

Metacognitive Strategies in Foreign Language Learning¹

Galina Abrosimova²

Abstract

The significance of the examined problems is caused by the need to improve the functional approach to understanding the link between metacognitive strategies acquisition and their value and impact on foreign language learning. The work contains the comparison of approaches of Russian scientists and foreign researchers on this problem. Also it comprises information about different requirements that authors put forward according to metacognitive strategies, their choice and application; the classification of learning strategies and particularly classification of metacognitive strategies; and research approaches related to the metacognitive strategy development. The leading goal set by the authors was to create a model of metacognitive strategy development during foreign language learning, to identify its principles, methods, approaches to its proper functioning, criteria and indicators which are able to effectively assess the level of metacognitive strategy development and use foreign language as a basis to fulfil created model. Article submissions may be useful in lecture courses on language teaching, developing a curriculum on teaching a foreign language as well as to apply to language lessons either during teaching or learning it.

Keywords: Foreign Language; Language-Learning Strategies; Metacognitive Strategies.

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning is one of the key components of the education of a modern individual. In the time of universal globalization and mobility foreign language is the key that opens every door.

It is known that learning a language requires a lot of effort especially it is difficult for adults. Despite the fact that now due to modern technologies and the development of the Internet, the possibilities for language learning have increased greatly, foreign language skills in our country is still at a relatively low level. If we take a look at the 2018 EF English Proficiency Index rating, Russia takes only 42nd

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² Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia; abrosimowagalina@yandex.ru

place among 88 countries throughout the world, and if we compare the European countries, 32 presented in this rating, Russia is only on the 27th place. It should be emphasized that this rating includes only knowledge of English, which is considered the most popular language among the foreign languages studied in our country (EF EPI Uroven' vladeniia angliiskim iazykom, 2018; Abrosimova & Kondrateva, 2018).

2. Methodology and materials

Research methods used in this work include using theoretical methods of research such as comparative analysis, compilation and systematization of works of Russian and foreign researchers who are/were studying the questions of development of metacognitive strategies and using foreign language as a basis for this process as well. The article also presents a designed model of developing metacognitive strategies of students during foreign language learning.

3. Metacognition

The problem of a learning of foreign language in our country remains relevant many years. Balanced and efficient new ways and methods to teach foreign language are crucial (Abdullina et al., 2019). Entrenched traditional methods of teaching FL may be listed as one the numerous reasons of it although they were once quite effective, now partially outdated and cannot provide the necessary level of language learning quickly and effectively. Scientists, tutors and teachers all over the world as well as in our country are working on the developing of new, modern and increasingly effective ways of mastering FL skills. One of them is the development of metacognitive skills of students.

The term metacognition was first used by Flavell (1976) as a knowledge of a person, encompassing students' own cognitive processes and their results, which actively control, regulate and organize the cognitive component of the learning process to achieve a specific goal. In other words, it is the ability to independently use and manage their own cognitive and mental capabilities to solve given problems, both in the process of studying and later in future life, in professional cases (Flavell, 1976). It should be noted that being metacognitive means a higher level of cognition, which includes the ability for self-analysis and self-control of cognition and perception of information, and the inclusion of metacognitive teaching methods into curriculum develops mental abilities and enhances reflection in educational activities, and allows the development of metacognitive abilities. Being metacognitive also implies that students themselves will independently improve their knowledge and skills through self-planning and active implementation of his cognitive activity. The level of metacognitive abilities is assessed by whether students are able to reasonably assess their own level of knowledge and level to be achieved, as well as to anticipate the effectiveness of acquired knowledge and plan the amount of knowledge that needs

to be acquired, while correctly allocating time and resources. Controlling your efforts to achieve the aim and tasks is also a metacognitive process. In Russian literature there are the following stages of metacognitive skills formation:

- setting a goal;
- defining the conditions and forms of work and planning;
- monitoring the results of own activities and if necessary, their correction (Nikiforova & Sokolova, 2016).

Metacognition makes possible the increasing of autonomy of the students and at the same time, increases motivation to achieve the goal. Here we can emphasize the external and internal motivation. Internal motives are associated with the students' motivation, their cognitive activities, which include:

- intellectual motive (student likes the FL as an opportunity to show their level of mental capabilities);
- desire to self-development (the desire to improve themselves, FL can serve as a tool to broaden world view);
- prosocial motive (student realizes the significance of the FL in the world and therefore studies it);

External motives include the following:

- achieving the goal (caused by the desire of a person to achieve success always and everywhere, for example, always get good grades, get a diploma, get a more prestigious job, etc.);
- self-affirmation (the desire to master the FL to obtain a certain status in society, the approval of other people, etc.);
- the desire to be like others, to be like idols, or to be closer to them, for instance, to understand the words of songs of favorite singers, bands, etc.);
- increasing the level of knowledge of the FL is a prerequisite condition to be able to communicate with foreign friends (Nikiforova & Sokolova, 2016).

