

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, an in-depth explanation of the theories utilized for the study will be presented. Theories related to Sociocultural and its key concept, Types of Scaffolding, Teaching challenges and solution on reading to Young Learners, and relevant research studies.

A. Theoretical Review

In this section, the researcher focuses on the literature review related to the topic. This includes a brief overview of sociocultural theory, which also takes into account teaching reading to young learners, as well as the challenges and solutions they face.

1. Introduction to Sociocultural Theory

This research employed a sociocultural theory. Sociocultural Theory is a theory of learning development developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), the learning process does not occur individually; instead, it occurs through social interactions with other people in the surrounding environment, such as teachers, peers, and other adults. Learning is a social and contextual process, meaning that it is strongly influenced by the culture and environment in which a person is located. Early in the 20th century, Russian psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896– 1934) created sociocultural theory. His writings, which argue that social interaction and culture are essential to human development, emerged as a response to behaviorism and Piaget’s theory of individual cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is essentially social in characteristics, and children develop cognitive skills through socially mediated activities, particularly through language and interaction with more experienced people. According to Jones (2020) Karl Marx’s dialectical materialism, which emphasized how social and material circumstances shape human consciousness, had a significant impact on Vygotsky. In addition, he incorporated ideas from psychology, education, linguistics, and philosophy into a

cohesive strategy that emphasized the interdependence of society and the individual in growth.

Vygotsky divides children's cognitive development into two key stages: initially, understanding is constructed through social communication with others, and subsequently, this socially mediated knowledge is internalized and transformed into personal understanding (Panhwar et al., 2016). In educational and language learning contexts, this perspective highlights the teacher's crucial role as a mediator in the learning process. Teachers facilitate students' cognitive and linguistic development by offering guidance, modeling strategies, and providing appropriate support. This support, known as mediation, can take the form of language, symbols, or other instructional tools. According to Panhwar et al. (2016), mediation plays a vital role in helping learners develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills by engaging them in meaningful interaction with both cultural tools and more knowledgeable individuals. Thus, Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that learning, especially in language education, is not isolated but deeply rooted in social and cultural experiences facilitated by educators.

2. Key Concept of Sociocultural Theory

1) Mediation

Vygotsky emphasized that sociocultural interactions have a profound impact on children's cognitive development and that learning occurs when individuals engage in meaningful communication with others, including parents, instructors, and more experienced peers. To help children make sense of their experiences, these interactions serve as a form of mediation, where language, symbols, and culturally shared tools play a crucial role. Knowledge is not only taught but also internalized during this process, progressively integrating into the child's autonomous thought and reasoning. According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive development is mediated and shaped by culture and social context rather than taking place independently of the environment. This idea is further supported by Wertsch (1991), who explains that mediation operates through cultural tools particularly language that organize how learners interpret and engage with the world. Similarly, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) emphasize that in second language

development, mediation is the primary mechanism that enables learners to progress from assisted performance toward independent competence.

2) More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Learning occurs through interaction within a framework of activities influenced by social, cultural, and physical environments, according to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Activity. Purposeful activity, which includes fundamental, goal-oriented tasks like those in language learning, is at the core of this process. These learning activities are organized in the classroom according to a social activity framework that considers the physical environment, learning goals, social roles, and interaction conventions. Importantly, during the activity, students receive support from More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs), typically teachers or more experienced classmates, who offer guidance, constructive criticism, and modeling. With this assistance, students can participate in tasks that would be too challenging for them to do on their own, which eventually results in improved comprehension and skill development.

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3) Zone Of Proximal Development

A key concept in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which explains how students can advance their cognitive development when guided by more experienced individuals, such as peers or teachers. In this area, educators provide students with short-term, systematic scaffolding to help them complete tasks they are unable to do on their own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Daniels, 2001; Blake & Pope, 2008). As students gain proficiency, scaffolding, which might include leading questions, clues, prompts, and demonstrations, is progressively decreased. When it comes to teaching reading, teachers act as facilitators who modify their support according to each student's place in their ZPD, providing assistance that is in line with the task's difficulty and the learner's present level of ability (Vygotsky, 1978).

4) Cooperative Learning Activities

Cooperative learning is an instructional method in which students work in small groups to achieve shared learning objectives. Within these groups, students who have a firmer grasp of the material can assist their peers who are still developing their understanding, allowing scaffolding to occur naturally through peer interaction. This aligns closely with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners perform tasks with the help of more capable individuals before reaching independent mastery. According to Newman and Holzman (1993, in Panhwar et al., 2016), Vygotsky's approach fundamentally reflects a cooperative learning strategy, as it relies on collaboration and shared activities that help students move beyond their current developmental level. Panhwar et al. (2016) further emphasize that Vygotsky's learning model explicitly encourages interactive and cooperative learning, which inherently provides opportunities for scaffolding within group dynamics. In language learning, such as reading, interaction between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves, is central to the learning process.

