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### Unlocking the Power of Process-based Reading Models: Pedagogical Insights for the EFL Classrooms

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#### Abstract

This article discusses the concept of reading as a process rather than a final outcome, emphasizing its importance in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. It explores various process-based reading models, highlighting their pedagogical implications. It argues that understanding reading as a process is crucial for effective teaching and learning in the EFL context. The main objective is to provide a comprehensive analysis of process-based reading models and their implications for pedagogy in EFL classrooms. This article delves into the significance of viewing reading as a dynamic process rather than a mere end result within the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. It navigates through various process-based reading models, shedding light on their profound implications for pedagogy. Emphasizing the pivotal role of understanding reading as a multifaceted process, the article endeavors to provide a comprehensive examination of these models and their instructional ramifications. Through an extensive literature review, the article scrutinizes the diverse linguistic processes intrinsic to reading, while revisiting prominent process-based models such as Irwin and Baker's reading comprehension model, and the Triangle Model of Reading. Each model, it elucidates, offers distinctive insights into the reading process: the Triangle Model underscores the interplay between phonological and semantic pathways.

**Keywords:** Reading process, Irwin and Baker's model, triangle model, model of reading system

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## **Introduction**

Reading constitutes a foundational aptitude that transcends mere word or sentence deciphering; it encapsulates the intricate process of extracting meaning from written material. At its core, reading comprehension entails grasping the holistic message conveyed by the text, surpassing the mere decoding of individual words (Woolley, 2011). The RAND report (2001) underscores that comprehension involves both extracting and actively constructing meaning through interaction with written language. Hence, attaining comprehension necessitates readers' adept navigation through the nuanced intricacies inherent in the structure and semantics of written language (Cohen, 1996).

The Reading Study Group report (2001) underscores the importance of understanding reading as a dynamic process, defining comprehension as the active, simultaneous extraction and construction of meaning from written language. In this connection, Cohen (1996) elaborates on this notion, emphasizing that readers must decode the complex "code" within written text to achieve understanding. This comprehension process involves coordinating multiple cognitive activities. Likewise, Adams (1990, 2004), Anderson and Pearson (1984), and Perfetti (1985, 1992) also highlight the inherent complexity and simultaneous nature of proficient reading (as cited in Cartwright, 2009).

At the core of understanding reading as a process lie diverse theoretical frameworks that illuminate its complexities. Rego (2006) outlines two principal models: the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up model prioritizes the sequential progression from print to meaning, centering on the deciphering and comprehension of individual words. Conversely, the top-down model accentuates the amalgamation of background knowledge with the text, emphasizing the reader's cognitive processing from meaning to print. However, interactive models, as identified by Paris and Hamilton (2014), encompass elements of both bottom-up and top-down processing, acknowledging the collaborative nature of reading whereby prior knowledge dynamically interacts with textual information.

Understanding reading as a dynamic process rather than a mere end result is crucial for effective teaching and learning in the EFL context. By scrutinizing various process-based models such as Irwin and Baker's reading comprehension model, the Triangle Model of Reading, and the Bottom-up, Top-down, and Interactive models, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into how these theoretical frameworks can be practically applied to enhance reading instruction in EFL settings. While there is a rich body of literature on reading comprehension and its importance in language learning contexts, a notable research gap exists concerning the explicit exploration and application of process-based reading models within the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom.

Despite widespread recognition of reading as a multifaceted process involving

diverse cognitive and linguistic operations, studies focusing on the pragmatic implications of these models for EFL pedagogy are scarce. Most existing research emphasizes the theoretical aspects of reading comprehension and the general relevance of process-based models in language acquisition. However, few studies specifically examine how these models can be effectively incorporated into instructional practices tailored to the unique needs and challenges of EFL learners.

