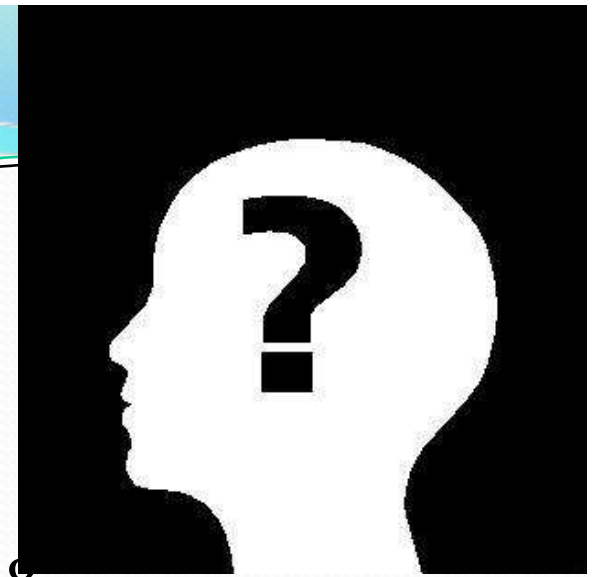# Background knowledge & nativization

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Pre-Questions

- Sometimes you read a text, understand every word in it but the text does not mean anything to you. What might be the reason for this?

- When you are reading a text, do you think about what you know about the topic?

- Before you start reading a text, do you think about what might be presented in it?

Content

- Background knowledge
- Schema theory
- Categories of schema
- Cultural knowledge
- Nativization
- Conclusion
- Assignment 3
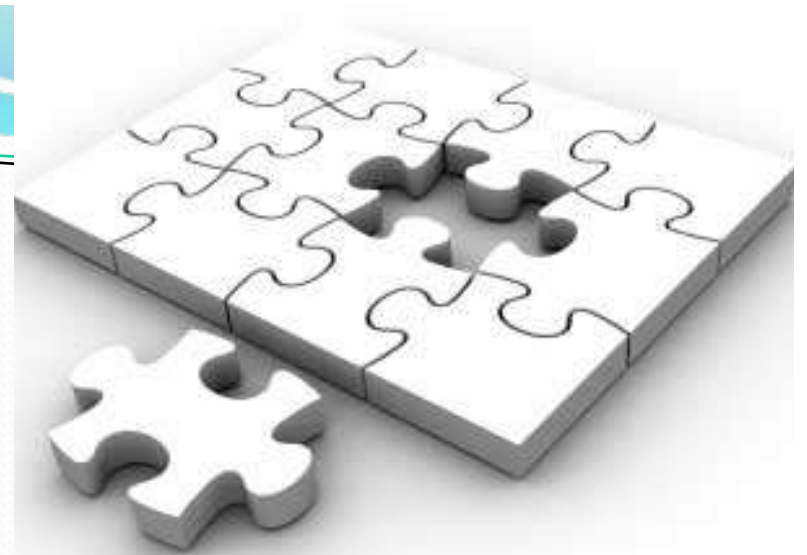
Introduction: Background knowledge

- Accounts for the storage of previous information in

- Background knowledge became popular with top-down models.

- Any text either spoken or written does not itself carry meaning since "a text only provides directions for... readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge" (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 556).

- Readers better comprehend if they have background knowledge about the text (Alderson, 2000).

Schema theory

- Deals with the reading process: readers are expected to combine their previous experiences with the text they are reading.

- Culture specific: As each reader has different background knowledge.

- Developed by the gestalt psychologist Barlett "who observed how people, when asked to repeat a story from memory, filled in details which did not occur in the original but conformed to their cultural norms" (Cook, 1997, p. 86).

- Assists to explain readers' comprehension problems.

- Suggests the kind of background knowledge they need.

3 assumptions of schema-theoretic approaches
(Nassaji, 2002, p. 444)

- Firstly, they attempt to discuss the representation of knowledge in the mind.

- Secondly, the usage of knowledge in comprehension is examined.

- Thirdly, making inferences in comprehension is taken into consideration.

