

**The Effect of a Suggested Training Program in Some Metacognitive  
Language Learning Strategies on Developing Listening and  
Reading Comprehension of university EFL Students**

**Submitted by**

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***Abstract***

***Background.*** There is a need to provide students with a repertoire of strategies to enable them to know what to use when and for what learning task. What they need to do is acquisition and use of the most important of skills; learning how to learn skills.

***Purpose of the study.*** The present study aimed at investigating the effects of a suggested training program in some Metacognitive Language Learning Strategies (MLLS) on developing listening and reading comprehension of first year EFL students.

***Sample.*** The sample of the study consisted of 80 first year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. Subjects were divided into two equal groups: one as experimental (forty students) and the other as control (forty students).

***Design.*** The study adopted a pre-post experimental and control groups design. The experimental group was trained in some metacognitive language learning strategies embodied in listening and reading comprehension tasks, while the control group completed the tasks without any metacognitive training. A listening comprehension test, a reading comprehension test and an English Proficiency Examination were used to measure the effects of the programme.

***Findings.*** The analysis of data using T-test revealed that the experimental group surpassed the control group in post-measurement of the listening comprehension test, the reading comprehension test and the English Proficiency Examination. It was concluded that training in metacognitive language learning strategies helped develop EFL learners' listening and reading skills and raise their language proficiency levels. Discussion of these findings, recommendations and suggestions for further research were made.

## **Introduction**

It is commonly accepted that schools, especially universities where the learner has to play a more active role taking responsibility for his own learning, must prepare independent, responsible citizens. The traditional aim of education, mere transmission of knowledge, is not adequate in the new millennium with its rapidly changing social and economic conditions. Schools are no longer able to predict and then equip learners with the skills they will need throughout the rest of their professional lives. Instead, they need to provide students with a large repertoire of strategies to enable them know what to use when and for what learning task. What they need to do is acquisition and use of the most important of skills; learning how to learn skills.

In recent years, there has been a shift in focus from the teacher to the learner, from a focus on the improvement of teaching to a growing concern for how learners learn a second or foreign language. Chamot et al (1999, p. 175) reported that another critical shift was from teaching strategies as a separate entity to integrating strategies into the language curriculum. Teachers also struggled with determining an appropriate scope and sequence of strategies to teach at various levels.

This shift in focus is accompanied with a shift in both teacher and learner roles. Oxford (1990, p.10 ) emphasizes that teachers traditionally expect to be viewed as authority figures, identified with roles like parent, instructor, director, manager, judge, leader, evaluator, controller, and even doctor who must cure the ignorance of the students. New functions are facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, advisor, coordinator, idea person, diagnostician of students' problems, and communicator. New teaching capacities also include

identifying students learning strategies, conducting training in learning strategies and helping learners become more independent.

This idea of learner autonomy is asserted by Widdowson (1996, p.67) who asserts that the idea that has been prompted in English language teaching over recent years is that learners should be as autonomous as possible, and be allowed to make the language their own. This idea of autonomy gives primacy to the process of learning. Teachers, therefore, can benefit from an understanding of what makes learners successful or unsuccessful, and establish in the classroom a milieu for the realization of successful strategies (Brown; 2000, pp.94- 95)

Many researchers emphasize the need for learning to learn skills and language learning strategies. Oxford and Crookall (1989, p. 415) think that the most constructive attitude resides in those researchers who really care about learners, who wish to understand and enhance the learning process, and who help to promote learning to learn skills . Oxford (1990, p.201) asserts that learners need to learn how to learn, and teachers need to learn how to facilitate the process. Conscious skill in self-directed learning and in strategy use must be sharpened through training. Strategy training is especially necessary in the area of second and foreign languages. Research shows that learners who receive strategy training generally learn better than those who do not.

Unlike most other characteristics of the learner, learning strategies are readily teachable (Oxford & Nyikos; 1989, p.291). Oxford and Crookall (1989, p.114) believe that it is possible and generally advisable to teach learning strategies through completely informed training in which learners are taught how and why to use, transfer, and evaluate strategies. Oxford

(1990, p. 202) thinks that awareness training is very important because it is often the individual's introduction to the concept of learning strategies.

