NOBEL
Journal of Literature and Language Teaching
Volume 14, Number 1, April 2023, 115-132
available at http://jurnalfahum.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/nobel/article/view/727
DOI: 10.15642/NOBEL.2022.14.1.115-132

THE EFFECT OF CULTURALLY FAMILIAR TEXT ON LOW-PROFICIENCY READER'S READING COMPREHENSION

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Article Info

Article History:
Received January 2023
Accepted March 2023
Published April 2023

Keywords:
culturally familiar text, low-proficiency reader, reading comprehension

Abstract

The study examines the effect of culturally familiar text on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency readers in Indonesia. There were sixty-two second-year college students involved in the study as participants. The study used reading comprehension tests to gather the data. The results revealed that students with culturally familiar text had outperformed those with culturally unfamiliar text in reading comprehension. It is also found that these low-proficiency readers' reading comprehension has improved significantly by using culturally familiar text in their reading practices. Interestingly, the students showed good engagement after being taught text that contained familiar culture. Finally, it can be concluded that the research results provide important insights, particularly for EFL educators, researchers, and learners, on the impact of culturally familiar contexts in facilitating reading comprehension achievement for low-proficiency readers in Indonesia.

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p-ISSN 2087-0698
e-ISSN 2549-2470

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is considered one of the fundamental elements in learning English as a second or a foreign language. In general, reading comprehension of a text depends on the shared information from the writer to the reader to create meaning. This shared information is the essence of the text. Some scholars assert that when the information shared in the text is familiar to the reader, i.e., the reader knows about it, then the reader's comprehension of the text is achieved (Carrell, 1987; Chihara et al., 1989; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2016, 2019; Tavakoli et al., 2013). This assertion is related to the study of Schemata.

Researchers defined the meaning of Schemata. Nassaji (2002) defines Schemata as interconnecting mental structures which include readers' background knowledge of everyday events. In Schemata theory, this background knowledge of the reader is the main component that supports the reader in retrieving or constructing meaning from any text she/he reads (Bartlett, 1932). Additionally, Al-Jahwari and Al-Humaidi (2015) contend that the study of schemata provides deep insights into the failure or success of a reader in comprehending a text.

The Schemata are divided into Formal Schema and Content schema. Carrell (1987) posits that a Formal schema is the background knowledge a reader has about the organizational structures of texts. A Content schema, on the other hand, is the background knowledge a reader has about the content of a text. The information about the topic, the reader's cultural familiarity, and his/her prior knowledge, which are grouped in cultural Schema, are the basis of Content schema. As Carrell (1987) explains, all these factors facilitate the readers to understand a written text.

Some scholars contend that Cultural Schema has a significant relationship with reading comprehension. It is suggested that familiarity with the content of a text will increase the readers' comprehension significantly and help him/her to understand the message of the text much better (Florencio, 2004; Yuet & Chan, 2003). Furthermore, Florencio (2004) suggests that a reader with an excellent cultural familiarity with the written text will be easier to comprehend implicit propositions found in the text. Using such text, in return, will increase reading comprehension and reading speed.

Next, studies explored the concept of Cultural Schema in Content Schemata, where background knowledge is activated through familiar cultural materials. These studies suggest that culturally familiar text improves reading comprehension (Alptekin, 2006; Alptekin & Erçetin, 2011; Bartlett & Burt, 1933; Carrell, 1987; Chihara et al., 1989; Demir, 2012; Erten & Razi, 2009; Gürkan, 2012; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Johnson, 1981; Khataee, 2018; Li & Lai, 2012; Pei-shi, 2012; Petnoosed, 2019; Rokhsari, 2012; Sasaki, 2000; Sheridan et al., 2016,

2019; Steffensen et al., 1979; Tavakoli et al., 2013). In addition, these scholars contend that the student's ability to identify with and immerse in the culture portrayed in the text enhances their comprehension and engagement and may overcome some of the linguistic complexity, syntactic or vocabulary, that the student has in the text.

