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encouraging as they can contribute to the students' development as autonomous and efficient readers who can take control of their own learning.

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responsibility for their own readings by transferring the strategy use to other documents.

Conclusion

Knowledge in sociocultural theory is an interpsychological process, and the co-construction of meaning is built through social interaction. In this paper, we observed the co-construction of knowledge by the participants at different levels when they used the different strategies for different purposes while performing tasks.

Throughout this study, we witnessed the importance of the role and effects of cognitive strategies and metacognitive awareness in the reading comprehension process. These helped the learners to develop their autonomy and confidence as critical readers; their awareness of their own thinking and learning processes by improving their own sociocultural representations of the reading comprehension process through the strategy instruction phase.

In this study, an important issue linked to sociocultural ESL/EFL research is still inconclusive: Why does the link strategy/competence not reach 100%? Does strategy instruction need to take a longer time? Do other variables like age and sex interfere in the utilization of the different strategies? It was not the purpose of this study to provide such evidence. However, it can be expected that for future research, from this theoretical perspective, to accurately bring answers that will pave the way for greater information about the learning strategies and the reading process.

However, from a sociocultural approach, we believe that it is encouraging to examine a process through learning strategies as good indicators of how learners face problem-solving situations. Developing skills in cognitive and metacognitive areas is very

dictionary...) of the reading process. In this context, took place: Inter-mental activity in a communicative search for meaning metalinguistic discussion (when learners talked about their different strategies use); and metacognitive activity, when learners used self-correction and evaluation upon task completion.

The metacognitive dimension is particularly important as it serves as a stimulus to provide students with a foundation supporting, manage and control their activity and learning, and be a safe guide to achieve reading tasks (Swain 2000, Otha 2001). We have also noticed that through this social interaction, the learners developed and internalized the strategies use. An important feature within vygotskian theory of cognitive development is that knowledge development occurs inter-psychologically through social interaction. In addition, the participants' effective use of reading strategies becomes visible as they engage in social interaction during a task completion in the strategy instruction phase.

Another remark concerns the learners' three levels of transition from nonintervention to intervention and to self-regulation. At the first level, the learners were not aware of their inappropriate use of strategies and could not rectify their use even with the teacher's intervention. When they were made aware of themby the teacher, they could not correct their strategies use.

After strategy instruction based on pair/group work and under other-regulation, the learners were able to notice and correct their mistakes after the corrective feedback was provided by the teachers/peers, although some learners continued to use the strategies incorrectly. At the third level, learners were able to use strategies appropriately according to the different types of texts read without the tutor's feedback. They started to assume full

- Introducing learners to the new cognitive strategies (inference, deduction, elaboration); to the metacognitive strategies (self-correction, self-evaluation) with tasks as the cloze test, referring, matching, substitution...

- Supplying scaffolding to the learners to use these strategies. The teacher gives examples and the students show a great competence in using them. They can talk aloud with other more competent peers (the teacher or good learners) who can scaffold their future development.

- Interfering by readjusting the task according to the learner's specific needs (ZPD), his/her learning style and rhythm by helping him/her, by congratulating after a good task completion, by answering their "why".

- Making them gradually more collaborative. The learners will be able to apply other sophisticated strategies when they read alone texts related to their areas of interest and/or face problem-solving situations. They are able to monitor a learning activity and evaluate themselves at the end of each task.

The results obtained at the end of the training sessions confirm the correlation between strategy instruction and the learners' competence in reading. In the experimental group made up of 22 students, 17 obtained a mark superior or equal to 10/20. In the witness group which contained 29 students and did not benefit from strategy instruction, 14 had a mark equal or over 10/20. From these results, we notice that strategy instruction reflects differences in the use of strategies between the two groups.

At the cognitive level, the completion of the different reading activities based on problem-solving tasks represented an overall goal. However, learners also needed to deal with a typology of activities in order to change their wrong representations (linear reading for all different types of texts, important use of

Three problem-solving tasks were designed to record the learners' processes of collaboration while performing them: the multiple-choice questions, true or false, and matching exercises or puzzles. In the first one the context, coherence and repetition help the students overcome their linguistic weaknesses by using inference, deduction and elaboration. The second one checks only the comprehension with the use of elaboration, inference and key-word. The third one enables learners to find again coherence, chronology, logic of the text by applying the key-word and association strategies. The objectives behind these tasks aim to help participants to engage in inter-psychological activity through collaborative learning (Garner 1988, Kohonen 1992) as this develops more mental efforts, and therefore a deeper language process.