Awareness of thought processes while learning is essential as suggested by research. Lotfy (1995, p.58) emphasizes that supporting thinking habits enhances self-regulation and makes the learner more aware and more sensitive to feedback and evaluation of his/her performance. Dirkes (1981, p.38) stresses that individuals should understand their thinking habits and use them more effectively. Tama (1986, p.32) states that the emphasis on promoting thinking skills in the classroom has taken three directions: the teaching of thinking, teaching for thinking, and teaching about thinking. In the first, thinking is regarded as a process of developing a set amount of skills. The second fosters thinking skills in the specific context of school curricula. In the third, students are encouraged to become more conscious of their own mental processes as they study or solve problems. Students learn how to predict the outcome of their performance, to plan ahead, to apportion time and cognitive resources, and to monitor and edit more efficiently their efforts to learn. This process is known as metacognition.

The concept of metacognition is well-grounded in theory and research. Paris and Winograd (1990, p. 15) state that the metacognitive theory focuses in general on (a) the role of awareness and executive management of one's thinking; (b) individual differences in self-management of cognitive development and learning; (c) knowledge and executive abilities that develop through experience; and (d) constructive and strategic thinking. Hacker (2002, p.11) concludes that the promise of metacognitive theory is that it focuses precisely on those characteristics of thinking that can contribute to students' awareness and understanding of being self-regulatory

organisms, that is, of being agents of their own thinking. Hacker (2002, p.5) emphasizes the importance of metacognitive research as a way to gain greater understanding of humans not only as thinking organisms but also as self-regulatory organisms who are capable of assessing themselves as agents of their own thinking. Our thinking is not happening just like a reflex, it is caused by the thinking person, it can be monitored and regulated, deliberately; i.e. it is under the control of the thinking person.

Metacognitive strategies are useful in developing all the language skills (Oxford; 1990, p.152). Many researchers highlighted the importance of metacognitive strategies and investigated the effect of training in metacognitive strategies on developing reading and listening comprehension (Brown, Armbruster, and Baker (1986); Carrell (1989); Carrell, Paris, and Liberto (1989); Glover, Ronning, and Burning (1990); Carrell (1992); Abdelraheem (1993); Vandergrift, 1997a; Vandergrift, 1997b ; Vandergrift, 1998; Strange (2001); and McCartney (2001). ; and Vandergrift, 2004. Abdelraheem (1993, p.35) states that metacognition plays a vital role in reading, for example, successful readers plan strategies, adjust efforts appropriately, and evaluate the success of their ongoing efforts to understand. Carrell (1989, p.123) found that the students who think that they use the most productive strategies (i.e. perceived strategy use) actually read through context better and understand more than do those who do not think they use such strategies. She mentioned, in another context, some facilitating effects on ESL reading metacognitive strategy training (Carrell; 1992, p.3). Vandergrift (2004, p 3-4) explains that knowing the purpose for listening also greatly reduces the burden of comprehension since listeners know that they need to listen for something very specific, instead of trying to

understand every word. He shows that skilled listeners use more metacognitive strategies than their less-skilled counterparts.

The need for training in metacognitive language learning strategies has been asserted by many researchers such as Kendall & Mason (1983); Kirby (1984); Palincsar (1985); Rinhart & Platt (1985); Cohen (1986); Oxford (1990); Narang (1991); Anwar (1992); Yuill (1992); Abderraheem (1993); Zidan (1994); Goh (1998); Al Melhi (2000); Darabie (2001); Kiernan (2001); Yarrow (2001); Serag (2000); Moore (2000); Dolak (2000); and Anderson (2002b).

Kendall and Mason (1983, p.41) identify approaches which teachers can use to improve children's metacognitive strategies as (1) providing instructions to predict outcomes that requires a reader's active involvement and constructive thinking; (2) encouraging children to integrate their prior knowledge with story content; and (3) training students to monitor their understanding by asking themselves questions as they read.

