ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Strategy instruction and transfer in the EFL classroom

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Abstract: This study examines the generalizability of research in the areas of instruction; learning; and transfer of learning to the role these play in the area of the use of strategic competencies in foreign language contexts (FLC). While previous studies have tended towards a focus on learner variables, this study includes the conditions of applicability with a task that can impact learning and transfer as well. The contributions of both variables, learner and task, were investigated through note-taking strategy instruction and transfer, to ascertain the effect on reading comprehension of textual materials in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Learning was measured as a precursor to transfer. In order to investigate the role of instruction and transfer in the transfer of strategy use, a mixed design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches for design and analysis was used. Findings suggest that the relationship between instruction and transfer as represented by strategy use and task performance is a multidimensional one, and that there are implications for language learning instruction in the foreign language classroom.

Keywords: classroom strategy instruction; foreign language learning; reading comprehension; research methods; transfer of learning

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift in the field of education in which less emphasis has been put on teachers and teaching and a greater emphasis has been placed on learners and learning. Congruent with this, second language (SL) instruction has moved to a more learner centred approach to teaching and learning (Cohen, 1998), where learner variables such as the role of learning strategies and how they contribute to success in the SL classroom have been explored (Griffiths, 2007; Nyikos, 1996; Rivera-Mills and Plonsky, 2007). The research suggests that empowering language-learners with strategic competencies assists them in their learning and performance outcomes. Learning strategies within the SL learning literature are defined in various ways. A general description of learning strategies is they are controllable processes that facilitate particular performances, or more specifically, they are plans oriented toward successful

task performance. Learning strategies can be described as specific mental process or systematic plans used by learners to regulate their language learning and to increase their skill (Cohen, 1998). In addition, the literature in second language learning extends this definition to include specific actions taken by learners to enhance learning (O'Maley, 1990; Oxford and Leaver, 1996), that is, 'the steps or actions selected consciously by learners either to improve the learning of a second language or the use of it or both (Cohen, 1998: 5). Research on the characteristics of successful foreign language (FL) learners indicates that, firstly, they use strategies, and secondly, they apply them differently from less successful learners (Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999; Qingquan et al., 2008). For example, in a classroom study in which Turkish EFL learners' reading strategies and the effect of reading strategy instruction on reading comprehension were investigated (Salataci et al., 2002), the results revealed improved performance on reading tasks. In another study (Spörer et al., 2009), the effects of strategy instruction on reading comprehension tasks with elementary school students in German were explored. It was found that learners who receive learning strategy instruction achieved higher scores on reading comprehension tests when compared to those learners who did not receive strategy instruction. A further review of the literature indicates that in addition to using a particular strategy constantly, successful language learners use a variety of learning strategies, and these strategies can be viewed as tools for effective learning, and that appropriate use of learning strategies results in improved proficiency, and consequently greater self-confidence (Griffiths, 2007; Qingquan et al., 2008; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989). In addition, research suggests that the use of learning strategies correlates with learner success and confidence, where more successful learners are reported to use a larger repertoire of strategies more frequently than less successful learners (Griffiths, 2007). Furthermore, researchers have reported the impact of learning outcomes, noted through the difference in the variety and use of learning strategies between successful and unsuccessful language learners in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context in China (Qingquan et al., 2008). The results of this study indicate that more successful language learners use a variety of learning strategies, such as using context to find the meaning of difficult words, previewing lessons before attending class, reviewing lessons after class, and having a positive attitude toward the target language. This research indicates that learning strategies do contribute to the language learning process and subsequent performance of FL learners, be it communicative competence or examinations.

While the usefulness of learning strategies in improving learners' language development can be observed generally, it can also be argued that learning strategies are beneficial in the more specific development of individual language skills, for example, reading comprehension. Reading, as one of the receptive language skills, is commonly taught in a FL context as a separate subject apart from other language skills such as writing, listening and speaking. Since reading in the target language requires knowledge about the language, setting, content and text structure, language learners in FL contexts often encounter difficulty when trying to construct meaning out of what they read. To minimise the difficulty they encounter, learners can benefit from employing a number of learning strategies during the reading process (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford and Leaver, 1996). For example, to find a main idea quickly, learners can apply cognitive strategies such as skimming and scanning. To understand unfamiliar words found in the reading texts, students can apply guessing strategies and other strategies such as the use of linguistic and contextual clues. These types of strategies, when used appropriately, can facilitate learners' understanding, thus giving the learner practical means to facilitate comprehension. So, it makes pedagogic sense in a

