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Innovative Technique for Promoting Literacy and Creativity: A Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the rationale for linguistic approach in teaching reading and investigated the impact of using literary texts as an innovative tool in promoting literacy and creativity in children. The theories of linguistics were analysed for proper contextualisation and conceptualisation in line with creativity and innovativeness of the pupils in word formation, connection and reading.

Keywords: Linguistic Approach, Literacy, Creativity, Teaching Reading

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important things every child should learn is how to read. This is because as children grow, they would need the knowledge of reading in school and the pursuit of education. Everything in the vocabulary, school subjects, assessments, and curriculum is being channelled to reading in one way or the other. The importance of reading cannot be overemphasized as everyone reads something for various reasons. Either for entertainment purposes, for information's sake, for academic purposes, research purposes, examinations, cultural participation, social intervention, to critique texts, and for general comprehension.



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In all, there is a great deal of learning, no matter the primary reason of reading. Either consciously or not, knowledge is acquired. There are quite a number of reading methods, theories and approaches. The three main theories of reading that extensively explains the process of reading are the traditional or bottom-up process which is concerned on the reader taking meaning from an already printed text without prior knowledge of the text. The second theory is the cognitive or top-down process, which is concerned with the reader, bring past knowledge to present knowledge to be able to interpret properly, a given text.

The last theory is the metacognitive or the interactive model which is concerned with the reader bringing in the cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, visualizations etc. This theory supports the work or coming together of the first two theories. This article focus on one out of the other theories of reading such as the psychological, whole word and linguistics and for the purpose of this article; we will be discussing the linguistics approach to reading.

Three linguists known as Leonard Bloomfield, Charles Fries, and Noam Chomsky postulated the linguistics approach or theory of reading. The first linguist; Bloomfield, is of the opinion that children should first be taught the visual discrimination of objects through colorful pictures which would help to bring to their memory or remembrance when they are eventually taught to associate the visually discriminated objects in form of letters, sounds, words or shapes. Furthermore, Bloomfield emphasised that teaching the child to appropriately name letters of the alphabet should come first as this will help the child to develop visual discrimination and word attack. He believes that the reading process should begin with the understanding of sound symbol correspondence as a basis for learning to read.

Naming the letters of the alphabet without error is also an appropriate channel to learning how to read while identifying the letter of a word from left to right, which ensures a form of mastery of the words and total discrimination of word and word attack. Generally, Bloomfield rejects the traditional or bottom top approach of the reading process and agrees that a child should first learn to identify or understand letter before pronouncing them.

For this linguist, a prior knowledge of a word or object must be brought to the memory of the child that is being taught to read before there can be a full grasp or understanding of what is being taught. Bloomfield believes that the necessary insights needed to understand reading is found in the linguistic theory other than social and psychological factors.

1.1 Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the effect of linguistics approach in teaching reading.

The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the effectiveness of linguistic approach in teaching reading
2. establish how linguistics approach could serve as innovative technique for promoting literacy in children.
3. ascertain how linguistics approach could serve as innovative technique for promoting creativity in children.



1.2 Research questions

The following research questions are generated to achieve these objectives.

- How effective is linguistic approach in teaching reading?
- How does linguistics approach serve as innovative technique for promoting literacy in children?

How does linguistics approach serve as innovative technique for promoting creativity in children?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Linguistic Approach: An Overview

According to the sociologist Kurt Lewin (1952), there is nothing more practical than a “Good theory”. In stark contrast to the common perception of beginners and even advanced students that linguistic theory is basically a nuisance and no more than an end in itself, this quote is in fact an ideal starting-point, which is designed to give a sketch of major theoretical and methodological approaches in English Linguistics. Linguistic theories are no less superfluous than, for example,

Newton’s Theory of Gravitation or Einstein’s Relativity Theory, as both, theories in linguistics and theories in physics, strive essentially for the same goal and serve the same purpose: to identify, formulate and explain a model of the underlying rules and principles of how things work in language or in the world, respectively, by means of observation and generalisation. Just as the theory of gravitation allows us to predict that objects which are dropped will fall to the ground rather than begin to float, a good theory of the English language will allow us to predict which sentences and words speakers are likely to produce and understand and which they will not.

Nila Banton Smith has pointed out that as early as the seventeenth century, educators were discussing various methods of circumventing the inconsistencies of the English language during beginning reading, such as: the phonic method, the alphabet method, the sight word method etc. The proof of these inconsistencies, however, still remains and the educators of this century are attempting to deal with them in a more effective manner in beginning reading programs. Several artificial orthographies, which attempt to control spelling patterns in reading, have been introduced. Another of the reading innovations is the linguistic approach.

