

An Investigation of the Relationship between Japanese University
Students' English Syntactic Awareness and Their Use of Cognitive and
Metacognitive Reading Strategies

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Abstract

The main aim of this study was to explore the relationship between Japanese university students' English syntactic awareness and their use of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. A total of 48 Japanese second-year university students from a computer engineering department in a Japanese university participated in the study, which employed a quasi-experimental approach (one-group pre-test/post-test design) and quantitative analyses. A pre-test was composed of a syntactic awareness section and a reading comprehension section. It was followed by six 60-minute lessons (one lesson per week) focusing on cognitive and metacognitive reading strategy training and then by a post-test composed of a reading comprehension section. Immediately after the post-test, an anonymous questionnaire was administered to check whether the participants actually attempted to use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies. The results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed with paired two-sample *t*-tests and correlation calculations (calculations of Pearson product-moment coefficients). The analyses with the *t*-tests were verified through calculations of Cohen's *d* and Pearson product-moment coefficient (*r*) and the analyses with the correlation calculations were verified through significance tests. The findings of the study indicate that cognitive and metacognitive reading strategy training enabled the Japanese university students to use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies (e.g., recalling background information relating to the subject matter) and leads them to rely on their syntactic awareness less frequently than before when identifying the relations among words in a sentence. They also indicate that, through reading strategy training, the students were able to use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies, irrespective of their level of English syntactic awareness. The training helped even participants with low level of English syntactic awareness use reading strategies and improve their reading comprehension in English. This result was inconsistent with the notion of the linguistic threshold hypothesis (LTH), which claims that second/foreign language readers are not able to use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies unless they satisfy a certain level of syntactic awareness in the target language. It is suggested that teachers' ways of administering reading strategy training, rather than students' level of syntactic awareness, determine whether or not students become able to use reading strategies to increase their reading comprehension.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, results, analyses, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of candidate: _____ Date: _____

Endorsement

Signature of Principal Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Associate supervisor: _____ Date: _____

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