Thus, cooperative learning not only fosters an active and communicative classroom environment but also serves as a natural framework for scaffolding, where support is given and gradually reduced as learners gain confidence and

competence. This strategy is particularly effective for young learners, who benefit from social engagement, communication, and hands-on collaborative experiences that are essential for language development within the sociocultural framework.

3. Types of Scaffolding

Scaffolding is one of the key instructional strategies that supports learners within their zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Scaffolding refers to the temporary assistance provided by a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), such as a teacher, peer, or parent, to help learners perform tasks they cannot yet do independently.

1) Verbal Scaffolding

Verbal scaffolding involves the use of spoken language to support and guide learners' thinking and understanding during the learning process. It is based on the belief that language plays a central role in cognitive development, as proposed by Vygotsky. Through strategic dialogue, teachers help students build vocabulary, clarify ideas, and organize thoughts. This form of scaffolding may include asking open-ended questions, paraphrasing or rephrasing student responses, using think-aloud strategies to model cognitive processes, and prompting learners to explain or elaborate on their ideas. According to Hammond (2001), verbal scaffolding provides essential linguistic support that helps learners construct meaning, engage in dialogue, and deepen their comprehension, particularly in language learning where communication functions as both the tool and the goal of instruction.

2) Procedural Scaffolding

Procedural scaffolding refers to the structured guidance given to students in managing the steps or processes involved in a learning task. This type of support helps students understand how to approach a task, rather than just focusing on the content. Teachers can provide clear instructions, use graphic organizers, assign roles in group activities, or demonstrate how to complete a task step-by-step. These strategies help students to stay focused, organized, and confident while learning. As students become more familiar with the procedures, support is slowly withdrawn, encouraging independence. Procedural scaffolding is particularly

important in complex learning environments where students must navigate unfamiliar steps or expectations, and research shows that such scaffolding improves students' ability to follow learning processes effectively (Midun, Bule, & Rorimpandey, 2020).

3) Conceptual Scaffolding

Conceptual scaffolding is designed to help students understand what to think about during a task by drawing attention to key ideas, relationships or concepts that underlie it. This helps students to focus on the important elements of the content and make connections between new information and prior knowledge. Teachers can provide conceptual scaffolding by highlighting key ideas in the text, using concept maps, asking questions that require interpretation or analysis, or encouraging students to reflect on how new content fits into a broader framework. According to Saye and Brush (2002), conceptual scaffolding guides learners toward deeper understanding by directing their attention to important aspects of the task and helping them construct meaning in a more purposeful and informed way. This type of scaffolding supports students in constructing meaning and developing deeper understanding, especially in subjects that require analytical thinking and content integration.

4) Metacognitive Scaffolding

Metacognitive scaffolding supports students in developing awareness and control over their own thinking and learning strategies. It involves prompting learners to reflect on their understanding, monitor their progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they use. Teachers may encourage students to set goals, ask self-reflective questions, or use learning journals to track their thinking process. According to Rahmat et al. (2024), metacognitive scaffolding strengthens learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognitive processes by prompting reflection and strategic thinking during academic tasks. Metacognitive scaffolding promotes self-regulation, a critical skill for lifelong learning. In alignment with Vygotsky's theory, this form of scaffolding helps learners internalize the external guidance they receive, eventually becoming independent thinkers capable of managing their learning.

5) Visual Scaffolding

Visual scaffolding uses pictures, diagrams, charts, and other visual aids to support comprehension and memory retention. This type of scaffolding is especially beneficial for visual learners, young learners, or second-language learners who may struggle with text-heavy material. By presenting information visually, teachers can help students understand abstract or complex ideas more easily. Commonly used examples include mind maps, labeled illustrations, flowcharts, and timelines. Visual scaffolding provides students with alternative ways to access content, serving as a bridge between language and meaning and aligning with Vygotsky's notion of cultural tools mediating learning (Mortini & Jaya, 2021).

6) Technological or Digital Scaffolding

Technological or digital scaffolding involves the use of digital tools and platforms to facilitate learning and provide individualized support. With the advancement of educational technology, learners can access a wide range of digital resources, including interactive applications, online dictionaries, collaborative learning platforms, and automated feedback tools. These digital tools can offer hints, suggestions, and visual or auditory support that align with the learner's level of development. In the context of Sociocultural Theory, technology functions as a mediational tool that expands the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by enabling interaction, communication, and personalized guidance beyond classroom settings. This idea is supported by Azir and Sriyanto (2021), who found that integrating scaffolding strategies within digital reading environments such as using prediction activities, modeled reading, contextualizing text, and digital annotation tools significantly improves students' comprehension of digital texts. Their study shows that digital scaffolding not only enhances engagement but also helps learners overcome reading challenges more effectively in technology-rich learning contexts. The types of scaffolding above can be summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Types of Scaffolding*

