

การประยุกต์ใช้ทฤษฎีทางภาษาศาสตร์เพื่อส่งเสริมการสอนทักษะ การอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจ

Application of Linguistic Theories to Promote the Teaching of English Reading Comprehension Skills

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บทคัดย่อ

การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจเป็นทักษะพื้นฐานที่สำคัญต่อความสำเร็จทางวิชาการและการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลักสองประการ ประการแรกเพื่อค้นหาแนวทางในการบูรณาการทฤษฎีทางภาษา โดยเฉพาะทฤษฎีวากยสัมพันธ์ ทฤษฎีระบบคำ และทฤษฎีอรรถศาสตร์ เข้ากับการสอนทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจ และประการที่สอง เพื่อให้แนวทางปฏิบัติสำหรับนักการศึกษาในการพัฒนา กิจกรรมการเรียนการสอนที่ช่วยส่งเสริมความสามารถในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนที่ยึดหลักการ แนวคิดของทฤษฎีทางภาษาศาสตร์เหล่านี้ วากยสัมพันธ์ซึ่งมุ่งศึกษาโครงสร้างประโยค ช่วยในการถอดรหัสความสัมพันธ์ของคำและวลี ทำให้ผู้เรียนสามารถเข้าใจโครงสร้างประโยคที่ซับซ้อนได้ อันจะนำไปสู่ความเข้าใจที่ลึกซึ้งเพิ่มมากขึ้น ระบบคำเป็นการศึกษาการสร้างคำ และโครงสร้างของคำ ซึ่งช่วยให้ผู้อ่านถอดรหัสคำที่ไม่คุ้นเคยโดยการวิเคราะห์หน่วยคำที่เติมหรืออุปสรรคและรากศัพท์ อรรถศาสตร์ซึ่งเน้นไปที่ความหมายของคำและประโยค ช่วยให้ผู้เรียนเข้าใจความหมายแฝงที่ละเอียดยิ่งขึ้น และส่งเสริมการตีความข้อความที่ลึกซึ้งยิ่งขึ้น ด้วยการรวมทฤษฎีทางภาษาศาสตร์เหล่านี้เข้ากับแนวทางการสอน นักการศึกษาสามารถส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนกลายเป็นผู้อ่านที่เชี่ยวชาญและมีวิจารณญาณมากขึ้น ซึ่งท้ายที่สุดจะช่วยเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพของกลยุทธ์การสอนภาษา

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill crucial for academic success and lifelong learning. This article has two primary objectives: first, to explore the integration of linguistic theories, specifically syntax, morphology, and semantics, into the teaching of English reading comprehension skills; and second, to provide practical guidelines for educators to develop instructional activities that enhance students' reading comprehension abilities based on these linguistic theories. Syntax, which delves into sentence structure, assists in deciphering word and phrase relationships, enabling students to navigate intricate sentence constructions for a more profound comprehension. Morphology, the study of word formation and structure, equips readers to decode unfamiliar words by analysing affixes and roots. Semantics, focusing on word and sentence meaning, enables readers to grasp nuanced connotations, fostering a deeper text interpretation. By incorporating these linguistic theories into their teaching practices, educators can empower students to become more proficient and critical readers, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of language teaching strategies.

Keywords Linguistic Theories, Syntax, Morphology, Semantics, Reading Comprehension

Introduction

The teaching of English reading comprehension skills has long been a cornerstone of language education, serving as a gateway to effective communication, critical thinking, and a deep understanding of textual content. In recent years, the application of linguistic theories has emerged as a powerful and innovative approach to enhance the teaching of reading comprehension in the English language. By drawing upon the rich tapestry of linguistic knowledge, educators can unravel the intricacies of language structure, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to illuminate the path for students to become proficient readers. This synthesis of linguistic theory and pedagogical practice holds the promise of revolutionizing how English reading comprehension skills are cultivated, equipping learners with the tools not only to decode words but to unlock the nuanced meaning and context within texts. In this exploration, we will delve into the manifold ways in which linguistic theories can be harnessed to promote the teaching of English reading comprehension skills, thereby bridging the gap between theory and effective classroom application.

Reading comprehension stands as a cornerstone of education and intellectual growth. It is the art of not just reading words but understanding their essence, context, and deeper

meanings. Achieving proficiency in reading comprehension is an essential skill that paves the way for academic excellence and lifelong learning. In this article, we embark on a journey through the application of linguistic theories, drawing on the insights of esteemed scholars in the field. It explores how linguistic principles, with a particular focus on syntax, morphology, and semantics can be harnessed to elevate reading comprehension. Additionally, it will provide pedagogical implications, including teaching activities, based on these linguistic dimensions. This journey begins with a fundamental understanding of what reading comprehension entails.

1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written text. It involves not only decoding the words on the page but also extracting meaning, making inferences, and connecting information to existing knowledge. Proficient reading comprehension is a critical skill that extends beyond mere word recognition. Effective reading comprehension encompasses several key components:

1) Vocabulary Knowledge: A strong vocabulary is essential for understanding the meaning of words in context. Readers must recognize and comprehend a wide range of words.