Kirby (1984, p. 98) revealed that poor readers were less aware of effective strategies and of the counterproductive effects of poor strategies, and were less effective in their monitoring activities during reading. Palincsar (1985, p.29) suggests that an effective reading instruction program requires the identification of complementary strategies that are modeled by an expert and acquired by the learner in a context reinforcing the usefulness of such strategies. Rinhart's review (1985, p.340) suggests that adult and college readers who show evidence of metacognitive deficiencies may be the most aware and capable of monitoring their mental processes while reading. Cohen (1986, p. 32) considers unskilled reading comprehension is one aspect to show the importance and need for training. Unskilled readers can

become skilled readers and learners of whole text if they are given instruction in effective strategies and taught to monitor and check their comprehension while reading. With respect to this point, Al Melhi (2000, p.2465A) found that some differences did exist between skilled and less skilled readers in terms of their actual and reported reading strategies; their use of global and reading strategies, their metacognitive awareness, their perception of a good reader, and their self-confidence as readers.

Oxford (1990, pp 137&138) highlights the need to learn much more about the essential metacognitive strategies. She states that though metacognitive strategies are extremely important, research shows that learners use these strategies sporadically and without much sense of their importance in several studies of second and foreign language learning, students used metacognitive strategies less often with planning strategies most frequently employed and with little self-evaluation or self-monitoring, likewise, university foreign language students in other studies reported using certain metacognitive strategies such as being prepared, and using time well, but they fail to employ other crucial metacognitive strategies, such as accurately evaluating their progress or seeking practice opportunities. Obviously learners need to learn much more about the essential metacognitive strategies. Being aware of metacognitive strategies is not enough. Awareness, as suggested by Narang (1991, p.30), should be accompanied by use. He states that successful learners are not only aware of their metacognitive strategies but also use them to control and monitor their learning.

Anwar (1992, pp. 66 - 67) investigated the effect of training English majors of the faculty of education in effective reading strategies on their acquisition



and use of these strategies and on English language proficiency. She states that students' language skills should not be

considered completed by the end of secondary schools, but more teaching and training is needed to develop such skills at the university level. She recommends that students enrolled in the first year English department should be trained in effective reading strategies through a comprehensive preservice training program.

The relationship between metacognitive strategies and comprehension is established by Yuill (1992) and Abdelraheem (1993). Yuill (1992, p.35) states that poor comprehenders have three main areas of weaknesses: in making inferences from text, in using working memory to integrate information in a coherent model, and in reflecting on their own comprehension. Abdelraheem (1993, p.121) recommends that reading instruction, especially for academic programs of prospective teachers of English, should benefit from the inclusion of explicit comprehension, fostering metacognitive strategy training. This is duly important given that systematic reading or listening instruction has no place in EFL preservice teacher education programs as asserted by Zidan (1994a, p.79).

Goh (1998, p.1) investigated L2 listeners' comprehension strategies and metacognitive knowledge about learning to listen, and compared the same in learners with different listening abilities. The results of the study reveal that high-ability listeners used more strategies more than low-ability listeners and they often varied tactics within the same strategic approach according to comprehension goals.

Serag (2000, pp. 63 - 64) investigated the effects of training in indirect language learning strategies and its effectiveness in enhancing reading

comprehension skills and strategy awareness. She found that self-evaluation, as the metacognitive strategy used in the study was not frequently used by the students. Moreover, the students' awareness degree of these strategies was notably low. She implied that other research studies that employ different types of learning strategies, to the four language skills, with different groups of students are needed and required.

Kiernan (2001, p.65) investigated the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies implemented in training performance support systems. Results of the study showed a significant difference in test scores between the control and the experimental groups regarding how they felt about the metacognitive strategies. Responses of the experimental group were overwhelmingly positive. A related area of difficulty as investigated by Yarrow (2001, p.262) is limited metacognitive knowledge and control. He proposes that children may lack exercising of appropriate strategies, or have difficulty exercising control over implementing and monitoring them.

