

**THE EFFECT OF PRE-READING ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS'  
READING COMPREHENSION OF SHORT STORIES  
(A CASE STUDY AT HALUOLEO UNIVERSITY)**

**DAMPAK DARI KEGIATAN PRE-READING TERHADAP  
PEMAHAMAN CERITA PENDEK PADA MAHASISWA  
PROGRAM STUDI BAHASA INGGRIS  
( STUDI KASUS PADA UNIVERSITAS HALUOLEO)**

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**POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM  
HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY  
MAKASSAR  
2008**

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Thesis

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ASNIAR LIO

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## **ABSTRACT**

ASNIAR LIO, The Effect of Pre-Reading Activities on Students' Reading Comprehension of Short Stories: A Case Study of Students of the English Study Program at Haluoleo University (Supervised by Etty Bazergan and Nasmilah Imran)

This study intended to investigate the effects of pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension of short stories. Forty students in the academic years of 2005/2006 in the English Department at Haluoleo University, Kendari, participated in the study. An explanatory experimental design was chosen since there were two groups of students where the study was conducted. Pre-reading activities comprising brainstorming, previewing and questioning were used as a treatment condition. Both groups were administered a pre-test and a post-test to examine potential differences between two groups.

The statistical analysis indicated that the pre-reading activities did not result in a significance overall gain for students' reading comprehension. It argued that a number of factors could contribute to this finding. These factors are related to the characteristic of the participants, time allocated for pre-reading activities, characteristic of the text employed and teacher's performance in presenting pre-reading activities. However, it was found that almost all of the participants in experimental group believed that pre-reading activities would be helpful to understand the reading text.

## ABSTRAK

ASNIAR LIO. Dampak dari Kegiatan Pre-Reading terhadap Pemahaman Cerita Pendek pada Mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris Universitas Haluoleo (Dibimbing oleh Etty Bazergan dan Nasmilah Imran)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti dampak dari kegiatan pre-reading terhadap pemahaman cerita pendek mahasiswa. 40 mahasiswa angkatan 2005/2006 jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Haluoleo Kendari berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Rancangan '*explanatory experimental*' dipilih dalam penelitian ini karena ada dua kelompok yang dipakai yaitu kelompok eksperimental dan kelompok control. Kegiatan pre-reading yang terdiri dari *brainstorming*, *previewing* dan *questioning* digunakan sebagai tindakan perlakuan. Kedua kelompok diberikan pre-test dan post-test untuk mengetahui perbedaan yang potensial antara kedua kelompok.

Hasil dari analisa statistik menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan pre-reading tidak memberikan dampak yang signifikan terhadap pemahaman siswa. Diasumsikan bahwa ada beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi hasil penelitian ini. Faktor-faktor tersebut berhubungan dengan karakteristik partisipan, alokasi waktu kegiatan pre-reading, karakteristik naskah yang diberikan dan performa guru dalam memberikan kegiatan pre-reading. Akan tetapi, hampir semua partisipan menyatakan bahwa kegiatan pre-reading sangat membantu mereka dalam memahami bacaan

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study that conveys the description of several fact and theories that urge this study, research questions, Objectives, scope of problem as well as significance of the present study.

### A. Background

Research in reading comprehension over the past thirty years has confirmed that reading comprehension involves more than just decoding meaning from a text and that, reader's factors play a vital role in reading comprehension (Alyousef, 2005). It has been argued that "...the meaning understood from a text is really not actually *in* the text, per se, but *in* the reader, in the background or schematic knowledge of the reader" (Carell, 1984: 333).

A central theme in many analyses of reading comprehension is the powerful role of prior knowledge of the content area relative to which the text is to be understood (Hung, 1990). The role of background knowledge in reading comprehension, formalized in the *Schemata Theory*, holds that no text has meaning by itself (Carell & Eisterhold, 1983; Pearson-Casanave, 1984). The meaning results from an interaction between what the reader already knows (previous knowledge) and what is in the text (Carell &

Eisterhold, 1983; Young, 1991). This suggests that meaning does not just reside in the text; rather, meaning is constructed out of the interaction between a reader's activated background knowledge and what is in the text. Therefore, if a reader is not actively using his or her background knowledge, a significant part of the reading process is not taking place, and the construction of meaning suffers.

