

Activating EFL Young Adult Learners' Cognitive Mechanisms of Encountering Current Events via Socio-Affective Strategy Training

By

Marwa Sayed Saleh Sayed

Advisors

Prof. Mohammed Farouk Abdel- Samie Dr. Karima Mohammed Abdel-Aziz

Professor of Curricula and EFL Instruction and Vice - President of student affairs Fayoum University
Lecturer of Curricula and EFL Instruction Faculty of Education - Fayoum University

Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of using socio-affective strategy training on EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. For this purpose, the study adopted a quasi-experimental design with a proficiency test to find the homogeneity of groups. Furthermore, two classes were selected as the non-treatment and treatment groups ($n = 60$), and the treatment group was conducted by socio-affective strategy training. The data collection instrument was a valid and reliable scale for measuring EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. The data collected were analyzed to provide information about the effect of the socio-affective strategy training on enhancing EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. The analysis was both quatitative and

qualitative. In the light of the results analysis, the socio-affective strategy training effectively enhance the treatment group's cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events compared to the non-treatment group that was without any treatment.

Keywords: *socio-affective strategy, cognitive mechanisms, current events, EFL young adult learners*

المستخلص باللغة العربية

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة تأثير استخدام التدريب على الإستراتيجيات الاجتماعية الوجدانية على الآليات المعرفية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مواجهة الأحداث الجارية. ولهذا الغرض اعتمدت الدراسة التصميم شبه التجريبي مع اختبار الكفاءة لإيجاد تجانس المجموعات. وعلاوة على ذلك، تم اختيار مجموعتين كمجموعات ضابطة و تجريبية (ن = 60)، وتم التدريس للمجموعة تجريبية مستخدماً التدريب على الاستراتيجيات الاجتماعية الوجدانية. كانت أداة جمع البيانات عبارة عن مقياس صالح وموثوق لقياس الآليات المعرفية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لمواجهة الأحداث الجارية. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها لتوفير معلومات حول تأثير التدريب على الإستراتيجيات الاجتماعية الوجدانية في تعزيز الآليات المعرفية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لمواجهة الأحداث الجارية. وكان التحليل كميًا ونوعيًا. وفي ضوء تحليل النتائج، فإن التدريب على الإستراتيجيات الاجتماعية الوجدانية يعزز بشكل فعال الآليات المعرفية لدى المجموعة التجريبية لمواجهة الأحداث الجارية مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة والتي درست بالطريقة التقليدية.

Introduction

Due to the changes of the world we live in and the variance of knowledge means around us, it is necessary to equip our students with the mechanisms of getting information and be aware of the way to identify this information. Develop as responsible members of the global society and gain the millennial century knowledge and skills

they require to prosper in a world of perpetual change. Consequently, it was necessary to provide students with sufficient awareness of current events by enhancing their cognitive mechanisms.

Heinström (2010) defines cognitive mechanisms as the ways people receive information, and the way people think about, interpret, evaluate, and therefore act upon that information. Indeed, Cognitive mechanisms refer to knowledge acquisition. The concept of cognition needs to clarify the process of getting information, linking the process of acquiring and the formation of concepts. The six stages of thinking skills—remember, comprehend, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create—are parts of the cognitive process.

Furthermore, cognitive mechanisms consist of chemical and electrical signals that happen in the brain and allow you to understand your environment and gain knowledge. The cognitive theory asserts that the process of learning is also a process in which learners participate in the construction of knowledge. After the theory of cognition was put forward, three kinds of teaching strategies; (Kim, 2006), namely, cognitive apprenticeship, anchored teaching, and interactive teaching, are gradually formed, which are shown in figure 1. (Lui, 2018)