reading classroom to teach learning strategies. The responsibility for this lies with the teacher. In an EFL context teachers need to integrate learning strategy instruction into classroom learning. In order for instruction to be effective, teachers must engage with the teaching of learning strategies. The challenge for teachers in integrating learning strategies into practice is to reconceptualise how they view teaching and learning; traditionally, teaching and learning has been a teacher-focussed activity involved in transmission, whereas learning strategy instruction is aimed at equipping the learner to take responsibility and control of their own learning, a learner centred view. In addition, integrating learning strategy instruction into classroom teaching and learner practice requires a conceptualisation of teaching centred on empowering the learner, the role of the teacher is no longer only of a disseminator and enlightened one. Instead, they become facilitators of learning. Another challenge that language teachers can face, particularly in a FL teaching context, is the limited time available for language instruction, and any new approach takes time and effort to implement and master (Chamot, 2004). Learning strategies can be taught either explicitly or implicitly (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). In explicit instruction, teachers inform learners about the benefits and the purpose of using learning strategies as part of language learning activities. By contrast, in implicit strategy instruction, learning strategies are presented to learners indirectly through an embedded approach, using activities and materials to draw out the strategies being taught, without explicitly informing the students about the benefits and the reasons why they need to learn the strategies. However, research indicates that explicitly teaching strategy use is more effective. Firstly, in instruction, that is teaching the strategy (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Qingquan et al., 2008); and secondly, in promoting the subsequent application of the strategy to other tasks, that is, transfer (Ross, 1984). Drawing from studies in education and SL acquisition research reveals that strategy transfer is affected by three variables: first, quality of instruction; second, the task; and third, the learner. First, quality of instruction involves the amount of practice, especially practice that varies in content and difficulty (Salomon and Perkins, 1989); the amount of guided feedback (Chamot, 2004); the degree of initial learning sufficient to assume learning has occurred (Salomon and Perkins, 1989); and whether or not the learner is actually able to successfully use a strategy after the initial learning. Quality of instruction also entails training aimed at developing the learners' awareness of strategy use in conjunction with cognitive learning strategy use. Cognitive learning strategy involves training in the use of judicious instructional strategies (Gagne et al., 1993; Ross, 1984), that is, which strategy to use to achieve the desired outcome. Second, transfer of a strategy is enhanced by task similarity. The probability of transfer from one task to another is increased when the new task is similar to the previous task (Ross, 1984), but this this is not always easy for learners to identify. Therefore, learners need to understand the purpose of a task clearly and the structure of the task, in order to know the conditions under which a strategy applies (Cohen, 1998; Oxford and Leaver, 1996). Third, learner variables, such as the degree of control the learners have over a strategy and what they believe about strategy effectiveness, affects strategy transfer (Salomon and Perkins, 1989). This again involves the extent of initial learning of the strategy; whether or not learners consciously evaluate strategy effectiveness; and whether or not learners attribute their success to effort or to use of the strategy (Gagne et al., 1993). It also includes whether or not learners can screen out distracting thoughts when trying to analyse a new problem (Kuhl, 1985), and the degree of relevant declarative knowledge possessed by the learners (Bjork and Jacobs, 1985). Ultimately, in order for learners to transfer strategies, they must first learn a strategy successfully, and then, recognise a new task as an appropriate context for the implementation of the strategy. Based on a review of the

literature, this study asks two general questions: 1) are the general findings on strategy learning and transfer applicable to the FL classroom? and 2) to what extent is transfer an interaction of task and learner variables? In order to explore these two questions, a note-taking strategy instruction program based on reading materials will be implemented. The following hypotheses are proposed:

1) Learners who receive note-taking strategy instruction will perform more successfully on the post-test and transfer tests than those who do not.

2) Among learners who receive strategy instruction, those who use the note-taking strategy will perform more successfully on the post-test and transfer tests than those who do not.

3) Similar content on the post-test and transfer tests will lead to greater transfer of the note-taking strategy by strategy users.