3.1 Learner and Metacognitive Strategies

Language learning is a complex cognitive skill and consists of systematic steps, starting with the initial acquaintance with the language (Bobyreva & Latypov, 2015). This process inevitably involves learning strategies use, either consciously or not. The mission of the teacher is to educate students with all categories of learning strategies and make their use as conscious as possible. Different scientists give different classification of these strategies.

Among Russian scientists we can highlight the classification by Koryakovtseva (2003). It has the following categories:

- strategies for general education; this category includes cognitive, informational, educational and informational strategies and strategies for academic collaboration;
- special strategies; these are cover strategies, using known linguistic means instead to compensate knowledge gaps, also strategies for search and social interaction;
- linguodidactic strategies; may be divided into semantic and linguosemantic;
- strategies for specific practice; this is a category of strategies for self-acquaintance with language means, learning, memorizing, contextualizing them, strategies for using language means, autonomous practice, self - control and self-correction of language and speaking skills and resource strategies (Koryakovtseva, 2003).

Though the most commonly used strategy classification is one given by Chamot & O'Malley. They define cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies:

- cognitive strategies stipulate working with new information, for example, repeating or grouping new words, memorizing them, etc. It is considered that this category of strategies is the most commonly used at the initial stage of language learning;
- social strategies are necessary to interact with other students and with native speakers;
- affective strategies are targeted to regulating emotions, motivation, for example, strategies aimed at reducing anxiety when communicating in the targeted language (which is always a big stress, especially in the initial stages of learning);
- metacognitive strategies are based on metacognitive processes and are aimed at understanding what to learn, how to study, and planning, controlling, regulating and evaluating the learning process. It should be noted that metacognitive strategies differ from cognitive strategies mostly with their functions. Cognitive strategies are aimed at learning new material whereas metacognitive strategies are regulatory strategies targeted at cognitive processes and strategies as well.

In this work we will rely on the abovementioned classification.

Let us to take a closer look at metacognitive strategies. As it has already been noted, metacognitive strategies increase students' learning ability and help to cope with the problem of inability to learn, which is typical for a large percentage of students.

It is worth to mention that the use of metacognitive strategies cannot be carried out without first mastering a large number of cognitive strategies, because

metacognitive strategies are aimed at the ability to flexibly combine all the student's strategies, skills and abilities to learn the FL.

Metacognitive strategies might be divided into the following categories:

- planning of mental activity: setting goals and tasks, determining the means to achieve them, systematizing future actions;
- predicting the outcomes of decisions;
- conscious regulation of mental activities: an impartial assessment of own knowledge and skills and their quality, as well as the quality of individual actions;
- analysis of the thought processes, the argumentation of taken mental actions, motivation and setting yourself to work; (Evdokimova, 2018)

4. Results and Discussions

The issue of how to develop metacognitive strategies better is not fully understood. But scientists agree that their development is extremely important, because these strategies allow students to structure and enrich their knowledge. In the future, they will let student better navigate in those life situations when existing in individual experience solutions to problems and tasks will be ineffective.

Dirkes put forward the following requirements for teaching metacognitive strategies:

- clearly identify the boundaries of the known and the unknown in problem situations, i.e. divide the information into the already familiar and the one that is necessary to obtain in order to solve the problem and task;
- to think out loud when solving various problems, to speak through each stage, difficulties and outcomes;
- reflection; it is necessary to prescribe reasonings and thoughts, difficulties encountered during the problem solving, ways to overcome them, etc .;
- to formulate strategies and ways of thinking;
- plan future actions accurately and specifically in order to achieve goals and solve problems;
- to evaluate self - effectiveness, in this case, the evaluation criteria must be established in advance; (Belenkova, 2014)

Campione proposed the following steps for the development of the metacognitive strategies:

- explication of strategies;
- clarification of the conditions in which it is most effective;
- training methods and options for implementing this strategy in various cognitive and problem solving situations. (Antipenko, 2017)

Pawluk suggested the following scheme:

- Stage 1: the teacher models the strategy, explains its importance and how it is used;
- Stage 2: the student practices the use of this strategy under the supervision of a teacher;
- Step 3: The teacher helps students to learn to identify the strategy given and decide where and how to use it;
- Stage 4: the student uses strategies autonomously; (Pawluk, 2012)

Antipenko (2017) gives the model, which has three stages:

The first stage includes desire for knowledge and understanding, the ability for long-term concentration of attention and memorization of a large amount of material; the second stage involves thinking over every detail of your plan, thinking about your own “thinking process”, involving creative imagination, modeling and demonstrating the elements of learning; and finally, the third stage consists of movement from causes to effects and from effects to causes, the application of the method of analogies and juxtaposition, systemic thinking (Antipenko, 2017).

