| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The Impact of Schemata Activation on Moroccan High School Students' Reading Comprehension Performance: A Mixed Methods Design

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| **ABSTRACT**

Reading comprehension is a cornerstone of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, yet Moroccan learners often face significant challenges in deriving meaning from written texts. This study investigates the impact of schemata activation on the reading performance of Moroccan high school students by exploring the instructional strategies teachers employ and the difficulties they encounter. Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Moroccan EFL teachers. The findings reveal that while teachers utilize a diverse range of strategies—most notably pre-reading questions, brainstorming, and class discussions—the frequency of these practices is influenced by various internal and external factors. Specifically, the study identified a statistically significant relationship between teacher gender and educational level regarding the frequency of schema activation, with male teachers and those holding bachelor's degrees reporting higher frequencies. Conversely, age and years of experience showed no statistically significant correlation. Major constraints hindering effective activation include a lack of teacher training, inadequate awareness of the role of prior knowledge, and outdated textbook materials. The study concludes by recommending a revision of pre-service training and the modernization of English textbooks to better align with student needs and enhance reading comprehension outcomes.

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is often defined as the process of getting meaning from text. Evidently, the ultimate goal of reading is to obtain a broad grasp of the text's content rather than deduce meaning from single words or sentences. Due to its complexity, a large body of scholarly research has been conducted to define and develop reading models. Reading is considered as an important part of English teaching and plays a dominant role among the four skills used in the learning of the English Language. Therefore, cultivating reading ability is an important role EFL teachers should play (Kintsch, 1988; Snow, 2002).

Departing from the assumption that reading in a second language presents many difficulties and challenges that might be closely linked to the text or the reader. What EFL learners bring to text is more important than what they get from it. Moroccan EFL teachers are called upon to activate learners' schemata and background knowledge so that learners' engagement level with the text is enhanced. Aligning with this, prior knowledge is often defined as the process of integrating the new information with the information learners already have. Additionally, previous research has shown that prior knowledge activation plays a significant role in learners' comprehension of texts in a foreign language. These studies have made it clear that grasping the role of schemata

in the reading process provides profound insights into why pupils may fail or succeed in comprehending written content (Ajideh, 2003; Hudson, 1982).

2. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the instructional reading strategies and the difficulties Moroccan EFL teachers encounter when activating students' prior knowledge and to examine the influence of the participants' internal and external factors (gender, age and educational level) on the frequency with which they activate their students' schemata. The aims of the present study are to be explored in the light of the following formulated research questions:

1. What kind of instructional reading strategies do Moroccan EFL teachers use to activate students' prior knowledge?
2. What are the difficulties that Moroccan EFL teachers encounter when activating students' prior knowledge?
3. To what extent do internal factors, such as participants' gender and age and external factors such as educational level, influence Moroccan EFL teachers' activation of students' prior knowledge?

3. Literature Review
3.1 Schemata Theory

Schemata theory is defined as "a schema is structured in the sense that it represents the relationship among its component parts" (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 259). It attempts to explain how people integrate the new information with the information they already have (Alderson, 2000). Schemata theory has had a significant impact on reading comprehension which is considered as an interactive process that necessitates the simultaneous performance of numerous mental operations. Bernhardt (1991) and Brantmeier (2004) pointed out that the activation of prior knowledge or schema is considered as one of these operations. Previous studies (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Murray, 1980) have shown that prior knowledge activation plays a significant role in learners' comprehension of texts in a foreign language. These studies have made it clear that grasping the role of schema in the reading process provides profound insights into why pupils may fail or succeed in comprehending written content.

