Using metacognitive strategies
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Teaching learners how to select and adjust their learning strategies is a key element in language learning. When this process is activated, education targets higher thinking skills that encourage problem-solving or students' inquiry and analytical skills which can be facilitated through metacognition.

Successful approaches to teaching need to include cognitive and metacognitive strategies that help learners to organize their knowledge, process and internalize it (Schoen, 1983, as cited in Magno, 2010, p.138). In order to promote autonomy and self-awareness, teachers can help learners to become self-directed and to build strategic competence by developing metacognition awareness and knowledge. Depending on the language competence level of students, age, purpose and context of learning, teachers can choose to adopt various strategies into guiding students to think and learn about their thinking and learning.

I chose to implement metacognitive strategies as my goal is to continuously facilitate students' progress, in and outside the classroom, to achieve high levels in learning effectiveness. Thus, I teach my students how to connect new to old information, to prepare and plan for learning and to go beyond just receiving and remembering information. The strategies selected, used or combined for learning are determined by the activity they are involved in, the learning purpose and the language level of students. For the monitoring stage students pause and assess if their strategy is efficient, if it needs adjustments or continuation. To check if they are successful in their learning strategy, students need to be able to evaluate the extent to which certain steps taken were appropriate or not and to reflect upon how this influences their progress.

I teach mostly intermediate to advanced levels where students' learning objectives are clearer and motivation to develop autonomous learning abilities higher. The course books and auxiliary materials we use contain sections with strategies to approach various tasks. After some practice, students immediately recognize the task type and they activate the strategy that works best for that activity. For example, in reading, students need to predict based on pictures, headlines, text organization or layout. Pre-reading continues with text skimming to check if their predictions are right, followed by an attentive reading of the questions, underlying key words, re-reading the text closely to check for the right answer, checking if the answer is right, etc.

One metacognitive strategy that students of all levels respond to positively is the KWL graphic organizer for reading and listening activities. Some students need help to organize and learn new vocabulary, and for this they learn to highlight key words, circle new words, build mind maps or word families, group them on certain topics, etc.

It is also important to remember that there should be more options for learners, and thus promoting individualization of learning, as one strategy might work very well for some students, but confuse or frustrate others. So far, I have noticed that students respond well to learning strategies and even demand

them at the beginning of the academic year, but I also face certain difficulties in teaching them how to think about their learning and thinking in producing written texts where they need to improve and transfer planning and organizing skills. Still, if and when applied appropriately, the metacognitive skills which help learners manage, direct, regulate and guide their learning influence significantly the level of performance.

Mango, Carlo. (2010). The Role of Metacognitive Skills in Developing Critical Thinking. *Metacognition Learning*, 5:137---15