Researchers also explored the combination of schemata (Cultural and Content schemata) on reading comprehension. Among those researchers were Erten and Razi (2009), Gürkan (2012), Rokhsari (2012), and Khataee (2018), who specifically combined the utilization of culturally familiar text with Content schemata using reading strategies such as pre-reading activities: brainstorming, pre-questioning, KWL chart; while-reading activities: scanning, skimming, clarifying, reciprocal teaching, inferring; and post-reading activities: thinking aloud, asking and answering questions. In the studies, these researchers found that culturally familiar text and reading strategies impact reading comprehension. Interestingly, the studies also found that culturally familiar text significantly outperformed reading activities in improving the utilization of reading strategies and reading comprehension, especially for lower and intermediate-level students. Hence, it is evident that all the studies reviewed in the paragraphs above share the same findings.

Despite the reasonably well-documented studies describing the impact of Cultural schemata on reading comprehension, it remains to be explored to compare the influence (the presence or absence) of culturally familiar text on reading comprehension. Therefore, whether culturally familiar text effectively improves reading comprehension remains to be investigated. In addition, exploring the students' interest in culturally familiar text is also worth researching as it will provide insightful results on the role of this Cultural Schemata on the students' reading comprehension. This present study aims to contribute to our understanding of these issues by answering the following research question: Is culturally familiar text effective in improving students' reading comprehension?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies have shown that culturally familiar text improves reading comprehension. For the past ten years, the studies include Demir (2012); Gürkan (2012); Rokhsari (2012); Li and Lai (2012); Weng (2012); Sheridan et al. (2016); Khataee (2018); Sheridan et al. (2019); and Fikray and Habil (2019). These scholars contend that the student's competence to recognize and engage in the culture described in the reading text will eventually improve their interaction and comprehension. The students' familiarity with the culture of the text may help them to reduce

the problem in understanding the linguistic complexity of the text, the syntactic elements of the text, and the problematic vocabularies found in the text they read.

Li and Lai (2012) performed research examining the impacts of culturally familiar text on fifty-five sophomore college students in Taiwan. These participants were told to read two sets of texts: one in a foreign culture, and the other, with culturally familiar text. A cloze test measured the student's comprehension of the text. The time spent on completing the test was also counted in this study. The study used a topic familiarity questionnaire and an attitude survey to know the students' ideas about the role of familiar culture and background knowledge on their comprehension of a reading text. The findings showed that the student's reading comprehension was affected by familiar culture from the text. The data also suggested that the student's familiarity with the content of the text significantly affected the time spent reading the text. Then, from the questionnaire and the attitude survey, it was found that the students believed that their prior knowledge played crucial functions in elevating their comprehension of the texts. These participants also agreed that they spent less time reading and comprehending culturally familiar texts than reading unfamiliar or foreign cultural texts. In conclusion, this study's results affirmed that background knowledge strongly impacted reading time, memory, and comprehension.

In 2012, Weng conducted similar research to assess the influence of prior/background knowledge on students' reading comprehension. Two hundred one first-year students in Taiwan were taken as the research participants. The study used four sets of texts (2 sets of culturally familiar/unfamiliar texts and two sets of topic familiar/unfamiliar texts) that all participants read and comprehended. Afterward, the participants did a reading comprehension test, a familiarity rating on the text, and a vocabulary test. The research results showed that the students' comprehension scores were significantly better on culturally familiar texts than on the other texts. It was also found that cultural familiarity supported students' vocabulary achievement, especially for those students with vocabulary knowledge under 2,000 words.

In summary, the study claimed that culturally familiar text was important for participants at lower proficiency levels to support them in comprehending reading text and vocabulary achievement. However, for the advanced learners, the role of cultural familiarity was not detectable since the students used linguistic knowledge more to support their comprehension on the reading and vocabulary tests. Thus, the study concluded that background knowledge was necessary for the student's comprehension and vocabulary mastery.

Next, Sheridan et al. (2019) conducted a study measuring the correlation between familiar culture text and the results of text comprehension. Partly replicating Demir's (2012) work,

Sheridan et al. implemented crossover research with 78 lower-intermediate Japanese EFL students as the participants. Unlike Demir (2012), who used tests to gain the data for the research, this study used tests, questionnaires, homework assignments, and interviews to collect its data. The study was also unique because it corrected the limitation of their previous pilot study (Sheridan et al., 2016) by having crossover research. The study also used a questionnaire with 7 points on the Likert scale questionnaire to improve the result finding from their previous study on measuring the students' interest in the culturally familiar or unfamiliar text. The result of the research yielded that the learners who read the text in a familiar cultural context outperformed students who read the original culture text in their reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. It was also found that the student's interest and engagement were higher with culturally familiar text than with an unfamiliar cultural context. Finally, the study concluded that culturally familiar text could be a scaffolding tool to enhance the students' learning.

