Metacognition- Metacognitive Knowledge and Strategy Use: Towards a Model of a ‘Good’ EFL Listener

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Metacognition is increasingly being credited as an influential factor in learning to listen in an L2. A number of studies to date on metacognition have identified a relationship between metacognition and L2 listening; however, some fail to show any link. Moreover, most of these studies investigated either strategy use or metacognitive knowledge as a component of metacognition; very few studies have explored metacognition from a holistic perspective, including both these amenable components. Therefore, this study fills this gap by exploring EFL listeners’ strategy use and their metacognitive knowledge, particularly looking into the differences between less successful listeners (LSLs) and more successful listeners (MSLs). An explanatory mixed methods design was used to elicit data from EFL undergraduate learners majoring in English at public universities in Bangladesh. Data were collected in two phases over a period of 14 weeks: elicitation of quantitative data on perceived strategy use via an English as a Foreign Language Listening Strategy Questionnaire (EFLLSQ) administered to 395 students at seven universities was followed by elicitation of data on task-based, on-line strategy use via think aloud protocol, and metacognitive knowledge via semi-structured interview, with a subsample of participants comprising 15 LSLs and 15 MSLs. Findings suggest a link between learners’ listening comprehension and metacognition in ELF listening and significant and considerable differences between LSLs and MSLs. Triangulation of strategies tapped via three different data collection tools also reveals some limitations of using a questionnaire as a strategy elicitation tool and suggests the think aloud technique as the most sensitive and suitable tool for tapping into listening strategies. Finally, synthesis and triangulation of: (a) MSLs’ strategy use; (b) MSLs’ metacognitive knowledge, and (c) both LSLs and MSLs’ perceptions of what makes a GL, suggests a tentative model of a holistic GL. The study argues that there is a positive link between metacognition and listening comprehension and the metacognitive model of a GL can be used as a checklist in the context of the continuum of listening development for understanding listeners’ metacognitive awareness and metacognition in action.

Calibration of comprehension and text processing: A mixed-methods approach to the effects of concept mapping and summarization

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Successful reading comprehension depends on readers’ decoding and comprehension skills as well as on their ability to self-evaluate their comprehension during reading (Hacker, 2004). Second language (L2) readers tend to struggle with monitoring comprehension while reading (Block, 1992), yet there is a lack of converging empirical evidence on the most effective instructional methods that can improve L2 readers’ metacognitive accuracy. Using a mixed-methods approach, this quasi-experimental study examined the effects of two instructional approaches, concept-mapping and summarization, on L2 reading comprehension
and metacognitive accuracy. Sixty Algerian undergraduate students were recruited and divided into three groups: the concept-mapping, summarization and control groups. Participants’ reading comprehension and metacognitive accuracy were assessed before and after the intervention. The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT) was used to measure participants’ comprehension level and a confidence judgment task assessed participants’ metacognitive accuracy in the GMRT. To examine the mental process involved in comprehension, ten participants from each group took part in the stimulated-recall interview in the pre- and post-test phases, using their eye movement patterns (eye-tracker) as a stimulus for verbalization. The quantitative data based on the reading test and metacognitive accuracy judgements revealed that only the concept mapping intervention enhanced students’ reading comprehension level and metacognitive accuracy, suggesting that their self-judgment of reading comprehension became less biased (over-confidence or under-confidence). To analyse participants’ verbal protocols, I designed a novel Local Global Situation Cognitive Metacognitive (LGSCM)-schema, that differentiates between six types of reading processes. The analysis that was built on this framework indicated that the use of establishing propositional meaning, building a mental model and evaluating internal consistency processes increased significantly after the intervention for the concept mapping group. Nevertheless, careful local reading decreased significantly against an increase in global reading from the pre-test to the post-test for this group. These findings suggest that the concept-mapping can draw L2 learners’ attention to the macrostructure of texts to achieve global understanding. For the summary group, a significant increase in the detection of external errors was found, suggesting that the summary intervention can support learners to draw on their background knowledge in understanding texts.

**Effects of teacher feedback on grammatical complexity in second language writing**

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In second language (L2) writing research, grammatical complexity refers to the variety and sophistication of syntactic structures exhibited in written production. In the context of English for academic purposes (EAP), using appropriate lexico-grammatical resources to express complex information and ideas is one of the goals of the EAP writing syllabus. Until recently, grammatical complexity research has been focussing on investigating the structural and formal features of grammatical structures, without adequately taking into account the cognitive and contextual factors that underpin and drive grammatical complexity. This study attempts to address this gap by examining whether and how teachers’ written feedback that specifically target content- and discourse-related problems in L2 EAP essays may lead to changes in grammatical complexity as students revise their writing by interacting with the feedback. Taking an ethnographic approach, the study is interested in observing and understanding the ways in which students’ cognitive reaction to teacher feedback and further reading effort in the revision process give rise to emergence of meaning-making grammatical complexity features. Findings of the study are expected to shed light on the cognitive and usage-based underpinnings of grammatical complexity and to provide pedagogical implications for language-focussed L2 writing instruction.
L2 (English) spelling is positively correlated with L2 vocabulary size, but not with a measure that putatively taps visual statistical learning

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Recent studies showed that a person’s visual statistical learning (VSL) ability is positively correlated with L1 and L2 literacy development. That is, people who are more adept at detecting implicit regularities in visual inputs tend to be or become better readers. Most if not all studies that examined this link looked only into reading ability, oddly neglecting spelling, and importantly, they all relied on relatively small sample sizes. In light of these, we recruited a relatively large sample (64 advanced English learners) to investigate if performance on a commonly adopted VSL task (i.e., embedded triplet task) correlates with L2 (English) spelling proficiency, as indexed by a spelling test involving highly rare regular English words. We also administered a rote memorization task and an L2 vocabulary size test. In line with a growing body of literature, we found no evidence that performance on the VSL task correlated with L2 spelling. We did however find clear evidence that L2 learners with a larger L2 vocabulary size are also better spellers. We argue that while SL is linked to literacy development, traditional VSL measures may not be suitable for the investigation of individual differences owing to poor sensitivity. Our study, alongside Mak (2016), also demonstrates that false positives may arise due to small sample sizes. We, therefore, urge researchers worldwide, especially those interested in individual differences, to work towards reproducibility and better science by for example avoiding unjustifiably small sample sizes.

Developing teachers’ readings of students’ language in the science classroom

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Teaching and evaluating students’ understandings of subject specific abstract concepts (e.g. energy) in pedagogical settings is challenging. Without a theoretical model of cognition and language on which teachers can systematically interpret their students’ written and spoken responses, teachers can find themselves observing ‘thousands of situations without being able to draw any conclusions’ (Perrenoud 1998:95). To address this issue, this talk introduces a model of linguistic knowledge (Zacharias forthcoming) based on Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar and other cognitive linguistic principles that can support teachers in using their students’ language output as evidence of their conceptual thinking.

I will illustrate this model of linguistic knowledge with reference to how students represent their mental images of abstract concepts in writing, speech and visual illustrations. The data collected is part of a four-month longitudinal study that took place in a first-year science classroom in an urban secondary school in the UK. In particular, it focuses the construal operations of schematization, categorization, metaphor and image schemas (Langacker 2008; Croft and Cruse 2004; 46) and how an understanding of these cognitive processes, and their relationship with language, can enable all teachers to interpret and evaluate their students’
work more systematically. It will also present some material designed for a student teachers’ Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in a Higher Education institute in Scotland. Some of the benefits and challenges of introducing this model on ITE/CPD programmes will be discussed.

References