Definition of schema

- Schemata are accepted as interlocking mental structures representing readers' knowledge (Perkins, 1983; Zaher, 1987; R. C. Anderson & Pearson, 1988; G. Cook, 1997; Alderson, 2000; Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2001) of ordinary events (Nassaji, 2002).

- Brown (2001) highlights that schema comprises of any "information, knowledge, emotion, experience, and culture" (p. 299) that readers carry to the text.

- Readers integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing schemata.

- Schema is also related with the organisation of information in the LTM that cognitive constructs allow (Singhal, 1998).

- Schemata enable readers to interact the existing knowledge with the new one coming from the text.

Comprehension and background information

- Readers' comprehension depends on their ability to relate the information that they receive from the text with their background knowledge (Anderson, 1999).

- Such pre-existing knowledge is defined as "life experiences, educational experiences, knowledge of how texts can be organized rhetorically, knowledge of how one's first language works, knowledge of how the second language works, and cultural background and knowledge" (p. 11).

- If readers do not have relevant background knowledge about the topic, then they will not be able to cross the borders of the printed material to achieve the meaning intended by the writer that is hidden beyond literal meaning offered in the text.

- In such circumstances, they should be provided with relevant background knowledge about the topic in order to make the cultural cues clear before reading the text.

Subcategories of schema Content and formal schema

- *Formal schema*: related with formal and rhetorical organisational structures of different types of texts.

- Reading comprehension is affected by reader's formal schemata interacting with the rhetorical organisation of a text.

- Readers probably have difficulties in processing the text if they do not know the language of it.

Content schema

- Background knowledge of the content area of the text that a reader brings to a text (Alptekin, 1993, 2002, 2003; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell, 1987; Singhal, 1998; Stott, 2001) such as knowledge about people, the world, culture, and the universe (Brown, 2001).

- Appropriate content schema is accessed through textual cues.

- Readers need knowledge about the content of the passage to be able to understand it (Alderson, 2000).

- This knowledge needs to be activated.

- As a result of the differences between the reader's own culture and English culture, the reader has to work twice as hard to understand what s/he reads.

Three types of knowledge

- In top-down and interactive models, readers use a variety of clues to achieve the meaning.

- Three types of knowledge essential in comprehension (Hadley, 2003, p. 131):
  - 'linguistic information',
  - 'knowledge of the world', and
  - 'knowledge of discourse structure'.

- Activating background and linguistic knowledge in the pre-reading stage to recreate the writer's intended meaning is essential (Chastain, 1988).

Johnson's study

- The impact of prior cultural background knowledge: provided strong evidence for schema theory research.

- Johnson's most important conclusion:

