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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN LANGUAGE AND HUMANITY STUDIES IN NIGERIA

EDITED BY
BELLO YUSUF WAMBA
ALIYU ALHAJI TANKO
MUHAMMAD AWAL INUWA
SULEIMAN ABDULLAHI WAMBA
SULAIMAN YUNUSA AHMAD

CHAPTER ONE

METACOGNITIVE THEORY AS PANACEA FOR THE TEACHING OF READING IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

BY:
AHMAN, Amina Ph.D.
Department of languages,
CASSS, Kaduna Polytechnics, Kaduna, Nigeria.
&
LAWAL, Safi Ph.D.
Department of languages,
CASSS, Kaduna Polythecnics, Kaduna, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Language can thus be described as the structural way in which words are put together successfully to representand forward one's conception, ideas or reasoning across to other people. Language can further be described as an organization of symbols that permits people to communicate or interact with one another. These symbols could be in vocal or written forms, gestures and body language. Language can also be construed with regard to the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.Borode (2016) describes language as a means of identification, categorisation, perception, thinking and transmitting knowledge across time and space.

Reading, as one of the four basic language skills, is essential for learning and a very crucial project in any language class. Reading,

has therefore, been given considerable attention by many scholars and researchers. According to Onukaogu (2003), Gutenberg's invention of printing during the 16th century placed a revolution on the written text. Thereafter, modern technology has aided printing and placed the written text in a very strategic position in human advancement. Consequently, every human being is at this moment in time influenced by the written text (i.e. through reading). Reading is a requisite and an indispensable skill in the teaching and learning processes.

Reading is a skill that is required by both teachers and students, regardless of the stage of their teaching and learning and further affirmed that it is the means by which academic excellence can be attained since no student can survive in the academic world without the ability to read(Lawal, 2019). Reading requires full participation of the teacher and student as members of the modern society and adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, empowers the readers, emancipates and unites people together.

Ofodu (2009) views reading as one of the most fundamental media for acquiring and promoting knowledge at all levels of education. Reading is a language skill that is employed in facilitating the acquisition and development of literacy needed for effective communication in different contexts and field. More so, reading is a pleasurable venture and a source of information which provides a means of integrating and widening one's language development. Reading is very important in the life of everyone. It is attested to around the world that reading shows its influence in improving students' performance in academics and later in life. The doors of the world are open to people who can readandopens people's views to different parts of the world. Via

reading people are able to have knowledge about other people, places, culture, and events different or similar to their background and personal experiences (Lawal, 2019). People, thus, become informed and opened to ideas, beliefs, activities and ways of life around the world which may be divergent from theirs through reading. Through reading therefore, people gain access to new discoveries, new interests and preferences; and additionally, reading guides people in whatever they are involved in. Reading is indispensable to people in the promotion of their culture and civilisation.

Dwelling more on the importance of reading, Lawal, (2019) deduced that reading allows us to familiarise ourselves with the experiences of our ancestors and presents us the chance to learn from the happenings of those nations who are technological based and up front. Through reading we can procure new scientific skills and attitudes that will equip us to move our country forward and develop such repute and confidence in commerce, science, education and technology that are evident in the developed nations. It is often said that a reading nation is a winning, progressing, thriving and living nation (Lawal, 2019). Therefore, as a nation that intends to develop, we need to promote reading in our tertiary institutions in order to encourage the majority of our people to read and have fulfilled lives. It is very important for every country and nation that craves for advancement and development, to ensure that reading skills are developed through a system of education at all levels that reflects the changing needs of the nation through reading

Today, a great deal of learning depends on reading as an essential prerequisite to literacy because, the bedrock of learning in any discipline and level of education; such as the need to understand

communication, recognise written information and process the data involved. Literacy plays an important role in individuals' lives, as it provides them with the required apparatus to perform efficiently in society. Irrespective of the activity a person engages in field of edeaviour and educational level, literacy allows and enables one to access information, consider it and apply the knowledge in relating with other members of the society. Therefore, reading can be described as nexus of literacy since reading is one of the keys that unlock the gate to literacy.The first step toward literacy is to acquire the reading skill and the teaching of reading in our tertiary institutions effectively should be the goal of every language teacher. Reading is so significant to learning in general that every subject area demands that students should be able to read and retain the information read. Since reading has been rated highly as an academic skill that is crucial in all formal school settings, and more so that students are more involved in reading than in writing, it is very crucial that every student has a good mastery of the reading skill.

