

The Effect of Cultural Schemata on Improving Iraqi EFL Preparatory Pupils' Achievement

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Received: 15/09/2022

Accepted: 02/11/2022

Abstract

The Current Study aims finding out the effect of the cultural schemata on EFL pupils' achievement in learning English Language and finding out whether the lack of cultural schemata of EFL pupils of experimental group affect their ability in learning English Language. To conduct the study and fulfill its aims the following hypotheses are set: 1) There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of experimental group who is taught cultural schemata and control group who taught by the traditional way in posttest. 2) To achieve the aims and confirm the hypotheses, the experimental design which is Non-Randomized Experimental Group Pretest –Posttest Design. The sample of the current study consists of (50) pupils in the fifth literary stage, derived from Al-Barudy preparatory school for girls. Both groups have been equalized in such variables from educational level of parents, age, English grades achievement in fourth stage, and the post and pretest of both groups. The experiment lasted two months, the researcher has taught the two groups during the academic year 2021-2022. To analyze the obtain data, different statistical means have been used many T-test for two independent samples to measure the pupils' post-test achievement.

After the statistically treatment of the data, the results expose that teaching pupils by using cultural schemata has provide it is effectiveness in rising pupils' understanding and their ability to communicate in learning English Language Based on the results, the obtained conclusions in this study, suitable "recommendations and suggestions for further studies are put forward".

Keywords: Cultural schemata, schemata, schema theory.

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

With the development of global economy and society, English Language is occupying more and more important status. English language is considered as an international language of world, because it is the language of information, technology, business and trades. For this reason, many learners attempt

to study English language and master all the four skills which are reading, writing, listening and speaking (White ,1988).

Maulana et al (2016) say that the most important problem that pupils faced in learning English language are lack of vocabulary, grammar, poor pronunciation, self –confidence, and shyness to speak, being afraid of making mistakes, therefore they have nothing to say.

Yang (2010) views that Schema and culture are the necessary features for pupils to learn and understand their surroundings, and they convey feelings and experiences outside world and inside heart through languages and the transmission of aspect in memory also depends on language. The pupils' schema is related to the specific language environment they are living in or familiar with, the common language and text will assist them to communicate smoothly.

Teaching cultural schemata helps the pupils to rise their knowledge, attitude, beliefs and values. The pupils can be more successful in language learning if the teachers link culture into a language classroom, that is pupils will increase themselves into the entire culture of the target language (Salim ,2017).

1.2. The Aims of the Study

This study aims at:

- 1- Finding out the effect of the cultural schemata on EFL pupils' achievement in learning English Language.
- 2-Finding out whether the lack of cultural schemata of EFL pupils of experimental group affect their ability in learning English Language.

1.3.Hypotheses of the Study

This study hypothesized that: There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of experimental groups who is taught cultural schemata and control group who taught by the traditional way in posttest.

1.4. Limits of the Study

The current study is limited to the use the cultural schemata on teaching English Language in (Al-Baurdy preparatory school for girls during the academic year 2021-2022). The sample of the study consists (50) pupils in the fifth preparatory school. The experimental group was taught by the cultural schemata and the control group was taught by the traditional method.

1.5. Value of the Study

This study is expected to be valuable for :

- 1- This study will be valuable for English language teachers, it will help them to teach English textbook by suggestion different teaching methods to be used by the teacher.
- 2- Researchers who seek for modern strategy in teaching English language.

1.6. Procedures of the Study

The following procedures are applied in this study:

- 1- Assessing randomly two groups: control and experimental group as the sample of the study.
- 2-Applying a pre-test for both groups.
- 3-Applying a pre-test on experimental and control groups in order to achieve equalization between other variables such as academic level of the father and mother variable.
- 4-Applying a post –test to both groups to discover whether there are any statistical significance differences among the subject of both the experimental and control groups.
- 5- The result of the post –test and the data have been presented and have been analyzed through using suitable statistical methods.

1.7. Definitions of Basic Terms

1.7.1. Schemata:

Carrel and Eisterhold (1983) state schemata mean what is understood from a text is a function of the special schemata that is activated at the time of processing the text. Additionally, is generalized collections of knowledge of past experiences which are organized into related knowledge groups and used to guide behaviors in familiar situations (Nishida ,1999).

1.7.2. Cultural Schemata:

Bedir (1992) defines cultural schemata as the background knowledge about cultural features of the language being learned. In other words, Ketchum (2006) defines is an extension of content schema which is culture – specific. It refers to cultural membership that is needed to fully understand the meaning intended by the writer

2.Theortical Background

2.1 The History of Schema theory

Schema theory is one of the essential doctrines of learning that applied to language skills learning and teaching. Schema theory is a theory about knowledge, it describes how information is processed. Schema (plural form: schemata) can be called frame, script or background knowledge (Kramsch ,1993)

According to Dawkins (1991), In the 17th century, the German philosopher Kant (1781) who developed Plato's notion and suggest the word " schema " in his work. Kant's theory of used the new ideas, new

concepts and he suggested that concepts connected with one's prior knowledge, they become meaningful only when they related to something the person already knew.

