On Improving Learning Ability of Students with English Learning Disabilities by Using Metacognitive Strategies

Li-Hua TANG
College of Foreign Language Education of China West Normal University,
Nanchong, Sichuan, China
16867933@qq.com

Keywords: English learning difficulties; Metacognitive strategies; Learning ability.

Abstract. Students are the main body of learning and development. Metacognition has irreplaceable significance in helping students learn effectively. Metacognition refers to learners' self-planning, self-control, self-regulation and self-reflection of their cognitive process on the basis of their awareness of their own cognitive process. It consists of three components, including metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience and metacognitive monitoring. Mastering metacognitive strategies can promote students to think from multiple perspectives in the learning process, so they can use various cognitive strategies flexibly and enhance the learning effect. Students with high metacognitive level usually have strong planning and purposefulness, strong self-control ability and insight ability. They can flexibly deal with the problems encountered in learning, choose their own learning goals and learning methods, and achieve better academic performance.

Introduction
Learning process is not only a cognitive process of identifying, processing and understanding the learning materials, but also a metacognitive process of actively monitoring and regulating the process [9]. When we are good at analyzing learning objectives, formulating learning plans, adopting appropriate learning strategies, constantly introspecting our learning process, and striving to improve our learning methods, we can achieve ideal results in learning everything [2]. To enable students to learn effectively, first of all, teachers must let them master and skillfully use metacognitive strategies. Only in this way can they fully understand the internal mechanism of cognitive activities and better control the process [4]. On the basis of fully understanding the internal mechanism of cognitive activities, students learn to evaluate the problems in the cognitive process, and determine what cognitive strategies to implement cognitive operations, so as to achieve better learning results [5].

Students with Learning Disabilities
Learning disability is a comprehensive concept, which refers to dysfunction consisting of different symptoms. It is manifested by significant difficulties in acquisition and application of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and mathematics [6]. After years of research and development, the definition of students with learning disabilities has got many different illustrations, but they have a common starting point: Students' intelligence belongs to the normal range, and they have no physical obstacles (if students' academic performance is affected by low intelligence or physical obstacles, it is not within the scope of our research). Because of their different reasons, these students cannot adapt to the study and life under the normal school education conditions. Their academic performance has been in the middle and lower level for a long time, which has resulted in learning difficulties.

The Concept of Students with Learning Disabilities
Students with learning difficulties have certain learning motivation, normal intelligence and no sensory disorders [7]. However, their academic performance is significantly lower than that of the
students of the same grade, and they cannot achieve the expected learning objectives. They have great difficulties in acquiring and using their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. Learning difficulties are mainly manifested in memory, metacognitive and social skills, specifically in reading and writing.

**Typical Problems Existing in English Learning Disabilities**

Students lack attention to English learning activities in the process of learning. They are stuck in books and learn English mechanically. Their English learning activities are divorced from real life. Some students do not have a strong sense of autonomy in learning English. They are unwilling to preview their lessons in advance, and they do not understand what they have learned. They are not clear about their existing knowledge structure and the problems to be solved. Apart from the unified textbooks, they seldom read English extracurricular books and do extra exercises. Some students even think that teaching aids are indispensable for learning. This dependence on teaching aids affects students' initiative to seek knowledge. Although some students have made their own English learning plans, they are often unable to persevere and adjust flexibly, which makes it difficult for them to play their due role.

**Metacognitive Strategies**

Metacognition is one of the hotspots in contemporary psychological research. Metacognition is a cognitive form and belongs to a high-level cognitive process.

**The Concept of Metacognition**

Metacognition refers to the individual's cognitive process and results. It is a knowledge system that reflects on the cognitive itself, that is, the perception of cognition [8]. Metacognition refers to learners' self-planning, self-control, self-regulation and self-reflection of their cognitive process on the basis of their awareness of their own cognitive process [1]. Metacognition consists of three psychological components: first, metacognitive knowledge, which refers to the process and result of the individual's cognitive activities to himself or others; second, metacognitive experience, which refers to the cognitive experience and emotional experience accompanied by cognitive activities; third, metacognitive monitoring, which refers to the cognitive subject's conscious supervision in the cognitive process, taking his own cognitive activities as the object. Metacognitive monitoring mainly includes identifying cognitive goals, choosing cognitive strategies, controlling cognitive operations, evaluating cognitive activities and adjusting cognitive goals, cognitive strategies and cognitive operations accordingly [3].

