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## Metacognitive strategies as points in teaching reading comprehension

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### Abstract

This article reports on a small-scale intervention that examined the effective implementation of metacognitive strategies to reading comprehension, in the frame of a metacognitive pedagogical model, at the Eurasian National University with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who was taught English as a foreign language, during 15 weeks. We divided them into two groups as 'control' and 'experimental' according to FCE pre-testing so the levels of reading comprehension of both groups were equal. Our research included 3 stages: a) preparation; b) active work; c) analysis. As a result we worked out the practical teacher's manual "GUIDE on using metacognitive strategies in teaching reading comprehension" with some assignments and tasks to the short texts that can be useful both for teachers and for the students who are on the way of improving English language learning and teaching. Therefore we conclude that metacognition means thinking about thinking and it is a relatively new field that is concerned with a learner's awareness of her/his own knowledge, cultural ideas and thoughts. From the results of this study we summed up that the participants acquired metacognitive reading strategies and their perceptions revealed important implications about the development of reading comprehension through short stories. Hence, the proposed Guide should be taken into account to aid both teachers and students in the language acquisition process.

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## 1. Introduction

Reading is defined as an interactive cognitive process in which readers interact with text and author's perspectives related to Adams (2007), Wagner & Tannenbaum (2007), Alderson & Urquhart (2004), Baker & Brown (2004), Grabe (2009). Readers' awareness, monitoring and regulating of these strategies while reading are called as metacognitive according to Flavell (1976) metacognition is a child's knowledge about and control over his or her own thinking process and learning activities such as: reading. Moreover, the concept of metacognition includes thinking about the thinking process, self-awareness, understanding, and memory techniques and learning characteristics as noted Flavell (1979). In 2008 Collins & Smith highlighted metacognitive strategies that helped students to focus their attention in an understanding of the content and to make connection between past knowledge and new information. The aim of metacognitive strategies is to teach students how to set objectives and how to be effective and independent was emphasized by Baker (2002). In 2009 Baker & Beall deepened that metacognitive strategies are related to how we think and learn including three skill techniques: planning, monitoring and evaluation. In the beginning of reading assignment students must be informed on how to use their planning, monitoring and evaluation skills. It is of great importance to improve the questioning skills of students in the process of teaching metacognitive strategies. Studies on metacognition and reading comprehension reveal the strong relation between the uses of strategies, awareness and reading comprehension as Brown (1980), Paris & Oka (1986).

The urgency of the small-scale intervention consists in the new approach to the problem teaching reading comprehension through using metacognitive strategies. The scientific novelty of the research is that this kind of strategies are not yet used in Kazakhstan where English is taught as a foreign language. So the purpose is to find the ways out of existent problems in teaching reading comprehension by suggesting a model of metacognitive strategies. Moreover to achieve the purpose we set the following objectives: to define the essence of metacognition; to determine the aim and nature of teaching reading comprehension; to improve the reading skills by using short stories; to work out a model of teaching reading comprehension; to implement the model of metacognitive strategies and to compare the results; and to work out "GUIDE on using metacognitive strategies in teaching reading comprehension".

## 2. Metacognition and Reading Comprehension

Metacognition, or thinking about one's thinking, is the foundation for other reading comprehension strategies. Proficient readers continually monitor their own thoughts, controlling their experience with the text and enhancing their understanding. As Tanny McGregor explained in *Comprehension Connections*, "Text plus thinking equals real reading!" Teachers can help students develop this skill by modeling and providing concrete experiences to help students understand and apply the strategy to fiction or nonfiction text. Reading comprehension is a critical component of functional literacy. Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read.

Further we chose short stories as the base of reading comprehension in teaching EFL in Kazakhstan. First, the deviated and figurative language of poetry necessitates very long time to grasp. Second, the length of novel will make it difficult for such classes to finish. Finally, drama can be used in classes, but it will be difficult to act out a play in crowded classes within limited course hours. Considering these objections, it is obvious that among literary forms, short-story, which is defined by Poe "as a narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to „a certain unique or single effect to which every detail is subordinate", seems to be the most suitable one to use in the University. The idea is also in line with Collie and Slater (1988) when they list four advantages of using short stories for language teachers.

## 3. Pilot Teaching of Reading Comprehension

This research is conducted not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings, but rather to contribute to a process of continuous revision and enrichment of understanding. So the following study was not aimed to demolish other researchers' views on this problem but to provide Kazakhstani educational system with detailed data about local situation in teaching and learning of foreign language. Much of what is known about the way students perceive

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