4) There is a relationship between note-taking strategy mastery as indicated by the number of main ideas correctly identified on the post-test, and post-test performance.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were enrolled in a core English course at a Japanese Institute of Technology. From a population of 2000 first-year students 338 students participated in this study. All participants were Japanese, average age of 19 years old, and had six years of English as a part of their secondary school education (years 7-12). The English level of the learners was basic, and students' struggled to communicate in English. The students had yet to declare their majors but their interests ranged from mechanical and material science engineering, information and computer sciences, architecture, civil engineering, to environmental sciences. The 338 participants were randomly assigned to ten classes and then the ten classes randomly assigned into two groups. Of the ten classes, six classes (totalling 203 learners) were assigned to the control group and four classes (totalling 135 learners) to the treatment group. Of the 338 learners, 260 were male and 78 were female. 23% of both the control and treatment groups were female.

2.2. Materials

2.2.1 Instructional materials

The inclusion of an instructional intervention such as the note-taking strategy-training programme required a tailored and appropriate set of instructional materials. The researcher developed both teacher materials and student worksheets for the teaching of the note-taking strategy. The materials focussed on two areas: 1) "what is note-taking?" and "why take notes?" and 2) a technique for taking notes in which the learners were to be instructed. Materials addressing skills such as identifying main ideas and supporting details as well as transitions were taught as part of the existing curriculum.

2.2.2 Reading passages

In order to select level and length appropriate reading passages to be used for the pre-test, post-tests, and transfer tests, three independent raters were used. Inter-rater consensus was required on

the criteria for the reading passages.

The reading passages contained an equal number of main ideas and word length of the passages comparable. For this study, all the reading passages contained four main ideas. The pre-test passage, 338 words in length; the post-test was 330 words in length. Transfer test A, 334 words; and transfer test B, 310 words.

2.2.3 Comprehension questions

Ten questions, designed to gauge the learners' ability to understand and contextualize the textual material, particularly content, of the reading passages, were developed. Understanding the content of the text was essential for the participants to be able to continue. The next step required participants to be able to recognise levels of information, such as main ideas, supporting ideas, examples and explanations and therefore, comprehension vital. The 10 questions were rated for level of difficulty by two independent raters. The participant response model for the 10 questions used a three choice option: True/False/Doesn't Say. The comprehension questions were designed to be quick and easy to integrate into class sessions.

2.3. Procedure

It was necessary that all activity related to the study be integrated into the existing classroom time allocation and curriculum. That is, serve a complementary role at the least. Therefore, the strategy instruction was embedded into 45 minutes of the regular 75-minute English class period. All participants in the study were taught a sequence of lessons in which they learned about basic reading skills including recognising main ideas, finding supporting ideas and recognising transition words. The instructional period for these three topics took place over the same period of time for all participants and was conducted with the same materials. In addition, the strategy-training (treatment) group received instruction in a specific note-taking strategy. The note-taking strategy instruction addressed how and why note-taking helps us to remember, that the process of note-making matters, and judicious strategy use, knowing when to take notes. In contrast, the participants in the control group did not receive the treatment instruction on note-taking and its benefits, but did continue with the regular curriculum that presented main ideas, supporting ideas, and transitions.

2.3.1 Design

The study was of a mixed design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches for design and analysis. The design and analysis have been previously piloted and the design replicated in this study. All instruction and testing were in English. The study took place over a nine-week period out of a ten-week term. The pre-test was administered to the participants in the first two weeks, and seven weeks later, post-test given to the participants. Ten to twelve days after the post-test, the Transfer-test was completed by the same participants. In the three class periods between the post-test and transfer-test, the participants engaged in their regular class curriculum such as listening and speaking tasks, and there was no reference to the strategy-training program.

In order to operationalize the investigation into instruction, transfer and performance, a one between factor (instruction) and a within subject factor based on the order in which participants received Transfer Test A, and Transfer Test B were used. A repeated measure was essential with three trial factors: post-test, Transfer Test A, and Transfer Test B. All classes took the pre-test, the

post-test, and the transfer tests and completed the same class work. The intervention being only with the treatment group which, in addition, received the note-taking strategy-training program.