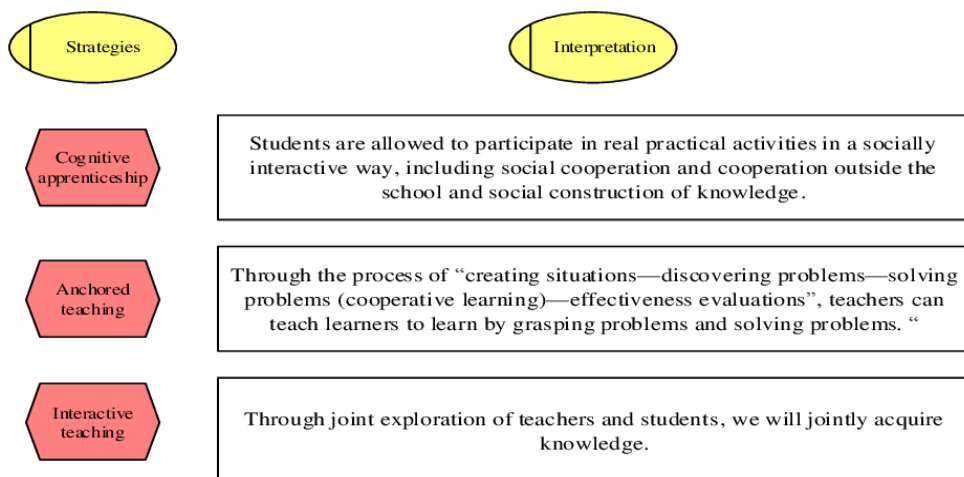


Figure1. Other teaching strategies in teaching English translation

To enhance students' cognitive mechanisms, it is perfect to use strategies that can gather the three previous strategies of learning at the same time, which are the socio-affective strategies.

Socio-affective strategies are the ones that are non-academic in nature and deal with intriguing learning through setting up a level of empathy between the instructor and student. They consist of considering factors such as emotions and attitudes (Oxford, 1990). Socio-affective strategies strongly take into account the student's relation to society as a whole ranging from family to the global community.

In the class, the students interact with their teacher and of course with their friends. Socio-Affective strategies can be known that they are related to social mediating activity and transacting with others, it uses cooperation and question for clarification

(Zeynali:2015). On the other hand, Socio Affective Strategy identifies one`s mood and anxiety level, feelings, rewarding oneself who has good performance and positive self-talk (Magno, 2010). Zeynali (2015) also mentioned the examples of this strategy, such as asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification, asking for help, talking with a partner, and exploring cultural or social norms. By using this strategy, hopes that they can control their attitude, motivation, and emotion.

Habte-Gabr (2006) opines that social and affective strategies are a non-academic approach that includes stimulating learning in the level of empathy between the teacher and the students. When implementing the strategies, teachers usually facilitate students with social mediating activities and let them communicate with their friends. (Brown, Gerbarg, & Muench, 2013)

It is worth mentioning that the potential of social-affective strategy instruction is not limited to a specific skill. Training learners in the use of social-affective strategies has been shown to play a major role in enhancing learner autonomy and self-confidence (Chamot, 1999), self-direction (Gan, 2004), motivation, and positive attitudes (Dörnyei, 2003; Kao & Oxford, 2014), and learner self-evaluation (Nikolov, 2006).

From surveying studies related to investigating the effect of socio-affective strategy training on EFL learners, it is noticed that no related studies found between the socio-affective strategies and the

cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events, and it is hoped that this research participates in enriching the field. On the other hand, there are studies investigating the targeted strategies for some language skills like speaking. Reading comprehension, listening...etc

In one of the studies which aimed to explore the affective domain and strategy use, Hurd (2008) applied think-aloud protocols to four French language learners who were studying at an open university. The participants were asked to record their thoughts during some reading and writing tasks in French. After the analysis of the data, the participants were observed to experience various positive and negative affective factors, and they used strategies such as “self-encouragement, skipping bits of text, rereading the text, keeping going regardless, consulting the *Corrigés* (answer keys) when worried, not dwelling on problems, taking a break, and checking back for reassurance”. (Hurd, 2008, p. 21)

“The Effects of Affective Strategy Training in the ESL Classroom” was another study by Rossiter (2003) that employed social and affective methods to enhance speaking ability. His study looked at how teaching affective strategies affected measures of second language proficiency and self-efficacy. 31 adult intermediate-level ESL students who were enrolled full-time in an ESL program at a Canadian post-secondary institution made up the study's participants. The study's findings demonstrated that the participants thought that learning affective strategies were most helpful for

practical applications outside of the classroom. The participant's performance on experimental tasks has improved (narrative and object descriptions). Mostly due to the participants' feelings being more at ease with the interlocutor, the researcher, and the setting.

