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THE METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY TRAINING EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' READING SKILL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

For many high school students learning English as a foreign language, the reading skills are considered as the most important and challenging of the four language skills. Especially when long reading texts concerns. Based on outcomes, as defined on a curriculum , it is expected that high school students who can read foreign languages are able to cope with difficulties in reading foreign languages, understand what they read, and integrate new information they have acquired with their background knowledge. Notwithstanding, students often express the difficulties they face while practicing reading skills, mainly they struggle understanding long texts. The question that emerges at this point is how teachers can help high school students in this process, thus facilitate them on being more efficient and independent readers. As the scientific researches with respect to the reading skills concerns, it has been noticed that the theories have changed over time. Carrell (1988) points out that the initial research on foreign language reading assessed reading as a process that begins with the understanding of small parts of the text (letters, words, phrases, etc.) and proceeds with acquisition of the whole text. From this point of view, during the reading process, the reader does not imply anything of his/her skill or knowledge, but merely compose the written letters and combine them with verbal expressions - pronunciations. The reader is in a passive position; they only alter symbols into verbal form. However, this model has been the target of various criticisms over time, and in contrary to this theory it is argued that the reader has an effective role in the reading process. On the other hand Carrel described reading as a "psycho-logical predictive game" and claimed that the reader's past knowledge and predictive ability enabled him/her to read during the reading process (Carrel, 1988). Furthermore Lesser Crouton (1997) notes that the result of this change in theory from passive to active learners position during reading process is that language learning strategies started to gain importance with the rapid growth of foreign language teaching. Eventually, the objective of many foreign language teachers has begun be based on using language learning strategies, thus facilitate the language learning process with the aim of educating independent learners who can take responsibility for their own language learning. In addition, Oxford (1994) concluded that all strategy studies did not produce successful and ultimate outcomes that some strategy training studies were effective in some skills and were not effective in other skills, so researches conducted that these subjects had to be repeated and thus provide more stable information. When the use of strategy is examined within the framework of reading skills, it has been found that successful readers use the strategies at a higher rate compared to the weak readers and that the successful readers use the strategies consciously and effectively (Block, 1992; Carrell, 1998). Moreover Carrell (1998) emphasizes that the effective use of reading strategies is closely related to metacognitive skills and meantime she defines the metacognition as "thinking about how the thinking process takes place and what is happening during this process". Anderson (2003) states that the teaching of metacognitive skills described in this way is an effective evaluation and management of teaching time.

Introduction

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Based on outcomes, as defined on a curriculum, it is expected that high school students who can read foreign languages are able to cope with difficulties in reading foreign languages, understand what they read, and integrate new information they have acquired with their background knowledge. Notwithstanding, students often express the difficulties they face while practicing reading skills, mainly they struggle understanding long texts. The question that emerges at this point is how teachers can help high school students in this process, thus facilitate them on being more efficient and independent readers.

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reading skills, it has been found that successful readers use the strategies at a higher rate compared to the weak readers and that the successful readers use the strategies consciously and effectively (Block, 1992; Carrell, 1998).

Moreover Carrell (1998) emphasizes that the effective use of reading strategies is closely related to metacognitive skills and meantime she defines the metacognition as "thinking about how the thinking process takes place and what is happening during this process". Anderson (2003) states that the teaching of metacognitive skills described in this way is an effective evaluation and management of teaching time.

Defining Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies in foreign language teaching has been defined in various ways by important names of this field. Oxford (1990: 1) has made a shortest definition stating that language learning strategies are "steps taken by students to enhance their own language learning." According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 1), language learning strategies are "special ideas and behaviours that help learners to understand, learn and remember new knowledge". Although they named differently by authors, as learner (Wenden & Rubin, 1987), learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and some others called them language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), there are few widely recognized features of learning this strategies.

First of all, language learning strategies are student production. The second they enhance language learning and improve language skills reflected in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Third, behaviours can be observed like techniques, or they can be invisible features such as thoughts and intellectual processes. The fourth language learning strategies include knowledge and memory (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). Oxford (1990) refers to 12 features of language learning strategies: 1. Contribute the main goal, communicative competence, 2. Allows learners to become more self-directed, 3. Expand the role of teacher, 4. Are problem oriented, 5. Are specific actions taken by the learner, 6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive, 7. Support learning both directly and indirectly, 8. Are not always observable, 9. Are often conscious, 10. Can be taught, 11. Are flexible, 12. Are influenced by variety of factors.

