The Importance of Metacognition: a Social Cognitive Approach to Self-regulated Second Language Learning (SLA)

Dr. Nadia Albaladejo García, WIT
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@Nnadialba
nadia.albaladejo@wit.ie

Summary:

Developing learning competencies in Second Language Learning involves that students have a good base (scaffolding) of the basics of the taught language; a good understanding of the facts and ideas in a specific and current context; as well as a good knowledge of the ways in which this specific knowledge can be organized to aid its use. A metacognitive approach to language learning can help foreign language students to control their learning, defining their own personal goals and monitoring their own progress to achieve those goals. In this talk, I aim at reviewing the so-called metacognitive approach in Second Language Learning (SLA). I will provide real-life examples and I will answer questions on how to adapt this approach to the third level education language classroom in Ireland.

Today I will discuss:

- What is metacognition?
- Theoretical background
- Metacognition Strategies
- What are typical "signs" of dyslexia?*
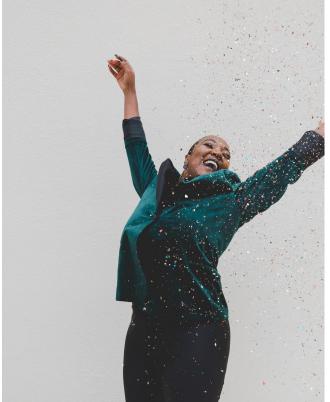- Learning Difficulties or Teaching Difficulties?
- Case Study
- Concluding remarks

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But first: What are you watching these days?

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What is "Metacognition"?

Definition

"Metacognitive" refers to decision-making processes that regulate the selection and the use of various forms of knowledge.
(Zimmerman, 1989)

…students can be described as self-regulated to the degree that they are metacognitively,' motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process.
(Zimmerman, 1986, 1989)

This definition assumes the importance of three elements:

1. <u>Students' self-regulated learning strategies</u>: organizing and transforming information, self-consequating, seeking information, and rehearsing or using memory aids.

2. <u>Self-efficacy perceptions of performance skill</u>: perceptions about one's capabilities to organize and implement actions necessary to attain designated performance of skill for specific tasks.

3. <u>Commitment to academic goals</u>: as grades, social esteem, or postgraduation employment opportunities; can vary extensively in nature and in time of attainment.

Self-regulated learning is not determined merely by personal processes; these

processes are assumed to be influenced by **environmental and behavioral** events

in reciprocal fashion.

Behavioural Impact

How do we control behaviour?

Given that: Students' behavioral performance is assumed to influence their perceptions of self-efficacy, as well as the reverse;

- ★ A positive start/experience/assessment where they can perform well, will have an effect with their engagement for self-efficacy!!
- ★ I.e. Set up something where you know they are going to do very well, and still get something from it.
- ★ When learners become self-directed, personal influences are mobilized to strategically regulate behavior and the immediate learning environment.

Self-efficacy perceptions of performance

It appears that self-observational and self-judgmental processes combined to facilitate students' self-regulation of their speech.

For example, listening to an audiotape of one's speech (self-observation) is assumed to affect self-judgments of progress in acquiring rhetorical skill. These self-judgments are expected to determine one's subsequent willingness to continue this self-instructive practice (a self-reaction).

There is extensive evidence that prompting students to keep records affects their learning, motivation, and self-efficacy.

Any more similar ideas for self-efficacy?

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Which of these can have a negative effect on student's self-regulation?

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Strategies

1. Self-evaluating
2. Organizing and transforming
3. Goal-setting and planning
4. Seeking information
5. Keeping records and monitoring
6. Environmental structuring
7. Self-consequating
8. Rehearsing and memorizing
9-11. Seeking social assistance; Peers; Teachers; Others
12-14. Reviewing records
15. Other: us

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Goal Setting

★

Signs of dyslexia

[And indeed, many others learning difficulties]

- ❖ Poor organisation skills
- ❖ Writing deteriorates over short/long periods
- ❖ Doesn't write "enough" in lectures
- ❖ Poor attention span
- ❖ Poor organisation of ideas (both written/verbally)
- ❖ Difficulty working in group/projects
- ❖ Workspace disorganized
- ❖ Loses work
- ❖ Struggle with timetable
- ❖ Slow to follow instructions
- ❖ Anxiety when asked to read out loud
- ❖ Anxiety about reading overall
- ❖ Tendencies: dyslexia according to language?
- ❖ Problem retrieving new words/grammar/previously worked material
- ❖ Problems mispronouncing
- ❖ Trouble understanding jokes or expressions that have a meaning not easily understood from the specific words (idioms), such as "piece of cake" meaning "easy"

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DYSLEXIA INDICATORS AT THE SECONDARY STAGE

Dyslexia is more than an isolated defect in reading or spelling. The problem may be perceptual, auditory receptive, memory-based or a processing deficit.

