

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the study background, the scope of the investigation, the research questions, the study's purposes, the study's significance, the definition of important terminology, and the dissertation structure.

1.1. Background of the Study

Mastering reading skills might be complex for English language learners in Asia or many other parts of the globe where English is considered a foreign language. For instance, the learners may have problems comprehending English texts due to limited cultural and background knowledge, unfamiliar words or grammar, and a minimum awareness of reading strategies (Nuttal, 2000; Iwai, 2009). Because of the problems that EFL learners encounter in reading, many educators and researchers attempt to perform studies searching for innovative pedagogical approaches and instructional media that might support students in overcoming difficulties and improving their reading comprehension.

In general, a piece of information sent from a writer to a reader determines whether or not the reader can comprehend what he/she reads. This information is the core of a text. Several scholars (Carell, 1987; Chihara, Sakurai & Oller, 1989; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2016 and 2019; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013) contend that readers' understanding of a text is related to their prior knowledge about the subject matter discussed in a text. In other words, scholars claim that the reader comprehends the text when he/she is acquainted with the subject matter. This claim connects to studies on schema.

Schemata are "higher-order cognitive structures that perform a vital function in assisting how past information relates with new knowledge in perception, language, cognition, and memory," according to Brewer and Nakamura (1984), as referenced in McVee, Dunsmore, and Gavelek (2005, p. 495). Based on the schema theory, the reader's prior experience is the essential factor in

determining whether the reader can extract or generate meaning from the content of texts she or he reads (Barlett, 1932). In addition, Al-Jahwari and Humaidi (2015) argue that the study of schemata may reveal profound insights into whether or not a reader is successful in grasping the material they are reading.

There are two categories of schema: formal and content Schema. Carrell (1987) states, "A formal schema is knowledge about the formal, rhetorical organizing patterns of various texts." A content schema, on the other hand, is the background information a reader brings to a text" (p. 461). The details of the text, the readers' cultural familiarity, and their past knowledge provide the foundation for a content schema. According to Carrell (1987), each aspect contributes to a reader's capacity to understand the information presented in a text.

Some scholars claim that content schema correlates with cultural schema in reading comprehension (Snow, 2002; Al-Jahwari & Humaidi, 2015; Alhaisoni, 2017). Thus, students' levels of understanding and comprehension will considerably improve if they are already acquainted with the cultural background of the text (Yuet & Chan, 2003; Florencio, 2004). In addition, Florencio (2004) believes that a reader with a solid grasp of the culture associated with a piece of work would have an easier time comprehending the text. The result of this is an improvement in reading speed and comprehension simultaneously.

It is hypothesized that the content schema changes along with the readers' cognitive development, such as when the readers pick up new skills during their lives and continue to educate themselves (Nuttall, 1996; Khanam, Zahid, & Mondol, 2014; Al-Asmari & Javid, 2018). Vygotsky (1978) contends that the readers' schema is connected to their cultural and social background information in constructivism theory. The readers' cultural and social awareness grew from the exposure to diverse texts they read, and their comprehension improved while reading these various texts. The experience, on the other hand, is distinct for each reader, which results in various levels of understanding despite reading the same texts.

In some studies (Al-Issa, 2011; Chen, 2003; Abraham, 2002; Langer, 1981; Hudson, 1982; Graves, Prenn, & Cook, 1985; Floyd & Carrell, 1987; Zare-ee, 2007; Takallou, 2011; Zhang & Seepho, 2013; Tavakoli, 2014; Rezaei, 2015; Akhtar &

Akhmed, 2018; Latifah, Suradijono, and Mursitolaksmi, 2018; Bria & Mbato, 2019), using various teaching-learning strategies and teaching media in reading comprehension classes proved effective in activating students' background knowledge.

