

## Focusing on EFL Reading



Focusing on EFL Reading:  
Theory and Practice

Edited by

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Adrian Roscoe

**CAMBRIDGE**  
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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Focusing on EFL Reading: Theory and Practice  
Edited by Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Adrian Roscoe

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# INTRODUCTION

## FOCUSING ON EFL READING: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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A highly complex and interactive cognitive process, reading is perhaps the most daunting language skill to acquire and master as it “involves orthographic, phonological, syntactic and semantic processing” (El-Kilabi, 2005, p. 198). It is also, by and large, solitary and individualistic (Brumfit, 1981), as we generally do it alone, and no two people read in exactly the same way, which causes the activity to seem nebulous and adds to the difficulty of unraveling its mystery. Reading also involves interplay and transaction between text characteristics, reader characteristics and processing abilities (Lee, 2009).

Being clearly an essential life skill, reading has been the focus of much research that explores the interaction between bottom-up processes, like word recognition, decoding and automaticity, and top-down processes, like schema and background knowledge use. Other research foci related to reading include strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), metacognition (Carrell, 1989), common difficulties (Alderson, 1984), vocabulary acquisition, language proficiency (Carrell, 1991), textual features (Beck, McKeown, Sinatra & Loxterman, 1991; Beck & McKeown, 1994; Wang, 2006), cohesion (Wilwa, Revlin & Hegarty, 2009; Hoover, 2009), coherence (Harbague, 1999; Sundermeier, Broek & Zwaan, 2005; Kendeou & Broek, 2007; Meyer, 2003), syntax (Blau, 1982), organization (Carrell, 1984), and content and cultural knowledge (Rapp & Kendeou, 2007).

In second and foreign language reading, the process is made even more complicated (Grabe, 2002) by multiple factors, including inadequate language proficiency (which slows bottom-up processing) and different or inadequate background knowledge (which hampers top-down processing). Weak readers suffer from the Mathew Effect because their slow reading hinders their language development. In other words, learners' reading skill



proficiency bears directly on their performance in the foreign language they are tackling. In fact, according to Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010), research shows that “reading is a significant and viable means of developing L2/FL ability, particularly in FL settings in which L2 input sources are limited” (p.27). Research also shows that “reading fluency is critical to successful reading. Fluent readers are accurate and fast in their ability to recognize words, and in their use of lexical and syntactic knowledge to better comprehend text” (Ibid, p. 27).

Because many foreign language students study their subject areas in English, reading is essential for their academic and professional success. Indeed, research tells us that reading is an important predictor and measure of their academic success. Yet EFL students struggle with this skill. Many are weak readers, slow at decoding and poor at comprehending what they read. This can be attributed to such factors as weak English proficiency and very limited experience with reading and the written word in both their mother tongue and English. Appropriate interventions can range from classroom activities, extramural practices, extensive, intensive and strategic reading to attitude and motivation improvement. Fortunately, these have been designed and implemented widely among teachers and practitioners in the last twenty years. But, while findings from reading research abound, the scope for further investigation remains unlimited, especially in countries where research activity is minimal.

This book, therefore, aims to address diverse aspects of EFL reading processes and comprehension. It is divided into six parts. The first addresses vocabulary and reading comprehension. As mentioned above, the importance of vocabulary and word knowledge for reading comprehension has never been contested, whether in theory or practice. Despite differences in focus, L1, L2 and FL research – historical and recent – has consistently found that vocabulary knowledge correlates very highly with reading comprehension (Cobb, 1997; Heibert, Lehr & Osborn, 2004; Nation, 2001). Hence, researchers have sought to discover how many words ESL and EFL learners need in order to read with comprehension. The General Service List (GSL) of the 2000 most common words was developed by West in 1953 and later updated by Bauman and Culligan (1995). However, West’s list was not deemed sufficient, since knowing only 2000 words omits around 20% of unknown words in any text encountered, which prevents successful comprehension. Liu Na and Nation (1985) demonstrate that we need around 3000 words for 95% text comprehension. Since reading is clearly the most important skill for academic performance, and since vocabulary knowledge is

essential for reading comprehension, it follows that special attention should be devoted to vocabulary knowledge, learning and instruction.