2.3.2 Variables

In light of the four proposed hypotheses for this study:

1) Learners who receive note-taking strategy instruction will perform more successfully on the post-test and transfer tests than those who do not;

2) Among learners who receive strategy instruction, those who use the note-taking strategy will perform more successfully on the post-test and transfer tests than those who do not;

3) Similar content on the post-test and transfer tests will lead to greater transfer of the note-taking strategy by strategy users;

4) There is a relationship between note-taking strategy mastery as indicated by the number of main ideas correctly identified on the post-test, and post-test performance;

the following variables are identified: 1) pre-test performance; 2) strategy instruction; 3) strategy use; and 4) task similarity. 1) Before the strategy instruction program began, a pre-test was conducted, in which the participants completed a reading comprehension test based on a reading passage they had completed for homework from the previous class. The purpose of the pre-testing was to have a reliable point from which to measure any effect. 2) the groups into which participants were placed determined if they were in a treatment or control group. The treatment group received strategy-instruction in the form of explicit training and practice with the note-taking strategy. The control group did not receive any practice or training or feedback on the specific note-taking strategy used for the treatment group. 3) strategy use was determined by categorising the learners' study notes as either note-taking strategy use as per instruction or non-use. 4) task similarity was determined by the transfer tests. Two different two transfer tests were used. One transfer test was similar in content to the post-test, and the other transfer test was unrelated in content. The transfer tasks were: Task A (similar content to the post-test), and Task B (dissimilar content to the post-test). Successful use of the note-taking strategy was measured by the percentage of main ideas identified, as was evident in the learners' notes for the post-test, Transfer Test A and Transfer Test B.

2.3.3 Counterbalancing

In order to minimize any effect due to the order that Transfer Test A and Transfer Test B were taken by the participants, that is, first or second, the order in which participants took the tests varied.

2.3.4 Scoring

To be able to determine if using the note-taking strategy made a difference, performance scores between the treatment and control groups on the pre-test, post-test, Transfer Test A, and Transfer Test B, were measured. This was determined by how many of the comprehension questions for that particular reading passage participants could correctly answer. In order to determine note-taking strategy use, all the materials used by participants in preparing each of the reading passages were collected at each testing phase, and evidence of use rated. A dichotomous scale of 'used' or 'not used' was applied to note-taking strategy presence on the pre-test, post-test, transfer Test

A, and Transfer Test. 'Use' was demonstrated by signs that the participants had made an effort to apply the note-taking strategy as taught during the treatment phase. Once note-taking strategy use was supported in the notes of a participant, the notes were then rated for the number of main ideas correctly identified. During the process of scrutinizing notes and study materials, two independent raters were used.

2.4. Data analysis

In order to gain quantitative insight into the data, a fully factorial (M)ANOVA was used. This is a least squares programme designed to minimise problems related to unequal group sizes. As participants in this study were measured under each of the three test conditions (post-test, Transfer Test A and Transfer Test B), repeated measures analyses were necessary. In addition, to establish a starting point to measure change from for each group, differences between the control and treatment groups' pre-test scores were examined through a one-way ANOVA. Finally, a one-way ANOVA using a teacher variable with the post-test scores was conducted for both the treatment and control groups was applied to check for teacher effects in the delivery of instruction.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Overview of results

The findings of this study were consistent with the general research into learning strategy instruction and transfer in school contexts. The findings reveal a significant relationship between learning strategy use and success in FL classroom learning. This was demonstrated by significantly greater overall use of learning strategies among more successful learners. Furthermore, the findings revealed patterns of use, and highlighted the relationship between strategy transfer and successful performance in foreign language learning.

3.2. Pre-test scores

All participants were pre-tested at the commencement of the study and this coincided with the beginning of the University semester. The purpose of pre-testing was to establish a starting point, or baseline, from which changes during post-testing could be seen. In addition, the need for parity between the treatment and control groups at the beginning of the study was essential. Results from the pre-test indicated that there was no significant difference ($F [1, 335] < 0.01$, $p = .95$) in learners' performance between the control and treatment groups, ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.37$, and $M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.07$, respectively).

3.3. Teacher effect

Within the design of the study, there was an awareness of the possibility of a teacher influence during the instructional phase for the treatment group due to individual differences in style, pedagogy and relationship. Data indicated that there was no significant difference between the control groups for Teacher A and Teacher B on the post-test. Furthermore, a significant improvement (increase of 1.75 and 1.11, respectively) was noted at the post-test between the performance of the treatment groups when compared to the control groups for both Teacher A and Teacher B, $F (1, 316) = 6.72$, $p = 0.01$. In summary, the treatment groups for both teachers outperformed the control group supporting the effectiveness of the strategy note-taking instruction.