3.2 Types of Schemata

There are three major types of schemata, namely, linguistics schemata, formal schemata, and content schemata (Carrell,1988). The first type is about linguistics schemata. It refers to the readers' existing linguistic knowledge about phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and expressions. Linguistic knowledge plays an important role in understanding a text. Without Linguistic planning, the reader can't decipher and understand the text. Therefore, the more language schemes are in the reader's mind, the faster the reader gets information and the better understanding the reader may grasp. The second type is about formal schema, which refers to "background knowledge about the formal, rhetorical organizational structure of different types of texts" (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 560). The last type is content schemata. This type of schema is considered as an influential factor for second-language readers

3.3 The Role of Schemata in Reading Comprehension

(Anderson et al., 1977) argue that "comprehension of a message entails drawing information from both the text and the internal schemata until sets are reconciled as a single schema or message" (p.187). This appears to emphasize one of the fundamental assumptions behind the concept of schema theory. When we are presented with new information, schemata that are relevant to that information come into play (or are activated) right away to help us understand this information and make sense of it. As a result, what is commonly referred to as comprehension refers to the cognitive act of reconstructing the meaning of the text through the process of slots-instantiation (schema) employing concepts from both the reading text at hand as well as ideas previously present in our cognitive structure until complete comprehension is achieved. In fact, one cannot speak of comprehending a text until all of the information in the section has been pieced together as one whole message that corresponds to the component elements of the readers' schematic knowledge and completely matches the author's intended message.

3.4 Schema Activation and Teachers' Role

The importance of prior knowledge has three major implications for the teacher. First, EFL teachers must consider the knowledge that any written text is based on. Second, a significant part of the reading process is missed if a reader does not actively use his or her prior knowledge. Third, teachers' primary goal should be to help students develop problem-solving, creative, and interpretive strategies that allow them to use whatever knowledge or resources they have. As a result, teachers can assist students in becoming better readers by teaching them how to activate and use their prior knowledge (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Jukil, 2018).

3.5 Strategies to Activate Schemata in Reading Comprehension

Several instructional strategies can help readers activate prior knowledge and hence improve comprehension. The pre-reading phase revolves around these instructional tactics. They are diverse, but they all have a similar importance. To put it another way, no technique is better than the other in terms of assisting the readers activate their prior knowledge while reading. Some are particularly effective in activating readers' prior knowledge of literary materials, but others are generally useful when it comes to

informational questions. One of the most important functions of these strategies is to activate learners' prior knowledge in order to determine their readiness to tackle a text. These strategies are presented by Labiod (2007) and they include: brainstorming, class discussion, KWL strategy, question-answer relationship, story mapping, and summarizing.

3.6 Teachers' Perceptions on Reading Strategies

Teachers' perspectives on teaching priorities vary since they have so many duties. According to Rose (2006), nearly all children should have a clear understanding of phonics, allowing them to become proficient readers and confident writers (Smith et al., 2023; Ramos, 2019). Many teachers believe that primary school teachers are responsible for teaching reading skills, which could lead to a decline in reading competence levels, affecting learning not only in

English classes but also in other disciplines. Similarly, Friesen & Haigh (2018) argue that it is very crucial to teach students how to use reading strategies by fourth grade, and because this skill cannot be learned, it should be explicitly taught when a large number of students are experiencing language difficulties, as the content may be beyond their current abilities and knowledge. Following the same line of reasoning, Friesen & Haigh (2018) assert that one of the tasks of teachers is to model the use of reading strategies, which should be used effectively at all grade levels, especially when readers are confronted with a new text structure.

3.7 Research Gap and Intended Contributions

The present study investigates a research problem relating to students' background knowledge activation. Schema theory has had a major influence on reading comprehension performance. In this context, Anderson (1984) describes schema as an " abstract knowledge structure" (p.42) or the readers' existing concepts about the world that determine a framework in which the readers must fit whatever they grasp from the text. It means that the more background knowledge students have, the more they can understand the reading text. Conveniently, a large number of studies emphasize the role of schema in enhancing reading comprehension in an EFL context (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015; Alhaisoni, 2017).

Although several studies have been carried out, especially outside the Moroccan context, on the effects of prior knowledge activation on students' reading comprehension (Johnson,1981; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983), there is still a limited supply of research on how teachers perceive the utmost importance of prior knowledge and the strategies they implement to cope with it in the classroom.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. It's a type of design in which quantitative and qualitative data are sequentially collected and analyzed and then the findings are interpreted. First, the researcher collected and analyzed quantitative data, and then qualitative data were collected to further explain the quantitative data. assumedly, quantitative data will be used to test the impact of the participants' demographic variables on their tendency to activate students' background knowledge. Qualitative data, on the other hand, will be used to further provide in-depth insights regarding the research problem being investigated.

