

实践研究

Evaluating Student Reading Strategies in a Sophomore EAP Course Using Student Learning Logs

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Abstract

In the spring semester of 2010, I undertook research into the pedagogical application of metacognitive reading strategies for a freshmen EAP class. A two-part survey was used to evaluate my teaching methodology and student learning outcomes. Reflecting upon the research, I determined that future research projects should more thoroughly investigate student learning. Since it did not fully provide an account of student learning, the use of the survey was limited, and I realized the need for utilizing qualitative research methods. Among qualitative research, researchers and teachers frequently use learning logs. Some researchers suggest that learning logs help teachers effectively evaluate student learning (Alvermann and Phelps, 1994; Auerbach and Paxton, 1997; Smith, 1996; Soldner, 1997, 1998). As the method of Auerbach and Paxton (1997) seems appropriate to my research interests, I decided to use their approach for classroom research. In this paper, using student learning logs from a sophomore EAP course, I evaluate student reading strategies and discuss strategy implications.

Key words

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) , metacognitive reading strategies, learning logs, learning outcomes

1 Introduction

A significant amount of research into written text analysis has led to implications concerning the teaching of reading and writing to second language learners, especially in terms of English for academic and specific purposes (Swales, 1990; McCarthy, 1991; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2001; Gillet, 2008). Written discourse analysis is applied for the teaching of reading comprehension as teachers encourage learners to analyze text types, structures, and discourse and lexical features, and to outline and summarize them. The approach of written discourse analysis

suits the model of metacognitive reading strategies. Metacognitive reading strategies include pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities (Allen, 2003; Evans, 2008). In the spring semester of 2010, I evaluated the pedagogical application of metacognitive reading strategies in the EAP¹⁾ classroom (Kamijo, 2011) in which students were first year International Business Administration majors. In the class, I used reading materials from a TOEFL ITP²⁾ test preparation textbook (Kanbe, 2007). The text types of TOEFL ITP reading passages are expository, historical/biographical narrative, and argumentative. Each text includes four or five paragraphs totaling 300 to 400 words. As I referred to the model of metacognitive reading strategies, I taught students to survey a text, identify the text type, structure, key words, and transitions, and outline and summarize the text. Students reinforced their comprehension of a text through post-reading activities, such as outlining and summarizing. The end of the course survey showed that the majority of students felt that the activities were effective. In the survey, students were asked to evaluate their learning outcomes, in terms of outlining and summarizing texts, key components of metacognitive reading strategies.

Assessing my research, I realized that future research should provide more detailed descriptions of student learning. I should evaluate in detail how students analyze, outline and summarize a text when they actually read it. Accordingly, qualitative research should be applied. As for qualitative research methods for the study, learning logs are considered appropriate since students will take time to reflect upon their learning through the semester and write comments at their own pace about how they learned. For the framework of analysis concerning student learning logs, some researchers have provided suggestions about how learning logs might be implemented in classrooms (Alvermann and Phelps, 1994; Auerbach and Paxton, 1997; Soldner, 1997, 1998). Auerbach and Paxton (1997) investigated student metacognitive reading strategies in an ESL course in the US. The researchers utilized the learning logs assigned to students, in which the students defined the reading strategies they used, how they actually used the strategies and the effect of the strategies upon their reading.

The framework indicated by Auerbach and Paxton (1997) is appropriate for my research interests. I decided to undertake research into student learning about metacognitive reading strategies in the intermediate EAP classroom as I incorporated the framework of learning logs. The present study addresses the following questions:

- 1) What were the student learning outcomes concerning metacognitive reading strategies? What did the student learning logs indicate about the learning?
- 2) What were the implications for practice and future research?

2 Literature review

Some researchers regard reading comprehension as a constructive process in which readers actively apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies in order to understand a text (Dole et al., 1991; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000; Allen, 2003; Israel, 2007). In the literature of L1 and L2 reading, researchers claim that there are three main stages in metacognitive reading strategies: pre-reading,

while-reading and post-reading strategies (Urquhart and Weir, 1999). Among the techniques of metacognitive reading strategies, Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review (SQ3R) is a major framework used in EAP and ESP programs, since it includes the explicit phases of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

In the education and applied linguistics literature, two researchers provide useful metacognitive reading strategies for pedagogical application. Allen (2003) describes a model of five metacognitive reading strategies, as she reviews the literature of metacognitive reading strategies in L1 and L2 contexts:

Making sense of the text by the reader is also very dependent on the use of metacognitive strategies. It is not enough to simply decode the words. The readers must have inner conversations in which they: (1) relate the text to their own lives, (2) determine which facts are important and unimportant, (3) summarize information, (4) fill in details and draw inferences, and (5) ask questions, ----- (p. 320).