To sum up, language learning strategies are techniques that students use consciously or unconsciously in the foreign language learning process deliberately to acquire and use knowledge and skills of the new language in an easier, effective and systematic way thus to enhance the success of this process in accordance with their needs.

Language learning strategies are divided into different types of strategies and grouped in several categories in a variety of ways. The most comprehensive classification in the context of language learning strategies was made by Oxford (1990). Similar to Rubin (1987), Oxford (1990) divided this system into two main groups as "indirect" and "direct". In the group of *Direct Strategies*, she classified memory, compensation and cognitive strategies, whereas in the *Indirect Strategies* group she includes metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Oxford (1990), in classification of strategies into groups, similar to Rubin (1987) and O'Malley et al. (1985) has considered a cognitive and metacognitive as strategy groups as well. Since metacognitive strategies belong to the strategy group that the current research focuses on, at this point, it is useful to focus on the concepts of metacognition, metacognitive knowledge, and metacognitive strategies, in the further section.

Metacognition and Metacognitive Strategies

John Flavell was the first to use the term metacognition in the late 1970s to mean "cognition about cognitive phenomena," or more simply "thinking about thinking" (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). Subsequent development and the use of the term have remained relatively faithful to this original meaning. For example, researchers working in the field of cognitive psychology have offered the following definitions: "Awareness of one's own thinking, awareness of the content of one's conceptions, an active monitoring of one's cognitive processes, an attempt to regulate one's cognitive processes in relationship to further learning, and an application of a set of heuristics as an effective device for helping people organize their methods of attack on problems in general. Awareness and management of one's own thought" (Kuhn & Dean, 2004, p. 270) "The monitoring and control of thought" (Martinez, 2006, p. 696).

Research on met cognitive knowledge and language learning especially learner strategies has acknowledged a mutual influence in terms of second language learning and highlights the fact that metacognitive knowledge should be incorporated in learner training programs to make their learning more efficient (Wenden, 1998). At this point in terms of better understanding metacognitive strategies, a definition that emphasizes the difference between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, has been considered useful to elaborate in brief on a preceding part of the paper.

Based on cognitive theory, there are two levels of reading strategy, i.e. cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. The former are the strategies that are more directly related to individual tasks and entail direct manipulation or

transformation of learning materials. In contrast, metacognitive strategies involve thinking about learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production while they are taking place, and self-evaluation of learning after the language activity is completed (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mazaneres, Russo & Kupper, 1985, p.560). In short, cognitive strategies are mobilized to construct a framework of the meaning of the text while metacognitive strategies are activated to develop awareness of strategy uses.

"While metacognitive strategies compares thinking about the processes of reading, planning of reading, their understanding while they appear or after the completion of a linguistic activity that contains evaluation of an individual during studying, meanwhile cognitive strategies are in direct correlation with reading activities and consist of direct control and processing". (O'Malley et al. 1985: 560-61).

Reading Strategies and Metacognition

Carrell (1998) arranged the reading strategies as follows: implementing of different tactics in order to make something that will incite reader's interest and make him/her understand the text and the main topic according to the reading strategies; reading very fast, or scanning the text in order to find a certain piece of information; using some words in the text to find unknown vocabulary; skipping unknown words; tolerating ambiguity; making predictions; verifying conclusions or deciding that they are wrong; defining the main idea; mobilising information in the background and recognising the text structure.

Block (1992: 319-320) claims that the reading process is a secret process where the readers control this process in an efficient way, and this influences that the text is understood better. This kind of control he has named as a true metacognition.

Concerning reading, metacognition is stated to consist of two main components, such as: information strategy of the person possessing it (metacognitive knowledge), and control of his/her own actions while the person reads for a completely different goal. (Carrell et al, 1989;. Casanav, 1998). Palinscar & Brown (1986) Conceptual monitoring strategies has listed as monitoring, selfquestioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting. Shih (1992: 303) among the strategies that would serve as an help during the reading process emphasis the role of self questioning to of a great interest. It is also said that a successful reader, before reading, during reading and after completion of reading poses questions to themselves.

Another study on the influence of the metacognitive strategies on reading was conducted by Carrell (1989). Carrell et al (1989) conducted training to 26 students who studied English as the second

language. She applied the following strategies: “semantic mapping” and “experience-text-relationship.”