A schema theory can be defined as the theory that deals with pre-existing knowledge structures stored in the mind (Erten and Frisbie, 2009). Anderson and Pearson (1984) refer to schema theory as a model that attempts to constitute the way in which knowledge is stored within the memory of a person. In 1980, An American artificial intelligence expert Rumelhart, he developed the schema concept. He regarded schemata as the constructing blocks of cognition. That is, refer how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind and how it is used (Psybox, 2002).

In 1990 many researchers obtained loads of evidence showing through these studies researchers learned that human behavior relies heavily on the past experiences and the knowledge saved in one's brain. The experiences which are unique to person help them to acquire personal schemas. Schemas may emerge from a group's collective knowledge and are presented across the minds in a society, enabling people to think as if they are one mind (Malcolm and Sharifian, 2002).

2.1.2 The Concept of Schemata

Schemata is cognitive structure representing generic knowledge. Thus, according to Rumelhart (1980), Rumelhart's view schema look like a tree with different branches which connect to an endless number of small units of knowledge "schemata". Schank and Abelson (1977) can describe schemata as script " that is a type of data structure containing a particular sequence of events in context, people's expectation from those contexts, and application to other similar contexts. So that a restaurant script would contain knowledge of the actions and sequence of ordering food, paying bills, and so on.

Every person stores in his/her mind ideas and experiences or events which are typical. Everyone has in his /her mind a schema for a particular familiar situation. For example, most of people possess a schemata of "child's birthday party " which are contain cards, games, presents, cake with candles and so on , so when listener or reader knows a child's birthday , these schemata are activated in the mind in order that the comprehension and understanding are fulfilled (Taylor and Croker , 1981).

Schemata organize background knowledge which allows the listener or the reader to guess and interpreted new information about what he /she listens or reads. A person's prior knowledge is organized and stored in the mind as a certain schema (Brown and Yule, 1983).

2.1.3 Types of Schemata

Schemata plays a very essential role in the pupils' interaction between the text and their background knowledge, basically many researchers have attempted to classified schemata into three main types which are: Linguistic schemata, formal schemata and content schemata (Carrell,1984).

1-Linguistic Schemata

Linguistic schemata can be defined as the people's existing skillfulness in the syntax, semantics, grammar and vocabulary. In other words, It involves all the important features for recognition of words and their relation with sentences, and also called language schemata (Jafri, 2017) .

Pupils have difficulty in understanding one sentence, and small vocabulary forms could be a big mistake to understand whole of the text. The researchers said that teachers could help pupils to enlarge vocabulary and give some leaning strategy to make them be focus, so if they found difficulty words they could guess or predicate the meaning from the content of text (Basmalah ,2013). linguistic schemata effects on pupil's fluency in speaking, pupils who have a lot of vocabulary will speak without too much effort. Grammar gives pupils to construct the correct sentence in their conversations; Therefore, the more students have linguistic schemata they faster, comprehended a text because linguistic (Nassaaaji , 2002).

2-The Formal Schemata

According to Carrell (1983)formal schemata defines as the background knowledge about the layout , rhetorical , organizational structures of different kinds of text. Formal schemata is also known textual schemata that involve the background knowledge relating to the formal and rhetorical organizational structures of different types of text .

This type of schemata includes knowledge of various text types and genres and all the characteristics of text that the writer has use to give shape to print the text and its meaning , and also includes the understanding structure of a text , consisting of literature types , writing style , language structures , vocabulary , grammar , formal and informal literal style of the text (Yang , 2010) .

3-The Content Schemata

The Content Schemata can be defined as a reader's comprehension of cultural background and the whole world , which is a basic of cultural comparison, in other words , it means the background knowledge of the content area of the text that a readers bring to a text (Yang,2010) . According to (Xiaho-hui et al , 2007) the importance of content schemata lies in its that the students used this type of schema to understand the text by interpreting , guessing or predicating of information and removing ambiguities since the meaning does not come from the grammatical structures , but from the student's familiarity with the text .

2.1.4 Cultural Schemata

Bedir (1992) states that cultural schemata is the background knowledge about cultural concepts of the language being learned. If a person is not equipped with the appropriate cultural schemata , she / he may not be capable to make sense of culturally unfamiliar situation . On other hand , culture schemata are defined as samples of basic schemata that building the meaning system of cultural group (D'Andrade , 1992) .