Part one of this book expands on all this in four chapters. The first, by Awadelkarim and Al-Homoud, surveys literature published in the last three decades on the role of glossing in vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. It critically reviews seminal studies and paradigms, critiques numerous gaps/inadequacies/delimitations and inconsistencies in some major existing studies/models, casts fresh light on the long-standing dilemma of the L1-L2 relationship, connecting all these with the complexities and intricacies of the reading process, and offering suggestions for future research in which the writers recommend the importance of taking a much more complex, socio-cognitive, dynamic, change/context-sensitive and multi-facted approach to all aspects of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

In the second chapter, “Vocabulary Knowledge and its Relationship with EAP Proficiency and Academic Achievement in an English Medium University in Oman”, Roche and Harrington examine first and final-year students’ English vocabulary recognition using the LanguageMAP, a computerized test developed by Australia’s Queensland University. Specifically, the chapter aims to determine if this test reliably predicts Omani students’ language proficiency and whether, in turn, their vocabulary knowledge reliably predicts their academic performance in English (AEP). A positive correlation is suggested between EAP and GPA and between vocabulary knowledge and AEP. Hence, vocabulary knowledge can indeed, it is argued, predict academic performance and English proficiency. This means that it can be used as an easy and cost-effective alternative to college post-enrollment assessment.

David Coulson’s chapter on developing word reading skills in East Asia’s secondary schools (Japan and Korea) shows that Japanese students’ English word recognition skills are hampered by the distance between Japanese and English writing styles. Koreans are found to read high-frequency English words more easily than their Japanese contemporaries. And since word recognition skills are not emphasized in East Asian secondary education, especially in Japan, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on this crucial skill.

The chapter “Improving Foundation Programme Students’ Reading Skills: Needs Analysis” by Ptak and Ginosyan investigates first-year English Foundation Programme learners’ requirements by identifying the most common strategies and practices used by students and college faculty in the learning and teaching of reading and vocabulary skills. It also explores student perceptions of the Foundation Programme’s curriculum

and teaching materials and the challenges they face in these. This study's results are certainly of consequence and can inform English Foundation Reading Programmes across Oman and elsewhere.

Part two of the book explores extensive and intensive reading in four chapters, each addressing the topic from a unique perspective. For proficiency in reading one must read extensively, intensively and widely and notice the language. Extensive reading, more speedily than intensive reading, requires a strong focus to gain a general understanding of material to be covered swiftly. Extensive reading is done for pleasure and exposes readers to diverse texts and topics (Day and Bamford, 1998). On the other hand, intensive reading requires close textual scanning and perhaps re-reading for information, not pleasure (Williams & Moran, 1989). These two types of activity are required to gain reading comprehension and speed and this part of the book shows how they can be adopted to advantage.

Nur's chapter investigates the effect of using self-access centers for promoting and improving reading among university staff. An extensive reading programme is described here, based within a self-access center, and the results indicate a positive effect on faculty reading skill improvement. Hence, the use of reading self-access centers by students and staff is highly recommended.

Mukundan and Nimehchisalem target both intensive and extensive reading in their chapter "Readerthon: An Intensive and Extensive Reading Programme". They first describe reading programmes used in Malaysia since the 1970s and then discuss the challenges and merits of extensive reading. They recommend Readerthon as an alternative to previous extensive reading programmes, since it combines both intensive and extensive reading for the benefit of the reader and is thus effective for promoting reading and improving reading skills.

Othman and Abdul Kadir's "Encouraging Reading and Self-learning among ESL Learners via the PBL Approach" uses the concept of Problem-Based Learning to motivate students to read and thus improve their language skills. PBL employs a deductive approach to ensure greater language exposure for students and an improvement in their reading and knowledge acquisition skills. Involving a control group that used a traditional teaching methodology and an experimental group that used PBL, the latter group was found to outperform the former in the post-test given to the two groups, although both had the same teacher, syllabus and textbook – proof, clearly, that the PBL approach is advantageous for foreign and second language learners.

Building on an enquiry into whether all literature is suitable for use in every EFL context, Risse and Al-Mahrooqi report on Omani student reactions to literature from foreign and native contexts. They found that student perceptions and reactions were colored by their culture but that these interactions were not uniform. They suggest a number of criteria that can guide teachers in selecting appropriate literary pieces and they also provide a list of recommended readings. The chapter offers guidance on how to use literature creatively in foreign language contexts.

Part three, “Reading Proficiency and Comprehension”, opens with the chapter “Readers’ Theatre: Setting the Stage for Oral Reading Fluency” by Patrick NG Chin Leong, which investigates Japanese EFL learners’ attitudes towards readers’ theatre as a way of enhancing their oral reading fluency. Student journal entries and teacher observations were used to assess students’ affective experiences and also their attitudes to the method. Students, they report, reacted positively to the method and their oral reading performance actually improved alongside noticeable gains in enthusiasm, confidence and efficiency.

In his chapter “To Read or not to Read”, Al-Noursi reviews the benefits of reading and different approaches to tackling reading texts. He also addresses the topic of teaching reading in the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, he investigates Emirati students’ poor reading comprehension skills.

