

Toward a tripartite model of L2 reading strategy use, motivations, and learner beliefs

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Abstract

The present study proposes a tripartite model of L2 reading strategy use, reading motivations, and general learner beliefs by examining the relationships among them in an L2 context. Reading strategy instruction was performed for 360 first-year university students enrolled in a reading-based course, in expectation of affecting their motivations and beliefs in the process. A tripartite model consisting of the three constructs was examined by structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed strong multiple correlations between these three variables. Furthermore, ample evidence was provided to validate this model: (1) the interdependence across the constructs demonstrated from the developmental perspective, (2) the model's multiple correlations confirmed at the level of individual correlations, and (3) the interrelationship between the constructs corroborated by the cross predictability in multiple regressions. The tripartite model suggests that the interdependence is a promising resource for comprehension development in the L2 reading context, and that main idea strategy plays a vital role in the process of learning to read. The results and discussion provide several important implications for research and instruction.

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1. Introduction

In second language (L2) reading research, it is generally agreed that developing L2 learners' strategy use and perceiving their own reading process and strategy use (i.e., metacognitive awareness) are important to the enhancement of their reading comprehension (e.g., Barnett, 1988, 1989; Carrell, 1998; Carrell et al., 1989; Grabe, 1991; Kern, 1989 for developing strategy use; Auerbach and Paxton, 1997; Block, 1992; Carrell, 1989; Matsumoto, 2006 for metacognitive awareness). Research on reading strategy use and metacognitive awareness has contributed to both improving L2 reading instruction and unraveling the reading process. However, because this type of research has mainly focused on the cognitive process of L2 reading through strategy use as mental operations, the

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relationships between reading strategy use and affective factors like reading motivations and learning beliefs have been put aside in L2 reading research.

In first language (L1) reading research, Guthrie et al. (2004) extensively explored the relationships between learner motivation and reading performance in L1 English contexts for children, using intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as their key concepts. They found associations among L1 reading motivation, reading amount, reading comprehension, reading strategy use, and conceptual learning. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) also reported that L1 intrinsic motivation is vital to learning reading strategies, and that possession of the strategies and the motivation to use them are likely to be mutually enhancing in L1 contexts. In Guthrie et al. (2007) engagement model of L1 reading development, strategy use parallels motivation in addition to social interaction and conceptual knowledge, all of which are suggested to be important in L1 reading development. Although plenty of L1 research on reading motivation and strategy use exists, few L2 empirical studies have explored the relationships between them, and more research on areas relevant to L2 reading motivation is necessary (Grabe, 2009).

On the other hand, research on L2 learning strategy use and learner motivation has provided suggestions about the relationships between L2 reading strategy use and reading motivation. For example, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) reported that the degree of L2 learner motivation had the most powerful influence on the choice and use of learning strategies, based on a large-scale survey on the factors affecting learning strategy use. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) concluded that L2 learner motivation is important as a framework that convinces L2 learners of the value of using learning strategies, and instruction on learning strategy use benefits from including motivational support. There have been a plethora of studies of this nature (e.g., Chen, 1999; Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Okada et al., 1996; Shimizu, 2003; Yamamori et al., 2003) that support the relationship between L2 learner motivation and learning strategy use, which are suggestive of potential relationships between L2 reading strategy use and reading motivation.

While it has been reported that motivational intensity influences L1 reading strategy use and L2 learning strategy use (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2004 for the former; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989 for the latter), students' beliefs about language learning have also been found to affect L2 learning including strategy use. Horwitz (1988) tapped the roles of learner beliefs in L2 learning, and indicated that beliefs "have direct relevance to the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes" (p. 283). Learner beliefs connect naturalistically to learners' use of language learning strategies. For example, Yang (1999) examined the relationships between L2 learner beliefs and learning strategies, and reported that L2 learner beliefs are likely to affect and restrict the range of learning strategies. Several other studies (e.g., Horwitz, 1987; Nakayama, 2005) have concluded likewise in L2 learning research. Nevertheless, general learner beliefs have not been included in L2 reading research, although specific beliefs about reading were found to influence L2 reading strategy use to some extent (Kamhi-stein, 2003).

With regard to the directions of influences, it is generally considered that motivation is one of the most influential factors for the use of learning strategies (e.g., Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Wharton, 2000), and that beliefs would likely affect the choice of learning strategies (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Yang, 1999). On the other hand, a few studies (Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Chamot and O'Malley, 1994; Hiromori, 2004) support the opposite direction, suggesting that strategy training and resulting strategy use can help L2 learners to become more motivated by making them notice the relationship between learning strategy use and learning success. In short, these studies do not exclude the possibility of the interaction across strategy use, motivations, and beliefs.

To sum up, it must be properly investigated whether and how strategy use, motivations, and learner beliefs are associated in L2 reading contexts, although relevant studies suggest potential associations among them. The purpose of this study is to construct and validate a tripartite model by examining the relationships among L2 reading strategy use, motivations, and general learner beliefs after reading strategy instruction, following the development of a questionnaire to inquire about the three constructs. Reading strategy instruction was performed as a means to develop strategy use because strategies are generally to be taught (e.g., Carrell, 1998), and also as a priming or impetus to influence motivations and beliefs in the instructional process.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants were 360 first-year English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students (mostly 18 and 19 years old, majoring in law, science, engineering, and chemistry) at a university in the southwestern part of Japan. They were

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