A descriptive study: Reading comprehension and cognitive awareness skills

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Abstract

This study aimed descriptively to make clear of the relationships between reading comprehension and cognitive awareness skills. Through the aim of the research, the national and international literature related to reading comprehension and cognitive awareness skills are reviewed and attained that the cognitive awareness skills enhanced the reading comprehension. Cognitive awareness is aware of how the individual gives the meaning to the things and shortly it is the individual’s knowledge about reading comprehension process. The aim of the reading is to comprehend. So the reader’s cognitive awareness skills to the text are the basic factor to comprehend reading and to achieve an effective reading.

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Introduction

The educational implementations in the 21st century which is also denominated as Information Society, have departed from the impact of behaviorist psychology and have diverted its way to the effects of knowledge oriented constructivist philosophy. The necessity to produce knowledge have switched the focus of education from teacher to student and from teaching to learning. In other words, in our century, “the art of teaching” has devolved its place rapidly upon “science of learning”.

The fundamental of learning is apprehension and the fundamental of apprehension is reading. Reading comprehension requires the effective utilization of cognitive structure and the latter requires sentient behaviours by the individual namely, awareness of his own cognition system.

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Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the perception, making sense of and comprehension of written matters, in more clear words it is to cognize in all respects the information, feelings and thoughts that are desired to be transmitted as they are, without having caused any misunderstandings, in its course and without leaving any doubtful points behind (Kavcar, Oguzkan & Sever, 1994: 4).

A prosperous reading comprehension necessitates the active participation by the reader, commencing and arranging the reading process on his own. In this context, the control of an individual over his reading and reading comprehension is subject to utilization of cognitive strategies and cognitive awareness (Harris & Sipay, 1990). As a matter of fact, when the sources upon reading comprehension is examined, it will be noticed that concepts such as cognition and metacognition remain at the forefront of reading comprehension.

Because reading comprehension requires effective utilization of cognitive structure. Cognitive hypothesizes focus more on the individual and emphasize on perceptive skills, memory and its restrictions, advance information’s and the strategies required to perform mental operations (Akyol, 2005:11). When considered from this point of view, the reader is an active participant who endeavors to built meanings by using cognitive awareness.

It is impossible to observe concretely from outside, the mental process of the reader during reading process. However, it is known that the reader restructures during reading process of what is submitted by the author with his advance information and achieves a judgment. There are various factors having impacts on reading in this process. One of these factors is the cognitive awareness level of the reader.

Cognitive Awareness

Flavell was the one to use the cognitive awareness first and determined this concept as the knowledge of the individual over his own cognitive processes and the use of this knowledge in order to control the cognitive processes (Namlu, 2004).

Cognitive awareness is the knowledge of the individual on his own cognition system and thoughts and his basic skill to learn how to learn (Huitt, 1997). The skill of cognitive awareness is to provide the learner to motivate on the subject to be learned, to give his attention, to elaborate approach, to make him evaluate to what extent he knows and to what extent he has to know, to make him aware of where he is, to plan what he will do afterwards, to observe what, to what extent and by using which contemplation skills he has learned and to improve this and to adopt those skills as a lifestyle (Gelen, 2004).

The cognitive awareness which is also named as thinking how to think is one of the sub factors of metacognition. There are three main factors of metacognition (Schoenfeld, 1987): (1) Knowledge of cognition (2) Regulation of cognition (3) Beliefs and intuitions. Knowledge of cognition, comprises the awareness of the individual of his contemplation process; regulation of cognition, control over cognition; however, beliefs and intuitions comprises the past experiences of the individual and his styles for perception of the world (Duffy, Roehler & Hermann, 1988; Schoenfeld, 1987).

