Interplay of Learning Theories in the Development of Reading Skills

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Abstract

The development of reading skills is a complex process influenced by various learning theories. This interplay of learning theories encompasses several prominent perspectives, including behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, and social learning theories, among others. In this regard, this paper aims to explore the interplay of different learning theories—such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and social learning—and their collective roles on the acquisition and enhancement of reading skills. Based on the related literature review, this paper focused on the relationship between learning theories and reading skill development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. It argues that the convergence of these theories enriches our understanding of the intricate process of reading comprehension. The key findings claim that in the dynamic interplay of these learning theories, behaviourism provides foundational skills, cognitivism explores mental processes, constructivism emphasizes the meaning-making process, and social learning theories highlight interactive experiences. The study suggests avenues for future research, encouraging scholars to delve deeper into the dynamic relationship between learning theories and the intricate process of developing reading skills.

Keywords: Behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, social learning, reading skills, relationship

Introduction

The term "theory" has its origins in the Greek word theōria (θεωρία), which, in translation, conveys meanings such as "a looking at, viewing, contemplation, speculation, also a sight, a spectacle" (McPherson, 2012, as cited in Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). In its contemporary usage, theory is characterized as a set of generalizations, explanations, and belief systems that are typically rooted in extensive research and databases. These theories are often subjected to study, testing, and prolonged debate, shaping the way descriptions of phenomena are formulated and elucidated (Tracey & Morrow, 2017; Gee, 2012). This multifaceted understanding underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of theories, emphasizing their role in interpreting and making sense of diverse aspects of the world through systematic inquiry and contemplation.

At its most fundamental level, a theory is a collection of statements that seeks to explain why natural phenomena occur as they do (VanPatten et al., 2020). These explanations, grounded in belief systems, are typically supported by extensive research and databases and often find acceptance among large groups of people (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). In essence, a theory is a framework of statements or principles crafted to elucidate a set of facts or phenomena, particularly those that have been repeatedly tested or widely accepted. The essence of a theory lies in its capacity to provide systematic understanding and interpretation of the observed world, offering a structured explanation for the occurrences within it.

The term "theory" is often used interchangeably with the term "model," as asserted by various scholars (Manzo & Manzo, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1994; Thomas, 1996; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013; Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Cohen et al. (2018) emphasize that both terms are sometimes employed interchangeably as "explanatory devices or schemes having a broadly conceptual framework." However, Ruddell et al. (1994) provide a distinct differentiation between theories and models, stating that a theory serves as an explanation of a phenomenon, such as the reading process, while a model functions as a metaphor to elucidate and represent a theory (p. 812). This nuanced understanding highlights the potential interchangeability of the terms, while also recognizing the subtle distinctions in their conceptual roles within academic discourse.

A theory is characterized as a set of principles, assumptions, rules, or laws that collectively form a verbal or mathematical description of a notable phenomenon, offering an explanation of how or why the phenomenon occurs. It defines the essential characteristics of a phenomenon, which are then integrated into a model representing the major working parts of a real-life process, such as reading (Rayner et al., 2012). While both theories and models aim to explain phenomena, there exists some disagreement within the field of education regarding the interchangeability of the terms "theory" and "model" (Kezar, 2001, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2017). In succinct terms, Grabe (2009) concludes that models can be seen as synthesis statements (p. 83). This recognition underscores the nuances in their usage and highlights that, while related, theories and models may serve slightly different roles in the academic discourse, with models often encapsulating a synthesis of theoretical principles.