Sami Dadi’s chapter deals with the role self-efficacy plays in enhancing weak beginner L2 readers’ proficiency and demonstrates its positive effect on them.

Part four deals with reading and writing integration in two chapters. The first, by Shaker Ali Al-Mohammadi, examines the difference between teaching reading as a discrete skill and teaching it when integrated with writing. He shows that the integrative approach produced more positive effects on Omani EFL students at Buraimi University College. Soufiane Trabelsi’s chapter addresses reading-writing convergence with a special focus on rhetorical markers. His study indicates that marker transfer from writing to reading was weak but that there was a strong connection between students’ proficiency levels in the two skills. The author offers several suggestions on how to enhance the two skills’ convergence among EFL learners.

The four chapters in part five address critical reading from various perspectives. Critical thinking, the main purpose of education (Glender, 2005; Willingham, 2007), should go hand in hand with the teaching of reading, especially at the advanced language proficiency level. Critical thinking is essential for gaining academic success, and training students to

use it while reading enhances their reading performance (Johnson, Archibald & Tenenbaum, 2010).

Viewing reading as a problem-solving activity, Thakur and Al-Mahrooqi's chapter, "Beyond Mere Textual Understanding: A Skeptical Approach to Reading", suggests that reading should promote thinking so that students can move from being knowledge reproducers to producers, a requirement of our current complex world. The second chapter, by Nayyer Chandella, shows how critical reading leads to transformative learning through the examination of others' attitudes, appreciating others, and shunning prejudice and discrimination. Guiding students to become reflective and inclusive while reading and learning should be the aim of literature classes. The chapter also shows how to use dialogue to engage students with the literature they read while exploring compelling questions. In the last chapter of part five, Esther Boucher-Yip demonstrates how teaching critical reading strategies through integrated skills instruction can enhance learners' language proficiency. The chapter offers guidance for teachers interested in including these strategies in their reading classes.

Part six concludes the book and is focused on reading assessment and testing. Two chapters address this topic. The first, by Melodie Lorie Cook, looks into the views and beliefs of expatriate English teaching faculty regarding test development for the Japanese University Entrance Examination, a major portion of which is devoted to testing reading. The chapter reviews the literature on such important criteria for reading test creation as validity and reliability and relates them to how the Japanese University Entrance Examination is constructed. However, it focuses mainly on expatriate teachers' beliefs about what important considerations should be observed in creating reading-oriented examinations. Chapter two examines and compares the testing methods and reading tasks used in university entrance examinations across five countries – Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, and Taiwan. The chapter traces changes that may have occurred in the past seven years to see whether assessment methods have actually developed to reflect changes in teaching methods, especially with regard to the communicative approach.

The book's six parts cohere to address some of the key topics that have emerged in both reading theory and practice. It thus constitutes a useful reference for EFL practitioners and researchers interested in observing how the two dimensions converge and how our knowledge of reading, its teaching and practice, might be advanced in the future.

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## **PART I**

### **VOCABULARY AND READING**

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE ROLE OF GLOSSING IN VOCABULARY LEARNING AND READING COMPREHENSION: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SEMINAL STUDIES AND PARADIGMS

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### **Abstract**

The present paper reviews and discusses a host of paradigms and seminal empirical studies on the important, yet contentious, role of glossing in vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. The various definitions, salient features and models of glossing are presented and critiqued (esp. Otto's 1981 and Roby's 1999). The relationship between glossing and the complexities and intricacies of reading processes and strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, L1 and L2, schematic knowledge forms and functions are all examined. In addition, the implications of these studies for both emerging research tendencies and classroom practices are tackled, taking into account the inconsistencies of many studies, especially on L1 and L2 glosses. These inconsistencies are particularly emphasized and dealt with (e.g. Miyaska, 2002; Yeh and Yang, 2003; Ghahari & Heidarolad, n.d; Yoshii, 2006; Erler & Finkbeiner,

2007; Xu Hong, 2010; Schmitt, 2010 and Ko, 2012). Finally, directions and suggestions for future research, in the light of the review study, are offered and discussed, hopefully leading to a more complex and multi-faceted approach to glossing and reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** glossing, vocabulary learning, reading strategies, L1 & L2 relationships, schemata, socio-cognitive theories.