Research studies have suggested that the extent to which a reader comprehends a text depends crucially upon the extent of the reader's background knowledge of a text's content area (Carell, 1984; Carell & Eisterhold, 1983). This view is confirmed by Siskin (1987) and Young (1991) who emphasize the importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension. Additionally, Young (1991: 1125) notes from previous studies that:

(a) lack of schema or the failure to activate an appropriate schema can significantly impair or hinder reading comprehension; (b) appropriate content/rhetorical schema application can increase comprehension; (c) background knowledge can be just as important as language ability; and, (d) by explicitly inducing schemata through pre-reading activities, comprehension can be facilitated, especially at the beginning and intermediate levels of language learning (p. 1125).

Young's observation was recently confirmed by Ajideh (2003) who argues for the importance of reader's schema in reader's comprehension of a text. It can be concluded, from these studies, that understanding how to activate a reader's schema prior to reading comprehension tasks is of immense importance if we are to promote effective reading.

In the EFL context, particularly as far as reading comprehension is concerned, students' schema can be activated (Howard, 2005) or built (Arcuri, 1990) through the provision of *pre-reading activities*. Pre-reading activities serve a number of purposes which include, but are not limited to, activating students' existing schema, preparing the reader for possible linguistics or conceptual difficulties present in a text (Erten & Karaka, 2003).

Pre-reading activities are particularly important when students are exposed to a passage where they do not have sufficient background knowledge on the topic (Ajideh, 2003). To activate students' schema in such circumstances, a teacher may provide the students with more information on the topic before coming to the passage. This additional information about the topic could help learners activate their schema, thus helping them coping with the passage later (Young, 1991).

Whilst the importance of pre-reading activities in EFL learner's reading comprehension is well documented (Ajideh, 2006), little study has been conducted to examine the impact of various pre-reading activities upon students' reading comprehension. Understanding the actual impact of various pre-reading activities upon students' reading comprehension is not only theoretically interesting, but also practically crucial for effective teaching.

In the EFL context, understanding how pre-reading activities could affect students' reading comprehension can, for example, help teachers prepare their teaching more effectively by, among others, identifying which

activities should be promoted to cope with which particular reading comprehension problems of the learners. Of course, this can be achieved only if we have a good grasp of the extent to which various pre-reading activities could impact upon EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The study seeks to fill in the gap in the literature by examining the extent to which pre-reading activities could affect the learners' comprehension of short stories. This study conducted with EFL learners currently enrolled at Faculty of Education, Haluoleo University Kendari in the academic years 2005/2006. The English Department of Faculty of Education served Drama as one of primary subject which included reading short stories.

## **B. Research Questions**

In relation to the effect of pre-reading activities on reading comprehension, the following research questions guide the proposed study:

1. To what extent do pre-reading activities have an effect on students' reading comprehension of short stories?
2. To what extent are the differences of students' reading comprehension between the ones in the experimental group and control group?

### **C. Objective**

This study intended to investigate:

1. The effect of using pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension of short stories.
2. The differences of students' reading comprehension between the ones in the experimental group and control group.

### **D. Scope of Problem**

Reading activities are generally divided into three phases: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. This proposed study is concerned only with the pre-reading activities given the fact that its particular aim is to scrutinise the relative effect of pre-reading activities on students' comprehension of short stories.

### **E. Significance**

The importance of pre-reading activities in students' reading comprehension has long been well-documented in the literature. However, relatively little work has been conducted to examine the extent to which various pre-reading activities could impact on learners' comprehension of a text. The present study is both theoretically and practically significant. At the

theoretical level, the proposed study is expected to provide the current views on the impact of pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension, particularly where English as Foreign Language learners are concerned. At the practical level, the proposed research could serve as a guideline for teachers seeking to design pre-reading activities for their teaching, taking the findings of the proposed study into account.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a broad range of theoretical grounds upon which the present study is based. It will also consider various relevant studies which have been carried out in the field and provide a critical overview of these studies.

#### **A. Previous Studies**

As discussed in the previous section, the role of schemata in facilitating reading comprehension has widely been recognised. Consequently, research has also been conducted to investigate how students' schemata could possibly be activated. Enormous research studies accrue concerning the role of pre-reading activities in activating students' schemata or prior knowledge.

