

COGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PROCESS OF READING LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the cognitive foundations of the process of reading literary texts. The study considers reading as a complex cognitive activity occurring in the human mind, highlighting the interrelation of processes such as attention, memory, thinking, and interpretation. It also substantiates the role of cognitive strategies in developing students' reading competence through literary texts.

Keywords: cognitive process, literary text, reading competence, interpretation, thinking, memory, attention

Reading is considered in modern cognitive psychology as a complex information-processing system. According to researchers, reading is not only the decoding of symbols but also a meaning-making process (Anderson, 2005). In particular, literary texts encourage active thinking and require higher-level cognitive operations from the reader.

The foundations of the cognitive approach go back to the works of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget associated reading with the developmental stages of cognitive growth, while Vygotsky interpreted it as a process shaped through social interaction and language.

The schema theory developed by David Rumelhart shows that prior knowledge plays a crucial role in understanding new information during reading. According to this theory, readers interpret texts based on their previous experiences.

Kenneth Goodman defines reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game." According to him, readers can construct meaning even without reading every word of the text, relying on contextual clues.

Similarly, Frank Smith emphasizes that reading should focus more on meaning rather than on individual words. This approach is especially important in the reading of literary texts.

During the process of reading literary works, readers perform the following cognitive processes:

- perception
- attention

- memory
- thinking

These processes work together and ensure deep comprehension of the text. The construction-integration model proposed by Walter Kintsch explains this process. According to this model, readers construct the text step by step and integrate it in their minds.

The process of reading literary texts is a complex psycho-cognitive activity in which the reader simultaneously performs several interconnected cognitive processes. These processes allow not only superficial understanding of the text but also comprehension of its deeper semantic and aesthetic layers. The main cognitive components include perception, attention, memory, and thinking.

Perception

Perception is the initial stage of literary reading, involving the reception of visual symbols (letters, words, sentences) and their transformation into meaningful units. The reader perceives the text visually and converts it into phonological and semantic codes. In literary texts, the perception process becomes more complex due to the frequent use of metaphors, symbols, and stylistic devices. Therefore, the reader must grasp not only literal meanings but also connotative meanings.

Attention

Attention ensures the selection of important information and focusing on it during reading. In literary works, the reader directs attention to specific elements such as plot development, character systems, and the author's ideas. The stability and selectivity of attention directly affect reading effectiveness. If attention is not properly managed, the reader may miss important aspects of the text. Therefore, attention control is an important cognitive strategy in literary reading.

Memory. Memory is considered one of the central components of the reading process. It manifests in two main forms: short-term (working memory) and long-term memory. Working memory temporarily stores parts of the text during reading and enables their interconnection. Long-term memory stores prior knowledge and experience and serves as a basis for understanding new information. During the reading of literary texts, the reader integrates new information with existing knowledge, which leads to deeper comprehension of meaning.

Thinking. Thinking is the highest-level cognitive stage of the literary reading process. At this stage, the reader analyzes, generalizes, draws conclusions, and interprets the text. In literary works, identifying implicit meanings, evaluating characters, and understanding the author's position require strong thinking skills. The thinking process involves operations such as inference, comparison, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships. This contributes to the development of critical and creative thinking skills in learners.

The cognitive processes discussed above function in an interconnected manner and determine the effectiveness of literary reading. Information received through perception is selected via attention, stored through memory, and processed deeply through thinking. As a result, the reader moves beyond simple comprehension and reaches the level of interpretation.

Research shows that the following strategies significantly improve reading effectiveness:

- predicting
- questioning
- visualization
- comprehension monitoring

These strategies ensure active learner engagement and develop metacognitive control (Pressley, 2002).

Scientific studies indicate that the use of purposeful cognitive strategies during reading significantly improves learners' text comprehension. In particular, research by Michael Pressley and Isabel L. Beck identifies strategic reading approaches as one of the key factors in effective reading. The most important strategies are explained below:

Prediction. The prediction strategy is based on the reader's ability to anticipate the content of the text before and during reading. This process helps establish a connection between the reader's prior knowledge (schemas) and new information. As a result, reading becomes an active cognitive process rather than a passive one. Research shows that prediction increases learners' interest in the text and deepens comprehension.

Questioning. The questioning strategy encourages the reader to enter into a "dialogue" with the text. During reading, the learner asks questions such as: "What does the author mean here?", "What will happen next?", "What does this character represent?". This process activates comprehension and strengthens metacognitive control. Studies show that questioning plays an important role in developing higher-order comprehension skills.

Visualization (mental imagery)

Visualization is the process of creating mental images based on the text. This strategy is particularly important in literary reading, as learners imagine the plot, events, and characters. This helps improve memory retention and deepen understanding. In cognitive psychology, visualization is considered a tool that strengthens encoding and storage of information.

Comprehension monitoring (metacognition). Comprehension monitoring is based on the learner's ability to observe and evaluate their own reading process. The reader asks themselves questions such as: "Do I understand this?", "Where am I having difficulty?", "Do I need to reread this part?". This metacognitive activity helps manage

the reading process and correct errors in time. Ann L. Brown emphasizes this process as an essential element of effective learning.

Thus, cognitive strategies transform the reading process from an automatic activity into a conscious and controlled one. They ensure active engagement with the text and develop learners' skills of comprehension, analysis, and interpretation. In particular, the systematic use of these strategies in literary reading significantly enhances reading competence.

From a cognitive perspective, the process of reading literary texts is a complex and multi-layered activity. In this process, various cognitive mechanisms interact with one another and contribute to the development of reading competence. Therefore, reading activities based on literary texts should be regarded as an effective pedagogical tool.

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