  - the more significant effect of background knowledge than vocabulary in reading comprehension.
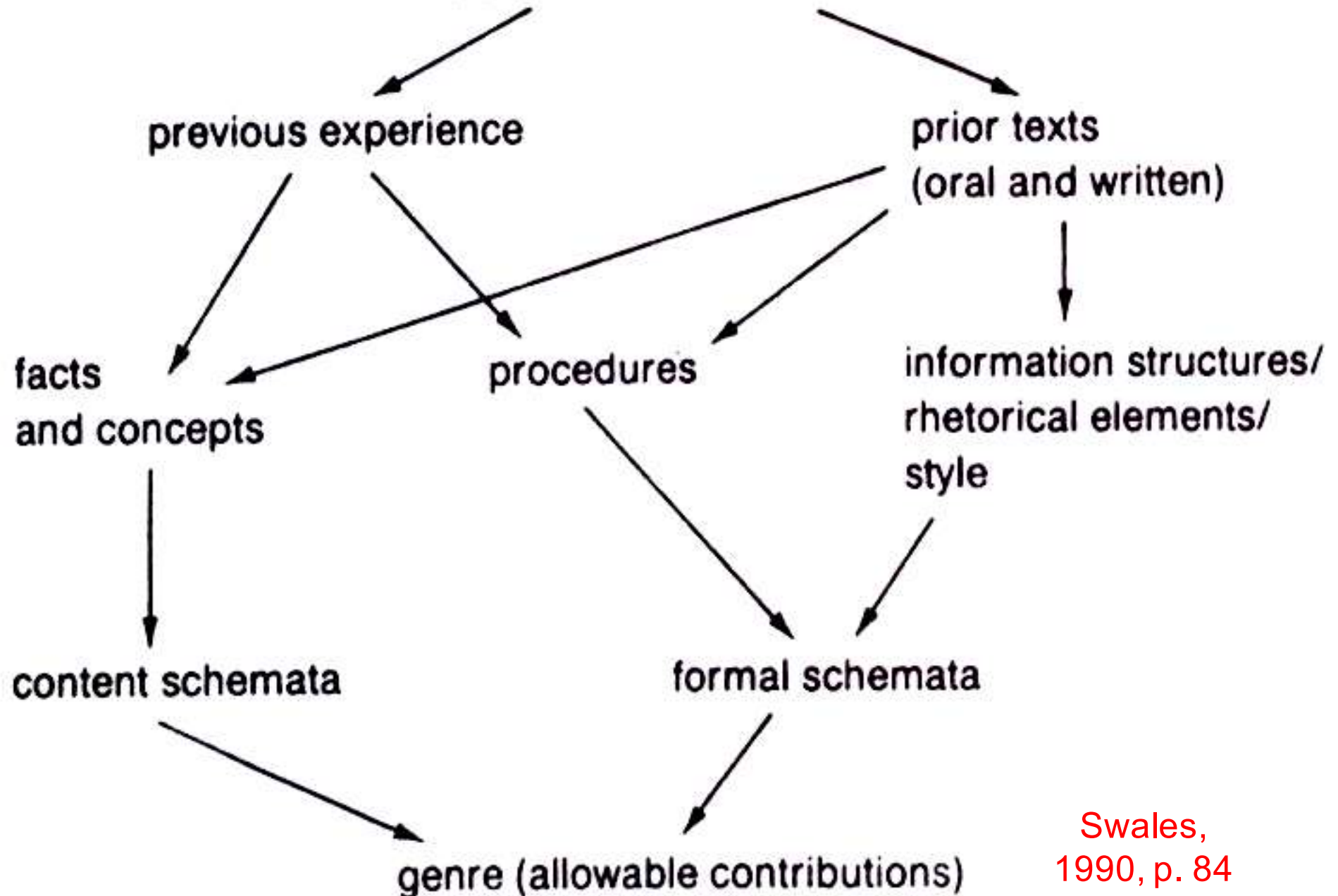
"It was necessarily a Registry Office Wedding."

Short and Candlin's (1986) example

- **"It was necessarily a Registry Office Wedding."**
- Taken from David Lodge's *How far can you go* novel.
- A non-native reader of English is hardly aware that a divorced British couple is not allowed to remarry in a church.
- Provide such cultural background knowledge to your learners.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

previous experience

prior texts (oral and written)

facts and concepts

procedures

information structures/ rhetorical elements/ style

content schemata

formal schemata

genre (allowable contributions)

Nativization by S. Razı

An example

- *The bus careered along and ended up in the hedge.*

- *Several passengers were hurt.*

- *The driver was questioned by the police.*

Nuttall, 1996, pp. 7-8

Analysis of the sample

- Make connections between sentences
- Buses carry passengers and buses have drivers.
- The 'passengers' in the second sentence belong to the bus in the first sentence, not to any other vehicle, and the 'driver' in the third sentence is the bus driver, not from any other vehicle.
- The three sentences actually do not give this information; but, we make assumptions based on experience.
- Buses career along a road. Although it is not mentioned, we can assume it.
- Road schema includes the components that mark the limit of a road such as 'hedge'.
- If we have road schema and its components; then, we can visualise the bus going too fast, leaving the road and crashing into the hedge that bordered it.
- If our road schema does not include the components such as 'hedge', we will have difficulties in visualising the scene.
- According to driver schema, the driver is the one who is responsible for the safety of the vehicle driven, that is why the driver is questioned by the police.
- Our schema sees a bus driver as male and adds the fourth sentence that would surprise us.

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Additional info

- **"She was later congratulated on her quick thinking and skilful handing of the bus when the brakes failed."**

- If you had not considered this possibility previously, the bus driver schema will change and listening results in learning something new.