Some additional studies (such as Barlett & Burt, 1933; Chihara, Sakurai & Oller, 1989; Sasaki, 2000; Alptekin, 2006; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Erten & Razi, 2009; Alptekin & Ercetin, 2011; Li & Lai, 2012; Pei-shi, 2012; Demir, 2012; Gurkan, 2012; Rokhsari, 2012; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2016; Petnoosed, 2019; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2019; Khataee & Sabzevari, 2018; and Sheridan & Condon, 2020) have focused explicitly on the cultural schema in which prior knowledge is activated by utilizing familiar cultural elements. These scholars affirm that culturally familiar reading material helps improve reading comprehension. The learners' ability to understand the context and culture of the text is another factor that, according to these academics, increases the learners' ability to comprehend and interact with the material. This skill may also assist them in finding solutions to challenges they are having with the grammatical structure or vocabulary of the text.

Most studies reviewed up to this point have concluded that improving readers' reading comprehension can be attributed to either the activation of the content schema (background knowledge) or the utilization of cultural schema materials. Other researchers were looking into the possibility of combining the two schemata, such as Erten and Razi (2009), Gurkan (2012), Rokhsari (2012), and Khataee & Sabzevari (2018), who deliberately linked Content schema (using pre-reading activities or reading strategies) along with cultural schema (using culturally familiar texts). Their research revealed that reading activities and culturally familiar texts affect learners' ability to comprehend what is read. Specifically, the study claims that reading skills supported by culturally relevant content are helpful for students who are just starting or are at a lower level.

Even though many researchers have conducted studies emphasizing the influence of content schemata and cultural schema on reading comprehension, investigating how these schemata improve reading comprehension still needs to be researched and investigated. The reason is that many things are still unknown about

how the content schema, such as metacognitive strategies and cultural schema, like culturally familiar texts, improve reading comprehension. The study gaps on either metacognitive strategies or culturally familiar texts, and the combination of both was found to be rather large, and recent research was needed to fill out the gap.

Some studies examined the function of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension (Carrell, 1998; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Zare-ee, 2007; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008; Mehrdad, Ahghar, & Ahghar, 2012; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Maasum & Maarof, 2012; and Zhang & Seepho, 2013). The participants of the studies varied in levels of reading ability from beginner or lower level learners to intermediate and advanced level learners. Although the studies had diverse participants, none focused explicitly on low-level to intermediate-level learners, as does the present research. This gap makes the present study especially significant since it contributes to the previously de-emphasized investigation of the individual participants.

Numerous studies have found that cognitive and metacognitive strategies play a role in reading comprehension (e.g., Mehrdad, Ahghar, & Ahghar, 2012; Tavakoli, Razi & Çubukçu, 2014; Dabarera, Renanda, & Zhang, 2014; and Rezaei, 2015). This recent study specifically analyses metacognitive strategies to give a comprehensive and extensive examination of these particular strategies, as opposed to prior studies that expanded the scope of the research.

Then, similar to the current investigation, there were studies on metacognitive strategies that included pre-service teachers in Indonesia as the subjects (e.g., Sari, 2016; Ramadhan, 2018). The difference is that this recent research used the SORS survey to examine its participant' Metacognitive strategies awareness and the utilization of the metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension practices. Sari (2016) and Ramadhan (2018) employed different instruments in their study. To evaluate her participants' awareness of Metacognitive strategies, Sari (2016) used a modified questionnaire from Phakiti (2003) and Purpura (1997). On the other hand, Ramadhan employed the MARS survey for this purpose. The examination results would be dissimilar from the different instruments these two studies have from this recent study. It would enrich the findings about

metacognitive awareness and the use of reading strategies by Indonesian learners from various credible instruments.

Next, it was discovered that there were studies similar to this recent one that examined the influence of metacognitive strategies on reading comprehension using SORS (e.g., Pei, 2014; Al-Qahtani, 2021). However, these two studies differed from this present study because the learners who participated in those studies were not novice pre-service teachers (Pei, 2014 took participants majoring in science and technology; Al-Gahtani took students studying English language as his participants).

Some scholars (e.g., Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Erten & Razi, 2009; Demir, 2012; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013) used a single cultural nativization text in investigations on culturally familiar texts, making the results experimentally limited and insufficient to generalize. To increase the generality of the outcomes of this study, the researcher nativized 15 texts from foreign cultures into 15 culturally familiar texts. These sets of texts, the familiar and unfamiliar ones, are assigned to experimental and control classes, respectively.

