

**DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TRAIL OF ENGLISH READING TEACHING MODELS:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER**

**Stephen Kanyimo,**

Makonde District Education Head

**Maidaani A. Ziyambi,**

Chinhoyi University of Technology

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this document analysis was to chronicle some of the theories of teaching vocabulary and reading of English as a second language. This was prompted by the observation that the majority of rural primary school learners had low English reading abilities. Teachers have forgotten theories which they read and discussed during their pre-service education. Their practice is now governed by pragmatic (what works) methods to get the learners a pass mark. Historical research philosophy which sought to understand the present from the past guided the study. Research design was mainly document analysis. Researchers identified documents by using Google search engines. Critical identifier words were: English reading theories, Second language teaching approaches. Inclusion criterion was based on English as a second language, being available and accessible to researchers. Since the documents were already in circulation in academic circles, there was no need to carry out serious validation. Copies of the English reading models were e-mailed to a purposive sample of 20 teachers of English language. These were selected on being online, teachers of English as a second language, available and willing to participate. Principle researchers presented the theorems to participants who had read the theorems. Focus group discussions on ZOOM and BIG/BLOCK BUTON platforms were held. The study found that, English reading theorems implied that: teachers can author reading materials locally to provide the context which provoke learners to read. Teaching requires content to be presented from simple to complex, starting from letter naming, vowels, phonic sounds and word meanings. Use of educational audio-visual materials can improve the application of behaviourist theories in the classroom. Acculturation can be implemented by requiring learners to read every time, as a school culture. This can be done by having a day or week in which all activities are done by reading instructions.

**Key Words:** Document analysis, English reading, Second language, teaching methods.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Contextual Analysis**

All living things have a language. Animals have an indolent language. It develops from within the animal. Its main purpose is for that specific species' communication. Meerkats for example have warning and greeting languages peculiar to them. People can only classify this language as different sounds because we, humans do not understand it. By the same token, meerkats may also classify our elaborate vocabulary as different mumbling sounds.

Human beings have the special genetic configuration for an external language acquisition system. We learn language from the environment. External language acquisition enables people to imitate different animal sounds. Such a function renders vocal language a critical universal communication benefaction. Social and economic needs for record keeping called for abilities to speak, write and read as critical inseparable functional skills.

Hume and Snowling (2012) cited in Wigfield et al (2016 : 26), argued that fluency in word decoding and word recognition, as well as critical inferences and detailed analysis; are dependent upon the development of earlier foundational reading abilities. To that end, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education, Pupils Lagging Academic Progress (PLAP) Teachers' manual (2015) assigned the task of laying the foundation of literacy development to the primary school teacher. These academics specialise in phoneme awareness (sound) and grapheme knowledge (letters), which are taught and learnt in earlier grades.

Live Ink (2006) underscores the fact that spoken language is a biological, natural phenomenon of communication throughout the history of mankind, whilst reading is a human invention which is only 6 000 years old. Live Ink (2006:4) goes further to cite Aristotle, who explained the close link between spoken words and written text when he demonstrates that "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experiences and written words are symbols of spoken words." Written words (texts) are contextualized through reading the text. So, for socio-economic national development to hasten, each and every learner should be capable of and proficient in reading.

According to Edwards (1981) a historian, the human race has invented methods of representation of their spoken words with written symbols. The Samaritans invented a pictorial style of writing known as cuneiform. The ancient Egyptians invented theirs called hieroglyphics. Live Ink (2006) added that the Phoenicians invented the first alphabet that had consonants only which the Greeks further developed and upgraded by adding the vowels. That same alphabet is the one we use today in Zimbabwe. Live Ink (2006) ranks this invention as one of humanity's greatest milestones in language development and communication reforms.

At first the alphabet was written only in upper case. Lower case symbols were introduced in 700AD as a need for elaboration and emphasis. Live Ink (2006) claims that later on spaces between words were then inserted. Spaces between words made reading simpler for the majority of people who attempted to read. Before spaces between words were introduced. Live Ink (2006) concluded that only people like Julius Caesar and Sir Ambrose were capable of reading the text silently.