The students were divided in groups, actually in two experimental groups and two control groups. In total four groups of students. One of the experimental group, was trained on “semantic mapping” whereas on a second experimental group “experience-text-relationship” training was conducted. The control groups did not get any training at all. Teaching lasted for four days. The studied groups, the experimental and control groups, had a pre-test and were graded according to a final test. At the end of the study, it was concluded that there were no differences between the results of the pre-test and the post-test among the experimental and control groups. On the other hand, results of the pre-test and the post-test groups revealed that there were significant differences. Researchers inferred that both strategies made reading easier thus Carrell et al (1989) claimed, only because the groups (subjects) were small, the future researches over the strategy training should reconsider to repeat strategy trainings aiming to obtain more reliable results, the training is recommended to last longer than four days.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate if training metacognitive strategy has a positive effect on high school student's reading skill performance. The students taking part in this research, study English as a foreign language, as a specific school subject within a framework of educational plan.

Research question

With respect to the aim of the study the following research question is going to be addressed:

Does the training of the metacognitive strategies have positive/meaningful effect on the experimental group's reading performance compared to the control group's performance of students?

METHODOLOGY

The following research instruments were used in this study:

Pre-test and post-test were the main instruments conducted during the research. The same pre-test and post-test were conducted to the experimental and control group of students. The reading comprehension test was prepared by a researcher and consisted of ten questions, among which nine questions were multiple choice and one was of matching style. To verify the reliability, the test was evaluated by the experienced professor of the area. As regard to the validity highly experienced professor on testing and assessment area was consulted as well. All of the professors that revised the test are currently working in University of Pristina, Faculty of Filology, English Language

Department. The pre-test and post-test text “So Much Deep Space” was taken from course book “Skills for Success – Reading and Writing” (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011).

Other four reading texts used in training are as follow: First reading text “The Good Teen” – 994 words; Second “Can Climate Change Make us Sicker” – 1001 words; Third “We All Need a Hero!” – 943 words; Fourth “Now on Stage: You Home!” – 1025 words. Reading texts are taken from same course book “Skills for Success – Reading and Writing” (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011).

The pre-test was conducted to the experimental and control groups within a same day with one hour of difference. The control group was tested by those who were responsible for the course in school department, while experimental group test was implemented by the researcher. The post test was implemented in the same procedure. Post-test was conducted after three week of pre-test examination. Since the students were not given the correct answer, after pre-test exam, three weeks interval was considered to be appropriate for students to remember and reflect the ability on metacognitive strategy use, acquired at four day training course. In the end, the students were requested to write their impressions from the training. The scores of the test were calculated by the researcher herself since the questions were mainly of multiple choices. T test has been applied for analysis of the scores of pre and post test. Significant p value was determined as $p < .05$. Firstly t test was applied to the pre-test averages of the experiment and control groups, secondly it was applied after training, again to the two of the groups separately. Thirdly t test was applied to the experimental group pre and post test result and the same was applied to the control group either. Therefore the results were communicated based on t test outcomes.

Research population

In total 39 students took place in this research. All of the students are public secondary school students, attending 11th class. They have been learning English since third grade of the primary school, and it is verified that their overall success in English language is average. According to educational plan, they all are supposed to mandatory attend at least 3 courses of English Language per week. The level of English as determined by the study program corresponds to B2 according to Common European Reference of Languages (upper intermediate). Thus the students by completing 11th class is supposed to correspond to B2 level description. The research being conducted in two group of students, the division into groups was as follows: 20 students in experimental group (6 male, 14 female), other 18 (7 male, 11 female) took place in control group.

Research Materials

A series of "Language Learning Strategies System" and "Strategy Inference Game" (Oxford, 1990: 27-30), proposed by Oxford 1990: 18-21, has been used for designing the course of 'metacognitive reading strategy training'. The course has been implemented to experimental group only.

Metacognitive Strategies has been chosen considering the appropriate level and needs of the students. The same consideration was taken into account while selecting texts that were supposed to use during the training. Also before selecting the texts students existing books are examined as well.

Training Procedure

Four reading texts used during the 'reading strategy training' are as follow: First reading text "The Good Teen" – 994 words; Second "Can Climate Change Make us Sicker" – 1001 words; Third "We All Need a Hero!" – 943 words; Fourth "Now on Stage: You Home!" – 1025 words. Reading articles are taken from course book "Skills for Success – Reading and Writing" (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011). Four lectures conducted to experimental group took place within 6 -18 interval of December 2016.

First lecture aimed to introduce students with Oxford (1990) six base strategy groups. They have been asked to group them and understand their category and the purpose of usage in practice. Furthermore it has been focused on metacognitive strategy use and recalling students that to the second day training is going to be based on use of metacognitive strategy in reading English texts.