## 1. Introduction

With a history stretching back as far as the Middle Ages, the use of glossing, (the word itself is derived from a Greek word ‘glossa’ meaning ‘tongue’ and was first employed in studying the classical languages), involves definitions or explanations of words (Nation, 1983, 1990; Derrida, 1967/1976). Glossing can take place at the word-level, sentence-level or even textual/discourse-level (inter-linear glosses), and has even been used, much more recently, in ‘Sign Languages’. However, the study of glosses has not really flourished until very recently in the history of applied linguistics. Over the years, glossing has proved to be a complex and multi-faceted process that draws on a wide range of factors for both its explanation and use. As such, the study of glossing over the last three decades reveals a vast body of research and practices that battle relentlessly with definitions, classifications, theories, types, functions, locations and, in many ways, conflicting findings. Major among these attempts are the models of Otto (1981) and Roby (1999). Equally, research on glosses draws on a huge body of theory that incorporates cognitive linguistics, language learning strategies (LLSs), inter-language, and the study of reading, contrastive rhetoric, schemata and pragmatics.

A rigorous survey of the role of glossing in both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension would, in all probability, unearth a range of problems, limitations, inconsistencies and emerging tendencies. These include a tendency to incorporate both cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of learning, the contentious issue of the role of L1 in L2 education, the conflicting results of the significance of the role of L1 and L2 glossing, the role of schemata and background knowledge in reading, the extent to which glossing could be incorporated into language learning strategies and styles, the question of viewing reading from the stance of the complexities, interdisciplinarity and multi-layeredness of the reading process per se, the emerging issue of multimedia and digital glossing, along with the various implications of all this for classroom and research practices alike.

## **2. Glossing and Vocabulary Knowledge: A Socio-Cognitive Approach**

Vocabulary knowledge is part and parcel of linguistic knowledge. Language knowledge has been debated throughout the history of linguistic theory and language studies. Although a variety of theories/approaches exist, they can be seen within two central paradigms – socio-cultural and cognitive. Recently, however, there have been several tendencies to merge them into a socio-cognitive approach, which is anchored in Van Dijk's work (2009, 2010) on the strategies of discourse processing done in the early 1980s and which features in many relevant works over the last decade or so.

Briefly, the socio-cultural paradigm views language as a 'social and cultural' construct, while the cognitive paradigm looks at language as primarily a 'cognitive' construct. The socio-cultural approach has been enhanced by both the "functionalist" school of linguistics and "behaviourist" perspectives which particularly dominated the linguistic scene in America during the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, Malinowski's "Phatic Communion" and "Context of Situation", and the pragmatic framework in general, became intertwined in the 'socio-cultural approach'. On the other hand, the cognitive paradigm maintains that language is essentially a cognitive phenomenon. As such, language knowledge, including its acquisition, is basically a mental activity. The mental paradigm has been hugely influential since the rise of the "generative framework" advocated by Chomsky and his disciples in the 1960s. Knowledge of the whole language system, according to the generative framework, is internalized with the human being possessing a mental syntax and a mental dictionary as well. The mental lexicon contains all the necessary features, information and characteristics of words – their morphological phonological, syntactic and pragmatic traits (Radford, 1988, 2009).

Language knowledge (vocabulary included) can be thought of as combining categories of both "systemic" and "schematic" knowledge (Widdowson, 2007). Systemic knowledge is knowledge of the linguistic system per se, whereas schematic knowledge deals with the various features and structures of background information. Schema theory was first put forward by the psychologist Bartlett (1932), but is also traceable to the earlier work of Piaget (1928). Bartlett (1932) sums up the concept as follows:

Schema refers to an active organization of past reactions, or of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-

adapted organic response. That is, whenever there is any order or regularity of behaviour, a particular response is possible only because it is related to other similar responses which have been serially organized, yet which operate, not simply as individual members coming one after another, but as a unitary mass.

It has since figured importantly in the empirical research of a variety of fields, including language pedagogy, vocabulary acquisition, and, in a remarkable way, in reading comprehension. Schemata is a term used to describe the knowledge structures of background information, be they psychological, social, cultural or linguistic. Widdowson, (2007) defines schemata as “the representations in the mind of what is familiar or customary”. That said, he distinguishes between “ideational schemata” and “interpersonal schemata”, suggesting that the difference is between “a mental construct of taken-for-granted assumptions about how reality is ordered (ideational schemata) and how communication is managed (interpersonal schemata)” (p. 132). In a similar way, Hatch (2001) distinguishes between system constraints (rules derived from the system) and ritual constraints (rules and norms derived from the socio-cultural aspects of communication), maintaining that “it is difficult to separate linguistic, social, and cognitive factors in the discourse system; they are tightly interwoven” (p.316). Equally, Jose (1999) has insightfully argued for adopting what he calls the “cognitive-cultural” model in educational linguistics.

