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Efficient Use of Strategies in Reading in Understanding in Learning Result

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The interest of the study on meaningful reading has to do with the fact that the level of understanding in reading is directly related with the learning result. The psychological cognitive studies and constructivism on meaningful reading treat reading as an intentional cognitive activity of the student in the interaction with the written text and the writer. Reading is considered as a mental complex activity of acquisition, reproduction and use of knowledge where the student plays an active role in the process of elaboration of information facilitating the activity of work memory. Here the researchers refer to the complex mental processes, such as cognitive strategies and metacognition, which help the student's thinking in the realization of the process of meaningful reading. This article treats the student's complex mental processes (cognitive strategies and metacognition) which take an active part in the process of elaboration and meaning building in reading as well as thematic of their influence in the instructional result. Some of the study findings related with this study conclusion are as follows:

1. Referring to the point of view of the relation of good strategies with the learning result, the question which has to do with finding of such strategies which are directly related with educational result and which strengthen understanding arises
2. Some researchers refer to the direct relation of good strategies with the academic result, others put forward the claim that the use of good strategies is not enough in order to explain the learning result. In addition to the student's strategic skill, they also refer to the intentional and motivating behaviour in learning.

The method of study is the theoretical analysis of literature through which was compiled the questionnaire structured in the respective category of reading strategies. Furthermore the data collected through the questionnaire were elaborated by means of the statistical software SPSS, version 21. Were analyzed the influences between dependant variable "learning result in reading" and independent variable -cognitive and metacognitive strategies in reading".

Introduction

In the contemporary concept, reading in an active way does not mean reading correctly in order to extract the meaning, but it means reading in a meaningful way. Meaningful reading demands mental efforts, which have to do with the connection of the ideas and definition of concepts. It relies on reasoning, it invites you to reflect after finishing it and it does not end with the ending of the last word. It is connected with mental processes which entice you to reword and rebuild your own opinion, a conclusion. It has high demands for the acquirement of information, it makes you read the text more than once. *Meaningful reading* is different from reading *for acquisition*. The later is performed by reading word to word that which is written. Different from linear reading, the intention is the acquisition, assimilation of information aiming at the acquirement of concepts and knowledge in certain fields of cognition. This kind of reading is closer to learning by heart.

Pisa 2009 studies on the student's weak results on a text's meaningful reading, indicated that the main problem does not stand in –the understanding word for word, *but in understanding a given text in high mental levels*.

Reading and the connection with the process of understanding

Meaningful reading must be distinguished from reading, reading to understand (or understanding of a given text - reading comprehension) and reading to learn. The concept of reading is treated in different times according to the theoretical prism of study by evolving and being complemented in the direction of meaning and the function it carries. (Israel& Duffy, 2014). Reading in the contemporary concept is more than the identification of the printed words; the definition of reading should involve the notion of understanding, thus the acquisition or building of meaning by the reader from the printed words. Reading is often considered as a result of the interaction between the reader, the text and the context. The action of understanding is a process of building which interweaves the meaning extracted from the text with the knowledge and the experience of the reader. With the evolvement of the concept of reading has also evolved the concept of being educated. Being educated does not mean only skill for reading and writing, but a skill for reading, for understanding and learning through a written text. (McKenna & Robinson, 1990)

Reading strategies and the connection with the process of understanding and learning

The researchers of the cognitive Psychology and Constructivists emphasize the student's active role in the elaboration of information through the use and monitoring of reading strategies. The studies have indicated that their efficient use improves the student's level of understanding and it increases the level of motivation in reading. According to the researchers, the level of understanding of a given text depends on the depth of the elaboration of information, which is influenced by a) cognition schemes b) type of cognitive strategies c) metacognitive skill for monitoring and evaluating the behaviour d) student's motivation e) psycho-emotional and social factors.