In addition, for the past ten years, several studies investigated the topic of familiar culture, focusing on cultures from countries in the Middle East and Asia (such as Demir, 2012; Gurkan, 2012; Rokhsari, 2012; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013; Khataee & Sabzevari, 2018; Li & Lai, 2012; Weng, 2012; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2016; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2019; Petnoosed, 2019; Firkray & Habil, 2019; and Sheridan & Condon, 2020). These studies concluded that culturally familiar texts activate students' background knowledge and reinforce reading comprehension. This conclusion may not be generalizable to other cultural settings, such as Indonesia. This issue prompted the need to perform research focusing specifically on Indonesian culture and its students.

However, a survey study by Rodliyah, Imperiani & Amaliah 2014 had Indonesian learners as the targeted participants. The study measured the learners' attitudes towards using local and target culture texts in their reading comprehension. The study took 20 first-year students studying EFL at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia as its participants. Two instruments: a questionnaire and an interview, were employed to gather the data. The study found that the students

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consider both local and foreign culture texts essential in their reading comprehension, with most affirming their preference for foreign culture texts.

In contrast with Rodliyah et al.'s research, this present study performs experimental treatments for students by utilizing culturally familiar and unfamiliar texts in their reading comprehension practice. This study also used many more instruments, such as culturally familiar texts, an interest questionnaire, reading comprehension tests, reading comprehension exercises, and a personal interview to gather its data. These all things make this present research worth researching because it enriches the findings about using familiar cultural texts on reading comprehension for Indonesian students.

In other studies, familiar culture context was used in a cloze test for evaluation. In this cloze test, the literal and inferential words were substituted with more familiar words from the students' cultural background (e.g., Chihara, Sakurai, & Oller, 1989; Johnson, 1981; Sasaki, 2000). Unlike those studies, this current research utilizes culturally familiar contexts in the form of reading texts for reading comprehension practices. The researcher used the TOEFL reading comprehension test with nativized and denativized passages to evaluate comprehension. In addition, this present study replicates Alptekin's (2006) research technique, which focuses on examining the understanding of textual and contextual clues of culturally familiar or unfamiliar texts for Indonesian learners, which has never been publicly investigated or published.

Regarding the study's approach, numerous researchers have decided to focus on two groups of participants from various cultural backgrounds, using two unique cultural texts (Steffensen, Joag-Dev & Anderson, 1979; Carell, 1987). This approach is made in order to get more dependable results. There were other studies with participants from the same cultural background; however, they were compared in two different cultural contexts using the same texts (Alptekin, 2006; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Erten & Razi, 2009; Demir, 2012; Sheridan, Tanaka, & Hogg, 2016, 2019). The current study is similar to these second studies in that it focused on participants with the same cultural background and used the same texts, which were nativized to suit the participants. The uniqueness is that the study chose not only

Indonesian culture but particularly the culture of West Kalimantan's people, which has never been researched with culturally familiar texts through nativization.

In some other studies on culturally familiar texts (such as the studies of Sheridan, Tanaka, and Hogg, 2016 & 2019; Sheridan & Condon, 2020), the examination subject areas are differentiated according to the degrees of student knowledge across groups of students (elementary, intermediate, or advanced). These studies focused on students enrolled in a general English course in high school, for example, and college students from various academic backgrounds. However, none of those studies focused on a specific study, such as teacher education.

In contrast with the studies above, the participants in this present research were teachers and students who were novice pre-service teachers with varying proficiency levels, ranging from low to intermediate. The researcher thought the students involved in the study would have their first exposure to metacognitive processes and culturally recognized materials in their English classes, so she included them in the investigation.