Type	Focus	Example	Role in SCT
Verbal	Language and interaction	Think-alouds, guiding questions	Language and mediational tool
Procedural	Process and structure	Step-by-step guides, checklists	Guided participation
Conceptual	Content understanding	Concept maps, linking prior knowledge	Meaning-making through tools
Metacognitive	Self-awareness and regulation	Learning logs, reflective questions	Development of Self-regulation
Visual	Graphic and spatial support	Charts, diagrams, images	Visual tools and mediators
Technological/ Digital	Technology-enhanced learning	Educational apps, digital collaboration	Modern mediational tools

In research exploring the challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading to young learners and the strategies they employ to overcome them, different types of scaffolding such as verbal, procedural, conceptual, metacognitive, visual, and technological can serve as in-depth thematic categories. Scaffolding itself is defined as temporary support that is adjusted to learners' needs and gradually withdrawn as students gain independence (Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010). These scaffolding types reflect the various forms of support teachers provide and offer a framework for classifying both the challenges encountered and the strategies used to address them. For example, if teachers report difficulties in helping students understand English vocabulary in reading texts, a possible solution is to use verbal scaffolding (e.g., repeating words, modeling, or guiding

pronunciation). Similarly, to address technology- related or engagement barriers, teachers might employ digital scaffolding, such as encouraging students to watch short films or animations to activate prior knowledge and support comprehension. According to Sihombing et. al (2025), who demonstrated that scaffolding strategies significantly improved students' reading comprehension, particularly when used to support vocabulary understanding and procedural text comprehension. In this research, the strategies employed by teachers are analyzed and categorized according to these scaffolding parameters to better understand how different types of support correspond to specific instructional challenges and solutions.

4. Teaching Reading to Young Learners

Reading instruction is crucial in helping students understand and interpret written text effectively. It involves developing essential skills such as decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Harmer, 2001). However, teaching reading, especially to young learners, presents several challenges, including limited vocabulary and low motivation (Alharbi, 2022). To address these challenges, it is important to employ strategies that engage students actively and provide the necessary support for their development. Basically, to teach reading, there are some principles as what stated by Williams (1986) as following:

a. Reading is a Process

Reading is not just recognizing words, but reading is also a dynamic process that involves the integration of various skills, such as decoding, comprehension, and interpretation. Reading is an active and evolving mental process in which the reader constructs meaning from the text.

b. Reading is a Language Activity

Reading is related to language development. Students' ability to read is shaped by their language skills, including vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. In addition, reading requires the same linguistic understanding as speaking and listening. **Comprehension is the Goal of Reading**

The main purpose of reading is to have the ability to understand meaning. Reading instruction should not only focus on decoding but also on fostering deeper understanding, analysis, and critical thinking.

c. Reading is a Teachable Skill

Reading is not an innate ability, but a skill that can be developed through effective teaching. Instruction should be systematic, explicit, and structured, so that students can develop skills from basic to more complex reading tasks.

d. The Role of Motivation.

Motivation plays an important role in reading success. Students are more likely to become active readers if they are motivated. Teachers should foster interest in reading through several strategies and positive reinforcement.

e. Reading Develops Gradually

Reading development occurs gradually, from early phonemic awareness and decoding to the higher levels of comprehension and critical reading. Instruction should be tailored to the reader's stage of development and support progression to higher levels of reading proficiency.

f. Reading Should Be Integrated with Other Language Arts

Reading instruction should not stand alone, but should be integrated with other language arts, such as writing, speaking, and listening. These skills reinforce each other and help students become more effective communicators and readers.

g. Teaching Should Be Differentiated

Students have different needs, backgrounds and learning styles. Teachers should differentiate for diverse student accommodations, providing additional support for struggling students and challenges for more advanced students.

h. Use of Appropriate Reading Materials

Choosing appropriate and varied reading materials is very important. Reading materials should be appropriate for students' developmental levels, interests and cultural backgrounds and can provide challenge and enjoyment to foster a love of reading.

i. Assessment and Feedback

Continuous assessment and feedback are essential for monitoring progress and adjusting instruction. Teachers should regularly assess students' reading ability and provide timely and constructive feedback to guide improvement and encourage self-reflection.

These principles are foundational to the understanding and teaching of reading. They emphasize the importance of thoughtful, engaging, and student-centered instruction, considering both the cognitive processes involved in reading and the social context in which it occurs. On the other hand, teaching reading to young learners is a crucial yet challenging process in language learning, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). Children have unique characteristics such as short attention spans and a need for learning that is visual, interactive and fun (Cameron, 2001). This implies that traditional, text-heavy methods may not be effective, and teachers must creatively incorporate engaging activities to maintain student interest. The involvement of parents and teachers is crucial in creating positive and meaningful reading experiences (Nunan, 2011). This suggests that children's reading success depends not only on classroom teaching strategies, but also on active support from their immediate environment.

