

**‘Becoming Aware’ : Do consciousness-raising study aides enhance adult language learning?**

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Metacognitive strategies are a way of consciously exercising the intellect and they have been found to be particularly useful in self-directed learning contexts, as in distance learning settings. Metacognitive skills involve the regulation of cognition – i.e. planning, monitoring and self-evaluation. Studies have revealed that adult English as a second language (ESL) learners, actively engage in monitoring. Furthermore, the ‘Noticing Hypothesis’ in language learning holds that learning without awareness is not possible and that learners need to ‘notice’ a feature to acquire it. This study, through a post-test, seeks to find out whether actively using metacognitive strategies by engaging in a scaffolded consciousness-raising (C-R) activity that requires learners to ‘notice’ linguistic features in their own output enhances adult language learning.

The ‘learning’ was measured through the Final Examination (FE) performance of 64 adults who followed an academic English course at a university in Sri Lanka. Whilst following the course, taken in the distance mode, the learners engaged in two types of activities - one where they were required to self-evaluate and monitor their own output in relation to a ‘model feed-back’ sheet provided and the other, where they had to obtain task knowledge by participating in continuous assessment (CA) tests. The former required learners to consciously use metacognitive strategies to obtain task knowledge while the use of such strategies is more implicit in the latter, as learners were not provided with explicit guidance.

The learners who engaged in the C-R activity obtained higher overall FE scores and perform better in writing than those who did not engage in this task. The correlation between engaging in the C-R

activity and FE scores is statistically significant. On the other hand, there was no significant correlation between FE scores and participating in the task requiring the implicit use of metacognitive strategies. The correlation between the FE score and engaging in both activities or engaging in neither was not statistically significant either.

Therefore it appears that scaffolded C-R tasks which require the explicit use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies (such as deduction and self-evaluation) positively impacts on adult ESL learning (undertaken in the distance mode) in Sri Lanka while implicit task knowledge gained through sitting for CA tests (a non-scaffolded task) does not make such an impact.