Cultural schemata are a sub-class of cognitive schemas that are abstracted from person's culture, and therefor to some extent shared , experiences . They allow persons to carry meanings and serve as share

knowledge between interlocutors . Cultural schemas also have a collective life at the beginning level of cognitive that features a speech community (Sharifian ,2011). Cultural schemata is considered a tool in helping learners to acquire better second language , because of the schemata structure as well as prior knowledge principles (Carrell ,1987) . The general aim of the cultural schemata is to create a form of social space of individuals to exercise face work and also to provide communicative tools to negotiate and lubricate social relationships (Hibino and Koyama ,2016). Cultural schemata also give a basic for pragmatic meanings in the sense that knowledge uptake of speech acts in largely captured in cultural schemata . In some language , for example, the speech act “ greeting “ is closely connected with cultural schemata of “eating “ and “ food “ , whereas in some other languages it is related with cultural schemata that link to the health of the interlocutors and their family members . Making deductions by interlocutors about the knowledge of how to suitable greet the hearers are based on the general assumption of shared cultural schemata (Plamer ,1996) .

2.1.5 The Importance of Using Cultural Schemata in Teaching and Learning

Educational strategies are planning to manage and realize different pedagogical and educational needs of teachers and pupils . There are many teaching techniques and methodologies have been used with the possibility of achieving the greatest outcome of teaching – learning processes (Ansari , 2019) . Moreover , no educational design can possibly yield the desired results without including suitable instructive strategies . Schuman (1996) observes the ability of the pupils to connect and relate the already learnt and data stored in mind in order to acquire new knowledge and data through cognitive processes .

Lee and Kinzie (2012) observe that the reactions of pupils yield effect depending upon the teachers’ questions . It means the pupils use their cognitive skill when they answer to questions based on logic and reasoning .Education and learning become a type of a reciprocal process for teachers and pupils . The cultural schemata of pupils are to be utilized by teacher to facilitate learning . Cultural schemata contains the understanding and remembering of the techniques applied to solve some problem and the results acquired with the application of those techniques . The same can be done using educational and pedagogical techniques and strategies to arrive at major conclusions . Schemata and knowledge saved in the long –term memory of pupils can be used to assimilate new knowledge through recalling the relevant stored information (Ansari , 2019) .

Getzmann , et al (2016) observe that Cultural Schemata play an important role in learning process involving the following :

- 1- Cultural schemata influence what pupils pay attention to . Pupils are more likely to pay attention to things that fit in with their existing schemata .
- 2- Cultural schemata also effect how quickly pupil learn .Pupil also learn information more rably when it fits in with current schemata .
- 3- Cultural schemata enable pupil to think quickly even under different conditions when things are easier changing the information is coming in quickly , pupil don’t usually have to spend a great deal of

time interpreting because pupil have ability to assimilate this new information quickly and automatically .

4- Cultural schemata can also change how pupil explain incoming information. When learning new information that doesn't fit with existing schemata , pupil sometimes distort or alter the new information to make it fit with what they already know .

5- Cultural schemata can also be uncommonly difficult to change . Pupil often cling to their existing schemas even in the face of contradictory information .

3. Methodology and Procedure

There are many scholars describe the experimental design in different definitions and opinions such as Goodman (1973) says that the experimental design as a way to discover the impact of experimental treatment on experimental group that are choose for testing the study . The current study , aims and hypothesis , demand the use of “ Non-Randomized pre-test – post-test Design “ (Issa and Michael , 1977) .

Of the fifth literary preparatory school pupils are the sample of the study . Table (1) shows the study's experimental design .

Table 1. The Experimental Design

Group	The Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	The Test
EX.	Pupils' Achievement in pretest	Cultural Schemata Strategy	Pupils' Achievement	Pupils' Achievement in posttest
CO.	Pupils' Achievement in pretest	Traditional Strategy	Pupils' Achievement	Pupils' Achievement in posttest

3.1. The Population

Leman and Merherns (1971) mention that can be defined the population as a particular group of subjects generally persons . The current study consist of EFL Iraqi preparatory pupils of the fifth literary stage for girls in center of Tikrit city for academic year 2021-2022 . The sample consists of (50) pupils will divide into two section . The first section (A) has randomly chosen to be the experimental group , and the second section (B) will be the control group . Each section consists of (25) pupils. The total number of the fifth class pupil's population (446) girls .

3.2. Test Construction

The researcher used post-test as a way to discover the results , so the researcher designed a test on the topic that was selected at the beginning of the study to measure whether there are statistically significance between the control and experimental groups .

3.3. Face Validity

Issac and Michael (1977) state that the face validity is point out whether the tool on the face of it, with the surface inspection its appearance and measure what is planned to measure. Also, Heaton (1988) explains that the face validity is the dimension to which the test measures what is believed to measure and nothing else

3.4. Content Validity

The content validity is refer to the level to which measure means exactly represents all features of concept Pennington (2003).