However, despite the importance of reading as a critical skill to success across domains of life's activities, researchers such Gabe, (2010), Fola Adebayo, (2014) Lawal, (2019) have observed that this skill is often ignored in Nigerian tertiary institutions. One of the major reasons learners perform woefully in English language and especially in other courses, could be lack of learners' awareness and knowledge of reading strategy that is required to successfully comprehend texts. It is, therefore, imperative that consideration is given to those strategies that can improve students' performance in reading comprehension. Experience has shown that instruction in comprehension helps students understand what they read and remember, what they read and

communicate and what they read with others. Comprehension can be improved by instructions that help readers use specific comprehension strategies. An effort to develop reading ability requires knowledge of the factors underlying it. Grabe (2010) equally points to the importance of effective reading strategies and affirms that reading strategies should be accorded attention since they indicate how readers manage their interactions with the written text and because these strategies are revealed to be connected to reading comprehension.

This study presumes that reading is essential for the success of learning English language and other courses in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Students, therefore, need to be equipped with a number of reading strategies to help them comprehend text information and ultimately for good performance not only in English language but in all courses. As observed by Fola-Adebayo (2014), the poor state of reading in Nigeria is caused by a lack of knowledge of relevant reading strategies. Moreover, Hans (2013) opines that the use of effective comprehension strategies which provide specific instructions for developing and retaining comprehension skills, with intermittent feedback, have been found to improve reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is increased when strategies are explicitly taught and used by teacher/students during reading (Sanford, 2015).Language learning strategies are the processes that teacher employed to teach and learners employ to learn the target language. Research in language learning such as Ofodu, (2010), Gabe, (2010), Fola Adebayo, (2014) Lawal, (2019)has identified specific strategies and classified them. Most current researches are now focused and carried out on the effects of metacognition, i.e., cognition of cognition on reading comprehension.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that reinforces this study is the theory of metacognition. Of particular interest to the study is Flavell's (1979) model. This theory revolves around learners' ability to reflect on their own cognitive processes and the awareness of the control that they possess over their thinking and learning processes while reading and solving problems.The concern of metacognitive theory is how teachers/learners employ metacognition knowledge to plan, monitor and evaluate their reading comprehension. Metacognition refers among other things to 'the monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective.' This Flavell's (1979) metacognition theory is widely expounded and as a concept,it encompasses any knowledge or cognitive process that touches on monitoring and controls all aspects of cognition. Some words which have been synonymously and interchangeably used to metacognition in recent years by researchers include: self-management, met-mentation or meta-learning. Other terms used in the literature in connection with metacognition include metacognitive beliefs, executive skills, meta-components and judgments of learning.

Today, metacognition is perceived as a major contributor to principal components of cognition which include memory, communication, attention, problem solving and intelligence notably for relevance in education such as reading comprehension. Leader (2008) stresses that metacognition is today used as an umbrella term encompassing the structures that are related to individuals' thinking process and information that is valuable to the teaching and learning of reading at all levels of education.

Precisely, the term 'metacognition' means cognition about cognition, or thinking about thinking that is required in reading to reinforce comprehension(Padma, 2013). Metacognition refers to the knowledge and processthat regulates cognition. More so, metacognition alludes to higher order thinking which involves active control over cognitive-processes engaged in learning. If teachers and learners of reading are meta-cognitively aware, they will be able to know what to do even when they do not know what to do. This means that they have strategies for finding out what they need to do. Metacognition involves activities such as designing how to catch up on a given learning task, tracking comprehension and assessing progress and completion of a venture. Activities such as planning, monitoring, evaluating a task based on objective and satisfactory completion is centered in metacognition (Nongtodu&Bhutia, 2017). Furthermore, metacognition is described as a level of thinking that involves active control over the process of thinking that is used in learning situations (Ofodu and Adedipe 2011).