Allen's literature review of metacognitive reading strategies includes the major L1 and L2 researchers in the US who used experimental or quasi-experimental methods. Researchers compared students who received reading strategy instructions with students who did not. The results of previous research reviewed by Allen (2003) indicate the effectiveness of teaching metacognitive reading strategies for "diverse groups of learners, including L1, L2, and learning disabled students" (p. 336).

Evans (2008) evaluates Allen's metacognitive reading strategies, which are slightly modified, and divided the strategies into six elements (p. 241) :

1. Deciding important points
2. Relating ideas to readers' lives
3. Summarizing
4. Filling in points not explicitly made
5. Making inferences
6. Asking questions

Evans (2008) notes Allen's categories for assessing the metacognitive reading strategies that might be appropriate pedagogy in EAP courses. Evans (2008) refers to the framework of metacognitive reading strategies, in which "students summarize and react to the texts they read" (p. 240). The strategies have four stages: outlining, summarizing, noting reactions and referential questioning.

First, Evans (2008) indicates outlining and summarizing in comparison to Allen's model of metacognitive reading strategies:

Outlines are visual representations of the overall rhetorical structure of a text. Detailed outlines note ideas contained in a text, and how these ideas relate to each other. Outlining in the RRJs can incorporate the metacognitive strategies of deciding the most important points (strategy 1), filling in points not explicitly made (strategy 4), and making inferences (strategy 5). ----- In addition, a written summary to accompany an outline should activate strategies 1, 3, 4, and 5 ----- (p. 241).

Second, writing reactions and referential questioning are noted in the context of Allen's (2003) metacognitive reading strategies:

----- students need to note their reactions, and relate ideas to their own experiences, consistent with metacognitive strategy 2. ----- Referential questions demand greater cognitive involvement with the text and are normally dependent upon the reader's finding 'gaps' in the writer's ideas, and or the reader's understanding of them (p. 241).

Evans (2008) applied these metacognitive reading strategies to an L2 EAP course, evaluating students' perceived effectiveness of the metacognitive reading strategies. From a survey in his L2 EAP classroom, Evans (2008) found that most students regarded metacognitive reading strategies as useful for reading comprehension and reading-to-write activities, both of which are essential in EAP.

The frameworks of metacognitive reading strategies that Allen (2003) and Evans (2008) suggest are summarized in Figure 1.

<u>Allen's model (2003)</u>	<u>Evans' approach (2008)</u>
1. Deciding important points	Outlining/Summarizing/Referential questioning
2. Relating ideas to readers' lives	Noting reactions/Referential questioning
3. Summarizing	Summarizing and paraphrasing
4. Filling in points not explicitly made	Outlining/Summarizing/Referential questioning
5. Making inferences	Outlining/Summarizing/Referential questioning
6. Asking questions	Referential questioning

Figure 1. Metacognitive reading strategies by Allen (2003) and Evans (2008)

Evans' approach is applicable to L2 EAP programs. Evans' model shows that analytical reading and summarization might be helpful for reading comprehension. Students should survey and analyze a text, outlining and summarizing it.

3 Research method

Learning logs are utilized as a qualitative research method to assess student reading strategies. The frameworks of such learning logs have been suggested by researchers (Smith, 1996; Auberbach

and Paxton, 1997; Soldner, 1998). Smith (1996) provides samples of learning log assignments in a history reading course. The themes of learning logs include observation of academic behavior, note-taking skills, test debriefing, and group work. Among the themes is a list of questions for evaluating reading strategies.

1. Describe your strategies for reading and comprehending your history text.
2. How do you organize your reading for long assignments?
3. How do you maintain your concentration?
4. Where do you study? How do you mark your text or take notes?
5. How do you review and learn material?
6. How do you use the five thinking strategies of good readers?

