

The Effect of Metacognitive Strategies on Adult Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract: With the trend of “Chinese craze” becoming more and more popular all over the world, it has attracted many Chinese lovers to study Chinese, including children, teenagers and adults. In the process of adult second language acquisition (SLA), there is a gap between the learning ability and that of adolescent learners. In this process, learners often adopt various learning strategies in order to improve their language acquisition ability. But at present, adult learners have less knowledge of learning strategies. Even though some adult learners have some knowledge of learning strategies, there are still some confusions in using them. Therefore, the primary task is to study the learning strategies used in adult second language acquisition and make a more rational understanding of it.

Keywords: Metacognitive Strategies; Second-Language Acquisition; Learning Strategies.

1. Introduction

In the process of Second-language acquisition, both learners and educators should fully realize that mastery of acquisition strategies is one of the key factors affecting learning outcomes. If learners cannot use acquisition strategies to improve their learning efficiency, they cannot absorb and digest themselves seriously and effectively, and it is difficult to achieve satisfactory learning results. Therefore, metacognitive strategies, which play a monitoring role in learning strategies, are particularly important.

2. The Difference between Learning and Acquisition

“Learning” and “Acquisition” are corresponding concepts, “Learning” is explicit knowledge, “Acquisition” is regarded as tacit knowledge, and the two are different types of knowledge, therefore, the explicit knowledge acquired through learning cannot be transformed into tacit knowledge; language acquisition is a kind of unconscious behavioral process. The author holds that it is theoretically reasonable to distinguish “Learning” from “Acquisition” in second language learning, and that “Acquisition” is more important than “Learning”. This is because the natural acceptance and the subtle influence of context often make it easier for learners to master a language, and the process of children's acquisition of their mother tongue is such a process. Conscious learning only gives the learner a rough idea of the language they are learning, as we can see from the many cases of adults who fail to learn a foreign language. The distinction between “Learning” and “Acquisition” tells us from time to time that second language acquisition should be like the acquisition of a mother tongue by an infant. Therefore, when we “Teach” the second language learners, we should also try the method of natural acquisition of mother tongue for children, to create a proper language environment for the second language learners.

3. The Characteristics of Adult Second Language Acquisition

Adult second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the acquisition of a second language by learners over the age of 18, that is, language acquisition after the critical period hypothesis. At this time, adults have already established their own mother tongue language system, in the second language acquisition process is extremely vulnerable to the impact of their mother tongue. The original language system of the learner will produce “Positive transfer” to the target language at some time, which can promote the acquisition of the target language. However, in many cases, the original language system will produce “Negative transfer” to the acquisition of the target language, hindering the acquisition of the target language. In addition, the adult mode of thinking tends to be holistic and logical, so they are more inclined or accustomed to learning a second language with native language thinking.

4. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognition is the ability of an individual to know and regulate his own cognitive process. Metacognition strategy is a typical learning strategy, it mainly refers to the effective monitoring and controlling strategy of learners to their own cognitive process and results. On the one hand, metacognition is a knowledge entity, which contains knowledge about static cognitive ability and dynamic cognitive activity, on the other hand, metacognition is also a process, that is, the process of awareness of the current cognitive activity, the process of regulation. As “Cognition about cognition”, metacognition is regarded as the core of cognitive activity and plays an important role in cognitive activity. It generally includes three parts: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience and metacognitive monitoring. Its specific performance includes preparation in advance, attention distribution, self-management, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and other aspects of the content. The use of metacognitive strategies can help learners to avoid some irrational behaviors in the process of acquisition, and then achieve a better grasp of the second language knowledge effect.

5. Classification of Metacognitive Strategies

1. Planning strategy

“Planning strategy” usually occurs before the cognitive process, which can be understood as *ex ante* behavior. In fact, “Planning strategy” is equivalent to the blueprint of urban planning and construction, which is a series of plans and assessments for language learning. For example, the famous “Tian Ji horse race” in history is the extreme use of the planning strategy in the metacognitive strategy.

2. Monitoring strategy

“Monitoring strategy”, which can be understood as “Action in action”, is the real-time monitoring of the learner's own behavior and its effects in the cognitive process. For example, learners self-monitor the timing and rhythm of their tasks. This strategy can make the learner increase their own vigilance, when the acquisition process and the plan strategy planning can be found out in time when different conditions, and reduce the deviation from expectations.

3. Adjustment strategy

“Adjustment strategy” and “Supervision strategy” complement each other and are closely linked. The adjustment strategy is a kind of examination and correction to the result that the learner forms to the cognition content, if finds the problem, takes the remedial measure in time, finds the inappropriate method, adjusts in time, this can be understood as an “Afterthought”. This strategy usually involves the acquisition of a cognitive activity or the conclusion of a cognitive process, and planning for the outcome of the previous behavior, and then better guide and guide the next stage of language acquisition activities.

6. The Role of Metacognitive Strategies in Adult Second Language Acquisition

The traditional method of studying the effect of metacognitive strategies on second language acquisition is introspection, that is, the self-summary report of learners on their use of learning strategies. In recent years, however, the main approach to the study of the effects of metacognitive strategies on second language acquisition has been transformed into an experimental one. Domestic and foreign scholars through a large number of experiments, making its research depth and reliability are greatly enhanced.

