

Diagnostics of the Level of Formation of Compensatory Competencies Through Writing and Reading in English Classes

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Abstract: This article investigates the effectiveness of different diagnostic tools in assessing the level of formation of these competencies in high school English students through writing and reading activities. A mixed-methods approach was employed, with quantitative data collected through pre- and post-tests and qualitative data through stimulated recall interviews. It revealed that a multifaceted approach combining standardized tests, writing tasks, and reading comprehension assessments with stimulated recall interviews provides a comprehensive understanding of students' compensatory strategies and their effectiveness. The findings suggest that while standardized tests offer a general overview of proficiency, task-based assessments and interviews provide valuable insights into students' individual utilization of compensatory strategies and their impact on comprehension and expression. Implications for improving diagnostic practices and fostering the development of compensatory competencies in English language classrooms are discussed.

Keywords: compensatory competencies, English as a second language (ESL), diagnostic tools, writing, reading, stimulated recall interviews.

Introduction:

Knowledge covers the level of phonetics, grammar, vocabulary and knowledge of non-verbal means of compensation. They serve as a theoretical and practical basis for the formation of compensatory speaking competence and compensatory skills themselves. At the vocabulary level, students must have knowledge of word-formation elements, synonymous means and semantic fields of what they are studying language within the limits specified by the program. Thus, knowledge includes knowledge of verbal as well as non-verbal means of compensation of the language system. Knowledge of verbal means of compensation covers knowledge of special elements of language that have a compensating function (for example, synonyms, periphrases, substitute words, etc.). Knowledge of non-verbal means of compensation (gestures, facial expressions, body movements, etc.) plays an additional, auxiliary role. A special role is given to knowledge about compensatory strategies and skills. In our opinion, students must have information about these basic concepts in order to consciously build their activities in real communication situations. Knowledge about compensatory strategies and skills provides guidance in activities and methods of performing them in difficult communication situations.

Compensatory competencies, the ability to overcome language deficiencies and utilize alternative strategies for successful communication, are crucial for learners of English as a second language (ESL). Effective language learning often involves the development of compensatory competencies, allowing learners to overcome language gaps and achieve communicative success even when faced with limited vocabulary or grammatical knowledge. [1] In the context of English as a second language (ESL) acquisition, these competencies play a crucial role in enabling students to understand and express themselves despite encountering unfamiliar words or complex grammatical structures. Assessing the level of formation of these competencies, however, presents a challenge, as they often manifest in subtle and context-dependent ways. [2] This study aims to address this challenge by

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exploring the effectiveness of different diagnostic tools in assessing the level of formation of compensatory competencies in high school ESL students through writing and reading activities.

Literature Review:

Several studies have emphasized the importance of compensatory strategies in EFL learning. Oxford (1990) identified various strategies used by learners to compensate for linguistic limitations, including word-level strategies (e.g., guessing vocabulary from context) and discourse-level strategies (e.g., using synonyms or paraphrasing). Similarly, Wenden (2001) highlighted the role of metacognitive strategies in compensatory competence, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's language use. [3]

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of writing and reading activities in promoting compensatory strategy use. Read (2004) found that writing tasks focusing on vocabulary acquisition encouraged learners to employ compensatory strategies such as using synonyms and paraphrasing. Similarly, Rost (2002) reported that reading activities with a focus on metacognitive strategies led to increased use of compensatory strategies and improved reading comprehension. [4]

Methodology:

The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a sample of 50 high school students studying ESL in a public school setting. Data was collected in three phases:

- A pre-test utilizing a standardized multiple-choice reading comprehension test and a writing task;
- Implementation of a six-week intervention focused on developing compensatory strategies through reading comprehension and writing activities;
- A post-test involving the same pre-test instruments and additional stimulated recall interviews with a subsample of 10 students. [5]

The writing tasks involved composing narrative paragraphs in response to open-ended prompts, while the reading comprehension tests assessed understanding of short informational texts. During the intervention phase, students engaged in activities specifically designed to promote the use of compensatory strategies such as guessing meaning from context, using synonyms and circumlocution, and employing visual aids. Stimulated recall interviews after the post-test probed students' thought processes while reading and writing, eliciting information on the specific compensatory strategies they employed and their perceived effectiveness.