Communication in economic activities demanded comprehensive reading. Martyn (2009) observed that reading and writing have reformed humanity due to the text. The key turning points were the inventions of farming, industrial implements and machinery throughout those centuries due to literacy development. One direct implication for teachers is that, effective teaching of reading must be carried out in the context of economic means of production. Words must be attached to tools and sentences constructed to explain the production process.

In fact Martyn (2009) confirms the correlation between the growth of literacy and the improvement of the socio-economic well-being of the Western European countries and North America. Edwards (1981: 29) discussed the critical role of literacy during the Renaissance when he states that:

...we shall read how the lamp of learning was re-lit in the countries of Europe and how the dark shadows of ignorance gradually began to disappear. As though awakening from a long sleep during the Dark and Middle Ages, the people of Europe began to open eyes again to seek glory of the beautiful art and wise learning which the Romans and the Greeks had known.

Edwards (1981) claims that literacy development awakened in Italy around AD 1400 and spread to entire Europe in the two centuries that followed. Greek scholars opened universities in important towns of Italy as economic ventures for spreading knowledge and literacy. Great historical artists were educated in those early universities, namely Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Gutenberg to mention a few. Gutenberg's invention of a printing press which printed books cheaply and quickly was a monumental milestone and turning point in global literacy development. According to Edwards' (1981:31) quantitative explanation:

Previously it might have taken a whole year to produce one book by hand; now thousands of books could be printed each year. Printed books were far cheaper to buy, so more and more people began to read and learn new things and shadows of ignorance began to fade.

Medieval king of France called Francis 1 became interested in literacy developments of the Renaissance, funded and commissioned a printing press that printed books cheaply and quickly. He also encouraged French writers to express their literacy ideas in plays, poetry and novels. Accordingly, the French, writers of literature became the best in Europe and France. French, as a language, became the envy of Europe. For one to be regarded as properly educated then (during the Renaissance), one had to speak French.

We deduced that, the implication of King Francis I's ideas is that visionary political will and effective leadership in education can turn a country's literacy level around. The leader's vision can transform an organization by manoeuvring it onto the right path to achieve its set goals, provided the implementers are literate. Takaya (2008) posits that success or failure of education is primarily measured by assessing the level of acquisition of the prescribed content (reading ability).

Schools in Zimbabwe have the main task of improving the national literacy rate. Subsequently prescribed national syllabus provides guide lines for English reading and teaching methods. This study then contributes as staff development material for reviving theories and models for teaching English as a second language. Importance is attached to implications for teachers' English language reading /teaching methods.

Zimbabwe's Education Act of 1987 implemented through The English Junior (Grade 3-7) Syllabus (2015:1) require English to be the language of instruction from grade four to seven, except for the indigenous languages. Chapter (25:04 Act 5/1987) specifically says "From the fourth grade, English language shall be the medium of instruction provided that Shona or Ndebele shall be taught as subjects on an equal time allocation as the English language. Although the handbook for school heads (1993: 6)

allocates three (3) periods for English language, implementing an integrated approach dictates the use of English reading in most of the subjects. Actually, English language dominance is clear when one considers that, textbooks in all subjects are in English. Consequently, a child who is weak at English reading is largely disadvantaged in all subjects which use English textbooks and the examinations.

## Statement Of Research Problem

Teachers read, discuss and write assignments on the application of teaching theories during their pre-service education. Their discussions then lack the practical implications because of limited experience in the actual classroom. Those teachers in the field concentrate on practices which produce results with or without theoretical backing. The role of this paper is to reflect on theories and models of teaching English reading and their implications for the teacher in the classroom. The paper provides a good supplement for explaining theories for those learning to teach.

This is an important contribution to the improvement of teaching English reading as a second language. It is also a good reminder of the professional theories governing teaching methods being used in practice. Teaching is a professional art which requires continuous staff development for contingent adaptation of content, resources and methods making this paper an essential support.

