, including their political and economic ups and downs.

### C. Vocabulary List

stumble (v.)	tortoise (n.)	abolish (v.)	exiled (adj.)
tropical (adj.)	wealthy (adj.)	celebrity (n.)	distribute (v.)
coup (n.)	plot (n.)	promptly (adv.)	flee (v.)
survive (v.)	wane (v.)		

**Use Your Dictionaries for the Vocabulary Meaning.**

## APPENDIX O

### Idea Units (Passage 4)

1. The human history of the Seychelles Islands is short.
2. Nobody lived on the islands until the 1700s.
3. European explorers, traders and pirates began stumbling on the islands in 1700s.
4. The first to actually claim the Seychelles as their own were the French.
5. The French sent settlers.
6. In 1770, 21 French settlers arrived.
7. The French settlers were brave.
8. There were seven slaves with the French settlers.
9. The French began a community on St. Anne Island.
10. This is how the human history of the Seychelles Islands began.
11. The settlers grew local crops.
12. The settlers ate tortoises.
13. This lasted for a few decades.
14. Then the British decided they wanted the Seychelles.
15. The French gave up the islands.
16. There was no fight at all.
17. This was in name only.
18. Then the British conquerors left.
19. The French flag was raised again.
20. The turnover meant very little to the settlement of people living there.
21. The settlement of people was small.
22. The Seychelles officially became a British dependency.
23. The dependency happened in 1814.
24. More and more slaves were sent to the Seychelles.

25. The British abolished slavery in 1835.
26. Many freed slaves came here to live in 1835.
27. The language was still French.
28. Not many white British people came here to live.
29. The Brits did little with the Seychelles Islands.
30. The Brits sent their freed slaves here.
31. The Brits sent their exiled prisoners here.
32. Exiled Brits didn't see the exile as much of a punishment.
33. Exiled Brits enjoyed living a tropical life.
34. In 1903, the Seychelles officially became a colony.
35. This meant government went back to the Queen in England.
36. Politics wasn't much of a discussion topic in the Seychelles.
37. People didn't even form any political parties until 1964.
38. At that time two parties were formed.
39. One party was Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP).
40. The other party was Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP).
41. Twelve years later, the two parties worked together.
42. Independence was granted from the British.
43. The founder of the SDP was James Mancham.
44. James Mancham worked hard travelling around the globe.
45. James Mancham tried to establish the Seychelles as a desirable vacation destination.
46. James Mancham was something of a playboy.
47. James Mancham's flamboyant ways got him.
48. The Seychelles was noticed.
49. Soon, wealthy Arab investors were buying large areas of land.
50. Celebrities were coming to the Seychelles on vacation.

51. Tourism dollars were flowing in.
52. There was a problem.
53. The money coming in wasn't getting evenly distributed.
54. Some got rich while others remained cash poor.
55. The Seychelles had become a playground for the rich.
56. The distribution of tourism wealth was unequal.
57. The distribution of tourism wealth caused discontent.
58. The leader of SPUP organized a coup.
59. SPUP was heavily socialist.
60. The leader's name was Albert Rene.
61. Albert Rene was a lawyer.
62. Albert Rene hired some Tanzanian and North Korean soldiers.
63. The soldiers backed him up.
64. The coup was bloodless and quick.
65. The coup was in 1977.
66. Albert Rene outlawed Mancham's SDP as well.
67. Four years later, Albert Rene's rule was challenged by Colonel Mike Hoare.
68. Colonel Mike Hoare was a warlord from Congo.
69. The plot was colorful.
70. Mike Hoare's men posed as South African rugby players.
71. The men were coming to the Seychelles on vacation.
72. The men packed their guns in their luggage.
73. The men were promptly discovered at the airport.
74. The plot was unsuccessful.
75. The men hijacked a plane to flee home.
76. In the 1970s and the 1980s, Rene maintained power.