Reading Comprehension and Cognitive Awareness

Günes (2000: 60), mentions that understanding comprises of the mental activities such as examination and election, adjudication, translation, commenting, shifting, performing analysis and synthesis and assessment. The executed researches have shown that there are distinctive disparities between the cognitive awareness behaviours of the good and weak readers during reading process. Gelen (2004), have shown those disparities as in the following table.
### Table 1. The cognitive awareness behaviours of the good and weak readers (Cook, 1989; Akt: Gelen, 2004)

|                | 1.2. The cognitive awareness behaviours of a good reader | 1.3. The cognitive awareness behaviours of a weak reader |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| **Before Reading** | - Activates former information.                        | - Commence directly reading without preparation.       |
|                 | - Understands the objective of the lesson and activity. | - Does not know why he reads.                          |
|                 | - Determines appropriate strategies.                    | - Has not developed any system how to read             |
| **During Reading** | - Concentrates.                                        | - Easily distracted and become anxious.                |
|                | - Previously estimates and tells about the content of the text. | - Directly reads, cannot estimate previously, does not think |
|                 | - Incase of a defect on reading comprehension, he uses a reading comprehension strategy for recovery of this defect. | - Does not know what to do when he does not comprehend what he reads |
|                | - He can analyze the content in order to understands new terms. He can identify significant terms. | - Cannot recognize significant words                   |
|                | - He has better reading comprehension by considering the structure of the text. | - Cannot define the expression organization in the text |
|                | - Organizes the new information and combines them with the past information. | - Annexes negative information to the new information, does not look for relation and integrity |
|                | - Control his own reading comprehension and he knows what he has understood. | - Cannot recognize his lack of understanding           |
| **After Reading** | - Can depict what he has read in various forms.         | - Reading and thinking stops                           |
|                 | - Can notice (assess) to what extent his endeavor has an impact on his accomplishment. | - Feels successful.                                    |
|                | - Can summarize significant ideas, can derive the main idea. |                                                |
|                | - Can inquire the relevant additional information       |                                                        |

The researches reveal the relationship between the cognitive awareness and reading comprehension. In a research carried out by Yagcioglu and Deger (2002) on reading comprehension, the outcome was that the students with metacognition skills are also competent readers. In this research, metacognitive has been defined as raising awareness of what the learners do during reading, raise the awareness of the students about their reading processes, asking questions and receiving replies about what and how they understand.

Likewise, De Corte De Corte, Verschaffel ve De Van (2001) tried to determine the impacts on the reading comprehension of the four of the reading comprehension strategies (activating former information, defining unknown words, graphic representation of what is presented in text, specifying the main idea) and metacognition strategy (regulating your own reading comprehension). As a consequence they noticed a disparity of learners in their reading comprehension and reading oriented behaviours.

Weir (1998), express that the good readers use various sorts of metacognition strategies in order to assure that they have achieved better reading comprehension. These strategies of them are itemized as self control, estimation, forming inquiries with respect to the text and giving replies to those questions, recognizing the patterns in the text, revision on text, trying to make a connection with the text and their lives.

There are researches showing that the academical achievements and the motivation levels of the learners who have cognitive awareness skill are higher. Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill & Joshi (2007), have tried to find out the impact of multiple cognitive strategy teaching on reading comprehension and vocabulary of the learners.
students. As an outcome for the research, it has been found out that the cognitive strategies have a boosting impact on the reading comprehension, vocabulary and academic achievements of the students.

Similarly, Cubukcu (2008) in his study of Enhancing Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension Through Metacognitive Strategies have thought about the cognitive strategies to the students in a period of five weeks. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that cognitive strategies education have a positive effect on improving the vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. There are also studies infering that the behaviour of the students who have cognitive awareness skills regarding their lessons have improved positively.

Cetinkaya ve Erktin (2002) have intended to develop a metacognitive scale in Turkish for normal and superior intelligent kids in pre-adolescence ages. And in accordance with this purpose, initially they have developed an inventory consisting of four sub-dimensions (awareness, self control, evaluation and cognitive methods).

The researches indicated that the inventory had a high and positive interior consistency and have sufficient structural validity. In the second phase of the study, the relation between the metacognitive skills and reading comprehension, success at school and talent was observed. For this purpose, a reading comprehension test and their year end school marks for Turkish, mathematics and science lessons were used. As a result of the study, a meaningful and positive correlation was revealed between metacognition inventory awareness and cognitive methods sub dimensions and reading comprehension. A meaningful and positive correlation was revealed between self control and evaluation sub dimensions and the average school marks for science lessons of highly gifted students.

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