Research in cognitive science and psychology has also revealed that the human mind prefers to organize knowledge in packets that help deal with information, events or experiences (Van Dijk, 1983). This organization may take various forms. In general, there are three fundamental processes: accretion, tuning, and re-structuring. When confronted with new information, events, situations, issues etc., the human mind can add to the packets and structures already existing (accretion), activate the parts that already exist to help deal with it (tuning) or invent a totally new packet, in attempting to grasp the new thing/information (re-structuring). These key processes are particularly useful in both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension/discourse processing (Awadelkarim, 1995; Widdowson, 2007).

Over the past two decades or so, and presumably under the influence of “interdisciplinarity”, which has affected a wide range of both human and natural sciences, linguistics and EFL pedagogy have been influenced by a strong tendency towards merging the social, cognitive and cultural perspectives into a unified whole (Awadelkarim, 2012).

### **3. Glossing as a Reading and Vocabulary Learning Strategy**

LLSs have been increasingly researched since the 1970s and early 1980s. There have always been different approaches with regard to definition, taxonomy/classification, theoretical framework, and strategy training. As a field, LLSs can be seen as focally interdisciplinary, involving education, psycholinguistics, cognitive science, cognitive linguistics (lexicon) etc. In addition, LLSs are closely connected with Inter-language (the overall characteristics of the language system of the learners who are still in the process of acquiring/learning a foreign language), learning styles, teaching methods/strategies, and the scientific study of the process of reading.

Despite the vastness of the differences in methods, most if not all classifications include such categories as cognitive/conceptual strategies (those requiring thinking), meta-cognitive strategies (those involving planning of the learning process), socio-cultural strategies, communication strategies etc.

Seminal works in LLSs which are majorly relevant to glossing include the following: Krashen (1982); Oxford (1989,1990,1996); Cook (1991); Ellis (1994, 1997); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Rubin (1981); Rubin & Thomson (1994); Lightbown & Spada (2003); Lantolf & Appel (1994 ); Schmitt & McCarthy (1997); Schmitt (2000); Cohen & Macara (2007); Rose & Kasper (2001); Hee Ko (2005); Yoshii (2006); Cohen & Macaro (2007); Oxford & Schramm (2007); Jacobs (2010) and Xu (2010). While some of these studies attempt to bridge the gap between psychological and socio-cultural perspectives, or seek to integrate learning strategies into teaching strategies, or endeavor to find new ways of incorporating a wide range of these strategies into the L2 syllabus, or opt to deal with L2 vocabulary learning strategies, much more recent work seeks to focus on the relationship between L1 and L2 learning strategies.

Major strategies in vocabulary learning may include glossing, contextualization, elaboration, inferencing, personalization, dictionary use, translation, or grouping. The role of vocabulary glossing is important within both general LLSs and vocabulary/reading strategies. Indeed, Jacobs (2010) insightfully notes that “the use of glossing is one of several possible repair strategies that readers can use, when they recognize comprehension breakdowns”. In addition, if we take into account Nation’s (1983, 1990) often-cited four functions of glossing (providing definition of low-frequency words, lessening reading interruptions by consulting dictionaries, providing learner autonomy, and allowing greater catering for

learner differences/individualization), combined with Cohen's four types of reading strategies (support strategies, paraphrase strategies, coherence strategies, and management of strategy use), we can observe that the combination of these lends itself easily to viewing glossing as part and parcel of LLSs. For instance, glossing can be considered a part of support strategies, because it helps to identify 'misunderstanding'. Besides, glossing could also be classified among the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, as well as with the socio-cultural strategies when textual and pictorial glosses are included (Blohm, 1987; Cohen, 1990; Jacobs, 2010). And as for reading strategies, it suffices here to quote Erler and Finkbeiner (2007) saying that "a single reader may employ many types of strategies, in the course of an L2 reading event".

### **3.1 From a Dichotomous and Interactionist Model to a Continuum and Multi-dimensional Model of Reading**

The study of reading strategies flourished under the general umbrella of LLS in both L1 and L2. Earlier studies, during the 1960s and 1970s, focused on the dichotomous distinction between "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies. The former includes conceptualizing reading as "higher-level" processing of such matter as paragraphs and whole text/discourse units, whereas the latter processes "lower-level" units, such as words or phrases. In the 1980s, however, the interactionist model was introduced, paving the way for "a continuum rather than a dichotomy", as expressed by Erler & Finkbeiner (2007). Over the past two decades, research has expanded to produce a view of reading as a "multi-layered and multi-dimensional" process, viewing it, in the words of Erler and Finkbeiner (2007), as "the result of complex interactions between text, setting, reader, reader background, reading strategies, the L1 and L2, and reader decision making". This is consistent with Grabe's (2012) much more recent work on reading, which introduces unusual issues in researching reading, such as motivation in reading (common though it is in researching other skills), the complexity of the relationship between L1 and L2 and the role of socio-cultural factors in L2 reading.