77. There were many attempts to take him out of power.
78. Rene survived mutinies and coup attempts.
79. Rene is still in power today.
80. Standards of health and the economy have slowly improved.
81. Rene has slowly moved towards privatization and a free-market economy.
82. Tourism waned in the 1980s.
83. All the power struggles were taking place in the 1980s.
84. Tourism has made a comeback.
85. Tourism is now 18% of the economy.

## **APPENDIX P**

### **MCQs (Test 4)**

#### **A. Comprehension Questions**

**Select the best choice.**

1. The human history of the Seychelles Islands began when .....
  - a. the British conquerors entered the Seychelles
  - b. European explorers discovered the Seychelles
  - c. the Seychelles officially became a British dependency
  - d. the French settlers began a community on St. Anne Island
  
2. The French left the Seychelles because .....
  - a. the British wanted the Seychelles
  - b. they didn't want the islands anymore
  - c. the British started a war against them
  - d. they couldn't find anything other than tortoises to eat
  
3. Why did the British send their exiled prisoners to the Seychelles?
  - a. Not mentioned in the text.
  - b. To let them enjoy a tropical life.
  - c. Because there was no other way to punish them.
  - d. Because there were no other places to take them.

4. The political activities began in the Seychelles when ..... .
- a. they gained independence
  - b. they officially became a colony
  - c. the two political parties were formed in the islands
  - d. the government went back to the queen in England
5. All of the following statements are true about the Seychelles EXCEPT ..... .
- a. "A lot of money flew in the islands because of tourism."
  - b. "There was a problem of distributing the money in the islands."
  - c. "The founder of the SDP was granted independence from the Brits."
  - d. "The industry of tourism developed in the islands after independence."
6. James Mancham travelled around the world to ..... .
- a. make Arabs invest in the islands
  - b. help make the islands independent
  - c. find another desirable vacation destination
  - d. establish the islands as a vacation destination
7. The tourism wealth being distributed unequally resulted in ..... .
- a. rugby players' hijacking a plane
  - b. abolishing tourism in the islands
  - c. a coup organized by the socialists
  - d. Colonel Mike Hoare's challenging the rules
8. Colonel Mike Hoare organized a plot against Albert Rene ..... .
- a. in 1977
  - b. in the 1980s
  - c. after privatization
  - d. before Rene outlawed SDP

9. Albert Rene's strategies in ruling over the Seychelles have brought about all of the following EXCEPT .....

- a. the comeback of tourism industry
- b. the unequal distribution of tourism money
- c. improvements in the standards of health and economy
- d. a movement towards privatization and a free market economy

10. Which of the following statements is TRUE according to the passage?

- a. Nobody was killed in Rene's attempt to take power.
- b. As a result of mutinies, Rene is no longer in power.
- c. Tourism comprises nearly half of the Seychelles' economy.
- d. It is mentioned that Mike Hoare was with his men when they hijacked a plane.

## B. Vocabulary Questions

Select the best choice.

1. **Tortoises** are .....

- a. animals
- b. vegetables
- c. tree roots
- d. a tropical fruit

2. **Abolish**, paragraph 1, means .....

- a. to clean something
- b. to stop something that is happening
- c. to buy something, especially something big or expensive
- d. to make someone suffer because they have done something wrong

3. If prisoners are **exiled**, they .....

- a. have to stay in prison to the end of their lives
- b. can gain freedom by paying money to the court
- c. are hanged because they have committed murder
- d. are forced to leave their country, especially for political reasons

4. The word **wealthy**, paragraph 3, means .....

- a. proud
- b. rich
- c. selfish
- d. easy-going

5. **Celebrities**, paragraph 3, are .....

- a. big companies
- b. common tourists
- c. famous people
- d. government officials

6. **Distribute**, paragraph 3, means .....