Another study employed a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental group (n=60) and a control group (n=60). Both groups were enrolled in secondary school English language classes. The experimental group participated in twelve weeks of instruction that incorporated specific writing and reading activities designed to promote the development and use of compensatory strategies. These activities included:

- ✓ Reading tasks: Texts were chosen with varying difficulty levels and unfamiliar vocabulary. Students were encouraged to use context clues, paraphrase unfamiliar words, and summarize main ideas to compensate for comprehension difficulties.
- ✓ Writing tasks: Students were given writing prompts that encouraged them to use alternative vocabulary and grammatical structures to express themselves effectively, even when encountering limited knowledge.

The control group received traditional English language instruction focused on grammar drills and vocabulary memorization. Both groups completed pre- and post-tests assessing their reading comprehension, writing fluency, and use of compensatory strategies. The reading comprehension test involved reading passages of varying difficulty and answering comprehension questions. The writing fluency test assessed students' ability to write a continuous paragraph on a given topic within a time limit. The compensatory strategy use test employed a self-report questionnaire and think-aloud



protocols to gather information about the specific strategies students employed during reading and writing tasks. [6]

Results:

Quantitative data analysis revealed statistically significant improvements in both reading comprehension and writing scores on the post-test compared to the pre-test. Qualitative data from the stimulated recall interviews provided valuable insights into the types of compensatory strategies students utilized and their effectiveness. Common strategies included synonym substitution, guessing meaning from context, paraphrasing, and summarizing. The interviews also revealed individual differences in students' awareness and deliberate use of these strategies. Notably, students who demonstrated higher levels of proficiency tended to employ a wider range of strategies and reported greater confidence in their effectiveness. The findings of this study suggest that incorporating writing and reading activities designed to promote compensatory strategies can be an effective approach for developing and diagnosing compensatory competencies in English language learners. Students who engaged in these activities demonstrated improved reading comprehension, writing fluency, and a more strategic approach to language use. This suggests that focusing on developing compensatory competencies may be beneficial not only for immediate performance in English language tasks, but also for fostering long-term language learning autonomy and confidence. [7]

Discussion:

The findings of this study suggest that a multifaceted approach combining standardized tests, writing tasks, and reading comprehension assessments with stimulated recall interviews offers a comprehensive understanding of students' compensatory competencies and their development. While standardized tests can provide a general overview of proficiency, task-based assessments and interviews offer valuable insights into students' individual utilization of compensatory strategies and their impact on comprehension and expression. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating task-based and qualitative methods into diagnostic practices in ESL classrooms to gain a deeper understanding of students' compensatory capabilities and tailor instruction to support their further development. [8]

Limitations and Future Research:

This study was limited to a single class and a relatively short intervention period. Further research with larger and more diverse samples and longer intervention periods is needed to confirm these findings and explore the generalizability of the results. Additionally, future studies could investigate the effectiveness of different teaching methods and materials in promoting the development of specific compensatory strategies and assess their long-term impact on students' overall language proficiency. While the study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the study was limited to a specific age group and educational context. Further research with larger and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal studies, is needed to confirm these findings and explore the long-term impact of developing compensatory competencies. Additionally, future research could investigate the effectiveness of different types of writing and reading activities in promoting specific compensatory strategies and tailoring instruction to the individual needs of learners.

Conclusion:

Developing compensatory competencies is an essential aspect of successful language learning, particularly for ESL learners. This study demonstrates the effectiveness of a multifaceted approach to assess and foster these competencies in high school English classes. By incorporating task-based assessments and qualitative data collection into diagnostic practices, educators can gain deeper insights into students' individual strategies and provide targeted instruction to support their development, ultimately leading to greater communicative success in English.



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