NAMANGAN DAVLAT UNIVERSITETI
ILMIY AXBOROTNOMASI, [2026-9]
ISSN:2181-1458
ISSN:2181-0427

13.00.00-PEDAGOGIKA
journal.namdu.uz
PEDAGOGICAL

THE ROLE OF METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING ACADEMIC ENGLISH READING SKILLS

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Abstract: *Reading comprehension is one of the most essential skills for students studying English in academic contexts. University students are expected to understand complex texts, identify main ideas, recognize supporting details, interpret unfamiliar vocabulary, make inferences, and critically evaluate information. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience difficulties when reading academic texts because of limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, ineffective reading habits, and a lack of strategic awareness. This article examines the role of metacognitive reading strategies in developing students' academic English reading skills. The study employs a qualitative literature review methodology and analyzes previous research on reading comprehension, metacognition, strategic reading, and English language instruction.*

Keywords: *reading comprehension, academic reading, metacognitive strategies, EFL learners, reading strategies, English language teaching, learner autonomy, strategic reading*

AKADEMIK INGLIZ TILIDA O‘ QISH KO‘ NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISHDA METAKOGNITIV O‘ QISH STRATEGIYALARINING ROLI

Annotatsiya: *O‘ qishni tushunish akademik kontekstlarda ingliz tilini o‘ rganayotgan talabalar uchun eng muhim ko‘ nikmalardan biridir. Universitet talabalaridan murakkab matnlarni tushunish, asosiy g‘ oyalarni aniqlash, qo‘ shimcha tafsilotlarni tanib olish, notanish so‘ z boyligini talqin qilish, xulosalar chiqarish va ma'lumotni tanqidiy baholash kutilmoqda. Biroq, ko‘ plab chet tili sifatida ingliz tili (EFL) o‘ quvchilari akademik matnlarni o‘ qishda cheklangan so‘ z boyligi, yetarli bo‘ lmagan bilim, samarasiz o‘ qish odatlari va strategik xabardorlikning yo‘ qligi tufayli qiyinchiliklarga duch kelishadi. Ushbu maqolada talabalarning akademik ingliz tilidagi o‘ qish ko‘ nikmalarini rivojlantirishda metakognitiv o‘ qish strategiyalarining roli ko‘ rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqotda sifatli adabiyotlarni ko‘ rib chiqish metodologiyasi qo‘ llaniladi va o‘ qishni tushunish, metakognitsiya, strategik o‘ qish va ingliz tilini o‘ qitish bo‘ yicha oldingi tadqiqotlar tahlil qilinadi.*

Kalit so‘ zlar: *o‘ qishni tushunish, akademik o‘ qish, metakognitiv strategiyalar, EFL o‘ quvchilari, o‘ qish strategiyalari, ingliz tilini o‘ qitish, o‘ quvchining avtonomiyasi, strategik o‘ qish*

РОЛЬ МЕТАКОГНИТИВНЫХ СТРАТЕГИЙ ЧТЕНИЯ В РАЗВИТИИ НАВЫКОВ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО ЧТЕНИЯ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Аннотация: *Понимание прочитанного является одним из важнейших навыков для студентов, изучающих английский язык в академической среде. От студентов университетов ожидается понимание сложных текстов, выявление основных идей, распознавание подтверждающих деталей, интерпретация незнакомой лексики, формулирование выводов и критическая оценка информации. Однако многие изучающие английский язык как иностранный (EFL) испытывают трудности при чтении академических текстов из-за ограниченного словарного запаса, недостаточных фоновых знаний, неэффективных навыков чтения и отсутствия стратегического мышления. В данной статье рассматривается роль метакогнитивных стратегий чтения в развитии навыков академического чтения на английском языке у студентов. В исследовании используется качественная методология обзора литературы, анализируются предыдущие исследования по пониманию прочитанного, метакогниции, стратегическому чтению и преподаванию английского языка.*