4.2 Research Context and Participants

The quality of the research is determined not only by the appropriateness of the methodology and tools utilized but also by the appropriateness of the sampling approach used (Cohen & Manion, 2000). To put it another way, "the correct sample size depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 89). To explain more, researchers use sampling as one of the keys to assessing the design of a research project. Dörnyie (2007) defines sampling as "the group of participants whom the researcher examines in an empirical investigation" (p. 96). According to Hallebone and Priest (2009), the sample, which represents part of the wider population that the study is about, should be in line with the study's aims, the research questions, the method(s) or technique(s) utilized, and the expected usages for the study's findings. Gray (2014) identifies two types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling requires selecting random samples of participants from a particular population that accurately reflects all study components that could be included. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, involves non-random sampling of the participants.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

The present study elicited data from Moroccan EFL teachers. Initially, the questionnaire was administered and analyzed. Then semi-structured interviews were conducted to clear up any misunderstanding and provide in-depth ideas. To make the data generalizable across the ideal population, the inquirer administered the questionnaire to a statistically-representative sample size. To fully understand the research problem, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews that provided in-depth insights. Combined with her situated perspectives as an EFL teacher of English, the researcher analyzed the qualitative data obtained thematically. The questionnaire was administered to different age, educational level and gender categories so that different perspectives are incorporated in the study. This combination will, ideally, result in a comprehensive understanding of the research

problem. Semi-structured interviews were conducted a few months after the questionnaire so that areas that needed further clarifications are identified.

4.4 Data Analysis and Procedures
After collecting data, questionnaires were coded, cleaned and then data was entered to the SPSS. Scale data included in the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively. The data obtained was approached as continuous/ ratio data. Treating the data as ratio is attributable to the idea that this study investigates the correlation between different variables. Relatedly, inferential statistics will be used to establish the existence and strength of this correlation. On the other hand, qualitative/text-based data elicited both through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions were analyzed thematically utilizing NVivo software. The researcher first transcribed the data verbatim, developed themes and then interpreted the data.

4.5 Validity and Reliability
To enhance the validity of the study, and prior to conducting the main study, the researcher pilot tested the questionnaire. The researcher sent the questionnaire to Moroccan University professors to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. The researcher received their feedback and introduced the required modifications. After introducing these modifications, the researcher pilot-tested the questionnaire on 10 Moroccan EFL teachers. Unclear questions were reworded and ambiguous elements were deleted.

4.6 Ethical Considerations
All the participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary. Additionally, prior to conducting interviews, the researcher obtained the participants' informed consent. Moreover, anonymity was ensured for all participants in the two instruments as Creswell (2016) mentioned "a researcher protects the anonymity of the informants, for example, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals" (p. 174). In addition, all participants were informed that declining to participate or withdrawing from the study at any time would have no impact on their status in any way. Furthermore, participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that no identifiable information would appear in the results if they were published.

