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Adult's Learning Strategies for Receptive Skill

Self-managing or Teacher-managing

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Abstract

Receptive language skill refers to answering appropriately to another person's spoken language. A lot of teachers try to develop receptive language skills in their language learners. When receptive language skills are not appropriately acquired, learners may miss significant learning opportunities resulting in delays in the development and acquisition of spoken language. The goals of this paper are to explain the term reading, elaborate reading strategy, discuss metacognitive strategies, and review self-managing learning strategies and teacher-managing learning strategies. The literature review demonstrated that teachers can play a key role in helping learners acquire their receptive skills in language learning. It can be also concluded that receptive skills can be acquired through the active involvement and effort of the learners in learning English language and learners should develop their own learning strategies in order to work with written material or the spoken word.

Keywords: self- managing, teacher- managing, receptive skill, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, reciprocal teaching

1. Introduction

Reading a text was always a big issue for students in general from different aspects of view especially understanding or comprehending what the text meant. Reading is an important skill that learners should know. Learners read texts for different aims from getting information to enjoyment. It helps EFL learners to be familiar with the subjects of their majors and make better their language knowledge (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Non-native English students namely, Iranian EFL learners are more concerned with getting the correct answer/s of reading comprehension questions than with more important process of how to get the answer since high-school. It is believed that using dictionary is somehow boring for them but the learners depend too much on the dictionary to look up every unknown word owing to being non-native. In order to help learners overcome these problems, teachers should show the learners different ways or techniques, e.g., He or she can ask them to read each line and underline unknown words without looking up the meaning in dictionary; to use contextual clues to guess the general meaning of that not in isolation; to skip unnecessary unknown words; and break them up into root. That is, prefix and suffix.

Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) expressed that reading strategy has an important effect on the readers' reading comprehension skill. Reading strategy improves the reading skill of proficient and less proficient readers. Readers use various reading strategies and know what, when, how, and why to use them in their reading comprehension process. When the teachers help learners develop awareness about their own thinking and learning processes, the teachers are helping learners think about the effectiveness of the strategies they use in reaching the goals they have set. Fundamentally, they are "thinking about thinking," a process known as metacognition. Generally speaking, use of a long-term metacognitive strategy of planning what is to be done, monitoring our progress, and evaluating the results is an effective way of helping learners take more control of their own thought and feeling processes (Block, 2004).

The literature of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension reveals that poor readers in general lack effective metacognitive strategies and have little awareness on how to approach to reading. They also have deficiencies in the

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use of metacognitive strategies to monitor for their understanding of texts. Conversely, successful L2 readers know how to use appropriate strategies to enhance text comprehension (Pitts, 1983). According to Block (2004), metacognition can be defined as a reader's awareness of (1) what he or she is thinking about while reading, (2) what thinking processes he or she initiates to overcome literacy challenges, and (3) how a reader selects specific thinking processes to make meaning before, during, and after reading.

As far as learning strategies are concerned, Knowles believed that there are two kinds of learners namely, pro-active learners and reactive learners who learn differently. Referring to the unanimity among researchers about this classification, Knowles (1975) claimed that people who have creativity and take the initiative in learning (pro-active learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners) (Knowles, 1975).

The main characteristic of self-managed learning is the degree to which the learner maintains active control of the learning process (Long, 2002). An emphasis on learner's self- managing and efficacy or productiveness means that the related teacher teach and involve students in specific strategies that offer the learners opportunities to make decisions and solve problems on their own without being told what to do at all times. It means the teacher provides the learners with strategies designed to help them process information effectively and to be self-confident, believing that they have the abilities to succeed. Simply speaking, when there is a will, there is a way. And perhaps most important, we help students become more reflective about their thinking and learning processes.

2. Literature Review

The meticulous definition of self- managing learning can imply independence, self-determination, autonomous learning, self-managed, self-assessment, learner strategies, self-help learning strategies, strategic investment, learner training, self-study, self-access learning. All these terminologies or key concepts that have emerged according to a pivot related to learner autonomy (which for our purposes can be taken as synonymous with self-directed learning) as a goal for learners, and *learner training*, or the teacher's encouragement of their efforts towards that goal. Androgogy or adult education, which was concerned with adult learners, was first introduced by the father of the adult education, Malcolm Knowles. After that another model of learning appeared as self- managing learning when he was introducing this system of learning to North American adult educators. By emerging of self- managing learning, the distinction between adult learning and children learning was highlighted (Knowles, 1975).

Knowles (1975) himself contributed to the self-managed learning literature with his book "Self-Managed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers, "published in 1975, describing self-managed learning as "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others", explaining the concept and outlining how to implement it through learning contracts. And it might be recalled that the first assumption underlying Knowles's view of andragogy is that learners become increasingly self-managed as they mature. The processes in self- managing learning include diagnosing one's own learning needs, setting personal goals, making decisions on resources and learning strategies and finally assessing the value of the outcomes (1968).