Anderson (2002b, p.1) emphasizes that learners who are metacognitively aware know what to do when they don't know what to do; that is, they have strategies finding out or figuring out what they need to do. He asserts that the use of metacognitive strategies ignites one's thinking and can lead to more profound learning and improved performance, especially among learners who are struggling. Darabie (2001, p.2647A) suggests that metacognitive awareness strategies can assist students develop their own judgments and reflections on the topic while reading. Dolak (2000, pp.519-20) revealed that professors did not seize the opportunity to explicitly use their metacognitive activities. Finally, Moore (2001, p.74A) states that although existing research indicates that metacognition is an integral part of

a learner's performance, a framework in instructional design for embedding metacognitive cues in learning programs does not exist.

In light of this background, it can be concluded that if learning is to be facilitated, language learning strategies have to be introduced and taught explicitly. Zidan's study, which examined the effects of using a direct instruction model on EFL majors' achievement in three selected reading skills, namely, determining significant details, determining word meanings in context, and locating specific passage information, revealed that direct instruction contributed consistently and significantly to enhancing the subjects' achievement in reading comprehension compared with the traditional "read-and-answer-the-questions" method. (Zidan, 1994, p. 80)

Students should not only know what the metacognitive strategies are, but should use them as well. In spite of the importance attached to metacognitive language learning strategies in enhancing language proficiency, no systematic instruction in these strategies is provided. Such conclusions led the researcher to think of training EFL students at the faculty of education in some metacognitive language learning strategies to measure the effect of this training on developing students' listening comprehension and reading comprehension as well as their language proficiency.

### **Context of the problem**

Although reading and listening are two essential language skills that college students need in studying for courses, performance on examinations, and in developing general language proficiency, it was observed by the researcher, while attending the essay and linguistic exercises course taught to first year EFL students at the faculty of Education, the lack of explicit direct instruction of reading and listening comprehension. Systematic reading or

listening instruction has no place in EFL preservice teacher education programs. Traditionally, however, some reading practice is usually given as part of the essay and linguistic exercises course. In these classes, there is much reading in the form of student answering of questions on reading passages without tangible assistance from the instructor as regards how to interact with text with greater ease and flexibility, or how to arrive at the intended meaning without necessarily wasting much time in word by word reading. This is asserted by Zidan (1988) who stated that

*In this particular situation, the teaching of reading comprehension has, for years, been a testing activity rather than a teaching responsibility where the students are typically assigned reading passages to read and answer the following questions. (Zidan, 1988, p.2)*

In the absence of suitable strategies for centring, arranging and planning, and evaluating their learning, students tend to use the reading material probably for the learning of new lexical items or at best, to work laboriously and indiscriminately to decipher the literal meaning of the reading giving equal attention to all language features as supported by research.

Similarly, while teachers are becoming more aware of the need to provide specific listening instruction to their students, many are unsure about what constitutes effective listening instruction (Berne, 1998, P. 169). They often do not provide the kind of instruction or context that students need. Texts selected for instruction situate listening instruction in contexts and tasks that are unrelated or, at best, only generally related to the academic contexts in which students must perform. Texts are meant for a very wide audience of listeners and, thus, use very generic topics in which to situate the instruction. While useful, these are not the kinds of topics, vocabulary, and input that students will be listening to in their academic classes.

The method used in training college students to listen lacks suitable metacognitive language learning strategies such as selective listening and paying attention. While traditional approaches to language teaching tended to underemphasize the importance of teaching listening comprehension, more recent approaches emphasize the role of listening in building up language competence and suggest that more attention should be paid to teaching listening in the initial stages of second or foreign language learning (Richards, Platt, Platt; 1992, p.216).

The above-mentioned observations and the state of art emphasize the need to provide students with suitable learning strategies that can facilitate their learning and result in improved listening and reading comprehension, and consequently improved language proficiency.