Since the 1990s, the literature on LLS, has grown much larger. A distinction is sometimes drawn between learning styles and learning strategies. Oxford (2003), who did this, holds that the term styles relates to the general approaches to learning a language such as the differences among learners between "global" and "analytic", "auditory" and "visual", etc. These general tendencies have psychological and biological foundations and tend to direct the types of strategies preferable to specific

learners rather than to others. Conversely, a learning strategy is typically defined by Scarcella and Oxford (1992) as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task, used by students to enhance their own learning”.

#### **4. Types and Functions of Glossing: A Summary and Critique of Two Key Models**

The following is a critical review of the taxonomies and functions of glossing that have dominated the field over the past three decades. We select two pivotal models, Otto's (1981) and Roby's (1999), attempt to summarize their key features, and then review them critically, pointing out strengths and weaknesses, wherever relevant. To start with, a general outline of the functions of glossing is provided and then the two selected models are introduced and critiqued.

Taxonomies of glossing vary tremendously, depending on the researcher's aims, interests, theoretical stance, and hypotheses. Their diversity has been expanded further by the emergence of new tendencies, such as online glossing. Online/cyber glossing may even include concealed comment/clarification/explanation (only by clicking on the insert menu may readers access them). Online texts are in fact “hypertexts”, wherein a huge number of texts and documents can be infinitely interconnected. Indeed, Hong (2010) stresses the importance of the hypertext and multi-media glosses in L2 vocabulary learning and reading comprehension as an important implication of many recent studies. Noting that many readers prefer paper texts rather than cyber/digital texts, Hong urges both practitioners and syllabus developers to seek innovative ways of online glossing, ensuring “more intelligent multi-media programming that presents glosses that are truly interesting and helpful to readers” (p. 69). Multimedia glosses will appear repeatedly in this study.

Emphasizing the idea of brief explanation and translation in glossing, Selger is reported in Hong (2010) as summarizing glossing types under three pivotal categories: textual, pictorial, and aural. Earlier glosses, however, included, in addition to definitions and explanations, extended comment and syntactical explanation (Hullen, 1989; Roby, 1999).

A survey of the rich literature on glossing exhibits a multitude of characteristics and features.



## 4.1 Glossing Features

On the whole, glossing can:

- be used as part of meta-cognitive strategies, strategies dealing with processes of planning, organizing, mapping and evaluating the learning process
- function as socio-affective strategies. These seek to cater for the emotional and social factors that facilitate or hamper learning
- serve as an effective ‘intervention’ strategy in writing. EFL teachers can benefit considerably from using glossed texts or getting students to gloss what they write (process-writing). Intervention strategies in writing include any systematic and planned teaching behaviour that purports to improve students’ writing
- integrate learning strategies into teaching strategies. An example of this appears in what Otto (1981) labels “the integrative function”, which he puts forward following his criticism of traditional strategies employed by reading instructors: modifying the text, augmenting the text, and modifying the students’ reading behaviour. Dismissing the two as being either “teacher-directed” or “reader-imposed”, he calls for a strategy to secure the necessary interactions between teacher, reader and text. Otto’s interactional model, which blends content-based with process-based glossing (which he terms “the dual foci” – detailed in figure 2), is consistent with thinking in a host of research tendencies and empirical studies over the past two decades (Johns, 1997 – see her “Socioliterate Classroom” approach), Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2001; Oxford and Schramm, 2007; Rubin, et al, 2007, and Deneme, 2010 (see her “cross-cultural LLS empirical study”). A critique of this model will follow later in this section.
- save the students the trouble of having to consult a dictionary repeatedly while reading and hence may produce smooth and uninterrupted learning. There is a large literature on this and it would be impossible to cover it fully. Outstandingly, however, it includes Lomicka (1998), Nagat (1999), and Hong (2010). Indeed, citing Nagat’s (1999) four functions of glosses, Hong (2010, p.61) concludes that “it is the easiest way to understand reading materials, since glosses are often in the margin on the same page, or on another page and learners need not look up the words in a dictionary”. Glosses may also encompass information other than lexical meaning, such as pronunciation, grammatical, syntactical

and pragmatic notes (see Roby's taxonomy). Furthermore, an "interlinear gloss" may even include a transliteration and phonetic transcription for words, phrases or paragraphs (Lehmann, 2004; Haspelmath, 2008).

- help recall text and thus assist reading comprehension. The literature teems with these kinds of studies. Jacobs' (2010), which will be detailed later, is one of several recent attempts to open up new areas of gloss research by incorporating the interaction between glosses and other variables.