For class pair-work, a typology of activities has been put forward in order to change the learner's wrong sociocultural representations of the reading process. This makes them aware of the importance of using strategies appropriately according to the tasks to be performed. The final aim is to make them more autonomous when they are reading alone documents in the field of their specialization. Ten activities with corresponding objectives have been designed for that purpose: previewing referring, logic of the text, connectors, expressing hypotheses to predict content, looking for information, sequencing, selective reading, contextualizing/predicting; and comparing and contrasting to develop critical reading and thinking.

Results Analysis

The learning strategy instruction is based on Vygotsky's method of scaffolding which comes from the dialogue among participants as follows:

Throughout these findings, we notice a weak number of occurrences in their use. Therefore, it is important to train these readers to use them more frequently and appropriately while they are performing reading tasks.

Activities and Tasks

For practical purposes, activity is three-fold. Its first level is aim-oriented (reason for such an activity); the second is action-oriented (goal behind the activity); the third one is operation-oriented that is, the actual doing (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 217) which refers to the potential development acquired by learners with the help of teachers/peers.

In a learner-centered approach, the textual comprehension in an interactive reading is obtained according to successive steps with corresponding objectives. In this context, four steps have been followed: pre-reading, previewing, search reading, and interaction. The first step guides and activates the learner's knowledge (background) with the use of the cognitive strategy of elaboration that is, to link a new information to prior knowledge. The second step, previewing a text, helps to get the general meaning and makes the reader anticipate its meaning and function through skimming.

The third one, reading with an objective is characterized by search reading according to the tasks. The objective of this procedure is to build activities which call for different reading strategies according to the various reading tasks (divide the class into small groups which explain their reading objectives according to the type of texts read). The last step, responding to the text according to one's own knowledge, calls for the strategy of elaboration. The reader responds to the contents by giving his own opinion and shares it with the other members of the group.

In this context, two methodologies have been set up. The first one explores and identifies the learners' strategies. The other is designed to train the students for a better use of strategies so as to develop, complete and/or replace the existing ones.

Context of the Study

The study was conducted in an EFL classroom for arabised undergraduate students (students whose medium of instruction is Arabic) enrolled in the first year LMD scheme (in order to obtain a degree in EFL after three-year studies) throughout the first academic semester. These students need to read academic articles, novels, books written in English. The first year students have an amount of three hours per week of reading.

The participants have been divided into two groups experimental and witness, made up respectively of 22 and 29 students. They have the same intellectual background in the field of knowledge. Their level of English is intermediate. However these students cannot, among other skills, read efficiently. Among the cognitive strategies, we have explored the use of elaboration, deduction and inference with various tasks as the cloze test, matching or associations. To identify the metacognitive strategies we have used selective attention and self-evaluation.

The results of their exploration are the following: 12/22 students use inference; 10/22 use the dictionary; 6/22 look for key-words; 2/22 apply note-taking; 2/22 use substitution 1/22 applies transfer; 1/22 uses the summary. This shows clearly where the differences are: inference and dictionary represent essentially the gap which exists between them and the other strategies use. For the metacognitive strategies, we have identified the following use: 7/22 use former organization; 5/22 self-evaluation; 4/22 selective reading; 1/22 selective attention.

- using background knowledge
- close reading
- questioning
- outlining
- summarizing
- reflecting
- evaluating arguments and evidence
- comparing and contrasting related readings

When students are taught strategies efficiently, they will become metacognitive learners who can control their own thinking, their own cognition. They are strategic readers as they become self-regulated because of the ability “to consciously and deliberately monitor and regulate one’s knowledge, processes cognitive and affective states” (Papaleontiou Louca, 2008, p. 3).

The following section deals with the methodological tools of investigation used to identify the learners’ use of the above strategies.

Methodological Tools of Investigation

For practical reasons, we (‘we’ refers to me as the author and teacher) have selected Faerch and Kasper’s theoretical tools (1987) and completed them with Matsumoto’s (1994) in order to put forward a methodology to observe, identify and classify the learners’ strategies. To identify the learners’ use of the different strategies, we have used observation and introspection with the following instruments: the think-aloud data and guided interviews for the investigation of the cognitive strategies of elaboration, deduction and inference with various tasks. For the metacognitive strategies, we have used self-explanation and semi-guided interviews to explore selective attention and self-evaluation to enable learners to use them, monitor their performance and determine if their use is efficient or not.

and an analytical process” (Wallace, 2003, p. 4) which is linked to ‘critical thinking’ as it implies thinking critically while reading. Reading critically is reading analytically according to Wall and Wall (2005, p. 4). In addition, reading critically which is different from skimming and/or scanning requires competencies in interpreting, analyzing, confronting, comparing questioning and making critical and objective judgment.