To begin with, Karakas (2002) examined the effects of pre-reading activities on ELT trainee teachers' reading comprehension of short stories by employing an exploratory quasi-experimental design with two intact groups of students in the ELT department. In Karakas's study, one group was assigned to the experimental group where participants were exposed to previewing/brainstorming and the other group was assigned to the control group where participants were exposed only to brainstorming. It was reported that previewing activities significantly contribute to

comprehension of short stories (Karakas, 2003). However, in Karaka's study, no pre-test was administered to both control and experimental groups, as the author concurred himself, primarily due to time constraints. Accordingly, despite the findings, the extent to which previewing activities could actually affect the performance of the students in the experimental groups remains debatable. It could well be argued that the difference in the students' post tests scores reported by Karakas (2002) has primarily been attributed to pre-existing differences among the participants, and not to the activities as reported by the author. Therefore, more studies are required before a solid conclusion regarding the effect of pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension is drawn.

Another study in the association between pre-reading activities and students' reading comprehension was conducted by Jecksembievva, as cited in Karakas (2003), who reported that "pre-reading activities contributed to comprehension of the texts..." (p. 28). Similarly, Arda, as cited in Karakas (2003), notes that pre-reading activities are instrumental to schemata activation, thus promoting comprehension. However, despite the recognition of the importance of pre-reading activities in students' reading comprehension, there was no report from these studies on the actual impact of pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension, necessitating the need for further investigation in the field.

Furthermore, Spencer and Sadoski (1988) carry out an interesting study on differential effects of pre-reading activities among ESL learners of

different cultural backgrounds. They find that providing background information during pre-reading activities yield effective outcomes.

A similar study is conducted recently by Ajideh (2003) who discusses schema theory-based pre-reading activities tasks in the ESL reading class. The author argues that "Reading comprehension is one of the main purposes of ESL teaching/learning" (Ajideh, 2003 p.1). Furthermore, Ajideh distinguishes between a 'product oriented approach' and a 'process oriented approach'. The former assumes that meaning resides within the texts itself, whereas the latter posits that meaning lies in the interaction between the reader and the text. This distinction between product and process oriented approach has a significant implication on the design and implementation of pre-reading activities in the classroom. For example, for product-oriented approach, pre-reading activities are geared towards "clarifying the meaning of difficult words or complex structures" (Ajideh, 2003 p.1). The study by Ajideh concludes that schema-based pre-reading activities are indispensable to activating and constructing students' background knowledge, which is assumed to be instrumental to text comprehension.

Another study in the area is conducted by McAloon (1994) who compares pre-reading and background knowledge. He demonstrates the need for pre-reading activities involving vocabulary, prediction and assessment of background knowledge. The author also shows how the

information gained during pre-reading activities could help teachers modify the lesson and cater to individual needs.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of research studies seem to confirm the desirable effect of pre-reading activities, the extent to which these activities affect comprehension of the learners with varying level of proficiency remains inconclusive.

For example, Hung (1990) reports that both lower proficient and advanced learners benefit equally from pre-reading activities. In other words, for Hung (1990), language proficiency is less relevant when discussing the impact of pre-reading activities, as these activities could assist in the schemata activation of the learners at varying levels of language proficiency.

In comparison, Tudor (1990) investigates the relative effectiveness of different pre-reading formats and the possibility of an interaction between pre-reading formats and L2 proficiency level. Three main sets of conclusion emerge from his experimentation. Firstly, the results provide an indication that pre-reading activities do have a potential for enhancing the text comprehension of L2 learners. Secondly, pre-reading materials which provide information or interpretive schema most directly have a stronger facilitative effect. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the facilitative potential of pre-reading seems to be substantially greater with lower proficiency learners.

Arguing in a similar vein, Hudson (1982) as cited in Hung (1990) contends that pre-reading activities are particularly suitable for learners with lower proficiency level and that they are less effective for more advanced learners. The underlying assumption of this contention is that highly proficient learners are equipped with appropriate schemata which could spontaneously be activated in the presence of textual cues (Hudson; 1982 as cited in Hung; 1990, Tudor; 1988). In comparison, lower proficient learners are not equipped with these schemata and their schemata should, therefore, be activated by means of pre-reading activities.