Second lecture aimed to introduce metacognitive strategies for reading English practically, respectively bringing strategies into life. After repetition of first lecture, the researcher handed out a paper with several metacognition definitions, as defined by different authors. The activity led the students on interactive discussion about the notions general and specific meanings and its use in learning English as a foreign language. Furthermore the researcher introduced the use of metacognitive strategy in practice by acting herself. After scanning the text she started to think aloud about the main ideas of the text and questioning herself "What do I already know about the topic?" "What might the

article going to talk about?," "What have I read?" "What does the article trying to describe?" After explaining that she was acting actually the way metacognition strategies are used during reading long English text, she delivered to students a first article "The Good Teen" (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011), thus perusing and facilitating them to act the strategies in a similar way.

Third lecture aimed to strengthen the previous lecture's objectives. Students were supposed to use the strategies and afterwards discuss it with peers about the ideas generated from the use of this strategies. Moreover this time from students it has been asked to use the strategies for each paragraph separately and discuss the ideas with the class. In this lecture the students were practicing on second article "Can Climate Change make us Sicker" (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011)

Fourth lecture continued with further exercises on "Can Climate Change Make us Sicker". After that the last text "We All Need a Hero!" and "Show Me the Way to Go Home" (D. Deise, Ch. Noroff & P. Carne 2011) has been delivered with the aim of strengthening the use of metacognitive strategies in reading English texts, and discussing them as well. But this time the researcher was only acting as an observer without facilitating during students work out.

DISCUSION OF THE FINDINGS

Pre-test and Post-test Data Analysis

The question of the current research was whether the training of the metacognitive strategies have positive/meaningful effect on the experimental group's reading ability compared to the control group.

The answer to this question has been sought by applying the t-test data. Significant p value was determined as $p < .05$. Firstly t test was applied to the pre-test averages of the experiment and control groups. Table 1 shows the mean (\bar{X}), standard deviations (S) and t-test results of the pre-test outcomes of the experimental and control groups.

Table 1- Comparison of Pre-test scores of Experimental and Control Groups (independent t test) s= 38

Test	Group	n	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	P
Pre-test	1.Experimental	20	51.35	14.39	30	0.098	0.89
	2.Control	18	50.47	14.20			

Table 1, reveals that the comparison of the results of independent t-test applied to the scores collected from the experimental and control groups subjected to pre-test, is not significant [$T(30) = 0.098$; $P > .05$]. Before the metacognitive reading strategy training, experimental and control

groups had approximately same level of reading skills in English. Since the finding resulted that there was no significant difference between groups on pre-test performances, t-test was likewise applied to the experimental and control groups, to seek if there was a meaningful difference in post-

test performance. Table 2 shows the mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation and

t-test results of the post-test results of the experimental and control groups.

Table 2- Comparison of Post-Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups (independent t test) s= 38

Test	Group	n	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	P
Post- test	1.Experimental	20	51.35	14.39	30	1.10	0.19
	2.Control	18	50.47	14.20			

The examined t test results of the comparison of the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, as presented in Table 2, it was found that the difference between the groups was not significant [$t(30) = 1.10$; $P > 0.05$]. After the metacognitive strategy training, there was no significant difference in the levels of the reading in English language between control and experimental groups. Therefore the claim that the metacognitive strategy training effects the students' reading skill performance is not in the same direction with the assumption of the research.

However, when the pre-test and post-test averages of the experimental and control groups are examined, it can be noticed that the final-test success rate of the experiment group is higher than

the pre-test success rate. In contrast, the control group's post-test average is lower than the pre-test average. Although the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant as the results prevailed from the pre-test and post-test related data, it has been considered of interest to analyse if there is statistically significant difference between the two tests conducted to the experimental group only. In addition, it was also made an examination on the difference between the pre-test and post-test averages of the control group. Table 3 displays the averages, standard deviations and t-test results of the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group.

Table 3- Comparison of Pre-test and Post-Test Scores of the Experiment Group (dependent t Test) s = 20; 18

Experimental group	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	T	P
Pre-test	20	51.35	14.39	15	2.07	0.07
Post-test	18	50.47	14.20			

When the result of the t test related to the significance of the difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group was

examined, [$t(15) = 2.07$; P seem to be significant. When analysing averages of pre-test and post-test, it is concluded that the post-test average ($X = 50.47$) is higher than the pre-test one.

