

METACOGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE IN ESP CLASSROOM

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Student academic success depends on their ability to think effectively in terms of their learning. The past few decades have seen significant advances in understanding the brain and learning in EFL/ESL classroom but it has not been deeply considered with regard to ESP. Teaching realities within a limited time frame for a particular ESP course, mixed-ability grouping and low motivation of students make ESP teachers look for some solutions to help students achieve their academic goals and meet their specific needs. ESP students are often deficient in the metacognitive skills needed to succeed in language learning. Accordingly, the task of an ESP teacher is to help them to get acquainted and then master such kind of self-awareness.

The term “metacognition” was introduced by Flavell and developed by Weinert, Hartman-Haas in 1980s simultaneously with the studies conducted by Swales, Wilkins, and Munby. According to Dignath, Büttner, Dignath, Buettner, Langfeldt improving metacognition is regarded to promote student academic success mainly in reading and text comprehension, reasoning, problem solving and writing [6].

As an instructional strategy, metacognition can help students with reflection on their learning during the ESP classroom activities and then encourage them to use these behaviours and thought processes on their own. The ultimate goal of teaching metacognition is to move students towards cognition, automatically knowing how to learn and applying the relevant strategies at the right time [3].

There is an interaction between metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Learners are involved in a process of moving from cognitive to metacognitive [1]. Models of metacognitive strategies tend not to be sequential [1]. For example, the

combination of cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as in writing a sentence and checking that it is to the purpose of a plan [1].

Apart from the teaching, an ESP teacher should also focus on recognition of the metacognitive knowledge role in the effectiveness of students' attempts to learn language. Learning effectiveness is influenced by the explicit knowledge of the task and appropriate strategies for its solution due to the fact that students can play an active role in this process having metacognitive knowledge [5]. Moreover, they can manage their learning process and look for the best ways to practice language [2].

Strategies that are used to improve students' metacognition are about being able to think about thinking. For example, such strategies can help in case with the gap experienced by the students between the quality of their preparation (for a lesson or a test) and the real situation of how prepared they are [4]. Stanford researcher Patricia Chen conducted the study concerning her students complaining about their poor test scores. The problem was that they lacked awareness of their preparation quality, so called "metacognitive awareness" [4]. As a result, the students got low scores. They were confident about the understanding of the material and considered themselves to be above average, but in reality they actually did much worse. This cognitive bias, the Dunning-Kruger Effect, can explain why so many students have a feeling of confidence passing a test despite their poor preparation [4]. Overconfidence is the result of lack of metacognitive knowledge common for mixed-ability ESP groups. This fact proves the contribution of metacognitive knowledge makes in terms of learning and teaching effectiveness.

There are different strategies students can apply to make ESP learning more effective: mnemonics, thinking journal, reciprocal teaching [6]. To promote students' metacognition ESP teachers can implement the following ideas in their ESP classroom [4], [6]:

- set explicit goals and help ESP students monitor the process of reaching them;
- prompt ESP students to manage their own learning process instead of being passive listeners. Wilson and Conyers metaphorically call it "driving one's brain";

➤ make a group work more cooperative in terms of discussing understanding, trying self-assessment and reflection;

➤ apply reciprocal reading (work with small groups of learners and plan the use of four key reading strategies and then ask your students to teach these strategies each other);

➤ discuss the possibility of using strategies for different tasks (f.e. reading strategies for listening tasks);

➤ provide ESP students with the autonomy and try not to give answers for students but to choose appropriate strategy themselves;

➤ encourage the students to ask you questions and ask themselves (here are some examples of self-questioning):

- *Have I faced any confusing or difficult things?*
- *What are we going to have on the test?*
- *What was wrong with my answer?*
- *Was my preparation for the test really good?*

Metacognition is significantly important for ESP students that is why learning strategies should play a key role to meet the student ESP needs. Moreover they have an impact on critical thinking, problem solving and effectiveness in ESP classroom. Applying different ideas an ESP teacher enables students become aware of metacognitive knowledge and thus makes the process of teaching language more meaningful and efficient. Metacognitive and cognitive connections should be taken into consideration in ESP syllabus design and development.

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