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a reading comprehension task“

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List of abbreviations

AHS	Academic secondary school in Austria, for pupils from age 10 to 18
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EFL	English as a foreign language
L1	First language
L2	Second language
TOEFL	Test of English as a foreign language

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1. Introduction

Reading is of great importance for our everyday lives and its role might be much more significant than we tend to think. “We read throughout the day in modern societies because print is all around us, and we use it in many more ways than we are aware of” (Grabe 2009: 5). Reading is not only an integral part of our daily lives but is also crucial in educational settings since “[c]itizens of modern societies must be good readers to be successful” (Grabe 2009: 5). However, they do not only need to be able to read in their mother tongue but frequently also in a second language. This is due to globalisation, or more precisely, due to an increase in “interactions within and across heterogeneous multilingual countries, large-scale immigration movements, global transportation, advanced education opportunities, and the spread of languages of wider communication” (Grabe 2009: 4). In the EFL classroom, more attention is paid to reading now than some years ago (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2006: 261). In Austria, this changing awareness of the importance of reading ability resulted in a revision of the school leaving examination (= Matura) of the academic secondary school (= AHS). While some years ago, the ‘Matura’ mainly focused on the skill of writing (and to a minor extent on the skill of listening), it now also explicitly tests reading ability (cf. Bifie).

Reading is already an immensely complex process in the L1 and it is only logical that it is even more complicated in a second language. This is why in the EFL classroom, teachers should try to facilitate reading comprehension tasks by means of a three-phase structure. The three-phase structure consists of a pre-, while- and post-reading stage and “is now standard practice” (Hedge 2000: 209) in the reading classroom. As the names suggest, learners perform exercises before, during and after reading that prepare them for the text and help them to understand and work with it.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the importance of pre-reading activities for the second language reading process and to explore their influence on second language reading comprehension. It further attempts to reveal the facilitating role that these exercises can have on the reading process for learners. Therefore, the complex operations underlying the reading process will be explained as well as the various types of knowledge involved. It is these types of knowledge that need to be addressed in the pre-reading stage. Differences between L1 and L2 reading will be discussed to demonstrate why it is especially important to prepare second language

readers for reading comprehension tasks. With regard to the three-phase structure, all three phases will be presented. However, since the main interest of the paper is the pre-reading stage, this phase will be analysed in detail by exploring its importance for background knowledge activation and motivation.

The purpose of this paper is not only to evaluate the importance of pre-reading exercises but also to compare the success of various pre-reading activities. For this reason, the effects of two pre-reading tasks will be investigated in the empirical part. A study was conducted with lower-secondary pupils attending an AHS (= academic secondary school in Austria) in Linz (Upper Austria) to explore two issues. First, it intended to analyse whether the pre-reading phase improves pupils' performance in a reading comprehension task. Second, it attempted to assess to which extent the two pre-reading tasks (pre-learning vocabulary and prediction of content) could facilitate the reading process. Thus, the research questions were defined as follows:

- Do learners achieve better results if they do a pre-reading exercise before the actual reading comprehension task?
- Is it possible to determine a difference in effectiveness between the two pre-reading exercises selected?

Hence, the aim of the empirical investigation is to gain further insights into the importance of pre-reading activities and into the success of learning vocabulary and predicting content in the pre-reading phase.

It needs to be noted that the results of the study only apply to those Austrian lower-secondary pupils who participated in the study. Moreover, the findings probably only relate to reading comprehension tasks that feature a story and that are followed by true-false or sentence-ordering tasks. What is not within the scope of the empirical investigation is the influence of pre-reading activities on pupils who have a higher level of proficiency or on pupils who attend other school types. The study further does not allow conclusions about the efficiency of pre-reading tasks in relation to other text types such as newspaper articles or argumentative texts and in relation to other follow-up reading comprehension tasks such as providing a short answer to open questions.

The paper is divided into a theoretical (chapters 2-4) and an empirical part (chapters 5-7). Chapter 2 is concerned with a general discussion of the reading process and the types of knowledge required for successful comprehension. The next chapter 3

focuses on reading in a second language by exploring the differences between L1 and L2 reading and by discussing the linguistic threshold. Chapter 4 then goes on to examine the issue of second language teaching and reports on the three-phase structure with a special focus on the pre-reading stage. An overview of the empirical investigation is provided in chapter 5, which is followed by the description of the results in chapter 6. Chapter 7 is concerned with the discussion of the test results, their implications and the limitations of the study. Last, chapter 8 is meant to summarise the issues explored in the theoretical part and the findings of the empirical part.

2. Exploring reading

Chapter 2 intends to offer an exploration of the reading process. Therefore, section 2.1. attempts to provide a definition of reading. Section 2.2. will then describe the various processes involved in reading by referring to both lower-level and higher-level processes. Different types of knowledge that are essential for reading, such as schematic knowledge or reading skills, will be discussed in section 2.3..

2.1. Attempting to define reading

This section attempts to define what is generally understood as reading and is thus not specifically concerned with reading in a second language but with reading in general. The reason for this is that “[m]ost of our current views of second language reading are shaped by research on first language learners” (Grabe 1991: 378). First, it is shown that it is a challenging task to formulate an accurate and precise definition which is nevertheless elaborate enough to account for all the different processes involved in reading. What follows is an explanation of why reading can be seen as an active and even interactive process. In addition, the perception of reading as a cognitive practice versus reading as a social practice is summarised and the different purposes for reading are presented.

An often quoted definition of reading was provided by Goodman (1967: 127), who described reading as “a psycholinguistic guessing game”. This means that reading

involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. (Goodman 1967: 127)

Hence, it is not necessary to decode every single letter (see also Ur 1996: 139; Williams 1986: 3). Instead, the word can be guessed on the basis of only a few letters. Thus, in Goodman’s (1967: 132) view, being a good reader means being a good guesser. Williams (1986: 3) notes that this guessing must not be understood as “random [...] [but] principled guessing”.

Williams (1986: 2) also provides his own definition and explains that reading is “a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written”. This definition is very short and, as the author himself admits, “simple” (Williams 1986:

2). In order to take the whole process into consideration, Williams (1986: 3-7) then goes on to describe which kinds of knowledge are needed for reading, such as knowledge of the writing system and its letters or symbols, the language (see also Urquhart & Weir 1998: 15) or knowledge of how to interpret texts (see also Nuttall 1983: 17-18; Wallace 1992: 4). The first also includes the need to decode letters and words (see also Nuttall 1983: 2). The last is important because not all texts are straightforward, which means that the reader needs to interpret things that are not mentioned explicitly. Grabe and Stoller (2002: 9-10) agree with Williams as they also state that many skills, processes and different types of knowledge are involved in reading. These skills and processes will be discussed in more detail in sections 2.2. and 2.3..

Several authors consider the reading process to be very complex (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xxvii; Birch 2007: 2; Grabe 1991: 378) and difficult to define (Grabe 1991: 378; Grabe 2009: 14; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 9). A one-or-two-sentence definition would not be able to account for this complexity. Thus, in Grabe's view (1991: 378), reading should rather be described than defined, which is why he thinks of reading as being a "rapid", "efficient", "comprehending", "interactive", "strategic", "flexible", "purposeful", "evaluative", "learning [...] [and] linguistic process" (Grabe 2009: 14). Reading is rapid since, when it is fluent, between 250 and 300 words are read per minute. It is efficient because several processes take place at the same time, e.g. decoding, interpreting or linking new information to background knowledge. The process is comprehending as the aim of reading is to comprehend what the writer wants to say. Moreover, as several processes happen simultaneously, reading is also interactive. These processes will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.. Another reason for reading being interactive is that the reader interacts with the text and the writer. This will be explained in more detail below. Due to the involvement of various skills and strategies, such as summarising important information or monitoring understanding, reading is also a strategic process. For a more detailed account of reading skills and strategies see sub-section 2.3.2.. Since these skills and strategies are adjusted to the different types and purposes of reading, reading can also be regarded as being flexible. It is furthermore purposeful because the reader usually has a purpose in mind, e.g. reading the text for information, for enjoyment or for learning (Grabe 1991: 378). Grabe (1991: 378) notes that having a purpose in mind results in higher motivation for reading. Reading is evaluative

insofar as readers think about their own opinion concerning the text, whether they find it informative, entertaining, boring, etc. and whether they agree or disagree with the writer. Grabe (2009: 16) further argues that reading can be seen as learning since readers always “make decisions about how to respond to the text”. Last, reading is a linguistic process. Similar to Williams (1986: 3-4), Grabe (2009: 16) points out that readers need to know the script and the language of the text in order to understand it.

Apart from its complexity, another reason why reading is difficult to define is that readers are usually not aware of what they are doing while reading (Birch 2007: 2). Hence, the mechanisms behind reading are not conscious (Birch 2007: 2), which is why readers usually cannot describe what they do exactly. It is further difficult to observe the reading process from the outside since it is invisible and “a silent, private activity” (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xix).

Since reading is not visible (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xix), it was sometimes described as a passive process in the past (cf. Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2006: 262). Moreover, in contrast to the productive skills of writing and speaking (Riddell 2010: 111), reading, together with listening, is a receptive skill (Riddell 2010: 111; Saricoban 2002: 1). However, the majority of scholars now agree that reading is not a passive but an active process (Grellet 1983: 8; Nuttall 1983: 5; Saricoban 2002: 1). The reason for this is that meaning is not in the text itself but has to be inferred by the reader (Alderson 2005: 6; Anderson 1999: 12; Devine 1988: 260; Nuttall 1983: 9). Thus, reading is an interactive process between the text and the reader (Alderson 2005: 6; Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xvi; Nuttall 1983: 9; Pearson-Casanave 1984: 334; Richard-Amato 2010: 136; Rivas 1999: 12; Wallace 1992: 39). Wallace (1992: 39) explains that

[t]exts do not ‘contain’ meaning; rather they ‘have potential for’ meaning. [...] [M]eaning is created in the course of reading as the reader draws both on existing linguistic and schematic knowledge and the input provided by the printed or written text.

Since readers interact with the text, they indirectly also interact with the writer (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xvi; Karakaş 2005: 26; Nuttall 1983: 10; Wallace 1992: 43). However, this interaction is somewhat hindered because the writer cannot be asked or talked to as would be the case in a spoken interaction (Nuttall 1983: 10). Therefore, it is the reader’s task to find out which meaning the writer intended to convey (Nuttall 1983: 10). To exemplify, Nuttall presents an analogy in which she

describes the text as a “do-it-yourself construction kit” (Nuttall 1983: 11). A piece of furniture consists of many individual parts that must be put together by the person trying to build the furniture. This is similar to the process of reading in which the reader needs to find out how to put the components of the text together so that they result in a coherent piece of writing. For the writer, the individual thoughts that are intended to be communicated are like the components of the furniture and the writer’s task is to arrange them in such a way that the reader is able to put them together into a coherent whole. Following Nuttall (1983: 11), this metaphor highlights that the reader is by no means passive but has to engage actively in the reading process. In conclusion, Nuttall (1983: 18) describes reading as “the transfer of meaning from mind to mind: the transfer of a message from writer to reader”.

As demonstrated, reading is frequently described with the help of metaphors. The reason for this is that “a complex process like reading seems simpler if it is compared to something we already have some knowledge of” (Birch 2007: 2). Apart from Nuttall’s (1983) metaphor presented above, another example of such a metaphor is the description of reading as a bottom-up and top-down process (cf. Grabe 2009: 84), which will be explained in section 2.2..

In addition, reading can be seen as a cognitive or social practice. Urquhart and Weir (1998: 9) view reading from a cognitive perspective, which means that they examine the reading process with a special focus on the activities going on in the brain. They argue that “[r]eading can clearly be viewed as a cognitive activity; it largely takes place in the mind” (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 37). The following cognitive processes are defined as components of reading: “reading strategies, inferencing, memory, relating text to background knowledge, [...] decoding, and obvious language aspects as syntax and lexical knowledge” (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 18). Urquhart and Weir (1998: 22) also provide a definition of reading: “[r]eading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” [original emphasis]. Wallace (1992), on the contrary, views reading from a social perspective. She argues that “it is not just psychological, cognitive, or affective factors which influence our interpretation of texts, but social ones” (Wallace 1992: 43). Thus, the interpretation of texts is, amongst others, dependent on which social class or which religion we belong to as well as on our political attitude.

What also needs to be mentioned is that reading is not only regarded as a process but also as a product. The product of reading should ideally be comprehension of the text, which means that the outcome of reading is at the centre of attention (Alderson 2005: 4). However, focusing on the product cannot reveal the mechanisms that function during the operation itself (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xix), which is why “[p]roduct approaches to reading have been unfashionable in recent years” (Alderson 2005: 5). An emphasis on the process of reading has better chances of shedding light on the complexity of the skill but as already noted, the investigation is still difficult due to the invisibility of the operation (Alderson & Urquhart 1984: xix).

As a last point, the different purposes for reading will be summarised. Grabe (2009: 7) notes that divergent purposes result in varying types of reading, which is why it is important to take them into account. In the following, the categorisations of Hedge (2000), Grellet (1983) and Grabe (2009) will be presented. Hedge (2000: 195) distinguishes five types of reading:

- “*Receptive reading*” [original emphasis] takes place when, for instance, a short story is read or when the organisation of arguments in a newspaper article is identified.
- As the term already suggests, “[*r*]eflective reading” [original emphasis] includes the critical evaluation of a text. For example, the reader reflects on the author’s arguments, whether they are plausible or contradictory. Therefore, reflection and evaluation are of great importance for this reading purpose.
- “*Skim reading*” [original emphasis] means that the reader wants to find out about the main ideas or the most important information presented. This can be done by only reading the headlines or topic sentences, for example. The aim of skimming is to quickly gain an overview so that not the whole text must be read.
- “*Scanning*” [original emphasis] is also a type of reading that is conducted very fast. The purpose of scanning is to look for specific information such as a birth date, a certain name or a specific train connection on a timetable. As with skimming, the aim is to locate information without having to read the whole text.
- “*Intensive reading*” [original emphasis], in contrast, means reading a text carefully and thereby paying attention to details. An example of intensive

reading is the reading of a poem, which often implies that the reader's focus is on the language and composition of the poem.

Hedge (2000: 195) further notes that “different purposes for reading determine different strategies in approaching texts”. The various reading strategies will be discussed in sub-section 2.3.2..

Grellet's (1983: 4) categorisation is similar to Hedge's (2000: 195) since she also regards “[s]kimming”, “[s]canning” and “[i]ntensive reading” as different types of reading. The author adds a fourth category of “[e]xtensive reading”, which can be described as reading for entertainment. Hence, extensive reading is mostly related to longer texts, from which the reader attempts to extract the main idea rather than details. Extensive reading is similar to what Hedge (2000: 195) defines as “[r]eceptive reading” [original emphasis] and to Grabe's (2009: 10) “reading for general comprehension”. In summary, Grellet (1983: 4) defines two main purposes for reading: reading for enjoyment and for obtaining information.

Grabe (2009: 7-10) distinguishes six purposes for reading. Even though he mentions that they are connected to academic settings (Grabe 2009: 7), they are similar to the purposes defined by Hedge (2000: 195) and Grellet (1983: 4), which are not limited to a specific setting.

- “Reading to search for information (scanning and skimming)” (Grabe 2009: 8): As already mentioned, scanning and skimming are fast reading processes. They are also part of Hedge's (2000: 195) and Grellet's (1983: 4) categorisations.
- “Reading for quick understanding (skimming)” (Grabe 2009: 8): As an example for skimming, Grabe (2009: 8) names the reader's need to find out whether they want to carry on with reading a given text or whether the information looked for is included in that text. Again, this purpose can also be found in Hedge (2000: 195) and Grellet (1983: 4).
- “*Reading to learn*” [original emphasis] (Grabe 2009: 9): The purpose of reading is to learn when the reader is looking for specific information which is needed in order to complete tasks or when the reader has to remember new information and connect it with already existing knowledge.
- “*Reading to integrate* information” [original emphasis] (Grabe 2009: 9): The purpose of this type of reading is to summarise and combine information from several texts or several chapters of a book, e.g. to combine contradictory views

on a topic or to summarise what has been read and to structure it in such a way that it can be stored in the memory.

- “*Reading to evaluate, critique, and use* information” [original emphasis] (Grabe 2009: 10): For this purpose, the most important information is selected, arguments and their validity are questioned and frequently, this type of reading is followed by further activities. Thus, this type of reading is similar to what Hedge (2000: 195) terms reflective reading.
- “*Reading for general comprehension*” [original emphasis] (Grabe 2009: 10): According to Grabe (2009: 10), this is “the most common purpose” and includes reading a novel, newspaper or magazine. Therefore, texts are read for pleasure and enjoyment, which resembles Hedge’s (2000: 195) receptive reading and Grellet’s (1983: 4) extensive reading.

Grabe (2009: 8) indicates that his categorisation is not a complete presentation of all purposes and he concludes that the variety of purposes is one of the reasons why reading is so complex and difficult to define in only a few words (Grabe 2009: 14).

In sum, it is very difficult to provide a short definition of reading because it can hardly do justice to the complexity of the process. Hence, it is more helpful to describe the different kinds of knowledge involved and the interaction between reader, text and writer. In addition, reading can either be seen as an activity that is mostly influenced by cognitive mechanisms or as an activity that is affected by social processes. As shown, the notion of reading as a process is better suited to reveal the mechanisms behind reading than the notion of reading as a product. Last, different types of reading can be distinguished resulting from varying purposes.

2.2. Processes involved in reading

This section outlines the various processes included in reading. Drawing on Grabe (2009), they are categorised into lower-level processes (sub-section 2.2.1.) and higher-level processes (sub-section 2.2.2.). It is important to note that these two types of processes interact and can function at the same time (Grabe 2009: 21).

2.2.1. Lower-level processes

To start, it needs to be clarified that the term lower-level does not imply that these processes are less difficult than higher-level processes (Grabe 2009: 21). Instead, the defining characteristic of lower-level operations is that they often become automatic (Grabe 2009: 21). Grabe (2009: 27) describes a process as being automatic when it is fast, when the reader cannot consciously control it, i.e. cannot suppress it, and when it cannot be introspected. He presents three lower-level processes, namely “word recognition, syntactic parsing [...] and semantic-proposition encoding” (Grabe 2009: 22), for which automaticity plays an essential role (Grabe 2009: 27; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 23).

According to Grabe (2009: 23), word recognition is “rapid and automatic” and involves orthographic, phonological and morphological operations (Grabe 2009: 35). During the orthographic process, visual input is analysed in terms of its form, i.e. the form of individual letters, of more letters combined to groups and the shape of whole words (Grabe 2009: 24). Subsequently, the information about the word’s graphic form is linked with phonological information (Grabe 2009: 24). Morphological processing is concerned with affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and therefore it can provide the reader with syntactic clues about the word in question (Grabe 2009: 27). Following the processing of the visual appearance of words (i.e. word recognition), the reader’s lexicon is searched for words that match the incoming orthographic, phonological and semantic information (Grabe 2009: 26). Khalifa and Weir (2009: 49) explain that a word is stored in memory together with information about its orthography, phonology and meaning. Information about the word’s morphology might also be included (Khalifa & Weir 2009: 49). While Khalifa and Weir (2009: 49) view lexical access as a process on its own, Grabe (2009: 26) as well as Grabe and Stoller (2002: 20) point out that it is frequently used synonymously with word recognition.

The second lower-level process presented by Grabe (2009: 29) is syntactic parsing. Syntactic parsing means that the structure of the sentence and the position of the word are analysed in order to receive “basic grammatical information” about the word, such as whether *book* should be read as a noun or a verb (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 22). In Khalifa and Weir’s (2009: 49) view, syntactic parsing does not only

include “word order, but also word form (morphology) and structural elements (determiners, prepositions, auxiliary verbs etc.)”.

The third lower-level operation described by Grabe (2009: 30) is meaning proposition encoding, which can also be termed semantic processing (Grabe 2009: 35). It is concerned with the meanings of words in combination with information about their position in a sentence (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 23). This information is grouped into “meaning units”, which are called “semantic propositions” (Grabe 2009: 31).

Lower-level processes can also be described as bottom-up processes (Grabe 2009: 55). This means that reading comprehension is based on the text itself and starts with the smallest elements, i.e. the letters, or in Khalifa and Weir’s (2009: 41) words, bottom-up operations are based on the “visual information” of the text.

2.2.2. Higher-level processes

Grabe (2009: 39) points out that it is difficult to define higher-level processes but that in general, they “assume that the reader can direct attentional resources to these component skills”. Like lower-level processes, they are often automatic but if problems arise, they can also be made conscious (Grabe 2009: 39). As examples of higher-level operations Grabe (2009: 39, 50) names the text model of comprehension, the situation model of comprehension and additional components of higher-order processing such as strategies, inferences or comprehension checking.

The text model of comprehension accounts for the process in which new information is combined with already existing ideas that are referred to during the reading. Hence, the “textual network of information represents a reader’s comprehension of a text” (Grabe 2009: 43). The situation model of comprehension (Grabe 2009: 43), in contrast, relates to the interpretation of the text, which is influenced by the readers’ background knowledge, their expectations about the text (e.g. genre-based expectations about the text’s structure), their attitudes towards the author and the text and their purposes for reading (Grabe 2009: 44). Note that due to its importance for the pre-reading phase (cf. section 4.2.) and the empirical part of the paper (cf. chapters 5-7), a more detailed account of background knowledge and schema theory is provided in sub-sections 2.3.1. and 4.2.1.. The remaining higher-level processes mentioned by Grabe (2009: 50-55), such as reading strategies or observing

comprehension, will not be dealt with at this point since some of them are discussed in sub-section 2.3.2., which is concerned with reading skills and strategies.

Grabe (2009: 55) notes that higher-level processes can be described as top-down operations. Therefore, higher-level processes are concerned with what a reader brings to the text. This is also stated by Alderson (2005: 17) who explains that “[t]op-down approaches emphasise [...] the reader’s contribution, over the incoming text” [original emphasis]. Khalifa and Weir (2009: 41) point out that “[i]n top-down processing larger units affect the way smaller units are perceived”. Thus, the reader is the larger unit who influences how the smaller unit, i.e. the text, is understood.

Last, bottom-up and top-down processes do not work separately but always in combination. Khalifa and Weir (2009: 41-42) claim that “[i]t is now generally accepted that we process at different levels simultaneously and draw on both bottom-up and top-down processes in establishing meaning”. Alderson (2005: 20) expresses a similar view when saying that “the two [processes] interact in complex [...] ways”. Grabe (2009: 55) also states that “readers are, of necessity, always both bottom-up and top-down readers”. Consequently, reading is a combination of what is provided by the text and what the reader brings to this text.

In summary, lower-level processes are automatic and comprise operations such as word recognition, syntactic parsing and semantic proposition encoding. They are based on the information provided by the text. In contrast, higher-level processes depend on larger units such as the text as a whole or the readers. Examples of such operations are the text model of comprehension and the situation model of comprehension.

2.3. Different kinds of knowledge and skills needed for reading

As already indicated in section 2.1., various types of knowledge are needed for successful reading to take place. They will be summarised in this section. A more elaborate discussion on the role of background knowledge and schema theory as well as on reading skills and strategies will follow (sub-sections 2.3.1. and 2.3.2.).

Khalifa and Weir (2009: 43) differentiate between the following five types of knowledge: lexical, syntactic, text structure, topic and general knowledge. Lexical knowledge consists of knowledge of the lemma and knowledge of the form. The

former includes the meaning of the word and the word class, whereas the latter concerns orthography, phonology and morphology (Khalifa & Weir 2009: 43). Therefore, lexical knowledge comprises semantic, orthographic, phonological and morphological knowledge. Syntactic knowledge is not further elaborated on by Khalifa and Weir (2009: 43). However, Urquhart and Weir (1998: 58) explain the necessity of syntactic knowledge when saying that it is not enough to know what individual words mean but that readers also need to be aware of how these words are connected. Grabe (1991: 380) summarises that knowledge of the structure of a language, i.e. syntactic knowledge, is needed to understand a given text. The third type of knowledge concerns text structure and thus, knowledge about cohesion (Alderson 2005: 67), i.e. “the ties and connections that exist within texts” (Yule 2010: 284). This is why Grabe (1991: 379) refers to this kind of knowledge as “[f]ormal discourse structure knowledge”. Following Khalifa and Weir (2009: 43), genre knowledge is also part of text structure knowledge. Alderson (2005: 80) summarises lexical, syntactic and discourse knowledge under the term “linguistic knowledge”. Furthermore, knowledge about the topic of the text is essential for successful comprehension (Alderson 2005: 80; Grabe 1991: 379; Hedge 2000: 189; Khalifa & Weir 2009: 43). In addition, general world knowledge is needed for reading (Hedge 2000: 189; Khalifa & Weir 2009: 43). Alderson (2005: 80) refers to this kind of knowledge as background knowledge, which will be elaborated on in sub-section 4.2.1..

Further types of knowledge not mentioned by Khalifa and Weir (2009) are cultural knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. Alderson (2005: 80) views cultural knowledge as distinct from background knowledge and explains that “world knowledge typically refers to *your* world – the way your world works. [...] [O]ther people’s worlds may work differently” [original emphasis] (Alderson 2005: 45). This is the reason why knowledge about the target culture is essential for reading. Metacognitive knowledge is listed as a further crucial component for reading by Grabe (1991: 379).

2.3.1. Schema theory and its importance for the reading process

This sub-section is concerned with the notion of schemata and their influence on reading comprehension. At the beginning, the term schema is explained and an example of a schema is presented. Then, different kinds of schemata are illustrated as

well as why schemata are essential for understanding a text. Last, points of criticism with regard to schema theory are raised and discussed.

To start with, the question of how a schema can be defined is addressed. As far back as 1781, the philosopher Immanuel Kant already noted that “new information, new concepts, new ideas can have meaning only when they can be related to something the individual already knows” (Kant 1963 [1781], quoted in Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 553). This means that new information always needs to be linked to already existing knowledge. Carrell (1983: 82) is in line with Kant’s early observation since she also explains that something new can only be understood when some kind of relation can be established with existent knowledge. Anderson and Pearson (1988: 37) express this in the following metaphor: “[t]o say that one has comprehended a text is to say that she has found a mental ‘home’ for the information in the text, or else that she has modified an existing mental home in order to accommodate that new information”.

We have knowledge of all kinds of things, procedures, actions and facts, etc., which is stored in our brain. Schema theory views this “organized knowledge as an elaborate network or storage system of abstract mental structures that represent an individual’s understanding of concepts related to experiences and knowledge” (Little & Box 2011: 24). Thus, even though schemata are abstract, they help to describe how we store and organise knowledge in our brain. What is important to note is that in this quote, schemata are seen as personal interpretations of prior experience. Similarly, Hedge (2000: 411) views schemata as “[k]nowledge, gained from experience, of the way the world is organized which is held as mental representations in the mind”. Hence, in this definition, schemata refer to all kinds of knowledge. This also holds true for the definitions of Douglas and Anderson and Pearson, who describe the schema as a “framework, plan, or script” (Douglas 2004: 29) and as “an abstract knowledge structure” (Anderson & Pearson 1988: 42). Carrell (1984: 446), on the other hand, defines schemata with regard to texts only when stating that they are “background knowledge structures related to both the formal rhetorical organization and the content of a text”.

Schemata consist of so-called “‘nodes,’ ‘variables,’ or ‘slots’” (Anderson & Pearson 1988: 42) which are filled with information belonging to the specific schema. Anderson and Pearson (1988: 42-43) mention the example of the ship christening

schema and argue that one aspect most people associate with a ship christening is that it is performed by a celebrity. Thus, the celebrity is one slot in the ship christening schema. Another slot would be filled with the information that for the christening, a bottle is broken on the bow of the ship.

While reading, we are likely to encounter new information about a topic which we either already have a schema for or which is not yet part of our prior knowledge. In the former case, the new information is integrated in the existing schema (Alderson 2005: 33) if it agrees with old knowledge (Anderson & Pearson 1988: 48). However, if it contradicts the already existing schema, new information is either not incorporated or the old information is replaced by the newly gained data (Anderson & Pearson 1988: 48). In the latter case of coming across new information for which there are no existing knowledge structures, it is not so clear what happens (Alderson 2005: 44). The reason for this is that this information cannot be linked to already available knowledge (cf. criticism about schema theory at the end of this subsection).