2) Decoding Skills: The ability to decode or read words accurately is foundational. It involves recognizing letters and their corresponding sounds.

3) Fluency: Fluent readers read smoothly and at an appropriate pace, allowing them to focus on comprehension rather than word recognition.

4) Text Structure: Understanding the structure of different types of texts (e.g., narratives, expository texts) aids in comprehension.

5) Inference-Making: Readers make inferences by drawing conclusions based on clues in the text, background knowledge, and context.

6) Critical Thinking: Effective readers engage in critical thinking, evaluating the content and considering the author's perspective.

In conclusion, the six components of reading comprehension work collaboratively to enable readers to understand and interpret written text proficiently. Vocabulary and decoding skills lay the foundation, while fluency ensures a smooth reading experience. Understanding text structure helps readers navigate the content, and inference-making allows them to go beyond the surface meaning. Finally, critical thinking elevates comprehension by encouraging

readers to evaluate and engage with the text critically. These components, when integrated, empower readers to unlock the full meaning and significance of the text they are reading. Reading comprehension is not a static skill; it develops and deepens over time with practice and exposure to diverse texts.

2. Models of the Process of Reading

In the context of ESL/EFL reading, three models of reading are widely known: the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model (Silberstein, 1987). According to the bottom-up model, reading is a process of manipulating phoneme-grapheme relationships as described by a structural linguist Leonard Bloomfield (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). An aspect of this view, which was popular under the ALM, was that reading is a passive activity, with writing as the active counterpart. The bottom-up model of reading, basically, fostered practices in reading instruction which built up learners decoding abilities from the bottom up, starting with the smallest units, single letters, letters blends, and building up to words and phrases. With the emergence of the more recent model, that is, the top-down model, this model of reading which viewed that reading takes place by matching sounds and letters became outdated.

The top-down model views reading as a process of reconstructing meaning, and it stresses comprehension of units of meaning larger than words and phrases. The proponents of this model include Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). This model, also known as the psycholinguistic model, revised the old arguments about the role of reader. According to the ALM, when reading, the reader is working in word-by-word fashion, leaving him/her as a passive message decoder. Conversely, the psycholinguistic model views readers as quite active because they make plan and decision, and coordinate a number of skills and strategies to facilitate comprehension. The new model also advocates the notion that reading is only incidentally visual. In the ESL/EFL teaching context, the application of this theory is evident in the adoption of instructional strategies stressing the active role of learners as readers. Examples of these activities include guessing the meaning of words from the context, previewing an article before reading it in order to have an overall view of this article, and actively engaging in predicting what the author might say next. In such a process, the reader uses his/her knowledge of vocabularies, sentences, discourses, and the world knowledge.

The alternative model, called the interactive model of the process of reading, puts together the earlier two models of reading, the bottom-up and the top-down. According to this model, reading involves the interplay of all meaning gathering activities. This interactive theory acknowledges the role of previous knowledge and prediction, but, at the same time, reaffirms the importance of rapid and accurate process of the actual words of the text (Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988; Dubin & Bycina, 1991). Clarifying the nature of the interaction, Harmer (2001: 201) states, Sometimes, it is the individual details that help us understand the whole; sometimes it is our overview that allows us to process the details. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) highlighted the important roles of both the reader and the text in facilitating the process of reading and understanding.

In a nutshell, the theories of the reading process have helped us in understanding how messages in a reading text can be comprehended by the readers. The theories of the reading process outlined above also contribute to the understanding of how reading should be taught, an issue which is discussed in the following section.

3. Fundamental concepts of linguistic theories on reading comprehension

Reading comprehension, the skill of comprehending written text, is a multifaceted cognitive process. At its core, this process hinges on three essential linguistic concepts: syntax, morphology, and semantics. These linguistic elements serve as the foundational components that empower readers to decode, grasp, and extract meaning from the words and sentences they encounter. In this exploration, we will delve into the significance of these fundamental linguistic concepts—syntax, morphology, and semantics—in the context of reading comprehension.

3.1 Syntax and Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted cognitive process that involves more than just recognizing words on a page; it requires the reader to construct meaning from the text. Among the various factors that contribute to successful reading comprehension, syntax, the set of rules governing sentence structure and word order in a language, plays a crucial role. This article explores the intricate relationship between syntax and reading comprehension, drawing on insights from prominent scholars in the field. Syntax is an indispensable component of reading comprehension. It enables readers to decipher sentence structures, parse complex sentences, and resolve ambiguities, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of written text. Educators can harness the power of syntax by incorporating

explicit instruction and syntactic analysis into their teaching practices. By equipping students with syntactic skills, educators empower them to unlock the language of texts and navigate the intricacies of written communication with confidence.

To understand the role of syntax in reading comprehension, it is essential to delve into Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar theory. In his groundbreaking work, "Syntactic Structures," Chomsky (1957) introduced the concept of deep structure and surface structure. Deep structure represents the underlying grammatical structure of a sentence, while surface structure is the actual arrangement of words in a sentence.