The history of theories and models related to reading is deeply intertwined with the broader history of reading and writing. Theories like Mental Discipline theory, Associationism, and Unfoldment theory emerged as non-experimental, general philosophies intended to be applicable across various educational domains. In contrast, the specific study of reading found its historical roots within the early development of cognitive psychology situated within an experimental, structuralist theoretical framework (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

The initial exploration of reading occurred in Wilhelm Wundt's (1832–1920) experimental psychology laboratory, where aspects of the reading process, such as letter and word recognition, print legibility, and attention span, were investigated. Wundt's work is associated with the structuralist perspective, marking a foundational contribution to the study of reading (Venezky, 1984 as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The late 1800s and early 1900s witnessed further contributions to the development of a cognitive processing theoretical orientation to reading. Acknowledging the complexity of the learning process, it is contended that understanding how individuals acquire reading skills in a second language necessitates a multifaceted approach. Thus, this paper explores leading learning theories, including behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, social learning theories, and others, to unveil their respective roles in shaping the process of reading skill development in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The following section discusses theoretical reviews of prominent learning theories in relation to reading.

Behaviourist Theories and Reading

Behaviorism is a theory that seeks to explain both animal and human behavior without reference to mental events or internal processes. Instead, it posits that all behavior can be elucidated solely by considering external factors in the environment (VanPatten & Williams, 2014). The central tenet of behaviorism is a focus on observable changes in behavior, neglecting the examination of mental processing. According to this theory, information is believed to be transferred and conveyed from a more knowledgeable individual to a less knowledgeable person (Zuriff, 1985; Tracey & Morrow, 2017; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). In essence, behaviorism provides an explanation of behavior grounded in environmental stimuli and responses, with a primary emphasis on observable actions rather than internal mental processes. In accordance with behaviorism, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) follows a similar pattern. The theory suggests that to acquire a second language (L2), individuals must engage in repetitive imitation of correct language models (VanPatten & Williams, 2014). This perspective transforms the depiction of reading from one involving perceptual processing to one that views reading as a behavior comprising isolated skills, each of which can be reinforced to enhance student achievement. Behaviorism continues to hold significance in contemporary education, particularly as the theoretical foundation associated with direct instruction methodologies (Carnine et al., 2004, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The emphasis on repetition, reinforcement, and observable behaviors aligns with behaviorist principles in language learning and instructional approaches.

In the context of behaviorism, the act of reading is conceptualized as the competent and properly sequenced performance of a chain of discrete skills. This perspective is concerned with structuring and controlling materials effectively to deliver environmental stimulation and provide opportunities for practice (Glaser, 1978; Monaghan & Saul, 1987, as cited in Alexander & Fox, 2004). Reading, according to this view, is seen as the mastery and sequential execution of individual skills, with a focus on arranging materials in a manner that optimizes environmental stimuli and facilitates practice for learners. According to Tracey and Morrow (2017),

> "Behaviorism created a new perception of the task of reading as a complex act consisting of component parts. The component parts of reading were viewed as visual discrimination (the ability to discriminate shapes and letters), auditory

discrimination (the ability to discriminate the sounds of the alphabet), left-to-right progression during reading, vocabulary (word knowledge), and comprehension (understanding what you have read). This understanding of reading led to a sub-skills approach to reading (p. 39).

According to behaviourist theories, reading is perceived as a process that progresses from the parts to the whole, often referred to as a "bottom-up" approach. In this view, readers are expected to master the mechanical and technical aspects of written language before shifting their focus to comprehension and understanding. Once learners have successfully acquired these foundational skills, they are considered capable of reading (Joubert et al., 2008, p. 71). This perspective reflects a sequential and step-by-step approach to reading skill development, aligning with the behaviorist notion of breaking down tasks into manageable components for mastery. On the other hand, it's worth noting that the reductionist aspect of behaviorism, with its emphasis on a bottom-up assembly of linked sets of behaviors to create a coherent activity like learning to read, contrasts with the Gestalt theory. The Gestalt theory, which opposes reductionism, emphasizes the holistic perception of patterns and configurations, suggesting a different perspective on the learning process (Wertheimer, 1945/1959, as cited in Alexander & Fox, 2004). This highlights the theoretical tensions between behaviorism and other cognitive approaches that emphasize a more holistic view of learning.