Furthermore, while some literature touches upon the relevance of process-based models, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis and the insights offered by these models and provide actionable pedagogical strategies for EFL educators. By synthesizing existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, it aims to provide educators with practical insights into how these models can inform instructional practices to enhance reading comprehension skills among EFL learners. In light of the increasing importance of English proficiency in global communication and academic pursuits, addressing this research gap is essential for facilitating effective language instruction and promoting literacy development among EFL learners. By unlocking the pedagogical potential of process-based reading models, educators can better support their students in navigating the complexities of written language and achieving meaningful comprehension, thus contributing to their overall language proficiency and academic success.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study predominantly relies on a comprehensive literature review approach to explore the use and implications of process-based reading models within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. A systematic search was conducted across various academic databases, journals, books, and reputable sources such as Irwin & Baker (1989); Medina and Pilonieta (2006); Frith (1986); Ghaith (2017); Valizadeh (2021); Adams (1990); Cartwright (2009); Seidenberg and McClelland (1989); Snowling and Stackhouse (2013); and Nicolson and Fawcett (2010) to identify relevant literature on process-based reading models in EFL settings. The literature review encompassed theories, concepts, empirical findings, and pedagogical implications associated with various process-based reading models. Notable models, including Irwin and Baker's model of reading comprehension, and the Triangle Model of Reading were given particular attention during data collection.

Data collected from the literature underwent synthesis and analysis to identify common themes, patterns, and gaps in the literature concerning process-based reading models in the EFL classroom. The analysis focused on identifying and discussing the pedagogical implications of process-based reading models for EFL instruction. This involved examining how each model contributes to understanding the reading process and informing instructional practices aimed at enhancing reading comprehension skills

among EFL learners. The findings from the literature review and analysis were critically discussed to provide insights into the practical applications of process-based reading models in EFL instructional contexts. Pedagogical implications derived from the literature were examined in relation to their potential impact on enhancing reading comprehension skills among EFL learners.

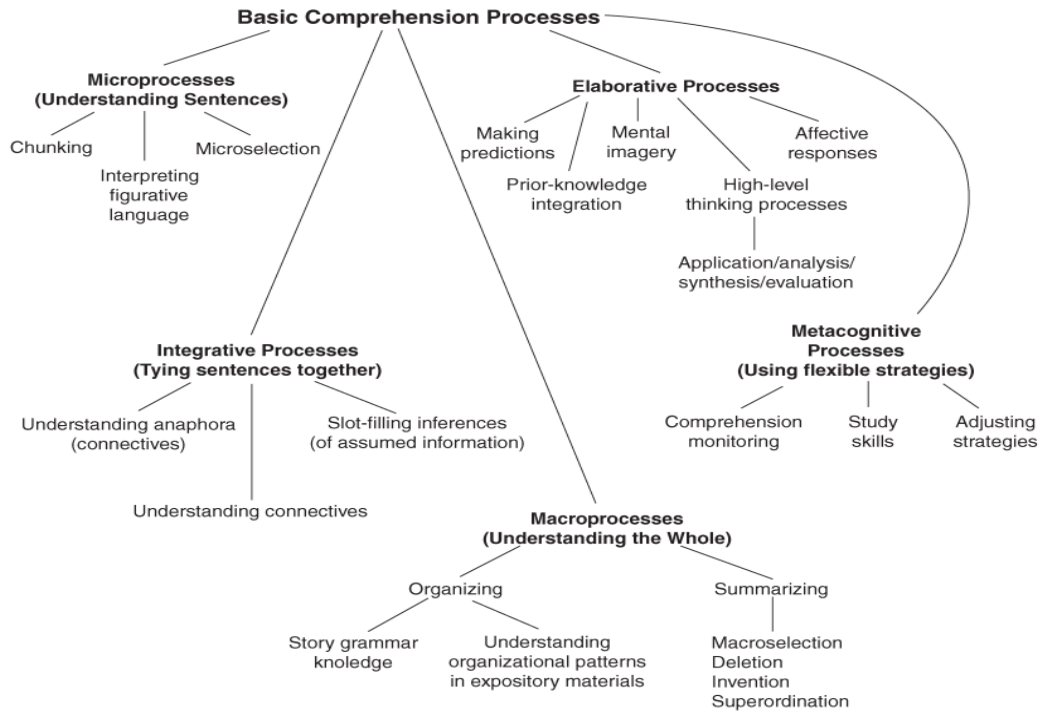
### **Results and Discussion**

The process of reading comprehension is a multifaceted and dynamic interaction between the reader, the text, and the reading activity. It explores into various perspectives on reading comprehension, emphasizing its complexity and the factors influencing successful comprehension including the various models which has been discussed in the following sections:

The act of reading as Koda (2007) involves converting printed symbols into their phonological equivalents to understand the passage's meaning. Yet, successful reading is not limited to this decoding process. It also requires the reader to have a robust vocabulary, knowledge of sentence structure, and the ability to process textual information, alongside pre-existing knowledge. At its core, reading is about extracting meaning from text, a process that includes three critical elements: the reader, the text, and the reading activity, as noted by RAND (2002). Essentially, comprehension arises from the interplay between the reader, the text, and the reader's purpose or goal (the activity). Further expanding on this, Fox and Alexander (2014) highlight the significance of the situational context in reading, emphasizing its role in influencing comprehension. Regarding the concept of reading comprehension, Klingner et al. (2007) emphasize that reading comprehension is a complex and multifaceted process that surpasses mere reactions to the text. They argue that successful comprehension involves extensive interactions between the reader and their background knowledge, strategic application of reading skills, and considerations regarding the text's content and various types. Rubin (2000) further characterizes reading comprehension as a sophisticated intellectual process that encompasses a multitude of abilities and cognitive processes.

During the reading process, individuals actively contextualize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate words, phrases, sentences, and longer passages. Additionally, readers draw on their prior experiences and world knowledge to construct meaning. They also have the capability to retain the information they read in either their short-term or long-term memory, which can be used for discussions or future assessments (Medina & Pilonieta, 2006). In this regard, Irwin and Baker (1989) model of reading comprehension processes provides even more depth to aid in the understanding of meaning and context processing as illustrated in the following figure:

**Figure 1**  
*Irwin and Baker's Model of Reading Comprehension*



Source: Irwin & Baker (1989, as cited in Medina & Pilonieta, 2006, p. 226)

The Irwin and Baker's model of reading comprehension outlines the various components involved in the reading comprehension process, including microprocesses, integrative processes, macroprocesses, elaborative processes, and metacognitive processes (Medina & Pilonieta, 2006). Microprocesses refer to the understanding of individual sentences, where readers decode words, interpret meanings, and comprehend grammatical structures. Integrative processes involve connecting different segments of text, establishing relationships between sentences and paragraphs, identifying main ideas, and inferring implicit information. Macroprocesses focus on understanding narrative and expository text structures, recognizing story elements in narratives, and text features in expository texts. Elaborative processes involve making meaningful connections beyond the text, drawing on prior knowledge and experiences to enhance comprehension. Metacognitive processes involve monitoring comprehension, evaluating understanding, and applying strategies to improve comprehension, such as summarizing, questioning, and clarifying (Irwin & Baker, 1989).

Comprehension, thus, is shaped by elements such as vocabulary proficiency,

sentence structure, and prior knowledge. To comprehend effectively, individuals need to contextualize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate different aspects of the text. Additionally, it entails the integration of prior experiences and worldly knowledge to construct meaning and retain information for future use. In this regard, Irwin and Baker's model offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending the interplay of these components. When these processes collaborate harmoniously, comprehension is achieved. Recognizing the connection between these processes can aid educators and learners in devising effective strategies to enhance reading comprehension skills (Medina & Pilonieta, 2006).

Irwin and Baker's model of reading comprehension provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex processes involved in effective reading comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This model delineates various components, from microprocesses to metacognitive processes, each playing a crucial role in how individuals understand and engage with text. Teachers can use this model to structure their teaching and focus on specific components based on the needs of their students. For instance, if students struggle with decoding words or interpreting meanings at the sentence level (microprocesses), teachers can incorporate activities that strengthen vocabulary and grammar skills. Understanding the integrative and macroprocesses helps teachers select appropriate texts and design instructional materials that cater to students' comprehension levels. They can choose texts with clear structures and features that facilitate understanding of main ideas and relationships between sentences and paragraphs. By incorporating strategies that align with elaborative and metacognitive processes, such as activating prior knowledge, making connections, and monitoring comprehension, teachers can empower students to become more autonomous and strategic readers.