Smith's list of questions for evaluating reading strategies is composed of elements related to preparation, study skills, and review, but these questions are more concerned with general learning behavior rather than specific reading strategies.

With respect to this issue, Soldner (1998) provides a nine-question framework for evaluating student reading strategies in the following manner.

Pre-reading

1. What do I know about the topic I am about to begin to read about?
2. What do I want to know about this topic?

While-reading

1. What did I do while I was reading to check if I was paying attention and/or comprehending while I was reading?
2. What did I understand? What was confusing? Why was it confusing to me?
3. What vocabulary terms did I learn or didn't understand? Why?
4. What part of the reading was clear to me? Which parts did I understand easily?
5. What specific problems did I have in reading this assignment?
6. At what point did I become tired, confused, discouraged? Why?

Post-reading

1. What did I do after finishing my reading?

Although the listed evaluating reading strategies through the phases of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading can be useful, these are descriptions of reading activities and problems. It might be much more helpful for students if they could define their reading strategies and describe how they apply strategies in the stages of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading.

Concerning these learning logs, Auerbach and Paxton (1997) apply the following categories for the reading strategy logs.

1. Name of strategy

2. Description of what you did

What was the text you used? What kind of text was it? How did you use this strategy? What did you do?

3. Effect of strategy

What was your reaction to this strategy? How did it work for you? Did it seem to help you? Why or why not? Describe the effect of using this strategy on your speed and comprehension? How do you feel about this strategy? Would you try it again?

Reviewing the frameworks for learning logs to evaluate students' reading strategies, an approach suggested by the above researchers, especially the one indicated by Auerbach and Paxton (1997), might be devised and applied to evaluate metacognitive reading strategies of the students through the learning logs in my classroom. In the spring semester, I assigned the writing of brief reflective comments after testing students in week 5 and week 10. In week 14 students summarized what they had learned in the course as they referred to these comments, and submitted their summaries as a learning log. Students wrote their learning logs in approximately 100 words.

In analyzing student learning logs, three elements are considered. First, I attempt to understand how students defined the metacognitive reading strategies they learned, in terms of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading strategies. Second, I attempt to assess how students used these strategies. Finally, I try to evaluate how the reading strategies students learned affected their reading.

The approach to the data collection and analysis of student learning logs in the present research is summarized as follows.

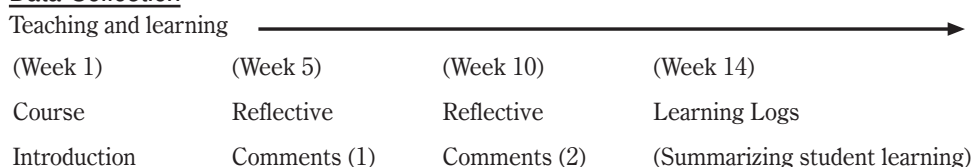
Data Collection

Figure 2. Data collection of student learning logs

The main objective of the course through the spring semester is to teach metacognitive reading strategies, such as surveying, analyzing, outlining and summarizing.

Data Analysis

1. Definition of metacognitive reading strategies

Did students learn the main features of analytical reading and summarization, including surveying, analyzing, outlining and summarizing?

How did students define their learning through the semester, in terms of the metacognitive reading

strategies taught in the course?

2. Description of how students used metacognitive reading strategies

How did students use the metacognitive reading strategies they had learned when they actually read texts? Which reading strategies do they find helpful for their reading?

3. Effect of metacognitive reading strategies

What were the effects of using metacognitive reading strategies? Did students improve their reading comprehension? Did they want to use the strategies more? For what purposes did they think they would apply the strategies in the future?

4 Classroom teaching in the spring semester

During their first two years, the students at Ritsumeikan University study English subjects including reading, listening, speaking and writing. These students in International Business Administration are required to participate in a study abroad program. The freshmen prepare for the TOEFL ITP test in the spring semester; they study intensively to develop skills in English for academic purposes. In their sophomore year, the students shift their studies towards English in business and management while they continue to study academic skills to prepare for study abroad programs. Consequently an EAP course incorporates the elements of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) related to business and management. To demonstrate their English proficiency, some students take the TOEFL ITP and iBT while others take the TOEIC. In their junior and senior years, students take more advanced electives.