The theory of behaviorism, in relation to reading, posits that reading is essentially a word-recognition response to the stimuli presented by printed words, without attributing a significant role to the reader's mind in the process. From this perspective, guided reading, direct instruction, practice, and repeated reading approaches, as advocated by LaBerge and Samuels (1974), are highlighted as influential reading strategies within a behaviorist framework (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, as cited in Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). Within the behaviorist paradigm, the learner, or reader, is seen as a passive recipient of information from the text. The individual reader's knowledge and experiences are considered inconsequential, as the focus is primarily on their response to external stimuli. In this view, only perceptual information and the decoding process are deemed significant.

The impact of behaviorism in the field of reading extends to shaping how the task of reading is understood, influencing perceptions of how reading instruction should proceed, contributing to the creation of reading materials, and influencing

the assessment of reading progress (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). This comprehensive influence underscores the far-reaching implications of behaviorist principles on various aspects of reading education.

Behaviorism has left a profound imprint on reading instruction, contributing to the emergence of sub-skills approaches that deconstruct the reading process into distinct components. These components encompass visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, left-to-right progression, vocabulary, and comprehension. This subdivision of reading into sub-skills aligns with behaviorist principles of breaking down complex tasks into manageable parts for explicit teaching and reinforcement (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Furthermore, behaviorism serves as the theoretical foundation for direct instruction methods, guided reading, and repeated reading approaches. In these instructional strategies, there is a strong emphasis on explicit teaching, repetitive practice, and reinforcement of specific reading skills. The behaviorist perspective, emphasizing external stimuli and observable behaviors, tends to neglect the role of internal cognitive processes in reading.

Constructivist Theories and Reading

Constructivism is a widely embraced learning theory that delineates how knowledge and meanings are constructed through active engagement rather than being passively transmitted or absorbed (Unrau et al., 2018). At its core, constructivism underscores the active role of individuals in the construction of knowledge, asserting that learning transpires when new information is integrated with pre-existing knowledge. This integration, it contends, is only achievable when learners are actively engaged in the learning process (Gunning, 2010). The theory posits that humans generate knowledge and meaning through the interplay of their experiences and ideas (Woolfolk, 1998; Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Learning, within the constructivist framework, is viewed as a dynamic process wherein individuals actively engage with their surroundings, draw connections between new and existing knowledge, and derive meaning from these interactions. The emphasis on active participation and the integration of diverse experiences aligns with the foundational principles of constructivism.

Constructivism is a widely applied theory of learning that explains how knowledge and meanings are constructed, rather than transmitted or absorbed, through our interaction with others and the environment (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013,

pp. 55-57). It is a theory that covers several interrelated theoretical frameworks for the investigation and understanding of reading and reading processes. In this regard, schema theory and psycholinguistics share the central concepts of constructivism and demonstrate the active role that learners have in the acquisition and application of knowledge that contributes to the development of reading and readers. Likewise, Tracey & Morrow (2012) argues that because of constructivism, in the reading process, the reader constructs his or her messages while reading.

The concept of constructivism and its implications in the context of reading have emerged through the contributions of diverse educators and psychologists (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Prominent figures such as Dewey (1916), Bartlett (1932), Goodman (1967), Smith (1971), Brown (1978), Flavell (1978), Rosenblatt (1978), Anderson & Pearson (1984), Pressley (2000), Guthrie (2004), and others have played a significant role in shaping the theories associated with constructivism and its reading application.

Dewey (1916) developed the theory of "Inquiry Learning", where the importance of problem-solving, social collaboration, and motivation was emphasized and based on interest and curiosity in learning reading. "Consistent with a constructivist perspective, Dewey's work also focused on a problem-based learning approach to education, central to which was motivating learner's interest" (Woolfolk, 1998, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p.49).