Fikray and Habil (2019) conducted a study with thematic analysis on 17 journal articles to answer three related questions. First, it explored Schema's function in improving reading comprehension. Second, it investigated the significance of text with familiar culture as teaching materials of reading subjects for ESL students. The third attempted to describe the pedagogical implications of how teachers can improve students' reading comprehension. The study utilized Chalkiadaki's (2018) procedure framework to organize data for systematic review. Specifically, inclusion and exclusion criteria are employed to select relevant articles for the study. The study's findings yielded that most studies affirmed background knowledge's role in supporting the comprehension of reading text. The research results further agreed with other scholars that background/prior knowledge is vital as it links students' prior knowledge with new knowledge. Moreover, the study asserted that culturally familiar text help to support reading comprehension and leads to positive reading recall that reduces anxiety in comprehending the text. Finally, the study concluded that teachers must apply the culturally familiar text in reading comprehension classes as it supports and enhances the students' reading performance. It is also suggested that curriculum designers create and select the reading text that matches the students' cultural background to stipulate a scaffolding aid to accomplish higher reading results.

Similarly, researchers from Turkey and Iran, including Demir (2012), Gürkan (2012), Rokhsari (2012), and Khataee (2018), measured the impact of culturally familiar texts on reading comprehension achievement. The difference these studies had was that they adapted Western literary texts at deeper levels.

Firstly, in 2012, Demir conducted a study to measure the influence of background knowledge and cultural Nativization on the comprehension achievement of reading and vocabulary. In this research, Demir had 121 students from the seventh grade of primary school in Turkey as the participants. There were sixty-three male and fifty-eight female students in the study. These students were grouped into experimental and control classes. The experimental class was treated with familiar cultural text where the English names for locations (such as the cities or countries), the cultural activities (events, celebrations), and dates on the text were replaced with Turkish words to activate the students' schemata. The control group, conversely, was treated with foreign culture text with all authenticated proper nouns about American culture. A T-test was employed in the data analysis. The students were given a parallel true-false test and a vocabulary test in the multiple-choice form to examine their reading comprehension and vocabulary inference. Finally, the result showed that familiar culture text has significantly facilitated students' reading comprehension and vocabulary inference. It was also concluded that culturally familiar text had enabled the students to activate their cultural schemata and improve their learning.

In the same year, Gürkan (2012) conducted a study examining the impact of familiar culture on the comprehension of reading text. Additionally, this research wanted to find out if activities of reading can replace cultural familiarity in the students' reading comprehension practice. The study took sixty pre-service teachers aged 20 to 24 from a university in Turkey as the participants. They were grouped into four classes (two received an original text with or without activities, and another received familiar culture text with or without activities). After completing the treatments, all participants took a set of reading tests comprised of questions: true/false, rearranged sentences, and essay questions. The research results of the reading test were then quantitatively examined using ANOVA. The findings showed that culturally familiar texts significantly impacted the students' reading comprehension. The research also revealed that the influence of text with familiar culture significantly outperformed the impact of reading activities. Finally, it was concluded that culturally familiar texts positively supported students' reading comprehension and significantly impacted their learning.

Next, a similar study was conducted by Rokhsari (2012) to examine the impacts of nativized text and activities before reading on students' comprehension. This study differed from other research because the participants were all intermediate students. There were 100 Iranian students involved in this research. The study replicated Demir's way of assessment by using true-false and multiple-choice reading tests on the study. The study results revealed that the students who received culturally familiar text outperformed the other participants on the

comprehension test of reading text. Specifically, the research found that the students receiving nativized text and pre-reading activities scored the highest. This finding meant that culturally familiar text with pre-reading activities that activated the students' background knowledge significantly facilitated reading comprehension. However, it was found from the comparison of the groups that the role of pre-reading activities alone was insignificant and that it could not exchange for the limited cultural familiarity the students had with the text. This finding supports Erten and Razi's (2009) work which claimed that reading activities could not activate the students' Schema without cultural familiarity. In short, it can be concluded from the study that the Nativization of the text played a substantial role in facilitating reading comprehension, and this role could not be replaced by pre-reading activities alone.