Another important point to be discussed is the role of critical thinking skills while reading critically. In order to help students internalize these skills and read critically, critical reading strategies instruction is of utmost importance (Daiek and Anter 2004). Teaching critical reading strategies and developing skills are at the heart of English educators and didacticians. Both concepts ‘skill’ and ‘strategy’ need to be defined in order to show the differences and relations that exist between them.

The first term ‘skill’ is “associated with the proficiency of a complex act” while the second one ‘strategy’ is “associated with a conscious and systematic plan” (Afflerbach et al. 2008, p. 365). Therefore, a skillful reader is faster than a strategic reader as the first one acts with automaticity while the second one control deliberately the use of strategies. However, the less skilled reader will develop, with practice, quick and efficient reading habits.

A classification of critical reading strategies has been put forward by Salisbury University in Maryland (USA) in order to help university students to increase their critical thinking while performing several critical reading assignments. This inventory is designed to help students to read critically in any subject matter or area of interest or specialization. It includes:

- previewing
- sourcing
- contextualizing

Language learners use learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when they perform a task or process new information. When they face a problem-solving situation they attempt to find the quickest and/or easiest way, tactics to reach a solution by using their personal techniques. These language learning strategies used by the ESL/EFL learners when performing tasks have been identified and classified by many researchers (Wenden and Rubin, 1987; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford, 1990; Ellis, 1995 etc...). For Rubin (1987) strategies used by the learner are of three types: learning communicative and social strategies. Oxford (1990) classifies the cognitive ones in the direct strategies and the metacognitive ones in the indirect strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify them into three sub-divisions: cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. In this study, we are more concerned with O'Malley's first two types which are made up of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Cognitive strategies are used for specific learning tasks and they imply a direct manipulation of the learning material itself. The most important in the reading process are: repetition resourcing (the use of dictionaries), key-words, note-taking deduction, elaboration, inference and combination. Metacognitive strategies require planning for learning, thinking of the learning process as it is taking place so as to save learning time, monitoring one's own comprehension or production, and evaluating learning upon task completion.

Concerning the third issue that is, if strategy use and instruction can improve L2 readers' competency and help them be efficient critical readers, we consider that both 'critical reading' and 'critical thinking' need to be taken into consideration. The first one is not reading for information or understanding all the words of the text. It is an "interpretative

the four skills that make up a language. In a sociocultural context, two types of 'representation' need to be studied as language reflects its culture (Lynch and Pilbeam, 2000).

The first type of representation (R1) is the difference between the ways we think, and the second one (R2) is the way we think we think. In other words, in R2 are to be found metalinguistic ideas linked to the learner's beliefs, notions and values that reflect his/her sociocultural realities. The next section provides some definitions and a classification of language learning strategies.

Definition and Classification of Language Learning Strategies

Although it is not possible to cover the wide range of studies carried out in the field of learning strategies, this paper addresses the following issues: First, the nature of the relationship between the cognitive, metacognitive strategies and the learner's competence; second, when these strategies are useful in reading comprehension process; third, if the learner's awareness of the strategy use and instruction can improve L2 readers competency and help them become autonomous and efficient critical readers.

Many researchers have defined the term language strategy. For Rubin and Wenden, they are "... sets of operations, steps plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining storage, retrieval, and use of information." (1987, p. 19). Faerch and Kasper state that a learning strategy is "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language." (1983a, p. 67). Stern considers that the concept of learning strategy is "dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques" (1992, p. 261).

refer to the Oxford Dictionary of Etymology. Later, a modern definition of its usage reads as follows: "...the process of mental conservation that consists in the presenting to itself by the mind of objects previously known" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). It was not until the 19th century that the term has acquired a social connotation, mainly under the influence of Durkheim (1912) who defined them as ideas, symbols "...widely accepted and socially forceful because they are collectively created through the interaction of many minds...(and are) the result of an immense cooperation to make them." (Durkheim, 1912, p.627).