Content and formal schematic items

A fifteen-year-old boy got up the nerve one day to try out for the school chorus, despite the potential ridicule from his classmates. His audition time made him a good fifteen minutes late to the next class. His hall permit clutched nervously in hand, he nevertheless tried surreptitiously to slip into his seat, but his entrance didn't go unnoticed.

"And where were you?" bellowed the teacher.

Caught off guard by the sudden attention, a red-faced Harold replied meekly, "Oh, ur, er, somewhere between tenor and bass, sir."

Content schematic pre-requisites:

- Fifteen-year-old boys might be embarrassed about singing in a choir.
- Hall permits allow students to be outside a classroom during the class hour.
- Teenagers often find it embarrassing to be singled out in a class.
- Something about voice ranges.

Formal schematic pre-requisites:

- The chorus tryout was the cause of potential ridicule.
- The audition occurred just before the class period.
- Continuing to "clutch" the permit means he did not give it to the teacher.
- The teacher did indeed notice his entry.
- The teacher's question referred to location, not a musical part.

Consider

- **Şile yine can aldı!**
  - What is Şile?
  - What might be the reason of death?

Nativization

- The identification of foreign cultural elements in any text and then changing them to native cultural elements.

- May assist readers to comprehend better.

- No structural differences between original and nativized versions.

- Should be limited with cultural elements.

Text with foreign cultural elements

- Piyango çekilişini, Noel şenliklerini, Paskalya yortusunu ve Halloween kutlamalarını da idare eden, halk etkinliklerine ayıracak bol zamanı ve enerjisi olan Bay Summers yürütecekti. Yuvarlak çehreli, neşeli bir insandı. Devon Eyaletinin en büyük domuz çiftliğinde çalışıyordu. İnsanlar onun için üzülüyordu çünkü Falkland Adalarında savaşıp sakatlanmıştı. Otuz yıldır evli olduğu karısı Mary de dırdırcı kadının tekiydi. Bay Summers siyah tahta bir kutuyla Aziz John meydanındaki Anglikan kilisenin gölgesindeki köy meydanına geldiğinde köylüler kendi aralarında sessizce konuşmaktaydı. Çok geçmeden Bay Summers ellerini sallayıp kalabalığa seslendi: "Bugün biraz geciktim sanırım." Bay Summers'ın sesi Exeter ve Bristol'ü birbirine bağlayan Mı otobanın hemen kenarında kurulu olan bu küçük Ottery St. Mary köyünde hiç aralıksız yankılanıp duran araç seslerine karıştı. Swans Nest Bar'ı işleten Bay Graves elindeki üçayakla Bay Summers'ın peşinden geldi ve üçayağı meydanın ortasına bıraktı. Bay Summers da elindeki kutuyu üçayağın üstüne yerleştirdi. Köylüler kutuyla aralarında mesafe bulunmasına dikkat ederek duruyorlardı. Bay Summers "Arkadaşlarım acaba bana bir yardım ederler mi?" diye sordu. Önce bir duraksama yaşandı sonra Bay Martin ve en büyük oğlu John ileri çıkarak kutunun üçayağın üzerinde sallanmadan durmasını sağladılar.