In the semester from April 2011 to July 2011, I taught a reading class for second year students majoring in International Business Administration. The reading class was structured to meet these student goals. Most students in my class had a proficiency level equivalent to TOEFL ITP scores from 420 to 500. As mentioned in the previous section, the approach of metacognitive reading strategies taught in the classroom includes surveying, analyzing, outlining and summarizing.

My teaching methodology consisted of materials, practice, three tests, and a report. One course text was *New Insights into Business*. The course book included comprehension exercises through skimming and scanning texts. I also added fill-in-the-blank summary exercises. Most of the readings in the textbook have six to eight paragraphs with approximately 600 to 800 words. The second text was a TOEFL ITP test preparation textbook, titled *Introduction to TOEFL-ITP Reading* (Kanbe, 2007), with approximately 20 passages tailored to preparing for the reading passages in the TOEFL ITP test. The passage text types are expository, historical/biographical narrative, and argumentative. Each reading passage is approximately 300 to 400 words.

In my classroom teaching for these students, summary writing exercises were assigned. The students completed and submitted five summary practices during the spring semester. Among the summaries, the homework assigned to students in week 2 (a passage from the TOEFL ITP test preparation textbook), week 7 (a passage from the TOEFL ITP test preparation textbook), and week

12 (a passage from *a news article from The Japan Times*) provided the basis for three tests given in weeks 5, 11 and 15. The homework assigned in week 11, which was a passage from the TOEFL ITP test preparation textbook, became the draft for a report due in week 14. Accordingly, students had to learn from the written feedback of their homework and carefully revise their summaries to prepare for the tests and a report independently.

In the three tests, students were required to answer vocabulary questions and complete fill-in-the-gap exercises about the summary. Students were not allowed to refer to handouts or notes for these exercises, which accounted for one-third of the test. For the remaining two-thirds of the test, students analyzed and summarized the passages from the TOEFL ITP preparation textbook (week 5 and week 10), and *a news article from The Japan Times* (week 15). Students were instructed to analyze the texts by marking the thesis statement, topic sentences, key words, and transitions, as they examined the introduction, body, and conclusion in the texts. After the analyses, students wrote summaries of the passages. In the tests, they were permitted to refer to their prepared summaries and notes.

For the report, students had to analyze and summarize a passage from the TOEFL ITP test preparation textbook. The assignment involved reading the text, understanding it through marking and outlining, and summarizing it. Through the class handouts, I explained how to identify the key textual and lexical features, such as the thesis statement, topic sentences, key words and transitional phrases.

5 Results

The student learning evaluated through learning logs is presented and analyzed in this section. In the class of week 14, students were assigned to summarize learning logs, as they evaluated their learning through the course. In their learning logs, some mentioned both analytical reading and summarization while others wrote about either analytical reading or summarization. Several students indicated other learning experiences. In this paper, due to space limitations eight student learning logs are provided as the data of the research.

Analytical reading and summarization

In the student learning logs, some students defined the stages of analytical reading with the term 'passage check,' which included dividing a passage into paragraphs, determining the thesis statement and topic sentences, understanding important information, key words, transitions and other details. One student thought writing a summary and doing a passage check were the main elements of her learning.

I learned how to write a summary in English and passage check in this class. I improved my ability to understand an essay in English and also made progress in reading comprehension. In addition, I increased my English business vocabulary. However, my English is still lacking in terms of vocabulary, so I need to improve this. Moreover, I cannot understand English

grammar very well so I have to improve this too. (Student 1, Learning Log)

Student 1 thought that the strategies concerning passage checking and summarizing helped her better understand English texts, leading to progress in reading comprehension. She also realized her weaknesses including vocabulary and grammar, and expressed her willingness to study in order to improve them.

Another student also mentioned that the passage check and summarization were two key learning features.

I learned a lot by taking this English Reading class. In particular I learned how to write a summary. At first, I didn't know the proper procedure for writing a summary, but I acquired the skill to do so as time went by. I thought 'passage checking' is very important in writing a summary, and finding topic sentences from a text is important too. Now I think I can read a text faster than before. (Student 2, Learning Log)

Student 2 said that he learned the appropriate procedure for writing a summary. The steps for the reading strategies include doing a passage check and using an analysis of the passage to write a summary. He wrote about gradually acquiring the skills to use the reading strategies through the course, which led to faster reading.

