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USING LEARNING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER AUTONOMY[1]

Otonomiyi Geliştirmede Öğrenme Stratejileri Kullanımı

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Abstract

Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or a task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. They are contextualized "battle plans" that might vary from moment to moment, or from one situation to another, or even from one culture to another. Strategies vary within an individual (Brown, 2000,p.119). Taking "learner" as the key to real success, learning strategies are indispensable within the learning process. Rubin (1987,p.15), emphasises the importance of learning strategies in the language learning process as: "all other things being equal, some students will be more successful than others in learning a second or foreign language. The learning strategy literature assumes that some of this success can be attributed to particular sets of cognitive and metacognitive behaviours which learners engage in. As learners are actively engaged in their process of learning using the strategies, they develop self-awareness and are led to the direct way towards autonomy. Now that these skills being effective in enhancing autonomy and self-awareness of the students in learning, then why not find more ways to develop these skills? Having this in mind, this study provides a step by step lesson plan and procedure covering these strategies.

Key words: *Metacognitive strategies, autonomy, learning process.*

Özet

Stratejiler, bir problem ya da bir göreve yönelik belirli yaklaşım metotları; belirli bir sonuca erişebilmek için hareket yöntemi; belirli bilgiyi kontrol ve manipüle etmek için planlanmış dizaynlardır. Zamandan zamana, bir durumdan diğerine, hatta bir kültürden diğer bir kültüre farklılık gösterebilecek bağlamlandırılmış "savaş planları"dır. Stratejiler bireysel farklılık gösterirler (Brown, 2000,p.119). Gerçek başarının anahtarı olarak "öğrenen" ele alındığında, öğrenme sürecinin öğrenme stratejileri vazgeçilmezdir. Rubin (1987,p.15), dil öğrenme sürecinde öğrenme stratejilerinin önemini vurgular: " başka her şey eşit olsa, bazı öğrenciler ikinci ya da yabancı bir dili öğrenmede diğerlerinden daha başarılı olurlar. Öğrenme stratejileri literatürü, bu başarının bir bölümünün öğrenenlerin kullandığı bilişsel ve bilişötesi davranış setlerine bağlanabileceğini varsayar. Öğrenenler, öğrenme süreçlerinde stratejileri aktif bir şekilde kullandıklarında, öz-farkındalık geliştirirler ve otonom olmaya yönlenirler. Madem ki bu beceriler otonomiyi ve öğrencilerin öğrenmedeki öz-farkındalıklarını arttırmada etkindir, öyleyse neden bu becerileri geliştirmek için daha fazla yol aramayalım? Bu fikirden hareketle bu çalışma adım adım bir ders planı ve bu stratejileri kapsayan prosedür sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Bilişötesi stratejiler, otonomi,, öğrenme süreci.*

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Having the importance of learning strategies in mind, a lesson plan was arranged appropriate for beginner German learners. The idea in mind was firstly to cover a classroom application to foster autonomy. The supporting aim was to provide a sample lesson plan to shed light to a better understanding of applying the theory into practice combining and integrating mnemonics, MI theory, cooperation, and metacognitive strategies.

Scope

Beginner language learners were aimed in this sample session. With the purpose of embedding metacognitive learning strategies into the classroom applications of language learning, beginner learners were actively involved in the session.

Review of Literature

- **Learning Strategies**

Oxford & Ehrman (1998, p. 8) defined second language learning strategies as "specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques... used by students to enhance their own learning." They are contextualized "battle plans" that might vary from moment to moment, or from one situation to another, or even from one culture to another. Strategies vary within an individual (Brown, 2000, p.119). Strategies are generally learner-oriented, deliberate, planned, consciously done activities. The learners are generally aware of the strategies that they are using. Chamot (2005, p. 112) (cited in Brown, 2000,p.132) defines strategies quite broadly as "procedures that facilitate a learning task....Strategies are most often conscious and goal driven." Learner strategies are the mental processes which learners employ to learn and use the target language. (Nunan, 1995, p.168).