5. Findings
5.1 Moroccan EFL Teachers' Instructional Strategies Employed to Activate Students' Prior Knowledge
Moroccan EFL teachers make use of a wide range of instructional strategies to activate learners' prior knowledge. Nevertheless, these instructional strategies are used with varying degrees depending on the teachers' objective, perspectives and students' level. The different techniques used to activate students' prior knowledge by Moroccan EFL teachers are shown in the following figures:
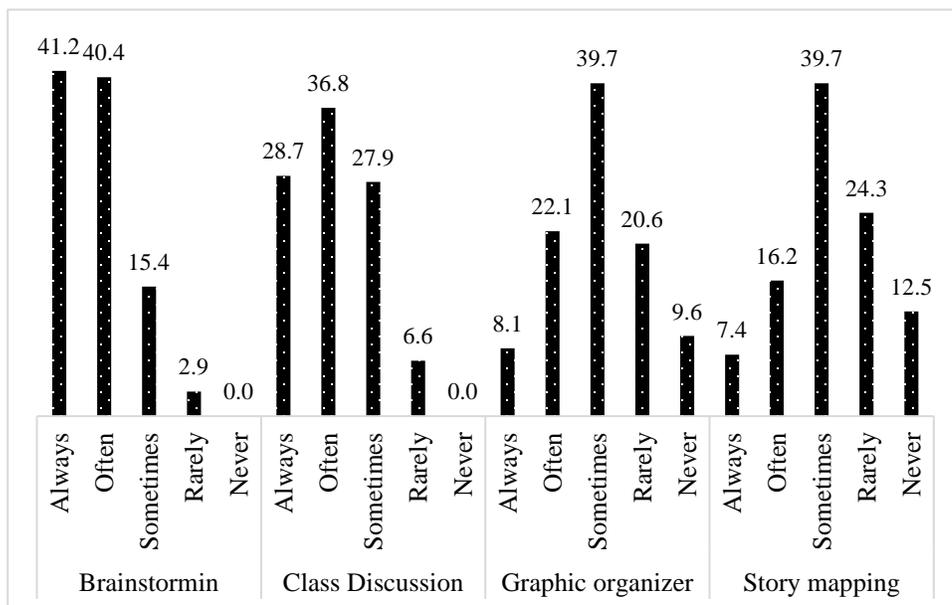

Figure 1 *Instructional strategies used by Moroccan EFL teachers to activate*

students' prior knowledge

The findings in the figure above indicate that a large proportion of Moroccan EFL teachers use the brainstorming technique to activate their students' prior knowledge. Relatedly, 41,2% and 40,4% indicate that they always and/or often use the brainstorming

technique to activate their students' prior knowledge. Class discussion is also another instructional strategy used by Moroccan EFL teachers to activate students' schemata. Conveniently, over 36% of the total participants assert that they often use class discussions to get the students' prior knowledge triggered. Additionally, 39,7% indicate that they sometimes use graphic organizer and story mapping to activate their students' prior knowledge and increase their engagement with the text.

5.2 Frequently Used Background Knowledge Strategies Employed by Moroccan EFL Teachers

The second question this study aims to answer is pertinent to reading strategies that Moroccan EFL teachers use to activate students' prior knowledge. The findings have clearly shown that Moroccan EFL teachers use a wide range of instructional strategies and techniques to activate their students' prior knowledge. However, these instructional strategies and techniques are used with varying degrees depending on the teachers' objectives, training and students' level. The table below shows the mean difference between different strategies employed by Moroccan EFL teachers

Table 1 *Backgound knowledge activation strategies mean difference*

Instructional strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-reading Questions	1,74	0,937
Brainstorming	1,80	0,806
Class discussion	2.13	0,906
Question answer relationship	2.33	1,109
Graphic organizer	3,01	1,068
Story mapping	3,18	1,083
Summarizing	2,75	1,087
Visual based Questions	2,60	1,056

The results in the table above indicate that though Moroccan EFL teachers use different instructional strategies, some techniques are used more frequently than others. Relatedly, the most frequently used technique to activate students' prior knowledge is Pre-reading Questions (Mean= 1,74, Standard Deviation= 0,937). Moroccan EFL teachers frequently ask different questions pertinent to the text topic in the pre-reading phase to activate their learners' background knowledge. The second most frequently employed technique by Moroccan EFL teachers to activate learners' schemata is brainstorming (Mean=1,80, Standard Deviation= 0,806). Class discussion is also another important instructional technique Moroccan EFL teachers use to trigger students' background knowledge (Mean= 2.13, Standard Deviation= 0,906). Moroccan EFL teachers often have open class discussions in the pre-reading stage to trigger their learners' knowledge of the world. Open class discussions allow for peer learning in such a way that the students can use their peers' ideas to activate their knowledge of the world and compensate for any deficiencies in their understanding.