The linguist is one of the advocators of regularising the spelling patterns in words presented to children in their readers. Through use of linguistic readers, the objective is to delay the beginning reader’s encounter with irregularly formed words of spelling until after the child has developed confidence in his reading ability. A linguist, in essence, studies human languages and is a scholar-scientist whose field of competence is human language. Linguistics, it would logically follow, is clearly and briefly defined as the scientific study of language.

The linguistic method suggests that initial instruction should present words in which patterns or symbol-sound relationship are both readily apparent and consistent. However, the linguist did not have a great impact on the educator until the middle 1950s. The three general principles of the linguistic approach are consistency of spelling patterns at the early stages, oral rather than silent reading, no picture clues. Reading is a language related process. The study of the science of language, which was defined as linguistics, has a contribution to make to reading. The linguistic view of reading as a decoding process is graphically portrayed below:

Reading	Language	Meaning
Decoding of writing	Representation of ideas and things in speech sounds.	Ideas and things.

Linguistic approach is a teaching method which assumes children in the class who participate have a strong grasp of their mother tongue (oral language) which is then used as an associative learning tool for words and spelling patterns. Most teaching is described as taking a linguistic approach where the lesson is taught in the mother tongue. Linguistic theory was formed by Noam Chomsky amongst others, who described language as having a grammar that is largely independent of language use. In a linguistic approach, most words presented in reading are phonemically regular and fit a particular pattern. The assumption is that once the underlying system is discovered, it is easier to break the code.

Thus the pupil spends the initial learning period on the smallest letters and learns first how to combine consonants and vowels into almost infinite numbers of three and four letter words. In order for children to perceive the phoneme-grapheme (sound- sight) relationship, the linguistic approach emphasizes the teaching of the letters of the alphabet as a beginning procedure. Since consonant sounds are not pronounced in isolation in normal English, the linguistic tool of presenting minimal pairs (words which differ only in one consonant or vowel) is used. Thus, a word such as ‘fat’ can be easily contrasted with words such as ‘cat’ and ‘sat’. Irregular words which do not follow a pattern are introduced as sight words.

If Leonard Bloomfield’s son, when he entered school, had not encountered a far out exponent of the kind of phonics Bloomfield described as ‘hiss and groan’ method of teaching reading, the development of linguistics approach to reading might have been quite different. As it was, Bloomfield invented an approach to beginning reading that limits instruction during a long introductory period to a rigid alphabetical principle. Bloomfield’s linguistic approach to teaching reading is based on the facts that English writing is alphabetic and that reading is merely the act of responding vocally to printed letters.

In other words, the letters of the alphabet represent speech sounds to be spoken and one reads by making the appropriate sounds for each pattern of letters. Bloomfield divides words into ‘regular’ and ‘irregular’ according to whether each letter takes its regular value. Bloomfield insists that to begin reading, the alphabetic principle should be followed, only regular words should be included without deviations until the child has over learned the regular words.



2.2 Linguistic Approach to Teaching Reading and Literacy

The study of linguistics can be traced back to the mid 1930's. Linguistic theory was postulated by language specialists like Leonard Bloomfield, Noam Chomsky and Charles Fries, who had various linguistic views to instruct perusing. According to UNICEF, Nigeria has the second highest burden of stunted children on the planet as over 2 million children in Nigeria experience the ill effects of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Breastfeeding rates have not improved over the previous decade, with only 17% of infants being breastfed during their initial six months of life.

Stunting is linked to poor cognitive development and lowered academic performance. There is a conviction that lack of healthy sustenance of newborn child and mother is a significant reason for reduced intellectual capability. Inadequate nutrient at the period of brain cell formation resulted to slow intellectual development which result to learning difficulties. Numerous children experience difficulty figuring out how to peruse because of insufficient nourishment. Black children particularly experience learning difficulties as a result of early malnutrition.

The idea to utilise linguistic approach in the teaching of reading came from Leonard Bloomfield. Leonard Bloomfield is cited as the earliest language specialist to endeavor the application of linguistics to reading instruction. Bloomfield perceived the technique being utilised to peruse his son uncovered an absence of knowledge. He believed phonics is not the best way of teaching reading and proposed that children should be taught visual discrimination of object before they learn to associate visually discriminated objects in form of shapes, letters and words to known sounds. As indicated by him, the child should not be taught sounds before he can peruse, the best is for the child to coordinate sound with visuals. Likewise, a child ought to be educated to name letters of alphabet and this will assist the child to develop visual discrimination and word attack.

As indicated by Charles Fries, the written English is alphabetic in nature, and it is the instructor's task to teach these to the children by introducing to them in organised sequence and by giving children adequate practice in remembering them in contrasting words. He proposed the 'transfer process' which required visual training, for instance, discrimination of the significant features of letters and words. For Fries, significance is lay in leaning to discriminate visually between whole patterns or units of words.