Although previous studies on the effect of pre-reading activities on L2 reading comprehension have generally shown that these activities could potentially enhance text comprehension of the students, researchers are yet to agree on whether or not the effect of pre-reading activities is equally shared by all learners, regardless of their language proficiency level.

## **B. Theoretical Background**

### **1. The Concept of Reading**

What is Reading? The word *reading* has a complex definition. In answering the question of “what is reading” there are various definitions provided by reading experts using various theoretical underpinnings.

Payani (2003: 47) states “Reading is, principally, for understanding the message that is either explicit or implicit in the text. In other words, reading is for meaning.” Payani argues that the message in the text is accessible to another person who decodes it, or reads it. To put it more simply, reading is getting a message from a text. In other words, Reading can be seen as ‘interactive’ process between reader and a text which leads to reading fluency (Alyousef, 2005).

Ajideh (2003) infers from previous studies that “reading must be viewed as a two-fold phenomenon involving process of comprehending and product comprehension” (p. 1) and that “reading involves an interaction between thought and language” (p. 2). He further contends that “the reader brings to the task a formidable amount of information and ideas, attitude and beliefs” (p. 2).

By looking at the reading definition categories above, it appears that reading cannot stand apart from both the reader and what is written in the text.

## **2. Reading Activities**

Reading activities can be divided into three phases: Pre-Reading, While-Reading and Post-Reading respectively (Williams, 1987 as cited in Ajideh, 2003). The following section will briefly discuss these reading activities.

## 1. Pre-Reading Activities

According to Tudor (1990), pre-reading is the term used to refer to the range of pedagogical techniques in which learners are involved before their main processing of a target text is performed. These activities are designed to help them process this text in a more meaningful way. Ajideh (2003) points out that pre-reading activities could also serve to motivate students to read and to gain the requisite information to answer the question. Being motivated is one of the most important factors that can help students in the process of reading.

In the pre-Reading phases, before learners begin to read the text, the teacher needs to perform various activities to help activate students' schemata. Ajideh (2003) classifies the common pre-reading activities used to activate appropriate knowledge that students lack as:

### ? **Previewing**

Previewing is another pre-reading activity likely to be appropriate for situations in which texts are difficult and may contain culturally unfamiliar material. Previews are introductory materials presented to students before reading to provide specific information about the contents of the reading material.

Previous studies have suggested that previewing techniques could help activate readers' schemata. For example, Swaffar et al (1991) as cited in Ajideh (2003) contends that previewing enables the readers to make predictions concerning the text based on a number of clues available in the text, such as title, headings, pictures, etc. These clues could potentially help the readers formulate their own hypothesis concerning the text, thus enabling them to envisage what the text is all about.

Arguing in a similar vein, Chia (2001), points out that:

"The aim of previewing is to help readers predict or make some educated guesses about what is in the text and thus activate effective top-down processing for reading comprehension. Several stimuli in a text, such as the title, photographs, illustrations, or subtitles, are usually closely connected to the author's ideas and content. So, based on any of them, students can make predictions about the content of the text." (p. 8).

Ajideh (2003) suggests that such activities as asking the students to have a quick look at the title of the text in hand, to scan the introductory paragraph of the text, to read key sentences within each paragraph, or to read the concluding sentence of a passage, normally located at the end of a text, are among other activities that could be introduced as pre-reading activities.

To follow from the above, it seems that, since previewing could assist in the schemata activation of the readers, it would also promote better reading comprehension. If this proves to



be the case, then readers who are introduced with previewing activities would presumably have a better comprehension than those who are not. Needless to say, this contention needs to be tested across different population with different characteristics before a solid conclusion is drawn concerning the extent to which previewing could promote effective comprehension.

? ***Questioning***

This pre-reading activity is a kin to traditional reading comprehension task where a set of questions related to a passage is introduced. The difference is that, unlike traditional reading activity where questions are introduced after the students read a given text, questions during pre-reading activity are introduced before students read the text. These questions can be produced either by the instructor or the students (Ajideh, 2003).

Although various pre-reading activities can be introduced, they share the same philosophy, that is, to equip the students with concepts, ideas, clues, and schemata necessary to comprehend the text to be read.

? ***Brainstorming (Semantic Mapping)***

According to Wallaces (1992) as cited in Ajideh (2003), brainstorming is one of the most widely used pre-reading activities.