3.5. Reliability of the Achievement Test

A successful test must be reliable. A test is said to be accurate if its level of accuracy remains constant and consistent each time it is administered to the same group of students under the same conditions (Veram and Beard, 1981). Alpha- Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the post-test. The coefficient is found to be (0.78), which refers to the homogeneity of the test questions.

3.6. Pilot Study

Richards and Schmidt (2010) suggest that the pilot testing is a preparation of the test to small representative group of examinees, in order to determine its suitability and effectiveness. So the researcher chooses (16) pupils randomly from (A) and (B) sections (8) pupils from each section from Al-Barudy preparatory school for girls.

3.7 Item Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that the item analysis is a process to realize and collect main information about the relation among items of the test and make decision depends on analyzing items of the test.

3.7.1 Difficulty Level

Item difficulty refers to the extent to which an item appears to be complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. It just reflects the percentage of learners who respond correctly to the object. The most suitable test item will have item difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010: 70-1). The item of the post-test ranges from (0.27) to (0.70)

3.7.2 Discrimination Power

Discrimination power means "calculating the degree to which a particular item's results correspond with the results of the entire test" (Alderson, 1995:80). This means that an object is deemed to have weak power of discrimination if it is correctly scored by high-skilled students as well as low-skilled students. So, The discrimination power of the test items between ranges from (0.28) to (0.63)

4. Analysis of Data and Discussion of Results

4.1. Results Related to Pupils' Achievement in Cultural Schemata

The results of the Statistical analysis by using t-test for two independent groups have shown that the mean scores of the experimental groups are (75.68) and that of the control group is (60.88). By using the t-test formula for two independent, the Calculated t-value is found to be (5.931), while the tabulated t-value is found to be (2.00) at the degree of freedom (48) and level of significance (0.05), This means indicate that there is a significant difference between the achievement of the two groups and in favour of the experimental group.

It is concluded that there is significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group in the posttest is rejected, as shown in table (2).

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviation, and t-Values of the Two Groups in the Achievement Test

Groups	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated		
EG.	25	75.68	9.05	Calculated	Tabulated	48	0.05
CG.	25	60.88	8.57	5.931	2.01		

4.2. Discussion of Results

The superiority of the experimental group's pupils ,which is studied according to the Cultural Schemata , leads to the following results :

1-Cultural Schemata helps the pupils to understand , comprehended and interpreted the new information around them .

2-The use of pictures , keywords , video , and You Tube help the researcher to activate the pupils to learn new synonyms especially when pupils use these new words in conversation with each other.

3-Using Cultural Schemata in teaching –learning process allows the pupils to be active , monitor , self-confidence which lead to rise their learning and solving problems .

4- Cultural Schemata aids the pupils to organized set of ideas to understand and interpreted the message of the writer in the text and they can conclude the main ideas .

5- Collaborative learning will enhance pupils to work in small group and discussion the questions and help them to communicate , review , and convey their ideas to each other not only in the classroom , but in real life situation

6- The study reveals that the pupils improve their achievement of the four skills after utilizing Cultural Schemata .

5.1. Conclusions

Depending to the results and analysis of the current study , the following conclusions are illustrated:

1-The achievement of the pupils of the experimental group is better than that of the pupils' achievement of the control group which shows that those pupils motivate in learning through Cultural Schemata than the traditional method to learn English as a foreign language in Iraqi preparatory schools .

2- The main cause of many EFL pupils' poor abilities in communication in their absence of background knowledge because , the teacher of foreign language focused on developing the four skills of language .So , in order to teach Cultural Schemata , teacher need to choose a suitable methods and techniques to make the pupils learn quickly and develop their prior knowledge .

3-Cultural Schemata is very useful method for integration old information with new information in foreign language classroom and help the pupils to achievement their skills and attitudes .

4-The use of Cultural Schemata allows the pupils to increase an atmosphere of collaboration between pupils and teacher .

5- Using pictures , and new technology in the classroom help the pupils to recognize other Cultural Schemata and lifestyle .

5.2. Recommendation

In the light of the results of the current study , the following recommendations are formulated :

- 1- Iraqi English Language teacher should support the pupils' confidence in order to express themselves clearly and participant in the lesson by using the application of Cultural Schemata in classroom .
- 2- EFL pupils should be aware of the importance of their achievement in learning another Language and background knowledge .
- 3- Teacher should be used the modern technology in teaching foreign language such as games , video , watching movies , TV and read books to make pupils interest through the process of learning . So technology facilitate the learning process and save time .
- 4- Teacher should use the communicative approach inside the classroom that give a chance to pupils to better understanding the meaning of the content of text .
- 5- Teacher should work to activate the pupils' Cultural Schemata in teaching four skills .

- 6- Curriculum designers in Ministry of Education can focus on the Cultural Schemata in designing the curriculum of teaching English Language .

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