### **Significance of the study**

Learning strategies are a prerequisite for effective learning. Oxford and Crookall (1989, pp. 404, 413) viewed that the use of strategies can make learning more efficient and more effective. More proficient learners appear to use a wider range of strategies in a greater number of situations. Oxford and Nyikos (1989, p.291) add that better language learners generally use strategies. Use of appropriate learning strategies enables students to take responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction. Self-directed students gradually gain greater confidence, involvement, and proficiency (Oxford; 1990, p.10).

Metacognition is regarded as important for memory, comprehension, attention, and communication (Kirby; 1984, p.89). Anderson (2002a, p.16) mentions that students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their

progress or review their accomplishments and future learning directions. Burns (1991, p.86)) proposed a set of requirements for learning with understanding stating that students will need, in particular, (a) to be taught about understanding; (b) to be taught the skills necessary to achieve coherence; and (c) to be provided with conditions that will allow them to pursue coherence. Wang and Richarde (1986, p.104) found that metacognitive training is a feasible and productive technique for improving learning. Hacker (2002, p.4) highlighted that awareness concerning the utility and function of a strategy is needed. This is likely to help the students generalize the strategy to new situations. He adds that conscious and deliberate, metacognitive thoughts are not only potentially controllable by the person experiencing them, but they are potentially reportable and therefore accessible to the researcher.

It is observed that conventional methods followed in teaching reading and listening to college students are of limited value in producing proficient readers and listeners. Reading is regarded mainly as a means of learning vocabulary items. But reading is much more than decoding words, multiple levels of cognitive processes ranging from basic perception to the highest levels of cognition are involved. Thus, teaching reading cannot be simple-minded activity. It requires the orchestration of many components into a meaningful whole if success is to be achieved. This shows the need for reading strategies that go beyond decoding surface structures to construct cognitive representations of text content. Likewise, the conventional methods followed in teaching listening result in a poor listener who is unable to comprehend the spoken message.

Literature reviewed shows the importance of using metacognitive language learning strategies in memory, comprehension, and attention, communication, and language skills. Added to all the previous reasons that helped in developing the idea of this work is the importance of training in metacognitive strategies which make this investigation even more significant. These strategies stimulate imagination, clarify thinking, and develop higher cognitive abilities. This is expected in creating students who are more able to cope with this new world of technology, discoveries, and vast sources of cumulative knowledge. It is hoped that this study will contribute in investigating the effect of training in metacognitive strategies on developing listening comprehension and reading comprehension of EFL students, and consequently their English language proficiency. It provides them with a suggested training program in some metacognitive language learning strategies which is hoped to develop their listening and reading comprehension.

### **Purposes of the study**

The present study was conducted to achieve the following purposes:

1. Identifying the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing listening comprehension of First year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education.
2. Identifying the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing reading comprehension of First year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education.

3. Identifying the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing language proficiency of First year EFL majors at the Faculty of Education.

**Statement of the problem:**

The problem of this study can be stated in the following question: " **What is the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing listening and reading comprehension of first year EFL majors?**" This question can be branched out into the following six sub questions:

1. What are the effects of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing listening comprehension of first year EFL majors?
2. What is the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing reading comprehension of first year EFL majors?
3. What is the effect of training in some metacognitive language leaning strategies on developing English language proficiency of first year EFL majors?

**Hypotheses of the study**

Based on reviewing the previous literature, the study seeks to verify the following hypotheses:

1. There are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the listening comprehension post-test favouring the experimental group.



2. There are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the reading comprehension post-test favouring the experimental group.
3. There are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the English proficiency post-test favouring the experimental group.