To be more specific, two theories or frameworks under the umbrella of constructivism and applicable to the investigation of reading demonstrate the broad and deep importance of this perspective: schema theory and psycholinguistics (Unrau et al., 2018). The Schema Theory, first suggested by Bartlett (1932) and later expanded by Anderson and Pearson (1984), conceptualized how knowledge is organized in the brain, and the implications of that organization for learning and reading (Bartlett, 1932; Anderson & Pearson, 1984). According to Schema theory, people organize everything they know into schemata, or knowledge structures (Gunning, 2010). In this regard, Tracey and Morrow (2012) conclude that in Schema Theory, students actively construct and revise their schemas as they read and learn.

Furthermore, as they read and learn, students use their existing schemas for language and content to assist with new reading and learning experiences (p. 53). In addition to having schemata for content (e.g., people, places, and things), readers have schemata for reading processes (e.g., decoding, skimming, inferencing,

and summarizing) and for different types of text structures (e.g., narrative texts, expository texts) (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Rosenblatt (1978) further extended the application of Schema Theory to the field of reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p.55). In sum, in Schema theory, students use their existing schemata for language and content to assist with new reading and learning experiences. Furthermore, they actively construct and revise their schemata as they read and learn (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

Another theory related to constructivist perspective, *Transactional/Reader Response Theory*, put forth by Rosenblatt (1978) argues that all readers have unique responses to reading texts due to the unique nature of their background schemas. The notion that all readers have individualized reading experiences because each reader has unique background schemata forms the cornerstone of Rosenblatt's Transactional / Reader Response theory (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). It is constructivist in nature because it emphasizes the active role of the reader in meaning- making. According to Rosenblatt (1978), readers construct literary meaning using the text merely as a blueprint. When reading for aesthetic purposes, readers fill in gaps by focusing on the unique images, impressions, feelings, and reactions they bring to mind while reading.

The Psycholinguistic Theory is another constructivist theory, which emphasizes that readers are active participants who try to construct a coherent, meaningful interpretation of the text as they read. At the core of the psycholinguistic perspective on reading Goodman (1967, 1970, 1976; Smith, 1971) emphasizes the role of language in the reading process and argues that readers use their knowledge about language, and the world in general, to drive their thinking as they engage in the reading process.

A central component of the Psycholinguistic Theory of reading is that readers rely on language cueing systems to help them rapidly read text, i.e., the systems of syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic information (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 57). The syntactic cues are related to the grammatical structure or syntax of the language that enables readers to predict the next words in the text. The semantic cues are related to the meaning of the words and sentences that allow readers to predict the next words in the text and the graphophonic cues are derived from the visual patterns of letters and words and their corresponding sounds that, again, allow readers to predict the next words in the text. Based on the perception of reading as a process of confirming and rejecting hypotheses, Goodman (1967) described reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game."

The concept of metacognition, when applied to the field of reading, contributes to a constructivist understanding of how reading comprehension occurs, as well as to a body of knowledge regarding instructional strategies that can be used to facilitate reading comprehension (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). In this regards, Flavell (1976) and Brown (1978) introduced the general concept of metacognition in the mid-1970s in reading which stresses the importance of specific types of mental engagement during the reading process to ensure accurate comprehension and comprehension monitoring experiences.

Finally, Engagement Theory (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, 2000) incorporates the central features of metacognitive theory that engaged readers, who are intrinsically motivated to read, therefore read frequently, are mentally active, and use metacognitive strategies to build their understanding of the conceptual content of reading texts (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Constructivism, based on Dewey's foundational work, has had a powerful impact both on how the reading process is understood and how reading instruction is implemented in classrooms. As a result of Constructivism, educators can view the reading process as one in which the reader constructs his or her messages while reading. Hence, constructivism as a theory covers several interrelated theoretical frameworks for the investigation and understanding of reading and reading processes ((Unrau et al., 2018).