In 2018, Khataee conducted a study to explore the influence of cultural familiarity and cultural schemata in improving students' reading achievement. 129 EFL students aged nine to eleven from elementary school in Iran participated in this research. These participants have the same culture and first language. The study divided these participants into two groups: the first was treated with three familiar cultural texts, and the second with three original cultural texts. After the treatments, all of the students were told to do a test of comprehension on reading. The results of the test were then quantitatively calculated using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the groups with familiar culture texts were more successful in their reading test (with a mean score of 5.00 on the first, 5.50 on the second, and 5.68 on the last).

In contrast, the control group was not very successful (with a mean score of only 2.79 on the first test, 2.61 on the second test, and 2.39 on the last). This finding suggests that activating the students' background knowledge and facilitating them with culturally familiar text indeed support the comprehension of their reading text. Next, the research data also affirmed that activating students' background knowledge was more successful in developing the student's comprehension of the reading text rather than using culturally familiar text only. In short, the findings supported the study hypothesis that a strong connection exists between cultural schemata, cultural familiarity, and the comprehension of a reading text. It was also evident in the study that teaching reading comprehension would be best facilitated by activating the students' background knowledge before reading and accommodating the students with culturally familiar text to comprehend.

All of the studies mentioned above suggest a need for a familiar cultural text which can support students to become effective readers. Those studies have also shown the positive influences of culturally familiar texts on improving students' reading achievement. However, it is interesting to state that in one study, Sheridan et al. (2016) found different results on the

influence of culturally familiar text on students' reading comprehension. The study was a pilot study using the Nativization of reading articles to increase vocabulary and reading comprehension recall. Forty-one EFL Japanese students aged eighteen to twenty-four participated in this research. This research was exceptionally unique because the learners were from various proficiency levels (intermediate to advanced levels). The study used reading comprehension tests (before and after the treatment) and written assignments to gather the data. In this research, Sheridan et al. (2016) found that the test results did not show differences in the scores between learners treated with culturally familiar or unfamiliar text. Their reading comprehension results also did not significantly improve after the treatment. From the qualitative data, however, the study revealed interesting results. First, it was found that the learners were positively engaged in reading the texts with familiar proper nouns. Then it was also evidence from the study that the absence of a culturally familiar context created cultural biases and changed how students responded to the text. In short, though this study did not successfully confirm that culturally familiar text improved students' reading comprehension and vocabulary, the study's findings produced exciting information on how culture impacted reading comprehension. Specifically, it revealed that the ways students read the texts could be either culturally based or culturally biased, depending on their familiarity with the culture.

In conclusion, the studies above describe that culturally familiar texts activate students' background knowledge and reinforce reading comprehension. However, this conclusion may not be generalizable to other cultural settings, such as Indonesia. Therefore, this issue prompted the need to perform research focusing specifically on Indonesian culture and its students.

METHOD

Participant

The study took sixty-two second-year students in the English education study program at West Kalimantan state university. There were twenty-seven male and thirty-five female students. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 19 years old. They were assigned to two classes at the lower-intermediate levels of English proficiency based on the TOEFL test scores before the treatment. None of these participants participated in reading comprehension training with culturally familiar text.

Material

Culturally Familiar Text

Replicating Alptekin's (2006) nativization process, the texts selected for the experimental group were made culturally familiar to the students. First, the textual and contextual cues of the original texts, which reflected British, American, or International culture, were identified to accomplish this. Then these cues were adapted in the modified versions to reflect Indonesian culture while keeping the texts' linguistic features and rhetorical structures unchanged.

The textual cues involved proper nouns about settings, locations, occupations, and characters that are familiar to the students and are from their locality. For the students from West Kalimantan, the word Pontianak and Kapuas Hulu may activate their past knowledge and experiences rather than the words Europe and Belgium. The name, Pierre Lebrun, may also sound foreign rather than Zikri Kelana which is a familiar name to the Malay people and the West Kalimantan people in general. Then, as the region is famous for its fishery, the students would be more familiar with a local fisherman association than a potato growers' association. Table 1 below lists all textual cues in the sample culturally familiar and unfamiliar text 1.

Table 1. Examples of Textual Cues in the Texts

Culturally Foreign version	Culturally Familiar version
Europe	Pontianak
Pierre Lebrun	Zikri Kelana
a potato growers' association	a local fisherman association
Mr. Lebrun	Mr. Kelana
Belgium	Kapuas Hulu
Belgians	the locals

Contextual cues involve cultural elements based on culture's sociological, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions, including religious conventions, interpersonal relationships, currency, time and space relations, food, drinks, games, and other cultural concepts. Table 2 demonstrates examples of contextual cues in the texts.