Some students defined their learning metacognitive reading strategies, by explaining that the stages of checking a passage and outlining are closely related to writing a summary of the passage. One student emphasized the need to divide more important sentences and less important sentences, producing an outline of a text.

I always read a passage without dividing important sentences and minor details. But in this class, I was taught to make an outline for each passage. In making an outline I became able to find what is important in the passage. I think it is important to make an outline in every passage in order to improve my reading ability. I feel that I make a summary more easily than last year. I want to use the skill I learned in this class in the future to improve my TOEFL score. (Student 3, Learning Log)

Student 3 thought that understanding important sentences in a text and creating an outline of it helped her improve her reading comprehension and skill in summarizing the text. She expressed her willingness to apply the reading strategies in taking future language tests.

Similarly, another student indicated the usefulness of checking a passage and outlining it for writing a summary of the passage.

I learned how to write a summary. It became easy to summarize as I checked a passage and

made outlines. Moreover, I think that I learned important things like a change in wording, using conjunctions, the whole balance and variety of words and phrases, while doing the homework of writing a summary. I improved my writing and reading skills in this class. In addition, I was able to understand the contents of a passage when I summarized it. (Student 4, Learning Log)

In addition to the major elements of analytical reading and summary, student 4 learned that writing a summary requires careful editing of structure and vocabulary. She wrote that the actual writing of the summary enhanced her understanding of the contents of a passage.

Another student learned summary and analytical reading. She said that grasping topic sentences and key words in a text was necessary for writing a summary, which also helped her understand the text easily.

In this reading class, I learned about writing a summary. I didn't know how to write a summary, however, our teacher taught us how to do so. Writing a summary is very useful and we can understand a text easily as we learn to write a summary, because we catch topic sentences and key words. I think I can read a text easily. I hope to continue to study in this way, and raise my TOIEC score. (Student 5, Learning Log)

Student 5 showed her willingness to study further and use her learning for future test preparation.

Analytical reading

In their learning logs, some students emphasized key features concerned with analytical reading for grasping difficult and long sentences as their learning. One student wrote that she learned how to read paragraphs in the course.

During the Reading Class of the first term, I learned about the composition of passages and how to summarize them. Before having this class, I did not like long sentences and difficult themes, because they confused my understanding. Through this class, I have studied the importance of a passage's arrangement, which is to clarify the author's opinion. Deciding important information and decorative words is the way to understand the passage and summarizing paragraphs helps us understand. It is training to acquire this skill, I think. (Student 6, Learning Log)

Understanding the passage's arrangement enabled student 6 to clarify the author's view, as she understood important information and signaling words. As a result, she became able to read long sentences and difficult themes.

Another student wrote about the sentence structure of English, including thesis statement, topic

sentences, and supporting sentences.

Through this English class, I can study the sentence structure of English. I didn't like to read English sentences, but now I like to read them. By finding important key words, I can read efficiently and I can make a summary as I use a passage check. Passage checking is very important to me. I think that passage checking helps me understand the content. I have realized the importance of knowing about the sentence structure of English. In the summer vacation, I will read three books in English to use the skill I have acquired during this class. I want to read more English. (Student 7, Learning Log)

As she learned the sentence structure of English and passage checking, student 7 understood the importance of analytical reading. As a result, she found enjoyment in reading English passages, although she had not liked to read English sentences before taking the class.

Summarization

Some students wrote about summarizing as their learning outcome. One student expressed her achievement of learning to write a summary throughout the course, as she practiced her writing. She explained that she was able to learn the 'right style' for writing a summary.

I learned many important things for making a summary in this class. I didn't understand the right style of summary before, but this class demands that we present a summary as homework. It is very difficult and hard for me. I always take a long time to finish the homework, but it helps the progress of my skill. I can write a summary now. I want to improve my summary skill further. (Student 8, Learning Log)

Student 8 mentioned that she would like to increase her ability to summarize a text further as she continues her study.