Constructivist theories have significantly influenced our understanding of reading as an active and dynamic process of knowledge construction. These theories emphasize that learners are not passive recipients of information but active participants who actively build meaning and understanding through their interactions with the text and the environment. By recognizing the importance of learners' prior knowledge, engagement, and metacognitive abilities, educators can design more effective reading instruction that fosters deeper comprehension and a love for reading. In classrooms, constructivist approaches encourage interactive and collaborative learning environments, providing students with opportunities to construct knowledge through meaningful interactions with texts, peers, and teachers. By embracing the constructivist paradigm, educators can empower students to become active, engaged, and proficient readers, enabling them to navigate the complexities of the written word and derive meaning from the vast array of texts.

Cognitive Theories and Reading

For cognitive theorists and researchers, the main areas of inquiry include memory, information processing approaches, attention and noticing (Samar & Dehqan, 2013). In this regard, Claros (2008) claims, "Cognitive theorists conceived language learning as a cognitive and individual process in which knowledge is constructed as the learner is exposed to comprehensible input, are given opportunities to both, negotiate meaning and receive negative feedback" (p.145).

The information processing or cognitive perspective of reading emerged as a dominant force in research from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s and continues to influence theories and models today. Slavin (1997) succinctly defines information processing theory as "the cognitive theory of learning that describes the processing, storage, and retrieval of knowledge from the mind" (p. 185). Scholars adopting this theoretical framework within reading research aimed to uncover and elucidate how individual readers engage with printed material to construct meaning (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013, p. 62). Cognitive-processing perspectives in reading seek to unravel the underlying mental processes inherent in the act of reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). This approach delves into the intricate cognitive mechanisms that readers employ as they interact with written text, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mental operations involved in the comprehension and interpretation of written language.

Tracey and Morrow (2006) provided an overview of cognitive processing theories and models about reading, spanning from the 1950s to the 1970s. These include the Substrata-Factor Theory of Reading (Holmes, 1953), the Information Processing Model (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968), Rauding Theory (Carver, 1977), Gough's Model (Gough, 1972), the Automatic Information Processing Model (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974), and the Interactive Model (Rumelhart, 1994). Moving into the 1980s, other notable cognitive theories and models emerged, such as the Interactive–Compensatory Model (Stanovich, 1980), the Orthographic Processing Perspective (Ehri, 1980), the Verbal Efficiency Theory (Perfetti, 1985), the Construction–Integration Model (Kintsch, 1994), and the Phonological–Core Variable Difference Model (Stanovich, 1988). Presently, there are four noteworthy cognitive processing theories concerning reading. These include the Parallel Distributed Processing Model (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986; Seidenberg &

McClelland, 1989), the Dual-Route Cascaded Model (Coltheart et al., 1993; Coltheart & Rastle, 1994), the Double-Deficit Hypothesis (Wolf & Bowers, 1999), and the Neuro-scientific perspective (Goswami, 2004).

The first theory based on information processing was the Substrata-Factor Theory of Reading (Holmes, 1953) which specifically claimed that sub-variables in the categories of cognitive ability, verbal ability, fine motor skills, eye movements, and personality factors to predict the speed and power of reading ability. In 1972, Gough proposed a reading model based on an information processing perspective. Early cognitive models of reading such as Gough's became known as "bottom-up" Information-processing Models because they depicted the cognitive processing of information as proceeding from lower-order to higher-order stages (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Gough's Model (1972) is exemplary of the cognitive-processing perspective applied to the field of reading due to its focus on explaining unobservable, underlying cognitive processes during the reading process (ibid) and is famous for being the first reading model to incorporate the stage theory of the information processing perspective.

The Automatic Information Processing Model (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974), another "bottom-up" cognitive-processing model that emerged in the 1970s, integrated the concepts of internal attention, external attention, and automaticity into the information processing perspective of reading which has five major components: visual memory, phonological memory, episodic memory, semantic memory, and attention (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Following the visual processing of text, the LaBerge–Samuels model proposes that information is then processed in the phonological memory (PM), where sounds are attached to the visual images. Episodic memory (EM), where the target information is recorded and all kinds of other knowledge are then stored in the semantic memory (SM). The fifth, and central, component is attention (A): internal attention (unobservable attention- refers to what is happening inside an individual's mind, regardless of the way the individual's external attention appears) and external attention (i.e., directly observable attention—the obvious behaviour of using one's eyes and ears to gather information efficiently and effectively).