Ключевые слова: *понимание прочитанного, академическое чтение, метакогнитивные стратегии, изучающие английский как иностранный, стратегии чтения, преподавание английского языка, автономия учащихся, стратегическое чтение*

Introduction

Reading plays a central role in academic English language learning. University students frequently need to read textbooks, research articles, academic essays, reports, and other scholarly materials in order to acquire knowledge and participate successfully in their academic disciplines. Unlike general reading, academic reading often requires learners to process complex arguments, understand specialized vocabulary, distinguish between main and supporting ideas, interpret evidence, and evaluate the author's position. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, academic reading can be particularly challenging. Students may understand individual words but still fail to construct the overall meaning of a text. Difficulties may arise from limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, insufficient background knowledge, or ineffective reading habits. Consequently, simply providing students with academic texts is often insufficient. Learners need to be taught how to approach texts strategically.

Reading strategies refer to deliberate actions that readers use to understand, remember, and evaluate information. Common strategies include previewing a text, predicting content, asking questions, identifying key ideas, using context to infer meaning, summarizing, and monitoring comprehension. Research on second-language reading has demonstrated the importance of strategic behavior and metacognitive awareness in successful comprehension. Metacognition refers to learners' awareness of and control over their own cognitive processes. In reading, metacognitive knowledge enables students to understand how they read, recognize when comprehension breaks down, and select appropriate strategies to solve problems. Flavell (1979) identified metacognition as an important component of effective learning, while later research has demonstrated its relevance to reading comprehension.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach. Academic publications concerning reading comprehension, metacognitive awareness, reading strategies, second-language reading, and academic English instruction were examined. The reviewed literature included theoretical works, empirical studies, and research-based discussions of strategic reading. Particular attention was given to studies that investigated the relationship between learners' strategic awareness and reading comprehension performance.

The analysis focused on four major areas:

the importance of reading strategies in academic English;

the role of metacognitive awareness in comprehension;

instructional techniques for teaching reading strategies;

the development of learner autonomy and self-regulated reading.

The selected literature was analyzed thematically. Common findings were identified and organized according to the stages of strategic reading: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. Because the present study is a literature review, no original experimental data were collected from participants.

Results

The reviewed literature indicates that successful readers do not simply process words sequentially. They actively construct meaning by combining information from the text with their previous knowledge and by using appropriate strategies. Strategic readers are more likely to identify the purpose of a text before reading, predict possible content, distinguish important information from less relevant details, and monitor their comprehension during reading. When they encounter a difficult paragraph, they may reread it, examine surrounding sentences, infer meaning from context, or use their background knowledge. For EFL students, strategic reading is particularly important because linguistic limitations can interfere with comprehension. A student who encounters unfamiliar vocabulary may stop reading and attempt to translate every word. Although this approach may appear useful, excessive word-by-word translation can reduce reading speed and interfere with understanding the main argument.

The results suggest that pre-reading activities provide an important foundation for comprehension. Before reading an academic text, students can examine the title, headings, subheadings, illustrations,

keywords, and introductory paragraphs. One effective strategy is prediction. Teachers can ask students to predict the content of the text based on its title and headings. Students may also discuss what they already know about the topic. This activates background knowledge and establishes a purpose for reading.

Another useful technique is setting a reading goal. Instead of simply telling students to «read the text,» teachers can provide a specific purpose, such as identifying the author's main argument, finding evidence for a particular claim, or comparing two perspectives. These activities encourage students to approach reading as an active process rather than a passive exercise.

While-reading strategies help learners maintain comprehension as they process the text. One of the most important strategies is monitoring. Students should periodically ask themselves whether they understand what they have read. Teachers can model monitoring by demonstrating how an experienced reader responds to comprehension problems. For example, a teacher may explain that a particular sentence is difficult because of an unfamiliar term and then demonstrate how the surrounding context can be used to infer its meaning. Questioning is another effective strategy. Students can generate questions about the text while reading. Questions such as «What is the author's main argument?», «What evidence supports this claim?» and «Why does the author mention this example?» encourage deeper processing.