3.4. Strategy instruction and test performance

Hypothesis 1 posed that learners who received note-taking strategy instruction would perform more successfully on the post-test and the transfer tests than those who didn't receive the note-taking instruction. This interaction was found to be significant, $F(1, 303) = 142.45$, $p = .01$, and indicated that the strategy instruction program had been successful. This then gave a sound base from which transfer could be measured. Results indicated that participants in the treatment group successfully engaged in applying, or transferring, the note-taking strategy to novel tasks. Notably, when compared to the control group ($M = 7.03$, $SD = 1.35$, $M = 6.70$, $SD = 1.83$, and $M = 6.59$, $SD = 1.58$, respectively), the treatment group achieved significantly higher performance scores on the post-test ($M = 8.38$, $SD = 1.07$), Transfer Test A ($M = 8.34$, $SD = 1.31$), and Transfer Test B ($M = 7.78$, $SD = 1.69$).

The success of the strategy instruction program in this study draws attention to two important points related to instruction and transfer. The first is a learner variable and that is, learners need to be aware that there are strategies available and that using them can improve comprehension and test performance. The second is a pedagogic variable and that is, it is essential to allow enough time for the inclusion of the instructional program with in the class periods. The significant effect of the training program confirmed that strategy instruction must be conducted over a substantial enough period of time to allow for learning (Salomon and Perkin, 1989). While a simple thing, time for learning within the context of this study was critical. Without evidence of learning of the strategy in the instructional period, the transfer phase of the study would not have been possible. To this end, the strategy training explicitly addressed the learners' awareness of strategy use, stressing the positive contribution applying strategies could make to their comprehension and wider study (Chamot, 2004; Gagne et al., 1993). In addition, the strategy instruction program encouraged the participants to reflect on their strategy use and the contribution it made to their learning outcomes, for example, in test performance (Gagne et al., 1993). Embedding the instructional materials into the existing curriculum and teaching them as an extension to core material gave relevance and purpose to the note-taking strategy instruction used for the treatment. During the training program learners were encouraged to see the note-taking strategy as a tool for assisting and enabling reading comprehension (Salataci and Aykel, 2002; Spörer N et al., 2009). Strategies were something they had control over and were able to use to work independently. To summarize, based on the findings of this study, a significant relationship was found between the condition participants were in (treatment or control), using the strategy, and test performance scores. It can be summarised as follows: 1) participants within the treatment group out performed participants in the control group; and 2) participants within the treatment group who applied the strategy performed the best.

3.5. Strategy use and test performance

In order to measure transfer of the strategy to novel tasks as hypothesized in hypotheses 2, 3 and 4, only the treatment group was used. Hypothesis 2 stated that among learners who received strategy instruction those who used the note-taking strategy would perform more successfully on the post-test and transfer tests than those who did not. Not only was there initial support for this from hypothesis 1 data, but also in the data for hypothesis 2, $F(11, 122) = 5.47$, $p = 0.02$. Participants who used the note-taking strategy as presented in the treatment phase, out performed participants who did not. The distinction between hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 1 is important. The study would claim that not only

is exposure to strategy instruction important, but participants who apply the strategy will perform more successfully. Being able to demonstrate learning in this study in order to claim transfer was foundational to hypotheses 2, 3 and 4. The program started by requiring participants to complete the pre-test. This testing was used to confirm that none of the participants demonstrated use of a note-taking strategy when studying the reading. From this point, the implementation of the note-taking strategy program as the instructional phase, and results from post testing as the use phase, indicating that the treatment group achieved significantly higher performance scores on the post-test ($M = 8.38$, $SD = 1.07$), and Transfer Test A ($M = 8.34$, $SD = 1.31$) and Transfer Test B ($M = 7.78$, $SD = 1.69$) as the applying phase. In order to encourage use the note-taking strategy, the literature had highlighted the importance of participants recognizing a benefit and value to the effort involved in applying it. In order to build this kind of attribution in the participants, the training program encouraged strategy evaluation (Oxford and Leaver, 1996; Gagne et al., 1996). For example, participants were encouraged to compare their pre-test performance with their own progress during the training program, and in doing so, it became apparent to the participants that use of the note-taking strategy was resulting in higher test scores (Salataci and Aykel, 2002; Spörer N et al., 2009). This was aimed at developing the learners' awareness and understanding of the strategy and thereby encouraging the learners to attribute success to use of the strategy (Chamot, 2004; Gagne et al., 1993).

