

Genre-based Analysis on the Use of Metacognitive Strategies in EFL Reading

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Abstract

This study explores EFL learners' use of metacognitive strategies on reading different genres. We investigate whether EFL learners adopt different metacognitive strategies (MCSs) while reading different genres of text, and, if so, English reading proficiency levels are relevant factors. We asked 34 students to read three different genres, Argument, Description, and Explanation, and investigate their use of MCSs through a survey questionnaire. We take three strategies, Global Reading Strategies (GLOB), Problem-Solving Strategies (PROB), and Support Reading Strategies (SUP) which are subcategories of reading strategies from Metacognitive Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSII). We found that there is no significant difference in the use of MCSs among the three genres, but the subjects rely on PROB in reading all the three genres much more than GLOB and SUP. The results indicate that overall, the subjects at the higher level of English reading proficiency use more MCSs, and in particular, they utilize PROB more than the low level ones..

Keywords

Genres, metacognitive strategies, MARSII

Introduction

There have been many studies on learning strategies in L2 reading and its effects. Krashen (2011) pointed out that learners can enjoy reading texts and easily capture its content, using appropriate learning strategies. The use of learning strategies are affected by many variables, particularly when reading academic texts. The purpose of this study is to find out whether or not learners use different strategies when they encounter different genres of English text. It is also explored if EFL reading proficiency levels influence the use of MCSs.

1 Theoretical backgrounds

1.1 Metacognitive strategies

Oxford (1990) classifies learning strategies into direct and indirect ones. The direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies while the indirect ones metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Shang (2011) investigated the use of learning strategies by 53 Taiwanese EFL students and found out the subjects use MCSs more than cognitive and other types of strategies. Thus we only take MCSs into account, which function for centering, arranging/planning, and evaluating learning.

Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) suggest types of MCSs on the basis of the notion of self-control mechanisms, and propose MARSII which is composed of thirty questionnaire items measuring the use of three types of MCSs for reading, GLOB, PROB, SUP. We conducted a survey, using MARSII, after the subjects read different genres of English text.

1.2 Genre analysis

Native speakers read different genres for different purposes every day. L2 learners are also exposed to various genres of text, and, in particular, they are focused on the function of genres for English for Academic Purposes (Paltridge, 2004). Knapp and Watkins (2005) suggest five types of genre, which are describing, explaining, instructing, arguing, and narrating. The current study chose Argument (A), Description (D), and Explanation (E) since they reflect communicative discourse in socio-cultural context more than the other two.

2 Procedure

The subjects are 34 Korean college students majoring in English language and literature. Just before the experiment begins, the subject took

an English reading test that was designed to measure their English reading proficiency level.

For three months, they read one genre of one or two pages once in a month, and answer the survey questions from MARSI. When they read, they were required to answer a couple of reading comprehension questions for each genre.

3 Results

Table 1 shows the subjects did not use different MCSs when reading different genres of text.

Table 1: Analysis of the Scores of the Three Strategies for Each Type of Genre

MCS	Genre	M	SD	SE	F	p
GLOB	A	3.52	.44	.05	.528	.59
	D	3.56	.64	.06		
	E	3.48	.57	.05		
PROB	A	3.79	.40	.05	1.697	.19
	D	3.64	.63	.06		
	E	3.67	.54	.05		
SUP	A	3.05	.43	.05	.806	.45
	D	2.99	.53	.05		
	E	2.96	.51	.04		

Regarding the difference in terms of proficiency level, 18 high level subjects use MCSs more than 16 low level ones, and the former rely on PROB more than the latter, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Differences between High and Low Level Subjects in the Use of MCSs

MCS	Level	M	SD	F	T	p
GLOB	High	3.53	.61	.184	.429	.67
	Low	3.50	.52			
PROB	High	3.86	.48	37.001	6.083	.00
	Low	3.50	.55			
SUP	High	3.03	.47	2.164	1.471	.14
	Low	2.95	.53			
All	High	3.47	.45	8.721	2.953	.00
	Low	3.31	.49			

Table 3 shows that PROB exerts greater influence on reading comprehension than GLOB.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Use of MCSs

MCS	β	t	p	F	p	R ²
GLOB	-.417	-5.173	.00	26.42	.00	.21
PROB	.666	8.740	.00			
SUP	-.050	-.704	.48			

4 Conclusion

The current study started with a hypothesis that learners might adopt a particular MCS according to a genre of text. We found that learners do not use different MCSs when they read different genres although high level learners appear to show somewhat varying use of MCSs, compared with low level ones. It is also found that the subjects utilize PROB more than the other two probably since the subjects have heavily relied on problem-solving techniques because of the test-oriented English education in Korea. In addition, it was shown that high level learners use more MCSs, as argued in Lau (2006).

We conclude that teachers need to present various types of genre of L2 text for adult learners and encourage learners to use various reading strategies considering text genre for effective reading.

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