

Theoretical Foundations of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), its Variations and Techniques

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Email: khalidjanaydeh@gmail.com**Abstract:**

The goal of this study was to look at the theory behind the Directed Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA) as well as the different ways it can be used and how it works. Using the descriptive-analytical method and after looking at the related theoretical literature, the study found that cognitive theory and schema theory helped with DRTA. The study also found that the most important part of this strategy is making predictions. It is a key part of understanding what people read. Prediction might have been one of the most important theoretical ideas that Stauffer built this strategy on. Each DRTA technique is a part of reading comprehension, and when they are all used together, they help students understand what they are reading better.

Keywords: DRTA, Cognitive Theory, Schemata Theory, Prediction, Reading, Confirming/Refuting, Justifying.

الأسس النظرية لاستراتيجية نشاط التفكير الموجه في القراءة (DRTA): تنوعاتها وأساليبها

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Email: khalidjanaydeh@gmail.com**المخلص:**

هدف هذه الدراسة هو استكشاف النظرية وراء استراتيجية نشاط التفكير الموجه في القراءة (DRTA) وكذلك الطرق المختلفة التي يمكن استخدامها وكيفية عملها. وباستخدام الأسلوب الوصفي التحليلي وبعد الاضطلاع على الأدب النظري ذات الصلة، وجدت الدراسة أن النظرية المعرفية ونظرية البنى المعرفية السابقة ساعدت على تطبيق استراتيجية (DRTA)، كما وجدت الدراسة أن الجزء الأكثر أهمية في هذه الاستراتيجية هو عملية التنبؤ؛ إذ إنها جزء رئيسي في فهم ما يقرأه الناس. وقد يكون التنبؤ أحد أهم الأفكار النظرية التي بنى عليها (ستوفر) هذه الاستراتيجية. فكل أسلوب من أساليب استراتيجية (DRTA) هي جزء من فهم المقروء، وعند استخدامهم سوية، فهي تساعد الطلبة على فهم ما يقرؤون بصورة أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية ((DRTA، النظرية المعرفية، التنبؤ، القراءة، التأكد / الرفض، التبرير.

Introduction

When it comes to the study and practice of languages, the ability to read is a crucial tool. Reading, like listening, is a receptive skill, and like writing, it is an academic skill; students learn it in school. One does not need to be taught how to listen. Reading is an intellectual and mental process that requires students to encode and decode the written word in order to reconstruct the original spoken message. Reading is more than just repeating words; it's about making sense of what you read. Over years, the focus of reading varied according to the teaching methods. In some teaching methods, such as the Audiolingual Method and the Situational Language Teaching, oral skills were the primary focus at the expense of reading. While in other methods, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, reading was the primary focus (Omaggio, 2000). Nowadays, there is an increasing demand to achieve balance in second and foreign language programs in reading and other language skills in curricula.

Students of English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language use a variety of strategies and techniques to improve their reading comprehension, including skimming, scanning, guessing, analyzing vocabulary, summarizing, paraphrasing, and making content predictions (Acosta & Ferri, 2010; Brown, 2001). The Directed Reading Thinking Activity is one such reading strategy (henceforth referred to as DRTA). Russell Stauffer invented the concept in 1969. This method was developed to help students improve their reading skills while also encouraging more introspective and analytical thinking (Saraireh, 2006). Furthermore, DRTA is a reading strategy that teaches students to make predictions as they read (Novendiana et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The current study looked into the theoretical underpinnings of DRTA. The variations and techniques used in the DRTA strategy are also investigated.

Methodology

The researchers followed the descriptive-analytical approach by reviewing the related the theoretical literature.

Summary of the Key Findings

Learners are able to construct new knowledge in light of prior knowledge through the use of DRTA, and this new knowledge becomes ingrained in the cognitive structures of the brain. Learners are able to reason upon, read texts to make decisions, make predictions, and recognize reading processes and strategies when they apply this advanced thinking strategy. In addition, a prediction can be one of the important theoretical bases on which Stauffer builds this strategy. He does this by relying on past events (Tierney & Readence, 2005). When DRTA brings together a variety of strategies, each one is capable of being applied in a methodical manner. In addition, the utilization of DRTA helps learners get off to a better start and improves their overall reading comprehension.