Based on these requirements and schemes, we have developed a model for the development of metacognitive strategies among students in the process of learning a foreign language:

Model of the development of metacognitive strategies in the process of learning a foreign language.

Aim: the development of metacognitive strategies in the process of learning a foreign language.

Tasks:

1. Identification of the principles, conditions and content of the model of metacognitive strategies development in the process of foreign language learning.
2. Creation of technology for development of metacognitive strategies in the process of learning a foreign language.
3. Obtaining new knowledges and skills about the methods and techniques employed in learning process;
4. Development of cognitive abilities and cognitive thinking, and the ability to learn independently and autonomously, the development of student motivation and a conscious attitude to the studied FL;
5. Development of self-discipline and self-organization, and of the ability to manage one’s own learning activities;
6. Find out how to apply the obtained knowledges and skills in practice.

Principles: focus-aimed, variability of content building, regularity and consistency, practicality, having structure, multiplicity, having context, relevance, awareness, electivity, individuality, joint activity, reliance on personal experience.

Conditions:

1. Motivating students to develop metacognitive strategies.
2. Creating a productive educational environment that stimulates the search, selection, practice and development of the necessary strategies.

Approaches: systemic, situational, applied, reflexive, planned, personal-active and evaluative.

Content:

1. Organization of methodological support of the process of mastering metacognitive processes.
2. Assessing students' basic knowledge of strategies and their implementation.
3. Acquainting with metacognitive strategies.
4. Planning work on creating situations for solution of which it is required to use metacognitive strategies;
5. Motivating students to use metacognitive strategies;
6. Assessment of the effectiveness of the development of metacognitive strategies.

Technology:

1) forms and means:

- practical skills training: the ability to set the goal of the activity; plan activities to achieve the goal; reflex; analyze; generalize; systematize the necessary learning material; start, maintain, and complete the communication; find, select, transfer the necessary information; work in a team and individually.
- cognitive – analytic training: the ability to search for and select relevant information; to analyze; to match; to compare; to classify; to group; to organize information; to summarize and to assess the information received; to identify the main content; to state the main idea; make a plan of the information received;
- self-determination training: learning the new material; awareness and assessment of self- attitude and view to the tasks and problems presented.

2) methods:

- diagnostic: heuristic (observation, questioning, conversation); expert evaluation;
- sampling: interactive, project, problem, communicative.

Criteria and indicators of metacognitive strategies development in the process of foreign language learning:

To be able to:

1. Independently identify and formulate a cognitive goal;
 2. Search and highlight the necessary information using search methods, including interactive methods;
 3. Structure knowledge;
 4. Choose the most effective ways to solve problems depending on the specific conditions;
 5. Find and establish connections and relationships in any field of knowledge;
 6. Perform logical operations: analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalization etc.
 7. Simulate a situation or problem;
 8. Plan personal learning activities;
 9. Identify the problem, look for and evaluate alternative ways to solve them;
 10. Make decisions and implement them;
 11. Work both individually and in a team, extracting the maximum benefit to achieve the goal;
 12. Adequately assess the task / problem and personal capabilities to solve them;
 13. Expand personal horizons;
 14. Distribute and concentrate attention;
 15. Achieve the goal;
 16. Manage own behavior;
 17. Move from thinking to activity and vice versa;
 18. Predict;
 19. Think critically;
 20. Self-improve;
 21. Organize and direct personal activities;
 22. Quickly assess changed conditions with restructuring behavior towards it;
- To be:**
23. Organized;
 24. Hardworking;
 25. Initiative;
 26. Creative;
 27. Responsible;
 28. Self-critical;
 29. Tolerant;
 30. Targeted

5. Conclusion

It is very important to develop and improve metacognitive abilities during university training, since they help to overcome the difficulties of their personal development. Knowledge of the factors for self-improvement should be part of the professional training of a specialist in any field. This will help to correct those beliefs that were the result of inadequate training and education, which subsequently impede the process of self-realization of the individual. So metacognitive strategies become a condition for self-development of the personality, the main benefit of the development of metacognitive abilities is the development of the ability to learn independently and the ability for continuous self-education, i.e. development of learner autonomy.

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