- a. to be left after other things have been dealt with
- b. to make something continue in the same way or at the same high standard as before
- c. to stop doing or providing something that you have regularly done or provided until now
- d. to give something such as food, medicine, books, etc. to a large group of people, especially in a planned way

7. A **coup** is .....

- a. a situation where the president and the parliament compete for power
- b. an achievement that is extremely impressive because it was very difficult
- c. an occasion when everyone in a country votes in order to make a decision
- d. a sudden attempt by citizens or the army to take control of the government

8. The word **promptly**, paragraph 4, means .....

- a. at last
- b. successfully
- c. quickly
- d. with difficulty

9. My friend could ..... a car accident. Thank God he didn't die in the accident.

- a. survive
- b. flee
- c. maintain
- d. struggle

10. If something such as power, influence, or feeling ....., it gradually becomes less strong or less important.

- a. stumbles
- b. wanes
- c. is packed
- d. is granted

## APPENDIX Q

### Perception Questionnaire

Age: .....

Sex: .....

Please read the items and tick (✓) the appropriate boxes.

**1= Strongly disagree**

**2= Disagree**

**3= Undecided**

**4= Agree**

**5= Strongly agree**

Item	Perception	1	2	3	4	5
1	I need a teacher to teach me the unknown words of the text that I am going to read.					
2	I prefer to use a dictionary to check the unknown words.					
3	I think there is no difference between dictionary use and teachers' instruction of vocabulary.					
4	I think learning vocabulary is more fun when I work without a teacher's help.					
5	I think my teacher would know better than me which words I need to learn to read a text.					
6	I always ask my teacher for the meaning of the unknown words while reading a text.					

<b>Item</b>	<b>Perception</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
7	I can understand unfamiliar reading passages without my teacher's help.					
8	I need a teacher to provide me with background knowledge on the text topic/content before reading a passage.					
9	I prefer to get the background information on a text by reading about it.					
10	I think my teacher's oral explanations on text topic/content are more effective than written explanations.					
11	I understand texts better with my teacher's instructions.					
12	The presence of a teacher in my reading class gives me a feeling of support.					
13	I can understand a text better if there is a title for it.					
14	I check vocabulary all the time.					
15	I try to guess word meanings from the context.					
16	I think I am an independent reader.					

APPENDIX R

## Interview Questions

1. In order to understand an unfamiliar reading passage, do you think you need a teacher to provide you with oral background information about the text, or would you prefer to read about the background information? Give reasons for your choice.
  2. Do you generally think you are an independent reader, or do you think you need a teacher? Give reasons.
  3. Do you think you need a teacher to teach you the unknown words of the text you are going to read, or would you prefer to look up the new words in a dictionary yourself? Give reasons for your choice.
  4. What do you think is the best strategy in understanding the unknown words of a text?

## APPENDIX S



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
ESOL Examinations  
English for Speakers of Other Languages

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Name: .....

Date: .....

# quick placement test

## Version 1

The test is divided into two parts:

Part 1 (Questions 1 – 40) – All students.

Part 2 (Questions 41 – 60) – Do not start this part unless told to do so by your test supervisor.

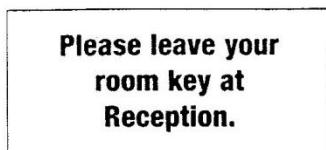
Time: 30 minutes

## Part 1

### Questions 1 – 5

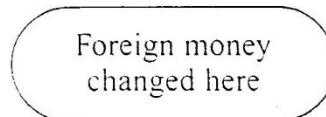
- Where can you see these notices?
- For questions 1 to 5, mark **one** letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet.

1



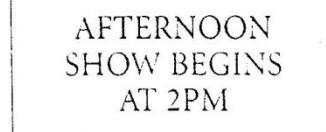
- A in a shop
- B in a hotel
- C in a taxi

2



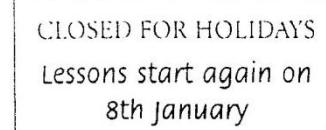
- A in a library
- B in a bank
- C in a police station

3



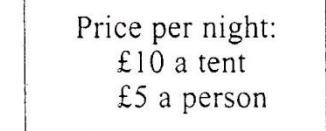
- A outside a theatre
- B outside a supermarket
- C outside a restaurant

4



- A at a travel agent's
- B at a music school
- C at a restaurant

5



- A at a cinema
- B in a hotel
- C at a camp-site

### Questions 6 – 10

- In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text below.
- For questions 6 to 10, mark **one** letter A, B, or C on your Answer Sheet.