Statement of the problem

Because of the huge amount of knowledge that became available to students around the world, and despite the numerous communication means, there is a problem that faces students when deciding the way to get the right and reliable information that is called the cognitive mechanisms. Therefore, the current study aimed to enhance the young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events through the use of socio-affective strategy training.

Consequently, the current study attempted to answer the following question:

- How can socio-affective strategy training enhance young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events?
- What is the effect of using socio-affective strategy training?

The hypothesis of the study

- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment group students and those of the non-

treatment group learners in the post-administration of cognitive mechanisms scale of current events.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the effect of using socio-affective strategy training on EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events.

Methodology and Design

1. Participants

The quasi-experimental one-control-group design was adopted in the current study. The participants of the research were 60 young adult learners that are randomly selected. Participants' age ranged from fifteen to seventeen years old to represent the study groups; the non-treatment and the treatment groups.

2. Data Collection

For the purpose of the study, a scale was designed to collect data about the level of study sample's cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. The scale as a whole was tested for validity and reliability.

2.2. Validity of the scale

2.2.1. Development of the statements:

For ensuring the content validity of the scale, it was designed based on a review of literature related to constructing awareness scales as a general e.g., (Duman and Yakar 2017, Gillihan et al. 2018). The cognitive mechanisms scale of encountering current events was designed based on the review of literature. It was composed of ten statements. The scale was examined by a group of seven experts in English language methodology to judge it regarding the following points:

- Relatedness of the items to the general dimension.
- Clarity and wording of the statements.
- The suitability of the scale for assessing EFL learners' level of awareness.

2.2.2. Internal Consistency:

The internal consistency of the scale means that there is a significant correlation between the statements of the scale. The internal consistency was tested by calculating the correlation between the score given to each statement and the total score given to the scale.

A detailed description of the correlations between the total score of the scale and its related statements is illustrated below:

Table (1): The Correlations between the Scale Statements

No	Item	Correlation
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	.	value	
Cognitive mechanisms	1.	I consult my parents while experiencing school bullying	0.859
	2.	I would visit the UNHCR “UN Refugee Agency” site to know more about refugees suffering	0.887
	3.	I use percentages to know the indicators of online harassment.	0.859
	4.	I often focus on examples of violence cases and try to get a scientific base from them	0.824
	5.	I follow covid19 daily infection rate	0.824
	6.	I depend on more than one source to know about the types of disabilities.	0.820
	7.	I depend on graphs to identify the use of weird fashion	0.810
	8.	I prefer to meet coordinators of “Decent Life Initiative” face-to-face to know about its activities	0.886
	9.	I prefer to look at volunteer statistics to know the impact of volunteering and volunteer management on the world	0.831
	10	I depend on research results to identify the benefits of gratitude in life	0.817

The values given in the above table show a strong correlation between the items on the scale. They were all significantly related. **This means that the cognitive mechanisms scale of encountering current events has an acceptable level of validity.**

2.2.3. Affirming the construct validity of the scale

Construct validity refers to a scale that measure the construct adequately. Factor analysis was done for estimating the construct validity of the scale. The Varimax method was used for this purpose. Factor loading that is greater than 0.40 were considered important. Regarding the scale, factor loading exceeded the loading cut-off (0.40), indicating practically significant level.

Table (2) the result of the factor analysis.

Domain	General factor
Cognitive mechanisms	.672

2. Reliability of the scale.

A measure is said to have high reliability if it produces similar results under consistent conditions. The reliability of the self-efficacy scale was tested using two different methods; Cronbach's Alpha method and the split half method.

Cronbach's Alpha Method

The reliability level of the scale was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha formula. The reliability value of the scale was (0.698). This reliability value was significant at the (0.01) level, which is a high level of reliability.

Table (3) the reliability value of the scale.