## Research Questions

The document analysis sought answers to the following pair of pertinent questions:

1. What do theories of teaching English language reading say?
2. What are the implications of the theories of teaching English language reading for the teacher?

## Theoretical Topography

Naming, describing and explaining are the vocabulary components of any foreign language semantic structure. They are acquired and developed by others through listening and reading. Consequently, language teaching and learning is a behavioural function guided by *behaviourist theories*. Watson's behaviourist theory (1913) suggests that language acquisition is a mechanical imitation or echoing, reinforcement and conditioning process. One of the problems for the application of behaviourist theory in Zimbabwe's public schools is the fact that many teachers are not the best English language models. They learned English as a second language so that they could teach the language to others as part of their employment tasks. Clearly, if they transmit incorrect accents, then it is echoed and reinforced.

This limitation can be circumvented by teachers who use audio visual aids. Specifically, those educational videos prepared locally so that they depict local context with accurate English language vocabulary and reading words. Local sign posts with words to read can provoke learners to read out of the classroom. In the school yard, pathways from one class to the other can have names. Games in which children are given directions to follow by reading names of roads can be played to promote functional reading.

Another theory of foreign language acquisition is the *acculturation theory* proposed by Schumann (1986: 386). Acculturation theory suggests that development of learners' communicative English vocabulary is facilitated by the acculturation of the learner to the target language group.

Acculturation implies the infusion of the second language English, French or Chinese into the description of the day to day activities. Unfortunately, Zimbabweans may have difficulties understanding and accepting the cultural content of many of the English textbooks and novels they study and use for teaching language reading in schools. Xuelian (2018) suggests that some texts appropriate for a Western classroom can offend Zimbabweans with deep cultural affiliations. Specifically, reading passages involving dating, alcohol drinking or nudity may discourage some learners from reading the language lexical structures. The implication for this observation is for teachers to author reading material with culturally mollifying contextual, economic and religious content.

The *interactions hypothesis* was proposed by (Krashen, 1987) who suggest that language learning is promoted by the learner's spontaneous and meaningful interactions with other speakers of the target language. A limitation to this theory is the fact that, there are limited English language speakers to provide the kind of spontaneous interactions in the school and their communities. In light of the fact that Zimbabweans may act in ways directly influenced by their cultural or religious background.

Vygotsky (1978) promoted the *socio-cultural theory* which posits that language learning is a social and cognitive activity. Implied here is the fact that, teaching reading should not be confined to the language lesson on the class time-table. Teachers can label doors of their classrooms, chairs desks so that, children read for the social purpose of identifying them as belonging to a specific classroom or learner. Learners can participate in public speaking and quiz competitions. Competitions between schools where children have better vocabulary, reading and speaking are important promoters of second language vocabulary and reading skills development.

These second language acquisition theories all assume that vocabulary teaching methods include learning in context, watching and listening, visualizing and use of mnemonics. Emphasis is placed on the social environment of school teachers, parents and community as a powerful source for learning vocabulary, reading and writing a second language. This study's purpose then is to explore different second language teaching theories as a basis for the improvement of the teaching and learning of English vocabulary in the current Zimbabwean technical, social, and political environment.

But implementing theories of English language teaching and learning in Zimbabwe faces certain ecological challenges. The combination of Roman Latin and old English Saxon alphabets renders it difficult for Zimbabwean teachers to be models. Their variations have a major impact on writing and pronunciation. In fact the Zimbabwean teacher's English depends on which school the teacher went to for education. Some went to Roman Catholic schools, Anglican schools, Public government schools, Council and community schools. These differences create challenges in teaching the alphabet, phonics, syllables and letter shape recognition. This is made even more difficult because the Zimbabwean informal educational system is strongly anchored in cultural practices. English is resisted as an agent of indoctrination and cultural dilution. Finally, most English teachers in public schools are not the best English language and culture models for learners to emulate. There is need for guidance from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of literacy.