According to Samuels (1994), "It is assumed in the theory—as well as by many who study reading —that getting meaning from printed words involves a two-step process: first, the printed words must be decoded; second, the decoded words

must be comprehended" (p. 820). The beginner comprehends by switching his or her attention (of which there is a limited capacity) back and forth between the two processes of decoding and comprehending. In contrast, the fluent reader needs little internal attention to decode text because he or she can decode most, or all, of the words of the text with automaticity (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). For the beginning reader, this process can be slow, laborious, and frustrating and comprehension can often be compromised, whereas for fluent readers, little or no attention is needed to decode the words, and, as a result, most or all of their attention is available for comprehension.

The Interactive Model (Rumelhart, 1977) proposed the first nonlinear representation of the reading process in which four cognitive processors (orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and lexical) simultaneously converge to create the most probable interpretation of text. Rumelhart's Interactive Model (1977, 1994) is consistent with a cognitive processing theoretical orientation to reading because it hypothesizes about unobservable, underlying cognitive processes that take place during the reading process and it uses a stage-by-stage conceptualization of the reading process (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). It is considered interactive rather than "bottomup," however, because it depicts multiple processors converging on visual input simultaneously rather than in a linear, sequential manner. So, it can be claimed that Rumelhart's (1977) Interactive Model was the first reading model to propose a nonlinear, simultaneous view of information processing.

In the Interactive–Compensatory Model, Stanovich (1980) extended the Interactive Model presented by Rumelhart in 1977 by arguing that texts processors are not only interactive and nonlinear, but also compensatory, i.e., if one processor is not working well, or has insufficient data, the other processors compensate for it. Like Rumelhart's (1977) Interactive Model, Stanovich's (1980) Interactive–Compensatory Model is compatible with both cognitive processing and information-processing orientations to reading (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Similarly, Ehri (1980) identified how orthographic forms (words) are captured in memory, and reported that words are encoded as separate letters "bearing systematic relationships to phonological properties of the word" (p. 313).

Likewise, Perfetti (1985) outlined the Verbal Efficiency Theory that attempted to explain individual differences in reading ability based on three assumptions: (1) that word recognition skills during reading are related to speech access; (2) that the

amount of time it takes to read an isolated word aloud is an indication of how well the reader knows the word; and (3) that a reader's decoding skill will determine how quickly he or she can identify words when reading isolated words.

The Construction– Integration Model (Kintsch, 1994), suggests that during reading, representations occur at several levels: the linguistic level (a representation of the words themselves), the conceptual level (a representation of what the words and sentences mean), and the situational level (a representation of the text integrated with the general knowledge in the person's mind). In this regard, Stanovich's (1988) Phonological–Core Variable Difference Model presents the primary difference between normal and dyslexic individuals as determined by deficits in the phonological realm of cognitive functioning.

According to the Parallel Distributed Processing Model (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986; Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989), successful reading is dependent on a reader's abilities in four areas: automatic letter recognition, accurate phonemic processing, strong vocabulary knowledge, and the ability to construct meaningful messages during reading. The information within and between each of these processors is organized according to connectionist principles. Furthermore, the processors are all interactive and compensatory (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). The model is representative of a cognitive-processing perspective because it explains cognitive structures and systems inherent in reading.