According to Chomsky, readers implicitly generate deep structures when processing sentences. This generation process aids in the construction of mental representations of the text. Understanding sentence structure, such as subject-verb-object relationships and syntactic rules, allows readers to decode complex sentences more effectively. For example, consider the sentence: "The cat chased the mouse." Knowledge of syntax helps readers recognize that "cat" is the subject, "chased" is the verb, and "mouse" is the object, enabling them to comprehend the action described.

3.1.1 The Crucial Role of Syntax in English Reading Comprehension

At its core, syntax deals with the rules and principles governing the structure of sentences and the arrangement of words within them. These rules dictate word order, sentence formation, and grammatical relationships between words. Understanding the intricacies of sentence structure is fundamental to the art of reading comprehension. In our journey through the world of linguistic theory and reading comprehension, we embark on an exploration of the critical role played by syntax, unveiling its multifaceted significance in the comprehension of English text. Drawing inspiration from the wisdom of esteemed scholars, we delve into the key aspects of syntax that enrich the reading experience. In the context of reading comprehension, syntax plays a pivotal role in several key aspects:

1) Sentence Structure Understanding: The ability to recognize and interpret sentence structures is fundamental to reading comprehension. Readers must discern subjects, verbs, objects, and modifiers to grasp the intended meaning of a sentence. Without this syntactic knowledge, sentences can become perplexing puzzles, impeding comprehension. Kintsch and van Dijk (1980) in their work on discourse comprehension, explain that readers construct mental representations of text that include the hierarchical structure of sentences.

Readers use their knowledge of syntax to create these mental representations, aiding in comprehension.

2) The Parsing Process: Parsing is the cognitive process through which readers analyse and interpret the syntactic structure of sentences. It involves breaking down sentences into their constituent parts, identifying phrases, clauses, and relationships between words. Successful parsing is essential for readers to construct coherent mental representations of the text. Frazier and Rayner's research (1982) on parsing strategies sheds light on how readers navigate sentence structures during comprehension. They propose that readers use a garden-path model, where they initially parse sentences based on the simplest and most common syntactic structures. However, when they encounter unexpected structures, readers may experience a "garden path," momentarily leading to comprehension difficulties.

For example, in the sentence "The old man the boats," readers may initially parse it as "The old man" (subject) "the boats" (object). However, as they encounter "the boats," they realize that "man" is the verb, and the correct interpretation is "The old man [who is] the boats."

3) Syntactic Ambiguity: Syntactic ambiguity occurs when a sentence can be interpreted in more than one way due to its grammatical structure. Resolving syntactic ambiguities is a cognitive challenge that requires the reader to consider different sentence structures and interpretations. Syntactic ambiguity often arises from phrases that can function as different parts of speech. Fodor and Garrett (1967) conducted pioneering research on syntactic ambiguity and reading comprehension. They proposed that readers use context and semantic information to disambiguate sentences. In the absence of such cues, they may initially choose one interpretation but then re-parse the sentence when encountering conflicting information.

Example Sentence: Consider the sentence "I saw the man with the telescope." This seemingly straightforward sentence can be interpreted in two distinct ways:

- The speaker used a telescope to see the man.
- The man had a telescope with him.

In this example, the presence of the word "with" creates syntactic ambiguity, demonstrating how sentence structure can influence interpretation.

4) Syntax and Word Order: One of the most fundamental aspects of syntax is word order—the arrangement of words within a sentence. Different languages employ distinct

word orders, and understanding these orders is crucial for decoding and comprehending sentences. In English, for instance, the standard word order is subject-verb-object (SVO), as exemplified in the sentence "She (subject) ate (verb) the cake (object)." However, deviations from this order can significantly impact sentence meaning. Gibson's research (1998) on sentence processing sheds light on the role of syntax in word order comprehension. He argues that readers utilize their knowledge of syntax to parse and interpret sentences effectively, allowing them to assign roles to words and understand the relationships between them. For instance, in the sentence "The cat (subject) chased (verb) the mouse (object)," the reader relies on syntactic cues to infer that the cat is the one performing the action of chasing the mouse.

Example Sentences:

- Simple SVO Word Order: "She (subject) read (verb) the book (object)."
- Different Word Order: "The book (object) she (subject) read (verb)."

These example sentences illustrate how altering word order within a sentence can impact the overall meaning and reader comprehension.

5) Syntactic Complexity and Comprehension: Reading materials often vary in syntactic complexity, with some texts featuring intricate sentence structures. Proficient readers possess the syntactic skills necessary to tackle complex sentences, extracting meaning from nested clauses, passive constructions, and elaborate syntactic structures. The comprehension of syntactically complex sentences poses a greater cognitive load on readers. Understanding complex sentence structures requires the ability to coordinate multiple clauses, phrases, and dependencies. Graesser and et al. (2005), in their research on reading comprehension, note that readers' comprehension abilities are influenced by the complexity of sentence structures encountered. Skilled readers are adept at handling complex syntactic forms, allowing them to comprehend a wide range of texts. Just and Carpenter's influential work (1980) on sentence processing efficiency highlights the challenges posed by syntactic complexity. They argue that readers expend more cognitive effort when processing complex sentences, which can impact comprehension speed and accuracy.