## **4.2 Otto's Model (1981)**

This is one of the first and most significant gloss models. Otto introduced a model for glossing based, for the most part, on the interactional approach (see figure 1). The model puts forward a framework for glossing that attempts to make use of both the 'content-based' and the 'process-based' perspectives. As the figure depicts, glossing unfolds as a complex process with "content knowledge" and "process knowledge" flowing into each other (the dual-foci). As such, the model seeks to integrate learning strategies with teaching strategies. This is what Otto calls "the integrative function", which he suggests following his criticism of traditional strategies employed by reading instructors: modifying the text, augmenting the text, and modifying the students' reading behaviour. Dismissing the two as being either "teacher-directed" or "reader-imposed", he calls for a strategy to secure the necessary interactions between teacher, reader and text. Otto's interactional model is in tandem with the line of thinking prevalent in a host of research tendencies and empirical studies over the past two decades (Johns, 1997 – see her "Socioliterate Classroom" approach); Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2001; Oxford and Schramm, 2007; Rubin et al, 2007; Deneme, 2010 (see her "cross-cultural LLS empirical study"). A critique of this model will follow later in section (4.4.1).

## **4.3 Roby's Model (1999)**

Drawing on the taxonomies of a variety of writers, such as Widdowson (1978), Otto & White (1982), Blohm (1982), Genette (1987), Hullen (1989), Stewart & Cross (1991), Oxford (1995), Roby (1999) synthesizes an excellent glossing taxonomy. This involves a six-category-based paradigm: authorship, presentation, functions, focus, language and form. Figure 1 below details this (Roby, 1999, p. 94-95):

- I. Gloss authorship
  - a. Learners
  - b. Professionals
    - 1. Instructors
    - 2. Materials developers
- II. Gloss presentation
  - a. Priming
  - b. Prompting
- III. Gloss functions
  - a. Procedural
    - 1. Meta-cognitive
    - 2. Highlighting
    - 3. Clarifying
  - b. Declarative
    - 1. Encyclopedic
    - 2. Linguistic
  - a. Lexical
    - i. Signification
    - ii. Value
  - b. Syntactical
- IV. Gloss focus
  - a. Textual
  - b. Extra-textual
- V. Gloss language
  - a. L1
  - b. L2
  - c. L3
- VI. Gloss form
  - a. Verbal
  - b. Visual
    - 1. Image
    - 2. Icon
    - 3. Video
      - a. With sound
      - b. Without sound
      - c. Audio (only)

A critique of this model will be provided in section 4.4.2.

Figure 1: Roby's Glossing Model, (LLT Journal, 1999: 94-95)

#### **4.4.0 Limitations and Drawbacks of the Two Models**

The two models, though significant, are, however, also limited and flawed in several ways.

#### 4.4.1 Otto's Model: A Critical Assessment

Otto's model capitalizes on its interactional approach to the process of glossing and its functions. In so doing, it draws heavily on discursive and socio-cultural/socio-affective/cognitive and applied perspectives. Notwithstanding this, it can be seen to have several drawbacks. Although it claims to propose a dual focus (content-related and process-related perspectives), there is little evidence that a due balance is struck between the two. For instance, factors such as gloss authorship, which may include both writer and reader, are ignored or under-emphasized in the model. Glossing can be used as an effective technique to improve not only reading but also writing. Moreover, a reader's schematic knowledge, apart from content knowledge, seems to be unduly disregarded. Schemata of whatever type (for example content-based, or psychologically and socially related), are centrally important in making readers effectively interact with a text Paget (1926), Bartlett (1932), and Reber & Reber (2001-WikEd). Being designated chiefly to describe expository texts does not excuse the model from failing to incorporate other necessary schematic information gained from background knowledge structures. The schematic function of glossing is too obvious to be ignored, particularly in reading comprehension. Hong (2010), outlining Myng Hee Ko's four functions of glossing, is quick to note that "glosses can help readers to connect prior knowledge with new knowledge in the text, which can help them understand and remember the content of the text".

Basing their study on Otto's model, Richgels and Hansen (1982) provide a host of guidelines for preparing glosses, which they describe as "a process of making selections". They attempt to improve the Otto model in specific ways. Yet, despite this, they appear to confine prior/schematic knowledge only to the content area. For example, one of the guidelines reads: "Consider the prior knowledge of content required. The glosser must be guided by the reader's content-related knowledge" (p.20). This question of background knowledge will arise again in sections 4, 6 & 7. A year or so later, Otto and Hayes (1982) introduced further questions which they said would raise awareness of the role of glossing in understanding a text. For instance, they asked:

1. Are certain types of reading material more suited for gloss notation than others?
2. At what point in reading should gloss activities be introduced?
3. What is the optimal amount of gloss notation for enhancing the understanding of the text?