6 Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, I described the learning outcomes of sophomores in an EAP reading class, as I presented their learning logs and the analysis of the logs. First, the literature of metacognitive reading strategies was reviewed. Researchers define metacognitive reading strategies as the activities of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading a text. In particular, Allen (2003) and Evans (2008) suggest useful models for EAP-based reading classes. Second, the research method of learning logs was explained. The frameworks of learning logs (Smith, 1996; Auberbach and Paxton, 1997; Soldner, 1998) were assessed. Referring especially to the model devised by Auberbach and Paxton (1997), I developed a learning log method to evaluate student learning in an EAP reading class. Third, the context and

teaching methodology in the sophomore EAP classroom were noted. I attempted to teach surveying, analyzing, outlining and summarizing. In the EAP classroom, I provided exercises in analyzing texts and writing outlines and summaries. Tests and a report were used to facilitate independent student analysis and summarization. Fourth, the results of student learning logs were indicated. The selected eight learning logs showed the students' learning concerning metacognitive reading strategies in terms of such categories as analytical reading and summarization.

The learning logs indicate that students in an EAP class learned metacognitive reading strategies through their own individual learning experience. Students defined their learning and described the steps of utilizing metacognitive reading strategies in their own ways. As regards the effect of their learning, some students showed a sense of achievement while others wrote about their willingness to study further. Their learning logs suggest that describing student learning outcomes and degrees through the use of a survey is limited. The survey results do not adequately describe individual differences in student learning and outcomes. The present research seems to suggest that learning logs can be a tool that might allow classroom teachers to evaluate and research metacognitive reading strategies in some detail.

Evaluating the present study shows what should be considered regarding future research. First, the learning log data in the present study was summarized by students in week 14, as they referred to previous comments and reflected upon their course study. Future research should provide the data collected in the process of their learning, at the beginning, middle and end of the course. Second, different qualitative research methods might be added to the learning logs. Interviews might be conducted at the beginning and end of the course, while classroom discourse might be recorded and its transcription presented. The data analyzed using a number of qualitative methods could strengthen future classroom research into metacognitive reading strategies.

Notes

- 1) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) involves teaching students English to prepare for academic study usually in higher education. Study skills taught in many EAP courses include listening to lectures and note taking, making presentations, reading textbooks and journals analytically, and writing assignment papers.
- 2) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a test for learners who prepare to apply to universities and colleges in the United States, Canada, UK, Australia and so on. TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) is a paper version of the TOEFL test used for students at universities and colleges.

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Appendix Teaching Objectives

The metacognitive reading strategies taught in the class

Surveying

Skimming a text, understanding the text type

Skimming a text to understand the general theme

Analyzing

Recognizing key features of a text, including the thesis statement and topic sentences

Recognizing key words, transitions, and examples

Determining important points

Understanding inferences

Outlining

Marking and highlighting key textual and lexical features

Briefly outlining a text based upon the text analysis

Editing an outline after carefully rereading a text

Summarizing

Paraphrasing in writing a summary

Writing a summary based upon the analysis

Using transitions to clarify the logic of a summary

Checking grammar and sentence structure

学習ログを使用した2回生 EAP コースにおけるリーディングストラテジーの評価

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要 約

2010年の春学期に、私はメタ認知リーディングストラテジーを1回生 EAP クラスむけに教え授業を行った。学生は要約作成練習、テスト、レポートを通して序々にメタ認知リーディングストラテジーの使用ができるようになっていった。私は授業への実践研究も行い、調査手法としては、教授法と学習成果を評価するという2つに分けた構成によるアンケートを使用した。研究を振り返り、私は学生の学習成果をさらに詳しく調べることを考えた。アンケートによる調査は限られたものであり、今後の研究において質的研究の手法を採用していく必要性を認識した。質的な研究のなかでも、Reflective writing（振り返りによる学習記録）はよく使用されている。とくに Learning logs（学習ログ）について、さまざまな教員による授業での応用が示されている。（Alvermann and Phelps, 1994; Auerbach and Paxton, 1997; Smith, 1996; Soldner, 1997, 1998）この実践研究では、私は研究者でもとくに Auerbach and Paxton（1997）により使用された学習ログの手法を採用した。そして2011年春学期2回生の EAP リーディングクラスにおいて、いかに学生がメタ認知リーディングストラテジーを学んだかを評価を行い、その考察と今後の研究の方向性を考えていく。