5. Challenges and Solutions in Teaching Reading to Young Learners

Teaching reading to young learners comes with various challenges that can hinder their progress and engagement. In particular, motivating students to engage with reading tasks can be difficult, as many students find reading boring or uninteresting (Novianti et al., 2021). In addition, teachers often face difficulties in providing developmentally appropriate reading materials, which limits students' ability to connect and understand texts. Adhikari (2024) found that students often lack access to suitable textbooks and instead rely on substandard reading materials. Their study also highlighted several other obstacles, including students' poor reading habits, limited vocabulary and background knowledge, inadequate strategic reading skills, and overly long reading texts and courses, all of which pose significant challenges for teachers in providing effective reading instruction.

Furthermore, Novianti et al. (2021) state that the challenges primarily stem from students' limited vocabulary mastery and their low motivation to actively participate in classroom activities. These findings show that the challenges in teaching reading come from both the students and the teaching process itself. Therefore, teachers need flexible and appropriate ways to help students overcome these problems. This finding suggests that the challenges in teaching reading stem from both the students and the teaching process itself. Therefore, teachers need flexible and appropriate ways to help students overcome these problems.

To overcome this problem, Adhikari (2024) explains that teachers' approaches, such as consistently monitoring students' reading progress, showing patience in the learning process, and encouraging students' active participation, can help overcome the obstacles. Challenges in the form of students' limited vocabulary can be addressed with the patience of teachers who consistently monitor students' abilities regularly, allowing teachers to identify which areas need strengthening. The challenge of a lack of reading habits can be overcome by creating a classroom atmosphere that encourages active student involvement, such as through discussions or group activities. Meanwhile, for challenges such as inappropriate or insufficient materials, teachers can make adjustments through observing students' needs and increasing direct interaction during the learning process.

To address these issues, Novianti et al. (2021) suggest using specific strategies, such as brainstorming and pair work, which can stimulate students' engagement and support vocabulary development in a collaborative learning environment. Brainstorming is done to arouse students' critical thinking before reading, for example, by linking the reading topic with their experience or knowledge. Meanwhile, pair work helps students discuss with friends, exchange ideas, look for keywords, and understand the reading content together. This strategy also makes the learning atmosphere more fun and less boring, so students are more enthusiastic about learning to read.

B. Study of the Relevant Research

Several relevant studies have been conducted regarding the challenges of teaching reading. First, according to Novianti et al. (2021), teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts often face challenges such as students' lack of vocabulary mastery and students' low motivation to engage in classroom activities. This study, which involved ten high school English teachers in Cimahi, Indonesia, employed a descriptive qualitative approach that combined questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that although these challenges hindered teaching effectiveness, strategies such as brainstorming, pair work, and integrating vocabulary learning activities significantly supported students' engagement and understanding. Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of selecting suitable texts and integrating pre-reading and post-reading activities to maintain students' interest and enhance comprehension. The practical findings of this study offer insights into how to overcome vocabulary limitations and enhance student participation, thereby optimizing reading instruction in EFL contexts, particularly at the secondary school level.

Second, according to Spanou and Zafiri (2019), teaching reading to young learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context can be effectively enhanced through the integration of digital tools, such as blogs. This study examines how blogs are utilized to enhance student motivation and engagement while fostering collaboration and interaction. The research employed a qualitative approach, involving classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students in an elementary school setting. The findings revealed that the use of blogs enabled students to develop reading and writing skills in a more interactive and meaningful way. Furthermore, teachers highlighted the importance of scaffolding and providing culturally relevant topics to maintain students' interest and participation. This study supports the idea that incorporating innovative strategies, such as technology-driven tools, can help overcome challenges like low motivation and limited interaction in the EFL classroom. Its insights align with the current research objective of exploring effective teaching strategies to enhance reading skills among young learners.

Third, Reynolds and Teng (2021) discuss the common challenges faced by educators when teaching young learners to read and write in English. These challenges could include issues such as limited vocabulary, motivation problems, and cultural and linguistic differences. In conclusion, the special issue would provide a comprehensive overview of the latest research and practices in teaching English reading and writing to young learners, focusing on both theoretical underpinnings and practical strategies. It offers insights into the challenges faced by young learners in EFL contexts. It discusses how teachers can address these challenges by using interactive, communicative, and culturally responsive methods to develop literacy skills. Through this collection of studies, the journal aims to contribute to the ongoing professional development of teachers and improve the quality of English language education for young learners.