The aim of this study is to analyze the influence of strategies in student's reading in the learning result in the subject matter of Albanian language in the middle lower Albanian education system, classes 6-9. In the new instructional programme for the subject matter of Albanian language, the reading line occupies 40% of the instructional subject. The new instructional programme 2015 emphasizes the learning results, knowledge and skills which the student should master for the development of competence of reading literary and non-literary texts, for every level of learning. Among them is also stressed the mastering of strategic skills of reading. Namely, in the instructional programme is emphasized: the student uses some strategies (before, during and after reading) in order to understand the text such as for example: *activates prior knowledge through a discussion in group; reads the text point by point and predicts what will happen later giving reasoning and arguments for his prediction; analyses the elements which associate the texts (pictures, illustrations, lists, tables, maps etc.) in order to understand the text better; reads the text again and again until her understands it; explains the functioning of charts, tables, pictures, illustrations, which are associated with the texts, distinguishes and uses knowledge on the way of text organization (chronological order, cause and consequence etc.).*

Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris (2008) make the distinction between the reading skills and reading strategies. Reading abilities are automatic procedures, whereas strategies are controlled intentional actions, both aim at reading and understanding of the text quickly, skilfully and with efficacy. Occasionally they act without control as automated mental processes. The expert readers when they read, they initially build a mental representation of the text (gist), which constitutes the basis of by the reader. The reader acts as a solver of the problems, discovers the meaning of the text and builds the new meaning as an active interactive process of the reader with the text. In this process of the elaboration of information, the reader identifies the unknown schemes and on the basis of known schemes he builds the new knowledge. In this phase the researchers refer to the deep meaning of the text, or situative meaning. In order to facilitate the elaboration of information in work memory, the

reader uses special reading strategies and techniques, which will assist him in the process of understanding. Learning strategies represent ideas for the achievement of learning objectives. Learning techniques are specific techniques which constitute the plan (Derry, 1989).

Cognitive strategies refer to the involvement of new knowledge in existing knowledge. According to Baker and Beall (2008) *reading awareness* on the intention of reading as well as the awareness of individual reading potentials, i.e. *reader's metacognitive awareness*, are the two conditions which distinguish the expert readers from the weak readers. The selection of learning strategies and techniques represent the student's metacognitive knowledge. Through the use of reading strategies, learning results in a more facilitated, more accelerated, more resultative and more adaptive process towards the new situations. The metacognitive strategies are defined as concrete, intentional situations which control and regulate the reader's efforts to extract the meaning of the text (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008)

The weak/non expert reader seems to not understand that they have not understood the text which they are reading. In order to realize the meaningful reading a balance should be drawn between the automatic application of reading skills and the use, selection and evaluation of suitable reading strategies and techniques. The strategies are applied in the phase before, during and after the reading process.

Structuring the questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a classic technique of data collection. The assessment of reading strategies according to the contemporary literature is made by means of questionnaires. The positive side of the questionnaire is that it provides opportunity for an easier modification of the data and reaching the conclusions, it provides a great opportunity of generalization and high credibility. The structuring and coding of the questionnaire was based on the conceptual analysis of the classification of reading strategies by the cognitivist theoreticians: O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Weinstein and Mayer (1986).

