

**METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY-BASED TEACHING OF POETRY:
A CLASSROOM INTERVENTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE ESL
LEARNERS**

1.Mr. A. Thiyagu

Assistant Professor,United College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

2.Dr. L. Suresh

Assistant Professor,SRMV College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

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Abstract:

The present study investigates the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy-based instruction in teaching poetry to undergraduate ESL learners. Poetry is often perceived as one of the most challenging components of English language learning due to its figurative language, symbolism, and interpretative nature. Traditional approaches to poetry teaching frequently rely on teacher explanation and memorization, which may limit learner engagement and critical thinking. The study implemented metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation while teaching three prescribed poems: *Ulysses* by Alfred Tennyson, *Captain! My Captain!* by Walt Whitman, and *The Unknown Citizen* by W.H. Auden. A classroom intervention was conducted among undergraduate students studying Part II English. The findings indicated that learners who received metacognitive strategy instruction demonstrated greater engagement, improved comprehension, enhanced analytical abilities, and better writing performance than learners exposed to conventional instruction. The study highlights the importance of metacognitive strategy training in promoting independent learning and meaningful literary engagement in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Metacognitive Strategies, Poetry Teaching, ESL Learners, Undergraduate Students, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation.

1. Introduction

Poetry occupies a significant place in English language education because it introduces learners to rich linguistic expressions, cultural perspectives, emotional experiences, and literary aesthetics. Through poetry, learners develop vocabulary, interpretative skills, critical thinking abilities, and creative expression. However, poetry

remains one of the most difficult literary genres for undergraduate learners, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts.

Many students perceive poetry as complex due to unfamiliar vocabulary, symbolic language, and abstract themes. Consequently, poetry classes often become teacher-dominated sessions in which students depend heavily on instructor explanations. Such approaches may reduce learner participation and limit opportunities for independent interpretation.

Contemporary educational theories emphasize learner-centered approaches that encourage active engagement and strategic learning. Among these approaches, metacognitive strategy instruction has gained considerable attention. Metacognition refers to awareness and regulation of one's own thinking and learning processes. Through planning, monitoring, and evaluation, learners become more conscious of how they learn and develop greater responsibility for their academic progress.

The present study explores the role of metacognitive strategies in poetry instruction. By integrating planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities into the teaching of prescribed poems, the study seeks to determine whether metacognitive strategy instruction can improve learners' comprehension, interpretation, and writing performance.

2. Review of Literature

Research on metacognition has consistently demonstrated its importance in language learning. Flavell (1979) introduced the concept of metacognition and emphasized learners' awareness of their cognitive processes. Subsequent studies highlighted the role of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, listening development, and academic achievement.

Oxford (1990) classified metacognitive strategies as essential components of language learning because they enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning activities. Anderson (2002) further argued that metacognitive awareness helps learners become effective and independent language users.

Within literary education, several scholars have emphasized the need for active learner engagement. Reader-response theorists argue that literary meaning emerges through interaction between the reader and the text. Such perspectives align closely with metacognitive approaches because learners are encouraged to reflect on interpretations and evaluate understanding.

Recent studies indicate that strategy-based instruction enhances learners' comprehension and critical thinking. However, relatively limited research has investigated the application of metacognitive strategies specifically in poetry teaching among undergraduate ESL learners. This gap provided the motivation for the present investigation.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction in teaching poetry.
2. To enhance learners' comprehension of prescribed poems.
3. To develop learners' analytical and interpretative abilities.
4. To improve writing performance through poetry-based activities.
5. To promote learner autonomy and reflective thinking.

4. Research Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant difference in poetry comprehension and writing performance between learners receiving traditional instruction and those receiving metacognitive strategy instruction.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

Learners receiving metacognitive strategy instruction demonstrate significantly higher poetry comprehension and writing performance than learners receiving traditional instruction.

5. Methodology

The study employed an experimental design involving undergraduate learners enrolled in Part II English. Two groups were selected:

- Control Group
- Experimental Group

Both groups studied the same prescribed poems. The control group received conventional instruction characterized by teacher explanation, note-taking, and question-answer sessions. The experimental group received metacognitive strategy-based instruction integrated into regular classroom activities.

The intervention was conducted over eight instructional hours. Data were collected through comprehension tasks, reflective writing activities, classroom observations, and poetry response essays.

6. Metacognitive Intervention Framework

The instructional intervention was organized around three major metacognitive strategies:

Planning

Before reading each poem, learners were encouraged to:

- Predict themes and meanings.

- Identify prior knowledge related to the topic.
- Establish learning goals.

For example, before studying *Ulysses*, students discussed concepts such as adventure, ambition, and perseverance.

Monitoring

During reading, learners monitored their understanding by asking questions such as:

- What is the central theme?
- What literary devices are being used?
- Do I understand the poet's message?

Students maintained reading journals and recorded difficulties encountered during interpretation.

Evaluation

After reading, learners evaluated their understanding through:

- Reflective writing.
- Group discussion.
- Self-assessment checklists.
- Poetry response essays.

These activities encouraged learners to assess their comprehension and identify areas for improvement.

7. Results and Discussion

The classroom intervention revealed several positive outcomes. Learners exposed to metacognitive strategy instruction demonstrated higher levels of participation and engagement during poetry lessons. They showed greater willingness to express personal interpretations and contribute to discussions.

The planning stage activated prior knowledge and increased learner curiosity. Students entered lessons with clearer objectives and demonstrated stronger motivation to explore poetic meanings.

Monitoring activities encouraged active reading and critical analysis. Learners became more attentive to imagery, symbolism, tone, and thematic development. Rather than relying exclusively on teacher explanations, they developed independent interpretative skills. Evaluation activities promoted reflective thinking and self-awareness. Students reported increased confidence in discussing literary texts and demonstrated improved ability to connect poetic themes with personal experiences and social issues.

Writing tasks also showed noticeable improvement. Learners produced more organized responses, employed richer vocabulary, and provided deeper textual analysis.

These findings suggest that metacognitive strategies contribute not only to poetry comprehension but also to writing development.

8. Educational Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for English Language Teaching. Poetry instruction should move beyond traditional explanatory methods and encourage active learner involvement. Metacognitive strategy training can help students become independent readers and critical thinkers.

Teachers may incorporate planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities into literary instruction to enhance learner engagement. Such practices support higher-order thinking and foster meaningful interaction with texts. The study also suggests that literary education can contribute significantly to writing development when learners are encouraged to reflect upon and respond to texts strategically.

9. Conclusion

The study demonstrated that metacognitive strategy-based instruction can enhance poetry learning among undergraduate ESL learners. By integrating planning, monitoring, and evaluation into classroom practice, learners became more engaged, reflective, and independent. The intervention contributed to improved poetry comprehension, stronger analytical abilities, and better writing performance. The findings support the growing body of research advocating learner-centered and strategy-based approaches in English Language Teaching.

Future research may explore the application of metacognitive strategies in other literary genres such as drama, fiction, and autobiography, as well as their influence on broader language learning outcomes.