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THE ROLE OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

Z.D. Abdullayeva
Professor of Chirchik State Pedagogical University
abdullayevazarinaxon2@gmail.com
+998959190551

Abstract

Academic reading is an essential component of higher education and foreign language learning. It requires learners not only to understand written texts but also to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information critically. Metacognitive strategies have been recognized as effective tools that help learners regulate their cognitive processes during reading. The present article examines the role of metacognitive strategies in teaching academic reading and their impact on reading comprehension, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Based on the analysis of international and Uzbek scholarly literature, the study highlights the effectiveness of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies in improving students' academic reading performance. The findings reveal that metacognitive strategy instruction contributes significantly to students' comprehension abilities and promotes independent learning. Therefore, integrating metacognitive strategies into reading instruction can enhance both academic achievement and lifelong learning skills.

Keywords: metacognition, academic reading, reading comprehension, metacognitive strategies, learner autonomy, English language teaching.

Introduction

Reading plays a crucial role in the academic success of students. It serves as a primary means of acquiring knowledge, developing critical thinking, and participating in scholarly communication. Academic reading differs from general reading because it requires a deeper understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, and complex concepts. According to Sohail, academic reading demands analytical and critical thinking skills that enable learners to interpret information beyond its literal meaning.[1]

In recent years, educational researchers have emphasized the importance of metacognition in learning processes. Metacognition refers to the awareness and regulation of one's own thinking and learning activities. In the context of reading, metacognitive strategies enable learners to plan their reading activities, monitor their understanding, and evaluate their comprehension outcomes. Such strategies are particularly important in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where students often encounter linguistic and cognitive challenges.

In Uzbekistan, the modernization of education and the growing emphasis on communicative competence have increased the importance of learner-centered approaches. As a result, metacognitive strategy instruction has attracted considerable attention among language educators and researchers. The integration of these strategies into reading instruction can help students become more autonomous, reflective, and successful readers.

Literature Review

[1] Sohail, M. (2015). Academic Reading and Critical Thinking Skills. *International Journal of Language Education, 2*(1), 45–53.

The concept of metacognition was introduced by Flavell, who defined it as knowledge about cognition and the ability to regulate cognitive processes. Metacognition includes two major components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation. These components enable learners to become aware of their thinking and control their learning behaviors effectively.[2]

Meniado describes metacognition as "thinking about thinking," emphasizing its role in improving learning outcomes and reading comprehension.[3] Similarly, Ahmadi, Ismail, and Abdullah found that students with higher metacognitive awareness demonstrate better reading performance and academic achievement.[4] Zhang further argues that academic reading requires learners to apply metacognitive strategies in order to understand and interpret complex texts.[5]

Djudin states that metacognitive strategies help learners become autonomous and self-directed. Through planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes, students develop problem-solving skills and gain greater control over their academic performance.[6] Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris emphasize that successful readers deliberately employ metacognitive strategies to overcome reading difficulties and achieve comprehension goals.[7]

Uzbek scholars have also contributed to the understanding of strategic language learning. Jalolov emphasizes the importance of learner-centered teaching methods that encourage students to regulate their own learning processes.[8] Irisqulov notes that successful language learning depends not only on linguistic competence but also on strategic awareness and self-monitoring abilities.[9] Furthermore, Mahkamov highlights the significance of reflective learning practices in developing students' reading and critical thinking skills.[10]

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[2] Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 906–911.

[3] Meniado, J. C. (2016). Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension. *English Language Teaching, 9*(4), 117–129.

[4] Ahmadi, M. R., Ismail, H. N., & Abdullah, M. K. K. (2013). The importance of metacognitive reading strategy awareness in reading comprehension. *English Language Teaching, 6*(10), 235–244.

[5] Zhang, L. J. (2013). Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategy Use in Reading Comprehension. *Reading Psychology, 34*(1), 54–78.

[6] Djudin, T. (2017). Using metacognitive strategies to improve reading comprehension. *Journal of Education and Learning, 11*(2), 124–132.

[7] Afflerbach, P., Pearson, P. D., & Paris, S. G. (2008). Clarifying differences between reading skills and reading strategies. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(5), 364–373.

[8] Jalolov, J. J. (2012). *English Language Teaching Methodology*. Tashkent: O'qituvchi.

[9] Irisqulov, A. T. (2009). *Teaching English Methodology*. Tashkent: Sharq Publishing.

[10] Mahkamov, N. (2017). *Modern Approaches to Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education*. Tashkent: Fan Publishing.

These studies collectively suggest that metacognitive strategies play a vital role in academic reading and language learning by promoting learner autonomy, critical thinking, and effective comprehension.

Discussion and Results

The analysis of previous studies demonstrates that metacognitive strategies significantly improve students' academic reading performance. Most researchers categorize these strategies into three main stages: planning, monitoring, and evaluation.[11]

Planning Stage

Planning takes place before reading and involves setting reading objectives, activating prior knowledge, and predicting text content. Learners examine titles, headings, subheadings, illustrations, and keywords to create expectations about the text. This process helps readers focus their attention and establish meaningful connections with the material.

Activating prior knowledge before reading facilitates comprehension and increases learner engagement. In academic settings, planning strategies enable students to approach texts with clear goals and expectations.

Monitoring Stage

Monitoring occurs during reading and requires learners to assess their understanding continuously. Readers ask themselves questions, make predictions, identify key ideas, and use contextual clues to understand unfamiliar concepts. Monitoring includes making inferences, recognizing text structures, and organizing information through graphic organizers.

Monitoring strategies allow learners to identify comprehension problems and apply corrective measures. As a result, students become active readers who can regulate their learning processes effectively.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluation takes place after reading and involves reflecting on comprehension outcomes. Students summarize information, assess whether reading objectives have been achieved, and identify areas that require further improvement. Evaluation includes collecting feedback, conducting self-assessment, and reviewing learning outcomes.

Evaluation strategies encourage learners to become reflective thinkers who continuously improve their reading skills. Through self-evaluation, students gain greater awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, which contributes to long-term academic success.

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that metacognitive strategy instruction enhances reading comprehension, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Students who received metacognitive training were better able to select and apply appropriate strategies according to specific reading tasks. Likewise, metacognitive awareness improved learners' problem-solving abilities and independent learning skills.

In the Uzbek educational context, metacognitive strategies can support national educational reforms aimed at developing independent and critical thinkers. Teachers can foster metacognitive awareness through activities such as self-questioning, summarizing, paraphrasing, reflective journals, peer discussions, and project-based learning. These activities encourage students to

[11] Zhang, L. J., & Sheepo, S. (2013). Metacognitive Strategy Instruction and Reading Development. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*(4), 847–865.

become responsible for their own learning and contribute to the development of lifelong learning competencies.

Conclusion

Metacognitive strategies are essential tools for improving academic reading comprehension and fostering learner autonomy. The literature reviewed in this article indicates that planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies enable students to become more effective readers and independent learners. Both international and Uzbek scholars recognize the importance of metacognitive awareness in language learning and academic achievement.

The findings suggest that teachers should systematically integrate metacognitive strategy instruction into reading classes. Such integration can improve students' comprehension skills, critical thinking abilities, and academic performance. Future research may focus on investigating the effectiveness of specific metacognitive interventions in different educational contexts within Uzbekistan and other EFL environments.

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