The second goal is the fostering of transformational learning (Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1985). Transformational learning as presented by Mezirow posits critical reflection by the learner as central to the process. This critical reflection is an "understanding of the historical, cultural, and biographical reasons for one's needs, wants, and interests. Such self-knowledge is a prerequisite for autonomy in self-managed learning" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 27). The third goal for self- managed learning is the promotion of emancipatory learning and social action. Just as andragogy has been criticized for ignoring the context of learning, so some writers would like to see self- managed learning to be positioned more for social and political action than individual learning. Both Brookfield (1993) and Collins (1996) call for a more critical, political analysis of SML.

Victori and Lockhart (2000) believe that one of the premises of any self-managed program, we believe, should be that of enhancing students' metacognition to prepare them for approaching their own learning autonomy. Such a program should involve cyclic diagnosis of learners' beliefs about language learning, preferred styles, learning needs and objectives in order to endow the learners with criteria for choosing optimum strategies, resources and activities for their individualized program. Their purpose was to highlight the unifying role of metacognition in all levels of learner training.

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In addition to goals and processes, the literature can be categorized according to the learner and the extent to which self-directedness is a priori personal characteristic and associated with other variables such as educational level, creativity, learning style, and so on. Two scales of self-directedness, one measuring readiness (Guglielmino, 1997), and one measuring personal characteristics have been used in a number of studies. In addition to these empirical studies, the relationship between autonomy and self-directedness has been explored. Candy (1991) writes that since a learner's autonomy is likely to "vary from situation to situation," educators should not assume that because a person has been self- monitored in one situation, "he or she will be able to succeed in a new area: Orientation, support and guidance may all be required in the first stages of a learning project."

Furthermore, Matuszowicz (1996) provides one example of this in his work focused on developing self- managing in homeless adults. For perhaps the first time in their lives, this group recognized themselves and others as learning resources and learned through the practice of interpersonal behaviors and skills such as giving and receiving feedback. Similarly, in British open learning centers, O'Mahony and Moss (1996) found that adult basic education students "identified a common bond and developed a *collective* self- monitor " (p. 30) through work on a student committee; they also enhanced their sense of individual self-direction.

A study of empowerment in community groups (Singh, 1993) suggests that group learning processes can empower individuals to move from low to high self-directedness. In addition, the enhancement of individual SM abilities tended to help groups become more empowering. In this paper, I will argue Braman's (1998) view that he believes goals of an individual and his/her cultural group may hinder the opportunity for self-manage. I will present data that support Rowland and Volet's (1996) view that adult learning has significance "for a learner's community as well as for the individual" by making learners practice in groups and examine individually.

2.1 Self- managed Learners

Self- managed learning, which has its roots in adult education, is an approach that has been tried with learners in elementary and secondary schools. There may be slight variations in how different educators define SML, but a survey of the literature on the subject identifies several tenets that are central to the concept. As the term suggests, SM views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. SM integrates self-management (management of the context, including the social setting, resources, and actions) with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies) (Bolhuis, 1996; Garrison, 1997).

SM recognizes the significant role of motivation and volition in initiating and maintaining learners' efforts. Motivation drives the decision to participate, and volition sustains the will to see a task through to the end so that goals are achieved (Corno, 1992; Garrison, 1997). The benefits of SM are best described in terms of the type of learners it develops. The literature on SML asserts that self- managed learners demonstrate a greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and managing themselves (Garrison, 1997). They are curious and willing to try new things (Long, 1994), view problems as challenges, desire change, and enjoy learning (Taylor, 1995). Taylor also found them to be motivated and persistent, independent, self-disciplined, self-confident and goal-oriented. Self- monitored learning allows learners to be more effective learners and social beings.

2.2 The Role of Teacher in Self- managed Learning

The most important object of educational process is to produce self- managed, life-long learners. Many current educational practices in public schools and universities; however, do more to perpetuate dependency than to create self- manage. Moreover, there is more than one way to teach well. With some exceptions, good teaching is situational– it varies in response to learners. The teacher begins to provide some key characteristics of a learner who can take responsibility for learning: an ability to define one's own objectives; awareness of how to use language materials effectively; careful organization of time for learning, and active development of learning strategies.

Knowles visualizes the teacher role as that of facilitator of learning rather than teacher, procedural guide rather than content transmitter. One of the most important tasks of the teacher is to raise student awareness of their roles in learning. Taylor (1995) suggests engaging students in discussion on topics from the Self- monitored Learning Readiness Scale. Examples of topics: I know that I want to learn and that I am a learner, so if I want to learn something, I can, and I like

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to learn and to solve problems because I know that thinking 'hard' can be fun. The exercise of evaluating oneself on such topics was found to have positively influenced learner awareness.

