



ENHANCING THE METHODOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH READING SKILLS THROUGH A METACOGNITIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, developing students' English reading skills has become a priority in foreign language education, particularly in academic settings where learners encounter complex texts. Traditional reading instruction often emphasizes linguistic decoding and comprehension questions while overlooking learners' cognitive and self-regulatory processes. This article highlights the importance of a metacognitive approach, focusing on learners' awareness and control of their thinking processes, in enhancing reading skills. Key strategies—including planning, monitoring, and evaluating reading activities—are discussed along with their classroom integration. Applying these strategies fosters autonomous, reflective, and strategic reading, enhancing learner autonomy, critical thinking, and lifelong learning skills..

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill in foreign language learning, serving as a primary source of linguistic input, knowledge acquisition, and cultural understanding. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, learners are expected to go beyond decoding words—they must analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate texts. Despite its central role, many learners struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, ineffective reading strategies, or lack of self-regulation skills.

Traditionally, reading instruction has focused on bottom-up approaches, including word recognition, grammar exercises, and comprehension questions. While these foundational elements are important, they are insufficient for developing higher-order comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Contemporary research in language education emphasizes **learner-centered approaches** that integrate cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of learning.

A metacognitive approach encourages learners to think about their own thinking, allowing them to plan, monitor, and evaluate reading strategies to improve understanding. Teaching students to reflect on their strategies, anticipate challenges, and adjust their approach enables them to become **active, strategic, and autonomous readers**. Beyond reading, metacognitive skills support problem-solving, reflection, and decision-making, fostering **academic success and lifelong learning**.

This article explores the theoretical foundations of metacognition, identifies key strategies for reading instruction, and discusses practical implications for English language teaching. By integrating planning, monitoring, and evaluation into reading pedagogy, educators can cultivate independent, self-directed, and proficient readers capable of navigating complex academic texts.

Theoretical Foundations of Metacognition in Reading

John H. Flavell first systematically described metacognition as **awareness and regulation of one's cognitive processes** for effective learning. In reading, metacognition involves understanding how one reads, why specific strategies are chosen, and how strategies can be adapted to enhance comprehension. Metacognitive readers actively plan their approach to texts, monitor understanding, and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies.

Studies in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology show that learners with strong metacognitive skills achieve **higher comprehension**, anticipate difficulties, detect inconsistencies, and adjust strategies appropriately. Conversely, learners with low metacognitive awareness often read mechanically, fail to integrate information, and struggle with complex texts. Therefore, integrating metacognitive instruction bridges the gap between basic literacy and higher-order comprehension.

Key Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Effective metacognitive reading instruction involves **three core strategies: Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation.**

1. Planning

Planning occurs before reading and involves:

- Setting reading goals (e.g., summarizing, analyzing, critical evaluation)
- Activating prior knowledge to connect new information
- Previewing texts (headings, subheadings, keywords)
- Formulating pre-reading questions to focus attention

Classroom Example: Before reading a scientific article, students identify their purpose, predict topics, and list key questions. Teachers model predictions and questioning strategies, preparing students to approach the text strategically.

2. Monitoring

Monitoring occurs during reading, helping learners recognize and address comprehension gaps. Techniques include:

- Re-reading difficult passages
- Slowing down for complex sentences
- Making inferences and connections across the text
- Using context clues for unfamiliar vocabulary

Classroom Example: While reading a news report, students highlight unclear terms, write margin notes, and discuss confusion with peers. Teachers model think-aloud strategies, demonstrating how to adjust reading strategies in real time.

3. Evaluation

Evaluation happens after reading and involves reflecting on understanding and strategy effectiveness. Activities include:

- Summarizing key points orally or in writing

- Discussing interpretations with peers
- Completing self-assessment questionnaires
- Identifying successful strategies and areas for improvement

Classroom Example: After reading a short story, students summarize its main ideas, compare interpretations, and reflect on which strategies improved comprehension. This promotes reflective thinking and internalization of effective reading habits.

Pedagogical Implications

Integrating metacognitive strategies requires a **shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction**. Teachers should:

- Model metacognitive processes through **think-aloud protocols**
- Provide **guided practice** before expecting independent use
- Encourage **peer collaboration** for strategy discussion
- Gradually transfer responsibility for learning to students, promoting **autonomy and self-regulation**

Practical Applications

Practical Applications:

1. **Strategy journals:** Students record strategies used, challenges, and reflections.
2. **Pre- and post-reading discussions:** Focus on prediction, clarification, and summarization.
3. **Digital tools:** Platforms for annotation, comprehension tracking, and feedback.

Empirical research shows that students trained in metacognitive strategies improve reading comprehension, motivation, and confidence. They develop transferable skills like **critical thinking, reflection, and problem-solving**, which extend beyond language learning to broader academic contexts.

Conclusion

Enhancing the methodology for developing students' English reading skills through a metacognitive approach is both necessary and effective. Unlike traditional approaches focused on decoding and grammar, metacognition emphasizes **active, reflective, and strategic reading**. By teaching students to plan, monitor, and evaluate, educators cultivate **autonomous, self-directed, and proficient readers**.

Incorporating metacognitive strategies improves comprehension, promotes critical thinking, and fosters lifelong learning skills. Future research should explore **digital tools, adaptive learning technologies, and interdisciplinary approaches** to metacognitive instruction. Ultimately, metacognitive teaching equips learners with essential cognitive tools to navigate complex academic and professional environments, enhancing both language proficiency and holistic educational development.

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