Identifying main ideas is particularly important for academic reading. Students should learn to distinguish between central arguments and supporting details. This skill can be developed through activities in which learners identify topic sentences, summarize paragraphs, or create outlines. Contextual guessing is also useful for vocabulary development. Instead of immediately consulting a dictionary, students can examine prefixes, suffixes, grammatical information, and surrounding sentences to infer the approximate meaning of unfamiliar words.

Post-reading activities allow learners to evaluate and consolidate their understanding. Summarization is one of the most useful techniques. Students can write a short summary of the text using their own words and focusing on the central ideas.

Another effective activity is graphic organization. Students can create concept maps, flowcharts, or outlines showing relationships between ideas. These activities are particularly useful for academic texts containing complex arguments or multiple concepts.

Reflection is also an important component of metacognitive reading. Students can be asked questions such as:

What was the main idea of the text?

Which part was most difficult?

Which strategy helped me understand the text?

What did I do when I did not understand something?

What strategy should I use next time?

Such reflection helps learners become more aware of their own reading processes.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that reading comprehension instruction should include explicit teaching of strategies rather than relying exclusively on extensive reading practice. Students may use reading strategies intuitively, but many EFL learners require direct instruction and guided practice before they can apply strategies independently.

One effective instructional model is gradual release of responsibility. In the first stage, the teacher explicitly explains a strategy and demonstrates how it works. In the second stage, students practice the strategy with teacher guidance.

Think-aloud procedures can be particularly useful in this process. During a think-aloud activity, the teacher verbalizes the mental processes involved in reading. For example, the teacher may explain how a heading generates a prediction, how a context clue helps interpret an unfamiliar word, or how a paragraph supports the author's main argument.

The results also indicate that no single reading strategy is sufficient for all academic texts. Different texts require different approaches. A research article may require attention to the research question, methodology, findings, and conclusions, whereas a theoretical chapter may require students to identify concepts, definitions, and relationships between ideas. Therefore, students should develop a repertoire of strategies and learn when to use them.

Another important implication concerns vocabulary instruction. Academic vocabulary is essential for comprehension, but reading instruction should not become a process of translating every unfamiliar word. Teachers can encourage students to determine whether an unfamiliar word is essential to understanding the text. If it is not central to the argument, students may continue reading. If it is essential, they can use contextual analysis or a dictionary. Critical reading should also be incorporated into academic English courses. At higher levels of proficiency, students need to evaluate the reliability of information, identify assumptions, distinguish facts from opinions, and recognize the author's purpose. Thus, strategic reading should ultimately develop not only comprehension but also critical thinking.

The role of the teacher remains important. Although the ultimate goal is learner independence, students need systematic support during the development of strategic reading abilities. Teachers should provide appropriate texts, demonstrate strategies, monitor student progress, and give constructive feedback. The integration of digital resources can further support strategic reading. Online academic texts can provide hyperlinks, digital dictionaries, annotation tools, search functions, and collaborative platforms. However, students should be taught to use these tools strategically rather than becoming dependent on automatic translation or dictionary lookup.

Conclusion

Teaching reading comprehension strategies is essential for developing effective academic English readers. The literature reviewed in this study indicates that metacognitive strategies such as planning, predicting, questioning, monitoring, identifying main ideas, inferring meaning, summarizing, and evaluating information can support learners' comprehension and independence. Effective strategy instruction should be explicit, systematic, and gradual. Teachers

should demonstrate how strategies work, provide guided practice, and gradually transfer responsibility to students. Pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities should be integrated into academic English lessons to encourage active engagement with texts. The ultimate objective of reading instruction should not simply be to help students understand a particular text. Rather, learners should develop the ability to approach unfamiliar academic texts confidently, recognize comprehension problems, select appropriate strategies, and evaluate their own reading performance.

Future research could investigate the effectiveness of specific metacognitive strategies among university-level EFL learners and compare strategy-based instruction with traditional reading instruction. Further studies could also explore how digital annotation tools, artificial intelligence, and online academic resources influence students' strategic reading behavior.

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