According to Wenden (1987,p.6), learning strategies are "the techniques actually used to manipulate the incoming information, and later to retrieve what has been stored." O'Malley and Chamot (1990,p.1) define them as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals used to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.". Oxford (1990,p.8) (cited in Şahin,2005,p.11) says "Learning Strategies are specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations."

- **The Importance of Learning Strategies**

According to Chamot (2001, p.25) (cited in Şahin,2005,p.11), "learning strategies are important in the language learning process for two major reasons. First if the current strategies of learners are discovered, language learning process including cognitive, social, and affective processes will be understood. Second, identifying the strategy profile of foreign language learners will provide useful insights for training less successful learners who are thought to lack of the awareness of strategy use in the learning process." That is, identifying learning strategies is the key to diagnosis for lack of strategy use and cure towards self- awareness of strategy use which finally leads to autonomy. Oxford (1990,p.1) (cited in Şahin,2005,p.11) also points out that language learning

strategies are important in language learning process by considering the learning strategies as the tools that reinforce self-directed involvement, and she states that (1990,p.22) learning strategies help learners take control of their learning in the learning process. This is simply a step-by-step procedure towards autonomy. Learning strategies take the learner to self-awareness leading autonomy.

As Rubin (1987, p.15) stated, "all other things being equal, some students will be more successful than others in learning a second or foreign language. The learning strategy literature assumes that some of this success can be attributed to particular sets of cognitive and metacognitive behaviours which learners engage in." Simply, learning strategies are attributed to be affective in success in touch with self-awareness and being autonomous.

Methodology

Intensively based on the aim of vocabulary building in context, the classroom application used reading for vocabulary teaching. Underlying objective of the session was strategy training.

First of all, at the very beginning of the class, a story about autonomy is presented by the teacher to make a feeling of awareness. Then, a text in the target language is given as an introduction to the topic (a text about everyday life of a family). The students are encouraged to find the key words and the unknown vocabulary. Scanning the text, the students get accustomed to the new vocabulary items. Next, metacognitive strategies list is presented and the first stage is introduced. The list contains the steps of *organise-plan/manage your own learning/monitor/evaluate* parts. This way, the list covers an overlook to the learning process as *pre/during/post* stages.

Then, Mnemonic strategy which is a method of vocabulary teaching, is explained to the students. Mnemonic strategy is based on associating new vocabulary items with incongruous images or sounds in the first language or inventing different stories for each word to stick it in mind. The French word "herisson" – hedgehog is remembered through an image of the English sound- alike "hairy- son" (Cook,1996,56). The vocabulary items are also organised appropriate for MI theory. Followed by sequencing (matching the vocabulary items) and brain-storming (making up imaginary families) activity, the procedure moves on to word webbing (family members & everyday actions) activity which helps students use their imaginations. After that, the students go back to the meta-list to monitor the process and check their learning. Then, *"Numbered Heads Together"* and *"Inside Outside Circle"* (Kagan, 1994) activities are explained. The students cooperate within groups and help each other learn. At the end, they go back to the target vocabulary list and test their learning. Finally, they use the meta-list again to look back on their own learning performance.

Below is the sample lesson plan of the session aiming learning strategy use integrating and combining mnemonics, MI theory, and cooperation as well.

Sample Lesson Plan:

Teacher:		Date: ....
Class: Elementary level	Topic: "DIE BERGE FAMILIE"	Time: 45 mins
Language Focus: Reading and Vocabulary	Objectives: Reading Vocabulary-building Strategy-training	
Prior Knowledge: Elementary level		
Materials: • Target text • Board • Projection of power-point slides • Worksheet • Audio material		