During brainstorming, “students are given a particular key word or key concept and then invited to call out words and concepts they personally associate with the key words or words provided by the teacher” (Karakas, 2003 p. 29).

One of the most obvious advantages of brainstorming as a pre-reading activity, from the standpoint of the teacher, is that it takes little time to prepare. From students’ stand point, brainstorming enables them to freely express what they have already known of a particular topic (Karakas, 2003). This would, in turn, allow the teacher to check students’ understanding of that topic prior to doing reading comprehension tasks. They are then able to proceed from there. This strategy rarely stands alone, but is usually incorporated or included with one of the other pre-reading strategies.

That brainstorming could help in schemata activation is not anecdotal. Enormous research evidence accrues suggesting the potential benefit of brainstorming. As a matter of fact, the desirable effect of brainstorming is relevant not only for promoting reading comprehension, but also for facilitating listening comprehension (Teichhert, 1996).

## **2. While Reading**

While reading consists of activities that students learn to use while they are reading a text. These activities help the student focus on how to determine what the author is actually trying to say and to match the information with what the student already knows. These strategies should be influenced by the *pre-reading activities* because students should be using or keeping in mind the previews, outlines, questions, brainstorm, etc. generated before reading and then using this information to digest what they are reading

## **3. Post Reading**

Post-reading stage consists of activities that students learn to use when they have completed reading a text. These activities are used to help the student look back and think about the message of the text and determine the intended or possible meanings that might be important. These activities are used to follow up and confirm what was learned (e.g., answer questions) during 'pre-reading' and 'while-reading' activities. Students may take the form of small group discussion and then it can be followed by whole-class discussion in order to solve some problems they faced

### 3. Schemata in Second Language Reading

Two general definitions of *schema* from Oxford University Press Language Teaching Schema quoted in Martin (1992: 113):

“a mental framework of knowledge and experience that allows us to incorporate what we hear (and read) into what we know”.

“mental representations of typical situations...used in discourse processing to predict the contents of the discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situation which the discourse describes.”

Another definition of schemata, which is relatively a kin to that provided in Oxford University Press, is given by Ajideh (2003). Ajideh points out: “schema can be seen as the organized background knowledge, which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse” (p. 4). In other words, schemata refer to one's prior knowledge of a given topic as a result of his/her experience and interaction with the environment. Thus, whatever one's understanding of a 'lion', for example, would constitute his/her schemata of a lion. This analogy is also shared when it comes to text comprehension.

The importance of schemata or background knowledge in reading comprehension has gained in much discussion among researchers (Hung, 1990), particularly as far as reading researchers are concerned. This growing interest in the importance of schemata in reading comprehension has been owing to the fact that previous research evidence has shown that background knowledge plays a vital role in reading comprehension

(Johnson, 1982; Osman, 1984; Koh, 1985, as cited in Hung 1990; Jacksembievva, 1993 as cited in Karakas, 2005). Therefore, it is by no means a mere coincidence that much work has been geared toward understanding how to activate students' schemata prior to doing reading comprehension tasks.

Amongst the most widely used strategy for schemata-activation is through the introduction of pre-reading activities. These include, but are not limited to, such activities as brainstorming, previewing, and questioning (Ajideh 2006). However, whilst the importance of pre-reading activities for schemata activation has empirically been confirmed by previous studies, it remains unclear as to whether the impact of these activities varies with learners' language proficiency; nor is it clear whether it varies with text types. Obviously,

One of the most popular propositions of schemata theory is that in order to comprehend a text the reader must use clues supplied by the author to activate the appropriate background knowledge (Carrell, 1984). Once active, these schemata can serve as a basis for making predictions. It is widely accepted that a good reader is constantly making and testing his/her predictions. This proposition has led to the conclusion that comprehension can only be achieved if appropriate schemata are activated (Hung, 1990).

Furthermore, Schema Theory proposes that when individuals obtain knowledge, they attempt to fit that knowledge into some structure in

memory that helps them make sense of that knowledge. It also proposes that individuals break down information into generalizable chunks which are then categorically stored in the brain for later recall (Carrell, 1984). Thus, in a sense, Schema Theory is an active strategy coding technique necessary for facilitating the recall of knowledge. As new knowledge is perceived, it is coded into either pre-existing schema or organized into a new script (Carrel, 1984).