In addition to these elements, each participant in this current study was a local student and a teacher from West Kalimantan. The students were from seventeen to twenties and were studying English education as a foreign language while the teachers were their teachers teaching English education, particularly reading skill development courses. The student participants, even if they were from the surrounding region, are considered millennial learners since they use information technology and have the cultural characteristics of this generation. They have been exposed to a significant amount of online and hybrid learning up to this point (post-COVID-19 Pandemic), which has familiarized them with exploring native-speaking countries, immersing themselves in their culture, and connecting with the people close in a variety of ways of interaction through the use of online applications such as YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, WhatsApp, and Tik Tok. These applications have enabled them to become more comfortable exploring native-speaking countries online. As a result, the individuals who participated in this research said that they are global citizens

with a high degree of tolerance and are well-versed in the customs of various nations as an essential component of their millennial identity.

With all attributes that the students have, this study investigation should be explored, generally on the utilization of metacognitive strategies and familiar cultural texts, and particularly on the degree of interest, the students have in culturally familiar literature. It is because the study will yield illuminating results on how the combination of metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts improves students' reading comprehension achievement.

1.2. Scope of the Study

This study's scope is limited to participants who are teachers and students of pre-service teacher education in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. The teachers and the students were from reading skill development classes in the English education study program. The students were in their first year of college, which made them novice pre-service teachers. The study employed teen instruments to collect the data for this investigation, including the procedure of metacognitive strategies, culturally familiar texts, culturally unfamiliar texts, the SORS questionnaire, the experience questionnaire, the interest questionnaire, and a reading comprehension test (the TOEFL test), the reading comprehension exercise and two open-ended personal interviews (one for the teacher and the other for the students). The study employed a mixed-methods design where the analyses of its quantitative data were completed by SPSS using ANOVA and T-test. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed using constant comparative methods, thematic analysis, and coding (open, Vivo, and selective). The conceptual framework of this research was based on some theories of ESL/EFL teaching, namely the Constructivism Learning Approach (Piaget, 1952) and Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1980; Carell, 1983), which serve as a guide for this research.

1.3. Research Questions

The study has four central research questions:

1. How do metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts improve the students' reading comprehension?

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2. How does metacognitive strategies training impact the students' application of reading strategies?
3. Do the students show a higher interest in reading texts that are culturally familiar or unfamiliar to them?
4. What cultural responses and reasons do the students have towards liking culturally familiar or unfamiliar texts?

With the research questions, the study needs quantitative and qualitative data to answer the questions completely. The researcher employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to accomplish the study.

1.4. Purposes of the Study

The study aims to accomplish four purposes based on the above research questions. First, it measures how metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts improve the students' reading comprehension. Second, the study examines how metacognitive strategies impact the students' utilization of reading strategies. Then, it uncovers the students' interest in using culturally familiar or unfamiliar texts in their reading comprehension. Lastly, the study explores the students' responses and reasons for liking culturally familiar and unfamiliar texts in their reading comprehension practices.

1.5. The Hypotheses

This quantitative phase of the study has three hypotheses, namely:

1. Students who have been taught the combination of metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts achieve higher post-reading scores than those who have not been taught the strategies and the texts.
2. Students are better at utilizing reading strategies after being taught metacognitive strategies.
3. Students are more interested in reading texts that are culturally familiar to them.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant for a variety of purposes. First, the current study raises teachers' and students' knowledge and awareness about the positive

support metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts give in helping students reduce reading comprehension difficulties. The treatment of metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts will supply valuable information and experience for teachers and create a reference for utilizing metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts to achieve better reading comprehension. Secondly, this study highlights the need to combine metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts to enhance students' engagement. Metacognitive strategies are one of the strategies that support activating students' background knowledge. Then, familiar culture texts are also teaching media that provide students with a familiar context of the texts. Previous studies have found that the provision of metacognitive strategies (Zhang & Seepho, 2013; Tavakoli, 2014; Rezaei, 2015; Akhtar & Akhmed, 2018; Latifah, Suradijono, and Mursitolaksmi, 2018; Bria & Mbato, 2019) and culturally familiar texts (e.g., Sheridan & Condon, 2020; Demir, 2012; Gurkan, 2012; Rokhsari, 2012; Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, and Rezazadeh, 2013; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2016; Khataee & Sabzevari, 2018; Sheridan, Tanaka & Hogg, 2019) in learning can improve students' learning achievement and increase their confidence in reading. This study implements metacognitive strategies with familiar cultural texts for the student's academic success. By exploring the combination of metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts on reading comprehension for the students, this study pursues to provide better teaching methods and teaching material to facilitate reading comprehension. Furthermore, this current study also provides data about the advantages of integrating metacognitive strategies with familiar cultural texts to improve reading comprehension achievement, create engaging learning, and positive motivation for the students. Finally, this study encourages teachers, students, and researchers to use metacognitive strategies and familiar cultural texts to improve reading comprehension teaching, learning, and research.