### **Limitations of the study**

1. Subjects in this study were randomly selected from first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. They were chosen because they were freshmen language learners who need to be provided with successful language learning strategies to make use of them throughout their study. The population of the study is first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. Sample of the present study was selected from the population after excluding the students who participated in the pilot study held in the first term of 2004 for calculating the reliability coefficient of the listening comprehension test and the reading comprehension test, and also excluding the students who participated in the pilot study for figuring out the difficulty level of the listening comprehension test and the reading comprehension test. Then the population was divided into a female population from which the female students in both the experimental and the control groups were selected and a male population from which the male students in both the experimental and the control group were selected. Each name of the students of the female and male populations was given a number and the students

who were supposed to participate were selected randomly from the pools of numbers.

2. The present study investigates the effect of some metacognitive language learning strategies on developing listening and reading comprehension among first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. Six metacognitive language learning strategies are included in this study in three sets. The first set of strategies includes strategies for centring learning. The two strategies included in this set are advance organizers and paying attention. The second set of metacognitive language learning strategies includes strategies for arranging and planning for learning. The two strategies whose effects on developing listening and reading comprehension are investigated are advance preparation and self-management. The third and last set of strategies investigated in the present study includes two strategies for evaluating learning. These two strategies are comprehension monitoring and self-evaluation.

## **Definitions of terms**

### **Metacognition**

Myers (1979, p.680) defines metacognition as "the general knowledge that guides effective selection and implementation of task-relevant skills." He considers the metacognitive knowledge as a metacognitive function; "Metacognitive knowledge serves as an executive function of coordinating and directing the learners thinking and behavior."

A group of researchers: Glover, Ronning, and Burning (1990); Sternberg (2000); and Anderson (2002a) define metacognition in terms of knowledge

about cognitive processes and regulation of cognition. Glover, Ronning, and Bruning (1990, p.102) define metacognition as "knowledge people have about their own thought processes". Sternberg (2000, p.322) defines metacognition as "the process of knowing or thinking about how we use strategies and skills to enhance our thought processes; thinking about how we think". Anderson (2002a, p.2) defines metacognition as "the ability to think about your thinking". It is the ability to make your thinking visible. It is the ability to reflect on what you do. Hacker (2002, p.4) proposes that a definition of metacognition should include at least three notions; knowledge of one's knowledge, processes, and cognitive and affective states. This goes with what Baker and Brown point out that knowing that (declarative knowledge) is different from knowing how (procedural knowledge) and the knowledge that a particular strategy is useful (awareness) precedes its routine use which in turn precedes the ability to describe how it is used (Carrell; 1989, p.122). The present study adopts the definition of metacognitive strategies as plans used to centre, arrange and plan for, and evaluate language learning to facilitate comprehension.

### **Strategy**

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992, p.355) define a strategy as procedures used in learning, thinking, etc. which serve as away of reaching a goal. In language learning, learning strategies are those conscious or unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using a language. Strategies are the thoughts and behaviours that learners use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Pressley et al (1985, p.4) link strategies to cognitive processes. They define strategies as "composed of cognitive operations over and above the

processes that are a natural consequence of carrying out [a] task. Strategies are used to achieve cognitive purposes (e.g., memorizing) and are potentially conscious and controllable activities”. This definition points out that the active learner consciously chooses to use strategies in order to enhance performance of a task.

### **Listening comprehension**

Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992, p.216) define listening comprehension as the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. Similar processes are referred to in psycholinguistics as speech recognition or speech perception. This study adopts the definition of listening comprehension which focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and context, background Knowledge and the topic as measured by a listening comprehension test.

### **Reading comprehension**

Richards, Platt, Platt (1992, p.306) define reading as perceiving a written text in order to understand its contexts. This can be done silently. The understanding that results is called reading comprehension. Different types of reading comprehension are often distinguished according to the readers' purposes in reading and the type of reading used. The present study adopts the literal and inferential levels of comprehension.

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a pre-post control group design. An experimental group and a control one were exposed to pre-post means of getting data. The experimental group was trained in the suggested program in some

metacognitive language learning strategies as applied to some listening and reading comprehension tasks, while the control group completed these tasks without any metacognitive training. Both groups took the pre-post test in listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Also both groups received the English proficiency examination prior to the conduction of the suggested training program in some metacognitive language learning strategies received only by the experimental group and after completing it.