Schemata do not only describe how knowledge in our brain is organised but also help us to anticipate the structure and the further development of texts and spoken interactions (Wallace 1992: 33). Moreover, schemata also contain “sociocultural aspects” (Wallace 1992: 35). Wallace (1992: 36) presents the example that citizens of the USA and Europe might have different schemata for the ownership of guns, which are likely to have their origin in varying attitudes towards keeping guns at home. In addition, there are also certain topics and genres that are unique to a particular culture such as “‘limerick’ and ‘cricket’” (Wallace 1992: 36). Hence, schemata do not only describe cognitive structures in our brain but they are also “social-psychological constructs” (Wallace 1992: 36) which are influenced by society and culture.

The following paragraphs will deal with the different kinds of schemata. First, Carrell’s (1983, 1984) distinction between formal and content schemata will be elaborated on and second, Wallace’s (1992) categories of genre and topic schemata will be outlined. Carrell (1983, 1984) distinguishes between formal and content schemata. Formal schemata are concerned with the organisation and structure of texts since these vary across text types and genres and often follow special conventions (Carrell 1984: 446-447). As an example, Carrell (1983: 84) names the

schema for simple stories, which implies that stories have a defined setting and a clear beginning, main part and ending. When readers know which structure to expect, it is easier for them to understand the text because they know, for instance, where to find the main information of a paragraph (Alderson 2005: 40). Moreover, there are “language and linguistic conventions” (Alderson 2005: 34) for different genres which are also part of formal schemata. Formal schemata do not only help to make sense of the text but also assist the reader with remembering the information contained (Carrell 1984: 447). In one of her studies, Carrell (1984: 462) was able to show that knowledge of text type and its structure facilitates recall of data from the text.

Content schemata are the second type of schemata Carrell (1983: 84) refers to. As the name already indicates, content schemata can be defined as knowledge about the content a text deals with. Examples of content schemata are “a text about washing clothes, celebrating New Year’s Eve in Hawaii, [...] or about the economy of Mexico” (Carrell 1983: 84). As the last two examples suggest, content schemata often contain cultural knowledge (cf. Alderson 2005: 45). There are a considerable number of studies which investigated whether knowledge of content influences readers’ comprehension and it was found that in most cases, readers understood the text better when they could relate the information to already existing knowledge (cf. Urquhart & Weir 1998: 63). This is especially true for texts that deal with “highly specialised” (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 65) topics such as nuclear physics. According to Alderson (2005: 34), content schemata can be further divided into background knowledge (also referred to as “knowledge of the world”), which is not always necessarily needed to understand the text, and “subject-matter knowledge”, which is essential for comprehension of the text. Note, however, that there seems to be no agreement as to whether background knowledge is a sub-category of content schemata (cf. Alderson 2005: 34) or whether it can be used as a synonym for schemata in general (cf. Anderson 1999: 11; Carrell 1983: 81; Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 556; Urquhart & Weir 1998: 68). Since the majority of authors seem to prefer the second option, the terms background knowledge and schemata will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

Wallace (1992: 34) distinguishes between genre and topic schemata, which is similar to Carrell’s distinction between formal and content schemata. As has already been mentioned, texts of varying genres follow different conventions with regard to

language, formality, structure, length, etc. Being aware of these conventions can facilitate the reading process to a significant extent. Wallace (1992: 34) terms the knowledge of such agreements and its organisation genre schemata.

The second group of schemata are topic schemata (Wallace 1992: 34-35). After having identified the text genre, readers will most likely try to find out the subject of the text. In order to do so, readers select words from the text that hint at a particular topic, such as “‘programme-economy-inflation-policy’” (Wallace 1992: 34), which suggest the subject of politics and not, for instance, of theatre. Thus, selected words activate a topic schema. However, in the case of highly specialised words such as “‘falls’, ‘gilts’, and ‘builders’” (Wallace 1992: 35), it can be challenging to decide which topic they belong to. If readers are not acquainted with the topic of finance, they will find it difficult to associate these words with the schema of the stock market.

It was already indicated above why schemata are of such great importance for the reading process. One of the reasons is that schemata have an effect on how texts are interpreted (Alderson 2005: 33). As already noted in section 2.1., a text itself does not carry meaning (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 559). Instead, meaning needs to be inferred by the reader (Alderson 2005: 6). What is inferred exactly is dependent on the reader’s background knowledge (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 556; Cook 2008: 121). As a result, the availability or non-availability of schemata influences the reading process to a great extent. If readers possess relevant background knowledge, linguistic deficiencies can be outweighed (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 63). On the other hand, if they do not possess a schema needed for understanding the text, this can cause serious comprehension problems (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 560). Moreover, it is possible that upon reading only one sentence or the first few lines of a text, the wrong schema is activated and, as a result, comprehension is hindered. However, when continuing reading and receiving more information, the reader might realise (though perhaps not consciously) that the wrong schema was activated and can therefore adapt to the new situation by calling on a different schema (Wallace 1992: 33-34).

Despite the importance of schema theory for the reading process, criticism is expressed too. The first point of criticism is that there is no agreement as to whether schemata are “fluid and constantly capable of adapting to fresh information [...] [or]

structured in advance, yet adaptable to text-driven alterations” (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 70). Thus, we are confronted with a problem of definition as it is not specified whether schemata are fairly stable or continuously changing. Additionally, Urquhart and Weir (1998: 71) criticise that schemata can refer to very different kinds of knowledge. They doubt if it makes sense to “apply the same term to notions as different as, say, our knowledge of the passive voice, of behaviour at a wedding, of birds, of the meaning and purpose of life, or of newspaper articles” (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 71-72). In addition, Alderson (2005: 44) criticises that even though schema theory can explain how new information is combined with existing knowledge, it cannot illustrate what happens with new information if it cannot be linked to prior knowledge. However, it needs to be mentioned at this point that Alderson (2005: 44) admits that “no information is completely new – similarities can be seen with something one already knows”. Therefore, readers will always be able to relate incoming information to something that is already known, even if it is only loosely connected. Another point of criticism mentioned by Alderson (2005: 46) is that schema theory is neither able to forecast how well a reader will understand a given text nor is it able to determine why comprehension occurs or does not occur. A further problem is mentioned by Urquhart and Weir (1998: 69) when they point out that it is difficult to define what needs to be included in the knowledge of a certain subject area. In other words, it is not possible to decide exactly what a schema is composed of. According to the authors, only knowing pure facts about a subject is not enough as readers also need to know how these facts can be linked. Last, it was already noted that the terms schemata and background knowledge are often used interchangeably. This is why it has sometimes been concluded that the notion of schemata is in fact of no use (cf. Urquhart and Weir 1998: 70).

In summary, schemata are mental structures organising our knowledge of different facts, events and subject areas. They consist of various types of information associated with a specific schema which is stored in so-called slots. When readers encounter new information, they try to integrate it into existent knowledge structures. The term schema can further be divided. Whereas Carrell (1983, 1984) distinguishes between formal and content schemata, Wallace (1992) decides on a similar categorisation but uses the terms of genre and topic schemata. The reason why proponents of schema theory consider schemata to be essential for the reading process is that a text does not contain meaning, which makes it necessary for the

readers to infer meaning based on their prior knowledge. As shown, the notion of schema theory is also seen critically since, for example, it is impossible to define the precise elements that need to be included in a certain schema.

2.3.2. Reading skills and reading strategies

Defining the difference between reading skills and reading strategies appears to be challenging. There are authors who describe skills and strategies as two separate entities (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 97), while others state that a clear distinction between skills and strategies is not possible (Khalifa & Weir 2009: 39). Grabe (2009: 221), for instance, argues that “what is a strategy and what is a skill is not clear, and there is likely to be less of a difference between the two concepts than a number of researchers have argued”. The blurred boundary between skills and strategies is also outlined by Alderson (2005: 311) and Grabe and Stoller (2002: 15).

Nevertheless, it is frequently argued that a strategy can be distinguished from a skill insofar as a strategy is conscious and a skill is automatic (Alexander & Jetton 2000: 295-296, quoted in Grabe 2009: 220; Urquhart & Weir 1998: 97.) Even though Khalifa and Weir (2009: 39) do not believe in such a clear-cut distinction, they decide to describe strategies as “purposeful, problem-solving activities” and skills as “automaticised abilities performed largely subconsciously”. Hence, this description also points towards a strategy being employed consciously and a skill being used automatically. Similarly, Carrell, Gajdusek and Wise (1998: 97) summarise that frequently, the term strategy is used to highlight that the reader is active during the reading process, whereas a skill points to “passive abilities which are not necessarily activated”.

Following Grabe (2009: 222), however, such a definition is problematic. The author points out that for the beginning reader, skills are conscious too since it takes time and requires practice until they become automatic. He illustrates that “even decoding does not start with automaticity, but with attentional resources actively engaged in problem solving by beginning readers” (Grabe 2009: 222). Moreover, strategies are frequently used by the reader without being aware of it, for instance, when unconsciously summarising what has just been read (Grabe 2009: 222) or when “skipping an unknown word while reading” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 15). Consequently, Grabe (2009: 221) defines strategies as “*cognitive processes that are*

open to conscious reflection but that may be on their way to becoming skills” [original emphasis]. Thus, this definition takes into account that a strategy is often employed consciously but can also become automatic. Since there does not seem to be agreement as to whether the terms skills and strategies can be used interchangeably or not, it was decided to follow Grabe for the purpose of this paper and to use the term strategy for conscious processes that can also become automatic and the term skill for automatic processes that can be conscious for beginning readers. Therefore, what needs to be borne in mind is that for the participants of this paper’s empirical investigation (cf. chapter 5), both strategies and skills are probably conscious because the pupils are beginning readers of English.

In the following, examples of reading skills and strategies will be presented without explicitly distinguishing the two terms for the above mentioned reasons. The list is a summary of the skills and strategies presented by Alderson (2005), Anderson (1999), Grabe (1991), Grabe (2009), Grabe and Stoller (2002) and Nation (2009).

- Word recognition skills (Grabe 1991: 379);
- Guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary by taking into account the context in which the words occur (Anderson 1999: 82; Grabe 1991: 382; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 7);
- Rereading certain parts of the text if their meaning is not clear (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Skimming (Alderson 2005: 60; Grabe 1991: 382), i.e. getting a general idea of what the text is about (Hedge 2000: 195);
- Trying to identify the structure of the text (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 7), for instance by paying attention to headings and subheadings and to the organisation of the text into paragraphs (Grabe 2009: 212);
- Identifying the most important information (Alderson 2005: 60; Grabe 1991: 382) and the main idea of the text (Anderson 1999: 82);
- Summarising the content of the text (Grabe 1991: 382; Grabe 2009: 209; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Asking questions concerning the text (Grabe 1991: 382; Grabe 2009: 209; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 7);
- Trying to answer these questions while reading (Grabe 2009: 209; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);

- Predicting what the text will be about (Anderson 1999: 82; Grabe 1991: 381; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 7) and thereby activating background knowledge (Grabe 2009: 209; Nation 2009: 7);
- Verifying or falsifying these predictions while reading (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Identifying a purpose for reading (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 7);
- Inferencing (Grabe 2009: 209; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Monitoring comprehension (Alderson 2005: 60; Anderson 1999: 83; Grabe 1991: 382; Grabe 2009: 209; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Using repair strategies if comprehension fails (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16);
- Relating new information contained in the text to background knowledge (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16) and comparing it with information presented in other texts (Grabe 1991: 381);
- Questioning the author's position and the content of the text (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 16; Nation 2009: 8).

Following this list of skills and strategies, the reader might get the impression that individual reading skills and strategies are used in isolation. However, as Grabe (2009: 215) points out, this is not the case since various skills and strategies are combined during the reading process. Alderson (2005: 50) also states that several skills and strategies interact but that the underlying mechanisms of this interaction still need to be investigated.

3. Reading in a second language

This chapter is concerned with the question of what is special about reading in a second language. Generally speaking, L2 reading is even more complicated than the basic reading process explained in chapter 2 since readers additionally have to deal with constraints caused by a limited knowledge of the target language and with influences of the L1. The additional complexity is explained in the discussion of the differences between first and second language reading in section 3.1.. This is followed by a description of the so-called language threshold which tries to answer the question as to whether L1 reading ability or L2 language proficiency has a greater influence on the L2 reading process (section 3.2.). Note that in the following, L1 reading is contrasted with L2 reading. Even though reference is only made to reading in a second language, all explanations are also applicable to reading in a foreign language that might be the reader's third or fourth language.

3.1. Differences between L1 and L2 reading

Several differences can be determined when comparing reading in a first language and reading in a second language. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002: 41), research into L2 reading is often very complex for several reasons. First of all, learners are not easily comparable as they have different language and cultural backgrounds, are of different ages and learn the L2 in different settings. Despite these difficulties, it is important to explore and discuss the considerable differences between L1 and L2 reading. Grabe and Stoller (2002) offer a very useful summary categorised into three main types of differences, namely “[l]inguistic and processing differences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 42), “[i]ndividual and experiential differences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 55) and “[s]ocio-cultural and institutional differences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 58). This classification will be used for the following sub-sections 3.1.1., 3.1.2. and 3.1.3.. Since many of those differences are also mentioned by other authors, their findings will be referred to as well.

3.1.1. Linguistic and processing differences

The first group of distinctions comprises seven “[l]inguistic and processing differences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 42). Some of them are advantages, some are

disadvantages for L2 readers. What they have in common is that when reading in a second language, not only one but rather two languages play a role. The reason for this is that the L1 has some influence as well when reading in a L2.

1. “Differing amounts of lexical, grammatical and discourse knowledge” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 42)

The first difference mentioned is that learners’ knowledge about the lexis, grammar and discourse of the L2 is likely to be less complete compared to the knowledge they have of their L1. L2 learners often start reading while they are still learning the grammar and vocabulary of that language, which means that these two processes take place more or less simultaneously (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 43). Thus, it might be the case that L2 grammar and vocabulary knowledge is very limited, whereas L1 learners already have more elaborate linguistic knowledge before they normally start reading between the ages of five and seven. Moreover, since L1 learners already know most of the words contained in texts when learning to read, they mostly also know their pronunciation (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 43). L2 learners, however, do not know as many words and their pronunciation, which makes reading more demanding (see also Verhoeven 1990: 92). In Grabe and Stoller’s (2002: 43) words, this means that “one benefit of developing accurate letter-sound correspondences as a support for reading is lost in most L2 settings; that is, L2 students cannot match a sounded out word to a word that they know orally since they do not yet know the word orally”. This is in line with what Williams (1986: 4) names as the main difference between L1 and L2 reading. He explains that “the native speaker [...] uses knowledge of the language to help him read, whereas the latter [the foreign learner] uses reading to help him learn the language” (Williams 1986: 4). Birch (2007: 11-12) is of the same opinion when saying that L2 learners’ command of the target language is limited as they may lack vocabulary and grammatical knowledge as well as knowledge about the target culture. With regard to discourse knowledge, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 43) argue that pupils need to learn about the organisation of different text types. Such knowledge is important because learners may be able to comprehend the main points but not how individual arguments are developed or how the text is structured (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 43-44). In his discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of being a second language reader, Nation (2009: 5-7) considers their limited knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, discourse and sounds to be a disadvantage. He claims that 98% of vocabulary need to be known so that learners

can understand a text. Thus, the L2 reader's limited knowledge of vocabulary should always be kept in mind.

2. "Greater metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness in L2 settings" (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 44)

The second difference mentioned by Grabe and Stoller (2002: 44) is that learners' knowledge about the language itself, i.e. metalinguistic knowledge, is often higher when learning a second language. This means that they are more aware of linguistic terminology or grammar rules, for example, which helps with the reading process (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 44-45). Furthermore, metacognitive awareness is frequently higher for L2 learners since they already know how reading works from their L1 (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 45). This means that they might have developed skills and strategies in their L1 that can help them in the L2 as well, that they can reflect on the reading process more consciously and that they are possibly able to detect why a comprehension problem occurred at a certain point (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 45). Hence, if problems arise, L2 learners may be able to deal with them more efficiently than beginning L1 readers since they are more likely to know the reason for them. The same point is mentioned by Nation (2009: 6-7), who lists this higher metacognitive awareness as an advantage for L2 readers. Since they are usually older than beginning L1 readers, they are cognitively more mature for the reading process (Nation 2009: 5, 7).

3. "Different amounts of exposure to L2 reading" (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 46)

Another difference is that in contrast to their mother tongue, learners mostly do not read enough in the second language. What Grabe and Stoller do not mention, however, is how much reading would be enough. Nevertheless, their suggestion seems reasonable as in daily life, learners read in the L1 all the time, whereas reading in the L2 might be limited to school or other educational settings. Following Birch (2007: 11-12, 82) and Hulstijn (1991: 7), this results in slower processing of the language. They say that in contrast to native speakers, word recognition is often not automatised, i.e. is slower and less accurate. Thus, poor second language readers need to concentrate most on word recognition processes so that they cannot concentrate on vocabulary, grammar and background knowledge as much (Hulstijn here refers to the results of a study carried out by Segalowitz, Poulsen & Komoda (1991)).

4. “Varying linguistic differences across any two languages” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 47)

Concerning linguistic differences between languages, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 47) mention the following example. Learners who have a Romance language such as French or Spanish as their L1 focus on suffixes when reading because in Romance languages, suffixes contain a high amount of grammatical information. The same holds true for German, which is “a highly inflected language” (Bernhardt 1987: 48). In contrast, English is “a relatively noninflected language” (Bernhardt 1987: 48) and as a consequence, affixes are not as important with regard to grammatical information. Therefore, pupils need to be made aware of this difference and they need to learn not to pay too much attention to prefixes and suffixes. Additionally, orthography varies across languages (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 47). English orthography, for instance, is irregular, which means that words are often pronounced differently from the way they are spelled (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 48). In German, and especially in Spanish, for example, it is fairly easy to know how a word is pronounced based on its spelling (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 48). As a result of their German or Spanish L1 reading experience, learners may struggle with decoding English words.

5. “Varying L2 proficiencies as a foundation for L2 reading” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 50)

The “Language Threshold Hypothesis” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 50) indicates that a certain level of knowledge of the L2 is needed in order to be able to read in the target language and to transfer reading skills and strategies used in the L1 to the L2. As already mentioned above, knowledge of lexis, grammar and text organisation is needed (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 50). If readers need too many cognitive resources to process the language of the text, they cannot concentrate on “fluent comprehension” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 51) properly, which makes comprehension of L2 texts very laborious. A more detailed discussion of the language threshold and its implications will follow in section 3.2..

6. “Varying language transfer influences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 52)

Transfer of knowledge, skills and strategies from the learners’ first to the second language can help but can also hinder the reading process. If it helps, this is referred to as transfer; if it hinders reading, this is called interference. Transfer means that cognitive and metacognitive resources from the L1, such as reading skills and

strategies or background knowledge, are used for reading in the target language (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 52). Nation (2009: 5-7) mentions skills and strategies such as skimming, scanning, using contextual clues or guessing the meaning of unknown words. Richard-Amato (2010: 71) and Nation (2009: 6-7) claim that these reading skills and strategies can be transferred from the learners' first to their second language. However, other authors argue that a direct transfer from one language to the other is not that easy and that it is questionable whether such a transfer happens automatically (Alderson 1984: 17; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 71).

In the case of interference, influences from the L1 have a negative impact on the comprehension of the L2 (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 52-53). Similar to transfer, interference affects, amongst others, phonology, phrases, morphology and syntax (Yule 2010: 191). Since interference is linked to incomplete knowledge of the target language and since learners rely more on their L1 when they only have limited knowledge of the L2, it is more likely to occur at the lower level of L2 proficiency (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 52).

7. "Interacting influence of working with two languages" (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 54)
As noted above, while reading in a second language, the first language is involved as well (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 54). Grabe and Stoller (2002: 54) name several effects that the L1 might have on processing the L2, amongst others "word recognition, reading rate, the organisation of the lexicon, the speed of syntactic processing, strategies for comprehension". It seems that according to this description, this seventh difference could also be grouped together with the sixth difference as the processes named can either be regarded as transfer or interference.

3.1.2. Individual and experiential differences

The second set of distinctions mentioned by Grabe and Stoller (2002: 55) is called "[i]ndividual and experiential differences", comprising four reasons why L2 reading is different from L1 reading.

1. "Differing levels of L1 reading abilities" (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 56)

The underlying assumption of this difference is that L1 reading skills and strategies have an impact on L2 reading. If many skills and strategies are available in the mother tongue, more of them can be transferred to the target language in comparison with a poor L1 reader, who will not be able to make use of many L1 reading skills

and strategies. However, what was mentioned above should be kept in mind, namely that there is no consensus as to whether all L1 reading skills and strategies are automatically transferable to the L2.

2. “Differing motivations for reading in the L2” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 56)

Learners will most likely show varying motivations for reading in the L2, which depends on personal aims but also on socialisation issues and the role that literacy plays in the learners’ environment. Thus, according to the varying backgrounds of learners, they will value L2 reading differently, which has an influence on their self-concept, their motivation and how important L2 reading ability is for them.

3. “Differing kinds of texts in L2 contexts” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 57)

When reading in the L2, learners might not be confronted with such a variety of text types as they are probably familiar with in the L1. Therefore, L2 learners might only have experience with some text types, their specific structure and vocabulary.

4. “Differing language resources for L2 readers” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 57)

Grabe and Stoller (2002: 57-58) argue that pupils might use various tools that help them to successfully read in the L2, such as bilingual dictionaries or glossaries (the latter helping with difficult vocabulary by providing translations, explanations, definitions or synonyms). These aids are not normally used when reading in the mother tongue (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 57-58).

3.1.3. Socio-cultural and institutional differences

“Socio-cultural and institutional differences” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 58) are the third group of differences, which the authors summarise as follows, “[r]eading development and reading instruction are strongly influenced by parental and community attitudes toward reading and uses of literacy” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 58-59). Three differences are mentioned in this category.

1. “Differing socio-cultural backgrounds of L2 readers” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 59)

As learners have diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, they might have varying opinions on literacy and its importance. In addition, approaches to interpreting texts might differ. Learners might be used to challenging the content of the text and to assessing it critically, while others might take it as the ultimate truth.

2. “Differing ways of organising discourse and texts” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 60)

Grabe and Stoller point out that different cultures organise and structure texts differently. As a result, reading in the target language might mean that readers have to deal with an organisation of texts that they are not familiar with (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 60). They explain that this can concern the way in which an argument is presented, the degree of new information being provided or how directly the reader is addressed (e.g. by using or not using the pronoun *you*) (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 60-61). Richard-Amato (2010: 71), on the contrary, argues that L2 learners might even have an advantage with regard to discourse since they already know from their L1 how texts can be structured.

3. “Differing expectations of L2 educational institutions” (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 61)

When discussing this difference, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 61) refer to situations in which the second language is learned in the country where the target language is spoken as the L1. In this case, the educational setting may be different from what the learners are used to from their home country, which might have an influence on exam formats or on ways of teaching pupils are not familiar with (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 61).

To summarise, Grabe and Stoller (2002: 42-63) mention fourteen differences between reading in the first and second language which are related to the target language, the linguistic background of individual pupils and the environment in which the L2 is learned.

3.2. The linguistic threshold

The notion of the linguistic threshold is based on the question as to whether L1 reading ability or L2 proficiency has a greater impact on L2 reading. In 1984, Alderson posed the question “[I]s foreign language reading a language problem or a reading problem?” (Alderson 1984: 24). The author proposed four hypotheses which are based on the two opposite positions concerning this question. The two major viewpoints are that either first language reading ability or second language knowledge is more important for L2 reading (Alderson 1984: 4; Devine 1988: 261). Alderson’s (1984: 4) first hypothesis claims that poor L2 reading has its roots in poor L1 reading. Hence, the underlying assumption is that a transfer of reading skills and strategies from one language to the other is possible (Alderson 1984: 6). Poor first

language readers only have a limited range of reading skills and strategies in their mother tongue and as a result, only a few or no skills and strategies can be transferred to the reading of the target language. What this implies is that the reading process will not vary significantly between various languages (Devine 1988: 261). As a result, a good L1 reader will also be a good L2 reader and a poor L1 reader will likewise be a poor L2 reader (Alderson 1984: 4). Thus, what is not taken into consideration at all is the reader's proficiency level in the second language.

The second hypothesis is a variation on the first hypothesis and states that poor L2 reading occurs because of poor or wrong reading strategies (Alderson 1984: 4). Alderson (1984: 10) explains that in similar languages, similar reading strategies may be applied but that for very different languages, also different strategies are needed. Therefore, a transfer of strategies is not possible in the latter case and if it happens nonetheless, the result is a poor L2 reading performance (Alderson 1984: 10). Hence, following this point of view, L1 reading plays a greater role than knowledge of the second language.

Alderson's (1984: 4) third hypothesis says that the reason for poor L2 reading is poor L2 ability. This means that knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, organisation of discourse and so on have a greater impact on L2 reading than the ability to read in the first language. Devine (1988: 261) notes that during the 1970s, more and more research showed that the influence of L1 reading ability was not as strong as had been presumed before. Several studies even revealed that there was no "strong relationship between reading ability in the first language and reading ability in a second language" (Devine 1988: 261).

The fourth hypothesis presented by Alderson (1984: 4) is a variation on hypothesis 3 and states that poor L2 reading occurs when the so-called linguistic threshold has not yet been passed. The assumption here is that learners need to know a certain amount of the target language without which reading is not possible (Alderson 1984: 4).

The author presents evidence from studies for all four hypotheses. For a detailed description of these studies, the reader is referred to Alderson's (1984) article. Alderson (1984: 20) concludes that "some sort of threshold or language competence ceiling has to be attained before existing abilities in the first language can begin to transfer". In a much more recent work, he summarises in a similar way that

[r]esearch to investigate or resolve the question whether second-language reading is a *language* problem or a *reading* problem has suggested the notion of a threshold of linguistic knowledge, without which readers cannot expect any first-language reading ability to transfer to the second language. [original emphasis] (Alderson 2005: 38)

The view that L1 reading can only help with L2 reading after a certain level, i.e. the linguistic threshold, has been reached in the second language is also supported by Clarke (1988: 120), Grabe and Stoller (2002: 50-52) and Hulstijn (1991: 9). This level is also referred to as the “language competence ceiling” (Clarke 1979: 121). Thus, concerning Alderson’s question from 1984, it seems that having a certain amount of linguistic knowledge of the L2 seems to be more important than L1 reading skills and strategies. Grabe and Stoller (2002: 50) summarise that “[a]lthough there are a number of qualifications, this hypothesis has been strongly supported by recent L2 reading research”. Nevertheless, Alderson (2005: 23) argues that both reading ability in the mother tongue as well as language knowledge of the target language are important in order to successfully read in a L2. It does make a difference if someone is a highly skilled and experienced reader in the L1 or if someone has little experience with reading (see also Bossers 1991). However, he also states that knowledge of the second language has still a greater impact than reading ability in the L1 as “[t]he notion that poor second-language reading is due to inadequate first-language reading receives little support from the research literature” (Alderson 2005: 24).

It is important to note that the threshold is not static. Where the threshold is located, i.e. which and how much knowledge of the second language is needed precisely, cannot be generalised. This is dependent on the text, its topic, the task related to it, the purpose for reading as well as the readers themselves and their knowledge of the world (Alderson 2005: 24; Bossers 1991: 57; Devine 1988: 267; Grabe & Stoller 2002: 50; Urquhart & Weir 1998: 72). What can be said, however, is that linguistic knowledge itself is not enough for successful L2 comprehension because content and formal schemata play a role as well (cf. Grabe 1986: 34; Grabe 1991: 381). Devine (1988: 273) provides the following example: the higher the background knowledge of a reader, the lower the threshold will be.

To sum up, readers need to have a certain command of the L2 in order to be able to make sense of L2 readings. Moreover, L1 reading competence can only be transferred to the second language if the threshold level is passed. The linguistic

threshold cannot be defined in absolute terms but varies according to text type, the task and reader variables such as background knowledge. It seems reasonable to assume that the more difficult the reading in question, the higher the level of the threshold (Alderson 2005: 39).