Example Sentences:

- Simple Sentence: "She ran to the store."
- Complex Sentence: "Although she was tired, she ran to the store because she needed groceries."

In the complex sentence, multiple clauses ("Although she was tired" and "she ran to the store because she needed groceries") are linked together, necessitating a higher level of syntactic processing.

6) The Role of Syntax in Inference: Inference, the process of drawing conclusions or making predictions based on textual information, is a crucial aspect of reading comprehension. Syntax plays a significant role in facilitating inference by providing structural cues that guide readers in connecting pieces of information and filling in gaps. McKoon and Ratcliff's research (1986) on inference and sentence processing underscores the role of syntax in comprehension. They argue that readers use their knowledge of sentence structure to make inferences about relationships between elements in a text, even when explicit information is not provided.

Example Sentences:

- Sentence: "After the storm, the streets were flooded."
- Inference: The sentence implies that the flooding occurred as a result of the storm.

Here, the reader relies on the sentence structure and temporal relationship ("after") to make an inference about the cause of the flooding.

3.1.2 Pedagogical Implications: Teaching Syntax for Reading Comprehension

Teaching syntax for the purpose of enhancing reading comprehension is an indispensable pedagogical endeavour, one that has the potential to greatly augment students' capacity to fathom and interpret written texts. As we delve into the pedagogical implications of incorporating syntax into reading instruction, we glean insights from distinguished scholars in the field to provide teachers or educators with invaluable guidance on how to adeptly manage instructional activities aimed at imparting a comprehensive understanding of syntax. Notably, Adams (1990), a luminary in the realm of reading education, underscores the profound significance of explicit syntax instruction in her work. She contends that teachers should not take for granted that students will naturally develop an understanding of sentence structure, advocating instead for the systematic, deliberate instruction of syntax to empower students to grasp the intricacies of sentence construction.

Instructional Activities for Teaching Syntax

To implement effective syntax instruction for reading comprehension, teachers can employ a variety of instructional activities that align with scholars' recommendations.

Activity 1: Sentence Structure Analysis

Objective: To help students recognize and analyse sentence structures in written text.

Procedure:

- 1) Select a passage from a text relevant to the students' reading level.
- 2) Read the passage aloud to the students.
- 3) Ask students to identify and underline different sentence structures, such as simple, compound, and complex sentences.
- 4) Discuss the identified sentence structures as a class, highlighting key characteristics.

This activity emphasizes explicit instruction and aligns with the need for students to understand sentence structures.

Activity 2: Sentence Transformation

Objective: To improve students' understanding of how sentence structure impacts meaning.

Procedure:

- 1) Provide students with a set of sentences with varying structures (e.g., active voice, passive voice, different word order).
- 2) Ask students to rewrite each sentence in a different form while maintaining the original meaning.
- 3) Encourage discussion about how changes in sentence structure affect the clarity and interpretation of the sentences.

This activity aligns with Gibson's research, which underscores the importance of syntax in understanding word order and helps students grasp how different sentence structures convey the same information differently.

Activity 3: Syntactic Ambiguity Resolution

Objective: To challenge students to resolve syntactic ambiguities in sentences.

Procedure:

- 1) Present students with sentences that contain syntactic ambiguities.

2) Ask students to identify the possible interpretations of each sentence.

3) Encourage students to discuss and justify their interpretations.

4) Guide students in identifying syntactic cues that help resolve ambiguities.

This activity is relevant to Frazier and Rayner's research (1982) on sentence processing and ambiguity resolution, as it directly engages students in the cognitive process of resolving syntactic ambiguities.

Activity 4: Complex Sentence Deconstruction

Objective: To enhance students' ability to comprehend complex sentence structures.

Procedure:

1) Select a complex sentence from a text.
2) Break down the sentence into its constituent clauses and phrases.
3) Ask students to identify the relationships between clauses and the role of subordinating conjunctions.

4) Discuss how understanding the structure of complex sentences aids in comprehension.

This activity, based on Just and Carpenter's work (1980) on sentence processing efficiency, emphasizes the challenges posed by syntactic complexity. It helps students dissect complex sentences, improving their comprehension of intricate text.

3.2 Morphology and Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill that involves various cognitive processes, one of which is morphology—the study of word structure and the rules governing how words are formed and modified. Morphology plays a crucial role in reading comprehension by influencing word recognition, vocabulary development, and the interpretation of written text. In this comprehensive article, it will explore the intricate relationship between morphology and reading comprehension, drawing upon insights from esteemed scholars in the field. Additionally, it will provide example sentences to illustrate key concepts.

3.2.1 The Significance of Morphology in Reading Comprehension

Nagy, Anderson, & Herman (1987) conducted research on word learning emphasize the importance of morphology. They argue that morphological knowledge enables readers to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words encountered in context, contributing significantly to reading comprehension.