### **Subjects:**

The subjects involved in the study were selected from among first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. The subjects were randomly assigned to the experimental group and the control group. Each one of the two groups included 40 students (22female and 18 male)

### **Procedures**

#### **1- Design of the Experiment:**

The study adopted a pre-post control group design. An experimental and a control group were exposed to pre-post means of getting data. The experimental group was trained in a suggested program in some metacognitive language learning strategies as applied to some listening and reading comprehension tasks, while the control group completed these tasks without any metacognitive training.

#### **2- Variables of the Study**

##### **The independent variable**

Training first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University in a suggested program in some metacognitive language learning strategies

### **The dependent variables**

- Listening comprehension
- Reading comprehension
- Language proficiency

### **The controlling variables**

- General proficiency level in English
- Grade level
- Gender

### **3- Tools of the study**

A- The suggested training program in metacognitive language learning strategies (Prepared by the researcher)

B- The listening comprehension test, (Adapted by the researcher)

C- The reading comprehension test, (Adapted by the researcher)

D- The English Proficiency Examination (CDELT)

### **Findings**

The present study lasted for twelve weeks. At the end of the experiment, the listening comprehension post-test, the reading comprehension post-test, and the English Proficiency Examination were administered to both the experimental group and the control group. The t-test was used to analyze the scores of subjects in the pre- and post- tests were compared and analyzed.

### **Hypothesis 1:**

The first hypothesis predicted that subjects in the experimental group would surpass their counterparts in the control group in the listening comprehension post-test. Analysis of data obtained using the t-test showed

that the experimental group achieved a higher degree of improvement significant at (0.01) level than the control group on the listening comprehension post-test.

Table (1) presents a summary of the analysis of data obtained in the listening comprehension post test of the experimental and control groups.

**Table (1)**

T-test results of the experimental and control groups on the listening comprehension post-test

Group	No. of Subjects	Total score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	F value	Degree of Freedom	"t" value	Significance level
Experimental	40	50	28.1	4.73	.39	78	8.38	0.01
Control	40		19.5	4.41				

The results confirm the first hypothesis that predicted significant differences, favouring the experimental group, between means of scores of the control group and the experimental groups on the listening comprehension post test. The experimental group achieved significantly better results than the control group. Thus the first hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:**

The second hypothesis predicted that subjects in the experimental group would surpass their counterparts in the control group in the reading comprehension post-test. Analysis of data obtained using the t-test showed that the experimental group achieved a higher degree of improvement significant at (0.01) level than the control group on the reading comprehension post-test.

Table (2) presents a summary of the analysis of data obtained in the reading comprehension post test of the experimental and control groups.

**Table (2)**

T-test results of the experimental and control groups on the reading comprehension post-test

Group	No. of Subjects	Total score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	F value	Degree of Freedom	"t" value	Significance level
Experimental	40	40	29.6	3.09	2.69	78	6.57	0.01
Control	40		24	4.41				

The results confirm the first hypothesis that predicted significant differences, favouring the experimental group, between means of scores of the control group and the experimental groups on the reading comprehension post test. The experimental group achieved significantly better results than the control group. Thus the second hypothesis is accepted.

### **Hypothesis 3:**

The third hypothesis predicted that subjects in the experimental group would surpass their counterparts in the control group in the post-testing of the English Proficiency Examination. Analysis of data obtained using the t-test showed that the experimental group achieved a higher degree of improvement significant at (0.01) level than the control group on the post-testing of the English Proficiency Examination.

Table (3) presents a summary of the analysis of data obtained in the post-testing of the English Proficiency Examination of the experimental and control groups.



**Table (3)**

T-test results of the experimental and control groups on the post-testing  
of the English Proficiency Examination

Group	No. of Subjects	Total score	Mean score	Std. Error Mean	Standard Deviation	F value	Degree of Freedom	"t" value	Significance level
Experimental	40	100	59.3	1.13	7.15	.03	78	5.88	0.01
Control	40		49.2	1.29	8.16				

The results confirmed the third hypothesis that predicted significant differences, favouring the experimental group, between means of scores of the control group and the experimental groups on the post-testing of the English Proficiency Examination. The experimental group achieved significantly better results than the control group. Thus the third hypothesis is accepted.