4. Teaching reading in a second language

Chapter 4 is concerned with the teaching of reading in a second language. First, section 4.1. explains the importance of the pre-, while- and post-reading phase for reading comprehension tasks and describes each of the three phases. Section 4.2. then focuses on the pre-reading stage in more detail, discussing the two main advantages of the pre-reading phase, namely schema activation and increase in motivation. Moreover, different pre-reading exercises are presented and since the participants of this thesis' empirical investigation use the coursebook *MORE! 2* (cf. section 5.3.), it is analysed which of them are to be found in this book. Last, various studies on the success of pre-reading tasks are summarised and the pre-reading phase itself is also regarded critically.

4.1. The three-phase structure

Reading comprehension tasks are now frequently addressed in terms of a three-phase structure which consists of a pre-, while- and post-reading phase (Hedge 2000: 209). The aim of this structure is to facilitate the reading process for pupils and to help them to make sense of the text. Williams (1986: 40) is of the opinion that there are two main advantages of the three stages. First, learners' language proficiency and background knowledge is taken into account, which increases their "involvement [and] motivation" (Williams 1986: 40), and second, the pre- and post-reading phase help to include the other three skills of listening, speaking and writing as well. However, Williams (1986: 40) also notes that there might be cases in which it is better not to include all three phases in the reading task. For reasons of suspense, for instance, the pre-reading phase may be left out (cf. sub-section 4.2.6. for a more detailed account). Even though he does not provide concrete examples, Williams (1986: 40) suggests that the post-reading stage could be omitted as well if it is not appropriate.

In the following, the purpose of each phase is explained and examples of activities for the three phases are presented. Note, however, that examples of pre-reading exercises are not discussed at this point but in sub-section 4.2.3 since section 4.2. discusses the pre-reading phase in more detail.

As its name implies, the **pre-reading phase** takes place prior to the actual reading, thus, before learners are first confronted with the text. Generally speaking, the pre-reading phase serves as an orientation phase. It allows pupils to become acquainted with the content expressed in the reading and with the context in which the text was written (Hedge 2000: 210). Furthermore, it tries to make learners interested in the reading (Williams 1986: 37) and to increase their motivation to read the text (Madaoui 2013: 16; Richard-Amato 2010: 309; Williams 1986: 37). To illustrate, learners often become motivated when they are asked to predict the content of the text before reading (Richard-Amato 2010: 138) or when they have a clear reason why the text needs to be read (Hedge 2000: 210). In addition, pre-reading activities help the pupils to connect the information contained in the text to already existing knowledge (Hedge 2000: 210; Madaoui 2013: 10; Richard-Amato 2010: 309; Wallace 1992: 86) and to reflect on their own experience with regard to the text's topic (Hedge 2000: 210). Such tasks also encourage learners to think about their own view on a specific subject matter (Hedge 2000: 210) before reading about the author's opinion. What is more, the pre-reading stage prepares pupils for the language they will encounter in the text, for instance, new vocabulary or unknown phrases (Hedge 2000: 210; Madaoui 2013: 10; Rivas 1999: 16; Wallace 1992: 88; Williams 1986: 37). It can also provide learners with cultural information necessary for understanding the reading (Madaoui 2013: 9; Richard-Amato 2010: 309; Wallace 1992: 86). Last, pre-reading tasks have an advantage for teachers as well since they allow them to find out what pupils already know about the topic and which specific aspects they are especially interested in (Richard-Amato 2010: 309).

As the name already suggests, exercises belonging to the **while-reading phase** are carried out during the process of reading. The goal of such tasks is "to encourage learners to be active as they read [and] [...] to intervene in the reading process in some way" (Hedge 2000: 210). Moreover, they can help pupils to reflect on what they read. While-reading activities aim at facilitating comprehension of the writer's purpose and the content of the reading as well as at helping to make sense of the text's organisation (Rivas 1999: 16; Williams 1986: 38). Additionally, while-reading exercises often support the ongoing interaction between reader and writer (Wallace 1992: 93). In the case of the text presenting a problem, for instance, while-reading tasks encourage the reading pupil to think about and suggest possible solutions to the problem after every paragraph or every few paragraphs (Wallace 1992: 93). What

should also be practised during the while-reading phase is reading skills and strategies (Rivas 1999: 16). (For a more detailed account of reading skills and strategies see sub-section 2.3.2..) Concerning the sequence of while-reading activities, Williams (1986: 39) suggests that “[a]s a rule, while-reading work should begin with a general or global understanding of the text, and then move to smaller units such as paragraphs, sentences and words”. Hence, with regard to the categorisation following in the next paragraph, the initial tasks should be concerned with the structure and the overall topic of the text. Only then should the exercises deal with specific linguistic features or details of content.

The aim of the following enumeration is to provide an overview of what such while-reading activities can look like. All while-reading tasks listed are mentioned by Davies (1982), Hedge (2000), Rivas (1999), Urquhart and Weir (1998), Wallace (1992) and Williams (1986). They were summarised and categorised into the following four groups: the structure of the text, its subject, its linguistic features and learner variables.

1. While-reading tasks that focus on the structure of the text

- Pupils find out about the order in which different ideas are contained in the text (Hedge 2000: 210). Afterwards, they need to transform the obtained information into a visual representation by filling in a grid, table, chart or diagram (Hedge 2000: 210; Rivas 1999: 18; Wallace 1992: 96; Williams 1986: 38).
- Learners look for an essential sentence at the beginning of a story which hints at its further development (Davies 1982, referred to in Wallace 1992: 95).
- The topic sentences have been removed from the text. Pupils determine which topic sentence fits which paragraph (Rivas 1999: 15).
- Jigsaw reading (Wallace 1992: 96): Learners work together in groups. Each learner has only one part of the text (e.g. one paragraph) and the whole group needs to find out their correct order.

2. While-reading tasks that are concerned with the topic of the text

- Pupils create questions concerning the text and its subject (Hedge 2000: 210).
- Learners find out whether their predictions about the text from the pre-reading stage were true (Hedge 2000: 210).

- Pupils read the paragraphs one by one and at the end of each paragraph, they try to anticipate the content of the next one (Hedge 2000: 210).

3. While-reading tasks that address linguistic features

- Learners pay attention to the language being used (Rivas 1999: 17). For instance, they focus on how the writer expresses their opinion and identify phrases which help them to do so (Wallace 1992: 119). Another example is to focus on vocabulary highly relevant to the topic in question and to analyse how these words are used in context (Williams 1986: 44).
- Cloze exercise (Wallace 1992: 95-96): In the reading comprehension, some words are left out and are replaced by a gap. Learners need to find out which words could be used to fill the gaps. What needs to be kept in mind here is that there will most likely be more than one right solution (Wallace 1992: 96).

4. While-reading tasks that address learner variables

- Self-monitoring: During the reading process, pupils continuously ask themselves whether they understand what they are reading (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 186). If they do, they continue reading. If they do not, they use repair strategies. Additionally, they check if their existing knowledge is in line with the (probably new) information presented in the text (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 186-187). This ties in with the notion of schema theory as the question is whether the content of the reading task can be integrated into already existing schemata (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 186-187).
- Learners provide their own opinion on the text and its topic (Hedge 2000: 210). In the case of the author expressing their view, they compare and contrast it with their own standpoint (Hedge 2000: 210).
- Pupils are encouraged to approach the text critically. While-reading tasks can make learners aware of two different interpretations of a text by comparing, for instance, in which ways a character can be seen or in which ways a certain action or a specific sentence can be interpreted (Wallace 1992: 116-118).

Wallace (1992: 100) points out that despite the positive effects of while-reading tasks, criticism can also be raised. She notes that doing while-reading exercises seems rather unnatural as the reading process is disrupted several times, which is usually not the case when reading in the mother tongue. Nevertheless, such exercises

help the pupil to actively think about the reading process during reading. Therefore, the advantages predominate.

The involvement with the text should not finish after the actual reading process but should continue in the **post-reading phase**. Therefore, post-reading exercises should encourage learners to further reflect on the reading and to refer to their own experience, opinions and existing knowledge (Williams 1986: 39). Generally speaking, post-reading tasks should also train the three skills alongside reading, namely writing, speaking and listening (Williams 1986: 39). According to Rivas (1999: 18), it is essential that these activities “resemble ‘real’ activities performed by native readers”.

Examples of such follow-up activities are, amongst others, mentioned by Hedge (2000), Rivas (1999), Urquhart and Weir (1998), Wallace (1992) and Williams (1986) and will be summarised in the following list. Note, however, that the list is by no means exhaustive.

- Before the three-phase structure was promoted for reading comprehension tasks, the typical post-reading activity was to answer a set of comprehension questions (Wallace 1992: 100). Such comprehension questions are still often used as a post-reading exercise (Wallace 1992: 100).
- Learners engage in a role-play which is in some way related to the content of the text (Wallace 1992: 101). Thus, the skill of speaking is practised.
- The reading is followed by a debate or discussion about one or more aspects of the text or about the text as a whole (Hedge 2000: 211). Again, speaking is at the centre of attention.
- Pupils express their view on the text (Hedge 2000: 211; Rivas 1999: 18). As an example, they argue whether they found the text helpful, interesting, provoking, etc. (Williams 1986: 39). These activities can be done orally or in a written format.
- Learners evaluate the text by questioning its content and by not automatically taking it as the ultimate truth (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 187). This can be done in the format of speaking or writing (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 187).
- Learners complete a story (Williams 1986: 44) or write another ending to the story (Rivas 1999: 18). They write a letter to the editor (Wallace 1992: 101), to the author or the main character. Other examples of post-reading writing tasks

are writing a follow-up newspaper article, a report, a summary, instructions, a sketch or an advertisement (Rivas 1999: 19; Williams 1986: 44).

- Rivas (1999: 19) names listening tasks as follow-up activities. A radio programme or an audio book on the same or a similar topic might be used for this purpose.
- Similar to the while-reading phase, pupils' attention can also be drawn to the language being used after reading (Hedge 2000: 211; Rivas 1999: 19). To illustrate, specific vocabulary and common phrases can be discussed (Hedge 2000: 211) or how the writer's opinion is expressed. Further, the text can be analysed with regard to the difference between informal and formal style (Rivas 1999: 19).
- Learners try to find various solutions to a problem presented in the text (Williams 1986: 51).
- Pupils read more texts on the same topic, which, however, express a different opinion (Hedge 2000: 211). Subsequently, they compare the different texts (Wallace 1992: 122).

To summarise, the three-phase approach promotes a pre-, while- and post-reading phase for reading comprehension tasks. At each stage, pupils are asked to do one or more exercises which help them with the reading process. Whereas the pre-reading stage aims at motivating learners and at activating relevant background knowledge, while-reading exercises attempt to actively engage pupils in the reading process. Post-reading tasks frequently address the skills of speaking, writing and listening and serve as further means for reflection and interaction with the text.

4.2. The pre-reading phase

This section is concerned with the pre-reading phase in more detail. Since the pre-reading phase is beneficial for two main reasons, namely for the activation of background knowledge and for motivational reasons, these are discussed in sub-sections 4.2.1. and 4.2.2.. Next, examples of different pre-reading activities are presented in sub-section 4.2.3.. Already with regard to the empirical part of the paper, the different kinds of pre-reading tasks in the school book *MORE! 2* are analysed in sub-section 4.2.4.. Thereafter, in sub-section 4.2.5., various studies on the impact of pre-reading exercises are presented. Last, sub-section 4.2.6. offers a

critical view of the pre-reading stage. Note that a general description of the pre-reading phase was already provided in section 4.1.. This is the reason why it is not included at this point.

4.2.1. Schema theory: the role of background knowledge

This sub-section attempts to answer the question as to why pre-reading tasks are essential for schema activation (cf. sub-section 2.3.1. for a detailed discussion of schema theory). The first reason for the significance of pre-reading exercises is that schemata do not only need to be possessed but they also need to be activated (Bransford, Stein & Shelton 1984: 33; Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 560). This activation ideally takes place before the actual reading since “[w]e want to avoid having students read material ‘cold’” (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 567). Anderson and Pearson (1988: 43-44) argue that a schema can be activated by coming across one or more of its elements. In addition, one element is likely to remind the reader of other elements as well. The authors further explain that there are constituents which are more likely to remind the reader of the right schema than others, which is why these words are especially important for the comprehension of the text. Hence, it can be concluded that words which are likely to activate the right schema should be referred to in the pre-reading stage.

Once a schema has been activated, learners have access to their already existing knowledge about a topic (Little & Box 2011: 25). Moreover, the activated schema allows them to link old and new knowledge and to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge structures, which can be achieved by using visualisations such as graphic organisers (Little & Box 2011: 25). Little and Box (2011: 26) explain that

[s]tudies have [...] shown that providing students with background information on a topic through the use of specific pre-reading strategies such as [...] graphic organizers implemented before reading [...] is likely to assist in schema building and therefore enhance vocabulary and reading comprehension.

However, readers do not only need to be prepared for the topic, related ideas and vocabulary. As Carrell (1984: 441) points out, it is also important to be aware of text genre, its conventions and specific structure. This kind of background knowledge, i.e. formal schema, can also be activated through pre-reading tasks. One way of

achieving this is suggested by Anderson (1999: 14) who recommends discussing linking words before reading.

It is possible, however, that a schema addressed in the text is not at the reader's disposal or is not activated. If this is the case, the result can be serious comprehension problems (Carrell & Eisterhold 1983: 560). Hence, to ensure that comprehension does not fail, it is essential to equip readers with or to activate the appropriate schema. This can best be done in the pre-reading phase (cf. Anderson 1999: 12), for instance, by teaching relevant vocabulary (Cook 2008: 123) or by a discussion about what learners already know about the topic in question.

A concrete example of how a schema can be activated during the pre-reading phase is offered by Pearson-Casanave (1984: 335). Learners are asked to read a travel journal written by a foreign student travelling to the USA. As preparation, the teacher tries to determine which kind of background knowledge the pupils need in order to understand the text. In this case, knowledge is necessary about what it is like to travel to an unknown country or about difficulties of making oneself understood in a foreign language, about vocabulary related to the issue of travelling, about how such a travel journal is structured and about the informal writing style. The learners Pearson-Casanave refers to were English second language learners in the USA who had previously left their home countries. For this reason, the author suggested that the learners should note down their way from their home to their destination in the USA including different kinds of transport used. This was then discussed with the entire class, which ensured that important vocabulary was mentioned automatically. Consequently, the schema of travelling to the USA was activated. The learners were aware of the common style and structure of travel journals, which is why this did not need to be discussed in the pre-reading phase.

To sum up, pre-reading tasks are a helpful tool to activate background knowledge. Activation of the right schema can reduce the likelihood of failure of comprehension and can further assist in relating new to existing knowledge. If chances are high that pupils do not possess the schema in question, it should be acquired in the pre-reading phase.

4.2.2. The role of motivation

It has already been noted that pre-reading activities can help to raise pupils' motivation to read a given text. This sub-section explores why motivation plays such an important role for reading and which types of motivation can be distinguished. Moreover, differences between motivated and unmotivated learners are addressed and last, it is investigated what pre-reading tasks can achieve in terms of motivation.

Motivation plays such an essential role since, according to Ur (1996: 274), learning is "easier", "more pleasant" and "more productive" when learners are motivated. Thus, it facilitates learning to a great extent. What is more, motivation increases the success of learning, and success, again, increases motivation. Even though it is not entirely clear which of the two factors induces the other, success and motivation have been shown to be interrelated (Ur 1996: 275). To exemplify, poor readers often have no motivation to read a given text and as a result, they often read less than good readers (Alderson 2005: 53). Due to lack of practice, they remain poor readers (Alderson 2005: 53), which is a vicious circle.

The literature frequently distinguishes between different types of motivation. This is why the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic, integrative and instrumental as well as between global, situational and task motivation will be explained below. For the classroom, the most important distinction is perhaps between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which concerns the source of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is "generated internally by the individual" (Alderson 2005: 53), which means that the source of motivation is **in** the learner. Moreover, pupils are intrinsically motivated if they learn in order to know the content of the learning afterwards (Fransson 1984: 88; Ur 1996: 274). Ur (1996: 276) describes intrinsic motivation as "the urge to learn for its own sake, which is very typical of young children and tends to deteriorate with age". Young children do not learn with a fixed purpose in mind but they learn in order to learn, because they want to explore things and because they are curious. Another characteristic of intrinsically motivated learners is that they often forget themselves while studying because they are so absorbed in the subject matter (Fransson 1984: 89). This again can often be observed with young children. Since intrinsic motivation is not generated by another person but by the learners themselves, it is frequently said "to be superior to extrinsic motivation" (Alderson 2005: 53). Although intrinsic motivation needs to come from the learner, it can be

influenced by the teacher to some extent, for instance, by showing learners that the teacher themselves is intrinsically motivated or by planning activities on a topic learners show special interest in (Ur 1996: 280). Thus, intrinsic motivation may be increased through pre-reading exercises that address a topic which is particularly exciting for pupils.

In contrast, extrinsic motivation means being motivated due to an “external reward” (Ur 1996: 274). In this case, pupils are motivated to study because they aim for good grades, want to pass an exam or want to satisfy and impress their parents, teacher or friends. For the teacher, it is difficult to influence these points (Ur 1996: 277). Nevertheless, Ur (1996: 276) argues that both kinds of motivation are of importance in the language classroom.

Besides the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation is differentiated from instrumental motivation. Motivation is said to be integrative when a new language is learned because the person has moved to a new country and wants to make themselves understood or find new friends. In short, the language is learned because the person wants to be integrated (cf. Richard-Amato 2010: 157; Ur 1996: 274). Hence, the language is learned for the sake of knowing the language. With regard to reading, this means that reading is practised because of the person’s need to understand texts in daily life. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, means that someone wants to learn the language in order to achieve something else, e.g. good grades or getting promoted (cf. Richard-Amato 2010: 157; Ur 1996: 274). In this case, the language is seen as an instrument to reach another goal. According to Richard-Amato (2010: 157), integrative motivation is more powerful than instrumental motivation in the majority of cases.

A further differentiation can be made between global, situational and task motivation (Ur 1996: 276). The first refers to the general attitude towards learning the language, which can be influenced by the prestige of the language, by learners’ own experiences with the language or by the teacher’s enthusiasm and approach. Situational motivation is affected by the setting in which a language is learned, such as school, university or a language class in the target country. Task motivation, on the other hand, is dependent on the task that needs to be done. Ur (1996: 276) argues that this type of motivation can be influenced in the classroom very well. As a consequence, it can be supposed that good pre-reading activities are especially

important with regard to task motivation and should therefore aim at confronting pupils with encouraging tasks.

Next, the difference between motivated and unmotivated learners as well as between intrinsically and extrinsically motivated learners is elaborated on. What distinguishes motivated from unmotivated pupils is that they are enthusiastic about a task and do not need to be encouraged to improve their language ability as this is their own will (Ur 1996: 274). For motivated pupils, it is important to be successful and they are eager to have good grades (Ur 1996: 275). Moreover, motivated learners have self-confidence, even if the task is difficult, and do not become desperate if a task cannot be solved immediately or if they have once been unsuccessful (Ur 1996: 275).

The difference between intrinsically and extrinsically motivated pupils with regard to a reading task is illustrated by Alderson (2005: 53), who states that extrinsically motivated pupils

seem to read at a surface level, paying attention to facts and details rather than to the main ideas, to what the text is about, to how ideas in the text relate to each other, and to how the text relates to other texts, or to what the reader knows about the subject or the world.

Thus, extrinsically motivated learners do what is generally expected from them in class, namely selecting information which is likely to be asked for in a task following the reading comprehension. Or in Alderson's (2005: 53) words: "[t]hese [...] types of understanding [...] are held to be educationally desirable". Intrinsically motivated learners, in contrast, remember information from the text better (Alderson 2005: 54) since they read the text as a whole more carefully. For this reason, it can be assumed that this is the case for all the information included in the text and not only for those facts referred to in the task following the reading comprehension.

When pupils are not already motivated before the reading lesson, the pre-reading phase is an optimal moment for creating motivation. What this implies for the planning of the pre-reading stage will be explained below. It was already noted that learners become motivated to read a text when interest is raised. This can either be achieved by making the pupils interested in the topic or by motivating them by a demanding task for the while- or post-reading phase (Ur 1996: 148). The first raises intrinsic motivation, whereas the second is a means of generating extrinsic motivation. One way of creating interest in the topic is to let learners predict the content of the text (Richard-Amato 2010: 138). Furthermore, motivation is likely to

increase when learners can relate the text or topic in question to their own lives (Pitcher *et al.* 2007: 378-379; Richard-Amato 2010: 138; Ur 1996: 281). Hence, it seems advisable to address pupils' views and personal experiences in the pre-reading stage.

Saricoban (2002: 11) suggests that during the preparation of the pre-reading phase, teachers should ask themselves the following question: "Why should anyone want to use this text, and can the same, or similar reasons be generated in the learners?". Thus, the teacher is asked to establish possible reasons for reading that resemble real-life purposes for approaching the text. The aim is that pupils do not only read the text because it is part of their class and they have to but because they want to. Even though this goal will not always be achieved, establishing a reason for reading has a positive effect on learners' motivation (Karakaş 2005: 28; Saricoban 2002: 11). Therefore, it is the teacher's task to plan the pre-reading phase accordingly.

Another way of increasing motivation is to aim for the activation of important schemata. As already illustrated in sub-section 4.2.1., schema activation should be part of the pre-reading phase. Apart from assisting with reading comprehension, schema activation also helps to make pupils curious about the text they are going to read (Arcuri 1990: 262). To put it differently, learners are more motivated when they already know to some extent what to expect but are still left with open questions about, for instance, the development of the story line.

What needs to be kept in mind is that it is important to vary the types of pre-reading exercises used. The reason for this is that besides all the factors mentioned, motivation is always also dependent on the individual learner. Huang, Cheng and Chern (2006: 201) point out that "each learner may be motivated by different materials for his or her own unique reasons". Thus, teachers should pay attention to not using the same kind of activities too often. This also helps to keep the lesson lively and exciting. In addition, the level of difficulty should be varied since generally speaking, less motivated pupils are more likely to think of easy pre-reading tasks as motivating, whereas highly motivated pupils will prefer more demanding activities (Huang, Cheng & Chern 2006: 201).

In summary, motivation facilitates the learning process in general and the reading process in particular. While intrinsically motivated pupils learn for the sake of learning, extrinsically motivated pupils learn for external reasons such as good

grades. Additionally, the difference between integrative and instrumental as well as between global, situational and task motivation was illustrated. Next, characteristics of motivated learners were addressed, for instance, high self-confidence and tolerance of frustration. It was concluded that one of the main aims of pre-reading activities is to raise curiosity about the text and to establish motivation to read it. This can be achieved by relating to pupils' own experiences, by providing a reason for reading or by activating the relevant schemata.

4.2.3. Examples of different pre-reading activities

This sub-section is concerned with how the pre-reading stage can be put into practice. Several examples of various types of pre-reading tasks will be provided in order to show how many different possibilities there are with regard to preparing pupils for the reading task. Nevertheless, this list is by no means complete. Following this detailed description, the question of how to decide which activity to use will be dealt with.

The following paragraphs provide proposals for the design of the pre-reading phase. The examples presented are a summary of suggestions made by Alderson (2005), Anderson (1999), Arcuri (1990), Carrell (1984), Carrell (1988), Day (1993), Hood, Solomon and Burns (1996), Huang, Cheng and Chern (2006), Karakaş (2005), Little and Box (2011), Mihara (2011), Nation (2009), Richard-Amato (2010), Saricoban (2002), Ur (1996), Urquhart and Weir (1998), Wallace (1992) and Williams (1986). For the sake of clarity, the pre-reading activities were organised into the following categories: pre-reading tasks that include prediction of various kinds, that address pupils' prior knowledge and that equip learners with knowledge about the language, the content and the structure of the text. Note, however, that there are overlaps and that in many cases, no clear line can be drawn between the groups.

Many pre-reading activities involve learners' **predictions** of some kind. According to Urquhart and Weir (1998: 185), prediction means to hypothesise about what the text will be about. Therefore, prediction often concerns the content of the text but as will be shown, it can also be related to its structure or the genre. Pre-reading exercises including prediction are especially helpful in terms of raising motivation (Richard-Amato 2010: 138).

- Predictions about the text's content can be based on the title, pictures taken from the text, headings (Day 1993: 35) or subheadings (Richard-Amato 2010: 138) or the table of contents (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 184). It is also possible to make predictions after having read one paragraph or, in the case of a longer text, two or more paragraphs (Alderson 2005: 318). Day (1993: 35) suggests that the prediction should be based on the first and last paragraph.
- When the text in question is a story, it might be suitable to make predictions about the characters in the story and about which problems they might encounter (Richard-Amato 2010: 138).
- The content of the text can also be predicted by showing pupils eight words which are taken from the reading task (Nation 2009: 35). The teacher needs to be careful with the choice of words because they should all point to the same topic and they should be related to some degree (Nation 2009: 35).
- Learners are encouraged to use a so-called "anticipation guide" (Richard-Amato 2010: 311), which consists of statements (facts or opinions) about the topic of the text. It is the learners' task to decide whether they think the statements to be true or false. The solution will be revealed during the reading itself.
- Frequently, a reading comprehension is followed by comprehension questions, which are normally answered after the reading. If these comprehension questions are in the right order, pupils can predict the structure of the text or, in the case of a story, the plot development from these questions (Mihara 2011: 56).
- Learners can be asked to predict the text type and the content from the first sentence of the text. Nation (2009: 35) claims that "[i]t is surprisingly easy to guess the likely topic type from the first sentence and thus make very useful predictions".

What is essential to keep in mind is that prediction exercises should always be revisited after the reading so that pupils can check whether their predictions were correct (Anderson 1999: 15). Moreover, all the exercises including predictions of some sort can also be done in written form so that pupils practise producing a coherent text too (Richard-Amato 2010: 312).

The second group of pre-reading tasks has the aim of activating pupils' **background knowledge**. Examples of such pre-reading tasks are the following.

- Based on the title or on pictures, learners are asked to talk about the topic of the text and what they already know about it (Nation 2009: 4, 35). Williams (1986: 119) suggests making two columns, one of which should be filled in with things learners already know about the subject, the other with things they are not completely certain about or do not know at all.
- Prior knowledge can be referred to by using graphic organisers such as charts or clusters (Little & Box 2011: 25; Richard-Amato 2010: 309). As above, the chart may consist of two columns, one with things pupils already know about a topic and the other with things they assume to find out while reading (Richard-Amato 2010: 309). An example for a cluster is to write the topic 'heroes' in the middle of a sheet of paper or the blackboard. Then, different heroes are added and the qualities related to the individual heroes are noted down (Richard-Amato 2010: 310).
- Background knowledge can also be related to in a whole-class discussion (Anderson 1999: 14), which can be initiated by looking at pictures or headings taken from the text (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 74). Moreover, a discussion about open questions concerning the topic of the text can address pupils' prior knowledge (Richard-Amato 2010: 309). The discussion can either take place in small groups or in the entire class (Richard-Amato 2010: 309). If the former is chosen, one group member may present a summary of the group's discussion to the rest of the class.
- Pupils are asked to relate the topic of the text to their own lives (Huang, Cheng and Chern 2006: 197). This can be achieved by asking them to share their own views and, if available, their own experiences with regard to the subject matter. Ur (1996: 281) calls this kind of pre-reading exercise "[p]ersonalization".
- Brainstorming also helps to make pupils aware of what they already know about a given subject matter. For the brainstorming activity, the teacher writes one or more key word(s) or a key concept on the board (Richard-Amato 2010: 310). Pupils then share with their peers and the teacher what they associate with it and a cluster is created out of their ideas (Richard-Amato 2010: 310). Even if some of the responses do not seem relevant for the text, all of them should be written down (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 73). The result of the brainstorming activity, i.e. the organised ideas, is what is sometimes called "semantic mapping" (Wallace 1992: 92). Finding a suitable structure for the

ideas can be the teacher's responsibility but it can also be taken over by the learners (Wallace 1992: 92). Brainstorming has advantages for both learners and the teacher. The former profit from it since their background knowledge is activated (Anderson 1999: 14-15; Wallace 1992: 91) and for the latter, it is a good way of finding out about what and how much the pupils already know (Wallace 1992: 91). One possible danger of brainstorming is that for learners at the lower proficiency level, it might be difficult to express their ideas due to a lack of relevant vocabulary (Arcuri 1990: 263). Thus, if the teacher fears that this could be the case, they need to ensure that learners are equipped with the missing vocabulary before the brainstorming activity.