#### Scotland

Scotland is the north part of the island of Great Britain. The Atlantic Ocean is on the west and the North Sea on the east. Some people (6) ..... Scotland speak a different language called Gaelic.

There are (7) ..... five million people in Scotland, and Edinburgh is (8) ..... most famous city.

Scotland has many mountains; the highest one is called 'Ben Nevis'. In the south of Scotland, there are a lot of sheep. A long time ago, there (9) ..... many forests, but now there are only a (10) .....

Scotland is only a small country, but it is quite beautiful.

6    A on

B in

C at

7    A about

B between

C among

8    A his

B your

C its

9    A is

B were

C was

10   A few

B little

C lot

### Questions 11 – 20

- In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the texts.
- For questions 11 to 20, mark **one** letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

#### Alice Guy Blaché

Alice Guy Blaché was the first female film director. She first became involved in cinema whilst working for the Gaumont Film Company in the late 1890s. This was a period of great change in the cinema and Alice was the first to use many new inventions. (11) ..... sound and colour.

In 1907 Alice (12) ..... to New York where she started her own film company. She was (13) ..... successful, but, when Hollywood became the centre of the film world, the best days of the independent New York film companies were (14) ..... . When Alice died in 1968, hardly anybody (15) ..... her name.

- |    |              |             |               |               |
|----|--------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| 11 | A bringing   | B including | C containing  | D supporting  |
| 12 | A moved      | B ran       | C entered     | D transported |
| 13 | A next       | B once      | C immediately | D recently    |
| 14 | A after      | B down      | C behind      | D over        |
| 15 | A remembered | B realised  | C reminded    | D repeated    |

## **UFOs – do they exist?**

UFO is short for ‘unidentified flying object’. UFOs are popularly known as flying saucers, (16) ..... that is often the (17) ..... they are reported to be. The (18) ..... ‘flying saucers’ were seen in 1947 by an American pilot, but experts who studied his claim decided it had been a trick of the light. Even people experienced at watching the sky, (19) ..... as pilots, report seeing UFOs.

In 1978 a pilot reported a collection of UFOs off the coast of New Zealand. A television (20) ..... went up with the pilot and filmed the UFOs. Scientists studying this phenomenon later discovered that in this case they were simply lights on boats out fishing.

- |    |             |             |            |             |
|----|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 16 | A because   | B therefore | C although | D so        |
| 17 | A look      | B shape     | C size     | D type      |
| 18 | A last      | B next      | C first    | D oldest    |
| 19 | A like      | B that      | C so       | D such      |
| 20 | A cameraman | B director  | C actor    | D announcer |

### Questions 21 – 40

In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence. For questions 21 to 40, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

- 21 The teacher encouraged her students ..... to an English pen-friend.  
A should write      B write      C wrote      D to write
- 22 They spent a lot of time ..... at the pictures in the museum.  
A looking      B for looking      C to look      D to looking
- 23 Shirley enjoys science lessons, but all her experiments seem to ..... wrong.  
A turn      B come      C end      D go
- 24 ..... from Michael, all the group arrived on time.  
A Except      B Other      C Besides      D Apart
- 25 She ..... her neighbour's children for the broken window.  
A accused      B complained      C blamed      D denied
- 26 As I had missed the history lesson, my friend went ..... the homework with me.  
A by      B after      C over      D on
- 27 Whether she's a good actress or not is a ..... of opinion.  
A matter      B subject      C point      D case
- 28 The decorated roof of the ancient palace was ..... up by four thin columns.  
A built      B carried      C held      D supported
- 29 Would it ..... you if we came on Thursday?  
A agree      B suit      C like      D fit
- 30 This form ..... be handed in until the end of the week.  
A doesn't need      B doesn't have      C needn't      D hasn't got