**Classification of Metacognitive Strategies**

Metacognitive strategies can be roughly divided into three types: planning strategy, monitoring strategy and regulation strategy. Planning strategies include setting learning goals, browsing reading materials, generating questions to be answered, and analyzing how to complete learning tasks. Monitoring strategies include tracking attention while reading, self-questioning materials, and monitoring their speed and time during examinations [10]. Adjustment strategies are based on the results of cognitive activities. They found the problem and took corresponding remedial measures. They can correct and adjust cognitive strategies in time according to the examination of the effect of cognitive strategies.

**The Role of Metacognitive Strategies in Students' English Learning**

Firstly, metacognitive learning strategies can make students realize and experience what alternative learning methods they have. They realize and experience that they consciously choose, arrange, use and adjust their learning methods in the process of learning English. They know the role, scope and conditions of their various methods of learning English, and they can choose the most effective methods of learning English.
Secondly, metacognitive learning strategies enable students to activate the use of English learning methods according to the characteristics of learning tasks. They timely regulate and control the use of English learning methods according to the changes of English learning tasks. They objectively evaluate the appropriateness of the English learning methods according to the learning effect.

Thirdly, in specific English learning activities, students know how to strategically apply declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge to English learning tasks. They understand which skills and strategies help them accomplish their learning tasks.

Fourthly, metacognitive strategies can fully mobilize students' initiative and enthusiasm in English learning. Teachers' role is not only to impart knowledge, but also to inspire students to think. Students can stimulate their thinking potential under the guidance of teachers. Teachers should guide students to participate in the process of knowledge formation. Students learn the transfer of knowledge and then transform knowledge into skills. From the student's point of view, learning is the student's own autonomous activity and it is a desire from the heart of the students. Strengthening meta-cognition is conducive to forming the idea that students are the main body of learning.

Mastering metacognitive strategies can promote students to think from multiple perspectives in the learning process, so they can use various cognitive strategies flexibly and enhance the learning effect. They can flexibly deal with the problems encountered in learning, choose their own learning goals and learning methods, and achieve better academic performance.

Improving the Learning Ability of Students with English Learning Disabilities by Using Metacognitive Strategies

Firstly, teachers should pay attention to metacognitive teaching and cultivate the awareness of metacognitive teaching. Teachers can also help students to make English learning plans and guide students to learn how to choose different English learning strategies according to different English learning tasks, and so on.

Secondly, teachers should enrich metacognitive experience and strengthen metacognitive monitoring. In English learning activities, students should consciously train their metacognitive ability through self-questioning and mutual questioning. They need to pay attention to the cognitive process and really participate in learning activities. The application of metacognitive strategies usually goes through a process of practice. When students first come into contact with meta-cognition, they often lack the knowledge of their own learning activities and fail to monitor their learning progress at all times. At this time, students can consciously use self-questioning, mutual questioning and other methods to strengthen metacognitive experience.

Thirdly, with the help of teachers, students with learning difficulties can learn metacognitive strategies systematically and master learning strategies suitable for themselves. Teachers can provide special guidance to students on metacognitive knowledge through knowledge imparting strategies. Teachers should clearly tell students what role metacognitive strategies play and what conditions they can use them. Through learning, students realize the importance of metacognition and consciously apply metacognitive strategies to English learning. They form appropriate learning strategies to enhance their English learning ability.

Fourthly, teachers should give students some autonomy in learning English, cultivate students' interest in learning English, and give students space to learn English independently. Classroom capacity is limited, so students should learn how to learn effectively. Teachers should consider leaving room for students to learn English independently when making teaching plans. Teachers should avoid speaking too much. The self-study ability of students with English learning difficulties is relatively weak, so they can make a learning plan with the help of teachers first. In the process of implementing the plan, they need to communicate with teachers and classmates, and exercise their self-study ability step by step.
Conclusion
The students with learning disabilities are relatively lack of metacognitive knowledge, and they do not have a clear understanding of their English learning ability, learning tasks and learning strategies. It is difficult for them to adjust their learning activities effectively. Students who lack metacognitive knowledge are apt to make wrong judgments about their learning situation. When they need to adjust their learning activities, they often fail to adopt appropriate English learning strategies. In the long run, it will be difficult to improve the level of learning. Teachers should attach importance to metacognitive teaching and cultivate the awareness of metacognitive. Teachers need to help students enrich metacognitive experience and strengthen metacognitive monitoring.

Acknowledgement
The paper was supported by the talent foundation project of China West Normal University (No. 17YC073).

References