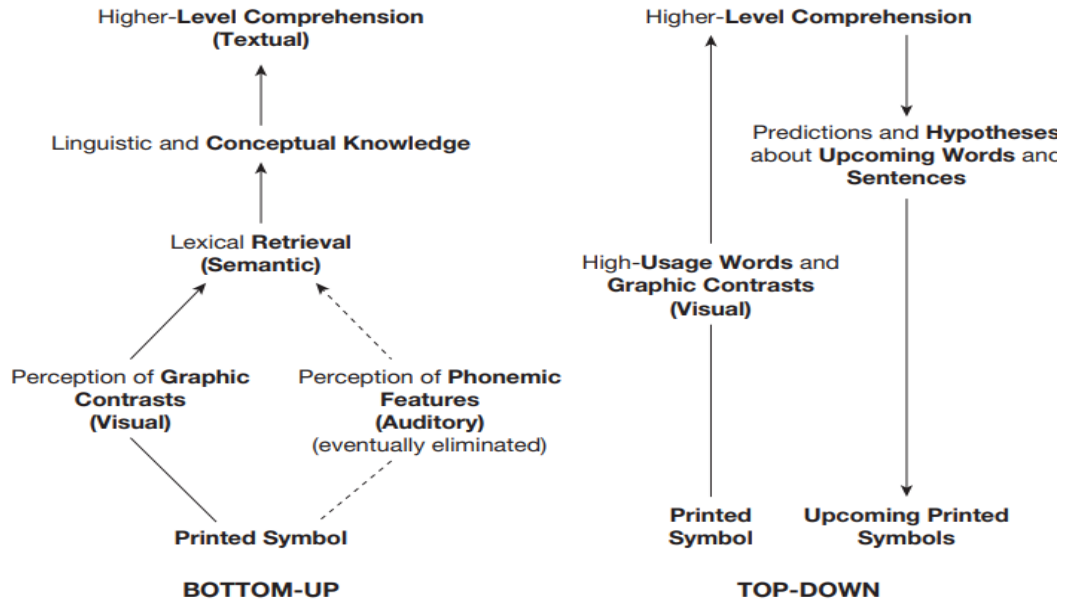
### **Process-based Reading Models**

Reading is a complex psycholinguistic process affected by reader-related, text-based, and context-specific factors including text processing automaticity and fluency, background knowledge, vocabulary, and as well as motivation, positive self-concept, and reading confidence (Ghaith, 2017, as cited in Valizadeh, 2021). These factors collectively contribute to skilled reading and comprehension. Recognizing and understanding these factors can assist educators and learners in developing effective strategies to improve reading skills and enhance comprehension. Reading is a multifaceted activity that requires the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and situational elements to achieve successful comprehension. Therefore, the models that focus on the process of reading acknowledge that this activity is a sophisticated psycholinguistic endeavor shaped by numerous factors associated with the reader, the text, and the reading context. Several theories of reading have emphasized the multifaceted nature of reading, highlighting the intricacies involved

at both the word level and higher levels of semantic processing which can be illustrated as follows:

**Figure 2**

*Theories of Reading Processing*



Source: Owens (2016, as cited in Valizadeh, 2021)

