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PAPER

HOW BILINGUALISM SHAPES PERSONALITY AND THOUGHT PATTERNS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METACOGNITION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Language learning is a complex process that involves not only acquiring vocabulary and grammar but also developing self-regulated learning habits. Metacognition, or the awareness and control of one's own learning processes, is a key factor in academic success, especially in second language acquisition. This study investigates the connection between metacognitive awareness and the application of language learning strategies (LLSs). Based on learner surveys, existing theoretical frameworks, and real-life classroom examples, the findings indicate that learners with high metacognitive skills tend to use strategies more effectively, leading to improved performance. The paper concludes with pedagogical recommendations for fostering metacognitive skills among language learners.

Key words: metacognition, language learning strategies, self-regulation, second language acquisition, strategic learning, learner autonomy

Introduction

Language learning is a multifaceted process that demands more than just mastering vocabulary and grammar. It requires learners to engage in complex cognitive activities such as monitoring their progress, setting appropriate learning goals, reflecting on their strategies, and adjusting their approaches based on self-awareness. While factors such as motivation, aptitude, and exposure to the language are often emphasized in language acquisition research, recent studies have shown that learners' ability to regulate their own learning through metacognitive strategies plays a crucial role in their success.

Metacognition, a concept first introduced by Flavell (1979), refers to the awareness and control of one's own learning processes. It involves two primary aspects: metacognitive knowledge—understanding the strategies, tasks, and oneself as a learner—and metacognitive regulation—the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's learning progress. Metacognition is not just an abstract cognitive skill; it is a practical tool that helps learners manage their learning more effectively by making deliberate choices about which strategies to use, when to use them, and how to adapt them when necessary. One key component of successful language learning is the use of language learning strategies (LLSs). These strategies, which include techniques such as note-taking, summarizing, and self-testing, enable learners to approach tasks more efficiently. Oxford (1990) defined LLSs as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that learners use to improve their progress in acquiring language skills. These strategies are often divided into different categories, such as cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, memory, and compensation strategies. Each category plays a different role in aiding language learners, but their effectiveness hinges on how consciously and appropriately they are applied, which brings metacognitive awareness into play.

Learners who possess metacognitive skills are better equipped to reflect on their learning processes, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and make informed decisions about how to proceed. This ability not only influences their strategy

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selection but also affects the frequency and variety of strategies they use. Furthermore, metacognitive learners are generally more autonomous and self-regulated, able to adjust their methods to meet the demands of different tasks and overcome obstacles they may encounter. Despite the clear link between metacognition and language learning, research has shown that many students, particularly those at the beginning stages of language acquisition, often lack sufficient awareness of how to apply metacognitive strategies effectively. While metacognitive awareness can significantly enhance learners' performance, it requires deliberate instruction and practice. Teachers can foster this awareness by providing students with opportunities to reflect on their learning, model strategic behavior, and guide them in adapting their strategies.

This study aims to explore the relationship between metacognitive awareness and the use of language learning strategies. By examining how learners' metacognitive skills influence their strategy choices and the effectiveness of those strategies, the research hopes to shed light on ways to enhance language learning outcomes. Ultimately, the goal is to provide insights for language educators on how to promote metacognitive skills and, consequently, improve the language learning process for their students.

Literature Review

What is Metacognition?

Metacognition includes two main components (Flavell, 1979):

1. Metacognitive knowledge – knowledge about strategies, tasks, and oneself as a learner.

2. Metacognitive regulation – the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's learning.

Metacognitively aware students tend to:

- Set specific and realistic learning goals
- Choose appropriate learning strategies for each task
- Reflect on their learning experience and adjust methods if needed Wenden (1998) and Chamot (2004) argue that metacognitive learners are more independent, persistent, and flexible in approaching language learning tasks. Language learning strategies (LLSs) LLSs help students manage the process of learning a new language. Oxford's (1990) taxonomy divides them into:
- Cognitive strategies – practicing, analyzing, and summarizing
- Metacognitive strategies – organizing, planning, and evaluating learning
- Affective strategies – managing emotions and motivation
- Social strategies – cooperating and asking for help
- Memory strategies – using associations and imagery
- Compensation strategies – guessing unknown words and using gestures

Each type of strategy serves a specific purpose, but their effectiveness depends largely on how and when they are used—which is where metacognitive awareness plays a central role. **Previous research on the relationship** According to Anderson (2002), metacognition and LLSs are closely related because learners who understand their own thinking can select and apply strategies more consciously. Similarly, Vandergrift (2003) showed that metacognitive awareness supports listening comprehension by encouraging self-monitoring and reflection.

Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative tools to assess students' metacognitive awareness and strategy use.

Participants

- 120 university EFL students from beginner to upper-intermediate levels
- Participants from three language institutes in Samarkand, Uzbekistan Instruments

1. Metacognitive awareness inventory (MAI) – adapted to second language learning context

2. Strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) – measures the frequency and type of strategies used

3. Focus group discussions – to gather students' perspectives on their learning habits

Data collection

The data for this study were collected using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess students' metacognitive awareness and their use of language learning strategies.

To assess metacognitive awareness, participants completed a Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI). This inventory consisted of items designed to measure both metacognitive knowledge (understanding of strategies, tasks, and the self as a learner) and metacognitive regulation (the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's learning). The participants rated each statement on a Likert scale, from "strongly agree"to "strongly disagree."

In addition to the MAI, participants completed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This inventory measured the frequency of various language learning strategies used by participants. The strategies were categorized into six groups: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, and compensation strategies. Participants indicated how often they used each strategy, with options ranging from "never or almost never"to "always or almost always."

Lastly, focus group discussions were conducted with a smaller group of students to gain qualitative insights into their learning experiences. These discussions allowed participants to reflect on their own learning strategies, self-regulation, and awareness of their learning processes. The discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of how students perceive their metacognitive and strategy usage.

Data analysis

The data analysis process combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the relationship between metacognitive awareness and the use of language learning strategies.

The quantitative data from the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis. This statistical method was used to examine the relationship between metacognitive awareness and the frequency of strategy use. The goal was to identify any significant correlation between students' ability to regulate their learning and the variety and frequency of strategies they employed.

For the qualitative data obtained from the focus group discussions, thematic coding was applied. The transcripts of the discussions were reviewed carefully to identify recurring themes and patterns in students' reflections on their learning processes.

This helped to explore how students made decisions about which strategies to use, how they planned and monitored their learning, and the challenges they faced in being more metacognitively aware. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of how metacognitive awareness influences the use of language

learning strategies and how this, in turn, impacts students' language learning outcomes.

Results

Quantitative findings · A moderate to strong positive correlation (r = 0.68) was found between metacognitive awareness and frequency of strategy use · Students with higher metacognitive scores reported more diverse and frequent strategy use, especially metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies · Planning, goal-setting, and self-monitoring were the most commonly used metacognitive actions Qualitative observations · Students who kept learning journals or reflected on their progress used strategies more purposefully · Some low-performing students were unaware of learning strategies and lacked planning or reflection habits · Students expressed a desire for more teacher guidance in developing learning strategies

Discussion

Strategic learning through metacognition

The data confirms that metacognitive awareness significantly impacts the intentional use of LLSs. Students who understand how they learn can:

· Select suitable strategies for each language task (e.g., using visual aids for vocabulary or recording for pronunciation)

· Adapt strategies when one is not effective

· Manage emotions and time more effectively

The role of teachers Metacognitive strategy use is not always intuitive, especially for beginner learners. Teachers must provide:

· Explicit instruction on how to plan and evaluate one's learning

· Modeling of strategy use, such as thinking aloud

· Opportunities for self-reflection, like learning diaries and peer feedback Challenges identified

· Many students lack awareness of metacognition

· Strategy instruction is often overlooked in traditional classrooms

· Learners often need ongoing support to form effective habits

Recommendations

1. Include metacognitive skill-building in language curricula

2. Use reflection tools, such as logs or journals, to help students monitor their learning

3. Teach strategy selection and adaptation alongside language content

4. Provide regular feedback and scaffolding to help students evaluate their success

5. Promote learner autonomy by encouraging independent goal-setting and self-assessment

Conclusion

This study highlights a strong connection between metacognitive awareness and effective use of language learning strategies. Learners who are able to reflect on and regulate their learning tend to be more strategic, motivated, and successful in acquiring a foreign language.

To improve language learning outcomes, educators must recognize the importance of developing metacognitive skills alongside language proficiency. By doing so, learners will not only achieve better academic results but also become lifelong, independent learners.

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