- It might occur that pupils do not have any prior knowledge about a specific subject. In this case, they need to acquire background knowledge in the pre-reading phase. To illustrate, if the learners lack important background knowledge of the cultural context a text was written in or about cultural traditions the text refers to, this knowledge can be provided by appropriate pre-reading tasks (Karakaş 2005: 29).

Since learners are frequently confronted with texts that contain unknown words or phrases, addressing **linguistic knowledge** in the pre-reading phase can help them with the reading process. Even though it is not necessary to understand every single word (Ur 1996: 140), it is important that pupils know the meaning of words essential to the topic and how they are used in context.

- The pre-reading phase can be used to talk about important or new vocabulary (Saricoban 2002: 6). Naturally, the words discussed should be part of the reading passage and should be highly important for the subject matter (Mihara 2011: 54). Moreover, they should not be discussed as individual words but in “semantically and topically related sets” (Carrell 1988: 243). Vocabulary exercises might include guessing the meaning of words from their context so that pupils see how the words are used in sentences (Wallace 1992: 89). They might also require pupils to find synonyms (Wallace 1992: 89) or to use the words in a story of their own (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 74). When the pre-reading task precedes the reading of a story, Day (1993: 52) suggests that learners can be requested to assign the new words to two characters from the story, to two groups of things (e.g. food and drinks – examples are my own) or

to two different situations (e.g. war and peace – examples are my own). While reading, pupils then check if the words were sorted correctly (Day 1993: 53).

- Learners are asked to list twenty words that they expect to find in the text (Anderson 1999: 17). Their suggestions can either be shared with their colleagues or kept to themselves and are verified during or after the reading.
- In addition to oral pre-reading tasks, written activities might be necessary to ensure that pupils can actively use newly learned words and “internalize the concepts already discussed by their usage in a personal composition” (Arcuri 1990: 264). To illustrate, pupils are told that they have to use four of the new words in their writing. Depending on the learners’ level and the topic, the writing can be quite short, consisting of only one paragraph, for example (Arcuri 1990: 265). Arcuri’s (1990) approach seems very interesting since the bulk of literature suggests writing tasks as part of the post-reading phase.

Many pre-reading tasks try to prepare learners for the **content** of the text they are going to read. Apart from exercises including prediction (see above), the following activities also address the text’s content.

- Pupils pose their own questions (Ur 1996: 146) concerning the text’s content based on the title, the first sentence or pictures (Nation 2009: 35). Hence, in this case, it is the learners who create the questions and they try to answer them after having read the text (Ur 1996: 146).
- Another possibility is to use the comprehension questions which were originally designed to be answered after the reading (Mihara 2011: 55). Pupils can be asked to guess the answers to these comprehension questions prior to reading.
- Learners are told about the topic of the text. Prior to reading, they need to find information about essential parts of the subject so that they teach themselves relevant background knowledge. Ur (1996: 146) calls this type of activity “[p]re-question”. In addition, learners can be asked to hypothesise about why the author has chosen to write about exactly this subject matter (Saricoban 2002: 4).
- Even though it is typically part of the post-reading phase, a role-play that addresses the topic of the reading can also be performed prior to reading (Carrell 1988: 245).

- If the text in question is of an argumentative type, the teacher can select statements from the text which present different opinions (Wallace 1992: 87). Learners then need to identify which statements are in favour of and which are against a particular position.
- In the case of the reading task being a story, the teacher can provide a summary of the plot (Karakaş 2005: 28). The teacher can read out the summary or talk about the plot freely.
- If a text is very culture-specific, it is advisable to discuss the topic with regard to the learners' own culture and to compare it with the target culture (Wallace 1992: 115). This exercise is only appropriate if pupils have a high level of proficiency since otherwise it might be too demanding (Wallace 1992: 115).

The fifth group of pre-reading exercises is concerned with the **structure** of the text. Carrell (1984: 465) argues that knowing about conventions of text structure helps to understand a text and will make it easier for learners to follow the development of the story, argumentative text or newspaper article, etc. (See also sub-section 4.2.1. on schema theory.)

- Talking about text type and the organisational conventions associated with it can help learners to better understand the structure of the text (Carrell 1988: 246).
- Another way of addressing text structure is to ask learners which structure they expect to encounter (Anderson 1999: 14). Moreover, they can be asked to reflect on which kind of linking words are likely to be included in the text and to record their ideas in a list (Anderson 1999: 14).
- Pictures or illustrations that are part of the text are also a means of making pupils aware of the structure (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 75). It is the pupils' task to speculate about the order in which the visual material will occur. This pre-reading task is suitable for learners at the lower level (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 75).

It can be seen that in the pre-reading phase, not only the skill of reading is addressed but also the other three skills of speaking, writing and listening. The first is practised in a discussion, when learners talk about their prior knowledge, their own experience or when the prediction activities are performed orally, for example. Writing is trained when pupils compose their own questions on the text, when they note down what

they already know about the topic or when they have to use new vocabulary in their own writing. Listening is probably found less often in the pre-reading phase than speaking or writing. Nevertheless, it is included in discussions, when learners listen to their peers' predictions or when their peers report on their prior experience.

As there is such a huge variety of pre-reading exercises, it might seem challenging to select the right kind of pre-reading task. First of all, the teacher needs to consider that pre-reading activities differ with regard to their effectiveness (cf. Huang, Cheng & Chern 2006: 195). Whether a certain pre-reading task is successful or not is dependent on factors such as the learners' level of proficiency, the text type and the quality of the pre-reading task (Madaoui 2013: 10). For detailed results concerning the success of individual pre-reading exercises, the reader is referred to sub-section 4.2.5., in which several studies and their results will be summarised. Second, the teacher's selection should also be based on the genre of the text (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 72). This is why, in the list above, the descriptions of some pre-reading tasks include a suggestion about which type of text they are appropriate for. In the case of pre-reading activities with no specific text type mentioned explicitly, these are applicable for the majority of texts. Furthermore, the pre-reading exercise needs to conform to the text and its content (Wallace 1992: 91). Its appropriateness is also dependent on the reading task since it makes a difference whether the pupils need to read for detailed information or for the main idea (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 73). What teachers further need to bear in mind is that it is important to choose the pre-reading tasks according to the learners' level, their motivation and their preferences (Huang, Cheng & Chern 2006: 202; Madaoui 2013: 10). Another factor which influences the selection of the pre-reading activity is that the exercises need to be varied. This helps to avoid boredom and ensures that all learners feel motivated by the pre-reading phase despite different individual preferences (Huang, Cheng & Chern 2006: 201). In addition, varying pre-reading tasks are needed for addressing different reading strategies (Wallace 1992: 90).

Even though it is possible and often even helpful to include more than one type of activity in the pre-reading phase, it should be kept in mind that the activities must not last for an extended period of time. The reason for this is that a lengthy pre-reading stage can have the opposite result to what teachers wish for, namely that learners become motivated to read the text but lose this motivation again due to too many exercises (Richard-Amato 2010: 312).

To summarise, various pre-reading activities were suggested and organised with regard to what they pay special attention to. This resulted in five different types, namely pre-reading exercises that rely on prediction, that focus on learners' prior knowledge, learners' linguistic knowledge, the text's content or the text's structure. It was also shown how the teacher should select which pre-reading task to use. The choice depends on the text type, the text's content and learner variables. Moreover, the skills of speaking, writing and listening should be referred to. With regard to all factors mentioned, it is essential to make use of various different types of exercises.

4.2.4. Pre-reading exercises in the school book *MORE! 2*

Since the pupils who were tested for the empirical part of the paper are taught with the help of the school book *MORE! 2* (Gerngroß *et al.* 2009), this sub-section will analyse the pre-reading activities included in the student's book. The student's book consists of twenty-one units and one CLIL section with one or more reading tasks in every unit. However, not all texts are accompanied by a pre-reading phase.

To start with, none of the texts is preceded by a task which is explicitly identified as a pre-reading task. The reason for this is that in each unit, new vocabulary is presented related to the topic of the unit. Sometimes, this is done right before the reading task and the vocabulary presentation can thus be regarded as a pre-reading exercise. It can happen, however, that this takes place some lessons before the learners read the text as the vocabulary exercise is frequently designed as an introduction to the whole unit. In other cases, in contrast, the unit starts with a reading comprehension right away. Here, pupils are confronted with the texts without preparation and only learn vocabulary related to the topic later in the unit. What almost all of the vocabulary exercises have in common is that the pupils are asked to match the new words with a corresponding picture. The learners either have to complete this task on their own or they receive help in the form of a listening task.

What is more, the pre-reading phase always deals with vocabulary and no other exercises such as brainstorming or a discussion activity are included. Even the format of the exercises offers little variety because it almost always requires pupils to match pictures and words. As already mentioned, occasionally, this is accompanied by listening to the words spoken on CD, which means that the pupils also hear the correct pronunciation. However, since the words are not further explained but only

read out, it cannot be claimed that a second skill, i.e. listening, is included alongside reading. What can further be criticised is that learners do not receive preparation for the content or the structure of the text. It could be assumed that this is due to the learners' low proficiency level (A1-A2) since this means that they only have a very limited knowledge of vocabulary and therefore, much attention needs to be paid to broadening their linguistic knowledge. Nevertheless, this kind of linguistic knowledge could also be addressed in a brainstorming or prediction activity. Consequently, it can be argued that there is a serious lack of variation in pre-reading tasks and that as a result, teachers should take care to include their own pre-reading exercises in the lesson.

However, there is one exception which is to be found in the CLIL section. Here, three reading comprehension tasks are included. For the first task, key words are given before the reading comprehension. Thus, what is addressed is again only vocabulary. The second reading task is also preceded by a presentation of key words but in addition, pupils need to do a quiz which ensures that they are equipped with the necessary background knowledge about South America. For the third reading task, key vocabulary is presented too and there is a pre-reading exercise that briefly explains in three sentences what a robot is.

What must be kept in mind, however, is that relevant schemata are often activated by other activities in the unit such as a listening comprehension or a speaking task preceding the reading comprehension because the whole unit always centres around one topic. In unit 11, for instance, there are various reading comprehension tasks without a pre-reading exercise. It might be claimed that at this point, it is not necessarily needed since pupils already know that the topic of the texts is Ancient Egypt due to the preceding tasks in the unit and that therefore, background knowledge and the appropriate schema might have already been activated. Sometimes, however, a unit starts with a reading comprehension without a pre-reading phase and without preceding exercises, which means that schemata can only be activated by the title of the unit.

In summary, the pre-reading phase as it is presented in the coursebook *MORE! 2* has potential for improvement. Instead of only providing pupils with important vocabulary, the text's content and structure should be discussed as well. Moreover, the variety of pre-reading activities is extremely limited.

4.2.5. Studies on the effects of pre-reading tasks

This sub-section summarises the findings of several studies which explored the effects of different pre-reading activities. In general, it is assumed that all pre-reading tasks help with the comprehension of texts. As already mentioned, not all pre-reading exercises are equally effective. This is what the studies presented below showed too.

At the very beginning, it needs to be noted that there are no studies from Austria and hardly any from Europe. The majority of research was conducted in Asian countries such as Iran, Taiwan or Japan and in North African countries such as Morocco. Consequently, when relating the results to the Austrian or European context, it needs to be borne in mind that education systems and teaching styles are likely to be different in Asia or North Africa. What is also important is that the participants of all studies summarised here were university students. Based on the sample descriptions of the studies, their level of English was between A2 and presumably C1 (“advanced” (Karakaş 2005: 30)). Hence, a one-to-one transfer of these results to pupils at lower proficiency levels might be risky. However, it can be assumed that the results can be related to some extent. For this reason, the results of the studies conducted with university students are summarised below.

Chen and Graves’ (1995) study aimed at exploring the effects of two pre-reading activities, namely previewing and providing background knowledge. The participants were 243 college students from Taiwan who reached scores of between 400 and 500 in the TOEFL and whose level of English is thus between A2 and B2 in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (cf. Educational Testing Service 2016). The test takers were divided into three experimental groups and one control group. The first experimental group performed the previewing task, the second the task regarding background knowledge and the third carried out both pre-reading tasks. The control group read the short story without a pre-reading phase. The previewing group listened to a preview of 200 words in length, in which important characters were introduced and the plot was summarised albeit omitting the end. The background knowledge group listened to a 200-word passage providing background knowledge about the historical context in which the text was written and about information on the cultural setting. The third group listened to both the preview and the background knowledge passage. The results showed that all three treatment groups scored significantly higher than the control group. The highest scores were obtained by the

previewing group, followed by the combined previewing/background knowledge group. These two groups performed significantly better than the background information group that came third. The control group was least successful and came last. Therefore, the findings indicate that in relation to this study, previewing was the most helpful pre-reading exercise among those tested and that providing background knowledge was only useful if it was combined with another pre-reading activity such as previewing.

A study conducted by Karakaş (2005) examined whether brainstorming combined with previewing or brainstorming on its own was more effective as a pre-reading task. Forty-one ELT trainee teachers from a Turkish university participated. Their level of English is described as ranging from “upper-intermediate to advanced” (Karakaş 2005: 30) and they were divided into two groups. One of the groups was asked to do two different pre-reading exercises, namely a brainstorming and a previewing activity. The second group carried out only one activity, namely brainstorming. The previewing task provided students with information about the author of the text and the time he lived in. As anticipated, the group working on the two types of pre-reading tasks outperformed the group that was prepared by brainstorming only, even though the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. The reason for the combined previewing/brainstorming group achieving better results is that background knowledge could be activated by the previewing activity, but not by the brainstorming activity. Consequently, it was concluded that for the setting of this study, brainstorming on its own was not sufficient.

Mihara (2011) investigated whether teaching vocabulary in the pre-reading phase was less successful than letting participants predict the answers to the comprehension questions which need to be answered after the reading. The results were then evaluated with regard to the students’ proficiency level. The 78 participants were Japanese university students of the Faculty of Science and Engineering whose level of English is defined as “pre-intermediate” and “upper-intermediate” (Mihara 2011: 53). The participants had to do four reading comprehension tasks which were taken from their coursebook. It was found that students belonging to the prediction group performed better than students belonging to the vocabulary group, even though the difference between the groups was only statistically significant for one of the four reading tasks. Furthermore, students with higher proficiency scored higher than

students with lower proficiency, no matter which pre-reading treatment they received. For two of the four reading tasks, this difference was statistically significant. It was concluded that “although pre-questioning [i.e. predicting] works better than vocabulary pre-teaching, it cannot override the effects of a linguistic ceiling” (Mihara 2011: 60). Thus, the differing effect of the two pre-reading tasks only showed between students of the same level. After the reading comprehension task, students were given a questionnaire which revealed that more than 50% preferred the vocabulary task prior to reading since it gave them the impression that they understood the text better when learning essential words first. This is interesting as it is contrary to the test results. It seems that students do not always prefer those activities most beneficial for them.

Another study which explored the success of making predictions and addressing linguistic knowledge prior to reading was carried out by Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988). Besides vocabulary discussion and prediction based on pictures, the study also investigated the effect of students composing their own questions on the basis of a one-sentence summary of the text. Forty Brazilian EFL university students with “average ability” (Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough 1988: 459) took part and were grouped into three experimental groups and one control group. The results again showed that the three treatment groups outperformed the control group. Similar to the later findings of Mihara (2011), it was shown that pre-teaching vocabulary was less effective compared to the other two pre-reading activities. Students who created their own questions scored highest and students who did the prediction task ranked second. The difference between the three treatment groups as well as between each treatment group and the control group was statistically significant.

In Madaoui’s (2013) study, two pre-reading tasks were tested: a whole-class discussion, which was initiated by two open questions, and vocabulary learning, which prepared students for words and their definitions that were assumed to be unknown. Apart from the two experimental groups, there was also one control group that did not do a pre-reading task. The study included 57 Moroccan EFL university students in their second semester, whose exact level of English is not mentioned. They had to read an expository text and answer nine short-answer questions afterwards. It was found once more that the members of the two experimental groups scored better, even to a statistically significant extent, than the members of the

control group. Moreover, the learners who participated in the discussion before reading significantly outperformed the learners who only learned new vocabulary. Hence, the result concerning the effectiveness of pre-learning vocabulary coincides with the findings of Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988) and Mihara (2011). Webb (2009) also analysed the effect of vocabulary learning as a pre-reading task but did not compare it with other activities. Seventy-one Japanese first-year EFL university students participated and it was found that pre-teaching key vocabulary significantly improved reading comprehension. It seems that even though the students benefited from pre-teaching vocabulary to a minor extent, it is not a very effective pre-reading task compared to others such as prediction or discussion activities. Madaoui (2013: 15) summarises that “different pre-reading activities can have a differential facilitative effect upon EFL students’ comprehension”. The author furthermore suggests that providing students with vocabulary should be part of every pre-reading phase but needs to be combined with a second pre-reading task (Madaoui 2013: 17).

What is more, the success of pre-reading activities might also vary between individual learners as they will prefer and will be motivated by different tasks. In addition, it is likely that the learners’ proficiency level has an influence as well since vocabulary pre-teaching, for instance, might be more important at the lower levels. Last, the text type will also affect the efficacy of a specific pre-reading exercise. As the author’s research suggested, there are no studies available yet that address the relationship between learner variables, the genre of the text and pre-reading tasks.

In conclusion, all studies that included a group which did not do any pre-reading activities showed that this group performed worse than the treatment groups which were exposed to a pre-reading phase. Thus, what all pre-reading exercises have in common is that they improve reading comprehension, albeit to a different extent. Previewing, prediction, students composing their own questions and discussions proved to be effective exercises, whereas providing vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge and brainstorming turned out to be less effective. However, this is only true if these activities are used on their own. If pre-teaching vocabulary, providing background knowledge and brainstorming are combined with other pre-reading tasks, they are likely to contribute to the facilitation of the reading process as well. In relation to the success of different pre-reading activities, learner

characteristics and the text itself play a role too. With regard to this topic, research still has to be conducted.

4.2.6. A critical view of the pre-reading stage

As already indicated, the pre-reading phase is not always necessarily advantageous. Most literature does not mention any drawbacks of pre-reading exercises, which is explicable insofar as there is general agreement on the facilitative effect of pre-reading tasks on the reading process. Nonetheless, there are cases in which it might be better to ask learners to read a text without preparatory exercises. Thus, this subsection will present instances of when the pre-reading stage can or even should be omitted. Furthermore, not all pre-reading tasks are applicable to all texts and they have been shown to differ with regard to their effectiveness. Some of these cases have already been indicated above and will briefly be summarised here.

There is one type of reading that does not necessarily require a pre-reading stage, namely extensive reading. Examples of extensive reading are the reading of stories, short stories, novels or biographies. Ur (1996: 149) argues that in “the case of extensive reading [...] the reading material is motivating in itself”. Thus, since the learners can often choose what they read (Hedge 2000: 200), they are curious about the text and they have intrinsic motivation to read, which means that curiosity does not have to be raised in a pre-reading phase in the first place. Care needs to be taken, however, that this motivation is not decreased by giving away too much of the text’s content and thereby destroying suspense (Ur 1996: 149). If the pre-reading task already reveals too much, the reading might become boring. In other words, extensive reading has the goal of making pupils read for the sake of reading and out of curiosity. Asking learners to do tasks before reading might interfere with this aim, which is why the pre-reading phase might be omitted if the text is not too difficult. However, if a text is demanding, it will be better to prepare pupils for the reading, also for extensive reading. In this case, the teacher must be careful to do this in a way that does not diminish motivation and that does not give away too much of the story.

As mentioned above, not every pre-reading task is equally beneficial. If pre-reading activities are only concerned with vocabulary, this might not be sufficient preparation. It was shown by various studies (Madaoui 2013; Mihara 2011; Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough 1988) that vocabulary work increases

comprehension but only to a small extent. Therefore, these studies suggest that in addition to teaching vocabulary, other tasks should be included in the pre-reading phase as well. The same holds true for brainstorming. The reason for this is that if the teacher does not intervene in the brainstorming process, the brainstorming activity cannot guarantee to activate all schemata necessary for understanding a given text (Karakaş 2005: 33). Moreover, not all pre-reading tasks might be suitable for all types of reading and their selection should also depend on learners' individual preferences.

To conclude, pre-reading tasks should not be applied if they risk destroying learners' intrinsic motivation and curiosity. This might hold true for the case of extensive reading, which has the aim of making pupils read for pleasure and out of interest. In general, however, pre-reading tasks are a means of helping learners with understanding a text and should therefore be included in most reading lessons.

5. Design and method of the study

This chapter is concerned with the design and method of the empirical research and presents the purpose (section 5.1.), setting (section 5.2.), the sample (section 5.3.), materials used (section 5.4.) and the procedure of the study (section 5.5.).

A quasi-experimental design was used for the empirical investigation, more precisely, the “**pretest-post-test non-equivalent group design**” [original emphasis] (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007: 283). This is due to the fact that the participants were not randomly assigned to the two experimental groups and the control group. Instead, the groups were formed according to the classes that already existed. In order to determine the performances of all three groups and to reveal possible variances in the individual groups’ proficiency under identical conditions, the actual testing (post-test) was preceded by a baseline test (pretest). Data of both tests were analysed in terms of descriptive statistics, the test’s reliability and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were performed for all test takers taken together and for the individual groups. Test reliability was evaluated by conducting an item analysis. In order to compare the three groups’ performances, an ANOVA was run. Additionally, a questionnaire was distributed to all pupils. For the closed questions in the questionnaire, the percentage of learners choosing the particular option was calculated. The sentence completion and open item were evaluated qualitatively.

5.1. Purpose

As already stated in the introduction, the purpose of the empirical investigation is twofold. First, it seeks to explore whether reading comprehension can be facilitated by means of a pre-reading phase and second, it tries to ascertain the effects of two selected pre-reading exercises, namely pre-learning vocabulary and prediction of content. Thus, the following research questions are addressed:

- Do learners achieve better results if they do a pre-reading exercise before the actual reading comprehension task?
- Is it possible to determine a difference in effectiveness between the two pre-reading exercises selected?

More precisely, the study seeks to investigate the effects of the pre-reading phase on lower-secondary learners in an Austrian school setting. As already summarised in

sub-section 4.2.5., the author's research suggests that there are hardly any studies available from the European context. Thus, it is hoped that the present study helps to gain insights into the success of the pre-reading phase applied in Austrian EFL classrooms and to thereby promote the importance of pre-reading activities for reading comprehension tasks.

With regard to the two pre-reading exercises selected, research suggests that pre-teaching vocabulary is less effective than using prediction exercises in the pre-reading phase (Mihara 2011; Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough 1988; see sub-section 4.2.5. for a detailed account of the relevant studies). What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that the setting and participants differed from the present study since the pre-reading activities were administered to university students in Japan and Brazil. The level of these students was "pre-intermediate", "upper-intermediate" (Mihara 2011: 53) and "average" (Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough 1988: 459). Thus, the present investigation aims to determine whether these findings are also applicable to Austrian second grade pupils whose level of English is lower (cf. section 5.3.).

Hedge (2000: 193) states that "[v]ocabulary is [...] [a] major component of reading ability", which is why it seems reasonable to address lexical knowledge in the pre-reading stage. As already explored in sub-section 4.2.3., various authors suggest preparing learners for essential vocabulary through pre-reading activities (Hood, Solomon & Burns 1996: 74; Huang, Cheng & Chern 2006: 197; Karakaş 2005: 28; Mihara 2011: 52; Nation 2009: 4; Saricoban 2002: 6; Urquhart & Weir 1998: 185). By providing learners with key words from the reading passage, it is likely that important schemata are also activated (cf. sub-sections 2.3.1. and 4.2.1.). In relation to the two basic processes involved in reading, bottom-up and top-down processing, the former is addressed in this pre-reading activity. As illustrated in sub-section 2.2.1., bottom-up processing refers to the decoding of individual letters and words and of making sense of individual sentences. Hence, the smaller elements such as individual words, and thus vocabulary, have an effect on how the text is comprehended.

Asking learners to predict the text's content based on pictures or on the title is also frequently suggested in the literature (Anderson 1999: 16; Day 1993: 33, 35; Nation 2009: 4, 35; Richard-Amato 2010: 138, Saricoban 2002: 1). With regard to the different kinds of knowledge involved in the reading process (cf. section 2.3.), the

following are addressed in the pre-reading task of predicting the text's content. Lexical knowledge is referred to as some important words are likely to be mentioned during the prediction. Genre knowledge is taken into consideration because pupils are told that they are going to read a story before they start predicting what the text might be about. Last, topic knowledge is referred to, provided that learners' guesses about the topic are right. In contrast to the bottom-up processes involved in the pre-reading vocabulary activity, what is at work in the pre-reading prediction exercise is mainly top-down processes (cf. Urquhart & Weir 1998: 159). It was explained in sub-section 2.2.2. that top-down processing is affected by what the reader brings to the text, i.e. the larger elements such as reader expectations or prior knowledge influence understanding of the text. As discussed in relation to the pre-reading exercise that is concerned with vocabulary, the chances are high that the prediction task equally "activate[s] different kinds of schemata" (Urquhart & Weir 1998: 185).

5.2. Setting

The study was conducted in an AHS (BG/BRG Ramsauerstraße) in Linz (Upper Austria) with pupils who attend the second grade. The baseline test took place on 25th February 2016 and the actual testing followed one week later, on 3rd March 2016. Both tests were performed as part of the pupils' regular English lessons.

5.3. Participants

For the selection of participants, convenience sampling (Dörnyei 2003: 72) was used as the researcher is in contact with one of the school's teachers. Altogether, 55 pupils (32 boys and 23 girls) from three different classes took part in the study. Since they attend the second grade of lower-secondary, they are mostly eleven or twelve years old. Although the classes are split in the main subjects and are taught by four different teachers, they all use the coursebook *More! 2* (Gerngroß *et al.* 2009), have four lessons of English per week and their general level of English is between A1 and A2 in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe 2007: 24), depending on the individual skills (cf. BMBF 2015: 5; Horak *et al.* 2010: 20). Concerning reading, their level should be A2 at the end of the school year in July (cf. BMBF 2015: 5; Horak *et al.* 2010: 20), which is why it can be assumed that at the

end of February / beginning of March, it is probably somewhere between A1+ and A2. The pupils were divided into three groups for both tests. Group A (experimental group) consisted of 19 pupils and did the pre-reading task of prediction in the actual testing. Group B (experimental group) was composed of 16 pupils and pre-learned vocabulary in the actual test. Group C (control group) consisted of 20 pupils and did not do any pre-reading activities. The learners were assigned to the three groups based on the regular class they belong to, which is different from their grouping in the regular English lessons.

5.4. Materials

Both the baseline and the actual test consisted of two texts and accompanying tasks which were taken from two second grade coursebooks different from the one used by the pupils. The texts for the baseline testing were extracted from *Red Line 2* (Haß 2008), whereas the two texts for the actual test were taken from *The new you & me 2* (Gerngroß *et al.* 2005). All four texts belong to the same genre, namely that of the story. Care was taken that the topics of those stories had not been discussed in class prior to the investigation. The selection of texts was also influenced by their length. The requirements in terms of length were based on those of the E8 standards testing, which were adapted to the learners' current level, as well as on the tasks that are included in the pupils' tests ("Schularbeiten"). The specifications of the E8 reading test, which takes place in fourth grade, state that the two sections contained should not exceed 600 words and that altogether, 20 items need to be answered (cf. Gassner, Mewald & Sigott 2009: 4). On average, the texts used for the 'Schularbeiten' are 300 words long and contain 8 items. Thus, two stories were selected for both the baseline and the actual test that are altogether approximately 600 words long and are followed by around 16 items.

Furthermore, the texts were chosen with regard to their accompanying tasks since the item formats had to be the same for the baseline and the actual test. Consequently, the first task in both tests required learners to decide on whether given statements were true or false, whereas the second task asked pupils to identify the right order of jumbled sentences. Hence, while the true or false task demanded learners' detailed comprehension of the text, the organisation of the disordered sentences asked for a more global understanding. Note that all materials are to be found in the appendix.