Step	Time	Tasks(teacher)	Tasks (students)	Interaction	Purpose
1		T reads a story about autonomy. Introduction to the topic: T asks about the family members & what they do at home.	Listen and respond	T ↔ Ss	Warm up & arousing interest
2		The text is presented. Giving instructions.	Listen to & read the passage and try to find the key words and unknown vocabulary.	T ↔ Ss	Scanning
3		Metacognitive strategies list is presented and given to the Ss.	Listen & then deciding on the goals of their learning.	T ↔ S	Organize& plan Managing own learning
4		Mnemonic strategy is explained. The vocabulary is presented via pictures & mnemonic strategy (appropriate for the MI theory)	Focus on the mnemonic strategies.	T ↔ Ss	Putting the vocabulary items in the long term memory by encoding process.
5		Sequencing activity is presented.	Match the pictures and the vocabulary items	S ↔ S	Focusing on the vocabulary deeply.
6		Brain-storming activity is	SS make up their	S ↔ S	Making the students

		presented.	imaginary families.		feel comfortable& cooperate (developing a group spirit"
7		Word-webbing activity is presented.	SS match the family members with the verbs given.	S ◄► S	Focus on the meanings of the verbs& using them in context
8		T tells the Ss monitor their learning by using the meta-linguistics strategies list.	SS monitor the process & check their learning	Ss	Monitoring the process.
9		"Numbered Heads Together" activity is presented. T shows a vocabulary item &tells out a number	SS come together as cooperative groups. They number off. Only the S with the number can respond.	T ◄► Ss S ◄► S	Cooperation within the group and vocabulary practice.
10		"Inside Outside Circle" activity is presented. The teacher gives a keyword from the new vocabulary items and one student of the pair gives the definition and the other makes a sentence using the word. When they decide that they finish, the circle rotates.	Students stand in two circles. The inside circle faces out, and the outside circle faces in. Each student has a partner. The rule is, "Make sure you and your partner know the answer. If the they get stuck, they consult with the pair on either side.	S ◄► S	Cooperation within the class and vocabulary practice.
11		"Test your German" activity is presented.	Practice & test their vocabulary knowledge.	T ◄► Ss S ◄► S	Testing
12		T tells the Ss evaluate their learning by using the meta-linguistics strategies list.	SS evaluate their own learning performance.	Ss	Evaluation of the learning activity& porcess

Lesson plan template from: Richards and Renandya's Methodology in Language Teaching: An anthology of current practice

Sample: Presentation of a key word: *(mnemonics: mother-butter-mutter/ MI: Linguistic intelligence)*

I am a **mother** pheasant plucker,
I pluck **mother** pheasants.
I am the best **mother** pheasant plucker,
That ever plucked a **mother** pheasant!

My mother cooks delicious dishes with butter.
- **Die Mutter**

Extra Information:

Step 1: The students are warmed up to the idea of being "autonomous".

Step 2: The text is presented and unknown vocabulary is studied.

Step 3: With the help of the metacognitive strategies list, students think about their goals for learning.

Step 4: Mnemonic strategy is simply using sound-related forms to link the target words and mother-tongue or second language use. It helps students learn the vocabulary easily.

Step 5: Sequencing activity is a cooperative activity. Cooperative groups match the pictures and the vocabulary to be learned.

Step 6: Cooperative groups make up their imaginary families.

Step 7: In cooperative activity of "word webbing", cooperative groups match the keywords with the family members they have already made up.

Step 8: With the help of the metacognitive strategies list, students monitor the process and check their learning.

Step 9: *Numbered Heads Together* is presented. The steps of Numbered Heads Together are "1. students number off 2. teacher asks a question 3. heads together 4. teacher calls a number" (Kagan,1994, p.10:3/4). "It gave the students the chance to work and discuss together (Ercan, 2009, p.46)".

Step 10: *Inside Outside Circle* (Kagan,1994, p.10:11). is presented.

Step 11: The vocabulary list is presented again for testing learning.

Step 12: With the help of the metacognitive strategies list, students evaluate their learning performance.

CONCLUSION

Metacognitive strategies are indispensible for successful language learning. They make students more aware of their own learning process. When the students think about their own learning, they develop self-awareness and finally learner autonomy is improved. Now that metacognitive skills enhance autonomy and self-awareness of the students in

learning and give them the responsibility of their own learning, then we should find ways to develop metacognitive strategies of our students. Combining and integrating mnemonics, MI theory, cooperation, and metacognitive strategies; this paper covers a classroom application to foster autonomy. This easy!

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