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Online Metacognitive and Interactional Strategy Use: Iranian Students' Internal Locus of Control

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Abstract

With the increasing use of the Internet by students especially at higher educational institutions worldwide, metacognitive strategy training should be recognized as a way to meet the current challenges and demands to propagate life-long reading among the students especially when reading online materials. Despite the importance of reading and technology, few studies to date have been carried out to examine the interactional metacognitive reading strategies employed by readers when using internal locus of control. This paper describes the interactional metacognitive strategy experience when reading texts online by internal locus of control students. Participants in this study were a selected group of Iranian postgraduate students with internal locus of control at one of the public universities in Malaysia. The instrument employed was the students' activities done through their online 'quick reply box'. These online activities gather three different types of information: Peer correction, Reference transferring, and Social cues in comfortable language use. The results of the study are discussed in terms of the students' strategy performance in an online reading environment. It is concluded, that interactional strategy is an effective approach that supports reading comprehension.

Keywords: Metacognitive; online reading; internal locus of control; interactional strategy; ESL

1. Introduction

Online learning environment provides a new context for the learners who requires having new technology knowledge with minimal support from the teachers. Many educational institutions all over the world in general, and specifically in Iran try to equip students with new technology environment to promote life-long education. In

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Iran, teaching reading is viewed as the main aim of language teaching and learning program at secondary and tertiary levels of education (Barani et. Al.,2010). Nahavandi et. al. (2013) believes that in Iran, reading is considered as language learning process based on the fact that teachers use reading as a tool to teach vocabulary and grammar. Recently, reading is considered as a communicative process in that the goal of reading is a meaning-making process. With rapid development in information and communication technology, a good reader should be armed with a wide range of online metacognitive reading strategies in order to comprehend online reading texts effectively as well as solving reading difficulties.

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the factors affecting reading comprehension. Some of these studies were dedicated to exploring the role of words and structures as elements of the language in online reading comprehension. Presently, increasing attention is devoted to the readers' active role in online reading process. In an online environment, it is up to the reader to use his ability and knowledge of strategy use to understand the writer's intention. One of the things that readers bring to the text is their ability to use metacognitive reading strategies. Metacognitive reading strategies indicate how the readers performed a task, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Such strategies are used by the reader to enhance their reading comprehension and overcome comprehension failure. In general, online metacognitive reading strategies are performances or procedures proceed by the readers to achieve comprehension, which is the main goal of reading a text (Kern, 1989).

Online reading environment such as the online forum provides a context for readers to interact with each other within this environment to promote their reading comprehension. This context helps the readers to interact with each other through discussion rooms, chat rooms and forum as well as to discuss or ask and answer questions thereby helping them to develop their knowledge and increase reading comprehension level. It can also replace or be used to support traditional face-to-face interactions in the classroom (Johnson&Aragon 2003, Inoue 2007, Hussin 2011). Online forum in addition provides opportunity for the students to brainstorm and discuss different issues relevant to the subjects they read (Sharma&Mishra 2007, Hussin 2011). Since online environment provides the room for students' interaction, this environment allows students to imitate the normal face-to-face classroom meetings. The students' can role-play as teachers and/or students and they can also play the roles of motivators to motivate each others at the same time. Online forum encourages students to be more active participants in their pursuits to understand and enhance their comprehension level of the online reading materials. Additionally, students' constant corespondence with each other would help them develop their own learning. Therefore, it is essential that teachers encourage students to utilize various reading strategies as well as motivate students to derive meaning out of the text by expressing their ideas toward the texts.

The present study explored the effects of interactional reading strategies on reading comprehension as demonstrated by the mediating effect of metacognitive reading strategies. This study focused on two variables: online interactional reading strategies and locus of control learning styles. The succeeding sections will describe the methodology employed and the data gathered. This will be followed by discussion of the findings as well as the contributions of the study.

2. Metacognitive reading strategies

Metacognition or metacognitive strategies refers to the process of thinking about thinking and involved knowing about learning and controlling learning through planning, monitoring, evaluating, and learning activity. The notion on metacognition is attributed to Flavell (1976), who describes metacognition as referring to "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them, e.g., the learning-relevant properties of information or data. It is about self-reflection, self responsibility and initiative, as well as goal setting and time management" (pg.232). Flavell argued about the reasons of learners' engagement with different learning tasks in different ways. Since learners have different learning styles, they would be able to apply different strategies in order to promote their learning process. Learners' awareness about their own learning abilities makes them think about their own process of learning and help them create learning strategies through their own knowledge construction to improve their learning. Duell's (1986) study revealed that learners develop