Difference between Cognition and Metacognition: The different between what is 'meta' and what is 'cognition' is a central problem with the concept of metacognition. Cognition and metacognition are two concepts that are closely related and can co-exist. Brown (1985) gives an example that the skill involved in reading a text (a cognitive skill) is different from the skill needed for monitoring one's understanding of the text (a metacognitive skill). Basically, cognition deals with mental processes such as memory, learning, problem-solving, attention and decision making. On the other hand, metacognition deals with an individual's higher order cognitive processes, where a person has control over his/her cognition (Brindha&Srinivasan, 2015).

In this paper work, the researcher is of the opinion that the main difference between these two concepts- cognition and metacognition rests on the fact that while cognition aids an individual to engage in a variety of mental processes that help him/ her make sense of the world around, metacognition deals actively with the control of the cognitive processes which are very important in the process of teaching and learning. Moreover, by the description 'thinking about thinking' metacognition ensures that a particular task ends perfectly through planning, monitoring, evaluating and comprehending.

This points to the fact that cognitive processes allows normal functioning of a person but metacognition raises it to a higher level by making the person more aware of his/her cognitive processes. For example, the cognitive processes would allow a teacher using a strategy or a student who is answering a question in reading comprehension to complete the task while metacognition would help both the teacher and student to double check through monitoring and evaluating the answer. Metacognition thus contributes to successful teaching and learning.

The Components of Metacognition according to Flavell's (1979) model of cognitive monitoring is chosen for this study because it is comprehensively designed and is regarded as the foundation for research in the field of cognition today. The model consists of four categories or components such as meta-cognitve knowledge, metacognitve experience, goals (tasks) and actions (strategies).All these are fundamental to teaching-learning process. Teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension are numerous.The Teaching-Strategies below are informed by thismeta-cognitive model.

Collaborative Reading Techniques(CRT):The modelconsensually suggestsfor teachers the use collaborative reading strategies for the teaching of reading. They are learners-centered strategies that can be used to achieve a given instructional goal. According to Oluikpe (2007) collaborative learning also known as cooperative learning instructional strategy promotes learners at various levels working together in small groups towards a common goal and helps them to internalize contents in reading.Lawal et al (2019)identified positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small group skills and group processing as elements of cooperative learning.In support of this view, Ofodu&Lawal (2007) assert that group members irrespective of gender and ability, had more time to work together, more responsive to the needs of another and give more explanation to assist each other's leaning so that all groups achieve comparable learning. One significant value of this cooperative learning is that the learners are active participants in the meaning construction process. This is the ideal nature of comprehension as it is interactional. The meta-cognitive model exemplified in the following strategies:

Reciprocal Teaching Strategy (RTT): In this technique, after the instructors' explanation, students take turns playing the teacher's role. The instructor's participation in this discussion expectedly should be prominent at first and then gradually recedes as students learn to gain more regulating control over the use of the strategies (Davis, 2010).The term "reciprocal" describes the practice of alternating teacher and student roles as student become more skilled in leading the strategy dialogue. Reciprocal teaching is used to fine-tune the mental processes inherent in text

comprehensions such as understanding the purpose of reading implicitly and explicitly; activating relevant background knowledge; allocating attention so that concentration can be focused on the major content at the expense of trivial; critical evaluation of content for internal consistency and compatibility with prior knowledge and common sense; monitoring on-going activities to see if comprehension is occurring, by engaging in such activities as periodic review and self-interrogation; drawing and testing inferences of many kinds, including interpretation, predictions and conclusion.According to Mazarin (2016), there are four main strategies used by students for reciprocal teaching: summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting. Students are expected to go through each action after they have read a segment of a text. Just like the collaborative reading technique, this technique is quite learners-oriented. It makes the students to be actively engaged in the activities.