Morphology encompasses various aspects of word structure, including affixes (prefixes and suffixes), root words, and morphemes (the smallest units of meaning in a word). Understanding how these components interact allows readers to decipher word meanings, identify relationships between words, and make predictions about text content.

1) Vocabulary Expansion

Vocabulary development is a fundamental component of reading comprehension. A rich vocabulary enables readers to understand and engage with a wider range of texts. Morphology contributes significantly to vocabulary growth by providing the tools necessary to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Kuo & Anderson, (2006) conducted research on vocabulary development underscores the relationship between morphology and reading comprehension. They argue that understanding the morphological structure of words helps learners infer the meanings of new words, contributing to vocabulary expansion.

Example Sentence:

Unfamiliar Word: Multicolored

Morphological Analysis: "Multi-" (a prefix indicating many) + "color" (a familiar word) + "-ed" (a suffix indicating past tense)

Inference: The word refers to something having many different colors.

By breaking down the word "multicolored" into its morphological components, readers can deduce its meaning, even if they have not encountered the word before. This ability to decipher unfamiliar terms enhances vocabulary and comprehension.

2) Enhanced Word Recognition

Efficient word recognition is essential for reading comprehension. Morphological awareness enhances word recognition skills by enabling readers to break down unfamiliar words into meaningful components. Carlisle (2000) conducted research on morphological awareness highlights its role in word recognition. She argues that readers with

strong morphological awareness can decode unfamiliar words more effectively by recognizing familiar morphemes within them.

Example Sentence:

Unfamiliar Word: Disconnected

Morphological Analysis: "Dis-" (a prefix indicating reversal or negation) + "connect" (a familiar word) + "-ed" (a suffix indicating past tense)

Inference: The word suggests that something was previously connected but is no longer.

Through morphological analysis, readers can identify the meaningful components of the word "disconnected," making it easier to understand its meaning and pronunciation. This ability to deconstruct unfamiliar words aids in word recognition, contributing to overall comprehension.

3.2.2 Morphological Analysis for Word Meaning

Morphological analysis allows readers to deduce the meanings of words based on their structural components, even when encountering unfamiliar terms in context. Nagy, Anderson, & Herman (1987) conducted research on word learning emphasizes the importance of morphology. They argue that morphological knowledge enables readers to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words encountered in context, contributing significantly to reading comprehension.

Example Sentence:

Unfamiliar Word: Unhappiness

Morphological Analysis: "Un-" (a prefix indicating negation) + "happiness" (a familiar word)

Inference: The word likely refers to the absence of happiness.

When readers encounter unfamiliar words like "unhappiness," they can apply morphological analysis to discern the word's meaning by breaking it down into familiar components. This ability to unlock word meanings enhances comprehension, particularly when reading challenging texts

3.2.3 Recognition of Word Relationships

One of the significant impacts of morphology on reading comprehension is the recognition of word relationships. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the text's content and context. Morphological analysis involves examining the structural components of

words, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. These components often carry specific meanings or convey grammatical functions. By recognizing morphological patterns within words, readers can make inferences about the relationships between those words. Nagy & Scott (2000) conducted research on vocabulary development highlights how morphological knowledge contributes to understanding word relationships. They emphasize that recognizing morphological patterns can help students identify related words and their meanings. Here are some key aspects of how morphology aids in the recognition of word relationships:

1. Identifying Synonyms and Antonyms

Morphology can reveal words that are synonymous or antonymous. For instance, the presence of common prefixes or suffixes may indicate similar or contrasting meanings. Consider the following examples:

Synonyms: Happy (adjective) and Joyful (adjective)

Morphological Analysis: Both words share the suffix "-ful," indicating full of or characterized by.

Antonyms: Comfortable (adjective) and Uncomfortable (adjective)

Morphological Analysis: The prefix "un-" in "uncomfortable" negates the meaning of "comfortable," creating an antonymic relationship.

Recognizing these morphological patterns can help readers identify synonyms and antonyms, enriching their understanding of word relationships in a text.

2. Understanding Derivations

Morphology also plays a crucial role in understanding how words are derived or transformed. Many words in English are formed by adding prefixes or suffixes to base words. Recognizing these morphological changes allows readers to comprehend how new words are created. For example:

Base Word: Friend (noun)

Derived Words: Unfriend (verb), Friendship (noun), Friendly (adjective)

Morphological Analysis: The prefix "un-" in "unfriend" reverses the meaning, creating a verb meaning to end a friendship. The suffix "-ship" in "friendship" indicates a state or condition, while "-ly" in "friendly" transforms the noun into an adjective indicating a quality.

Understanding these derivational processes enables readers to navigate texts where authors may use various forms of a word to convey nuanced meanings or emphasize different aspects of a concept.

3.2.3 Pedagogical Implications: Teaching Morphology for Reading Comprehension

Teaching morphology, the study of word structure and formation, is a valuable pedagogical approach to enhance reading comprehension skills. Morphological instruction empowers students to decode unfamiliar words, recognize word relationships, and make educated inferences about word meanings based on structural components. Carlisle (2003) said that morphological instruction enhances students' vocabulary development and word recognition skills, which are crucial components of proficient reading comprehension. Moreover, Nagy, Anderson, & Herman (1987) confirmed that understanding the structural components of words empowers students to decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words encountered in context, contributing significantly to reading comprehension.