5.3 Moroccan EFL Teachers' Instructional Strategies Employed to Activate Students' Prior Knowledge : Qualitative Data

The analysis of open-ended questions in interviews regarding how Moroccan EFL teachers activate their students' prior knowledge provide a wealth of information. The thematic analysis of the Moroccan EFL teachers' responses has resulted in the following themes:

Table 2 *Strategies and techniques used by Moroccan EFL teachers to active students' prior knowledge*

Theme	Frequency
The Use of Visuals	6
The use of Videos	5
Questions	5
Class Discussion	4
Brainstorming	4

The Thematic analysis of Moroccan EFL teachers' responses regarding the instructional strategies they employ to activate their students' prior knowledge has resulted in five main themes. Moroccan EFL teachers have asserted that they always set the context for the lesson and activate students' prior knowledge using various instructional techniques which include the use of visuals and videos, pre-reading questions, class discussion and brainstorming.

5.4 Techniques Employed by Moroccan EFL Teachers to Ensure Students Understand the Reading Text

The thematic analysis of the open-ended question regarding techniques employed by Moroccan EFL teachers to ensure their students fully understand the text has resulted in a wealth of information. Moroccan EFL teachers resort to a wide range of techniques to make sure their students fully understand the reading text. The analysis has resulted in the themes listed below:

Table 3 *Checking students' comprehension techniques employed by Moroccan EFL teachers*

Theme	Frequency
Reading Comprehension questions	7
Summarizing the text	6
Open class discussion about the text	5
Providing the general idea of each paragraph	5
End of class Follow-up activity	5
Diversifying questions	4

The findings indicate that Moroccan EFL teachers employ a wide range of techniques to ensure that their students understand the text. The participants assert that they never ask their students the traditional questions such as 'do you understand?', 'is it clear?' to check their understanding. They instead use various techniques and performance indicators that show whether the students have or have not understood the text. They often use comprehension questions to check their students' understanding. For them, answering the questions accurately is an indicator that they have understood the text. Additionally, summarizing can be a good technique to check understanding. They assert that summarizing the text means that students have a full understanding of the text. Additionally, the participants frequently used classroom discussion and end of class follow up activities as ways of testing their students' understanding. Importantly, the participants stressed the importance of diversifying their questions to check their students' understanding. Put slightly differently, they assert that they use questions that require students to provide general ideas and specific information because, for them, combining specific and general ideas allows the students to build a complete understanding of the text.

5.5 Difficulties encountered while activating students' prior knowledge in the classroom: A Moroccan Perspective

Though there is a wide range of instructional strategies that can be used to activate students' prior knowledge and though Moroccan EFL teachers hold very positive attitudes towards and are aware of the importance of activating students' schemata, there are so many difficulties that constrain teachers' willingness to activate their students' background knowledge, as shown in the figures below:
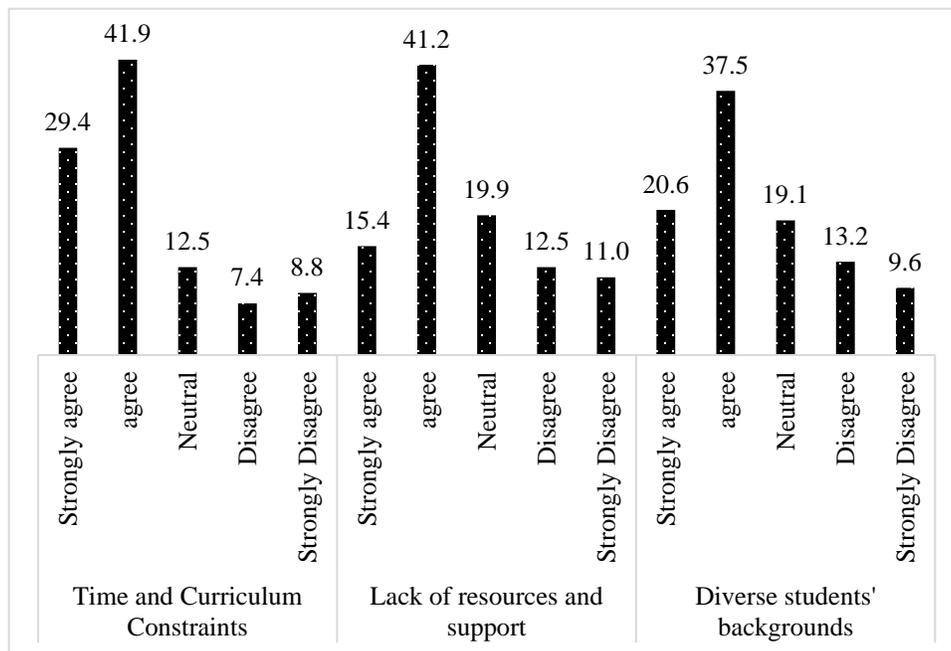

