

THE ROLE OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS AMONG 8TH–9TH GRADE PUPILS

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Abstract: The development of effective English language learning skills among secondary school pupils requires not only linguistic knowledge but also learners' awareness of how they learn. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to understand, regulate and evaluate their own learning processes. This article examines the role of metacognitive strategies in developing English language learning skills among 8th–9th grade pupils. The study adopts a qualitative and methodological approach and focuses on three major dimensions of metacognitive regulation: planning, monitoring and evaluation. Particular attention is given to the application of metacognitive strategies in reading, listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary acquisition and grammar learning. The article argues that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies can help pupils identify learning goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor their comprehension and performance, recognize difficulties and reflect on their progress.

Keywords: *metacognitive strategies, English language learning, secondary education, 8th–9th grade pupils, metacognition, self-regulation, learning strategies, learner autonomy, self-assessment, reflection.*

Introduction

Successful English language learning depends not only on pupils' knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and language structures but also on their ability to understand and regulate their own learning processes. Pupils may have access to appropriate learning materials and classroom instruction but still experience difficulties if they do not know how to plan their learning, monitor their comprehension or evaluate their progress. This issue is particularly relevant among 8th–9th grade pupils. At this educational stage, learners are expected to become increasingly independent and responsible for their academic performance. However, many pupils continue to rely primarily on teachers for explanations, correction and evaluation. They may complete tasks without considering which strategies they use or whether those strategies are effective.

The concept of metacognitive strategies.

Metacognition generally refers to learners' awareness of their own cognitive processes and their ability to regulate these processes. In language education,

metacognitive strategies help learners make conscious decisions about how they approach learning tasks.

Three major components can be distinguished:

Planning involves determining learning objectives, identifying task requirements, predicting possible difficulties and selecting appropriate strategies.

Monitoring involves checking comprehension and performance during the learning process.

Evaluating involves judging the effectiveness of the strategies used and determining what should be improved in future learning.

These three components can be represented as: **planning → monitoring → evaluating → reflection → improved learning**

The process is cyclical rather than linear. Evaluation and reflection provide information that can be used to improve planning during subsequent learning activities. Metacognitive strategies therefore transform language learning from an activity in which pupils simply complete exercises into a conscious process in which they make decisions about *how* and *why* they learn.

Metacognitive strategies in listening. Listening can be particularly challenging for secondary-school English learners because spoken language is temporary and often contains unfamiliar vocabulary and different pronunciation patterns. Metacognitive strategies can help pupils approach listening tasks systematically. Before listening, pupils can predict the content from the title or pictures and identify what information they need to listen for. During listening, they can monitor whether they are following the speaker and focus on key information rather than attempting to understand every word. After listening, they can evaluate their performance and identify the source of difficulty.

The role of the teacher.

The successful development of metacognitive strategies requires active teacher involvement. The teacher should not simply tell pupils to “think about their learning.” Instead, metacognitive strategies need to be explicitly taught, demonstrated and practiced. A gradual instructional model can be proposed: **teacher modelling → guided practice → collaborative practice → independent practice → self-regulation**

At the first stage, the teacher demonstrates the strategy.

At the second stage, pupils use the strategy with teacher support.

At the third stage, pupils practise it collaboratively.

At the fourth stage, pupils apply it independently.

Finally, learners should be able to select and adapt strategies according to their individual learning needs. Thus, the teacher gradually moves from being the main

controller of the learning process towards becoming a facilitator of learners' metacognitive development.

Discussion

The integration of metacognitive strategies into English language teaching can provide several pedagogical benefits. First, it can make pupils more aware of their own learning processes. Instead of completing tasks mechanically, they begin to understand the reasons behind their learning decisions. Second, metacognitive strategies can support independent problem-solving. When pupils encounter difficulty, they can learn to select an appropriate strategy instead of immediately depending on the teacher. Third, metacognitive instruction can support learner autonomy. Pupils become increasingly capable of establishing learning goals and evaluating their progress. Fourth, metacognitive strategies can help teachers obtain better information about pupils' learning difficulties. A pupil's incorrect answer provides limited information, whereas a pupil's explanation of *why* the error occurred can reveal a deeper learning problem. However, metacognitive strategies should not be introduced as additional theoretical material that increases pupils' workload. They should be integrated naturally into existing English activities. A reading lesson, for example, can include two minutes of planning, several monitoring questions and a short reflection at the end. Another important consideration is age appropriateness. 8th–9th grade pupils may initially find metacognitive terminology difficult. Therefore, teachers should use simple language such as “plan,” “check,” “think,” “evaluate” and “improve” rather than relying heavily on abstract theoretical terminology.

Conclusion

Metacognitive strategies play an important role in developing English language learning skills among 8th–9th grade pupils. By teaching learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, teachers can help pupils become more conscious, strategic and independent language learners. The integration of metacognitive strategies into reading, listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary and grammar activities can make the learning process more purposeful. Self-questioning, think-aloud activities, learning journals, self-assessment checklists, reflective tasks and strategy-based instruction provide practical ways of developing pupils' metacognitive awareness.

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