The Role of Metacognition in the Success of Reading and Writing Tasks across Cultures

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Abstract- **There are individual differences between students' ways of learning which may impact on their success in responding to the challenge of learning a foreign language. While some students are self-regulating and self-directing, others may understand their own strengths and weakness but be unable to make use of this knowledge to increase their success rate. Yet others will lack this level of self-awareness and ability to take control of their own learning. The concept of metacognition, which can be defined as the ability to understand, reflect on, and control one's thinking and learning is important for academic success across a range of subject areas. Metacognitive knowledge and strategy training should be implemented and integrated in language learning to enhance the development of language proficiency.**

INTRODUCTION

The metacognition has a close relationship with learning and attainment. Metacognition as first described by Flavell refers to the ability to monitor and control thinking during a task and to the longer term building of knowledge about one's own and others' thinking processes. Metacognition comprises metacognitive knowledge including that related to self, task and strategies, metacognitive experiences and the ability to regulate and control cognitive processing during a task. Different models of metacognition view the dynamic interaction between these features slightly differently, with some emphasising other factors such as motivation while others focus on information processing.

A further model on which the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory is based is the categorisation of metacognition into declarative, procedural and conditional. This categorisation is particularly useful in studies of pedagogy because it enables assessment of specific features of metacognition in relation to a learning goal. The link between metacognition and academic achievement is often based on correlational findings and the assumption cannot be made about cause-and-effect relationships.

Assessment of metacognition is fraught with difficulties. The most usual ways of assessing metacognition include self-report questionnaires, interviews, think-aloud protocols, observations and various tests that seek to link confidence judgements or predictions of success with actual success on a task. Assessments may also be designed to concentrate on the process of learning or the outcomes of learning.

Reading and writing have long been considered to be related activities. Teachers use the five-stage reading process – pre-reading, reading, responding, exploring and applying for a balanced instructional program and five stages of the writing process – pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing to support students to develop their compositions. According to constructivist theoretical perspective both reading and writing are meaning-making activities.

Metacognition has gained substantial attention in recent years in SLA research. Metacognitive awareness should be recognised as an indispensablepart of EFL reading an in EFL writing. Earlier research in metacognition in L2 reading and writing is largely descriptive and exploratory in nature and the focusplaced on the types of metacognitive knowledge and strategies students use in reading and writing tasks. Only little attention was paid to the relationship between the employment of these strategies and knowledge and L2 success in learning.

Recent studies have examined metacognitive knowledge as one factor among many within larger cognitive models of L2 writing to investigate the relationships between L2 linguistic knowledge, speed of L2 processing, metacognitive knowledge, L1 writing proficiency and L2writing proficiency. Research on metacognitive knowledge in language

learning has suggested that there is a mutual influence in terms of second language learning and metacognitive awareness

In 1998, Wenden pointed out the importance of incorporating metacognitive knowledge in learner training programmes to make learning more efficient. However much of the research in this area focuses on metacognition about learners themselves, rather than about the tasks and process. Further, very little is known about similarities and differencesbetween learners from different sociocultural contexts in terms of their metacognitive strategy use for successful language learning. Liu and Li claimed that there is a need to examine the role of metacognition in successful L2 reading and writing across EFL contexts in order to gain evidence of whether metacognition contributes to L2 success, and how metacognition is used by L2 learners across different cultures. The research attemptsto explore the interrelationship between metacognition and academic success in English language learning with a particular focus on reading and writing.

In reading tasks proficient language learners take conscious steps to understand what they are doing by using a wider range of strategies than less proficient learners. Less proficient learners tended to use more cognitive strategies to assist reading comprehension and progressing the task. Specifically less proficient students use a lot of comprehension strategies such as summarising, questioning, repetition, language strategy and process strategy. The less proficient learners pay special attention to completing the task using strategies they normally use, despite the nature of the tasks.

Proficient learners use more metacognitive strategies than their counterparts. In terms of specific metacognitive strategies, less proficient learners mainly use self- knowledge with a focus on their understanding of the material and the difficulty in relation to their linguistic competence.

Proficient and less proficient learners demonstrate different metacognitive strategies to complete the writing task. The differences lie in three areas: planning, monitoring and evaluation. Less skilled writers tend to start writing immediately after a task is assigned. The primary reason for doing so is a perception of lack of time. They are quite aware that they normally take a quite a lot of time to construct sentences. They construct the essay in their L1 and then translate it into English. They are often frustrated by their lack of appropriate lexical expressions of English. It is important to focus on language strategy. Less proficient learners differ from proficient learners in planning, monitoring and evaluating.

In planning both proficient and less proficient learners plan what they need to do when they receive the task. Less proficient learners often make a plan for the outline for the writing task an rush into writing, proficient learners engage in thinking about their prior knowledge, which might have been of help with the task. Proficient learners also allocate time for each stage of the writing.

For less proficient learners there was little evidence of monitoring their progress, performance and thinking. Proficient learners monitor the task level and the strategies they use. The strong sense of monitoring their writing process and products to some extent help the proficient learners developtheir competence in writing and improved the quality of their product.

In terms of evaluation both the less proficient and proficient do not engage with it after completing the task. Some proficient learners evaluate their own performances, especially in relation to their own expectations before conducting the task. This suggests that proficient and less proficient learners think and act differently in terms of metacognition.

In many EFL contexts, language learning still by and large focuses on enhancing learners'linguistic knowledge and very little attention has been paid to developing and improving students' learning strategies. There is a strong pedagogical implication: metacognitive knowledge can be shared among individuals as it explains individuals' approach to language learning activities and reflects a sense of being in control of one's own learning. Such knowledge and awareness in the development of an individual's approachto language learning activities helps learners to stand back and observe themselves to see what they have learned, and provides a base for the negotiation of meaning in the many different types of social interaction in a learning environment.

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