According to Noam Chomsky, he postulated the theory of generative grammar with the possibility that knowledge of language involves rules and representation. His theory of generative grammar says that people are all born with an innate understanding of the way language works, that is, the people are completely brought into the world with an intrinsic comprehension of the manner in which language works. Children are hereditarily programmed to acquire language because of an innate language acquisition mechanism residing in the brain named language acquisition device (LAD).

Language development is determined by the nature of the environment a child dwells. If a child is placed in an improvised environment, inborn abilities will not develop and grow and a stimulating environment will empower the child's innovativeness and intelligence to grow. According to Noam Chomsky, educating at any level involves encouraging natural development.



The best methodology of teaching is to persuade the learner that the subject merit learning and permits the child's natural inquisitive and interest to grow and develop. Linguistic is the study of structure of the English language and its study empower the students to find how oral language is put down to writing. The linguistic approach underlines the teaching of the letters of alphabet as a starting strategy.

2.3 Linguistics Approach as an Innovative Technique for Promoting Literacy and Creativity In Children

Innovation as an educational effort improved by what the developer considers to be new or different. An example of innovation in language education over the last few decades has incorporated new pedagogical approaches such as: as targeted language teaching; changes in teaching materials; technological development, such as learning a language using a computer. In order to increase the learner's desire to discover and increase their desire for language learning, discussion should focus on how linguistics learning tasks can be transformed into creative tasks, promoting literacy skills and creativity in children.

Various sub-fields of linguistics have exhibited a strong interest in the concept of creativity in recent decades. According to Chomsky, creativity lies at the very basis of language, and it is the key quality of language that provides the tools for expressing endlessly many thoughts and reacting properly in an indefinite range of different situations (Chomsky, 1965). The playful use of words to create new meanings has been termed as language creativity (Tin, 2003). Language play involves a wide range of activities, according to pomerantz and Bell (2007), because all communication takes place through manipulations of linguistics form and meaning.

Creativity is the ability to come up with surprising but intelligible new ideas, and also valuable in some way (Boden 2001) and involves different types of creative thinking. Thus teaching using linguistics approaches in an innovative manner inspire creativity in the learning process and have a bigger payoff for students.

Boden (2001), proposes three types of creative thinking through which new ideas can be produced, which are:

1. Combinatorial thinking: it produces new ideas by associating old ideas in unknown but intelligible and valuable forms;
2. Exploratory thinking: explores all the possibilities inherent in the current conceptual space using existing rules; and
3. Transformational thinking: this significantly modifies one or more rules of the current conceptual space.

Using words to illustrate this point of view on creativity is a common element of everyday language use and incorporates numerous sorts of creative thinking. Different language users use varying degrees of linguistic creativity throughout the entire range. Tin (2013) highlighted the following examples in which the language user changes the familiar into something unusual, fresh, and startling meaning through playful language use:

1. 'Because you're mine, i walk the line': a phrase from a song that uses exploratory thinking to produce an unexpected meaning, that is, using the current rules of rhyming 'mine—'line'.



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2. 'Cats walk thin and sleep fat,' a line from a children's poem that uses combinational thinking to create an uncommon image of cats by combining ideas from various faraway locations in a new way ('walk, sleep,' versus 'thin, fat').
3. 'If there is a will, i want to be in it': a parapsydokian used frequently by comedians to produce a startling ending to a common statement (in this case, 'if there is a will, there is a means') through transformational thinking by dramatically altering part of the existing conceptual space.
4. The stomachs are silent. The serious lamb burger': created a new meaning and phrase using transformational and combinational thinking, altering a well-known movie title ('silence of the lambs') and merging ideas from disparate disciplines ('movie title' versus 'advertisement').

Language acquisition is aided by the necessity to utilise language to generate new meaning, which helps to extend and destabilise learners' language. It assists learners in retrieving and transforming less accessible language as well as exploring and transforming their own language. It reduces the tendency for cognitive focus and improves the recall of language. We broaden our existing vocabulary and grammar, retrieve less accessible words and phrases, combine familiar words in unfamiliar ways, and develop complex grammar when we need to say something new (in particular, new to self, which speakers have not yet considered or 'discovered' and thus lack the language to express (Tin, 2011). Going forward, Tin (2013) discussed two language learning tasks that could be set up to promote creativity in language learning: multicultural experiences and constraints.

3. CREATIVITY AND MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCES

According to research, there is a link between creativity and multiculturalism (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky & Chiu, 2008). Being exposed to a variety of events at the same time can help people develop cognitive flexibility and creativity. Multicultural experience, on the other hand, can be a double-edged sword. Individuals may experience culture shock when they are exposed to a strange environment, feeling uncomfortable and disoriented in the absence of the familiar language, food, and behavioural standards.