The Contribution of Significance of the Results

This study is significant because it provided evidence of the DRTA foundation's stability as well as the diversity of approaches and insights upon which DRTA is built. This study is also significant because it demonstrated how to make the most of pedagogical methods. The study's findings may be useful for EFL teachers in assisting their students in overcoming comprehension difficulties by providing a diverse and systematic variety of techniques and procedures. Furthermore, the study is important for textbook designers in terms of designing, integrating, or enlisting DRTA into textbook strategies. The findings suggest that EFL supervisors should hold regular training courses or intensive workshops for their EFL teachers in order to promote and improve the use of reading techniques, specifically DRTA, in their classrooms. The findings present a variety of DRTA-based teaching and learning examples, with a focus on critical thinking skills and reading comprehension through students' textbooks and teachers' guides. The study's findings may be useful for preparing and equipping pre-service teachers, as well as providing models of teaching comprehension and strategies based on a firm, solid, and enlightened systematic and theoretical approach.

The Origin of DRTA

DRTA is a strategy that aims at improving students' reading comprehension. Stauffer first introduced this strategy in 1969. The aim of the DRTA strategy is to enhance students' reading comprehension. This strategy was first introduced by Stauffer in 1969. It originated from the Directed Reading Activity (henceforth, DRA) which was developed by Betts in 146. It is a traditional and text-based strategy to teach reading texts. According to Harp & Brewer (1991) DRA was used "to monitor the kinds of thought tasks children can do in response to what they read". DRA uses basal reader programs. These programs aimed at teaching reading with various graded parts and reading textbooks (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Differences between DRTA and DRA

Petre (1971) makes a distinction between DRTA and DRA. DRA is behaviorist-based; therefore, there is a linear link between the teacher and the learners. He / She has a dominating and essential role in monitoring learners' activities related to the text. DRA is a closed-wheel or star strategy. Students respond (*response*) to a question that the teacher poses as a *stimulus*. In contrast, DRTA is cognitivist-based and it is reliant on learners' action. This strategy benefits from constructivism which helps students generate their own knowledge based on past information connected to the text they are reading. While the students are active participants in their groups, the teacher's role is an organizer, moderator, and intellectual provocateur. Additionally, both DRTA and DRA establish two communication patterns.

Theoretical Foundations of DRTA

"Tell me and I forget; show me, and I remember; involve me, and I learn," an ancient Chinese proverb says. This proverb emphasizes the significance of learning when students actively participate in the construction of meaning. In other words, if learners want to learn

successfully, they must actively participate in their learning. According to Vercellotti (2017), active learning states that learning processes occur well, allowing learners to improve their achievement. As previously stated, DRTA is an active learning strategy that requires learners to think actively and critically. Furthermore, it is a learner-centered strategy (Abdel-Jawwad, 2018). As a result, the theoretical foundations of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (henceforth, DRTA) are firmly rooted in both schema theory and cognitive theory. The DRTA variations and techniques, as well as a summary and conclusion, are then presented.

The Schema Theory

Bartlett first devised the term "schema" (the plural form is "schemata") in his book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* in 1932. He explained the role of prior knowledge and an individual's previous experiences on memory and perception (Omaggio, 2000). Other words with similar meanings to schema are scripts, plans, goals, frames, expectations, and event chains (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1983; Minsky, 1982; Rumelhart, 1980).

What facilitates students' reading comprehension is schema. This means that if learners do not have schema about a particular topic, their comprehension is immediately lost (Moreillon, 2007). Schema has been defined in different ways. Rumelhart (1977) stated that a schema is "an abstract representation of a generic concept for an object, an event, or a situation." According to Weaver (1988), a schema is knowledge and experiences organized in chunks, often accompanied by feelings. Harp and Brewer (1991) stated that "schema" refers to a reader's previous knowledge about a specific topic, a text, and its functions. Also, McGee and Richgels (1996) defined schema as mental structures in which the readers store all the information about people, places, objects, or activities. Thus, a schema is information stored in the individual's mind (Davoudi & Ramezani, 2014). Therefore, comprehending texts relies on schema, which help learners understand new ideas, facts, text types, patterns, and practices (Rumelhart, 1980). According to Harp and Brewer (1991), schema could be the main contributor to reading comprehension.

Schema theory entails perceptions and assumptions that learners have previously and externally obtained or acquired in the way they understand messages (Moreillon, 2007; Schiffrin, 1994). One of the main principles of schema theory is that readers are directed to construct meaning from their cognitive structures (Omaggio, 2000). Schema theory is concerned with the reading process, in which readers are expected to combine previous experience with the text (Cook, 1997). Therefore, schema theory suggests that learners translate the information they acquire about a specific situation or a text depending on their previous knowledge. This means that written texts should be read or comprehended based on the learners' past experiences (Harp & Brewer, 1991).