Activity 1: Morpheme Identification

Objective: To develop students' ability to identify morphemes within words.

Procedure:

- 1) Select a list of words from a text that contain prefixes, suffixes, or root words.
- 2) Provide students with these words and ask them to identify the morphemes within each word.
- 3) Discuss the meanings of the morphemes and how they contribute to the overall word meanings.
- 4) Encourage students to create a visual representation (e.g., word maps) that displays the morphemes and their meanings.

Morpheme identification activities promote morphological awareness, enabling students to recognize the building blocks of words (Kuo & Anderson, 2006).

Activity 2: Word Family Exploration

Objective: To explore word families and understand how morphological changes affect word meanings.

Procedure:

- 1) Select a base word (e.g., "act").

2) Have students brainstorm and list words that are related to the base word by adding prefixes or suffixes (e.g., "react," "action," "actor," "inactive").

3) Discuss the meanings of these words and how morphological changes alter the original word's meaning.

4) Encourage students to create sentences using words from the word family to illustrate their meanings.

Word family exploration enhances students' vocabulary and comprehension by showcasing how morphological changes impact word meanings (Nagy & Scott, 2000).

Activity 3: Contextual Analysis

Objective: To apply morphological analysis when encountering unfamiliar words to infer their meanings in context.

Procedure:

1) Select a text passage that includes words with unfamiliar morphological components.

2) Read the passage aloud and ask students to identify unfamiliar words.

3) Guide students in breaking down these words into morphemes.

4) Encourage students to make educated guesses about the meanings of the unfamiliar words based on their morphological analysis and the surrounding context.

5) Discuss the inferred meanings as a class and compare them to dictionary definitions.

Contextual analysis activities promote critical thinking and inference skills by applying morphological knowledge to real-world reading situations (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987).

Activity 4: Word Relationship Web

Objective: To help students recognize and understand word relationships through morphological analysis.

Procedure:

1) Select a set of words from a text that exhibit various word relationships, including synonyms, antonyms, and derivations. Create a list of these words for the activity.

2) Begin by discussing the concept of word relationships with students.

3) Explain that words in English often share common prefixes, suffixes, or root words that provide clues about their meanings and relationships with other words.

4) Present the list of selected words to the students. Encourage them to identify any familiar morphemes within these words.

5) Draw a central circle or box on the board or a large piece of paper. Write a base word in the center (e.g., "act"). As students identify words related to the base word through morphological analysis (e.g., "action," "actor," "react"), draw lines connecting these words to the central word.

6) Label the lines with the morphemes or affixes that connect the words (e.g., "-ion," "-or," "re-").

7) Encourage students to explain the meanings of these related words based on the identified morphemes.

8) Introduce words that are synonyms or antonyms for some of the words in the web.

9) Discuss how shared morphemes contribute to synonymy or how different morphemes contribute to antonymy.

This instructional activity aligns with the research of Nagy & Scott (2000), who highlighted the importance of morphological knowledge in recognizing word relationships. By visually mapping out word relationships through morphological analysis, students gain a deeper understanding of how words are interconnected and how common morphemes contribute to these relationships. This activity fosters critical thinking and enhances vocabulary comprehension, both of which are essential components of reading comprehension.

3.3 Semantics and Reading Comprehension

Semantics and reading comprehension are two intertwined aspects of language and cognitive processing that play a pivotal role in our ability to understand and interpret written text. Semantics refers to the study of meaning in language, encompassing how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning and how this meaning is constructed and interpreted by individuals. Reading comprehension, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and extract meaning from written text.

Semantics is a cornerstone of linguistics and cognitive science, focusing on the meaning of language. It is a multifaceted field that deals with various aspects of meaning, including word meaning, sentence meaning, and discourse-level meaning. Scholars in semantics study

how words combine to form sentences, how the meaning of a sentence is influenced by the meanings of its constituent parts, and how context plays a role in interpretation.

One of the seminal figures in semantics is Noam Chomsky, whose work laid the foundation for modern linguistic theory. Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar emphasized the importance of syntax in understanding sentence structure. However, semantics complements syntax by addressing the meaning within sentences.

3.3.1 Semantic Ambiguity

One of the intriguing challenges in semantics is dealing with ambiguity. Ambiguity arises when a word or phrase has multiple meanings or interpretations. It is a common occurrence in natural language, and humans are remarkably adept at resolving such ambiguities based on context and background knowledge. Polysemy and homonymy are two forms of ambiguity:

1) Polysemy: Polysemy occurs when a single word has multiple related meanings. For example, the word "bank" can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river. The meaning depends on the context in which it is used.

2) Homonymy: Homonymy involves words that are spelled or pronounced the same but have different unrelated meanings. An example is the word "bat," which can refer to a flying mammal or a sports equipment used in baseball.