- 31 If you make a mistake when you are writing, just ..... it out with your pen.  
A cross              B clear              C do              D wipe
- 32 Although our opinions on many things ..... , we're good friends.  
A differ              B oppose              C disagree              D divide
- 33 This product must be eaten ..... two days of purchase.  
A by              B before              C within              D under
- 34 The newspaper report contained ..... important information.  
A many              B another              C an              D a lot of
- 35 Have you considered ..... to London?  
A move              B to move              C to be moving              D moving
- 36 It can be a good idea for people who lead an active life to increase their ..... of vitamins.  
A upturn              B input              C upkeep              D intake
- 37 I thought there was a ..... of jealousy in his reaction to my good fortune.  
A piece              B part              C shadow              D touch
- 38 Why didn't you ..... that you were feeling ill?  
A advise              B mention              C remark              D tell
- 39 James was not sure exactly where his best interests ..... .  
A stood              B rested              C lay              D centred
- 40 He's still getting ..... the shock of losing his job.  
A across              B by              C over              D through

## Part 2

***Do not start this part unless told to do so by your test supervisor.***

### Questions 41 – 50

- In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best fits each space in the texts.
- For questions 41 to 50, mark **one** letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

#### The tallest buildings - SKYSCRAPERS

Nowadays, skyscrapers can be found in most major cities of the world. A building which was many (41) ..... high was first called a skyscraper in the United States at the end of the 19th century, and New York has perhaps the (42) ..... skyscraper of them all, the Empire State Building. The (43) ..... beneath the streets of New York is rock, (44) ..... enough to take the heaviest load without sinking, and is therefore well-suited to bearing the (45) ..... of tall buildings.

41 A stages                    B steps                    C storeys                    D levels

42 A first-rate                B top-class                C well-built                D best-known

43 A dirt                      B field                      C ground                      D soil

44 A hard                     B stiff                     C forceful                    D powerful

45 A weight                   B height                   C size                           D scale

## **Scrabble**

Scrabble is the world's most popular word game. For its origins, we have to go back to the 1930s in the USA, when Alfred Butts, an architect, found himself out of (46) ..... He decided that there was a (47) ..... for a board game based on words, and (48) ..... to design one. Eventually he made a (49) ..... from it, in spite of the fact that his original (50) ..... was only three cents a game.

**46 A** earning

**B** work

**C** income

**D** job

**47 A** market

**B** purchase

**C** commerce

**D** sale

**48 A** took up

**B** set out

**C** made for

**D** got round

**49 A** wealth

**B** fund

**C** cash

**D** fortune

**50 A** receipt

**B** benefit

**C** profit

**D** allowance

### Questions 51 – 60

- In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.
- For questions 51 to 60, mark **one** letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.

- 51 Roger's manager ..... to make him stay late if he hadn't finished the work.  
A insisted      B warned      C threatened      D announced
- 52 By the time he has finished his week's work, John has hardly ..... energy left for the weekend.  
A any      B much      C no      D same
- 53 As the game ..... to a close, disappointed spectators started to leave.  
A led      B neared      C approached      D drew
- 54 I don't remember ..... the front door when I left home this morning.  
A to lock      B locking      C locked      D to have locked
- 55 I ..... to other people borrowing my books: they always forget to return them.  
A disagree      B avoid      C dislike      D object
- 56 Andrew's attempts to get into the swimming team have not ..... with much success.  
A associated      B concluded      C joined      D met
- 57 Although Harry had obviously read the newspaper article carefully, he didn't seem to have ..... the main point.  
A grasped      B clutched      C clasped      D gripped
- 58 A lot of the views put forward in the documentary were open to .....  
A enquiry      B query      C question      D wonder
- 59 The new college ..... for the needs of students with a variety of learning backgrounds.  
A deals      B supplies      C furnishes      D caters
- 60 I find the times of English meals very strange – I'm not used ..... dinner at 6p.m.  
A to have      B to having      C having      D have