Through multicultural experiences, people are also exposed to a range of behavioral and cognitive scripts for situations and problems. These new ideas, concepts, and scripts can be the inputs for the creative expansion processes because the more new ideas people have, the more likely they are to come up with novel combinations. When people are engaged in a new culture, these elements that they normally take for granted can become abruptly lost and inaccessible (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). In multicultural encounters, 'culture shock' can spark creativity by helping one to see things from fresh angles. It is a two-edged sword when it comes to culture.

On the one hand, it is made up of a system of learned patterns that enable people in a society coordinate their social behaviours (Chiu & Hong, 2006). When a person is engaged in and exposed to only one culture, however, the learned routines and conventional knowledge of that culture may limit his or her ability to think creatively. Prior knowledge and readily available exemplars are a fundamental impediment to imaginative thinking and conceptual growth (Ward, 1994).



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Although culture shock has a negative aspect, once the hardest adaption periods are gone, it can be a terrific opportunity to learn fresh perspectives on many daily activities and to acquire new ways of thinking. Hence by reading books on different background children would increase in word vocabulary, this is obviously seen when children express themselves in story writing and drawing of diagrams. This meets up with the national curriculum of England which states that students should read literary texts in the language, which in turn will stimulate ideas, develop creative expression and help students write prose using grammar and language.

Expanding vocabulary and writing creatively to express your own ideas and opinions" (department of education, 2013). However, just the mere presence of multicultural experiences is not sufficient for creativity. Another condition, namely constraints, needs to be present to facilitate creativity tin.

3.1 Creativity and Constraints

Rules, boundaries, and scarcity are all examples of constraints that limit freedom and choice (Joyce 2009). Constraints are two-sided or paired in that one element limits searching in specific sections of the problem space, while the other element encourages searching in other areas of the problem space (stokes 2006). As a result, Tin (2013) claimed that the types of constraints that are desired for creativity differ from those seen in 'controlled' language acquisition tasks.

Limitations in these 'managed' tasks typically encourage learners to evaluate what they already know to communicate known meaning while restricting their search for riskier, unknown areas (for example, utilizing a given sentence structure to express what is seen in an image or presented as known information). A limitation that leads to creativity, on the other hand, should encourage learners to look for fresh meaning in the unknown rather than limiting their search to what they already know.

Boden (2001) believes that the creative use of restrictions should be principled and innovative, the types of limitations applied, as well as the style and timing of constraint application, are some examples of inventive utilization. Joyce (2009) also suggested renowned creative works have featured the discovery of new restrictions to work with. In terms of linguistic creativity, this entails not just satisfying current restrictions, but also discovering new constraints or altering some or all of the existing constraints or norms in order to foster innovation. In terms of timing, restrictions do not need to be presented at the start of a work because the existence of a clearly defined goal at this stage can backfire, activating familiar past experiences rather than widening learners' vocabulary.

A creative task involves two stages: idea generation and concept exploration (Finke, Ward, & Smith 1992). In the idea-generation phase, a social actor is given an ill-defined problem and is asked to come up with solutions or 'preventive forms' without using words. Not knowing what the final result will be, what the task's purpose will be, or what meaning those shapes will have. A new limitation is discovered or exposed during the idea-exploration phase, and the social actor is driven to interpret previously generated 'pre-inventive forms' in light of the new constraint, constructing new meaning and making meaning in retrospect.



3.2 Idea-generation phase

Names of objects (for example, phone, watch, et cetera); 'natural elements' (for example, storm, sun, flower, et cetera); 'names of animals' on a piece of paper (for example, kangaroo). The words pupils create during this idea-generation phase are considered per-inventive forms since they are created without knowing what meaning and purpose they will serve or what they will be utilised for.

After words have been generated, new constraints are revealed:

1. Formal constraint: students must compose sentences using the structure outlined below and the words generated previously. They must employ the words generated in the preceding phase (requirement for input): 'if i were a (enter the generated word here), i'd...'
2. Semantic constraint: students must meet the semantic constraint, which requires them to construct sentences that adhere to the formal limitations outlined above in order to express their feelings to someone they care about, (for example, if i were a kangaroo, i'd put you in my pocket, keep you close to my heart, and hop around town'; 'if i were a candle, i'd always burn bright for you'; 'if i were a window, i'd discover every crack to get inside your heart'.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Teaching using linguistics approaches in an innovative manner inspire creativity in the learning process have a bigger payoff for students, their exposure to second language learners' literary texts actually improves literacy and creativity in them. This creativity helps learners in becoming self-sufficient in depending in themselves in learning and using their instinct to learn. These reasons make creativity a growing valued characteristic perceived as a valued resource for individual and social development.

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