Figure 2 *Constraints that Hinder Moroccan EFL teachers from activating students'prior knowledge*

The fndings in the figure above indicate that Moroccan EFL teachers run into so many constraints and difficulties that constrain them from activating their students prior knowledge. Conveniently, a large proportion of Moroccan EFL teachers agree and/or strongly agree (41,9% and 29,4% respectively) that time and curriculum are the most constraint that hinders their attempts to activate their students' prior knowledge. Moroccan EFL teachers, especially those teaching Baccalaureate levels, have to finish long and dense textbooks and prepare their students for national exams by the end of the year, which puts a lot of pressure on them. They often rush into finishing the textbook on time which makes them oftentimes skip the prior knowledge activation phase. Second, lack of resourses and support is another constraint that hinder Moroccan EFL teachers from activating students' prior nowledge. Relately, over 40% of the participants agree that lack of resource and support is a major challenge for them. Equally important, the fact that students come from diverse backgrounds constrain teachers from activating their students' prior knowledge. Over 37% of the participants agree that the fact that students come from diverse backgrounds makes them unable to attend to everyones' needs and, therefore, become unable to trigger the students' schemata.

The findings in the figure below further delve into other constraints related to students' prior knowledge activation. Specifically, over 41% of the total participants assert that lack of awareness about the role of prior knowledge is a major constraint that prevents teachers from activating students' prior knowledge. Put slightly differently, Moroccan EFL teachers might potentially be unaware of the role prior knowledge activation plays in facilitating and increasing understanding. Additionally, lack of effective teaching strategies could be a constraint that hinders teachers' tendency to activate students' schemata. Relatedly, over 40% believe that lack of effective strategies is a major challenge. Another important constraint pertinent to students' prior knowledge activation is related to teachers' training and pre-service education. Importantly, over 49% of the total participants believe that Moroccan EFL teachers are reluctant towards activating their students' schemata because they lack adequate training on how to use different strategies to activate students' schemata. It, therefore, seems reasonable to argue that trainers and stakeholders should revisit teachers' preservice education and 1) raise Moroccan EFL teachers' awareness of the importance of students' prior knowledge activation and 2) train them on how to effectively select among the strategies availabe to successfully activate their students' prior knowledge.
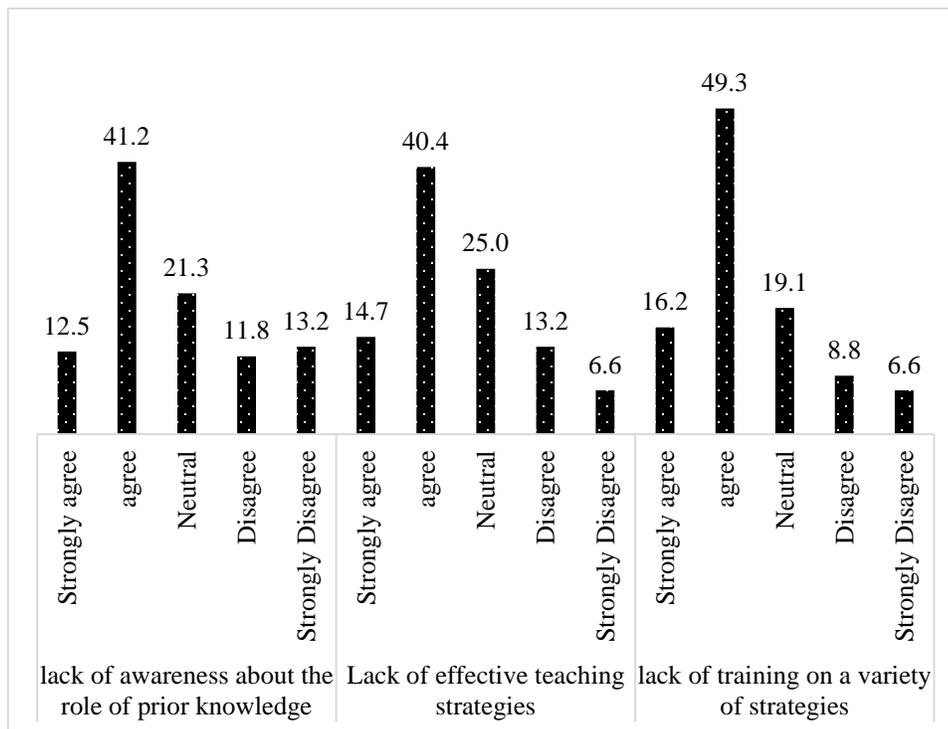