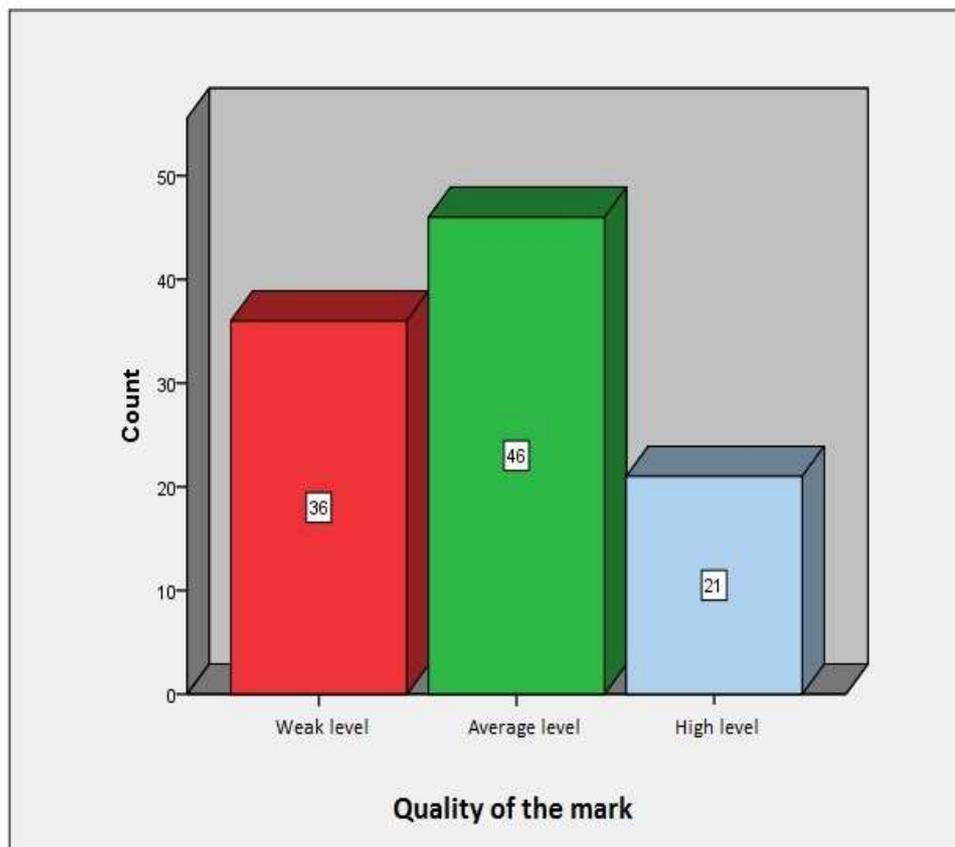
Adhering to the above types of classification, is made the codification of measuring indicators, namely in a) depth strategies, b) learning technique and c) metacognitive strategy. Depth strategies are further divided into cognitive and metacognitive strategies. For study reasons, the questionnaire is divided into three sections: strategies before, during and after reading. This structuring corresponds to the learning phases in meaningful reading of a given text.

As a dependent variable was determined the learning result in the subject matter of Albanian language expressed in assessment with mark. The learning result in language (the mark) was determined as a dependent variable, because the meaningful reading is realized through the integration of reading skills and linguistic skills of a given text. Linguistic knowledge and literary knowledge are performed integrated in the subject matter of the Albanian language for the middle lower education system. The learning result is an indicator of the level of understanding of a given text.

Statistical elaboration of data

The database gathered by means of the questionnaire provided the achievement of statistical conclusions on the relationship between the variables taken under study. The participant students in the selected sample, from the mark quality, have a distribution in which the average level (46%) dominates and weak level (36%), whereas the qualitative level takes the lowest specific weight (21%), in which the classification of the quality through the average mark is made according to the principle: Weak level={5-6}; Average level={7-8} and High level={9-10}.

Chart 1. Distribution of the students according to the quality level



From the elaboration of data, the model we have used, has made the assessment of the coefficients of linear regression enabling the verification of the H_1 hypothesis. In the Table 4.5 we observe that the coefficients β_i are different from zero, which proves the consistency of the H_1 hypothesis.