In contrast to the Parallel Distributed Processing Model, the Dual-Route Cascaded Model (Coltheart et al., 1993; Coltheart & Rastle, 1994) suggests two routes for processing text input: one path for handling words that are already known to the reader/computer and another path for handling unknown words and non-words. Likewise, Wolf and Bowers's (1999) Double-Deficit Hypothesis is a theory used to explain the cause of reading disabilities. According to Wolf and Bowers's model, reading-disabled children fall into one of three categories: children for whom phonological deficits are the core of their reading disability, children for whom naming speed deficits are the core of their reading disability, and children for whom both phonological deficits and naming speed deficits are problematic. The neuro-scientific lens examines patterns of brain functioning during reading through the use of brain imaging technology (Goswami, 2004).

In conclusion, cognitive theories have significantly influenced the understanding of reading and its underlying processes. These theories emphasize

the role of cognitive abilities, information processing, and memory in the reading experience. Overall, cognitive theories have been a cornerstone in the study of reading, offering a valuable framework to comprehend the cognitive processes that underlie this fundamental skill and contributing to the broader goal of enhancing literacy education for learners of all ages.

Social Learning Theories and Reading

The social learning theories emphasize the significant role of social interaction in knowledge development and learning. When applied to reading, they highlight the influence of social factors and interactions on literacy learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). Some of these theories include the Sociolinguistic Theory (Bernstein, 1972a, 1972b; Bloom & Green, 1984; Heath, 1982), Socio-Cultural Theory (Au, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Moll, 1992, 1994), Social Constructivism/Socio-Historical Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), and Social Learning Theory/Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986).

As the name suggests, from the sociolinguistic perspective, reading is viewed as both a social and a linguistic process. In this regard, Bloom and Green (1984) write, "As a social process, reading is used to establish, structure, and maintain social relationships between and among people. As a linguistic process, reading is used to communicate intentions and meanings, not only between an author and a reader, but also between people involved in a reading event" (p. 395). To be more specific, sociolinguistic theory emphasizes the role of individuals' language in reading acquisition and reading ability. Furthermore, it asserts that language is learned as a result of people's social interactions with each other. Varying patterns of social and language interactions subsequently lead to differences in individual reading skills (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

The socio-cultural perspective has its roots in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) which emphasizes the roles of social, cultural, and historical factors in the human experience, emphasizes the social aspect of learning and focuses more on the broader concept of culture, which includes, but is not limited to, language (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). According to Au (1997), Socio-Cultural Theory emphasizes the idea that "the human experience is mediated by culture" (p. 183) and claims that "when children learn to read, or fail to learn to read, they do so in a particular social, cultural, and historical environment" (p. 184). Social Constructivism/

Socio-Historical Theory (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978, 1986) describes how knowledge is constructed within individuals as a result of social interaction, and Social Learning Theory/Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) describes the central role of modeling in human learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006).

Hence, social learning theories play a crucial role in understanding the process of reading and literacy learning. These theories highlight the significance of social interactions and cultural influences in shaping individuals' reading abilities and language development. The sociolinguistic perspective recognizes reading as both a social and linguistic activity, emphasizing the use of reading to establish and maintain social relationships while communicating intentions and meanings.

Conclusion

Reading theories, like other educational theories, have evolved, with historical roots in general philosophies and cognitive psychology. Behaviourist theories view reading as a behaviour composed of isolated skills reinforced to increase achievement. In contrast, constructivist theories emphasize active knowledge construction by integrating new knowledge with existing knowledge. Cognitive theories focus on underlying mental processes during reading, such as memory, information processing, and attention. Social learning theories highlight the role of social interaction and language in reading acquisition and ability. Sociolinguistic theory views reading as a social and linguistic process, while socio-cultural and socio-historical theories emphasize the influence of social, cultural, and historical factors on reading development. Social constructivism emphasizes knowledge construction through social interaction, while social cognitive theory highlights modeling's role in learning. Overall, understanding the diverse perspectives on reading theories provides valuable insights into how individuals comprehend and interact with written texts.

In conclusion, this paper endeavours to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives on learning and practical applications for enhancing reading comprehension in SLA. By examining the contributions of various learning theories to the acquisition of reading skills, this study aspires to empower educators and researchers in their quest to foster proficient and confident readers in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

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