According to the schema-theoretic view, a reader plays a very active role in reading and comprehending a text is an interactive process involving the reader's existing background knowledge and the text (Carrell, 1984). The meaning of the text does not reside in the material itself, *per se*, but in the interaction that takes place between the reader and the text (Carrell, 1984). Obviously, fundamental to text comprehension is the reader's ability to organise information and connect new knowledge he or she already possesses.

Arguing in a similar vein, Pearson (1984) points out that no text is ever fully explicit, authors omit those relationships that they expect (and hope) the reader can figure out for themselves. Reading is no longer passive, it is an active, constructive process in which a reader utilises all available resources to construct meaning. Therefore, teachers must view the text, in conjunction with students' prior knowledge, student strategies, the task and the classroom situation as a whole to achieve comprehension.

If the reader lacks appropriate schemata or fails to activate them, comprehension may be impaired. All in all, pre-reading activities are intended to activate appropriate knowledge structures or provide knowledge that the reader lacks.

The use of background knowledge is, therefore, one of the major activities in reading comprehension. One of the implications of this contention is that activating appropriate schemata should be used in reading classes simply because if readers activate in inappropriate schema, they may miss the meaning of the text (Bensoussan, 1998). Thus, failure to comprehend a text may be attributable to the reader not having the appropriate schemata.

As far as reading short stories are concerned, prior knowledge refers to the total of the students' past experiences. The schema the reader develops through past experiences forms the basis for his or her prior knowledge on a particular topic. If prior knowledge is lacking or is not activated, the student has difficulty comprehending the text being read (Ajideh, 2003).

Therefore, the teacher assists readers activate or recall from his or her past experiences, the background knowledge needed to comprehend a particular selection; or, if necessary, provides the reader any key information that is not available from prior knowledge. The teacher provides scaffolding between students' knowledge base and story concepts; thus, a relationship is established, and comprehension occurs.

It follows from the above that pre-reading activities in reading a short story may include: the mental set, background information and key concepts, essential vocabulary, and the story preview which redirects the students' thoughts toward the story to be read.

The extent to which subject knowledge affects L2 reading has been widely explored in research on participants studying English as a second language (Hung, 1990). The results of the studies highlight the fact that topic knowledge, whether familiar or unfamiliar, can be a highly influential force in L2 reading comprehension. If the topic of a text is conceptually difficult or unfamiliar, additions to it could make it easier to comprehend. Despite this, however, little is known as to whether the importance of subject knowledge in reading comprehension is also shared by EFL learners. Obviously, further research in the field is called for to better understand this phenomenon.

#### **4. The Place of pre-reading activities in comprehending short stories**

As discussed previously, researchers have discovered many instructional strategies to facilitate comprehension by relating the readers' background knowledge to the new information. Within this view, a pre-reading activity is a technique teachers can use to encourage students to call up background knowledge, to foster predictions and to ascertain the level of knowledge a particular student needs to close the gap between their prior knowledge and the commands of the text.



Students' prior knowledge provides the pathway to understanding new ideas and forms the foundation for the mental set or motivation (Ajideh, 2003). For comprehension of the story to take place, the unknown is linked to a foundation of prior knowledge based upon life experiences. From building upon the familiar in the mental set, the lesson then provides information necessary to clarify important concepts. Therefore, in a sense, pre-reading activities involve cognitive engagement with ideas that provide the foundation crucial to understanding important concepts in the story, and consequently to comprehension of the whole.

In a nutshell, research evidence suggests that activating students' schemata prior to reading a story is highly recommended since activating appropriate schemata have been found to promote comprehension of short stories.