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS): The strategic reading procedure use in PALS is similar to reciprocal in that both interventions emphasise students' collaboration and dialogue. The implication of this technique is that the student work closely in pair to help each other in the difficult section of the text in order to attain comprehension. As much as this technique focuses on the cooperativeness of the class, it can as well lead to divisiveness among the students. Also, the students especially the ill-motivated ones; if not properly checked can use the avenue to defuse negative influences.

Think-AloudInstructions: The belief that verbalizing one's thinking might aid cognitive control is consistent with the view that children's self-regulatory thought process develop when they reproduce and internalise adult speech(Lawal, et al 2019). The

curriculum and using explicit instructional skills and strategies to grasp the curriculum. It has been observed that secondary school teachers are often not sure of how to teach students to improve deficient reading skills because they have not been adequately trained in teaching reading strategies. While many classrooms engage in comprehension assessment, researchers have found that explicit strategy instruction is lacking in most classrooms (Ofodu, 2010, Muhammed, 2016 and Lawal, 2019).

This researcher similarly observes that different researches on improvement of reading comprehension have been done on singular reading strategies and isolated approach used to analyse reading comprehension ability. This approach is often used to investigate the impact of different factors on reading comprehension. Such studies may not be all-inclusive since there are other factors which collaboratively affect the ability of learners in reading comprehension. There are a number of important factors and components that influence reading comprehension such as questioning strategies, graphic organisers, etc.

Relevance of the Theory to the Teaching and Learning of Reading in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Having established in the literature that reading comprehension as well as the reading strategies discussed in this studyare informed by cognitive processes/strategiesand metacognition theory.

Moreover, metacognitive theory has been pointed to in the literature (Fries-Gaither, 2009) as the foundation for other reading comprehension strategies. Albazi and Shukri (2016)findings revealed that metacognition have positive impact on teachers and learners and the awareness it has on teachers and students in turn,

Enhanced their reading comprehension. The major concern of this theory is to aid readers become proficient through a continual monitor of their own thoughts, control of their experience with the text and enhancement of their understanding. Thus, this metacognitionmodel is relevant to the teaching and learning of readingin Nigerian Tertiary Institutions because of the following reasons:

1) Teachers' knowledge of Metacognitive knowledge would help in developing learners' good thinking and lifelong learners to cope with new situations in this rapidly changing world.
2) This model if judiciously used will help teachers of reading to integrate metacognitive knowledge into language instruction and develops learners who can take charge of their own learning.
3) To have a metacognitive knowledge by the teachers of tertiary institutions is important for effective language teaching and teaching.
4) The metacognition model encourages the use several methods/strategies to promote teaching and learning at all levels of education.
5) The concept of metacognition encourages self-regulation and strategic reading as essential components of comprehension.
6. The model creates awareness and educates teachers in different ways by which students could be helped to become proficient readers and ultimately, comprehend effectively if judiciously utilized.
7. This metacognitive model is relevant because itexposesteachers to how they can assist the learners to develop good reading skills and by providing factual adventures that

will help them understand and apply strategies to different types of texts.It is obvious that metacognitive reading strategies have been established as one of the solution to the problem of poor reading comprehension.Effective readers can use metacognitive skills to monitor their understanding and reflect on what they have read because it creates awareness for the readers on how to apply different strategies to teach and learn comprehend text.Metacognitive approach improves students' cognitive activities by expanding their awareness and regulation of the skills through various strategies.

Over and above, the theory is relevant to the teaching and learning of reading in the tertiary institutions in that when teachers and students are skilled in the application of different strategies and with ample background knowledge; they can use metacognitive self-monitoring skills to merge new and old knowledge to enlarge their schemata.

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