4. Should the stages of gloss (demonstration, development, internalization and fading) have both vertical and horizontal aspects?

These questions themselves could be viewed as an attempt by Otto and his associate to improve the model by making it a little more capable of addressing these issues. Of the four, however, the notion of describing stages for glossing really does sound useful. Some of the deficiencies of Otto's model might thus be repaired by Roby's model, which will be dealt with in the following subsection.

#### **4.4.2 Roby's Model: A Critical Assessment**

Roby's model is, in many respects, deficient, because of the very nature of its theoretical structure. Enjoying a host of merits, it has, nonetheless, been rendered deficient in certain ways. The various functions have been presented in a way that overlooks or pays very little attention to the interactional contributions to the overall glossing process. Instead, glossing items are listed, wrongly, as if they would operate linearly and not cyclically. Besides, some classifications are, conceivably, either misinterpreted or misrepresented in the synthesized model. What is more, the tabular information looks too detailed in the text instead of just being adequately interpretative. The layout of the list, moreover, appears over-numbered (e.g. items such as gloss functions and gloss form), leaving it difficult for the reader to fully grasp the model. The fifth section (gloss form) can be reduced to just two subcategories: a. traditional glossing and b. multimedia glossing.

It is also notable that Roby's taxonomy lacks a category for gloss space/ location. Glosses could be inter-linear (inside text), marginal (in the margins of the text), above or below the text. Concerning digital/online glossing, Pantel & Lin (n.d.) propose what they call a "word-for-word glossing algorithm", whose function is described as follows: "The gloss of a word is determined by maximizing the similarity between the set of contextually similar words and the different translations of the word in a bilingual thesaurus" (p. 84). Hong (2010) argues that online/hypertext glosses should be made attractive to learners by providing "additional benefits not available with the print materials" (p.69). Another interesting feature of Roby's design is that it includes not only L1 and L2 glosses but also L3 glosses. Indeed, glosses could be provided in a mediating L3 in the context of multilingual EFL learners.

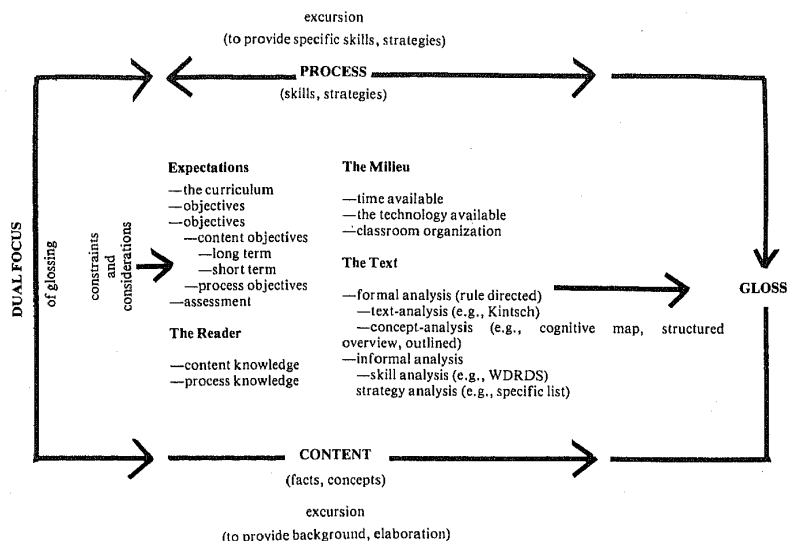


Figure 2: Otto's Interactional Model, American Reading Forum (ARF,81)

## 5.0 Glossing and Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension has been found by both theoretical and empirical research to be exceedingly complex and the factors affecting it are manifold. Since the 1980s, much research has provided evidence against the traditional bottom-up approach in reading comprehension, promoting instead a more interactional mode that combines both top-down and bottom-up models (Van Dijk, 1983). Major among the cited functions of glosses is that they facilitate reading comprehension (Jonson, 1982), Davis (1989), Hee Ko (2005). The literature abounds in attempts to probe the effects of L1 glossing on reading comprehension (Erler and Finkbeiner, 2007), the effects of L2 glossing on reading comprehension and retention, the effects of various gloss types on reading comprehension (in terms of the location of the glosses) and, in multi-media glossing, in terms of the gloss mode, text only, text + picture, text + picture + video + sound. Hong (2010) reviews scholarly work on the effects of glossing on building/enhancing learners' schematic/background knowledge, the role of glossing as a learning strategy (Jacobs, 2010), and the relationship between the effectiveness of glossing and learners' proficiency level etc.