Figure 3 *Further Challenges and Constraints related to students' background knowledge activation*

6. Data Discussion

6.1 Instructional Reading Strategies Moroccan EFL Teachers Use to Activate Students' Prior Knowledge

The second research question sought to determine some of the instructional strategies Moroccan EFL teachers employ to activate their students' prior knowledge. Interestingly, the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that Moroccan EFL teachers use a wide range of techniques to activate students' schemata. More specifically, the participants indicated that they often use brainstorming, class discussion, graphic organizers, story mapping, summarizing, visual aids, KWL charts, listing statements related to the topic of the text on the board, etc.... However, comparing mean difference between all the strategies listed showed that pre-reading questions, brainstorming and class discussion are the most frequently used instructional techniques employed by Moroccan EFL teachers to activate the students' prior knowledge.

Though Moroccan EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards activating students' schemata and though they are aware of the importance and the benefits brought about by students' schemata activation, the process of background knowledge activation is not always easy and straight forward. Moroccan EFL teachers run into difficulties that potentially constrain and hinder their willingness and frequency with which they activate their students' prior knowledge. These difficulties are broadly classified into three main categories: teacher-related constraints, students' related constraints and textbook-related constraints

6.2 The Association between Moroccan EFL Teachers' Gender and Students' Schemata Activation

The third question investigates the influence of the participants' gender on their tendency to activate their students' prior knowledge. The findings indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between Moroccan EFL teachers' gender and the frequency with which they activate students' prior knowledge. In other words, gender plays a decisive role in the frequency with which they activate students' prior knowledge. Put differently, the findings obtained indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between male mean and female mean prior knowledge activation frequency (p =,043). Male mean prior knowledge activation is higher (M=1,97) than female mean prior knowledge activation(M=1,65).

It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that gender indeed influences the frequency with which Moroccan EFL teachers activate students' prior knowledge. This finding does not only confirm the assumption that individual characteristics (e.g., personality, attitudes) and general characteristics (such as age, gender, tenure, educational discipline, and background) influence what we do and how we do it, but also validates the research alternative hypothesis (H1) that suggests that there is indeed a statistically significant positive relationship between Moroccan EFL teachers' gender and their tendency to activate students' prior knowledge. This finding is in line with previous research (see., Laird et al., 2007; Shah, 2011; Saidi &Al Mahrooqi, 2012).

6.3 The Association between Moroccan EFL Teachers' Educational Level and Students' Background Knowledge Activation

The fourth research question seeks to assess if there is a statistically significant association between the participants' education level and students' prior knowledge activation. The dependent variable means, in this case, the frequency of activating students' background knowledge, differ significantly among the three different groups. Moroccan EFL teachers in the bachelor's group have the highest mean of background knowledge activation (M=2,03), while the participants in the Ph.D. group have the lowest (M=1,00), which confirms research alternative hypothesis (H1) that suggests that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between Moroccan EFL teachers' educational level and their tendency to activate students' prior knowledge.