Table 1. Model results for H_1

Coefficients									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	8.756	1.205		7.269	6.366	11.146		
	Learning technique	-.327	.260	-.133	-1.260	-.843	.188	.881	1.135
	Depth strategies	.048	.368	.017	.130	-.682	.777	.603	1.658
	Metacognitive strategies	-.164	.348	-.062	-.470	-.854	.527	.568	1.760

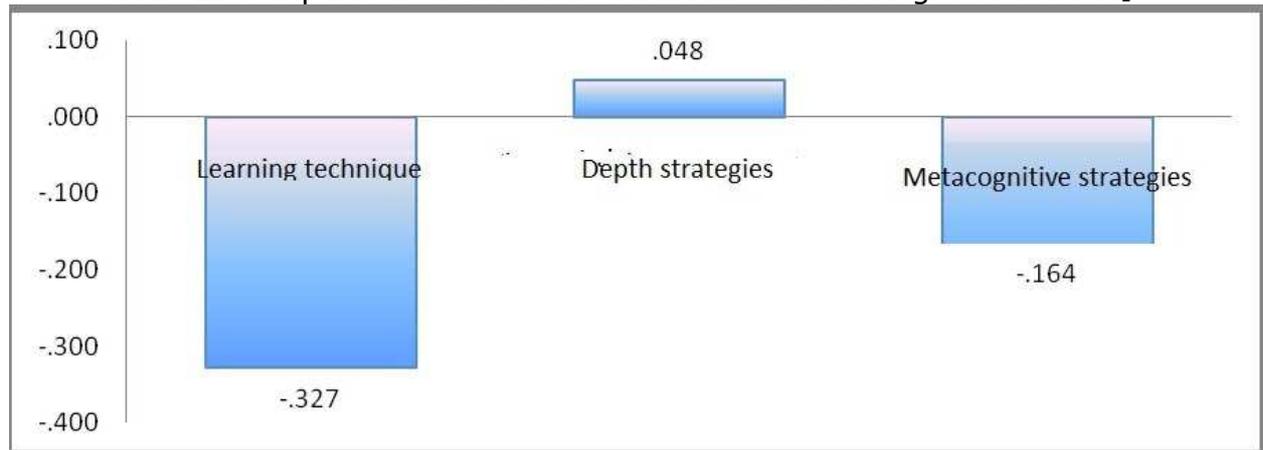
a. Dependent Variable: Learning result

(Source: Output i SPSS v.21)

The mathematic equation which expresses the connection between the variables of this regression, has the shape:

$$Y_1 = 8.756 - 0.327(X_1) + 0.048(X_2) - 0.164(X_3) + \varepsilon$$

As it was stressed above, this mathematic model has not the satisfactory significance to be a generalized model, but it clearly expresses the tendency of the influence of each of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Figure 4.2). This way, we observe that $\beta_1 = -0.327$ which means that the independent variable *learning Technique* (X_1) exercises a negative influence on the dependent variable, the same way as the other independent variable *metacognitive Strategy* (X_3) for which the value of the regression coefficient is $\beta_3 = -0.164$. Whereas, the independent variable *depth Strategy* (X_2) increases the level of *learning Result* by exercising a positive influence on it ($\beta_2 = 0.048$).