## **Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of literacy**



Vygotsky's (1896-1934) *Socio-cultural Theory* of Literacy teaching and learning suggests two levels of a learner's ability to acquire concepts and learning. First, the learner has the ability to solve a problem independently reading silently and using own language. Second, the learner has potential and ability to master a concept or task whilst working under the guidance of a teacher or peer. That gap between the learner's independent problem-solving ability and the learner's ability to solve a problem under someone's guidance is what Vygotsky coined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). These can be established by asking learners to read to the teacher who concentrates on the learner's eye and lip movement, then the vocal pronouncement of the words.

Someone who is more knowledgeable of the task to be learnt must guide the learner to narrow that "distance" between learners' independent and potential ability. Vygotsky called that someone who has more knowledge and competence in the task, "The More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO). This person is expected to guide the learner through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The teacher's (MKO's) role is to assist the learner to make quick progress in finding solutions to set reading tasks. Subsequently in reading English as a second language, the role of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), the teacher, is to equip learners with the keys that unlock the symbols in the text. Teaching phonic word attack, from letter words, vowel sound and attach the sounds to these symbols so that they comprehend the embedded meaning is encouraged. Arshad and Chen (2009: 37) support the importance of the MKO when they suggest that the children at an early age may learn and initialize higher psychological functions including second language reading and writing from engaging in relations with others including adults. The role of the MKO is to guide the learners through the ZPD by teaching. This function is very critical and needs to be over-emphasized for functional reading instruction to prevail.

David (2018) observed that schools were abandoning the traditional 'tabula rasa' models of teaching in which the teacher's role was solely the transmission of knowledge to passive, "empty" learners. Lockwood and Levin (1993) prefer that schools should implement participatory learner-centered models. They facilitate learners' adequate opportunities to practice reading. Praxis is paramount and fundamental for competence-based learning. Learners have to interact with the text to achieve literacy development.

Arshad and Chen (2009) suggested that young children could learn to read and write even though they had not fully mastered the language. They (Arshad and Chen, 2009) proclaimed that rural children have serious limited access and exposure to English language as compared to their urban counter parts. In rural environments, child-adult interaction does not promote English language learning. Lack of exposure to second language models consequently reduces the child's rate of reading English. The situation prevailing in Zimbabwe's rural primary schools is aggravated by limited knowledgeable others (MKO). According to Moshia (2014), a teacher who lacks the proficiency and pedagogical skills to teach English reading contributes to the child's retarded rate of developing English language vocabulary and reading ability.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of literacy proffers what he termed "scaffolding." The term describes the methods, actions and speech adults use to assist and hasten the child's rate of knowledge acquisition and construction. In scaffolding, the MKO must correctly determine the task the learner is capable of accomplishing independently (thus assumed knowledge) and then introduces the new task that is intended for the learner to internalize. In this context of instructional

scaffolding in reading, Applebee and Langer (1993) cited by Arshad and Chen (2018: 13) recommends that the MKO must provide the strategies and support necessary to carry out unfamiliar and complex tasks.

Bereitser and Scandamalia (1987) identified the following positive characteristics which can be exploited by the MKO in the teaching and scaffolding of English reading as a second language:

- (i) Provides clear directions and opportunities to meet the expectations of the learning tasks which should be expressed in detailed planning of the English reading task.
- (ii) Attempt to anticipate any difficulties from the reading context or uncertainties likely to be encountered by the learners before formulating detailed schemes and plans.
- (iii) Determine the unforeseeable difficulties that the learning task is likely to pose for particular students. The teacher then selects the strategies to overcome the foreseeable difficulties.
- (iv) Keeping learners focused on the task through guidance.
- (v) Choosing strategies that simplify content knowledge (vocabulary and structure) and discourse knowledge (methodological approach).
- (vi) Continuously assessing progress can be done throughout the teaching/learning process by MKO demonstrating the activities regularly during teaching.
- (vii) Scaffolding reduces uncertainty, surprise and disappointment. Learners do not feel burn-out or fear because the MKO does not use a stick.
- (viii) Scaffolding creates momentum in learning to read the L2 because the MKO directs the learners' energy towards the task.