Table 2. Examples of Contextual Cues in the Texts

Culturally Foreign version	Culturally Familiar version
potato harvest	fish harvest
this summer	this year
French fries	Kerupuk Basah
the very hot summer	poor harvest
hot temperatures	the big wave in the sea around the island
the heatwave	heavy rainstorms in many rivers
a lack of rain	a high tide on the sea
5,000 eateries	50 eateries
the world's biggest potato chips exporters	the best local delicacy in the region
potato harvest	fish harvest

There were ten culturally familiar and unfamiliar texts used in the study. The following paragraph illustrates one of the texts to show its textual and contextual changes.

The unfamiliar culture text was titled "*French Fries will be 3cm Shorter*", and it depicted a poor harvest season in Europe due to a particularly hot summer. The hot weather had the most detrimental effect on the potato crop in Belgium, which grew at a rate of 25 percent lower than average. Due to the shortfall, the length of Belgian French fries has been reduced by 3 centimeters. Belgium's most famous export is its French fries, which also happen to be the country's official cuisine. The nation sends over 2.3 million tons of French fries all over the globe each year.

In the culturally familiar version of the text, the story changed from describing French fries to Kerupuk Basah, which was 3 cm shorter than usual due to a poor fish harvest in West Kalimantan this year. The textual cues are as follows:

- *Europe* was changed to *Pontianak.*
- *Pierre Lebrun* was changed to *Zikri Kelana.*
- *A potato growers' association* was changed to *a local fishermen association.*
- *Mr. Lebrun* was changed to *Mr. Kelana.*
- *Belgium* was changed into *Kapuas Hulu*.
- *Belgians* were changed to *locals*.

Then, the contextual cues consist of the following:

- *Potato harvest* was changed to *fish harvest.*
- *This summer* was changed to *this year.*
- *The very hot summer* was changed to a *poor harvest.*
- *Hot temperatures* were changed to *the big wave in the sea around the island.*
- *The heatwave* was changed to *heavy rainstorms in many rivers.*
- *A lack of rain* was changed to *a high tide on the sea.*
- *French fries were changed to Kerupuk Basah.*
- *Five thousand eateries* were changed to *50 eateries*.
- *The world's biggest potato chip exporters* were changed to *the best local delicacy in the region*.

Reading Comprehension test

The TOEFL test was used as the reading comprehension test. The study administered the TOEFL test to students from both experimental and control groups to compare their reading comprehension results after exposure to the treatment. The TOEFL test shows high reliability

and validity and is a standard test for students studying English as a second or foreign language (Chapelle et al., 2008). The study explicitly utilized the reading section of the TOEFL test, which consists of five passages and 50 multiple-choice questions.

Procedure

The study implements a quasi-experimental with a post-test-only design on two groups of participants: Group 1 treated with culturally familiar text, and Group 2 treated with culturally unfamiliar text. Both groups were randomly assigned, one as the experimental and the other as the control group. In order to control the intervening variables, the study administered the treatments for the groups with some conditions: first, the groups were treated in parallel sessions simultaneously. Second, the groups were taught with the same teaching strategies. Third, the groups were similar in their proficiency level based on their pre-test TOEFL results. Fourth, the number of males and females in each group was similar (group 1 with 14 males and 18 females, Group 2 with 13 males and 17 females). Fifth, both groups received ten sessions of treatments, either with culturally familiar or unfamiliar text.

Furthermore, to eliminate affective intervening factors, the study has asked the students to select topics of interest before the treatment. The texts assigned to the students to read on the treatments were with topics based on their interests (i.e., about youth activities, food, drinks, daily life, and technology). One difference was that the experimental group received culturally familiar text, while the control group was taught culturally unfamiliar or foreign cultural text. The study administered a TOEFL test to all participants from both groups to gather the data. Table 3 below summarizes the types of treatment given to the participants.