Long (1994), who works with readers, suggests generating similar discussion through the use of questions designed to help learners become aware of what good readers do and how to become one. Among the examples he provides are: Did you read better today than yesterday? Could you keep the ideas in your book straight in your mind? Were there words you did not know? How did you figure them out?

To establish the habit of self-managing, teachers need to encourage learners to reflect on what they did and to revise attempted work (Corno, 1992). Keeping journals is one way of maintaining a record of the learning process. Teachers also need to model learning strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, so that students will develop the ability to use these strategies on their own. Teachers also need to allow individual learners to approach a task in different ways using different strategies (Many, Fyfe, Lewis, & Mitchell, 1996). Teacher should help students begin to recognize their different personality types, life-goals, and styles of learning; set high standards and motivate students to achieve them.

Since SM stresses meaningful learning, Temple and Rodero (1995) advocate a situated learning approach, in which teachers bring real-life problems into the classroom for learners to work on. They advise against 'sugar-coating' work with fun, the rationale being that if the tasks are meaningful, learners will work on them willingly. Learners should also be allowed to collaborate with the teacher in determining deadlines and other regulations. For the language teacher, the issue is whether it is possible to help learners acquire and develop strategies of either kind which will enhance their ability to learn inside and outside the classroom.

2.3 To Promote Self- managed Learning through Reading Strategies

Reading comprehension strategies are seen as comprehension processes that enable readers to construct meaning from the printed page most effectively. In other words, those strategies show how readers tackle a reading task, how they interpret their reading and what they do when they do not comprehend. Good readers draw on prior knowledge and experience to help them understand what they are reading and are thus able to use that knowledge to make connections. Struggling readers often move directly through a text without stopping to consider whether the text makes sense based on their own background knowledge, or whether their knowledge can be used to help them understand confusing or challenging materials. By teaching students how to connect to text they are able to better understand what they are reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Accessing prior knowledge and experiences is a good starting place when teaching strategies because every student has experiences, knowledge, opinions, and emotions that they can draw upon.

Tovani (2000) offers reasons why connecting to text helps readers:

- It helps readers understand how characters feel and the motivation behind their actions.
- It helps readers have a clearer picture in their head as they read thus making the reader more engaged.
- It keeps the reader from becoming bored while reading.
- It sets a purpose for reading and keeps the reader focused.
- Readers can see how other readers connected to the reading.
- It forces readers to become actively involved.
- It helps readers remember what they have read and ask questions about the text.

3. Reciprocal Teaching

Rosenshine and Meister (1994 as cited in Ahmadi & Pourhosein, 2012) defined reciprocal teaching as an instructional strategy that teaches learners to use metacognitive thinking as they construct meaning from a text. According to Klingner and Vaughn (1996 as cited in Ahmadi & Pourhosein, 2012), the reciprocal teaching has been used to improve comprehension for learners who can decode but have problems in understanding a text.

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional strategy for teaching strategic reading developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984, 1986) that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students. In this dialogue the teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading the dialogue about a passage of text. Four strategies are used by the group members in the dialogue to use reading comprehension strategies independently, including text prediction, summarization, question generation, and clarification of unknown or unclear content. At the start the adult teacher is

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principally responsible for initiating and sustaining the dialogue through modeling and thinking out loud. As students acquire more practice with the dialogue in small groups, the teacher consciously imparts responsibility for the dialogue to the students, while becoming a coach to provide evaluative information and to prompt for more and higher levels of participation.

It can be stated that reciprocal instruction permits teachers to give their learners enough practice on the main strategies called predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing to construct the meaning of a text in a social setting. Learners monitor their own thinking by the reading process. Reciprocal instruction develops reading comprehension and promotes readers to be better in reading a text and helps them reach the most important objective of reciprocal teaching, becoming independent readers.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to see the superiority of self-managed on learners' proficiency of reading comprehension, students' accomplishments, teachers' role in this area and suggesting some tips about learning strategies so that EFL learners can read different texts of not only their textbooks but also other sources like magazines, newspapers to comprehend them effectively and efficiently without relying, to some extent, on dictionary and referring to it a lot. Moreover, the long-term objective of the SM is a life-long learning particularly in adult education. A touchstone of effective learning is that students are in charge of their own learning; essentially, they direct their own learning processes. SM enable learners to be efficient, active, and motivated. They no longer get bored with this task. They set their own personal goals and pursue personal interests. But the problems arise when the teaching style is not matched to the learner's degree of self-monitored and the students are not directed properly in the first stages of learning. On the other hand, it needs learners to collaborate with teacher.

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