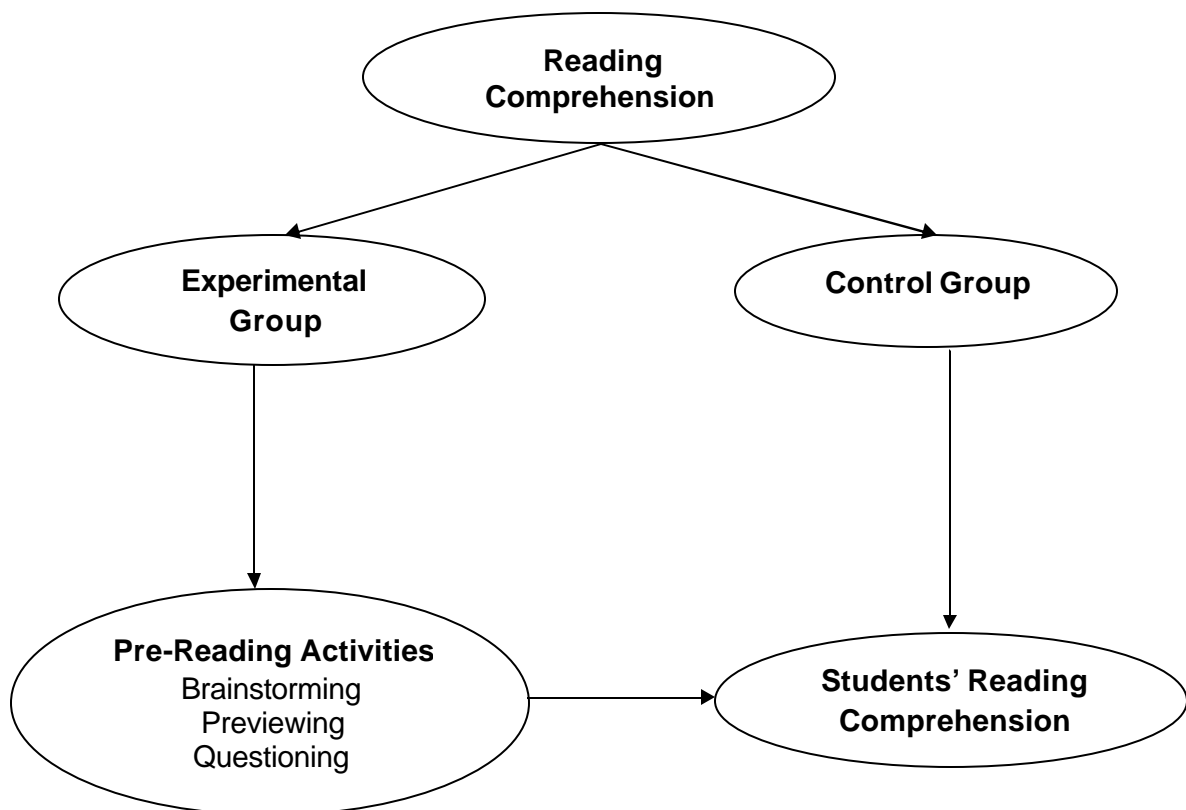
### **C. Conceptual Framework**

A good deal of research evidence, as discussed in the previous section, suggests that introducing pre-reading activities prior to doing reading comprehension tasks has the potential to promote students' comprehension of the text. The primary goal of the present work is to examine the validity of this contention with EFL learners.

Ajideh (2003) classifies the common pre-reading activities as Previewing, Questioning and Brainstorming. In the present study, experimental group was exposed to the above pre-reading activities,

whereas control group was not introduced to any kind of pre-reading activity. It is envisaged that, based on the literature review, the experimental group would outperform the control group.

The schematic representation of the conceptual framework of the present study can be seen in the following diagram:



#### D. Definition of Terms

The following are the terms used along with their definitions:

1. *Pre-reading Activities*. In the present study, the term pre-reading activities is used to refer to activities designed by the teacher which is primarily intended to activate students' schemata prior to doing reading comprehension tasks.
2. *Previewing*. The term previewing has been used to refer to one type of pre-reading activities whereby the teacher gives a specific short description of the topic contained in the passage.
3. *Brainstorming*. The term brainstorming has been used to refer to one type of pre-reading activities intended for arousing students' interest and background knowledge whereby the teacher provides the class with "a particular key word or key concept" related to the passage and "students are then invited to call out words and concepts they personally associate with the keyword or words provided by the teacher" (Ajideh, 2003 p. 10).
4. *Questioning*. A kind of activity where a set of questions related to passage is introduced before students read the text.
5. *Short Story*. In the present study, the term short story has been used to refer to a work of fiction no longer than 20,000 words and no shorter than 1000.
6. *Schema (Plural Schemata)*. The term schemata is used to refer to background knowledge or prior knowledge.

### **E. Hypothesis**

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed for the following study:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is a significant effect of pre -reading activities on students' reading comprehension.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is not a significant effect of pre-reading activities on students' reading comprehension.