Skinner (1961) applied the behaviourist theory to learning. It claims that learning is a process of operant conditioning in which the desired behaviour is reinforced by rewarding. Thus, in the teaching of English vocabulary and reading, whenever a learner elicits responses that reflect the desired mastery, he/she should be shown positive appreciation by praising to reinforce the desired behaviour.

Craig (1984) influenced by Piaget's cognitive theory acknowledges that all learning is an active process involving the brain. Reading is both perceptual (during decoding of letters and symbols) and cognitive when interpreting or comprehending the read material. A reader confronts a text from which he/she must decode the symbols by sight or hand in the case of the blind, and encode the meaning in the mind. Chomsky (1968) acknowledges that knowledge of a language involves the ability to assign meaning to deep and surface structures of the text. Thus, during reading, the reader should be able to assign semantics and the phonetic interpretation to the paired deep and surface structures.

Bruner advised teachers to scheme the English reading content according to the learners' levels of development. Shuying (2013) speculates that efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to the reader's own knowledge and experiences. According to Pardede (2017) comprehending a written text is a complex interactive process between the reader's background knowledge, experiences and the written text. To that end, teachers can prepare the classroom environment to be a rich background for English reading.

According to Shuying's (2013:130) Schema Theory, written text does not carry meaning by itself. Rather, the Schemata (acquired mental knowledge structures) help the reader to comprehend. To that end, teachers are expected to programme the content starting with the easy (prior knowledge) and incrementally progress to more complex content. For example, start by naming letters, vowels, sound (phonetics), sentences and paragraphs. Craig (1984) proposes that, reading involves the learner's personal commitment, interest and emotional interaction with the text. Hence teachers are discouraged from depending on foreign textbooks. These do not include learners' attributes. For easy comprehension of the text, the content of the text must be familiar to the reader's background knowledge and past experiences (schema). Locally authored learning content must be culture-embedded. Unfortunately, learner personalised instruction is not supported by Zimbabwe's centralised education and national examinations system.

A text provides the direction for readers as to how they (readers) should retrieve, extract and construct meaning from the text. The reader's own previously acquired knowledge (the prior knowledge) is the fundamental foundation on which new knowledge is constructed.

### **Theories explaining learning to read**

Nunam (2003: 70) proposed that reading (departure from symbol decoding to comprehension) can be done in three phases: the bottom-up, top-down and the interactive model. In the bottom-up model, learners begin by decoding sounds to make words, phrases and sentences to reach comprehension. The written word is the stimulus. They can parrot words without understanding what they mean. Teachers' roles include encouraging and assisting in the interpretation. Picture and word teaching methods can be more helpful to promote both language and reading.

The top-down process begins with the reader's background knowledge. Learners make predictions of what is coming as a strong factor to promote comprehension of the text. A learner with limited experience of the context of the problem finds it difficult to comprehend. Teachers guided by the top-down model, use storytelling to extend learners imaginations and background. They ask learners to predict what could happen to main characters in stories as part of their teaching method. It is a cognitive provoking teaching strategy which relies on class discussions. A free teaching-learning class environment is critical for a top-down reading model to apply.

The interactive model combines strong elements of both the bottom-up and the top-down processes. Murtagh (1989) rates the best second language teachers as those who can "efficiently integrate" both the bottom-up and the top-up processes. The critical word is integration. Teaching is an art whose evaluation is relative, contingent with the nature of learners, school and resources hence the "best" is relative.

Pardede (2017) has similar theories which explain the nature of learning to read, namely;

- (i) The traditional theory (bottom-up processing or the skilled reading theory) which focuses on the printed form of the text. This is the main method used in schools today. It is associated with the phonic approach. In phonics, learners exercise rote learning of letter sounds as the main word attack strategy.



