

Chapter 15

Developing a Translanguaging Reading Model for Indian ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Studies have proven that multilingual children's second language learning and reading comprehension skills are influenced by the complex linguistic repertoire they possess. But when multilingual learners from low SES and migrant families acquire reading through a medium of instruction (MoI) that is not their L1, they face challenges in general language comprehension and literacy development as their L1 knowledge remains untapped as elaborated upon in the previous chapter. Therefore, this chapter proposes a task-based translanguaging model within the socio-cognitive framework for scaffolding reading in low resource Indian classrooms. The scaffold is provided through a series of incrementally complex tasks to build learners' lexical coverage, inferencing skills, and whole-text comprehension through translanguaging pedagogy at pre-, while-, and post-reading stages. The model activates learners' prior knowledge through L1-L2 lexical equivalents, develops inference generation abilities through peer interaction, and aids whole-text comprehension through bilingual sequential summary.

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we have presented a critical review of the composition of multilingual education (MLE) in India and the use of translanguaging pedagogy in ESL classrooms in general and for developing reading comprehension skills in particular. In this chapter we are going to propose a sequential task-based reading comprehension model specifically designed to enhance reading for meaning and inference generation in young ESL learners from low SES families. As these children lack adequate exposure to the target language outside class and reading is an abstract multidimensional literacy skill that requires adult intervention and structured input, we have designed this model keeping in mind the rich L1 resources of the learners and their low level proficiency in the target language as it is mostly limited to classroom exposure. Alongside this, we propose to place this model within the socio-cognitive theory (SCT) of learning whereby young ESL learners would engage in peer work and enhance their reading knowledge through mutual interactions and constructive feedback from one other.

We would begin our proposal of a reading model by referring to the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach that is based on the premise that through solving authentic tasks with real-life goals language learners can engage in meaningful communication which in turn can focus their attention to the linguistic forms of the target language (Long, 1985; Ellis, 1996; Skehan, 1996; Robinson, 2001). For the task-based reading model to be successful, an application of the TBLT approach, the tasks have to be graded or sequenced according to their linguistic and cognitive complexity. For this we refer to Robinson's cognition hypothesis which theorises that 'pedagogic tasks should be designed and then sequenced in an incremental order of difficulty so that the learners move from classroom setting tasks to real-world tasks' (2001: p. 287). So let us now look at the main aspects of task sequencing and its adaptability for Indian multilingual reading classrooms.

Task Sequencing

Since the TBLT approach advocates the use of goal-oriented tasks where the target language is used for communicative purpose to achieve desired outcome (Ellis, 1996, p. 23), a method to enhance goal-orientation is to sequence tasks in an order of cognitive difficulty (Robinson, 2001). A set of tasks when sequenced on a scale of complexity can help ESL learners pay attention to form and meaning. This can eventually lead to faster development of the target language. The sequencing can be based on several task factors such as (a) *complexity*, (b) *condition*, and (c) *difficulty* with (i) *cognitive*, (ii) *interactive*, and (iii) *learner related* factors, respectively (Robinson, 2001a; 2001b. pp. 287-318). These sub-features are proposed in Robinson's Triadic Componential Framework of task sequencing. He further explains that sequencing of pedagogic tasks can be done along two complexity dimensions: one, *resource-directing* based on *cognitive-conceptual* task demands and two, *resource-dispersing*, and *performative procedural* task demands.

A resource-directing task with many elements is expected to ask for a range of lexis and to yield more complex syntactic structures because all the different elements need to be named and distinguished. Similarly, complex reasoning tasks will generate more complex language because the line of argumentation may be lexically marked (e.g., by the verbs '*claim*', '*propose*', '*argue*'), and syntactically expressed by means of complex sentence structures of argumentation (e.g., '*if* . . . *then*' clauses). On the other hand, tasks can increase in complexity along '*resource-dispersion*' dimensions and make extra resource demands which cannot be met by using a monolingual system. *Resource dispersion* variables include

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