According to this theory, meaning is not carried by the text; instead, the reader's experience and knowledge of the world give it meaning (Anderson, 1977). Hedgcock & Ferris (2009) indicated that schema is one of the primary readers' variables since they determine the texts and instructions. Stahl (2008) indicated that effective use of readers' prior knowledge is crucial since they make specific connections to written texts. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) say

that different readers' schemas are very important, and this is especially true when readers have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

When a schema represents a whole situation, a person thinks of a series of stereotypical things that happened in that situation (Omaggio, 2000). This phenomenon was explained by Schank and Ableson (1977) using the term "*script*". It is a structure describing a stereotypically appropriate sequence of events in a specific situation. Thus, schema theorists describe the interactive comprehension model as two interrelated bottom-up and top-down processes (Rumelhart, 1980). Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) differentiated between these two models.

Rumelhart (1980) stated that bottom-up processing is considered data-driven, moving from parts to the whole. On the one hand, bottom-up processing occurs when the focus is on the text's specific details, including decoding individual words or other linguistic cues. In other words, the reader constructs his or her understanding of the text using words and sentences. On the other hand, top-down processing occurs when the reader concentrates and uses his or her prior knowledge to understand the meaning of the text (Barnett, 1989). Rumelhart (1980) and Carrel and Eisterhold (1983) indicated that top-down processing is conceptually driven, moving from the whole to the part. Therefore, in this type of processing, the meaning of the text is lost unless it is integrated into the reader's existing knowledge (Aebersold & Field, 1997). The schema theorists stated that bottom-up and top-down processing co-occur (Omaggio, 2000).

Carrell (1988) assumed that adept readers move from one processing model to another as they accommodate the task's requirements, whereas lowly proficient readers are heavily dependent on one of the models, leading to difficulties in comprehending the text. These readers may be limited by the text and rely heavily on bottom-up processing. They focus on decoding the words and morpho-syntactic features or rely on their background knowledge, but they make unnecessary assumptions and miss important parts of the text.

There were various attempts to divide schema into several types and discuss them in detail. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) identified three types of schemas that readers bring with them when reading a specific text. First, linguistic schema refers to knowing about certain things in linguistics. In other words, linguistic schema refers to sounds and symbols, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and markers of cohesion and reference within and among sentences and paragraphs in any written text. Such a schema is considered the starting point for learning to read. However, if readers had gaps in different types of linguistic schema, there would be breakdowns in comprehension. Hedgcock & Ferris (2009) identified three types of schemas that readers bring with them when reading a specific text. First, linguistic schema refers to knowing about certain things in linguistics. In other words, linguistic schema refers to sounds and symbols, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and markers of cohesion and reference within and among sentences and paragraphs in any written text. Such a schema is considered the starting point for learning to read. However, if readers had gaps in different types of linguistic schema, there would be breakdowns in comprehension. Second, "formal schema" or "text macrostructure" refers to knowing how different text types are organized. Such schemata include text genres such as recipes, newspaper columns, narratives, essays, research papers, and lab reports. Therefore, second- or foreign language readers must be exposed to these genres and

learn about their characteristics. Finally, the reader's prior knowledge of ideas, events, objects, and situations mentioned in a written text is referred to as the "content schema. Content schemas are necessary for all readers.

However, particular aspects of the content schema could constitute a problem for readers, especially second- or foreign language readers (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). When they are raised and educated in specific cultural contexts (EFL or immigrants), this causes comprehension gaps in presenting specific cultural information in texts such as biblical scripts and references like Milton's *Paradise Lost*. These religious and cultural texts are unfamiliar to these readers, who may confuse them (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

The Cognitive Theory

Richards and Schmidt (2010) described the cognitive theory as a phenomenon in the mental structures of the individual's mind. They indicated that many variables related to the cognitive theory affect learning, including language learning. These variables may include memory, language aptitude, general intelligence, analysis, and evaluation. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) suggested three categories of strategies:

1. The cognitive strategies help readers do their mental tasks, like making inferences and figuring out what words mean, while reading.
2. Readers must organize their thoughts while checking their understanding of what they are reading or correcting their predictions using metacognitive strategies.
3. With social and emotional (socio-affective) strategies, readers can work together with their classmates and teachers during reading activities.

Perhaps these strategies include looking for the meaning of unknown vocabulary from a peer or verifying predictions. The cognitive theory combines two significant theories, i.e., *Behaviorism* and *Nativism*. It is based on cognitive psychology, which focuses on general mental processes in learning a language like transfer, simplification, generalization, thinking, remembering, and restructuring (McLaughlin, 1987). This theory entails that internal and external factors account for language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Michael, 1991). Starting with internal factors, the cognitive theory viewed learning as a result of mental activity rather than something imposed from outside the learner (Ellis, 1990). According to this theory, individuals' knowledge is organized in their brain, and when they learn something new, it is integrated or reorganized in their mental structures. Therefore, this theory sees the learners acting, constructing, and planning (McLaughlin, 1987).