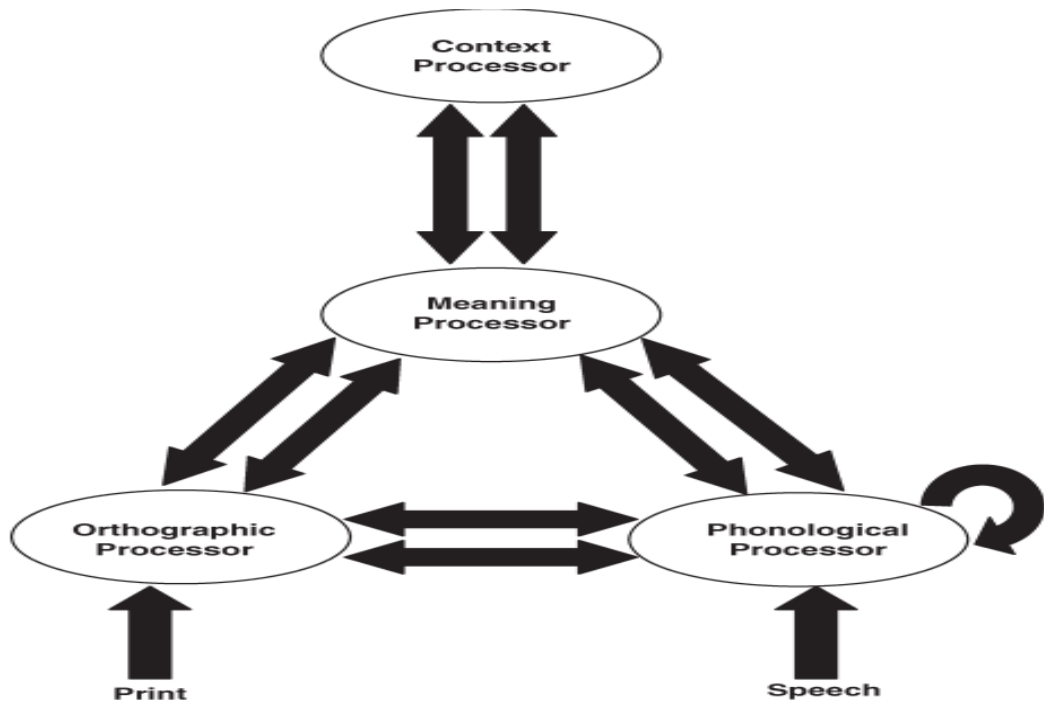
Achieving reading comprehension is a remarkable feat, considering the diverse linguistic components that proficient readers need to navigate. These elements encompass phonological (sounds), orthographic (spelling patterns), morphological (word structure), syntactic (grammar), semantic (meaning), metacognitive (thinking about one’s own thinking), and strategic aspects of language. Several researchers have highlighted that comprehension is an intricate process involving the simultaneous processing of these linguistic features. In contrast, novice and struggling readers often concentrate predominantly on graphophonological aspects of print, overlooking the significance of meaning in the reading process (Bialystok & Niccols, 1989; Clay, 2001; Dewitz & Dewitz, 2003; Gaskins & Gaskins, 1997; Oakhill, 1993; Oakhill & Yuill, 1996; Pressley, 2006; Schwartz & Stanovich, 1981, as cited in Cartwright, 2009, p. 115).

To illustrate the reading process model, Adams (1990) presents four key components: the orthographic processor, responsible for letter forms and sequences; the phonological processor, focused on individual phonemes and phonological patterns; the meaning processor, which draws on prior knowledge and vocabulary; and the context processor, involved in constructing the ongoing meaning of a text. These components collectively contribute to the comprehension of written language (Cartwright, 2009, p.

115) which has been illustrated as follows:

**Figure 3**

*Model of Reading System: Four Processors*



*Source: Adams (1990)*

The orthographic processor involves recognizing and processing letter forms and their sequences. The phonological processor focuses on individual phonemes (speech sounds) and phonological patterns. The meaning processor relies on prior knowledge and vocabulary to derive meaning from the text. The context processor involves the ongoing construction of meaning through the interaction of the reader's understanding of the text with the surrounding context. Furthermore, Adams (1990) emphasizes the coordinated, parallel, and highly interactive nature of the various processors involved in reading. They work in concert and complement and compensate for each other's vulnerabilities and weaknesses. They cannot replace, preempt, or overcome each other (Van Kleeck, 1998, p. 34).

By considering these four components, Adams (1990) highlights the multifaceted nature of reading comprehension, which involves integrating knowledge of letter-sound relationships, understanding word meanings, and utilizing contextual information to make sense of the text. Understanding the various components and processes involved in reading can inform instructional practices and interventions aimed at supporting and



enhancing reading comprehension skills. By addressing the different linguistic aspects and providing opportunities for meaningful engagement with texts, educators can foster more comprehensive reading abilities in learners.