Chart 2. Comparison of the level of influence in the Regression for H_1 

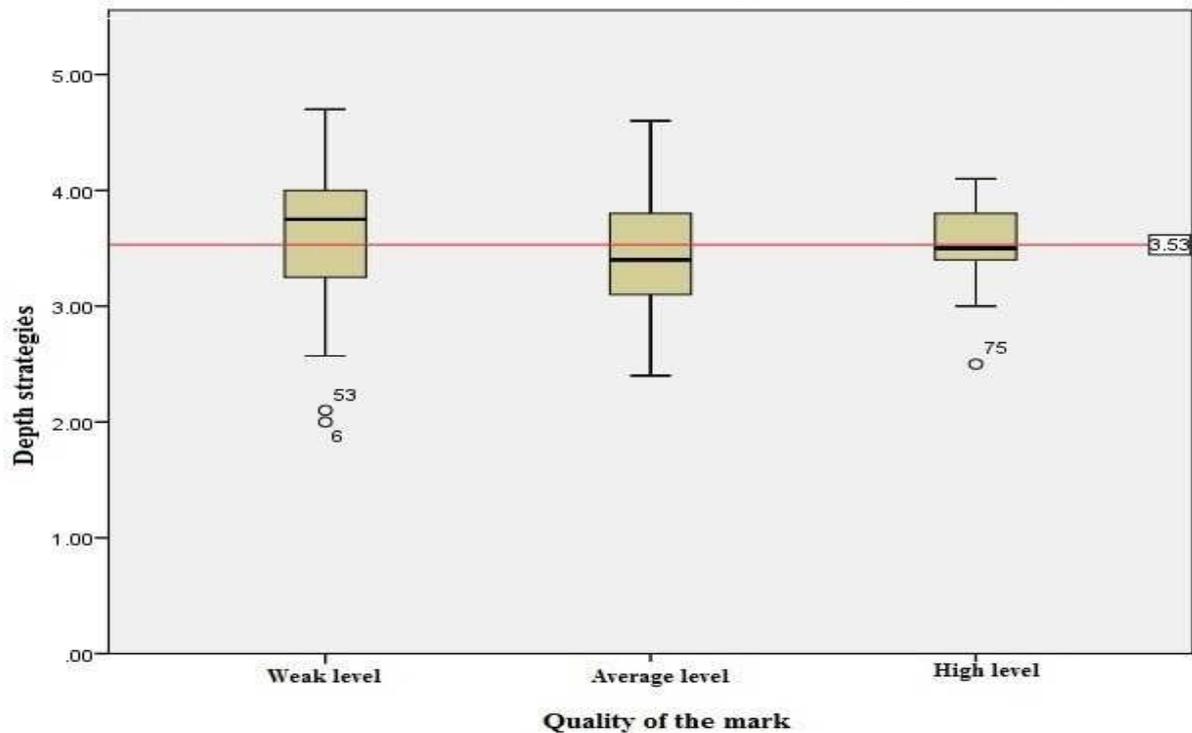
(Source: the Author)

In the Figure 4.3 we notice that the dependent variable, referring to the collected data, does not have a normal distribution under the influence of the independent variables. In the results of the descriptive statistics we noticed that the observed average *Learning result* is 7.23 and with a standard deviation up $s(Y_1) = 1.57$. The statistical elaboration of data indicates that the dependent variable, under the simultaneous influence of the independent variables, ensures a mathematical expectation in the *learning Result* lowered than the observed one [$E(Y_1) = 6.4$] and with an improved deviated standard (St.Dev=0.985).

The distribution of the concentration of values of the variable *depth Strategies* according to the quality level of the mark is presented in the chart 2. In this chart is noticed that the mathematic expectation which has a value 3.55 falls within the concentrations 50% of each of the levels of the mark quality. This means that for the three levels, we have a tendency of average perception on the depth Strategy. But observing this phenomenon for each of the cases of the quality level, we have different specific approaches. We notice in the chart that the observed average for the weak level is above the mathematic expectation of the Depth Strategy variable. This creates the feeling that even though the students with weak level have a high perception for the indicators which measure the variable Depth Strategies, this is not reflected in their mark quality. This is explained with the fact that the weak students do not have the reading strategic awareness developed. Their strategic selections are random. In order that the weak students may develop the level of meaningful reading, according to a study of recent years, the students should gain the reading awareness and strategic awareness. This is enabled through the direct learning of cognitive strategies which rely on questions of text organization (text summary) and metacognitive strategies of self-regulation of learning. An opposite phenomenon is manifested by the students with average level of their mark. For the students with qualitative mark level, we notice constancy between the perception on Depth Strategies and the observed average of this group. Putting it in

other words, this means that the qualitative students are clearer about the depth strategies and their significance in the process of meaningful reading. The use of these strategies is convincingly reflected in their result in the subject matter of the Albanian language.