Resolving ambiguity is a complex cognitive process, and it often relies on contextual clues and world knowledge. Notably, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein explored language games and how meaning is established through language use.

Example Sentence: Consider the word "bark." In the sentence "The dog's bark is worse than its bite," "bark" refers to the sound a dog makes. However, in the sentence "The tree has rough bark," "bark" pertains to the protective outer layer of a tree. The context disambiguates the word's meaning.

3.3.2 Semantic Role Theory

To understand how words relate to one another within sentences, semantic role theory provides a framework. Scholars such as Fillmore, Jackendoff, and Dowty have contributed significantly to this theory. Semantic roles, also known as theta roles or thematic roles, describe the underlying relationships between the components of a sentence. In semantic role theory, words are categorized based on their roles in conveying meaning. These roles include:

- 1) Agent: The entity that performs an action.
- 2) Theme: The entity that undergoes an action.
- 3) Experiencer: The entity that perceives or experiences something.
- 4) Goal: The endpoint of an action or movement.
- 5) Source: The starting point of an action or movement.
- 6) Instrument: The means or tool used to perform an action.
- 7) Location: The place where an action occurs.

Understanding these roles aids in deciphering the meaning of sentences by identifying who is doing what to whom or what.

Example Sentence: In the sentence "She handed him the book," "She" is the agent, "the book" is the theme, and "him" is the goal. Identifying these semantic roles clarifies the action taking place.

Semantics and reading comprehension are intricately connected. The meaning of a text is derived from the semantics of the words and sentences it contains. Comprehending a text requires readers to process the semantic relationships among words, infer unstated information, and build a mental representation of the text's meaning. Skilled readers use their knowledge of semantics to:

- 1) Infer Meaning: They infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context and prior knowledge. For instance, encountering the word "pulchritudinous" in a sentence like "She had a pulchritudinous smile" allows readers to infer that it means "beautiful" or "attractive" based on the context.

- 2) Identify Relationships: They identify semantic relationships, such as cause and effect, comparison, and contrast, to make sense of the text. Recognizing these relationships aids in understanding the flow of ideas within a passage.

- 3) Resolve Ambiguity: They disambiguate words and phrases with multiple meanings based on the context. This is crucial for interpreting sentences without confusion.

- 4) Interpret Figurative Language: Skilled readers comprehend figurative language, such as metaphors and idioms, by grasping the underlying semantic associations.

- 5) Evaluate Claims: They critically evaluate the semantics of arguments and claims made in a text, assessing their validity and coherence.

Scholars like Jane Oakhill and Walter Kintsch have conducted extensive research on reading comprehension. They emphasize the role of semantics in constructing a mental representation of a text. Kintsch's Construction-Integration Model posits that readers construct a mental representation of the text as they read, integrating new information with their existing knowledge.

In a text about climate change, the phrase "rising temperatures" implies an increase in global temperatures due to various factors. Readers must use their semantic knowledge to understand the consequences of this phenomenon.

3.3.3 Word Semantics: Building Blocks of Language

Word semantics is concerned with the meanings of individual words and how they contribute to the meaning of larger linguistic units, such as phrases, sentences, and texts. Understanding individual word meanings is a crucial aspect of semantics. Charles J. Fillmore, a prominent semanticist, introduced the notion of frame semantics, which posits that words are associated with frames or mental structures that help us understand their meaning. For example, the word "restaurant" is associated with a frame that includes elements like food, customers, and dining.

Lexical semantics is another area of word semantics that focuses on word meaning and how words relate to one another in a language. George Lakoff, a key figure in this field, proposed the theory of conceptual metaphors, suggesting that our understanding of abstract concepts is grounded in more concrete, embodied experiences. For example, the metaphor "love is a journey" frames our understanding of love as something with a beginning, middle, and end. Carlson (1986) delves into lexical semantics, emphasizing that word meaning is not a fixed entity but is instead a complex interplay of various factors, including context, usage, and the relationships between words. Fodor and Katz (1963) introduced the Notion Theory of meaning, which posits that words are associated with structured mental representations that capture their meaning. This theory underscores the intricate nature of word semantics.

Example:

The word "butterfly" conjures images of colorful, delicate insects fluttering among flowers. In the phrase "a broken heart," the word "broken" carries emotional weight, signifying profound sadness.

3.3.4 Sentence Semantics: Composing Meaning

Sentence semantics delves into how individual words combine to create meaningful sentences. This involves studying how words interact with one another in terms of meaning, and how sentence structure influences interpretation.

Montague semantics, developed by Richard Montague, is a formal approach to sentence semantics that uses mathematical logic to represent the meaning of sentences. This approach has been influential in the development of natural language processing and computational linguistics. Montague's work demonstrated that the meaning of sentences can be represented using logical predicates, providing a formal foundation for understanding sentence semantics.

