UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

THE USE OF
SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES
FOR TEXT COMPREHENSION AMONG
ESL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ISMAILIA BIN ISHAK

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education
in Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL)

Faculty of Education

June 2007

Abstract

This study was aimed at ascertaining the degree to which ESL students use Self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies which include planning, monitoring, problem solving and evaluating. It was also aimed at assessing the degree of awareness on the part of the students based on their self-efficacy beliefs in using self-regulated strategies. The study was conducted on a group of ESL students at UiTM Sarawak for a period of a month. The investigation was carried out within 10 hours of reading class whereby the students were exposed to the four self-regulated strategies. Direct Explanation Method was used to teach students on how to use SRL strategies. The research employed a mixed method incorporating both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The data were collected using likert-type inventories and immediate written recall protocols generated through semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study reveal that the students were using the strategies frequently throughout their reading process with the exception of Evaluating strategy. The finding also shows that the students were confident of their ability in using the strategies as they reported high score on the self-rating self-efficacy scale. This study has to a certain extent provided some interesting evidence on the nature of learning the students were involved in especially as regards the use of SRL strategies. The pedagogical implication is that students should be equipped with SRL strategies through explicit instruction to help facilitate their reading comprehension process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS   PAGE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Most Malaysian ESL undergraduates are still grappling with the idea of how best to master the English language. According to Philip (2005), what seems particularly lacking among young Malaysian adult ESL students is the control over their own learning. It means that they lack the knowledge of learning strategies and techniques, which would enable them to take greater responsibility of their own learning, and hence better control of their learning process. Such inadequacy poses a significant problem for the undergraduates, as they need to use reference books largely written in the English language. It is important therefore that students be equipped with conscious knowledge of self-regulatory processes in their attempts to learn particularly in the contexts of comprehending academic texts. It is indeed critical for Malaysian ESL undergraduates to have not only a working knowledge of English but also knowledge of a strategic learning approach to enable them to read and comprehend academic texts in order to fulfil various academic tasks effectively. While these students may have little problem in understanding academic texts in Malay, they are most likely in need of conscious instruction in what Wenden (1998) calls the "know-how" of approaching academic texts in English. In other words, these students need to be trained in effective use of learning strategies to take control of their learning process before they can eventually take complete responsibility of their learning or become autonomous in their overall learning approach.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter details a comprehensive review of the related literature. It discusses among other things, the theoretical principles of self-regulated learning (SRL), types of SRL strategies, instructional framework to be used in this study, previous studies in the area of SRL, and the conceptual framework that guides the whole thesis. It is hoped that this chapter provides a strong overall theoretical framework for the current research.

2.2 Self-regulated Learning

Generally, students can be described as self-regulated when they are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process (Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 2002). The basis of self-regulation is said to be self-awareness, which can be accomplished by training in various self-testing, self-monitoring, and self-questioning strategies. Through such training, students can be taught to be aware of what learning activities are appropriate, what their unique characteristics and limitations are, the nature of materials to be learned, and what the critical tasks of learning are (Brown, 1981).

Brown's (1981) work suggests that in order to train learners in general and durable strategies, it is necessary to teach metacognitive skills in conjunction with cognitive skills. Similarly, Paris et al. (1983) stress the need to teach learners about their own cognitive functions and the ways they can be combined or organised to solve problems. Such training provides the metaknowledge and strategies for self-management and self-