Abstract

In the current investigation, the relationship between ESL advanced students' beliefs, metacognition and their strategic reading performance was examined. Three questionnaires were used to find out the nature of this relationship. In addition, think-aloud protocol analysis, retrospective questions and interviews were also used to examine the reading processes of the subjects. The beliefs variables; i.e., beliefs about language learning and beliefs about reading were positively correlated. However, no positive correlation was found between students’ beliefs and their metacognitive knowledge suggesting that metacognition does not affect beliefs. But quite interestingly, it was found that beliefs form part of the metacognitive knowledge of the learners and have a role to play in choosing one or another strategy while reading.

The whole subjects were then regrouped into high metacognitive knowledge (HM) and low metacognitive knowledge group (LM) to compare and contrast their strategic reading behavior and find out whether the beliefs variables and metacognitive knowledge accounted for the variability in subjects’ strategic reading performance. It was discovered that when subjects were provided with passages to simply read and comprehend, both HM and LM subjects performed equally well and displayed similar patterns of reading processing. However, when they were asked to perform a specific task while reading, the HM subjects outperformed the LM ones because they were more organized and used more comprehension monitoring during reading and commented more often on their attempts to make sense of the text. Conversely, the LM subjects tended to summarize the text more and did not use comprehension monitoring as much as the HM subjects. This suggested that the metacognitive knowledge of subjects helped them enormously to self-monitor their comprehension, and to take action for correcting their comprehension failures through alternative reading strategies.

The findings of the study suggest an interaction between the beliefs variables, metacognitive knowledge and strategic reading behavior of learners. This may mean that in reading instruction, a consideration of these variables can lead to better reading performances which are fully discussed in the implications for EFL/ESL classes.