Table 3. Types of Treatment

Groups	
Group 1	**Group 2**
• Taught with general teaching strategies and culturally familiar texts	• Taught with general teaching strategies and culturally unfamiliar texts
• Morning sessions (07.30 – 09.00)	• Morning sessions (07.30 – 09.00)
• Ten meetings	• Ten meetings
• Text topics: youth activities, food, drinks, daily life, and technology.	• Text topics: youth activities, food, drinks, daily life, and technology.
• 32 participants: 14 males and 18 females	• 30 participants: 13 males and 17 females

The whole procedure of the research is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. The Study Planning Summary

GROUPS	WEEKS	SESSIONS
G-1	1	• TOEFL reading comprehension test and an introduction to the culturally familiar text.
	2-11	• Teaching Sessions with culturally familiar text.

	12	• TOEFL reading comprehension test.
G-2	1	• TOEFL reading comprehension test and an introduction to the culturally foreign text.
	2-11	• Teaching Sessions with culturally foreign text.
	12	• TOEFL reading comprehension test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

This research question measures the effectiveness of culturally familiar texts in improving students' reading comprehension. To answer this research question, the researcher tested the study hypothesis: students taught with culturally familiar text get higher reading comprehension scores than those taught with culturally unfamiliar text.

The study used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to analyze the differences among the groups. There were two independent variables, culturally familiar or unfamiliar text. There was only one dependent variable: the reading comprehension score.

Before proceeding with ANOVA, the homogeneity of variances was measured using "Levene's test of Equality Error Variances" (Levene, 1960). The variances were found to be homogeneous, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Results on Homogeneity of Variances

Group	$\bar{X}$	s	η	F	Sig	Description
Experimental	3.39	2.296	30	0.	0.923	Homogenous
Control	1.42	2.678	32	009		

After assessing the homogeneity, ANOVA was performed in SPSS to compare the effects of the first group (taught with culturally familiar text) with the second group (taught with culturally unfamiliar text) on the students' reading comprehension achievement. From the analysis, it was revealed that there were effects of both groups on the students' reading comprehension. Figure 1 below describes the scoring representation.

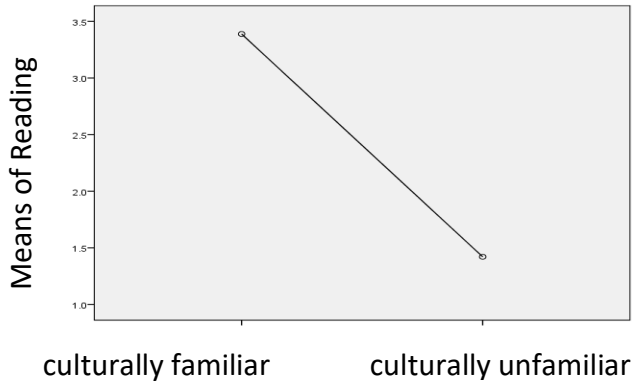

Figure 1: Description of Score Representation

Figure 1 shows that students treated with culturally familiar text outperformed those treated with text with unfamiliar cultural context. Their average Mean in reading comprehension was 3.39 compared to the group with culturally unfamiliar text with only 1.42. Table 6 below provides a summary of the descriptive statistics.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of the Treatments on Reading Scores

Group	$\bar{X}$	s	η	F	Sig	Description
Experimental	3.39	2.296	30	3.389	0.000 (<0.05)	Significant
Control	1.42	2.678	32			

Culturally familiar text is practical for improving the student's reading comprehension. The data analysis of research question 1 suggests that culturally familiar text improves the students' reading comprehension achievement. As shown in Table 6, culturally familiar text was significant with p-values < 0.05. The main effect yielded an F ratio of 3.389. As a result, the hypothesis was accepted.

The study result showed essential issues concerning the effectiveness of culturally familiar text in improving the students' reading comprehension achievement. The study revealed that novice pre-service teachers who participated improved their reading comprehension after being taught culturally familiar text.

The text activates the students' background knowledge and improves their comprehension of the reading text. The study found that the students benefitted the most from using culturally familiar text, with higher scores than their pre-test. This finding agrees with Khataee (2018), who suggests that activating the students' background knowledge and facilitating them with culturally familiar text support their comprehension of the reading text.