No	Domain	Reliability level
1	Cognitive mechanisms	.698

The split half method

The scale was divided into two halves and correlation was calculated using the Spearman-Brown formula. The reliability level of the scale was (0.674). This reliability value was significant at the (0.01) level, which is a high level of reliability.

Table (4) the reliability value of the scale.

No	Domain	Reliability level
1	Cognitive mechanisms	.674

Results

To test the study hypothesis, the means and standard deviation of the treatment and the non-treatment groups' results were computed. (T-Test) was used to measure the significance of differences.

Table (5): T-test results of the obtained data for post-administration of the cognitive mechanisms scale of encountering current events

	Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Df	T	Sig. Level
cognitive mechanisms of current events awareness	Treatment group	30	37.9333	1.77984	58	29.422	sig. at 0.01
	Non-treatment group	30	23.5000	2.01289			

There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment/ non-treatment groups for the treatment group in the post-administration of cognitive mechanisms scale of encountering current events. Moreover, results show that the mean of the post-administration for the treatment group equals (37.9333). Furthermore, this value is bigger than the mean of the post-administration for the non-treatment group which equals (23.5000). In addition, the t-value (29.422) is bigger than the table t-value, and this indicates that there are significant differences at level 0.01 for the treatment group.

Discussion:

Training in socio-affective strategies that is considered as mixing between affective and social aspects can activate the EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events, promoting the process of English learning by stimulating learners' initiation for getting knowledge. It makes them curious to get information, seeking it; they have had a commitment to the knowledge. This asserts the effect of the study training in achieving its objective; i.e., activating EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events.

The preceding result of the current study is consistent with those reached by Lui (2018) which investigated the relationships between a number of cognitive and individual difference measures and different types of math performance. Indeed, she evaluated the effectiveness of an estimation-based training program that targeted one of these cognitive mechanisms to determine the factors that predict progress during the intervention and the mechanisms that explain math improvements. Finally, she concluded that the study found the evidence of a representational shift that supported higher math performance in procedural and complex math; specifically, in higher math-skilled individuals, procedural math relies more on mechanisms that involve non-symbolic number representations, while complex math draws upon mechanisms that involve primarily symbolic number representations.

Additionally, there is the study of Kaushanskaya (2007) that was to examine linguistic and cognitive mechanisms in foreign vocabulary learning within theoretical frameworks of working memory. The findings revealed that the study contributed to cognitive models of language processing and working memory, and suggest that long-term knowledge associated with native-language letter-to-phoneme mappings influences foreign word learning and that the language-learning process can be modulated by linguistic experience.

Qualitative analysis:

Young adult learners can improve their independence and autonomy so they can be in charge of their learning by using socio-affective methods. Additionally, because students used strategies like seeking clarification and working together with others to obtain and verify the information, the socio-affective strategy training was extremely successful in strengthening the cognitive mechanisms of EFL young adult learners. For instance, according to the researcher's observations, when lecturing about the "global youth forum" and during a question-and-answer session, the students started utilizing the internet to search for information about how to register and who the participating nations are. In addition, a student who was being taught about the "coronavirus" expressed, *"I get interested in following the infection rates of coronavirus every day."* Indeed, lecturing about the "decent life initiative", students seek to meet the initiative coordinators to know more about the initiative, organizing

field visits to the beneficiary villages. As a result, utilizing socio-affective tactics can improve the cognitive processes of EFL young adult learners. Additionally, it influences both their minds and methods of knowledge acquisition. Each student was allowed to learn in his or her way of getting information. Thus, socio-affective learning methodologies gave students ownership over how they learned.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, the researcher asserts that using the socio-affective strategy training can enhance the EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events, which resulted in the improvement of the EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. Data were collected from 60 EFL young adult learners. The data collection tool was a valid and reliable scale for assessing young adult EFL learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events. To investigate how socio-affective strategy training improved the EFL young adult learners' cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events, the data collected were examined. The mean and standard deviation of the results for both the treatment and non-treatment groups were calculated to test the study hypothesis. To assess the significance of differences, the (T-Test) was utilized. The analysis's findings demonstrated that, in comparison to the non-treatment group, which received no treatment, the socio-

affective strategy training significantly improved the treatment group's cognitive mechanisms of encountering current events.

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