 One possible reason for that could be the fact that the higher the educational level of the participants, the less interested they become in activating students' knowledge of the world. The fact that education level significantly impacts teachers' tendency and frequency of activating students' prior knowledge is in line with previous research (Goldhqber & Brewer, 1996; Zhang, 2008; Cremin & Lawrence, 2013; Elsbree, 2015).

6.4 The Association between Moroccan EFL Teachers' Age, Years of Experience and Students' Background Knowledge Activation Frequency

The last research question sets out to investigate the influence of the participants' age/ years of experience and the frequency with which they activate students' schemata. In other words, the question investigates if there are changes in students' schemata activation that can be attributable to age and experience. The findings reveal that no statistically significant relationship was found between the participants' age and/or years of experience and students' prior knowledge activation (p=,119)., suggesting that participants' age plays a nonsignificant or a negligible role in participants' frequency with which they active their students' prior knowledge. This finding entails that we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0) that suggests that there is no statistically significant positive relationship between Moroccan EFL teachers' teaching experience/ age and their tendency to activate students' prior knowledge.

Though the findings obtained found no statistical association between the participants' age and years of experience and the frequency with which they activate students' schemata, the P-P plots show that the first age category that corresponds to

the novice teachers group reported significantly more students' background knowledge activation frequency than the other two groups (M=2,14), whereas the second age category that corresponds to mid-career teachers group reported the least (M=1,74). In other words, Moroccan EFL teachers' tendency to activate their students' schemata is high when they are young and novice teachers, and this tendency declines as they grow older and as they gain more experience. This finding clearly shows that age may potentially influence the participants' frequency of activating students' prior knowledge. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area (Berliner, 1988; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Hill et al., 2005; Brod, 2020).

7. Pedagogical Implications

The findings obtained from this study will be used extensively to offer the Moroccan Ministry of Education and all the stakeholders some pedagogical implications that can help in the process of prior knowledge activation and, therefore, significantly improve learners' reading skills.

Taking into account the results of the present study, the Ministry of Education, policy -makers and all the stakeholders in Morocco are called upon to:

Rethink EFL teachers' pre-service training: to fully equip Moroccan EFL teachers with the skills required to successfully activate learners' schemata and/or design their own materials, policy-makers in the field of education are invited to re-visit both the objectives and structure of the pre-service training in such a way that EFL teachers are fully prepared to teach reading.

Revisit the quality and structure of continuous professional development training: the assumption that pre-service training can fully prepare teachers for the job is erroneous. The ministry of Education, therefore, is required to question the quality and frequency of continuous professional development and make it an expectation of all EFL teachers. Having quality continuous professional development training can largely improve the instructional strategies of EFL teachers and, ideally, improve their teaching skills.

Correct EFL teachers and students' negative attitudes towards reading: Reading comprehension is often viewed as a difficult skill to teach by teachers and an impossible task for learners. Stakeholders are, therefore, called upon to correct this misconception by demonstrating that reading is an important and teachable skill.

Design textbooks that contain up-to-date texts and materials: the discussion in the previous section showed that EFL teachers extensively complained about the quality of the textbooks used to teach English in Morocco. The participants indicated that the textbooks are obsolete and outdated. They also assert that textbooks contain texts that are long and that are incompatible with the learners' expectations, interests and needs. This conclusion is further confirmed by different textbook reviews and evaluations done in Morocco. It seems, therefore, reasonable to argue that policy-makers and stakeholders in Morocco should urgently and instantly initiate the English textbooks renewal phase. This process should include specialists in designing textbooks and should urgently take into account EFL teachers' opinions. This, hopefully, will result in textbooks that respond to teachers' expectations and students' needs and aspirations.

8. Conclusion

This study aims at 1) empirically investigating Moroccan EFL teachers' attitudes towards students' prior knowledge activation, 2) investigating the frequency with which Moroccan EFL teachers activate students' prior knowledge 3) unveiling some benefits brought about by prior knowledge activation and some constraints that may hinder the process of activating students' schemata and 4) examining the influence of the participants' internal and external factors on the frequency with which they activate their students' schemata. This study came as a response to scholars' ongoing calls and emphasis on addressing the importance of activating students' background knowledge while teaching reading comprehension.

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