- (ii) The cognitive view (top-down processing) focuses on the learner’s background knowledge which is then linked to what is on the printed page. Meaning and interpretation to enhance comprehension is derived from the word, phrase, sentence and story approaches.
- (iii) The metacognitive view is based on the reader’s control and manipulation on the comprehension of a text. Emphasis is on the reader’s cognitive consciousness about what he is encoding while reading (Pardede 2017, and Grow1996).

Pardede (2017) suggests pertinent considerations to the teacher of English reading as a second language which can make the L2 readers find the text comprehensible. The suggestions advise the teachers to follow the pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading tips listed below.

- (i) Select text in advance and the text should be relevant to the learner’s needs, preferences, individual differences and culture.
- (ii) Choose reading texts that learners have background knowledge (schema) so that they comprehend with interest and easy.
- (iii) Activate the existing background knowledge (schemata) to bring familiarity. Discuss the known experiences with learners.
- (iv) Build new background knowledge so that the learners comprehend the new text.
- (v) Explain the formal and content schemata when the new text contains unfamiliar cultural experiences that are different from that of the learner. (formal schemata refers to knowledge of structure of text for example: fiction, letter, report. Content schemata refers to the message of the text).
- (vi) Guide and monitor learners as they read the text. Readers should take notes. Compile list of new vocabulary and new information and details.
- (vii) Guide the learners in post-reading activities such as questioning, retelling and dramatizing.
- (viii)

**Comparison of the Three Models of Reading.**

The Synthetic Model The Traditional Model The Bottom-up Processing 1960s-1970s	The Analytic Model The Cognitive View Top-down Processing 1970s-1980s	The Analytic-Synthetic Model The Metacognitive View Interactive Model late 1980s to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading is a process of decoding</li> <li>• Focus is on the symbols on the text e.g. the phonic approach to teaching reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game</li> <li>• Focus is on the reader e.g. the whole word approach to teaching reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading is a process of construction of meaning from text. Uses both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies and skills</li> <li>• Focus is on interaction</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter symbols plus sound from words</li> <li>• Words from sentences</li> <li>• Sentences from story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reader receives input from the text and makes predictions based on             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conceptual abilities</li> <li>2. Background knowledge</li> <li>3. Language processing skills</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Texts confirm or revise prediction</li> <li>• Use of holistic approach to reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both bottom-up and top-down process occur simultaneously to the learner to comprehend the text</li> <li>• Interaction is between the reader and the text</li> </ul>
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**Source: Pardede (2017), Gray (1969), Chi-Fen Emily Chen (2012) and The Trainer's Handbook (1997: 45)**

**2. SUMMARY**

Pardede (2017) and Gray (1969) argue that the metacognitive view and the analytic-synthetic model produce learners who acquire real meaningful learning and improved comprehension. The teachers require staff development. The metacognitive view (Pardede, 2017), the analytic-synthetic model (Gray 1969) or the interactive model (Chi-Fen Emily Chen (2012) stress the importance of the reader's schemata for successful meaningful English reading.

According Schema Theory, the teacher must programme the content starting with the easy (prior knowledge) and incrementally progress to the more complex content. The teacher must be reminded that the plan scheme of work is not the master. He/she must teach the content that should be effectively mastered by the learners. For the teacher to succeed in implementing an effective reading programme he/she must also understand the child's affective development. Craig (1984) concurs with Vygotsky (1978) that reading involves the learner's personal commitment, personal interest and emotional interaction with the text. For easy comprehension of the text, Piaget argues that the content of the text must be familiar to the reader's background knowledge and past experiences (schema). Bruner agrees with Piaget and posit that all learning should be culture-embedded. Shuying (2013:130) argues that the fundamental principle or tenet of Schema Theory authenticates that written text does not carry meaning by itself. Rather, the Schemata (acquired knowledge structures) help the reader to comprehend. The paper concluded that: Understanding of the theories of English reading can assist the English reading teachers to implement English reading lessons effectively. The teachers can be staff developed in reading theories and their implications.

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