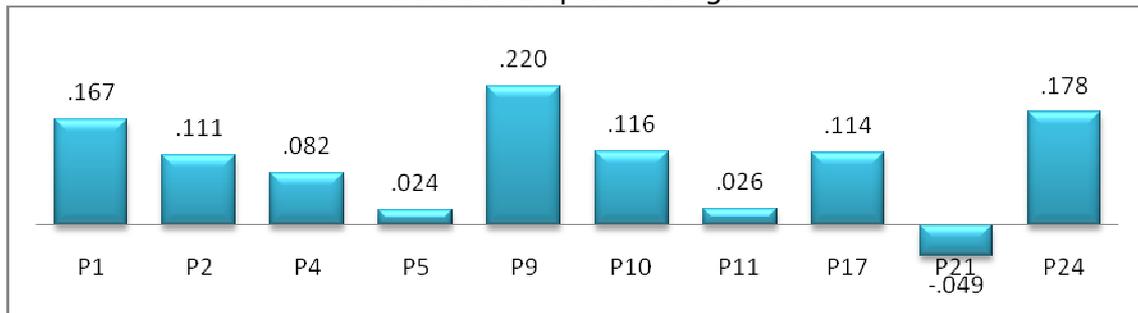
Chart 3. Concentration of values of depth Strategy according to quality level



The values of the variable Depth Strategy are determined as simple arithmetic average of ordinal values (Likert scales) which are taken by the indicators represented on the questionnaire by means of the questions: P1, P2, P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P17, P21 and P24. In order to determine the nature and the level of influence of each of these indicators on the independent variable depth Strategies, we have studied their linear regressive relation (as independent variables) and Depth Strategy variable (as dependent variable). The results of elaboration of the data through SPSS v.21 are represented in the Chart 3. We notice that all the indicators, with the exception of P21, exercise different positive influence on the variable depth Strategy. The greatest positive influence is exercised by the indicator P9 *optical mental representation*. According to the researchers the spontaneous mental representations influence in the elaboration of information, but not in understanding of the text. When it comes to conscious mental representations of information, then the reader is more concentrated and more active in the elaboration of information, as a result more active in building the text meaning. P21 *summary of text meaning*, even though in low values, exercises a negative influence on the level of perception of Depth Strategy. This result in the influence may be explained with the fact that the summary of text meaning, recent years has gained a special significance in the learning process of meaningful

reading. It is treated not only as an indicator of the level of understanding of a given text, but also as an indicator of the reader's critic attitude towards the text. Significant indicators which in our study exercise a lower influence on depth Strategies are P5 *connection between existing and new knowledge*, P11 *main ideas of the text*, P2 *prediction of text meaning*. It is observed that the lowest influence is exercised by the finding of main ideas and summary of meaning.

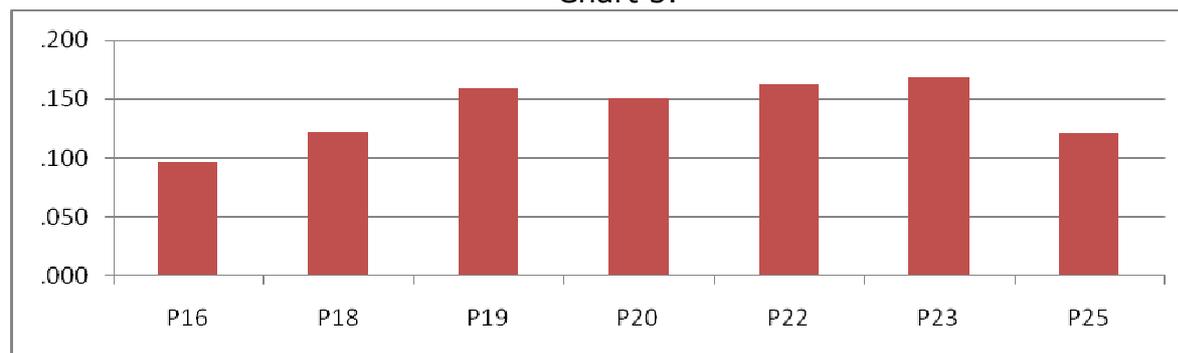
Chart 4. The distribution of the influence of the indicators which determine the variable Depth strategies