According to the cognitive theory, learning a second language is viewed as "the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill" (McLaughlin, 1987). For a language learner to be proficient, some skills must be practiced, automatized (learned), integrated, and organized into their cognitive structures that are continuously restructured to develop their proficiency (Omaggio, 2000). These cognitive structures are organized and structured through practice and teaching (external factors) to reach the level of automatization, which means making a skill

routine through practice. McLaughlin (1987) says that when learning a language becomes an acquisition, people use the language correctly without having to think about it.

Another feature of this theory is that it achieves meaningful learning. Ausubel (1968) emphasized the concept of meaningful learning. It entails that new knowledge must be related to relevant concepts that learners already know. Therefore, the new knowledge is stored and organized in the learners' cognitive structures. He differentiated between meaningful learning and rote learning. Rote learning is arbitrary and verbatim. It entails that knowledge is not stored or integrated into the brain, i.e., the cognitive structures receive the new information in isolation or in discrete forms so that they are not restructured since the new information is not integrated. However, whatever is rotely learned cannot be altered or paraphrased if it is not meaningfully processed.

Finally, both the schema theory and the cognitive theory focus on how people organize and build their knowledge and experiences in their minds through repeated exposure to new information and knowledge. The new information and knowledge are processed to fit these mental structures. It is noteworthy that each individual develops his or her own unique schema. This depends on his or her own experiences and cognitive processes.

Variations of DRTA

With four distinct versions of DRTA, Richek (1987) provided educators with tools to address the needs of students across a spectrum of abilities. Several examples are provided below:

- **Eliciting Predictions without Justification**

When students can't provide evidence to back up their claims, teachers turn to this method. Students with limited abilities will benefit from this format.

- **Directed Listening Thinking Activity (the DLTA strategy)**

This is the model that teachers of second language acquisition should use. It is read to them rather than read to them. The input text or listening text is typically difficult, but at their level. They extrapolate from the information they have received. This method is gradually being applied to actual text reading.

- **Silent DRTA**

This type allows readers to control their reading pace, respond in writing rather than verbally, and avoid embarrassment. One feature of this model is that readers become self-sufficient readers.

- **DRTA Source**

This type allows readers to distinguish between important and less important information and predictions based on the text and prior knowledge. The semantic webbing style is one method of implementing DRTA. It serves as a visual aid for organizing and integrating story concepts, strengthens inferential and evaluative skills, improves deduction, and serves as the story's schema (Widomski, 1983).

Techniques in DRTA

DRTA consists of four main techniques; *predicting, reading, confirming / refuting and justifying*. Each technique of this strategy is presented with some detail.

- *Predicting in DRTA*

Prediction is one of the strategies that is used to improve students' reading comprehension. It is one of the main metacognitive skills used when reading texts, and it is a vital thinking strategy used before reading a particular text (Tankersley, 2005). Therefore, prediction is the primary component in many successful reading programs (Renn, 1999). Mckown and Barnett (2007) stated that prediction helps readers establish the purpose of their reading. It also aids them in activating prior knowledge and enabling them from the start (Pesa & Somers, 2007).

Furthermore, when the teacher introduces the title of the reading text, images related to the content, and key words, learners' predictions improve (McKown & Barnett, 2007). During the reading stage, prediction may help students monitor their comprehension and form their own ideas as they read. Furthermore, students' predictions can be compared to the information in the written text (McKown & Barnett, 2007). As a result, they claimed that revising learners' predictions is necessary because it improves their comprehension. According to Mckown and Barnett (2007), prediction allows readers to interact more, which increases their interest in and understanding of the written text. Prediction may help learners analyze, interpret, and deepen their understanding of the text after reading it (Pesa & Somers, 2007). Furthermore, it meets any expectations of the textual content that students read (Nerim, 2020). As a result, without prediction, students may struggle to understand written texts (Acosta & Ferri, 2009).

Prediction is a key component of DRTA as a metacognitive strategy. It allows students to participate in making predictions. Asking students several open-ended questions to elicit their predictions about the text can help them build prior knowledge. As a result, DRTA could be used to back up learners' predictions. It is based on a cycle in which learners predict, read a text, and decide whether or not their predictions are supported (Welson, Abdel-Haq, & Kamil, 2020). Finally, prediction is the foundation and primary technique used in DRTA.