As a replication study, this study confirms Alptekin's (2006) assertion that simple textual and contextual cues familiar to the students' culture help activate their background knowledge and improve their comprehension. Several other scholars (Alptekin & Erçetin, 2011; Demir, 2012; Erten & Razi, 2009; Fikray & Habil, 2019; Gürkan, 2012; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Li & Lai, 2012; Pei-shi, 2012; Rokhsari, 2012) also found that localized words such as textual and contextual clues about characters, settings, locations, occupations, religious conventions, interpersonal relationships, currency, time and space relations, food, drinks, games, and other cultural concepts stimulate the students' memory and background knowledge which lead to a better reading comprehension result. Furthermore, these scholars contend that familiar cultural texts help students to recognize and engage in the culture described in the reading text. Additionally, the studies affirm that students' familiarity with the culture of the text may help

them to reduce the problem in understanding the linguistic complexity of the text, the syntactic elements of the text, and the problematic vocabulary found in the text they read. Thus, it makes it easier for the students to have better comprehension.

Moreover, the study finding agrees with Tavakoli et al. (2013) and Sheridan et al. (2019) on the positive benefit of using familiar cultural text to support students' comprehension. These scholars claim that when the information shared in the text is familiar to both the reader and the writer, a better understanding and comprehension of the text can be achieved. This assertion is also supported by Fikray and Habil (2019), who state that culturally familiar texts lead to a positive reading recall, reducing anxiety in comprehending the text. In other words, texts with familiar cultural contexts provide the readers with adequate cues that increase understanding and create an enjoyable reading.

In addition, the finding agrees with Weng (2012) and Sheridan et al. (2019) that culturally familiar text is essential for participants at lower proficiency levels to support them in comprehending reading text and vocabulary achievement. In his study, Weng (2012) found that cultural familiarity supported vocabulary mastery, especially for lower-level readers with vocabulary knowledge under 2,000 words. The study also claimed that culturally familiar text was necessary for these readers to support them in activating their background knowledge, linking their past knowledge and experiences to the text's message, and increasing their comprehension of the text. Agreeing with the idea, Sheridan et al. (2019) contend that culturally familiar text could be a scaffolding tool to enhance beginner or lower readers' comprehension mastery.

The study is also in line with the findings of studies by Erten and Razi (2009), Takallou (2011), Gürkan (2012), and Rokhsari (2012), which conclude that cultural schemata support reading comprehension achievement better. Additionally, this current research agrees with their conclusion that familiar cultural texts should accompany reading strategies to strengthen the activation of students' background knowledge and eventually improve reading achievement. Cakir (2006) mainly explains five goals that can be achieved by utilizing familiar cultural text the learners: developing communication skills; helping the understanding of the linguistic patterns of the text; improving the knowledge of cultural understanding; advancing the perception of reality; providing enjoyable learning processes; enhancing the knowledge/awareness about problems during reading, improving the interpretation of the text, and helping in comprehending the meaning of the text.

In summary, the utilization of culturally familiar text in the treatment of this present study has provided excellent support to the student's reading comprehension, both activating the

students' background knowledge and assisting them in comprehending the message of the text they read.

CONCLUSION

This present study examines the effectiveness of culturally familiar texts in improving students' reading comprehension. A contribution of this study includes proposing culturally familiar texts to improve students' reading comprehension. In addition, the current study explicitly showed how teachers could use culturally familiar text in their reading comprehension classes. The study urges the teacher to use Nativization to produce culturally familiar text in reading comprehension class. In the Nativization process, the teacher must ensure sufficient familiar words are found in the text. Having too many familiar words will decrease students' interest in reading because there are no new things to keep them interested to read more. Having only a few familiar words is also not recommended because it will not provide much support for the student's comprehension.

The students who participated in this study achieved positive results in their reading comprehension after being treated with culturally familiar text in their reading comprehension class. This finding revealed a significant impact of using culturally familiar text on the student's reading comprehension. There was also great interest found in the students on the use of culturally familiar text in their reading comprehension.

Finally, the study recommends that teachers and book designers produce culturally familiar text through Nativization. The process replaces the contextual cues (such as the description of religious activities, money, time, space, food, and drink) and textual cues (such as proper nouns about people's names, professions, and locations) in the text. There is a need for texts with various cultural contexts in Indonesia to support students from many local cultures to develop or improve their reading comprehension. Indonesia has rich local cultures all over the region that are unique and interesting for future study. Moreover, EFL students in the English global era enjoy English learning that connects to their culture. Teachers and book designers must know this need to create better teaching material that enhances learning engagement. In addition, to create moderation in support of cultural context, it is also suggested that the teacher and book designer will commit to providing other cultural contexts (national, Asian culture, and international culture) in developing text to read for the learners.

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