The results from the elaboration of data indicate that for the Albanian reality they are somehow far from contemporary study findings. In Albanian middle lower education system, the employment of assisting strategies in the process of understanding of a given text, has become a part of the culture of learning in class, as a part of indirect teaching for development of understanding. This means that the teachers encourage the students in the use of assisting reading strategies, but they are still not transformed into a strategic experience and awareness in the students. The students, even when they use them, are not aware for the use and the intention of their use as supportive procedures in the process of active elaboration of text meaning or they are transformed into unconscious automatic processes.

The independent variable *metacognitive Strategy* (X_3), exercises negative influence on the dependent variable *learning result* with a value of the coefficient of regression $\beta_3 = -0.164$. The greatest influence in metacognitive strategies is exercised by the indicator represented through the question P23 *check and self-assess understanding*, whereas the lowest influence is exercised by the indicator P16 *self-correct understanding*. The results from the elaboration of data indicate that the students do not have the metacognitive awareness of monitoring, checking and assessment of understanding developed or these complex mental processes act automated and the students are not aware for the intention and the significance of their use.

Chart 5.



Conclusions

Cognitive depth strategies exercise positive influence on the learning result $r.0.48$. The greatest positive influence in depth strategies is exercised by the indicator P9 *optical mental representation*, whereas P21 *summary of text meaning*, although in low values, exercises negative influence on the level of perception of *depth Strategies*.

For the students with qualitative level of the mark, we notice constancy between the depth Strategies and the observed average of this group. Putting it in other words, this means that the qualitative students are clearer about the depth strategies and their importance in the process of meaningful reading. The employment of these strategies is convincingly reflected in their result in the subject matter of the Albanian language.

The learning techniques and the metacognitive strategies do not exercise influence in the learning result. The strongest metacognitive strategy in negative influence of metacognitive strategies is P23 *check and self-assess understanding*.

The students of the middle lower education system (classes 6-9) do not have the strategic awareness of metacognitive reading developed, or even those students who employ metacognitive strategies, they employ them automatically without knowing the significance of their use. This is observed in the negative result -1,64.

As a conclusion, what should the teachers consider related with the student's strategic awareness? – According to the researchers, the understanding and learning result in reading is related with the increase of the reading awareness and the student's strategic awareness. The student's *reading awareness* is related with the *self-regulatory* behaviour in reading. As the readers become aware overtime on the complexity of reading process, it is possible to perceive with big accuracy their reading and strategic skills in order to respond to the reading needs.

The researchers refer to not only the influence of reading cognitive strategies in understanding results, but especially the importance of the employment of metacognitive strategies, which strengthen the self-regulatory skills as well as learning self-efficacy. On the other hand, the increase of self-efficacy in reading increases the student's inner motivation

for depth reading (situative text). Many researchers support the point of view that the self-efficacy in itself may give a high result, when the necessary skills and knowledge are absent (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

The question is how to raise the student's strategic awareness. Emphasizing the great importance of the employment of reading strategies in the process of understanding and learning, the researchers refer to the need of their involvement in the programme of language learning. Secondly they refer to the direct teaching of strategies which is found to be more efficient compared to the indirect one where the students should be simply trained in the employment of some strategies. In some studies for direct learning of reading strategies, resulted that the students, who were imposed to the programmes of learning of strategies increased the learning result as well as the strategic awareness. These students also increased the self-efficacy and motivation in a short time. Even though it is almost impossible for the reader to use all or almost all the strategies, there exist significant data for the efficacy of their use. The employment with efficacy of the reading strategies develops the reading abilities.

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