Subject teachers are not expected to be able to diagnose these difficulties as such, but some general indications are listed below. If several of these are observed frequently in the classroom, please tick the relevant boxes and enter details of the pupil concerned and pass to the Support for learning team for further investigation.

Pupil Name: **Class:**   **Date:**

- ❑ Quality of written work does not adequately reflect the known ability of the pupil in the subject

- ❑ Good orally but very little written work is produced – many incomplete assignments

- ❑ Disappointing performance in timed tests and other assessments

- ❑ Poor presentation of work – e.g. illegibility, mixed upper and lower case,
- ❑ unequal spacing, copying errors, misaligned columns (especially in Maths)

- ❑ Poor organisational skills – pupil is unable to organise self or work efficiently;

- ❑ carries either all books or wrong ones; frequently forgets to hand in work

- ❑ Sequencing poor – pupil appears to jump from one theme to another, apparently for no reason

- ❑ Inability to memorise (especially in Maths and Modern Languages) even after repeated practice

- ❑ Inability to hold numbers in short-term memory while performing calculations

- ❑ Symbol and shape confusion (especially in Maths)

- ❑ Complains of headaches when reading; sometimes see patterns in printed
- ❑ text; says that words move around the page or that text is glaring at them

- ❑ Unable to carry out operations one day which were previously done adequately

- ❑ Unable to take in and carry out more than one instruction at a time

- ❑ Poor depth perception – e.g. clumsy and uncoordinated, bumps into things, difficulty judging distance, catching balls, etc.
- ❑ Poor self-image – lacking in confidence, fear of new situations – may erase large quantities of written work, which is acceptable to the teacher

- ❑ Tires quickly and work seems to be a disproportionate return for the effort involved in producing it
- ❑ Easily distracted – either hyperactive or daydreaming

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland provides information, research, and advice re dyslexia for students, parents, teachers and other professionals

Website: http://www.dyslexia.ie/

The British Dyslexia Association represents people with dyslexia and has a wealth of information and resources.

Website: http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association provides help and information to people with dyslexia and dyslexic people and their families.

Website: http://www.nida.org.uk/

The International Dyslexia Association, formerly the Orton Dyslexia Association, provides resources for professionals and families dealing with individuals with reading disabilities/dyslexia.

Website: https://dyslexiaida.org/

Learning Difficulties or Teaching Difficulties?

"How can a student be competent, sometimes very competent, in his first language and have difficulties with a new language, difficulties that are supposedly based in the first language?"

Schwarz, Robin L. "Learning disabilities and foreign language learning." *LD Online. www. ldonline. org/article/6065 (accessed March 10, 2008)* (1997).

How can learning "disabled" students be taught foreign languages?

1. Ganschow and Sparks theorized further that to help these students, the sound system of the target language must be very explicitly taught.

2. In their studies on Karen Miller's students, Ganschow and Sparks found that by being taught phonological skills in one language, the students improved their phonological awareness in English also.

3. [...] approach to language instruction which has been effective [...] changes as reducing the syllabus to the essential elements, slowing the pace of instruction quite considerably, reducing the vocabulary demand, providing constant review and incorporating as much visual/tactile/kinesthetic (i.e. multisensory) stimulation and support as possible.

Yes, ok but ... Metacognition & self-regulation for all?!

How' you doing?

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Case Study: Student A

Student A: "Pat"

Profile:

Pat was not diagnosed with dyslexia until the end of 4th year.

His dyslexic tendencies were highlighted by private grinds teacher given the student's difficulties in reading in Spanish.

Before this no one ever mentioned the possibility of his possible dyslexia given that this student has a high IQ and it is very accomplished academically.

After diagnosis, he decided not to inform his school as he felt stigma towards learning difficulties would impact on him negatively.

Different view now at third level.

"my parents are really good in giving me support outside the school. I always knew I had to work that little bit harder compared to other people to achieve the ambitious results that I wanted, [...] I always had to push myself that little bit harder, like I would see people working less than me, or maybe getting a little bit less than me or the same....[...] I felt pretty crap about it cause I thought I am like, maybe a little bit stupid ...[...]. When I accepted there was a bit of dyslexia there, that I was able to agree in my own head that, you know, this isn't a bad thing, I just have to push myself that little bit harder.'

'I suppose I engage much more with the language from multiple perspectives; I put myself out of my comfort zone to speak Spanish; I would visit Spain quite a bit, I would anyway ... and I would really just kind of put myself out there, and engage with the language; for example I changed my phone language; if i was at the gym and I saw the "atlas" thing at the bottom I would choose Spanish [...] So I think it's just little things'

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