These two definitions lie at the heart of the contemporary debate on the representation of knowledge. Firstly, we have the use of 'representations' to refer to some aspects of the individual's cognitive processing of data like storage and retrieval. In this case, the term is associated with the memory functioning and lexicon, and with knowledge of the internal structures, phonological, morphological and syntactic of the linguistic code (Riley, 1996).

This approach is mainly psycholinguistic. If we apply it to English as a foreign language (EFL) learning process, it will focus on the investigation of inter-language that is, the learner's provisional grammar (Corder, 1982, Riley, 1996) as a sentence can be a representation of knowledge (idem). The other approach can be sociocultural as the representations refer to knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values and culture, and both sociolinguists and didacticians alike are aware of the importance of investigating them.

This approach also implies to take into consideration the sociocultural dimension in the learning process. The researcher will examine the influence of the learner's representations on the ways in which they develop sociocultural communicative competence and achieve success while doing tasks in anyone of

In this discussion, firstly, knowledge refers not to a possessed and compiled object, but to a collaborative activity which is made with others as “an attempt to extend and transform collective understanding” (Wells, 1999, p. 84). Vygotsky states that knowledge is created through social interaction and therefore, this social co-construction is sociocultural (Wells 1992) and ‘mediated’ by cultural processes and physical or psychological instruments (idem, p.286-287).

Secondly, learning or knowledge development is seen as an instructional-based approach in which the “zones of proximal development” (ZPD) that is, “the discrepancy between a child’s actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187) are produced by the learners’ own social and historical perspectives, motivations attitudes, beliefs, values that is, their own sociocultural representations (Riley,1990).In this context, Otha (1995, 2001) has outlined the important role of a teacher or peer to scaffold the learner’s level of potential development. In other words, the scaffolding is a temporary support provided by teachers/peers in order to take the learner from his actual development to the targeted objective as “determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer” (Otha, 2001, p. 9).

Finally, the mediated nature of human action (Wertsch, 1991) or Activity Theory (Leontiev, 1978) derived from sociocultural theory is an important framework for the exploration of collaborative activity in ESL/EFL reading comprehension classroom contexts. Therefore, the nature, role, sources and effects of learners’ representations while learning a foreign language are important as they are broadly sociocultural.

The term ‘representations’ has a Latin origin and means ‘symbolizing’ or ‘standing for’ and since the 16th century it has been used with reference to memory and mental imagery if we

Introduction

This study aims to show the growing importance of collaborative activity from a sociocultural approach. Theoretical tools for this study lie in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mental development as a means to observe and understand the learners' co-construction of knowledge and learning. A special focus will be on the sociocultural component: the scaffolding of learners' knowledge through mediation between the teacher/peers and peers/peers. In this context, this paper will examine the importance of the students' representations as these are broadly sociocultural. The other theoretical foundation lies in the definition and classification of language learning strategies with a focus on critical thinking and critical reading strategies.

The following section is a brief overview of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory with a special focus on the three main ideas of mental development. Secondly, we shall move to the definition and classification of language learning strategies. Subsequently, we shall describe the methodological tools of investigation and context in which the study was carried out. Finally, we shall analyze the results obtained.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev S. Vygotsky's theory of mental development focuses on three main ideas: First, an emphasis on developmental analysis in order to be able to understand some features of mental functioning; second, the individual mental functioning or cognitive process has social origins; and third, a focus on the mediation nature of human action (Wertsch, 1991). If these ideas are applied to an ESL/EFL context, our understanding of knowledge and learning (the latter understood in the sense of knowledge construction) are very important.

How to Teach Reading Strategies to L2 Readers at University Level

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Abstract

This paper is about a study related to the teaching of learning strategies to L2 readers at university level. It draws on the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of mental development. It focuses on developmental analysis; the individual mental functioning; and the mediated nature of human nature. If these ideas are applied to an ESL or EFL context our understanding of knowledge and learning are of utmost importance. This study aims to show the relationship between reading strategies, reading proficiency, metacognitive awareness and L2 readers. It shows the importance of collaborative activity from a sociocultural approach in an ESL/EFL context. It also examines the importance of the students' representations which are broadly socio-cultural.

Reading strategies are particularly important for L2 readers as they seek to master both language and content simultaneously. When students develop their metacognition, the awareness of the learning processes and strategies that lead to success, they are more likely to proceed with a learning task monitor their own performance on an ongoing basis, find solutions to problems and evaluate themselves upon task completion.