Experimental group	n	\bar{X}	S	sd	T	P
Pre-test	20	51.35	14.39	15	0.42	0.78
Post-test	18	50.47	14.20			

Table 4- Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test scores of the Control Group (dependent test) s = 20; 18

Table 4 presents the scores of a pre-test and post-test of the control group [$t(15) = 0.42$; $P > 0.05$], the results indicate that the difference between the two tests are not significant. Based on the fact that the post-test averages of the experimental group were statistically higher than the pre-test averages, it can be said that the metacognitive strategy training process conducted to experimental group positively influenced students' reading success, although there was no significant difference in the post-test averages between the experimental and control groups results. The fact that the expected difference of the post-test findings between the two groups did not attained assumed results it may be justified with the short duration of training process.

Grabe (1991: 379) notes that reading develops over time, and that readers cannot not immediately

become fluent readers namely develop a reading skill. It emphasizes that fluent reading is the product of a long-lasting effort and step-by-step approach of development. In addition, in the description of language learning and language learning strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 26), define them as complex cognitive skills, and explained the acquisition of both in the context of "Cognitive Theory", state that a single truth can be learned from a single experiment; But when the language acquisition concerns they state that such complex cognitive skills can only be acquired over a long period of time and by repeating them over and over again. In another words reading has been estimated to be time-consuming process.

Given that language learning strategies are complex cognitive skills, consequently the metacognitive reading strategies as well, it can be concluded that the four-hour strategy training process are short

enough to make a significant difference on the success of the two groups. This, however, should not mean that the training has made no contribution on the reading skills.

It can be said that the significant increase in the mean of the post-test of the experimental group results is indicative of the presence of a progression in this direction, although the results of comparison of the two groups post-test result showed no significant difference. The possibility that the success rate of the experimental group may increase the difference between the experimental group and the control group may reach a meaningful level should be taken into consideration, if a longer and more frequent training period are to be conducted to the experimental group of students. This research, which lasted for four days only, did not have such an opportunity. Furthermore, another argument of the overall result of the research can be considered the selected strategies, respectively they may have been incompatible with the learning styles of the students' population.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether explicit metacognitive strategy training has a positive effect on the students' reading skill performance. The hypothesis subjected to the research claimed that metacognitive strategy training can influence/effect positively reading performance in English Language.

The effect of the metacognitive strategy training has been examined within the framework of the question "Does the metacognitive strategy training influence meaningful significance on the reading skill of the experimental group compared to the control group of students?"

The answer to this question was sought by applying independent t-test to the post-test averages of the experimental and control groups. It has been concluded that there was no significant difference between the two groups at the end of the training period. However, when the pre-test and post-test averages of the experimental group were examined, it was observed that the post-test averages were higher than the pre-test, and it was concluded that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group. At the end of the training period, there was a statistically significant increase in the reading performance of the experimental group of students. Whereas there has not been observed significant difference between the results of t-test of pre-test and post-test averages applied to the control. These findings indicate that although the strategy training has not proved the expected result, it promises a progress in this regard. At the end of the training period, despite the fact that there was no significant difference in success between the two groups on the

performance of reading skill in English language, the increase of the performance of the experimental after the post-test should not be underestimated. It may be concluded that with a longer metacognitive strategy training period, the result of positive performance in reading English as a foreign language could increase, thus the students of experimental group would become more effective readers compared to students of control group.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations arising in the light of the results of the current research can be listed as follows:

First, as Farrell (2002) points out, teachers should not expect immediate success with strategy training. The strategies offered and the time of assimilation of the same by the student should be considered, since they are consuming processes. This knowledge acquired as "expressible information" according to the cognitive structure can be achieved and used as "operational knowledge" only through the provision of time and frequent application possibilities (O'Malley & Chamot: 1990).

Secondly this study can also be repeated with English Language students on a weekly basis during the course of academic semester, emphasizing regularly the use and application of metacognition strategies, respectively conducting training in longer period of time. Given the opportunity of training based on frequent intervals, students can have the opportunity to use the strategies more often, therefore can monitor and evaluate what strategy at what levels fit their needs in a best manner. During the long lasting training process where the aid of teacher is to be regarded as well, students may improve their strategy use and become independent readers over time.

Thirdly, because of time constraints, learning styles of students were not considered in the selection of strategies thought in a training during the research. This is thought to be one of the factors that affected the performance not to be in a desirable level. Accordingly, in the framework of a future research, the possible differences in use of the metacognitive reading strategies in relation with student's different learning styles should be examined specifically.

In addition, it is considered that the training of teachers on metacognitive strategy use should be considered as one of the factors affecting the success of strategy use. Therefore it is recommended in-service training seminar for teachers in this area.

Finally, it may be concluded that with a longer metacognitive strategy training period, the effects of positive performance in reading English as a foreign language could increase, hence the students of high school would become more effective and

independent readers.

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