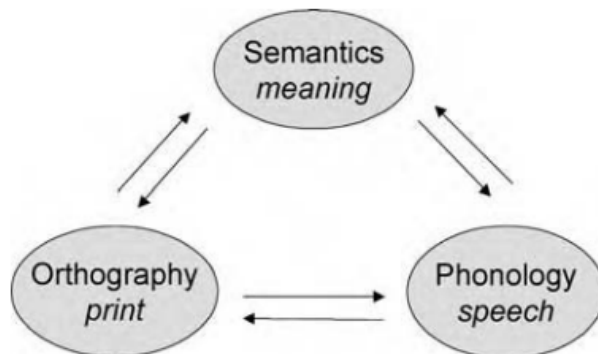
Adams' model highlights the coordinated and interactive nature of the reading processors. EFL instruction should adopt an integrated approach that addresses all four components simultaneously. This can involve using authentic texts that provide opportunities for students to engage with letter-sound relationships, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension within a meaningful context. Understanding the multifaceted nature of reading comprehension encourages the development of metacognitive strategies. EFL learners can be taught to monitor their comprehension, identify areas of difficulty, and apply appropriate strategies to overcome challenges in each processor. By considering Adams' model and its pedagogical implications, EFL educators can enhance their instructional practices to effectively support students' development of reading comprehension skills across various linguistic components.

### Triangle Model of Reading

The Triangle Model of Reading, originally proposed by Seidenberg and McClelland (1989) presents a theoretical framework for comprehending the reading process. This model identifies two main pathways involved in reading: the phonological pathway and the semantic pathway. The model emphasizes that learning to read is an interactive process where children utilize their linguistic resources, but it highlights the significant role of phonological processing in reading development (Snowling & Stackhouse, 2013). The Triangle model of reading has been illustrated as follows:

**Figure 4**

*Triangle Model of Reading*



*Source: Seidenberg and McClelland (1989, as cited in Snowling, & Stackhouse, 2013)*

The phonological pathway is responsible for the mappings between written orthography (spelling) and phonology (sounds of language). It involves decoding written

words into their corresponding sounds, which is crucial in early reading development. Readers learn to associate letters or letter combinations with specific phonemes, enabling them to blend the sounds together to read words. On the other hand, the semantic pathway represents the mappings between orthography and phonology via semantics (meaning). This pathway utilizes contextual cues and semantic knowledge to aid in word recognition and comprehension. It recognizes that reading goes beyond merely decoding isolated words and involves understanding the meaning conveyed by the text.

The Triangle Model emphasizes the significance of phonological processing in reading development. Thus, the model highlights the importance of addressing phonological skills in reading instruction, as they lay the foundation for accurate and fluent word reading. Nonetheless, the model acknowledges the interplay between phonological and semantic processing, as both pathways contribute to skilled reading comprehension. Understanding the interaction between the phonological and semantic pathways allows educators to design effective reading interventions that target these areas and support children's overall reading development (Snowling & Stackhouse, 2013).

The Triangle Model of Reading proposed by Seidenberg and McClelland (1989) offers a theoretical framework that highlights the interplay between two main pathways in reading development: the phonological pathway and the semantic pathway. Given the emphasis on the phonological pathway in early reading development, EFL educators can prioritize phonological awareness instruction. This includes activities that focus on sound-symbol correspondence, phonemic awareness, and phonics instruction to help learners decode written words accurately and fluently. Instructional strategies should target decoding skills that facilitate the mapping between written orthography and phonology along the phonological pathway. EFL teachers can employ explicit instruction and practice activities that help learners recognize letter-sound relationships and blend sounds together to read words effectively.