The baseline test featured the two stories “At the supermarket” and “Sport can be dangerous!” (cf. appendix, section 10.1.). The first story consisted of 146 words and was followed by six true or false items. The second story was 529 words long and was succeeded by eight jumbled sentences. In the original version as printed in the coursebook, both stories were accompanied by pictures. The pictures were not included in the test for two reasons. First, in the pupils’ tests (“Schularbeiten”), reading comprehension tasks are usually not accompanied by pictures. Second, in the actual testing, they were used for the pre-reading phase.

The actual test likewise consisted of two stories, the titles of which are “Patrick’s new donkey” and “The coin” (cf. appendix, sub-section 10.2.1.). The former was 250 words long and was followed by nine true or false items, whereas the latter contained 278 words and eight jumbled sentences. Again, the accompanying pictures that were included in the coursebook were not used for the test but for the pre-reading prediction activity.

The pre-reading exercises for the two treatment groups were not included in the coursebook but were designed by the researcher. Group A performed the pre-reading tasks of prediction (cf. appendix, sub-sections 10.2.2. and 10.2.3.), which involved predicting the stories’ contents based on pictures and the stories’ titles. The learners were asked to first think about their predictions individually before sharing them with their colleagues and the teacher. Thus, their ideas were collected and discussed orally. Group B did the pre-reading vocabulary activities (cf. appendix, sub-sections 10.2.4. and 10.2.5.), which focused on important words taken from the reading passage. These words were presented with the help of pictures and the pupils had to find out which sample sentence they belong to. Subsequently, they needed to link the words with their German translation before using them in their own sentences.

The questionnaire was developed in three different versions according to the three different groups (cf. appendix, section 10.3.). It aimed at shedding light on pupils’ opinions on the pre-reading activities and the perceived level of difficulty of the reading passages and the following tasks. For this purpose, between six and eight closed questions (depending on the group) and two open-ended questions were included, one of the latter being a sentence completion item. The closed questions were realised by using Likert scales, which require “respondents [...] to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with these items by marking [...] one of the

responses ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’” (Dörnyei 2003: 37). To facilitate this process for pupils, they were asked to assign a grade between 1 (= absolutely true) and 5 (= not true at all) to the questions, which resembles the Austrian marking system. The sentence completion item attempted to determine what the learners themselves regarded as helpful preparation for reading stories in English. The other open question provided them with the possibility to note further thoughts not attended to in the closed questions. Due to the learners’ relatively low proficiency, the whole questionnaire was designed in German to ensure pupils’ comprehension and to prevent misunderstandings. Additionally, it was assumed that the learners would be less inhibited to share their opinions and to raise further issues in the open questions when they were allowed to do so in German. The pupils were told in advance that there are no right or wrong answers and that it is their own opinion which is important for the questionnaire.

5.5. Procedure

To ensure that the pupils took the test seriously, it was agreed that they could obtain a positive mark on their in-class work (“Mitarbeitsplus”) for very good performances. They were told so by their teachers in advance.

As already mentioned, a baseline test was administered on 25th February 2016 to determine the approximate level of each group when they perform a reading comprehension task without preparation by a pre-reading phase. One of the treatment groups (group B) was tested in the first lesson (7:55 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.) by the researcher. The other treatment group (group A) and the control group (group C) were tested in the second lesson (8:50 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.) with the researcher conducting the test with the experimental group and a teacher, who was informed about the precise procedure of the whole study, conducting the test with the control group. The learners were given five minutes for the first reading comprehension task (“At the supermarket”) and ten minutes for the second (“Sport can be dangerous!”). After the first reading task, they handed in their answers. Then, they worked on the second text and handed it in. As can be seen, there was no pre-reading phase included in the baseline test. With regard to scoring, the pupils received one point for each correct item and zero points for each incorrect or missing item. Thus, as the test consisted of fourteen items, fourteen points was the highest score possible. Since the

scores were already very high in the baseline test (cf. section 6.1.) and since many pupils had finished the test before the time limit was over, it was decided to decrease the amount of time the pupils had for the reading comprehension tasks in the actual test. Thus, instead of five minutes, as originally planned, they were allowed four minutes for the first text (“Patrick’s new donkey”) as well as four minutes for the second text (“The coin”).

The actual test took place one week later, on 3rd March 2016, at the same time as the baseline test. Again, group B was tested in the first lesson and groups A and C in the second lesson. While groups A and B were taught by the researcher, the test in the control group (group C) was conducted by the same teacher as in the baseline test. For the two experimental groups, the procedure was as follows. The pupils did a pre-reading task for the first text (“Patrick’s new donkey”), which was followed by the reading comprehension task. Then, they handed in the first text and their answers. Subsequently, they performed the pre-reading exercise for the second text (“The coin”), worked on the second reading comprehension and handed it in. The control group was asked to do both texts without preparation. Thus, they read the first text, handed in their answers, read the second text and handed in their answers. After the testing, all groups were asked to complete the questionnaire, for which no time limit was set. The scoring of the actual test was identical with that described for the baseline test. Each correct answer was awarded one point, each incorrect or missing answer was given zero points. Altogether, this test consisted of seventeen items, which means that the highest score possible was seventeen points. The closed questions in the questionnaire were evaluated quantitatively, whereas the open questions were evaluated qualitatively. For more detailed information on the questionnaire, the reader is referred to section 6.4..

6. Results

Chapter 6 presents the results of the baseline test in section 6.1., those of the actual test in section 6.2., a comparison of these two tests' results in section 6.3. and the findings of the questionnaire in section 6.4.. Both tests were evaluated statistically in terms of descriptive statistics, reliability and inferential statistics. The latter included a comparison of the groups' performances by means of an ANOVA. In order to compare the two tests, a paired-samples t test and related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were conducted. Relating to the questionnaire, the Likert scale items were analysed quantitatively, whereas the remaining two items were evaluated qualitatively. For the statistical analysis of the baseline test and the actual test as well as for their comparison and for the analysis of the Likert scale items in the questionnaire, *SPSS Statistics for Windows* (Version 23) was used.

Note that for the statistical analyses, the true or false items were numbered as they appeared in the test papers, namely as items 1-6 in the baseline test and as items 1-9 in the actual test. Since the items of the ordering task were not numbered in the test papers, they were assigned numbers according to their order in which they appeared in the test papers. Hence, for the description and discussion of results, the sentence-ordering items of the baseline test are referred to as items 7-14 and the sentence-ordering items of the actual test are labelled items 10-17.

6.1. Results of the baseline test

This section is concerned with the evaluation of the baseline test's results. First, the results are analysed in terms of descriptive statistics, presented in Table 1 below. Note that the results are provided in relative numbers and are not yet separated according to groups but concern all three groups taken together.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics (baseline test)

N	Valid	55
	Missing	0
Mean		.8688
Std. Error of Mean		.02128
Median		.9286
Mode		1.00
Std. Deviation		.15779
Variance		.025
Skewness		-1.028
Std. Error of Skewness		.322
Degree of Skewness		-3.193
Kurtosis		.079
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.634
Degree of Kurtosis		.125
Range		.57
Minimum		.43
Maximum		1.00

As can be deduced from Table 1, the results are negatively skewed (-1.03). Moreover, the degree of skewness (-3.19) is not within ± 2 , which suggests that the distribution around the mean is not symmetrical (Green 2013: 45). This indicates that many test takers achieved high scores (Green 2013: 45) and found the test rather easy. Thus, as already mentioned in section 5.5., it was decided to reduce the time pupils were allowed for the actual test in order to increase the level of difficulty and to obtain more meaningful results. What can further be seen in Table 1 is that the kurtosis is positive (.08) and thus leptokurtic, which means that individual learners' results were similar (Green 2013: 45). The degree of kurtosis is .13 and thus within ± 2 , which would indicate a near-normal distribution. However, since the degree of skewness is -3.19, it seems that the distribution is non-normal (Green 2013: 82). To verify that the distribution is indeed non-normal, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted. The test confirmed non-normal distribution ($n = 55$, $KS - Z = .25$, $p < .05$). For better illustration, Figure 1 below shows the distribution of scores.

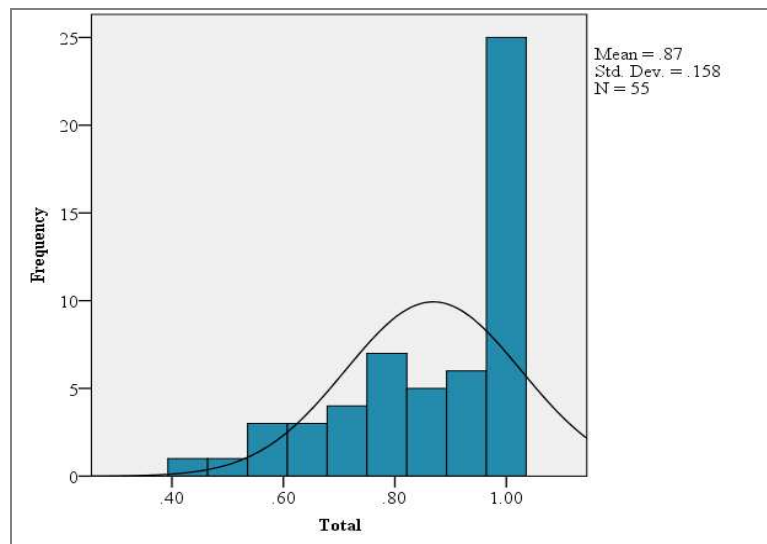


Figure 1 Histogram of distribution of scores (baseline test)

It can clearly be seen that the distribution of scores in relation to the mean (86.88%) is non-normal since almost half of the 55 test takers achieved the maximum 100%. Thus, as presented in Table 1 above, the mode of all test takers is 100%. The histogram further illustrates that the results are negatively skewed as there are more pupils at the upper end of the distribution. Moreover, it shows the data's leptokurtic distribution with a peak at 100%.

In order to gain further information about the individual groups, descriptive statistics are also given for group A (prediction group in actual test), group B (vocabulary group in actual test) and group C (control group in actual test) in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for groups A, B and C (baseline test)

	Group A	Group B	Group C
N Valid	19	16	20
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	.8045	.9241	.8857
Std. Error of Mean	.03575	.02565	.04027
Median	.7857	1.0000	1.0000
Mode	.79 / 1.00	1.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	.15584	.10258	.18011
Variance	.024	.011	.032
Skewness	-.412	-.957	-1.424
Std. Error of Skewness	.524	.564	.512
Degree of Skewness	-.786	-1.697	-2.781
Kurtosis	-.724	-.688	.807
Std. Error of Kurtosis	1.014	1.091	.992
Degree of Kurtosis	-.714	-.631	.814
Range	.50	.29	.57
Minimum	.50	.71	.43
Maximum	1.00	1.00	1.00

Table 2 reveals that the mean of group A is lowest at 80.45%, which is followed by group C's mean of 88.57%. The mean of group B is highest at 92.41%. What can further be derived from Table 2 is the median of the three groups. Group A's median is 78.57%, while group B's and C's median is 100%. This is remarkable since a score of 100% means that all items were answered correctly. Hence, more than half of group B and group C achieved the highest score possible. Concerning the mode, group A's most common scores are 79% and 100%, whereas group B's and group C's mode is 100%. With regard to range, group C's range is highest at 57%, followed by group A's range of 50% and group B's range of 29%. This suggests that group C is most heterogeneous and group B is most homogeneous with regard to the individual learners' performances in the baseline reading test. Minimum scores are 43% for group C, 50% for group A and 71% for group B. The maximum score is the same for all three groups, namely 100%. The standard deviation is 15.58% for group A, 10.26% for group B and 18.01% for group C. This suggests once more that the performances of the pupils belonging to group B are most homogeneous, followed by group A and group C, the latter being least homogeneous in terms of performances. Variance is a further indicator of group B being most homogeneous with a variance of 1.1%, followed by group A with a variance of 2.4% and group C with a variance of 3.2%.

With regard to the distribution of the individual groups' scores, Table 2 shows that skewness is negative for all three groups (-.41 for group A, -.96 for group B and -1.42 for group C). Hence, in all three groups, there are more pupils who achieved high scores than pupils who achieved low scores (Green 2013: 45). Kurtosis is negative for groups A and B (-.72 and -.69) and positive for group C (.81), which indicates a platykurtic distribution of scores in groups A and B and a leptokurtic distribution of scores in group C (Green 2013: 45-46). As displayed in Table 2, the distribution of group A's test scores is near-normal since both the degree of skewness (-.79) and the degree of kurtosis (-.71) are within the ± 2 parameter (Green 2013: 45). The same holds true for group B due to the degree of skewness (-1.7) and the degree of kurtosis (-.63) being within ± 2 . Concerning group C, the distribution is non-normal since the degree of skewness is -2.78 and thus not within the ± 2 parameter. Figures 2, 3 and 4 below illustrate the distribution of the test scores of groups A, B and C.

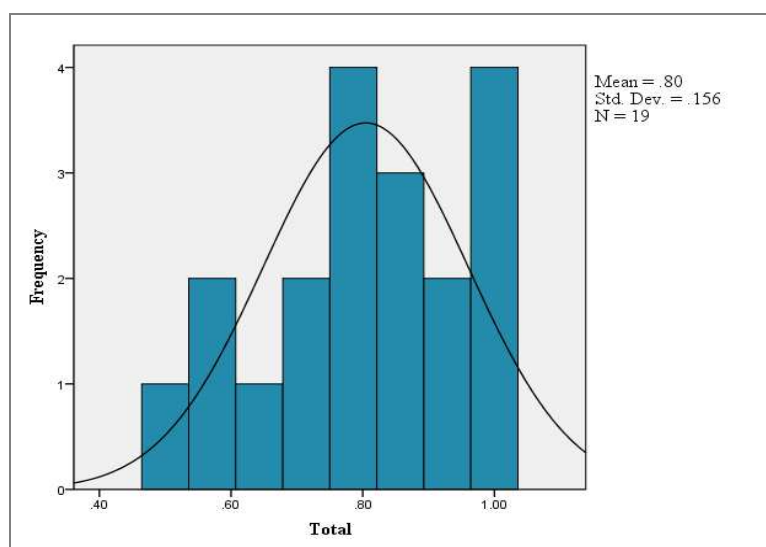


Figure 2 Histogram of distribution of group A's scores (baseline test)

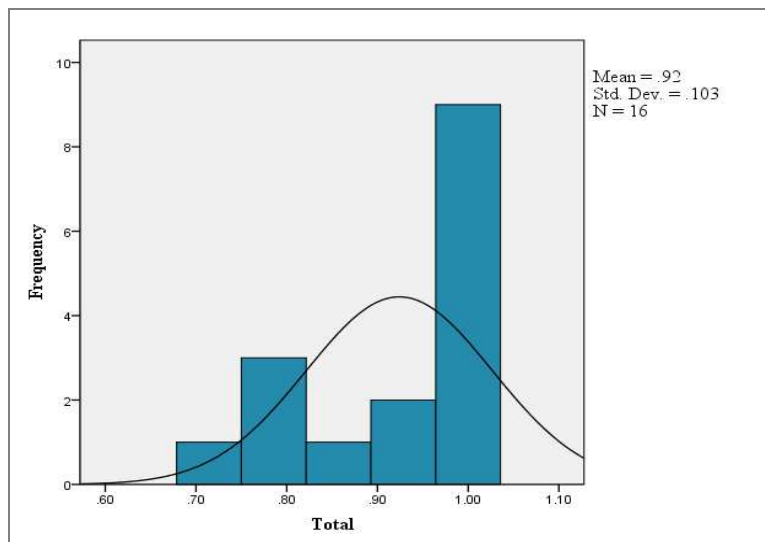


Figure 3 Histogram of distribution of group B's scores (baseline test)

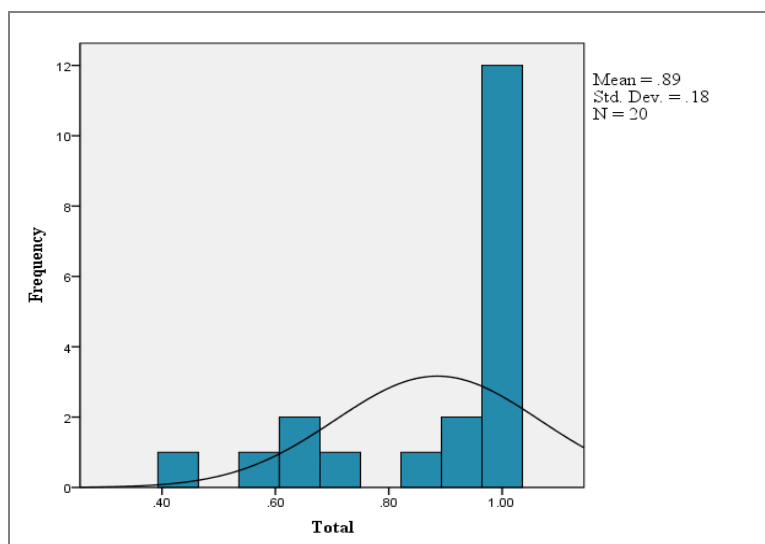


Figure 4 Histogram of distribution of group C's scores (baseline test)

Figures 2 and 3 show that the distribution of group A's and group B's scores is near-normal with group A's results being nearer to normality than those of group B. Figure 4 illustrates non-normal distribution of group C's scores. It can also be seen in Figures 2, 3 and 4 that in all groups, the data are negatively skewed and that therefore, more pupils obtained high than low scores.

Since the reading comprehension tasks that were included in the baseline test were not originally designed for testing but rather for teaching reading, an item analysis was undertaken and the reliability of the test was calculated. Table 3 shows the facility value (= p-value) and discrimination index for each item.

Table 3 Facility values and discrimination indices of individual items (baseline test)

Item	p-value	Discrimination index
T/F item 1	.873	.130
T/F item 2	.945	.099
T/F item 3	.982	.011
T/F item 4	.927	-.097
T/F item 5	.964	.108
T/F item 6	.982	-.112
Ordering item 7	.727	.593
Ordering item 8	.727	.694
Ordering item 9	.691	.633
Ordering item 10	.964	.199
Ordering item 11	.745	.690
Ordering item 12	1	.000
Ordering item 13	.782	.746
Ordering item 14	.855	.620

As presented in Table 3, item analysis showed that the facility value of all true or false items is above .8, which means that more than 80% of the test takers answered these items correctly. With regard to the items in the sentence-ordering task, items 10, 12 and 14 have a p-value of more than .8. Item 12 even displays a facility value of 1, which means that all pupils answered this item correctly. Thus, it can be assumed that items 1-6, 10, 12 and 14 were very easy for the test population (Green 2013: 27). Concerning the individual items' discrimination indices, the results presented in Table 3 suggest that all true or false items as well as sentence-ordering items 10 and 12 do not discriminate well between good and poor test takers. The reason for this is that a discrimination index of less than .3 indicates that the item is not discriminating positively (Green 2013: 29), which probably is a result of the items' low level of difficulty. Since the true or false items 4 and 6 exhibit a negative discrimination index, it seems that these items were answered correctly by the weaker pupils and wrongly by the stronger pupils (Green 2013: 29).

Table 4 provides information about the reliability statistics by indicating the test's Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha in the case of individual items being removed from the test is given in Table 5 below. Note, however, that Cronbach's Alpha was artificially increased since the ordering items were not treated as a testlet, i.e. as interdependent items, but as independent items (Sireci, Thissen & Wainer 1991: 242-243). This means that in fact, reliability is not as high as Cronbach's Alpha in Table 4 suggests. The same holds true for the figures of Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted in Table 5.

Table 4 Reliability statistics (baseline test)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.755	14

Table 5 Cronbach's Alpha if individual items are deleted (baseline test)

	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
T/F item 1	.765
T/F item 2	.762
T/F item 3	.762
T/F item 4	.778
T/F item 5	.759
T/F item 6	.767
Ordering item 7	.712
Ordering item 8	.696
Ordering item 9	.705
Ordering item 10	.754
Ordering item 11	.697
Ordering item 12	.760
Ordering item 13	.690
Ordering item 14	.712

As shown in Table 4, the analysis of the test's internal reliability revealed that the test is reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .76 since following Pallant (2007: 98, quoted in Green 2013: 38), "[v]alues above .7 are considered acceptable; however, values above .8 are preferable". These numbers are related to high-stakes tests so that as a result, a reliability coefficient of .76 is quite high for such a short test as the baseline test in the present study. However, as stated above, reliability was artificially boosted due to the interdependence of the ordering items. Furthermore, with regard to the individual items, it turned out that seven of the fourteen items do not influence internal reliability positively. The reason for this is that Cronbach's Alpha of the test would have been slightly higher if these items had been deleted. As Table 5 reveals, this holds true for all items of the true or false task and for item 12 of the sentence-ordering task. Thus, even though the test as a whole is reliable, the true or false items and one of the sentence-ordering items do not make a positive contribution to this reliability. However, they do not affect it in a negative way either.

In order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the individual groups' performances in the baseline test, an ANOVA was run. The Levene test showed equal variance across the data of all three groups ($p = .12$), which is one of the requirements for the ANOVA. With regard to the second condition, a normal distribution, it was already mentioned above that this was not found ($n = 55$, $KS - Z = .25$, $p < .05$). However, the ANOVA is robust to violations of the normality assumption (Bühner & Ziegler 2009: 372; Stevens 2007: 57), especially when the samples are of approximately the same size (Bortz & Schuster 2010: 214). Thus, since the three groups in the present study are almost the same size, the ANOVA can be conducted despite the violation of the normality assumption. Another reason why an ANOVA was calculated is that it is more powerful than its equivalent non-parametric test (Bühner & Ziegler 2009: 372) and thus "more likely to find a significant difference if one is there" (Green 2013: 91). Table 6 presents the results of the ANOVA.

Table 6 ANOVA (baseline test)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.133	2	.067	2.859	.066
Within Groups	1.211	52	.023		
Total	1.345	54			

As can be seen in Table 6, the ANOVA revealed that there is no significant difference between the groups' performances ($F_{2,52} = 2.86$, ns.). Consequently, it can be assumed that the three groups are of approximately the same level.

6.2. Results of the actual test

The procedure for analysing the test results of the actual test is similar to what was presented for the baseline test in the previous section. First, descriptive statistics show the results for each individual group. An item analysis was then carried out to determine the reliability of the test for each group. Inferential statistics compare these results by means of an ANOVA to investigate whether significant differences between the control group and the treatment groups can be found. Moreover, it was analysed if the two pre-reading exercises had differing effects on learners' performances in the true or false and the sentence-ordering task. Therefore, an

ANOVA was run to compare the three groups' results of the true or false task and another ANOVA compared their results of the ordering task.

First, the actual tests' results are presented by means of descriptive statistics. Table 7 below displays descriptive statistics for the three groups A (prediction), B (vocabulary) and C (control group).

Table 7 Descriptive statistics for groups A, B and C (actual test)

	Group A	Group B	Group C
N Valid	19	16	20
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	.7647	.8934	.8353
Std. Error of Mean	.04361	.04595	.03403
Median	.8235	1.0000	.8824
Mode	.88	1.00	.88
Std. Deviation	.19011	.18379	.15220
Variance	.036	.034	.023
Skewness	-.629	-2.057	-.812
Std. Error of Skewness	.524	.564	.512
Degree of Skewness	-1.200	-3.647	-1.586
Kurtosis	-.460	4.284	-.287
Std. Error of Kurtosis	1.014	1.091	.992
Degree of Kurtosis	-.454	3.927	-.289
Range	.65	.65	.47
Minimum	.35	.35	.53
Maximum	1.00	1.00	1.00

Table 7 demonstrates that the results are negatively skewed in each group with group B exhibiting the most negative value (-2.06), followed by group C (-.81) and group A that shows the least negative value (-.63). Thus, in each group, there are more pupils who achieved high scores than pupils who achieved low scores (Green 2013: 45). The degree of skewness is -1.2 for group A, -3.65 for group B and -1.59 for group C, which suggests that group B's results are not symmetrical in relation to the mean, whereas group A's and group C's results are more symmetrical since they are within the +/-2 parameter (Green 2013: 45). With regard to kurtosis, group A and group C exhibit a negative value (-.46 and -.29), whereas kurtosis for group B is positive (4.28). Hence, the scores in groups A and C are less densely distributed than the scores in group B, which means that the pupils in groups A and C performed less similarly to each other than the pupils in group B (Green 2013: 45-46). The distribution of scores in groups A and C is therefore platykurtic, while it is leptokurtic in group B. Concerning the degree of kurtosis, it is within +/- 2 for group A (-.45) and group C (-.29) but not for group B (3.93). This again suggests that the

distribution of scores in groups A and C is near-normal and non-normal in group B. For better illustration, Figures 5, 6 and 7 below provide information about the distribution of group A's, group B's and group C's scores.

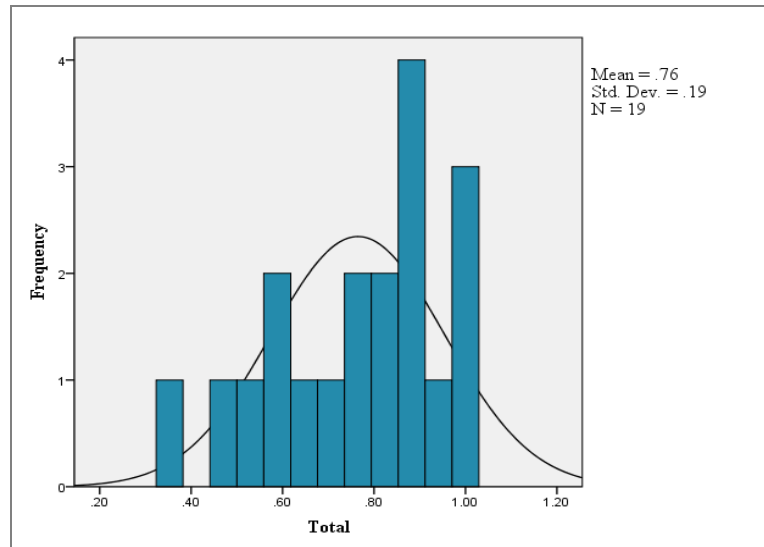


Figure 5 Histogram of distribution of group A's scores (actual test)

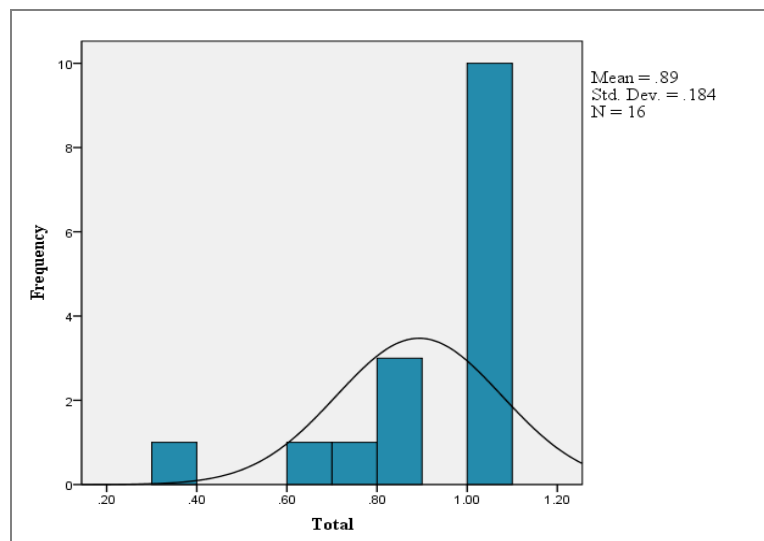


Figure 6 Histogram of distribution of group B's scores (actual test)

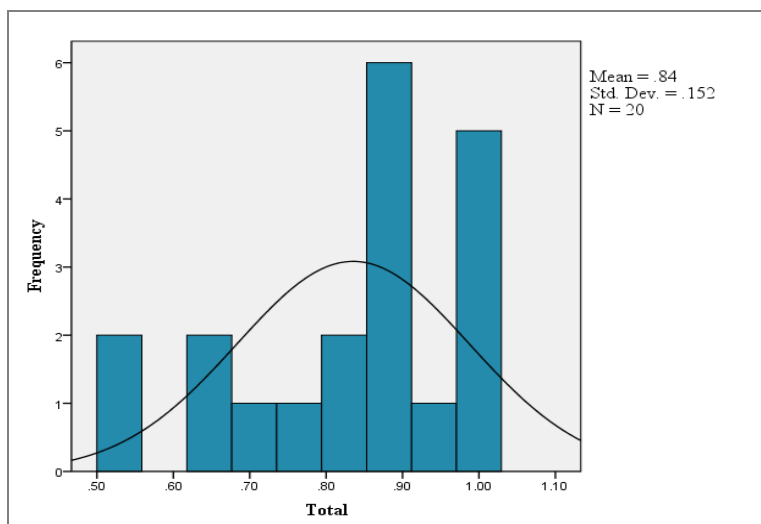


Figure 7 Histogram of distribution of group C's scores (actual test)

The analysis of the degrees of skewness and kurtosis suggested near-normal distributions for the scores of groups A and C and non-normal distribution for the scores of group B. When comparing the histograms of the three groups, it can be seen that the distributions of group A's and group C's performances are indeed nearer to normality (Figures 5 and 7) than that of group B (Figure 6). As the degrees of skewness indicate, the histograms also illustrate that the results are least symmetrical in group B, more symmetrical in group C and most (although not entirely) symmetrical in group A. It can also be seen that the kurtosis is platykurtic in groups A and C and leptokurtic in group B with a peak at 100%.