One of the central ideas in sentence semantics is compositionality, which suggests that the meaning of a sentence can be derived from the meanings of its constituent parts and the way they are combined. Barbara Partee, a pioneer in formal semantics, has contributed significantly to our understanding of compositionality. For example, in the sentence "The cat chased the mouse," the meaning of the sentence is composed of the meanings of "cat," "chased," "the," and "mouse," as well as the syntactic structure of the sentence.

3.3.4 Discourse-Level Semantics: Context Matters

Beyond individual sentences, semantics extends to the level of discourse, where context plays a pivotal role in meaning interpretation. Context can include information from previous sentences, shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener, and the overall situation in which communication takes place.

One prominent scholar in discourse-level semantics is Deborah Tannen, who has explored how conversational style and patterns of interaction influence meaning in discourse. Tannen's work on gender and language, for instance, highlights how men and women may use language differently to achieve similar communicative goals, leading to differences in interpretation.

Anaphora and deixis are also crucial aspects of discourse-level semantics. Anaphora refers to the use of pronouns or other linguistic expressions to refer back to previously mentioned entities. Deixis involves the use of words like "this," "that," "here," and "there" that depend on context for their interpretation. Scholars like Barbara Abbott have extensively studied these phenomena and how they contribute to discourse coherence.

3.3.5 Pedagogical Implications: Teaching Semantics for Reading Comprehension

Understanding the role of semantics in reading comprehension is essential for educators seeking to enhance students' literacy skills. Here are some pedagogical implications and instructional activities that harness the power of semantics:

Activity 1: Semantic Mapping

Objective: Develop students' ability to explore word meanings and relationships.

Procedure:

1) Select Appropriate Text: Choose a text passage with rich semantic content. The passage should contain words or phrases central to the text's overall meaning.

2) Identify Key Terms: Identify key words or phrases within the chosen passage that are essential for understanding the text.

3) Create a Semantic Map: Have students create a semantic map, a visual representation that connects these key terms with lines to illustrate their relationships.

4) Discussion and Analysis: Encourage students to engage in discussions about how the interconnected words and phrases contribute to the overall comprehension of the text. Prompt them to write about their observations and insights.

This activity aligns with the research of Kintsch (1998) on the Construction-Integration Model, emphasizing the central role of semantics in comprehension. Semantic mapping encourages students to dissect text at the word and phrase level, fostering a deeper appreciation for how individual components contribute to the overall meaning. It also promotes critical thinking as students make connections between words and phrases, enhancing their ability to extract meaning from context.

Activity 2: Inference Exercise

Objective: Enhance students' inference-making skills.

Procedure:

1) Select Reading Passages: Provide students with short reading passages that include implicit information requiring inference.

2) Identify Inference Points: Ask students to identify parts of the text where inference is necessary to fully understand the intended meaning.

3) Group Discussion: Facilitate group discussions where students can share the inferences they made and the evidence from the text that led them to those conclusions.

4) Progressive Complexity: Gradually increase the complexity of the passages over time to challenge students' inferential abilities.

This activity corresponds with the research of Graesser and McNamara (2011) on the Construction-Integration Model, emphasizing the importance of inference in establishing coherence. Inference exercises compel students to go beyond the literal meaning of text and draw conclusions based on context and implied information. By progressively introducing more challenging passages, educators can scaffold students' inferential skills, enhancing their overall comprehension abilities.

Activity 3: Contextual Word Use

Objective: This activity focuses on teaching students how to interpret word meanings based on the context in which words are used.

Procedure:

1) Select Sentences: Choose sentences or short paragraphs that contain words with multiple meanings or words whose meanings change based on context.

2) Word Analysis: Have students analyse the selected words and identify their meanings based on the surrounding context.

3) Discussion: Engage students in discussions about how the context influenced their understanding of the word's meaning.

4) Application: Encourage students to apply this skill to other texts they encounter, highlighting the importance of context in word interpretation.

Green (1973), in his research on semantics and syntactic regularity, emphasized the role of context in influencing the interpretation of words. Readers use contextual cues to disambiguate words with multiple meanings.

Conclusion

Using linguistic theories to improve reading comprehension offers a valuable approach for equipping students with crucial academic and lifelong skills. Recognizing key linguistic principles, especially syntax, morphology, and semantics enables educators to implement effective teaching methods that enhance comprehension. These methods are not only

supported by scholarly research but also empower students to confidently navigate the complexities of written language.

In conclusion, the collaboration between linguistic insights and reading instruction is a powerful tool for shaping effective education. This partnership highlights the significant impact of linguistic theories on the development of reading comprehension abilities. In a time when information is abundant, and literacy is essential, combining linguistic theories with reading comprehension instruction provides a clear path. It equips individuals with the tools to understand and critically assess the wealth of written material available.

Enhancing reading comprehension through linguistic theories is a dynamic and relevant journey. It fosters a lifelong love of reading, learning, and the limitless opportunities offered by language. As educators, scholars, and learners, let us continue to explore, adapt, and innovate in the realm of reading comprehension. In doing so, we honor the legacies of linguistic pioneers and empower future generations with the invaluable gift of comprehension—the key to unlocking doors to knowledge, imagination, and a world of endless possibilities.

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