(1) functional classification

In the process of language acquisition, the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing need to be improved constantly. The experimental method carries on the corresponding metacognitive strategy training to the learner, after the metacognitive strategy training, learners improve their use of metacognitive strategies, increase their awareness of self-regulated learning, have some management and control of the learning process, and thus improve their learning ability.

1. Hearing

Metacognitive strategies can improve learners' comprehension of listening materials. The effect of metacognitive strategies was the best for adult learners with poor listening ability but standard pronunciation. However, the effect of using metacognitive strategies is not obvious for the learners with poor pronunciation. Therefore, when encountering this problem, teachers and learners need to

explore and formulate a unique learning strategy, teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, strive to make every Chinese learner can get a unique and meaningful learning journey.

2. Oral English

Compared with children, the language environment of adult second language learners is not as good as that of children, and the language environment of adult second language learners is more artificial, and the imitative material of its language is not so easy to obtain as when children acquire their mother tongue. In addition, adults have greater psychological barriers in the process of second language acquisition, fear of mistakes, fear of making mistakes. In addition, affected by negative transfer of mother tongue, adult second language learners cannot express themselves quickly in sentences. Therefore, the proper use of the “Planning strategy”, “Monitoring strategy” and “Adjusting strategy” in the metacognitive strategies can effectively solve the problems of the L2 learners' lack of language materials and their lack of speaking, thus let the learner play the subjective initiative, thus better improve the spoken English level.

3. Read

In the aspect of target language reading, the monitoring strategy of metacognitive strategy plays an important role. When adult learners read, they often have a goal in mind to grasp, such as finding out the main idea of a text or a specific piece of information. In this case, it is the “Monitoring strategy” that guides the behavior and thinking of adult second language learners.

4. Write

In the aspect of target language writing, “Planning strategy” and “Monitoring strategy” of metacognitive strategy can play an important role in a certain time and scope. For example, before writing, collect the language material that can be used in your mind, think about it and then write. However, it is worth noting that if the metacognitive strategy training beyond a certain period of time, metacognitive strategy use level and writing level is no longer necessarily related.

(2) the deficiency of metacognitive strategy

Appropriate and scientific use of metacognitive strategies can save learners time and effort in second language acquisition. Therefore, the importance of metacognitive strategies is self-evident. However, there are still many problems with metacognitive strategies in the process of second language acquisition. Only a few of the strategies have some explanatory power when learners use metacognitive strategies, and most of the strategies can not explain their effects on performance. In addition, the effect of metacognitive strategies adopted by adults in second language acquisition is uncertain, and the individual differences of learners and the specific language learning content should be taken into account.

7. The Review of Metacognitive Strategies in Adult Second Language Acquisition

Learners should actively learn about metacognitive strategies, so that metacognitive strategies can be effectively applied to daily learning. The so-called “Sharpening the knife without cutting the wood”, the learner actively to understand and learn the metacognitive strategy and the subliminal application of the strategy in language acquisition, thus better, faster, more to master the content of the second language. For

example, when learning new words in a second language, we can use the “Planning strategy” in the metacognitive strategy to plan the learning materials in advance, learners who do not use metacognitive strategies are obviously inferior to those who use them, so learners should find out the learning strategies and methods that suit them according to their own conditions. However, when using metacognitive strategies, learners should also give full play to their subjective initiative. According to different learning contents, they should choose the appropriate branch strategies within the metacognitive strategies, so as to better suit the case, improve the efficacy of metacognitive strategies. In addition, when facing the learning content which is not suitable for using metacognitive strategy, the learner can use the “Adjusting strategy” of metacognitive strategy to adjust the self-learning strategy in time, so we can choose better ways to help second language acquisition. For example, a learner with poor listening comprehension needs to use other learning methods.

8. Conclusion

To some extent, the use of metacognitive strategies promotes the efficiency of adult second language acquisition. However, there are still many deficiencies in the application of metacognitive strategies. First of all, it requires learners to know metacognitive knowledge, including cognitive subject, cognitive object and cognitive strategy, this makes the use of these strategies take a long time to accumulate; secondly, because metacognitive strategies help us learn better by planning our attention and learning processes, therefore, it is impractical to teach metacognitive strategies directly in the process of learning, and some methods in cognitive learning strategies should be cooperated with, it can be seen that metacognitive strategies are learning strategies that require a certain degree of knowledge, familiarity and accumulation of

some basic strategies. Otherwise, because the metacognitive strategies do not directly affect our teaching materials, on the one hand, the lack of metacognitive strategies in these approaches may lead to Zhao Kuo, on the other hand, because of the long cognitive time period, for the learners, the improvement effect is not obvious at the present stage, and there will be some disadvantageous factors such as the waste of cognitive resources in the initial application, which will lead to the result that the learners' performance is not ideal enough for a period of time, in order to make the learners feel frustrated and even give up learning Chinese, it is necessary for the educators to provide the learners with positive emotional guidance and necessary and accurate strategic analysis, enable students to re-establish interest in learning Chinese and motivation. In short, there is still much room for exploration in the study of metacognitive strategies in adult second language acquisition.

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