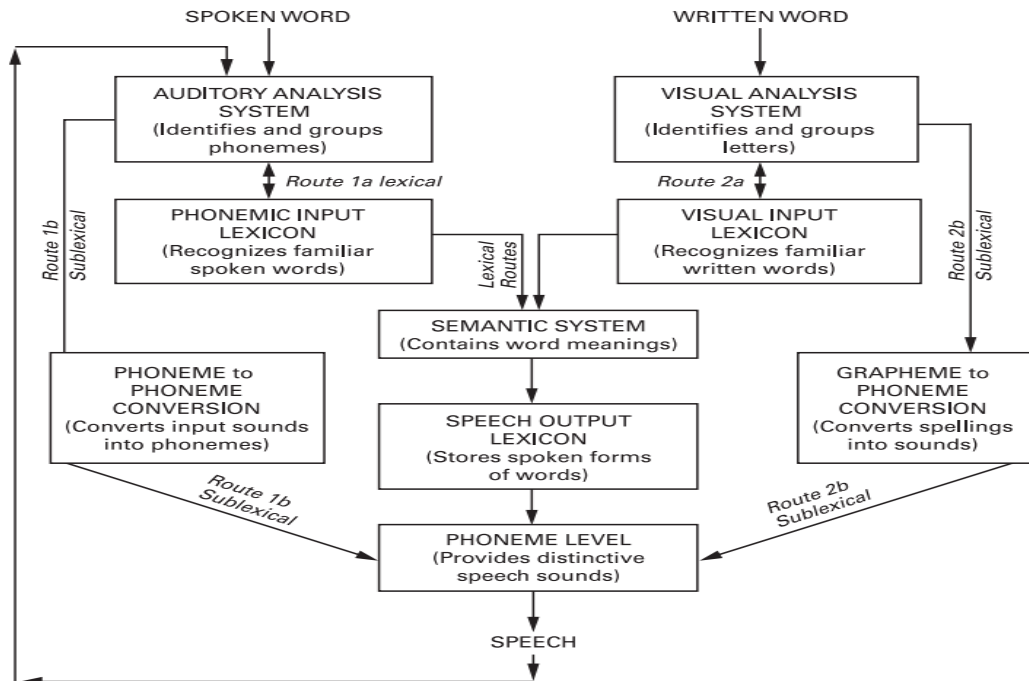
Regarding the different routes involved in understanding spoken and written language, as proposed by Nicolson and Fawcett (2010), there are two main routes involved in reading: the lexical route (route 2a) and the sub-lexical route (route 2b). This model builds upon the idea that children first learn to understand and produce speech using familiar (route 1a) and unfamiliar words (route 1b). Figure 5 illustrates the processes of reading in terms of route of learning reading skill.

Nicolson and Fawcett (2010) illustrate the different routes involved in understanding spoken and written language. Prior to learning to read, children acquire the ability to comprehend and produce spoken language. This includes familiar words (route 1a) and unfamiliar words (route 1b). Route 1a involves understanding and producing familiar words based on their meaning, while route 1b pertains to unfamiliar words. When it comes to reading, there are two main routes: route 2a and route 2b.

Route 2b, known as the sub-lexical route, is primarily used for unfamiliar words. In this route, an unfamiliar word is broken down into its sub-lexical units, such as phonemes or syllables. The word is then pronounced based on these parts, and the individual uses their ability to understand spoken words (route 1a) to identify the meaning of the word. Thus, for unfamiliar words, two passes through the reading system are needed.

**Figure 5**

*Different routes in understanding spoken and written language*



Source: Nicolson and Fawcett (2010)

In skilled reading, the more typical route employed is the lexical route (route 2a). In the lexical route, a written word is perceived and recognized as a whole, without the need to break it down into sub-lexical units. Skilled readers can directly access the meaning of familiar words without relying on the sub-lexical route or reentering the auditory routes. This route enables efficient and rapid word recognition, as the reader can quickly recognize and understand familiar words in their entirety (Nicolson & Fawcett, 2010). The understanding of different routes in comprehending spoken and written language can significantly impact reading instruction. It emphasizes the importance of phonological awareness and decoding skills for unfamiliar words (sub-lexical route) and the promotion of automatic and holistic word recognition for familiar words (lexical route). In this regard, Frith (1986) proposed three main stages of learning to read, representing distinct levels of reading proficiency and skill development:

In the initial logographic stage, the readers read a few words as whole units, similar to icons or visual patterns. They recognize these words based on their visual appearance and familiarity as sight words, without decoding individual letters or phonemes. In the alphabetic stage, they acquire the ability to decode words by breaking them down into individual letters or graphemes and associating them with corresponding phonemes or sounds. They utilize grapheme-phoneme conversion rules to sound out words. Finally, in the orthographic stage, they progress beyond decoding and start recognizing larger units or chunks within words based on orthographic rules of English. Instead of breaking words into individual letters, they identify orthographically standard chunks or letter sequences, using letter-sequence to syllable-sound rules (Frith, 1986). These stages reflect the progression from reliance on sight words to the development of phonological decoding skills and, finally, to the integration of orthographic patterns and rules (Frith, 1986). It's important to note that these stages are not fixed or mutually exclusive, as children may move through them at different rates and with varying degrees of overlap.