With regard to the individual groups' means, it can be seen in Table 7 above that group B's mean is highest at 89.34%, followed by group C with 83.53% and group A comes last with 76.47%. Hence, compared with the baseline test, the sequence stayed the same with group B performing best and group A performing worst. As a reminder, group B received the pre-reading treatment of vocabulary, whereas group A received the pre-reading treatment of prediction. This means that the control group that did not do any pre-reading activities obtained better results than the experimental group that was asked to predict the stories' contents. Consequently, one of the two pre-reading exercises did not have an effect on the learners' comprehension. Table 7 further displays that the median of group A is 82.35%, whereas group C's median is higher with 88.24% and group B's median is highest at 100%. What is striking about group B's median of 100% is that, as in the baseline test, more than half of the vocabulary group answered all items correctly. With regard to the mode, group A's

and group C's most common score is 88%, while group B has the highest mode possible of 100%. It can further be seen that the minimum scores of groups A and B are 35%, in contrast to group C that shows a minimum score of 53%. This is interesting as the two experimental groups have lower minimum scores than the control group. The maximum scores are equal for all groups, namely 100%. This results in a range of 65% for the treatment groups A and B and a range of 47% for the control group C, which indicates that the performances of the pupils belonging to the control group are not as heterogeneous as those of the pupils belonging to the treatment groups. The standard deviations are 19.01%, 18.38% and 15.22% for groups A, B and C respectively, which again suggests that the control group is most homogeneous and reveals that the prediction group is least homogeneous. The same can be noticed when analysing variance, which is highest for group A (3.6%), followed by group B (3.4%) and group C (2.3%). In the baseline test, this sequence was different since it was the vocabulary group that was most homogeneous, followed by the prediction group and the control group that was least homogeneous. Thus, with regard to the treatment groups, the vocabulary group was more homogeneous than the prediction group in both tests. The control group, however, was the most heterogeneous group in the baseline test but the most homogeneous group in the actual test.

Similar to the reading comprehension tasks used in the baseline test, those used in the actual test were taken from a coursebook and were thus designed for teaching rather than testing reading. Therefore, an item analysis was performed in order to determine facility values and discrimination indices. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to gain information on the test's reliability and of individual items in relation to the test as a whole.

Table 8 below presents the facility values and discrimination indices of the seventeen items that were included in the actual test for each group.

Table 8 Facility values and discrimination indices of individual items for groups A, B and C
(actual test)

Item	Group A		Group B		Group C	
	p-value	Discrimination index	p-value	Discrimination index	p-value	Discrimination index
T/F item 1	.842	.022	1	.000	.950	-.158
T/F item 2	.526	.294	1	.000	.900	.108
T/F item 3	1	.000	1	.000	.950	-.068
T/F item 4	.632	.435	.813	.646	.800	.407
T/F item 5	.895	.012	.875	.797	.900	.318
T/F item 6	.789	.431	.875	.797	.850	.295
T/F item 7	.947	-.145	.750	.562	.900	.391
T/F item 8	.684	.381	.813	.646	.650	.455
T/F item 9	.842	.462	.875	.797	1	.000
Ordering item 10	.737	.785	.938	.750	.900	.616
Ordering item 11	.579	.620	.813	.646	.550	.640
Ordering item 12	.684	.070	.875	.723	.800	.295
Ordering item 13	.842	.619	.938	.750	1	.000
Ordering item 14	.789	.385	.875	.168	.700	.644
Ordering item 15	1	.000	.938	.750	1	.000
Ordering item 16	.632	.643	.938	.196	.800	.030
Ordering item 17	.579	.537	.875	.168	.550	.640

As Table 8 shows, item analysis revealed that the facility values of the true or false items 1, 3, 5 and 9 are above 80% in all three groups, which means that these items seem to have been very easy for all test takers (Green 2013: 27). The same holds true for the sentence-ordering items 13 and 15, which also show a p-value of more than 80% in all groups. True or false items 2, 6 and 7 and the ordering item 10 have a facility value of more than 80% in two groups, while the true or false items 4 and 8 and the ordering items 11, 12, 14, 16 and 17 have a facility value of more than 80% in only one group. Since the p-value of items 1 and 2 is 100% in group B, these items were answered correctly by all pupils belonging to the vocabulary group. Item 3 was also answered correctly by all participants in group B as well as by all participants in group A. All test takers in the control group chose the right answer for the items 9, 13 and 15. Item 15 was also answered correctly by all pupils belonging to the prediction group. Thus, 7 of the 17 items have a p-value of above 80% in group A, 16 in group B and 10 in group C. Hence, even though the aim was to increase this test's level of difficulty by restriction of time, 7 items still seemed to be very easy for the pupils in group A, 16 for the pupils in group B and 10 for the pupils in group C.

Concerning discrimination indices, these prove to be below .3 for the true or false items 1, 2 and 3 in all groups. As a consequence, these items do not discriminate well between strong and weak learners (Green 2013: 29). Items 1 and 2 show a discrimination index of 0 in group B, which means that there is no difference between the performances of group B's weaker and stronger pupils on these items (Hughes 2013: 226). The reason for this is that all test takers in group B answered these items correctly (p-value = 100%). The same holds true for item 3 in groups A and B, items 9 and 13 in group C and item 15 in groups A and C. The negative discrimination indices of items 1 and 3 in group C and of item 7 in group A suggest that in these groups, the weaker pupils answered the items correctly and the stronger pupils answered it wrongly (Green 2013: 29). Items 4, 8, 10 and 11 show a discrimination index above .3 in all three groups and thus discriminate positively between good and poor test takers of all groups (Green 2013: 29).

For the sake of gaining information about the test's and items' reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the whole test (see Table 9 below) and for the case of removing individual items from the test (see Table 10 below). As in the baseline test, Cronbach's Alpha is actually not as high as indicated in Table 9 due to the artificial increase in reliability caused by not treating the sentence-ordering items as a testlet but as independent items (Sireci, Thissen & Wainer 1991: 242-243). The same must be borne in mind when analysing the figures of Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted in Table 10.

Table 9 Reliability statistics for groups A, B and C (actual test)

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Group A	.772	17
Group B	.884	17
Group C	.729	17

Table 10 Cronbach's Alpha if individual items are deleted for groups A, B and C (actual test)

Item	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted		
	Group A	Group B	Group C
T/F item 1	.784	.888	.746
T/F item 2	.768	.888	.734
T/F item 3	.775	.888	.741
T/F item 4	.755	.873	.707
T/F item 5	.782	.866	.717
T/F item 6	.755	.866	.719
T/F item 7	.785	.878	.711
T/F item 8	.759	.873	.700
T/F item 9	.754	.866	.732
Ordering item 10	.722	.871	.691
Ordering item 11	.736	.873	.672
Ordering item 12	.787	.870	.720
Ordering item 13	.742	.871	.732
Ordering item 14	.759	.892	.674
Ordering item 15	.775	.871	.732
Ordering item 16	.734	.888	.748
Ordering item 17	.744	.892	.672

As can be seen in Table 9, Cronbach's Alpha for the whole test is .77 for group A, .88 for group B and .73 for group C, which means that the tests of all groups are reliable (Pallant 2007: 98, quoted in Green 2013: 38). Table 10 shows Cronbach's Alpha if individual items are deleted from the tests and thus provides information on the reliability of individual items in relation to the three groups. Items that do not influence the overall reliability of group A's test positively are the true or false items 1, 3, 5 and 7 and the ordering items 12 and 15. Concerning group B's test, the true or false items 1, 2 and 3 do not make a positive contribution to the test's reliability as well as the ordering items 14, 16 and 17. However, both in group A and in group B, the listed items do not affect reliability in a negative way either. With regard to group C, reliability would have been slightly higher if the true or false items 1, 2, 3 and 9 and the ordering items 13, 15 and 16 had not been included in the test.

In summary, what can be deduced from the item analysis is that some of the items are flawed with regard to their facility value, discrimination index and reliability. This needs to be kept in mind for the further discussion of the test results. Nevertheless, the test as a whole proved to be reliable although this reliability was artificially boosted due to the sentence-ordering items' interdependence.

For the sake of comparing the performances of the three groups, the test results were analysed by means of inferential statistics. The Levene test revealed that there is

equal variance across the groups ($p = .6$). The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test calculated for the scores of all three groups taken together showed that the distribution of test scores is non-normal ($n = 55$, $KS - Z = .2$, $p < .05$). However, since the ANOVA is robust to non-normality (cf. section 6.1.), it was run to find out whether significant differences between the groups' achievements could be detected. The findings are presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11 ANOVA (actual test)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.146	2	.073	2.370	.104
Within Groups	1.597	52	.031		
Total	1.743	54			

As can be seen in Table 11, the ANOVA showed no significant difference between performances of the three groups ($F_{2,52} = 2.37$, ns.). This means that there is no significant difference in achievements, neither between the two treatment groups nor between the control group and the individual treatment groups. Hence, no significant effect of the two types of pre-reading exercises could be determined. Chapter 7 will discuss what can be concluded from this result.

Since the success of pre-reading activities is, amongst others, dependent on the item format of the reading task (cf. sub-section 4.2.3.), it was further analysed whether the pre-reading tasks had differing effects on the learners' performances with regard to the two item formats included. For this purpose, two One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were run to determine whether distributions of scores were normal. The tests revealed that for both the true or false as well as for the sentence-ordering task, distributions were non-normal ($n = 55$, $KS - Z = .27$, $p < .05$ and $n = 55$, $KS - Z = .33$, $p < .05$ respectively). Levene tests showed homogeneity of variance for the true or false task ($p = .34$) and for the ordering task ($p = .06$). Due to the test's robustness to the violation of the normality assumption, an ANOVA could be conducted to compare the learners' scores for both item formats separately. The results of the ANOVA for the true or false task are shown in Table 12.

Table 12 ANOVA for T/F task

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.096	2	.048	1.328	.274
Within Groups	1.881	52	.036		
Total	1.977	54			

Table 12 illustrates that no significant difference between the groups' performances in the true or false task were found ($F_{2,52} = 1.33$, ns.). Thus, the pre-reading activities did not have a significant impact on the pupils' achievements in this task. Moreover, no significant difference between the pre-reading vocabulary and the pre-reading prediction group could be detected. It follows that neither of the two pre-reading exercises significantly influenced the learners' performance.

Concerning the ordering task, the findings of the ANOVA are displayed in Table 13 below.

Table 13 ANOVA for sentence-ordering task

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.251	2	.125	1.993	.147
Within Groups	3.268	52	.063		
Total	3.519	54			

Table 13 likewise shows that the difference between the three groups' performances in the ordering task is not significant ($F_{2,52} = 1.99$, ns.). Hence, in relation to the learners' achievements in the sentence-ordering task, it did not matter whether they performed pre-reading exercises or not. In addition, there was no significant difference between those learners who performed the pre-reading vocabulary task and those who performed the prediction task. It can be concluded that the pre-reading phase did not have a significant influence, neither on the pupils' performances in the test as a whole nor on their achievements in the true or false and the sentence-ordering task regarded separately.

6.3. Comparison of the baseline test's and the actual test's results

In this section, the individual groups' results of the baseline and the actual test are compared. When analysing the means, it can be seen that all three groups achieved better results in the baseline test than in the actual test (cf. Table 2 in section 6.1. for

the results of the baseline test and Table 7 in section 6.2. for the results of the actual test), which is most likely due to the reduction of time in the actual test. Group A's mean in the baseline test was 80.45% compared to 76.47% in the actual test, which results in a difference of 3.98% between the two means. Group B achieved a mean of 92.41% in the baseline test and a mean of 89.34% in the actual test, resulting in a difference of 3.07%. Group C's mean was 88.57% in the baseline test and 83.53% in the actual test and hence, the difference between the two means is 5.04%. Thus, for all three groups, the actual test was more difficult than the baseline test, albeit to differing extents. The biggest difference between the two means can be determined in the control group and the smallest difference in the vocabulary group.

In order to determine whether the differences in performance are statistically significant, a t test was conducted to compare the two points of measurement. Since for group A, the degrees of skewness and kurtosis are within ± 2 for both the baseline test (cf. Table 2 in section 6.1.) and the actual test (cf. Table 7 in section 6.2.), a paired-samples t test was run. In the baseline test, the degrees of skewness and kurtosis for group B would also be within the acceptable ± 2 parameter (cf. Table 2) but in the actual test, they are not (cf. Table 7). As a result, one of the variables does not fulfil the normality assumption needed for parametric t tests, which is why the non-parametric related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test was calculated. This test was also used to compare the performances of group C because the degree of skewness is not within ± 2 in the baseline test (cf. Table 2).

Table 14 below provides the results of the paired-samples t test for the prediction group.

Table 14 Paired-samples t test (group A)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Devia- tion	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Baseline test Total – Actual test Total	.03981	.18516	.04248	-.04944	.12905	.937	18	.361

As can be seen in Table 14, the difference in the means of the baseline and the actual test is 3.98%. The table further shows that this difference is not statistically significant ($t_{18} = .94$, ns., $M_{pre} = .8045$, $M_{post} = .7647$), which means that group A's achievements in the baseline test and in the actual test did not differ to a statistically significant extent.

Table 15 presents the results of the related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test for group B.

Table 15 Related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test (group B)

	Actual test Total – Baseline test Total
Z	-.178
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.859

As demonstrated in Table 15, there is no statistically significant difference in the medians of the baseline and the actual test ($Z = -.18$, ns.). Hence, statistically speaking, group B's performance in the actual test was not significantly different from the performance in the baseline test.

Table 16 below reports on the outcome of the related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test for group C.

Table 16 Related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test (group C)

	Actual test Total – Baseline test Total
Z	-2.104
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.035

It can be seen in Table 16 that the related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test revealed a statistically significant difference in the medians of the baseline and the actual test for group C ($Z = -2.10$, $p < .05$). In order to find out whether the results are not only statistically but also educationally significant (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007: 520), the effect size was calculated ($r = -.33$). According to Cohen (1988: 532), an effect size of .3 indicates a medium effect and thus, the effect size of $-.33$ does so too (Green 2013: 103). Hence, the control group performed significantly worse in the actual test than in the baseline test and the effect is medium. The results of the paired-samples t test for group A and the related-samples Wilcoxon signed ranks test for group B suggest that the achievements of the treatment groups, which were prepared by pre-reading tasks, did not significantly change despite the reduction of time. In contrast, the performance of the control group, which did not do any pre-reading activities, deteriorated to a statistically significant extent.

In summary, the comparison of the performances of each individual group in the baseline and the actual test showed that all three groups found the actual test more difficult than the baseline test. While the differences in performances were not statistically significant for the two experimental groups, the difference was statistically significant for the control group with a medium effect.

6.4. Results of the questionnaire

This section illustrates the results of the questionnaire which was distributed in all groups after the reading comprehension tasks. For the closed questions, it was calculated how many per cent of pupils ticked each of the five categories available (1 = stimmt genau [absolutely true], 2 = stimmt fast [almost true], 3 = stimmt teilweise [partly true], 4 = stimmt eher nicht [rather not true], 5 = stimmt gar nicht [not true at all]). Note that due to restrictions of space, only the most relevant items will be discussed. The results of the remaining items are provided in the appendix (cf. section 10.4.). The sentence completion item and the open-ended question were evaluated qualitatively. For better illustration of these two items, selected answers of learners will be quoted.

Prior to the description of the results, it needs to be recorded that the sequence of items differed between the groups. This is why in the following presentation, the caption will indicate the item's number for each group. First, the group is named (A,

B or C), which is followed by the relevant item number (1-8). To illustrate, the first item discussed in the next paragraph is labelled item A1 / B2 / C2. Hence, this item was item 1 for group A and item 2 for groups B and C. Some items were only included in one or two versions of the questionnaire (e.g. item C5 and item A3 / B3).

The first two items discussed are related to the stories. The results of item A1 / B2 / C2 “Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich nicht wusste, worum es geht. [I did not understand the stories very well because I did not know what they were about.]” are reported in Figure 8 below.

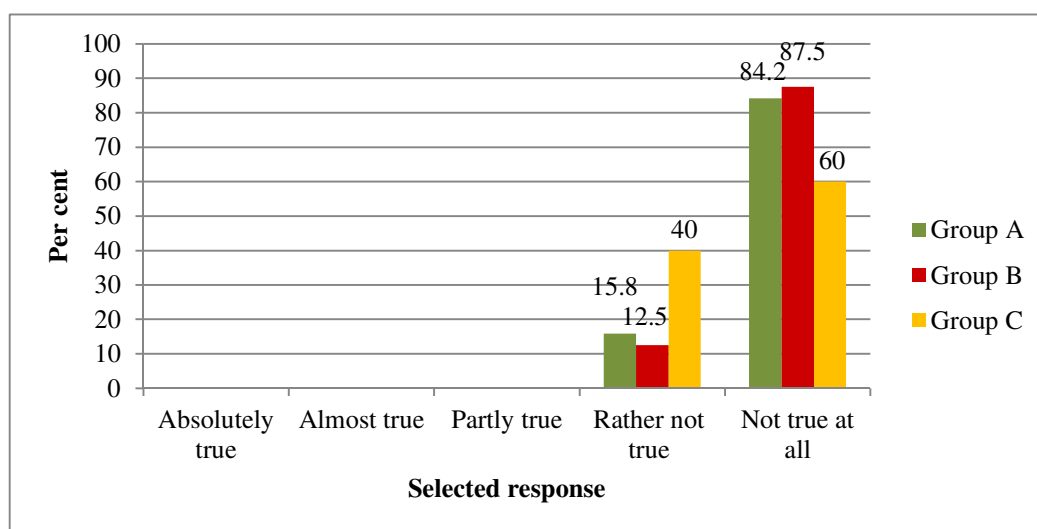


Figure 8 Responses to item A1 / B2 / C2

As Figure 8 shows, all groups indicated that they knew what the stories were concerned with because not a single learner picked option 1-3 (absolutely true, almost true, partly true). This is also reflected by the learners’ generally high scores and the actual test items’ facility values. However, a difference between the groups can be detected regarding option 5 (not true at all) since it was chosen more often in the experimental groups (84.2% and 87.5%) than in the control group (60%). This suggests that more pupils in the treatment groups had the impression of having understood the texts well than pupils belonging to the control group.

Item A2 / B1 / C3 says: “Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich viele Wörter nicht kannte. [I did not understand the stories very well because I did not know many words]”. The answers to this item are demonstrated in Figure 9 below.

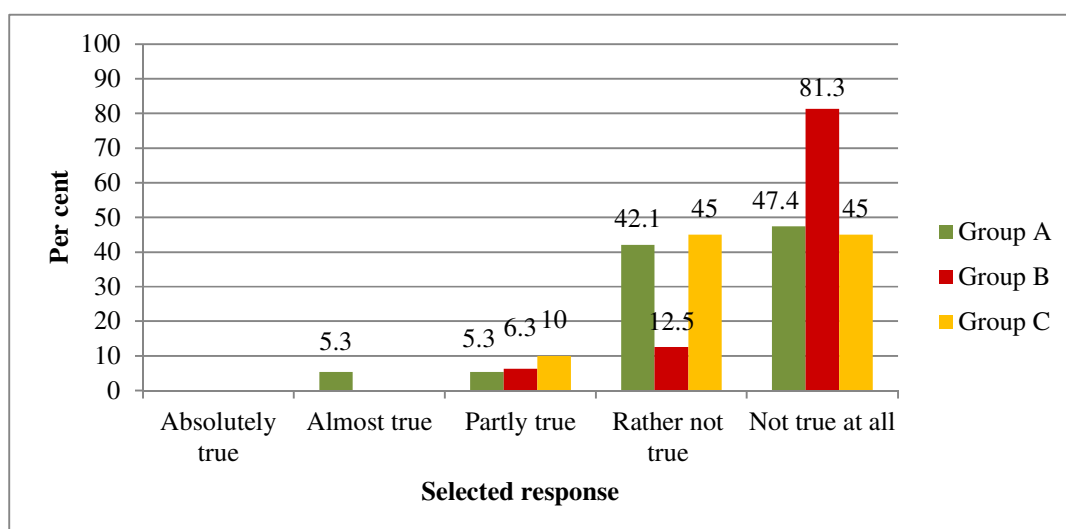


Figure 9 Responses to item A2 / B1 / C3

As Figure 9 displays, no one chose option 1 (absolutely true). This suggests that the pupils knew most words, no matter which treatment they received. Option 5 (not true at all) was chosen most often in the vocabulary group, more precisely, by 81.3% compared with 47.4% in the prediction and 45% in the control group. Thus, as anticipated, the vocabulary group had the least difficulties with unknown words, followed by groups A and C which are very similar with regard to option 5.

The next statement discussed is item A3 / B3, which concerns the worksheets of the pre-reading phase. Since the control group did not do any pre-reading tasks, this item was only included for groups A and B. The wording of item A3 / B3 is as follows: “Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mir geholfen, die Geschichten zu verstehen. [The worksheets which we did prior to reading helped me to understand the stories]”. Figure 10 below provides information about the test takers’ answers.

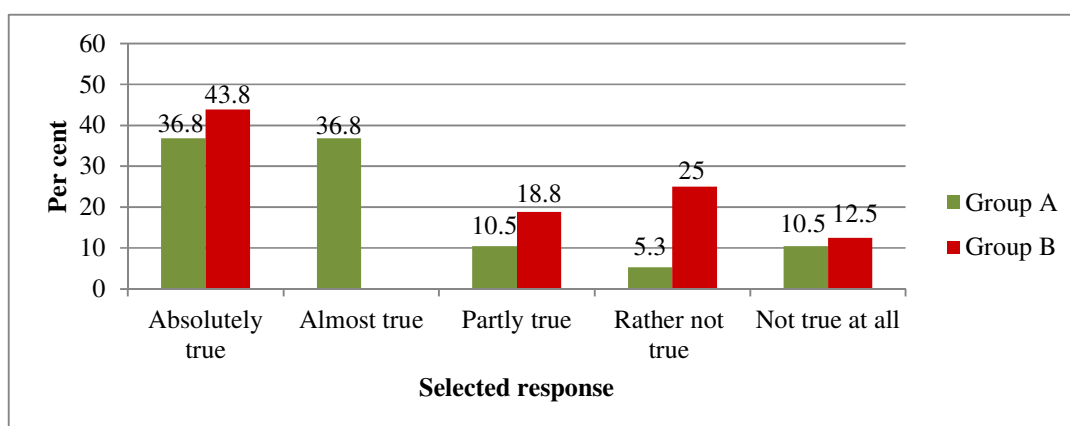


Figure 10 Responses to item A3 / B3

It can be seen in Figure 10 that slightly more pupils in the vocabulary group ticked option 1 (absolutely true) than pupils in the prediction group (43.8% compared to 36.8%). Thus, it could be assumed that in the pupils' view, pre-teaching vocabulary helps more than predicting and discussing the content of the stories. However, when adding the positive categories 1 and 2 (absolutely true and almost true), a different picture is displayed. In this case, 73.6% of the prediction group chose an affirmative answer, whereas only 43.8% of the vocabulary group did so. This means that on the whole, more learners belonging to the prediction group found the pre-reading exercise helpful than those of the vocabulary group. Furthermore, if the two negative options (rather not true and not true at all) are regarded together, a similar picture evolves since they were chosen by 15.8% of the prediction group and 37.5% of the vocabulary group. Therefore, more than one third of group B did not think that the worksheets had helped them with comprehending the stories.

Item A4 / B4 is also related to the worksheets and says the following: "Durch die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, habe ich schon gewusst, worum es in den Geschichten gehen wird. [Due to the worksheets which we did prior to reading I already knew what the stories would be about]". Figure 11 presents the learners' answers to item A4 / B4.

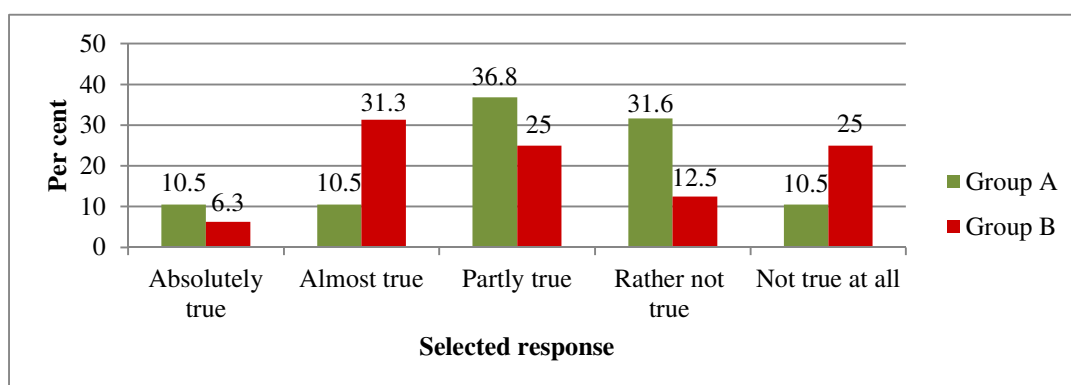


Figure 11 Responses to item A4 / B4

As Figure 11 illustrates, 10.5% of group A and 6.3% of group B ticked the answer ‘absolutely true’, which would indicate that the pre-reading phase allowed the prediction group to guess the stories’ contents to a slightly greater extent than the vocabulary group. In contrast, when adding the two affirmative answer options (absolutely true and almost true), another result is displayed. Then, it seems that more pupils belonging to the vocabulary group already knew what the stories would be about (37.6% compared to 21% of the prediction group). This is interesting as the contrary was expected, namely that the prediction group would know more about the stories’ contents than the vocabulary group due to the discussion of their predictions prior to reading.

Figure 12 below reports on item A5 / B5 that is concerned with raising curiosity during the pre-reading phase: “Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mich neugierig auf die Geschichten gemacht. [The worksheets which we did prior to reading made me curious about the stories]”.

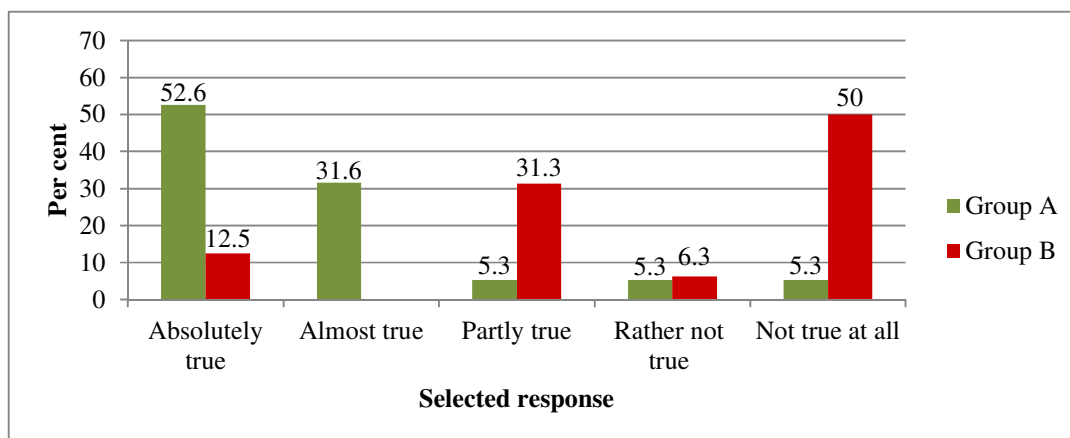


Figure 12 Responses to item A5 / B5

As can be seen in Figure 12, there is a considerable difference between groups A and B. While only 12.5% of the vocabulary group stated that they were curious about the stories, more than four times as many (52.6%) did so in the prediction group. When adding the two affirmative categories, the result is even more telling: only 12.5% of group B indicated their curiosity compared to 84.2% of group A. Hence, the result suggests that prediction of stories' contents indeed contributes to learners' curiosity and as a result, also to their motivation. This is in line with what Richard-Amato (2010: 138) mentions about prediction tasks and motivation (cf. sub-section 4.2.3.). What is also striking is that half of group B indicated that they were not curious at all compared to only 5.3% of group A.