- *Reading in DRTA*

Reading is essential for academic success as well as everyday life. It is a cognitive process that allows students to comprehend the meaning of the text. Furthermore, it is the primary requirement for students' success and achievement. DRTA is a reading strategy designed to improve students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills while also expanding their knowledge of various text structures (Hasan, 2017). DRTA, like Crawford et al. (2005), is intended to improve students' reading comprehension by directing them to the most important points in written texts. They also mentioned that DRTA allows students to discuss meaning with their peers during the lesson. DRTA employs guided silent reading. The students are instructed to read the text aloud. They continue reading the text until they find the information they need to determine whether or not their predictions were correct (Novendiana et al., 2016), i.e., to confirm or refute their predictions.

In DRTA, loud reading can be used by either the teacher or the students (Megawati, 2019; Tankersley, 2005). Students' predictions and opinions should become more focused as they read more. Instead of taking part, the teacher acts as a nonjudgmental facilitator. He or she contributes to this focus by asking students to describe how the elements of the texts are connected and to provide evidence for any assertions (Tankersley, 2005).

- ***Confirming / Refuting in DRTA***

Confirming refers to making sure whether students' predictions are right or wrong. Clay (2005) stated that rereading to confirm is apparent evidence indicating that students ask themselves, "were they right or wrong?" Confirming predictions in reading texts is a socio-affective strategy that allows students to interact with their peers or teachers during reading activities (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Socioaffective strategies might include seeking the meaning of unfamiliar words from a peer or confirming a prediction with a teacher.

Metacognitive strategies, in contrast, regulate cognitive processing, as when readers monitor comprehension or correct inaccurate predictions. The better the reader can make correct predictions, the less confirming via the text is necessary (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). When students read the text for confirmation, their predictions are confirmed, refuted, or adjusted in light of the new information in the text. As mentioned above, confirming is done when students know if their predictions are right or wrong. However, it is a self-corrected way of rereading the text. Reading to confirm or refute predictions is beneficial for achieving enhanced comprehension (Panjaitan & Siagian, 2019). In DRTA, confirming or refuting predictions is essential to improving students' reading comprehension. In addition, the students are provided the opportunity to change or modify their predictions that have been made earlier.

- ***Justifying in DRTA***

Justifying implies that students believe their predictions are correct. It seems that justification is an ongoing process that begins subconsciously from the first reading until the final stage of reading, when the former appears consciously. The student utters, demonstrates, and maintains his or her newly emerged convictions about the text. They use clues from the text, rereading, peer prediction, and the teacher's remarks and explanations to draw up their predictions. In DRTA, the students use discussion, communication strategies, interaction, logical explanations, and critical thinking to convince others or give a logical explanation to their predictions in the text (Richardson & Morgan, 1997; Stahl, 2004).

Developing justification ability and skill usually results in firm comprehension and a holistic understanding of the text. The more students improve and utilize higher-order thinking strategies, the better their justifications are, and vice versa. From this perspective, justification and reflection have a cyclical nature that will eventually transform the knowledge of texts into a cognitive structure.

Summary and Conclusion

DRTA benefits from the schema theory and the cognitive theory. DRTA relies on students' prior knowledge, background knowledge, or schema to help them understand and comprehend what they are reading. Therefore, students are involved in reading to construct and understand their text interpretations (Kompyang, 2017). Nerim (2020) added that DRTA aims to elicit students' prior knowledge regarding the topic of a reading text. This means that students build their new knowledge in light of their prior knowledge, and it becomes part of the cognitive structures in their brain. Also, DRTA is a mental process and a higher-order thinking strategy that enables students to reason logically, make decisions based on their reading of a text, make predictions, and be aware of reading processes and strategies (Androveda, 2015; Fitriana, 2018).

Through looking at the techniques of DRTA, it is found that *prediction* is the primary component of this strategy. It plays a vital role in comprehending texts. This means that prediction is described as taking a chance by choosing the most likely alternative (Tompkins & Webeler, 1983). In addition, a prediction could be one of the significant theoretical foundations that Stauffer depended on in designing this strategy (Tierney & Readence, 2005).

Using the techniques of the DRTA strategy (*predicting, reading, confirming or refuting, and justifying*) plays a pivotal role in improving reading comprehension. Each technique can be applied systematically when DRTA puts them all together. In addition, using DRTA boosts and improves learners' reading comprehension in all aspects. Furthermore, DRTA improves students' reading comprehension because these activities are rich in communicative tasks. Thus, it provides readers with new concepts, ideas, suggestions, styles of thinking, and opinions.

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