The model proposed by Nicolson and Fawcett (2010) regarding the different routes involved in understanding spoken and written language, along with Frith's (1986) stages of learning to read, has profound pedagogical implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Understanding the sub-lexical route (route 2b) highlights the importance of phonological awareness and decoding skills, especially for unfamiliar words. EFL educators can incorporate explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding strategies to support learners in breaking down unfamiliar words into sub-lexical units and understanding their meanings. In the initial logographic stage described by Frith (1986), learners recognize a few words as whole units based on visual patterns. EFL instruction should include activities that promote sight word recognition, such as sight word flashcards, sight word games, and repeated exposure to high-frequency words.

As learners progress to the alphabetic stage, they acquire the ability to decode words by associating graphemes with corresponding phonemes. EFL teachers can facilitate this stage by teaching letter-sound correspondences, blending and segmenting activities, and guided practice in applying phonics rules to decode words accurately. Frith's (1986) orthographic stage emphasizes the recognition of larger units or chunks within words based on orthographic rules. EFL educators can support learners in this stage by teaching spelling patterns, syllable division rules, and common orthographic conventions in English words.

### **Conclusion**

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted process that extends beyond isolated

words or sentences, requiring readers to decode words and construct meaning through interaction with the text. Understanding and applying various cognitive processes and strategies are essential for effective comprehension, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Several models of reading comprehension offer valuable insights into the interconnected components that contribute to comprehension and have significant implications for instructional practices in EFL classrooms.

Reading comprehension is the process of deriving meaning from text, aiming to gain an overall understanding of the content. Decoding words is essential for comprehension. Skilled reading involves various processes which contribute to understanding. Comprehension is a complex activity that requires interactions between the reader, text, and activity, encompassing abilities like contextualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and remembering information. Skilled readers integrate multiple aspects of language, such as phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, metacognitive, and strategic elements, to comprehend text.

The Irwin and Baker's comprehensive framework and Adams' Reading Process Model highlight the importance of addressing multiple components in EFL instruction to foster deep understanding and engagement with English language texts. By incorporating structured phonics instruction, prioritizing vocabulary development, and recognizing the interdependence of various cognitive processes, educators can create meaningful learning experiences that support reading comprehension.

The Triangle Model highlights the interplay between phonological and semantic processing in skilled reading comprehension. EFL instruction should adopt a balanced approach that addresses both pathways, recognizing their complementary roles in reading development. While the phonological pathway is crucial for decoding, the semantic pathway underscores the importance of meaning in reading comprehension. EFL instruction should incorporate vocabulary instruction that helps learners understand the meaning of words within the context of the text, utilizing contextual cues and semantic knowledge to aid comprehension. By incorporating the principles of the Triangle Model into EFL instruction, educators can effectively support learners' reading development by addressing both phonological and semantic processing skills, ultimately fostering skilled reading comprehension in English language learners.

EFL classrooms should incorporate interactive reading activities that encourage learners to actively engage with texts. This includes activities such as guided reading discussions, reciprocal teaching, literature circles, and collaborative reading tasks. These activities promote interaction between learners' background knowledge and the text, fostering deeper comprehension. EFL educators can scaffold instruction by gradually releasing responsibility to learners as they develop their reading skills. By incorporating the principles of the interactive model into EFL instruction, educators can create a

dynamic and engaging learning environment where learners develop the skills and strategies necessary for effective reading comprehension. In conclusion, understanding and applying these implications in the EFL classroom can empower educators to create enriching learning experiences and support learners in developing robust reading comprehension skills in English as a foreign language.

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