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Metacognition and Second Language Reading

Abstract

Reading in second language is a dynamic and interactive process in which learners make use of background knowledge, lexical knowledge and grammatical awareness to comprehend the message effectively. It is an essential skill to master in academic contexts. In this regard, they have to apply various strategies and also they should be aware of when, where and how to use strategies for better comprehension. With reference to this, the paper investigates the role of metacognitive strategies in second language reading. Students need to be aware of how to use metacognitive strategies to develop a deeper understanding of the

text. The employment of reading strategies that distinguished the skilled readers from the unskilled readers.

Key words: Second Language Reading, Metacognition, Metacognitive reading strategies

Introduction

Skillful reading is fundamental for adults' education. It is an essential skill for second language learners to master in academic contexts (Grabe, 1991). According to Anderson (2003), reading is an interaction of four things such as the reader, the text, fluent reading and strategic. Strategic reading refers to the ability of the reader to use a variety of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose of reading. Learners need metacognitive knowledge of strategies for skillful reading. If the reader have the knowledge of metacognitive strategies, they put conscious effort towards language development and comprehension. Walczyk (1994) talks about three aspects of reading skills. The first aspect concerns to the lexical process of word, sentence and text comprehension. The second aspect refers to the working memory and third deals with the executive metacognitive components of reading. Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and the conscious use of these strategies enable the learner to identify the relevant information in a text, retrieve the relevant background knowledge from long-term memory and monitor the use of appropriate strategies.

Metacognition and Reading Comprehension

Many research studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between students' metacognitive awareness of reading process and their ability to read strategically. A study conducted by Sila (2009) shows that students from different faculties, different genders

or different age will have different levels of metacognitive awareness. It also reveals that older people have higher metacognitive awareness compared to younger people. Mokhtari and Richard (2002) states that metacognitive knowledge of the readers helps them to plan to monitor and to evaluate their reading activity. In relation to the Sweet and Snow (2002) opines that comprehension occurs when a reader deliberately interacts with a text Mohamed (2002) used a quasi-experimental study with Malaysian university students and concludes that metacognition was highly related to their reading efficiency and performance in English Norris(2012) found that using a think aloud strategy during reading increased learners comprehension. Rwanda (2012) also adds that comprehension does not happen by chance but rather it is a function of certain cognitive processes such as knowledge and depth of vocabulary. Pacello (2014) describes that metacognitive reading strategies include generating questions monitoring comprehension, summarizing, rereading when comprehension breakdown, thinking about prior knowledge, establishing a purpose for learning, making predictions and self questioning. Learners should be aware of these strategies to be successful in comprehension. For this, learners need a proper instruction and practice. Carrell (1991) supports this view and describes that training in the use of global strategies for problem solving in reading can be useful in helping them improve their reading ability. Similarly Lian and Seepho (2012) also provide that metacognitive strategy training was effective in enhancing the students' academic reading comprehension and promotes positive attitudes toward reading and enables the students to be aware of their strengths & weaknesses. In order to know the metacognitive reading strategies that are frequently employed by the readers, Magogwe (2013) conducted a study with first year students. The findings of the study reveal that more proficient students use high metacognitive strategies and concludes that there is a strong correlation between learners' metacognitive strategy use and overall proficiency in second language.

Metacognitive Reading Strategy

Metacognitive reading strategy helps the reader to think critically and monitor their own comprehension. This strategy is classified into three phases pre-reading, during reading and post reading. It includes the process such as inferencing comprehension monitoring responding to difficult text strategically. Strategies specific to reading can be categorized as planning, monitoring, and evaluation

Planning

Planning is used in pre -reading phase. It activates learners' background knowledge and makes them ready for reading. It also includes previewing a title, pictures, illustration, heading or subheading that help reader get the overview of the text. Reader also examine whether their material has a certain text structure setting purpose for reading also called as a planning strategy.

Monitoring

Learners use monitoring strategies during reading. These strategies involved comprehension of vocabulary, self questioning summarizing and inferring the main idea of each paragraph during reading. Readers also focuses on key words or key information of the text. They also decide which part of the message in the text can be highlighted or ignored based on purpose of the task.

Evaluating

Learners employ this strategy after reading. This is the third phase of reading. In this stage, learners think about how to apply this reading in another context. They start to analyse the text with the author, context and the style used in the text.

Metacognitive strategy training

Fogarty (1994) explains the reason to teach metacognitive strategies.

- 1.To develop students deeper understanding of text
- 2.To take students thinking to higher level
- 3.To steer students into adulthood.

Conclusion

The awareness of metacognitive strategies stimulates the learners to put conscious efforts towards language improvement or comprehension. In an academic setting, learners should be strategic in reading to master in their course. This strategic reading helps them to remember and analyse what they have read and activates their cognitive domain.

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