Figure 13 below provides the results for items A6, B6 and C5. Item A6 says: "Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil wir vorher schon über den Inhalt der Geschichten gesprochen haben. [I thought that the tasks following the reading were easy because we had already talked about the stories' contents beforehand]". The corresponding item for group B (B6) states: "Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil wir vorher über wichtige Wörter gesprochen haben. [I thought that the tasks following the reading were easy because we had talked about important words beforehand]". Due to the omission of the pre-reading phase in the control group, item C5 asked about the difficulty of the comprehension tasks without relating it to pre-reading exercises: "Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach. [I thought that the tasks following the reading were easy]". Since all three items are related to the perceived level of difficulty of the tasks following the reading comprehension, Figure 13 below reports on all three groups' responses.

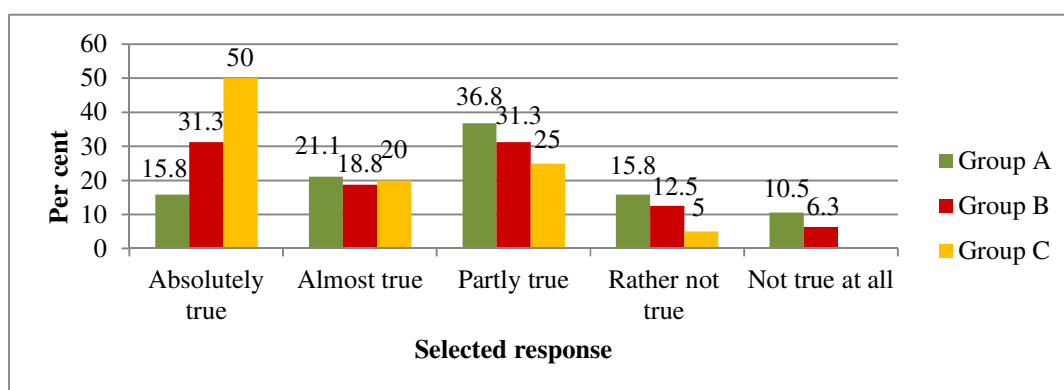


Figure 13 Responses to item A6, B6 and C5

As Figure 13 demonstrates, slightly more than one third of group A (36.9%) was of the opinion that prediction and discussion of contents facilitated the tasks after the reading (answer options absolutely true and almost true taken together). Another 36.8% stated that the pre-reading phase partly helped them with solving the tasks. The smallest group (26.3%), even though still consisting of more than one quarter of group A's pupils, is the one which did not agree on a facilitative effect of the pre-reading prediction activity (answer option rather not true or not true at all). With regard to group B, 50.1% thought the statement to be absolutely or almost true. Thus, half of group B perceived the comprehension tasks as easy due to the pre-reading phase compared to only 36.9% of group A. Slightly less than one third rated the statement as being partly true. This seems to indicate that pre-teaching vocabulary helps learners with answering the comprehension tasks after the reading. Fewer pupils in group B chose the answer options rather not true and not true at all than pupils in group A (18.8% compared to 26.3%). Figure 13 further illustrates that half of the control group stated that the comprehension tasks were easy and a further 20% thought that this was almost true. Hence, even though the pupils belonging to the control group did not receive any preparation for the reading comprehension tasks, 70% agreed that they were easy. This corresponds with their performance in the reading test (see section 6.2.), which was worse than that of the vocabulary group but better than the prediction group's achievements.

In summary, the closed items on the questionnaires revealed the following. First, all 55 participants understood the stories' contents and in comparison with the control group, learners belonging to the treatment groups did so even more. The majority of the prediction group (73.6%) believed that the pre-reading exercises had helped them with comprehension of the stories, whereas in the vocabulary group, not even half of

the learners thought so. In the prediction group, only 15.8% were of the opinion that the activities had not helped them compared to more than one third of the vocabulary group. Concerning the facilitative effect of the pre-reading exercises with regard to the tasks following the stories, the majority of group A's pupils were on the positive side of the answer spectrum but more than one quarter believed that prediction and discussion were not the reason why the tasks were easy to understand. Half of the vocabulary group, in contrast, thought that the vocabulary exercises were the reason for not experiencing difficulty in answering the comprehension tasks. As regards curiosity, it is remarkable that the prediction group was much more curious about the stories than the vocabulary group.

In the sentence completion item, learners were asked to complete the following sentence: "Beim Verstehen von englischen Geschichten hilft es mir, wenn... [For the comprehension of English stories, I find it helpful when...]". As already indicated, the results were evaluated qualitatively for each group. An interesting issue raised in group A was time. Several pupils mentioned that having enough time helps with successful comprehension. As this was not referred to in the other groups, it could be assumed that perhaps, the time constraint was one reason for the prediction group's least successful results. This issue will be discussed in chapter 7. The second topic raised in the prediction group was vocabulary since in the pupils' views, it is essential to know the English words before reading. Moreover, learners' answers revealed that it helps them to make guesses about the stories' contents beforehand and to discuss the texts afterwards. Therefore, in spite of group A coming last, it seems that the learners do think of prediction exercises as being useful. Group B also mentioned vocabulary knowledge as a helpful tool for reading comprehension, even more often than group A. The pupils further remarked that reading the text more than once helps with understanding as well as highlighting important events or facts and summarising the text. As in the other two groups, the issue of vocabulary was also raised in group C. Additionally, it was indicated that thinking about the text in German facilitates the reading process as well as reading it more than once, the latter being suggested in group B too. Interestingly, one pupil in group C stated that discussing the story and posing questions prior to reading is useful when saying that "Beim Verstehen von englischen Geschichten hilft es mir, wenn 'man [...] schon im Vorhinein Fragen zur Geschichte stellen kann.'" [For the comprehension of English stories, I find it helpful when 'questions concerning the story are already asked in

advance’]”. This statement points towards a preference for the pre-reading prediction exercise for this pupil. To sum up, the sentence completion item revealed that both pre-reading tasks were perceived as helpful with vocabulary knowledge being referred to more often.

The open question item was verbalised as follows: “Möchtest du sonst noch etwas zu den Geschichten und den Aufgaben sagen? Du kannst deine Gedanken hier aufschreiben. [Would you like to say something else about the stories and tasks? You can note down your thoughts here]”. In all groups, the majority of pupils stated that the stories were not difficult, for instance by saying: “Die Geschichten waren einfache, gutverständlichen [sic] Geschichten. [The stories were simple, comprehensible stories]”. The tasks following the reading were also perceived as easy: “Die Aufgaben waren eigentlich ziemlich einfach. [The tasks were actually fairly easy]”. The observed low level of difficulty is also reflected in the pupils’ high scores. Nonetheless, eight learners suggested that the level was not too easy either, which is exemplified by the following two quotes. “Ich fand sie [die Geschichten] waren nicht zu leicht aber auch nicht zu schwer. [I thought that they [the stories] were not too easy but not too difficult either]”. Another pupil wrote, “Ich finde die Aufgaben waren für unsere Schulstufe [sic] passend und dem entsprechend [sic] einfach. [I think that the tasks were suitable for our level and, as a result, easy]”. One pupil belonging to the prediction group noted that “die Zettel, die es vor einer Übung gab machten auf die Geschichte neugierig” [the worksheets which we did prior to the reading comprehension task made me curious about the story]”. The answers to item A5 / B5 (see above) similarly suggested that the prediction task raised the learners’ curiosity. Concerning the tasks’ level of difficulty, one learner indicated the following: “Die Fragen mit richtig oder falsch waren einfacher als die Geschichte zu ordnen. [The true or false task was easier than ordering the jumbled story]”. This is in line with the facility values of the individual items in groups A and C (cf. section 6.2., Table 8), as on average, the true or false items have a higher facility value ($p = .8$ for group A and $p = .88$ for group C) than the ordering items ($p = .73$ for group A and $p = 0.79$ for group C). However, for group B, which is the group that the above quoted learner belonged to, the average facility value of the ordering items is slightly higher ($p = .9$) than that of the true or false items ($p = .89$). Drawing on the answers of the control group, it can be assumed that not all words contained in the reading task were known. As the following two quotes suggest, this was a problem for some

pupils, whereas for others, it was not. “[I]ch wusste ein paar Vokabeln nicht und so kannte ich mich manchmal nicht aus. [I did not know some of the vocabulary, which is why I did not understand everything]”. “Ich wusste manche Vokabel nicht, jedoch verstand ich die Geschichten gut. [I did not know some of the vocabulary but I still understood the stories well]”. To conclude, what was stated most often by learners in all three groups was that the stories as well as the comprehension tasks were easy but nonetheless appropriate for their level.

7. Discussion

Chapter 7 discusses the test results which were presented in chapter 6. Section 7.1. therefore investigates what the test results suggest concerning the research questions, possible reasons for the results are presented and possible pedagogical implications are identified. Section 7.2. then provides information about the study's limitations as well as suggestions for improvement and proposals for future research. The findings and their implications are summarised once more in section 7.3..

7.1. Discussion of the test results and pedagogical implications

First and foremost, what needs to be considered for the whole discussion following in this and the subsequent sections is that despite both tests being reliable, some items of both the baseline and the actual test did not make a positive contribution to this reliability. This was the case for seven items of the baseline test and six items of the actual test for groups A and B and seven items of the actual test for group C. Moreover, due to the interdependence of the sentence-ordering items, reliability was artificially increased.

As a reminder, the test results will once more be summarised briefly. In the baseline test, no statistically significant difference between the groups could be found. Group B performed best, followed by group C and group A came last. More than half of group B and C answered all items correctly, which means that generally speaking, the baseline test was very easy for the participants. In the actual test, the same ranking was found as in the baseline test. The vocabulary group scored highest, the control group second highest and the prediction group lowest. Again, no statistically significant difference could be determined between the groups' performances, neither when regarding item formats separately nor when regarding the whole test. Interestingly, these results are contrary to those of Mihara (2011) and Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988) as in their studies, prediction exercises proved to be more effective than pre-teaching vocabulary, even though the results were not statistically significant for all reading tasks included (cf. sub-section 4.2.5.). Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988) were furthermore able to show that both pre-reading exercises facilitated reading comprehension because the control group that did not do any pre-reading activities was significantly outperformed by all

treatment groups (cf. sub-section 4.2.5.). A possible reason why Mihara's (2011) results were different from those of the present study might be the larger groups sizes in her study (between 20 and 31 test takers per group compared to 16 to 20 test takers per group in the present study). In Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough's (1988) study, however, the group sizes were also very small (10 students per group). Therefore, the group size was most likely not the reason for the opposed results in this case. The comparison of the baseline test's and the actual test's results revealed that for both treatment groups, the difference between the two points of measurement was not statistically significant. For the control group, however, it was statistically significant.

As regards the research questions, it follows that according to the present study, it cannot be assumed that pre-reading exercises generally increase learners' achievements in a reading task. The reason for this is that only one experimental group, namely the vocabulary group, performed better than the control group. Learners who were part of the prediction group, in contrast, did not achieve better results than the control group. Since the differences between the groups' performances were found to be non-significant, it cannot be concluded either that the pre-reading vocabulary exercise leads to better results in a reading comprehension task. The second research question addressed the issue of varying effectiveness between individual pre-reading activities and asked whether a significant difference could be found between the vocabulary and the prediction group's performances. The results showed that this was not the case, which implies that the effects of pre-reading vocabulary and pre-reading prediction tasks did not differ significantly in the present investigation.

What follows now is a presentation of possible reasons for the findings of the study. First, the discussion focuses on why no significant differences between the groups' achievements could be detected. Second, it is hypothesised why the vocabulary group scored highest. Third, potential explanations are provided for the fact that the prediction group performed worse than the control group and last, the outcomes of the comparison of the groups' results on the baseline and the actual test are discussed.

The first reason why no significant effect of the pre-reading phase could be identified might be that the reading task was very easy for participants and that learners did not

have comprehension problems anyway. As a consequence, the pre-reading exercises did not or probably could not have a further facilitative effect on the already simple reading task due to a ceiling effect. This assumption is reinforced by the pupils' responses to item C5 of the questionnaire, which revealed that, in spite of not having received any preparation, 70% of the control group perceived the tasks following the reading comprehension as easy. The open question on the questionnaire also showed that learners of all groups considered the tasks to be very easy. This explains the learners' high scores and the non-normal distribution of the test results. Various pupils indicated that the pre-reading exercises had not helped them, which might be a further consequence of the stories' perceived easy level. Thus, the results of the questionnaire and the whole investigation might have been different if the reading tasks had been more challenging for the test takers. Accordingly, it could be assumed that the reading comprehension tasks were not suitable for the participants. However, as they were taken from second grade coursebooks, the level was appropriate. This was also checked with the teacher in advance. Concerning the pupils' overall high scores, the teacher remarked that the pupils were generally very good at reading comprehension tasks, which might be a further explanation for the good results and the observed ineffectiveness of the pre-reading tasks.

Another reason for the results not reaching statistical significance might be the rather low number of participants ($n = 55$) and the resulting low number of test takers in each group (19 test takers in group A, 16 in group B and 20 in group C). This might have had an impact on the test results as well and it is possible that a larger sample would have caused different results.

Even though the effects of the two pre-reading exercises were not significant, it should still be mentioned that the mean of the vocabulary group is higher than that of the prediction group. This is interesting since in the studies presented in sub-section 4.2.5., pre-teaching vocabulary proved to be less efficient than prediction exercises or other pre-reading tasks. One possible reason for this is that bottom-up processes, and thus vocabulary knowledge, may be more important for the lower proficiency level than top-down processes which are involved in prediction. What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that as already noted several times, the difference between the groups' performances was not significant. Moreover, pre-teaching vocabulary may have been more efficient only because the best group in the baseline test received the pre-reading vocabulary treatment. Results might have been different if

group A, who performed worst in the baseline test, had received the vocabulary treatment. The same holds true for the pre-reading prediction exercise. Although the results suggest that prediction is not particularly useful, the outcome might have been different if the control or vocabulary group had received this treatment.

Another possible reason for the results is that the participants belong to classes with different special interests. Groups A and C are classes that focus on natural sciences, while group B is a class with a special focus on languages. Despite the different foci, the selection of test takers was justified and the groups' comparability was ensured since, as already mentioned in section 5.3., all classes have the same amount of English lessons in the second grade and use the same coursebook. One of the teachers who instructs pupils from all three groups assured the researcher that at this level, she does not make a difference between language and natural science classes and teaches exactly the same to all pupils. However, the results still demonstrate that the language class (group B) scored highest in both the baseline and the actual test. Thus, besides preparation for the reading task, interest, motivation and aptitude might also have an influence on the learners' achievements. Even though these are topics that deserve to be addressed further, their discussion would exceed the scope of this paper.

Furthermore, the amount of time spent on the two pre-reading tasks might have been an issue. The prediction group spent less time on the pre-reading phase (around ten minutes for each pre-reading activity) since the discussion did not last as long as the vocabulary exercises the other treatment group did (around fifteen minutes for each pre-reading activity). This might provide an explanation for the vocabulary group's higher scores but not for the fact that the control group outperformed the prediction group. However, in light of the control group performing second best, it seems unlikely that time was really the crucial factor.

While the preceding paragraphs suggested possible sources for the vocabulary group scoring highest, potential reasons for the prediction group performing worst are presented in the following. When comparing the results of the prediction and the control group, the lower scores of the former could be interpreted as a sign that a pre-reading prediction exercise hinders rather than supports reading comprehension. However, this would be wrong to assume because it cannot be said that the prediction group's performance was weak. Moreover, the difference between the

prediction and the control group was not significant. Another explanation for the prediction group's results might be that these pupils also performed worst in the baseline test and that consequently, the groups might exhibit different levels of proficiency. However, this was not verified by the statistical analysis of the baseline test since it was shown that the difference between the performances of the prediction and the control group was not significant.

Another issue worth considering is that in the questionnaire, group A commented on time constraints they faced in the actual test. Since this was the only group that did so, time might be one reason for group A performing worst. Once more, care must be taken with labelling group A's performance as worst since this does not mean that the pupils' achievements were weak. It only implies that they were outperformed by the other two groups. Speaking against time constraints as a possible reason for group A scoring lowest is the fact that all learners were allowed more time in the baseline test and that the prediction group was last nevertheless. Consequently, not too high an importance should be ascribed to the issue of time.

Last, the fact that the prediction group displayed the weakest performance might lead to assume that the pre-reading exercise did not help this group at all. The questionnaire, in contrast, revealed that 73.6% of the learners belonging to the prediction group thought that the pre-reading activities had helped them to understand the story (cf. item A3 / B3). Thus, it seems that the facilitative effect of the prediction exercise did not show in the test results but that at least, the pupils had the feeling of the reading process being eased.

What was also analysed for each of the three groups is the difference between their achievements in the baseline test and in the actual test. These comparisons showed that all groups performed worse in the actual test than in the baseline test, the reason for which is most probably the reduced time the pupils were allowed in the actual test. However, while those groups that did pre-reading activities prior to reading did not show a statistically significant difference in performances, the control group that did not do a pre-reading exercise did show a statistically significant and also an educationally significant difference in performances. These results suggest that the pre-reading tasks helped the treatment groups to not deteriorate to such a great extent as the control group. Hence, the pre-reading phase did have some minor influence on the pupils' performances, which means that in spite of the pre-reading activities

having had some effect, this effect was not strong enough to change the groups' ranking in the actual test.

What follows for the remainder of this section is an exploration of the test results' pedagogical implications. First, the results showed that no significant facilitating effect of the pre-reading vocabulary and the pre-reading prediction exercises could be identified. However, while the pre-reading tasks might not have been helpful for all learners, they may have been supportive for some of them. As responses to the questionnaire revealed, 36.9% of the prediction group indicated that the pre-reading exercise had helped them with the tasks following the reading comprehension (cf. item A6) and 50.1% of the vocabulary group thought that the pre-reading phase had assisted them with these tasks (cf. item B6). Hence, even though the pre-reading activities did not have the effect of the experimental groups significantly outperforming the control group, learners still felt that they had been supported, which constitutes a valuable reason for the inclusion of a pre-reading phase.

Responses to the sentence completion item included in the questionnaire suggest that in learners' opinions, the most useful tool for facilitating reading comprehension is knowledge of vocabulary. This is also reflected by the test results since the vocabulary treatment group scored highest. It needs to be mentioned that members of all three groups listed vocabulary knowledge as a helpful instrument. There are two possible reasons for this. First, learning vocabulary prior to the reading task is what pupils are most likely used to from their coursebook (cf. sub-section 4.2.4.) and second, it can be assumed that vocabulary knowledge is especially important at lower proficiency levels.

The test results might further indicate that pre-reading activities do not have an effect on learners' performances in easy reading comprehension tasks. If this holds true, the pre-reading phase only needs to be included when learners are confronted with difficult texts. However, the present study's results cannot be generalised and therefore, the issue needs to be addressed by future research. This is what the subsequent section 7.2. will elaborate on.

In spite of the results failing to indicate a facilitative effect of the two pre-reading tasks, it must be kept in mind that the pre-reading phase is also highly valuable if it "only" results in pupils' increased motivation. This was suggested by the answers to item A5 / B5 of the questionnaire as the learners stated that the pre-reading

prediction task contributed to making them curious about the stories. The pre-reading vocabulary exercise did so too but only for a small number of pupils. However, the results also showed that curiosity does not automatically lead to better performances since even though the prediction group was by far more curious about the texts, they still performed worse (but not significantly worse) than the vocabulary group.

In summary, among the possible reasons for the observed ineffectiveness of the pre-reading vocabulary and the pre-reading prediction activities are the test's perceived low level of difficulty and the small sample size, from which follows that the results cannot be generalised. Furthermore, the learners were taken from one language and two natural science classes, which might have had an effect on their achievements in the reading test. The results suggest that the pre-reading phase does not have a significant effect on learners' performances on easy texts. However, it is supposed that pre-reading exercises are also valuable for easier reading tasks as some pupils did feel that the activities prior to reading had helped them. Moreover, the exercises could increase curiosity of some pupils and thus, also their motivation.

7.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This section discusses the study's limitations and presents suggestions for improvement and future research. Regarding limitations, it needs to be noted that according to the curriculum, the participants' level for the skill of reading was between A1+ and A2. For this reason, the results are only applicable to learners of this proficiency level but even in this regard, it is not claimed that the results can be generalised. Moreover, the findings only hold true for certain reading tasks and specified item formats, namely for the genre of stories that are followed by a true or false or a sentence-ordering task.

Another limitation of the empirical investigation arises due to the baseline and the actual test containing flawed items which did not discriminate well between weaker and stronger pupils. However, since these items did not influence the tests' overall reliability in a negative way either, they were not removed but, as already mentioned several times above, they might still have influenced the results of the ANOVA. What also needs to be considered with regard to the ANOVA is that it was conducted despite the non-normal distribution of test results due to its robustness against this violation.

The empirical investigation could further be improved by including a larger sample and more difficult test items. To gain more detailed information about item difficulty, the reading tasks could be trialled with a similar group of test takers before the actual testing. Another possibility is to choose tasks that were designed for testing rather than teaching reading so that their difficulty can better be assessed in advance. However, with regard to increasing the test's level of difficulty, it must not be forgotten that the reading tasks in the present study were appropriate for the test takers' required proficiency level. Thus, it would be interesting to conduct the same test in another school in Linz where, perhaps, pupils' reading level will not be as high. It would be exciting to see whether the pre-reading exercises show a facilitating effect under such circumstances. The results could then be compared with the results presented in this paper to investigate whether the impact of pre-reading exercises varies with regard to different proficiency levels.

What also needs to be addressed by future research is the effect of pre-reading exercises on pupils who are all taken from language or from natural science classes but not, as was the case in the present study, pupils from both. In addition, it needs to be kept in mind that the learners were not assigned randomly to the three groups since a quasi-experimental pretest-post-test non-equivalent group design was used (cf. chapter 5). This might have influenced the results too. Future research could furthermore provide valuable insights into the impact of a pre-reading phase on Austrian upper-secondary pupils. However, there is not only a need for more studies being conducted in the Austrian context but more generally in the European context. It would also be interesting to explore the effects of a greater number of pre-reading activities, many of which were presented in sub-section 4.2.3.. Moreover, the relation between varying text types, item formats and pre-reading activities are subject to further investigation as well as the connection between different pre-reading tasks and motivation.

7.3. Concluding remarks

As the preceding sections revealed, the study's outcomes are contrary to what was expected. Following previous research addressing the issue of pre-reading activities, it was assumed that first, the control group would be outperformed by the two experimental groups and that second, the prediction group would be able to exhibit

higher scores than the vocabulary group. Since the prediction group was outperformed by the control and the vocabulary group, the results were surprising. One of the reasons why the pre-reading tasks did not seem to help comprehension was that the reading tasks might have been too easy. In addition, the rather low number of participants might have played a role as well. A possible explanation for the vocabulary group performing better than the prediction group is that the former consisted of learners who decided to focus on languages rather than on natural sciences. Thus, the vocabulary group might generally show better performances in reading comprehension tasks regardless of which pre-reading treatment they receive. The comparison of the two points of measurement revealed that all three groups performed worse in the actual test with the control group being the only group that deteriorated to a statistically significant extent. The questionnaire allowed pupils to state their opinions on the pre-reading and reading tasks and the possibly most telling result was that the pre-reading exercise of prediction had raised learners' curiosity. In order to gain further insights into the subject, it was suggested that future research should be carried out especially in the European context including various other pre-reading activities, text types and item formats.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the importance of the pre-reading phase for L2 reading learners. For this purpose, the process of reading was investigated and it was shown that mental operations, which can be divided into bottom-up and top-down processes, interact in complicated ways. Different types of knowledge necessary for the reading process were examined, for instance, knowledge about vocabulary, syntax, phonology, morphology, the text's topic or general background knowledge. Special attention was paid to schema theory, which explains why these types of knowledge do not only need to be possessed but also have to be activated. Moreover, the difficulty of distinguishing between skills and strategies was reported on. What followed was an outline of several skills and strategies employed in reading such as identifying the most important information or monitoring comprehension.

Subsequently, differences between reading in a first and second language were surveyed and the three categories of linguistic and processing, individual and experiential and socio-cultural and institutional differences were distinguished. Furthermore, it was suggested that a certain level of language proficiency (i.e. a linguistic threshold) needs to be reached before L1 reading experience can help with L2 reading.

The topic of teaching reading was addressed by focusing on the three-phase structure. It was argued that the general aim of the pre-, while- and post-reading stages is to establish a connection between reading and the skills of listening, speaking and writing as well as to prepare pupils for the text, to support them during the reading process and to help them work further with the text. Thus, the benefits of the pre-reading phase are that learners can tune in to the subject and organisation of the text and ideally become interested in the reading. For better illustration of the three-phase structure, sample activities for all three stages were presented. The pre-reading phase was described in more detail and it was demonstrated that it is essential for two main reasons, i.e. for activation of background knowledge and for generating motivation. With regard to research, it was reported that hardly any studies were undertaken in the European context. However, studies conducted with university students in Asia, North Africa or South America could not only attest the positive effects of pre-reading tasks but also identified differences in the amount they helped with reading comprehension. Highly supportive exercises were previewing

(e.g. listening to a summary of the text), prediction of content, creating one's own questions concerning the text and discussions. Pre-reading activities that proved to be beneficial only to a minor extent were pre-teaching vocabulary, addressing background knowledge and brainstorming. It was also pointed out that under certain circumstances, the pre-reading phase might be omitted, for instance, if otherwise, suspense is destroyed.

The aim of the empirical investigation was to determine whether a reading comprehension task could be facilitated for pupils attending lower-secondary in Austria. For this purpose, two pre-reading activities were selected: prediction of contents from pictures and the stories' titles and pre-teaching vocabulary. Fifty-five participants read two stories, one followed by true or false items, one by jumbled sentences that had to be put in the right sequence. Statistical analysis revealed that performance did not differ significantly between groups and thus, pre-reading exercises did not seem to facilitate the reading process to a significant extent. What was surprising about these results was that they were contrary to the researcher's expectations. Drawing on other studies conducted on the topic of pre-reading exercises, it had been anticipated that the two treatment groups would outperform the control group and that the prediction group would achieve better results than the vocabulary group. However, neither of the expectations was verified. Among the possible reasons why no facilitative effect of the pre-reading tasks could be determined is that the reading task was very easy for the test takers and the sample was fairly small. This might also explain why the influence of the two pre-reading tasks was found to be non-significant. Contrary to expectations, the vocabulary group outperformed the prediction group, which might have been due to the former group's focus on languages compared to the latter group's focus on natural sciences. The fact that the control group achieved better results than the prediction group seemed to suggest that the pre-reading prediction task did not assist learners. When comparing the results of the baseline test and the actual test, it was found that the control group's performance deteriorated to a greater extent than the performances of the treatment groups, which is an indication of the pre-reading activities having affected the pupils' achievements in the reading comprehension tasks to a minor extent.

In order to gain further insights into pupils' perception of the reading tasks and the pre-reading exercises, questionnaires were distributed after the test. The answers showed that the prediction task was able to raise pupils' curiosity, which is why it

was concluded that the pre-reading prediction activity should not be labelled as being in vain. Even if this type of pre-reading task did not help the pupils included in this study to achieve better results, a positive effect manifested itself nevertheless, namely insofar as learners indicated that they were more motivated to read the texts in question. Perhaps the most important finding related to the questionnaire is that even though not all pupils thought that the pre-reading exercises had helped them, some of them did. It follows that individual preferences play a role as well and unfortunately, they cannot always be fully considered. However, if some learners have the feeling that they are prepared and motivated for the reading, the pre-reading task is already beneficial and should thus be regarded as enrichment.