Erten & Razı, 2007, pp. 175-176

Text with foreign cultural elements

Piyango çekilişini, Bayram Kutlamalarını, Hıdrellez şenliklerini ve kiraz festivalini de idare eden, halk etkinliklerine ayıracak bol zamanı ve enerjisi olan Mehmet Bey yürütecekti. Yuvarlak çehreli, neşeli bir insandı. Çanakkale'nin en büyük besi çiftliğinde çalışıyordu. İnsanlar onun için üzülüyordu çünkü Kıbrıs Çıkartmasında savaşıp sakatlanmıştı. Otuz yıldır evli olduğu karısı Müzeyyen de dırdırcı kadının tekiydi. Mehmet Bey siyah tahta bir kutuyla Cumhuriyet meydanında Orta Camii'nin gölgesindeki köy meydanına geldiğinde köylüler kendi aralarında sessizce konuşmaktaydı. Çok geçmeden Mehmet Bey ellerini sallayıp kalabalığa seslendi: "Bugün biraz geciktim sanırım." Mehmet Bey'in sesi Çanakkale ve İzmir'i birbirine bağlayan ana yolun hemen kenarında kurulu olan bu küçük Gökçalı köyünde hiç aralıksız yankılanıp duran araç seslerine karıştı. Köy Kahvesinin işleten Halil Karadağ elindeki üçayakla Mehmet Beyin peşinden geldi ve üçayağı meydanın ortasına bıraktı. Mehmet Bey de elindeki kutuyu üçayağın üstüne yerleştirdi. Köylüler kutuyla aralarında mesafe bulunmasına dikkat ederek duruyorlardı. Mehmet Bey "Arkadaşlarım acaba bana bir yardım ederler mi?" diye sordu. Önce bir duraksama yaşandı sonra Hacı Dayı ve en büyük oğlu Sedat ileri çıkarak kutunun üçayağın üzerinde sallanmadan durmasını sağladılar.

Erten & Razı, 2007, pp. 175-176

Differences between two versions

| Original Version	Nativized Verison
Characters	
Michael (Mike) Loomis	Coşkun Umutlu
Frances	Özlem
The Stevensons	Nalan & Tarık
A little Japanese waiter	A beautiful teenage waiter
The City	
New York / City of New York / State of New York	Çanakkale / City of Çanakkale
Alice Maxwell' house	Tarık Uyanık's house
Fifth Avenue	Kordonboyu
The Brevoort	Barışkent
Washington Square	Republic Square
Eighth Street	Golf Tea Garden / Republic Square
Football game	Basketball game – Turkish womes's championship
Culture	
Rolls and coffee	Turkish baguette and tea
An extra five pounds of husband	An extra several kilos of husband
A steak as big as a blacksmith's apron	A fish as big as a man's arm
A bottle of wine	A big bottle of rakı
A new French picture at the Filmarte	A new Turkish picture – O Şimdi Asker (in the army now) – at the AFM cinema

Nativization by S. Razı

Conclusion

- Consider the impact of background knowledge on reading comprehension.

- Cultural knowledge has important impact on reading comprehension.

- Nativization makes comprehension easy since it enables extra space in STM.

- In the next chapter, you will learn how to blend the other sources into your text in relation with APA rules.
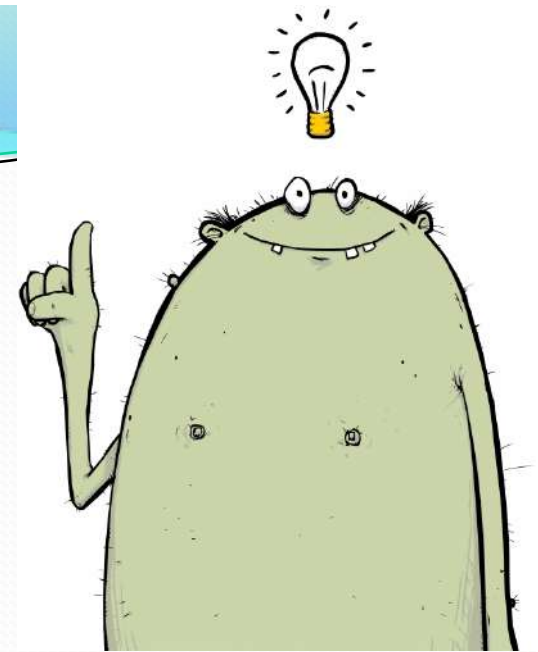
Assignment 4:

Explain the development of listening skills in EFL young learner classes.

Instructions

- Read the four sources carefully and blend them into your discussion in accordance with APA (6th ed.) in-text citation rules .
- You are not allowed to use any other sources.
- Attach the following reference list to your paper.
- You must use at least one secondary-source in your paper (no more than two).

Length: Between 550-750 words.

Deadlines:

21 December 2017 - 23:59 (First draft)

26 December 2017 - 23:59 (Peer review)

29 December 2017 - 23:59 (Revised paper)

References

House, S. (1997). *An introduction to teaching English to children.* London: Richmond.

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