3.6. Strategy use and task similarity

Task similarity has long been a stumbling block to novice learners. Recognizing occasions for use requires that the participant see past the surface features of a task, features such as content, structure, context or language. Hypothesis 3 purports that task similarity on the post-test and transfer tests would lead to greater transfer of the note-taking strategy by strategy users. The findings of this study did not support this. It was found that participants were able to recognise occasion for use and applied the strategy on both Transfer tasks, regardless of content similarity (Qingquan et al., 2008; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Kuhl, 1985). Flexible use of the note-taking strategy is a solid indicator of successful initial learning (Salomon and Perkins, 1989). 71 of the participants ($n = 87$) who used the note-taking strategy on the post-test applied the note-taking strategy to Transfer Test A (similar), while 77 participants who used the note-taking strategy on the post-test also used it on Transfer Test B (dissimilar).

3.7. Mastery of strategy and score

The final hypothesis proposed that mastery of the strategy would result in higher test performance scores. This relationship was supported by the results of the study. Hypothesis 4 stated that there was a relationship between note-taking strategy mastery as indicated by the number of main ideas correctly identified on the post-test, and post-test performance. It was noted in this study that with the increase in participants' scores on the post-test scores came evidence of an increase in the number of main ideas identified for the reading passage. This relationship was surmised as one of the criteria for mastery. Within the treatment group, the number of main ideas correctly identified on the post-test reading by participants had a significant effect on post-test scores, $F (4, 122) = 6.58$, $p = 0.01$. The relationship is as follows: the more main ideas correctly identified by the learner, the higher the learner's score. Research in the note-taking literature suggests that prose-learning strategies, including note-taking, are beneficial in at least two ways relevant to this study: 1) enhancing the learner's understanding; and 2) facilitating recall by giving it organisation and

structure (Qingquan et al., 2008; Salataci and Aykel, 2002; Spörer N et al., 2009; Brown, 1984).

3.8. Limitations for the study

It was important to this study that it was conducted under regular classroom conditions with a program of instruction that complemented and was integrated into the existing curriculum. For instructional programs to be useable by classroom teachers, they must be integrated and seen as worth the effort. This had to be demonstrated under naturalistic conditions. There were specific limitations due to the integrated approach of the training program, for example, timeframes and an existing curriculum. For example, the time between the post-test and transfer tests was four class sessions. While this was adequate, a longer time between the post-test and transfer-test would be something to consider. There were also general points for consideration. For example, the population in this study was homogenous in age and schooling and all participants had a low English level. Limitations related to the choice of strategy for instruction; how performance was measured; and how strategy use was demonstrated should be considered in understanding the results of this study.

3.9. Implications for instruction

It is evident from the success of the strategy-training program used in this study that strategies can make a difference, and cognitive strategies are relevant to all fields of study, including second and foreign language learning. The most salient findings relevant to classroom practice are: 1) that an integrated and explicit approach to strategy training is effective; 2) that strategy training can be included into existing curriculums; 3) learner awareness and attribution of success are important. Pedagogic implications also emerged. The study confirmed that instruction, and practice that encourages exposure to a range of reading tasks and requires a variety of response activities from learners is important in teaching for learning and mastery. And that instructional materials must be appropriate to the reading level of the students if there is to be meaningful testing (Salataci and Aykel, 2002; Spörer N et al., 2009) and learning strategy transfer (Brown, 1984).

4. Conclusion

In this study, the contributions of learner and task variables in strategy learning and transfer were investigated. This was achieved through examining the effect of explicit instruction in the use of a note-taking strategy as a means of improving comprehension of textual materials in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Within the school context and within the language leaning classroom success in education is measured by demonstrated achievement. This study has looked at the contribution learning strategies can make to language performance. Strategic competencies remain an integral part of the learning process and the benefits of strategy use can be seen in learners' achievement. The findings suggest that performance in the language classroom is influenced by the relationship between instruction and transfer as represented by strategy use and task performance is a multidimensional one of which, language is but one aspect.

Author contributions

RLN is the sole researcher of this study and the writer of this paper.

Conflict of interest

The author reported no conflict of interest.

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