1.7. Definitions of Key Terms

The study provides definitions of the terms used in the research to clarify the meanings.

- 1.7.1. *Reading* is a multidimensional and complex system that derives meaning from print or digital material (Butterfuss, Kim, & Kendeou, 2020). Reading is also a cognitive, social, and linguistic process that establishes and maintains relationships among the author, the reader, the reading materials, and the people involved in the reading event (Wallace, 1992).
- 1.7.2. Reading comprehension addresses the processes of constructing interpretations between the texts and readers' abilities to comprehend various perspectives from their background knowledge or experiences, the author's messages, sociocultural contexts, and textual references (Serafini, 2012).
- 1.7.3. Metacognition is defined as "Thinking about thinking." This is the learner's ability to reflect on what they know about something, such as looking back on an event and describing what happened and the feelings associated with it. (Anderson, 2008, p.99).
- 1.7.4. Metacognitive knowledge or awareness is a person's knowledge of him/herself as a learner and things that can affect his/her performance, knowledge of strategies, and when and reasons to use the strategies (Lai, 2011).
- 1.7.5. Metacognitive strategies are characterized as those that monitor, control, and govern the learning process, as well as those that involve reflection on the learning process, planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Rahimi & Katal, 2012).
- 1.7.6. The Survey of Reading Strategies, often known as SORS, is "an instrument to test the knowledge or awareness and the use of metacognitive and reading strategies by teenage and adult ESL/EFL students" (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002, p. 2).
- 1.7.7. Background knowledge is "all experiences that a reader can bring to a text: life experiences, educational experiences, cultural experiences, knowledge of how the first language works as well as how the second language works, and knowledge of how a text can be organized rhetorically" (Anderson, 2008, p.100).

- 1.7.8. Culturally familiar texts in this study refer to nativized texts in which the textual and contextual cues are adapted semantically and pragmatically into the students' culture. The linguistics and rhetorical content of the texts stayed the same with the denativized form of the texts (Alptekin, 2006).
- 1.7.9. Culturally unfamiliar texts in this study refer to denativized or original texts, which contain textual and contextual cues about foreign/native speakers' cultures (Alptekin, 2006).
- 1.7.9. The term "nativization" refers to "the semantic and pragmatic adaptation of the textual and contextual cues of the original story into the student's own culture while keeping its linguistic and rhetorical content essentially intact" (Alptekin, 2006, p. 499).

1.8. Structure of the Dissertations

The dissertation of the study is written in five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the research by describing the background of the study, the scope, the research questions, the purposes, the hypotheses, the significance of the study, the explanation of the terms used in the study, then end up with the explanation of the structure of the study. In Chapter 2, the writer delivers a wide-ranging review of the literature, which comprises ten subheadings: theoretical frame of the study; theories of reading and reading comprehension; the history and approaches to reading models; metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension; measuring metacognitive strategies awareness and its implementation; the theory of schemata and cultural familiarity; culturally familiar texts and reading comprehension; nativization in the culturally familiar texts; metacognitive strategies and culturally familiar texts; and the chapter summary. Chapter 3 is divided into participants, treatment, data collection, and data analysis procedures. In Chapter 4, the description of the study's findings with discussions of the related theories is explained in detail to answer all four research questions of this study. The last part, Chapter 5, provides the study's conclusion, the writer's understanding of the pedagogical implications of the study, the limitations of the study's results, recommendations for further study, and future research about the study.