### **Discussion of the results**

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of training first year EFL students at the Faculty of Education in some metacognitive language learning strategies on developing their listening comprehension and reading comprehension. The students in the experimental group were taught the suggested training program which emphasized the concept of metacognition as well as the learning strategies applicable to listening and reading tasks. The program included the most relevant strategies as evident in research and recommended by the jury members. The EFL students were also helped to apply whatever theoretical knowledge they had about learning strategies in general and metacognitive language learning strategies in particular during the training program. This was done through the practice stage in the metacognitive cycle in which students had the opportunity for

guided and free practice. Through metacognitive language learning strategies in the three sets of centring, arranging and planning for learning, and evaluating learning, the students got better insight into the comprehension process and how it works.

The results of the present study have confirmed that listening comprehension and reading comprehension could be developed through systematic instruction in metacognitive language learning strategies. Systematic explicit instruction about the concept of metacognition and learning strategies helped students of the experimental group to better comprehend this new approach and how to apply it to different learning tasks including listening or reading. The model of instruction provided for teaching and applying each one of the six metacognitive language learning strategies included in the suggested training program helped the students to know why, when, and how to use the strategies. Gradually, they started to think metacognitively about the strategies they could use to improve their listening and reading comprehension to become not only better listeners and readers, but also autonomous and strategic learners. This is asserted by Widdowson as he mentions that the idea that has been prompted in English language teaching over recent years is that learners should be as autonomous as possible, and be allowed to make the language their own. This autonomy idea gives primacy to the process of learning (Widdowson; 1996, p.67).

First year EFL students in the experimental group performed far better than their counterparts in the control group. All the hypotheses were confirmed statistically. This reveals the significance of metacognition in learning. This goes with what Anderson stated that students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan

their learning, monitor their progress or review their accomplishments and future learning directions (Anderson; 2002, p.16)

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1- Including metacognitive language learning strategies as part of the course of essay and linguistic exercises and reading and listening courses assigned to EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Minia University.
- 2- Including the metacognitive language learning theory as part of the courses for teaching curricula and methods of teaching to EFL students at the Faculty of Education.
- 3- Encouraging EFL teachers to train their students to use the techniques of metacognitive language learning strategies for centring learning, arranging and planning for learning, and evaluating learning.
- 4- Encouraging EFL students to use metacognitive learning strategies in authentic listening and reading tasks in their classrooms
- 5- Encouraging EFL students to transfer metacognitive learning strategies to other learning contexts

### **Suggestions for further research:**

- 1- Conducting a similar study that investigates the effect of some metacognitive language learning strategies other than those used in the present study.
- 2- Conducting a similar study that investigates the effect of some metacognitive strategies on language skills other than those used in the present study.

- 3- Conducting a similar study that investigates the effect of some metacognitive strategies on developing vocabulary among learners of EFL.
- 4- While strategy instruction improved participants' listening and reading comprehension in this study, it is not known to what extent and in what ways the different kinds of strategy instruction contributed to the listening and reading improvement. Future designs need to separate the different types of strategies so that their relative contributions to effective listening and reading can be determined.
- 5- Future research should test the ability of participants to use the information for higher order cognitive tasks.
- 6- Research designs need to include opportunities to observe participants as they attempt to use listening and reading strategies on authentic listening and reading tasks in their classrooms as prospective teachers. Thus, they became not only autonomous, independent learners, but also strategic teachers.

Although determining when students engaged in internal cognitive processing is difficult, it is still necessary to operationally define these activities in order to know whether students maintain and transfer their strategy instruction to authentic listening and reading tasks in their classrooms. Further research that examines the listening and reading demands is needed in order to determine what kinds of strategies are most effective for these tasks.

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