Since the study undertaken was comparatively small in nature with 55 participants all attending the same school, the results are not suitable for generalisation. Therefore, further research is needed including a higher number of pupils from different schools and possibly also from different regions. In addition, learners of higher proficiency levels should be tested as well as a greater variety of pre-reading exercises and their influence related to different text types and item formats. Until then, it is advisable for teachers to implement pre-reading tasks into their teaching and to offer a variety of such exercises. Even if the pre-reading phase helps only some learners, this is already a valuable benefit.

Word count: 37,555

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10. Appendix

10.1. Baseline test

Name: _____

Group: _____

At the supermarket

Lisa is going to have a birthday party at home on Saturday, so yesterday the Taylors went shopping in the supermarket. What did they buy? Well, they bought some chocolate because Lisa is going to make brownies for the party. Then Jade wanted some crisps and lots of sweets! Mr Taylor thought she wanted every sweet in the supermarket!

"We don't have any fruit", said Mr Taylor.

"No fruit, Dad! Nobody wants fruit at a party", answered Lisa. "Do we have any candles at home? I need some candles...".

"Dad, can I have this mouse comic, please?" asked Jade. "Please,..."

"No. You don't have any pocket money left."

"Dad, can we buy these new orange drinks? We don't have any cool drinks at home", said Ben, Lisa's older brother.

"Oh dear. This is going to be a long shopping trip!" said Mr Taylor.

Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- | | T | F |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Lisa is going to have a party on Sunday. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. All the Taylors are at the supermarket. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Lisa wants a lot of fruit. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Jade wants a cat comic. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Ben likes the new lime drinks. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Mr Taylor is not happy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Points: _____ / 6

Name: _____

Group: _____

Sport can be dangerous!

A It was six o'clock on Tuesday evening, and Mr and Mrs Jackson were in the living room. Terry came in. "Hey, Dad, we aren't going to have dinner until quarter to seven. Let's go jogging", said Terry.

"Oh, Terry, I'm so tired", said Mr Jackson.

"I had a very busy day at work. And now it's dark. I don't like jogging when it's dark. It can be dangerous."

"Oh Dad, don't be silly", said Terry. "It isn't dangerous. There are two of us. Don't forget, the doctor said you need to exercise more."

"Yes, Terry is right", said Mrs Jackson. "He said you need to do something like jogging or swimming. It's cold now, so I think jogging is a better idea than swimming."

"OK, OK, you two", said Mr Jackson. "Let's go jogging. But tell me first what we're having for dinner. I'm getting hungry."

"It's fish and a salad for you", said Mrs Jackson.

"Should I buy some chips?" asked Mr Jackson.

"No, you shouldn't", said Mrs Jackson.

"We don't need any tonight."

B The paths in the park were dark because there were a lot of big, old trees next to them.

"Terry, it's so cold and dark, and I don't see any other people jogging", said Mr Jackson.

"Let's go and look in the department store next to the park. It's nice and warm."

"Dad!" said Terry. "Come on, let's run!"

Terry and his father didn't see a young man in front of them.

He had a CD player with headphones and he ran into Mr Jackson.

"Oh I'm sorry", said the young man. "You know, it's so dark here under the trees." "It's OK", said Mr Jackson. Terry and Mr Jackson started jogging again. After a minute, Mr Jackson said, "Terry, stop. My wallet isn't in my right back pocket. I think that young man has got it."

They ran after him. "Hey, you, give me my wallet", Mr Jackson shouted at the young man.

"What?" shouted the young man, taking off his headphones. "What wallet?"

"It's in your pocket!" shouted Mr Jackson.

The young man was scared.

"OK", he said. "No problem." He took the wallet from his pocket and threw it to Mr Jackson.

Name: _____

Group: _____

Then he ran away.

"That was cool, Dad", said Terry.

"It wasn't cool", said Mr Jackson. "I was really scared. Let's go home right now."

C Back at home, Terry and his father went into the kitchen. "Hi there. How was your run through the park?" asked Mrs Jackson.

"Mum, a man stole Dad's wallet!" said Terry.

"But then Dad ran after him, and he got the wallet back."

"His wallet?" said Mrs Jackson. "What do you mean? It's here, on the kitchen table."

Terry and his dad looked at the table. There was a wallet on it. Then Mr Jackson pulled the wallet out of his back pocket. "This isn't my wallet", said Mr Jackson. "Oh no! Whose wallet is it? What should I do now?"

"Take a look inside", said Terry. "The man's name must be in there somewhere. We can look up his telephone number and call him right away."

What happened first? Look at the sentences and put them in the right order.

- ☐ Mr Jackson and Terry ran after the young man.
- ☐ "This isn't my wallet", said Mr Jackson.
- ☐ The young man took off his headphones with one hand.
- ☐ "Terry, it's so cold and dark, and I don't see any other people jogging", said Mr Jackson.
- ☒ **1** "Let's go jogging", said Terry.
- ☐ "It's here on the kitchen table", said Mrs Jackson.
- ☐ "Oh, Terry, I'm so tired", said Mr Jackson.
- ☐ He took the wallet from his pocket and threw it to Mr Jackson.
- ☐ A young man ran into Mr Jackson.

Points: _____ / 8

10.2. Actual test

10.2.1. Reading comprehension

Name: _____

Group: _____

Patrick's new donkey

Patrick was a very poor man. He worked all day with his donkey to feed his family. But one day his donkey died. When Patrick came back home, he did not know what to do. "What's the matter?" his wife asked. "Our donkey's dead", said Patrick, "but I need a donkey for my work." "I've got an idea", said his wife.

The next day Patrick and his wife walked into town. There were lots of people in the streets. A rich man walked past them. He was pulling a donkey along on a rope. Patrick's wife quickly took the rope from round the donkey's neck and put it round Patrick's neck. Then she went home with the donkey. The rich man did not see this and walked on, pulling Patrick behind him. Suddenly Patrick stopped. The rich man looked round. "Where's my donkey?" he shouted. "I'm your donkey", said Patrick. "What?" said the rich man. "My neighbour is a magician, and some time ago, he got very angry with me and changed me into a donkey. But maybe his magic doesn't work any more because now I have changed back into a man again." The rich man felt very sorry for Patrick and he let him go.

Now Patrick had a donkey again, so he could do his work. He worked very hard and was able to save some money. Some time later, he bought another donkey and gave the first donkey back to the rich man.

Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- | | T | F |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Patrick didn't work hard. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Patrick couldn't work without a donkey. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. When his donkey died, his wife had an idea. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. A rich man rode past them on a donkey. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Patrick's wife stole the rich man's donkey. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Patrick put a rope round the donkey's neck. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. The rich man was a magician. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. The rich man was kind to Patrick. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Some time later, Patrick gave the donkey back. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Points: _____ / 9

Taken from: Gerngroß, Günter; Puchta, Herbert; Davis, Robin L.; Holzmann, Christian. 2005. *The new you & me. Textbook 2*. Wien: Langenscheidt, 129.

Name: _____

Group: _____

The coin

Tom was not a coward. He was good at sports and he was not afraid of ghosts or spiders. But he was afraid of dogs. On his way to school there were a lot of houses with gardens. In one garden there was always a big brown dog. When Tom came to the garden, he crossed the street and walked on the other side. But sometimes the dog was out in the street.

There was a small shop on this side of the street too. Tom was afraid and went into it. The shopkeeper was an old man with white hair. "What can I do for you?" he said. "I don't ... I'm ... The dog ... I'm afraid of the dog", Tom said. The old man looked at Tom. Then he went into a room at the back of the shop. When he came back, he had a coin in his hand. It looked old and there was a tiger on it. "Put this in your pocket", the old man said to Tom, "it will help you." "Thank you very much", Tom said and went out into the street.

There he saw the big brown dog again. The dog looked at Tom and Tom looked at the dog. Then Tom put his hand in his pocket. The coin was there. Tom could feel it with his fingers. He looked at the dog and then he went on. For the first time he was not afraid of the dog. Tom felt very good.

The next day the brown dog was out in the street again. Tom stopped and said hello to him. Then he went on.

What happened first? Look at the sentences and put them in the right order.

- ☐ The shopkeeper gave him a coin with a tiger on it.
- ☐ For the first time he wasn't afraid of the dog.
- ☐ Tom put the coin in his pocket.
- ☒ 1 Tom was not a coward, but he was afraid of dogs.
- ☐ He went into a shop because he was afraid of the dog.
- ☐ The next day Tom met the dog again and said hello to him.
- ☐ One day on his way to school Tom saw a dog on his side of the street.
- ☐ He said, "The coin will help you."
- ☐ He went out into the street again.

Points: _____ / 8

Taken from: Gerngroß, Günter; Puchta, Herbert; Davis, Robin L.; Holzmann, Christian. 2005. *The new you & me. Textbook 2*. Wien: Langenscheidt, 41. 2

10.2.2. Pre-reading prediction task for the story “Patrick’s new donkey”

What do you see in the picture?

We are going to read a story. The title of the story is “Patrick’s new donkey”. What do you think the story will be about?



Picture taken from: Gerngroß, Günter; Puchta, Herbert; Davis, Robin L.; Holzmann, Christian. 2005. *The new you & me. Textbook 2*. Wien: Langenscheidt, 129.

10.2.3. Pre-reading prediction task for the story “The coin”

What do you see in the pictures?

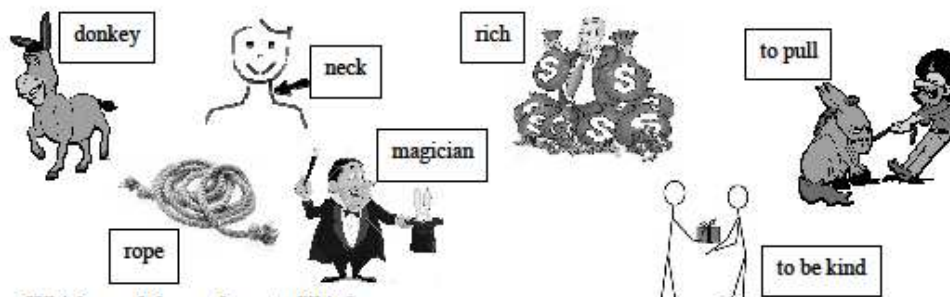


We are going to read a story. The title of the story is “The coin”. What do you think the story will be about?



Pictures taken from: Gerngroß, Günter; Puchta, Herbert; Davis, Robin L.; Holzmann, Christian. 2005. *The new you & me. Textbook 2*. Wien: Langenscheidt, 41.
http://png.clipart.me/graphics/thumbs/204/illustration-of-a-little-boy-being-chased-by-a-dog_204423199.jpg (15 Feb. 2016).
<http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/boy-walking-dog-14633644.jpg> (15 Feb. 2016).

10.2.4. Pre-reading vocabulary task for the story “Patrick’s new donkey”



Which word do you have to fill in?

1. A _____ is a grey animal that has long ears.
2. He is very _____ because he has a lot of money.
3. It is very difficult to _____ a donkey.
4. Between your shoulders and your head is the _____.
5. He gave me a present. This was very _____ of him.
6. We have a _____ to pull the car.
7. A _____ can change a rabbit into a cat.

Link the English words with the German translation.

donkey	Seil
rope	nett, freundlich sein
neck	Esel
magician	ziehen
rich	Zauberer
to be kind	reich
to pull	Hals

Now use the words in your own sentences.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Pictures taken from: <http://images.clipartpanda.com/donkey-clip-art-dec3111.gif> (15 Feb. 2016).
<http://lessonpix.com/drawings/470/90x85/Neck.png> (15 Feb. 2016).
http://media.4teachers.de/images/thumbs/image_thumb.5506.jpg (20 Feb. 2016).
<http://norsknettskole.no/studentar/T11h01esgr/images/Bilder/trekke.gif> (15 Feb. 2016).
<http://previews.123rf.com/images/dedmazay/dedmazay1009/dedmazay100900089/7905582-The-magician-pulls-out-a-rabbit-from-a-hat-Stock-Vector-cartoon.jpg> (15 Feb. 2016).
<http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/rope-19463280.jpg> (15 Feb. 2016).
<http://www.cliparthut.com/clip-arts/151/rich-man-with-money-151424.jpg> (15 Feb. 2016).

10.2.5. Pre-reading vocabulary task for the story “The coin”



Which word(s) do you have to fill in?

1. Before you _____, you have to look to the left and the right.
2. Ben is always scared. He is a _____.
3. A _____ is a small animal with 8 legs.
4. The _____ is a wild animal that lives in Asia.
5. You can buy cheap things with a _____.
6. Max doesn't like dogs. _____.
7. Trousers often have a _____.

Link the English words with the German translation.

coward	Tiger
he is afraid of dogs	Münze
tiger	er fürchtet sich vor Hunden
pocket	die Straße überqueren
to cross the street	Spinne
coin	Feigling
spider	Hosentasche

Now use the words in your own sentences.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Picture taken from: Gerngroß, Günter; Puchta, Herbert; Davis, Robin L.; Holzmann, Christian. 2005. *The new you & me. Textbook 2*. Wien: Langenscheidt, 41.

10.3. Questionnaires

10.3.1. Questionnaire Group A

Name: _____

Group: A

Wie fandest du die reading comprehension?

Lies folgende Sätze durch und sage, ob sie auf dich zutreffen / nicht zutreffen. Bewerte jeden Satz mit einer Schulnote zwischen 1 und 5. Es geht nur um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt kein richtig oder falsch!

1= stimmt genau
2= stimmt fast
3= stimmt teilweise
4= stimmt eher nicht
5= stimmt gar nicht

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich nicht wusste, worum es geht.					
2. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich viele Wörter nicht kannte.					
3. Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mir geholfen, die Geschichten zu verstehen.					
4. Durch die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, habe ich schon gewusst, worum es in den Geschichten gehen wird.					
5. Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mich neugierig auf die Geschichten gemacht.					
6. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil wir vorher schon über den Inhalt der Geschichten gesprochen haben.					
7. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil die Geschichten einfach geschrieben waren.					
8. Ich fand die Aufgaben schwierig.					

Schreibe ein Ende für folgenden Satz, sodass er auf dich zutrifft. Es geht wieder um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten!

Beim Verstehen von englischen Geschichten hilft es mir, wenn _____
_____.

Möchtest du sonst noch etwas zu den Geschichten und den Aufgaben sagen? Du kannst deine Gedanken hier aufschreiben:

10.3.2. Questionnaire Group B

Name: _____

Group: B

Wie fandest du die reading comprehension?

Lies folgende Sätze durch und sage, ob sie auf dich zutreffen / nicht zutreffen. Bewerte jeden Satz mit einer Schubnote zwischen 1 und 5. Es geht nur um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt kein richtig oder falsch!

1= stimmt genau
2= stimmt fast
3= stimmt teilweise
4= stimmt eher nicht
5= stimmt gar nicht

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich viele Wörter nicht kannte.					
2. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich nicht wusste, worum es geht.					
3. Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mir geholfen, die Geschichten zu verstehen.					
4. Durch die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, habe ich schon gewusst, worum es in den Geschichten gehen wird.					
5. Die Arbeitszettel, die wir vor dem Lesen gemacht haben, haben mich neugierig auf die Geschichten gemacht.					
6. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil wir vorher über wichtige Wörter gesprochen haben.					
7. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil die Geschichten einfach geschrieben waren.					
8. Ich fand die Aufgaben schwierig.					

Schreibe ein Ende für folgenden Satz, sodass er auf dich zutrifft. Es geht wieder um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten!

Beim Verstehen von englischen Geschichten hilft es mir, wenn _____
_____.

Möchtest du sonst noch etwas zu den Geschichten und den Aufgaben sagen? Du kannst deine Gedanken hier aufschreiben:

10.3.3. Questionnaire Group C

Name: _____

Group: C

Wie fandest du die reading comprehension?

Lies folgende Sätze durch und sage, ob sie auf dich zutreffen / nicht zutreffen. Bewerte jeden Satz mit einer Schulnote zwischen 1 und 5. Es geht nur um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt kein richtig oder falsch!

1= stimmt genau
2= stimmt fast
3= stimmt teilweise
4= stimmt eher nicht
5= stimmt gar nicht

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ich habe die Geschichten gut verstanden.					
2. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich nicht wusste, worum es geht.					
3. Ich habe die Geschichten nicht so gut verstanden, weil ich viele Wörter nicht kannte.					
4. Ich war neugierig, worum es in den Geschichten gehen wird.					
5. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach.					
6. Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen schwierig.					

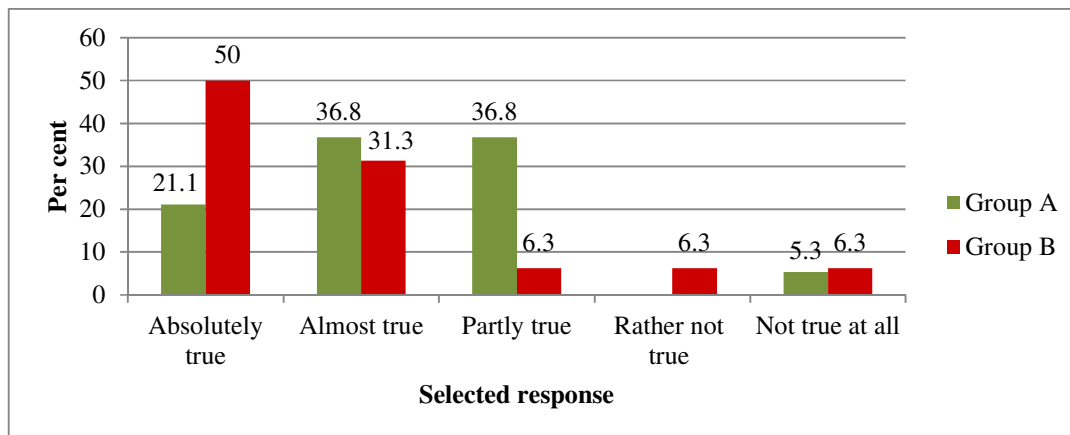
Schreibe ein Ende für folgenden Satz, sodass er auf dich zutrifft. Es geht wieder um deine eigene Meinung und es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten!

Beim Verstehen von englischen Geschichten hilft es mir, wenn _____
_____.

Möchtest du sonst noch etwas zu den Geschichten und den Aufgaben sagen? Du kannst deine Gedanken hier aufschreiben:

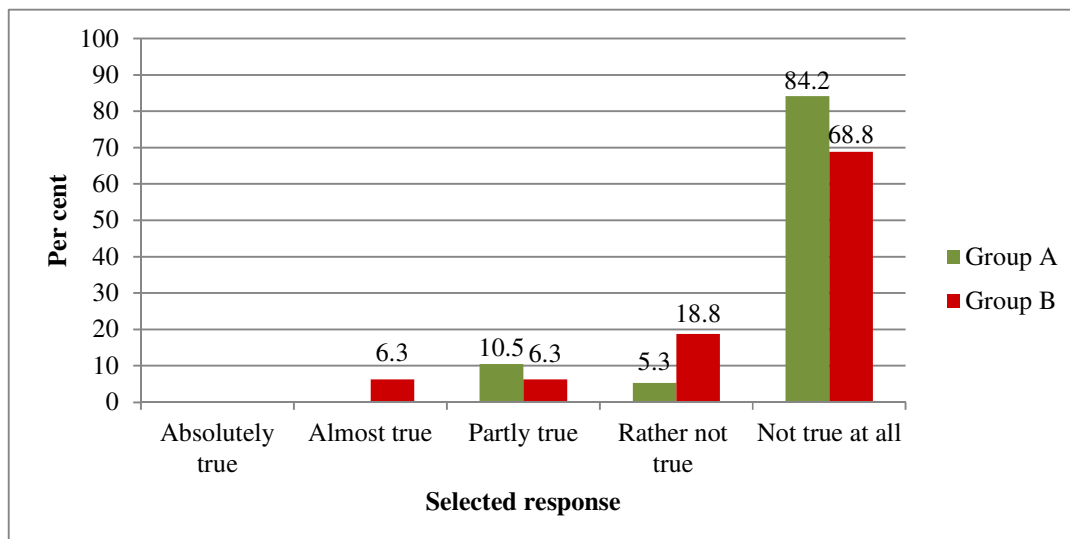
10.4. Results of the remaining items on the questionnaire

Item A7 / B7: “Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen einfach, weil die Geschichten einfach geschrieben waren. [I thought that the tasks following the reading were easy because the stories were written in an easy way]”.



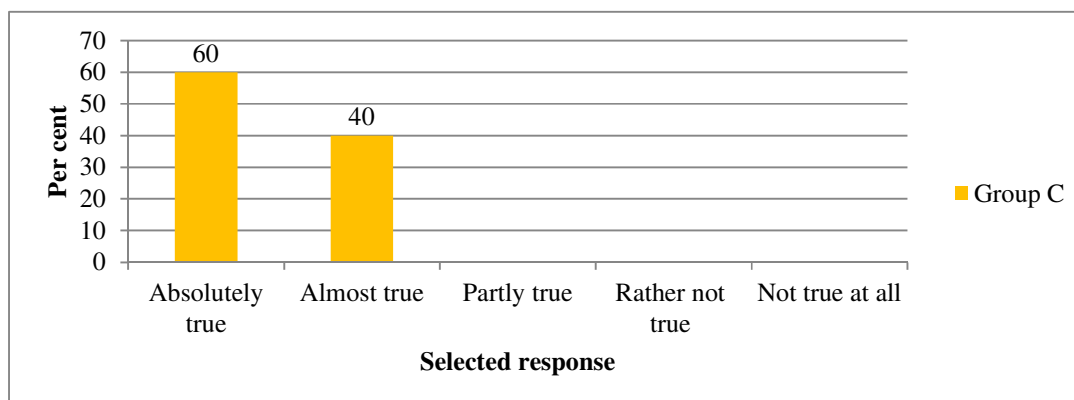
Responses to item A7 / B7

Item A8 / B8: “Ich fand die Aufgaben schwierig. [I thought that the tasks were difficult]”.



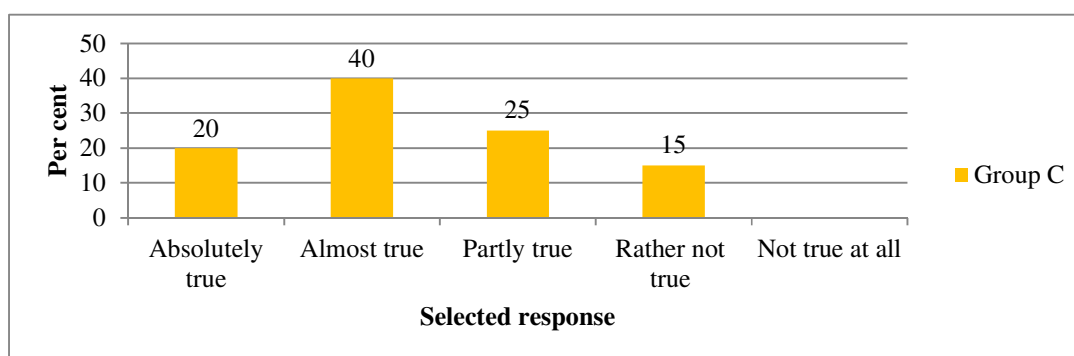
Responses to item A8 / B8

Item C1: “Ich habe die Geschichten gut verstanden. [I understood the stories well]”.



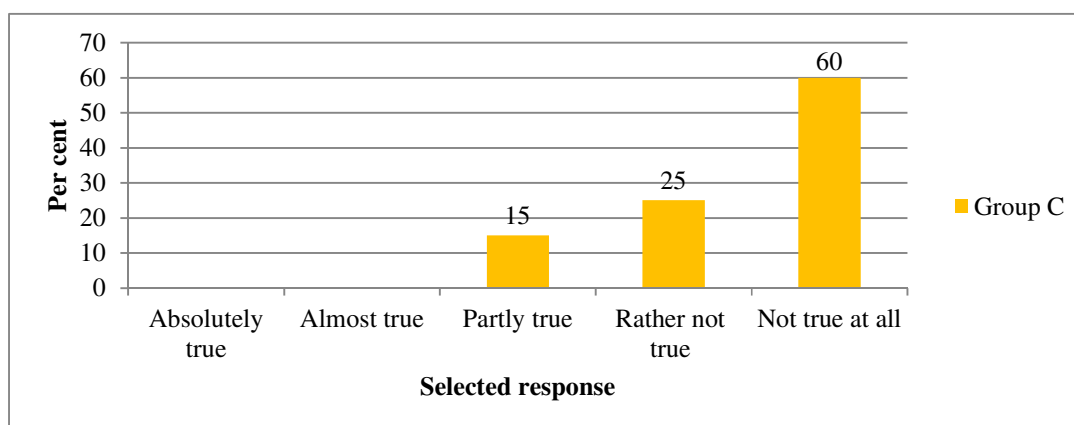
Responses to item C1

Item C4: “Ich war neugierig, worum es in den Geschichten gehen wird. [I was curious what the stories would be about]”.



Responses to item C4

Item C6: “Ich fand die Aufgaben nach dem Lesen schwierig. [I thought that the tasks following the reading were difficult]”.



Responses to item C6

10.5. Abstract (English)

This paper intends to investigate whether pre-reading exercises influence the success of Austrian lower-secondary pupils in a reading comprehension task. The theoretical part of the thesis therefore analyses the reading process in general, reading in a second language and teaching reading in a second language, the last of which discusses the three-phase structure of reading comprehension tasks with a special focus on the pre-reading stage. For the empirical part, a study was conducted with 55 pupils who attend the second grade of an academic secondary school (AHS) in Linz. Two stories were included in the reading comprehension task, one of them being followed by true or false items and the other by sentence-ordering items. One of the two treatment groups learnt vocabulary prior to reading, whereas the other treatment group predicted the stories' contents based on their titles and on pictures. The results are contradictory to earlier research since the prediction group was outperformed by the vocabulary group and the control group, with the former scoring highest. However, the differences between the groups are not statistically significant, which is probably due to the small sample size. Following the reading comprehension task, a questionnaire was distributed which revealed that some pupils did consider the pre-reading exercises to be helpful. Thus, it was concluded that even if the pre-reading stage did not significantly influence the results of this study's participants, it could still contribute to assist some learners in the reading process.

10.6. Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht, ob Vorbereitungsübungen für das Lesen den Erfolg von österreichischen UnterstufenschülerInnen bei einer Leseverstehensübung beeinflussen. Der theoretische Teil der Arbeit analysiert daher den Leseprozess im Allgemeinen, das Lesen in einer Zweitsprache und das Lehren von Lesen in einer Zweitsprache. Letzteres diskutiert die Drei-Phasen-Struktur von Leseverstehensübungen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Phase der Übungen vor dem Lesen. Für den empirischen Teil wurde eine Studie mit 55 SchülerInnen durchgeführt, welche die zweite Klasse einer AHS in Linz besuchen. Die Leseverständnisübung bestand aus zwei Geschichten, auf welche jeweils eine Aufgabe folgte, eine Richtig-Falsch-Aufgabe und eine Aufgabe, bei der Sätze in die richtige Reihenfolge gebracht werden mussten. Während eine der zwei Experimentalgruppen vor der Leseverstehensübung Vokabeln lernte, versuchte die andere Experimentalgruppe den Inhalt der Geschichten mithilfe von deren Titeln und von Bildern vorherzusagen. Die Ergebnisse widersprechen früheren Untersuchungen, da in der vorliegenden Studie jene Gruppe, die versuchte den Inhalt vorherzusagen, schlechter abschnitt als die Vokabel- und die Kontrollgruppe, von welchen Erstere die besten Ergebnisse erzielte. Allerdings sind die Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen statistisch nicht signifikant, was vermutlich auf die kleine Stichprobengröße zurückzuführen ist. Anschließend an die Leseverständnisübung wurde ein Fragebogen ausgeteilt, welcher ergab, dass einige SchülerInnen die Übungen vor dem Lesen trotzdem als hilfreich empfanden. Deshalb wurde aus den Ergebnissen geschlossen, dass die Übungen vor dem Lesen die Leistungen der TestteilnehmerInnen zwar nicht signifikant beeinflussten, sie aber dennoch dazu beitragen konnten, einige Lernende bei ihrem Leseprozess zu unterstützen.