Reading Comprehension Strategies and Monitoring in International Relations Students

Reading Comprehension Strategies and Comprehension Monitoring in Bilingual International Relations College Students

Abstract

Reading strategy use and reading comprehension monitoring are essential cognitive processes that skilled readers use to make sense of texts. Comprehension is also enhanced through the employment of word-recognition, phonology, syntactic processes, and prior knowledge. These procedures are used when reading in a second language, and transfer most of the time to the second language directly from the native language. This study determined the extent to which bilingual International Relations college students transfer strategies when reading in Spanish and in English, and if this process helps enhance reading comprehension. The study included ten bilingual students studying International Relations at the private university UDLAP in Puebla, Mexico. Their native language is Spanish and their second language is English. This population was chosen as International Relations college students attend content courses in Spanish as well as in English and are encouraged to read in this second language. This research project contains observations of students while reading, applications of comprehension questionnaires, evaluations of strategies through the application of the “Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory” (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002), and interviews with the participants. All these instruments were used to explore strategy use and transfer, from Spanish to English, text comprehension and awareness of the comprehension monitoring process that students follow when reading. From the results obtained, the most important were a considerable transfer of literacy strategies from Spanish to English as well as from English to Spanish, and little awareness of using reading strategies and of the comprehension monitoring process.

Key terms: bilingualism, reading comprehension, reading strategies, reading comprehension monitoring, L1 (native language), L2 (second language).