

INTEGRATING COGNITIVE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE LEARNING APPROACH (CALLA) TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' READING SKILLS

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ANNOTATION: The development of reading skills is a foundational component of academic success, especially for students learning a second language or studying in a bilingual environment. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, presents a comprehensive instructional model designed to integrate content area instruction with language development through the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This article explores the theoretical foundations of CALLA and its practical implementation in improving reading proficiency among students. By aligning reading instruction with CALLA's three phases—preparation, presentation, and practice—the article highlights how strategic reading fosters academic language acquisition, enhances comprehension, and builds learner autonomy. Through a review of literature, classroom-based methods, data analysis, and discussion, this article presents CALLA as a transformative pedagogical tool for reading development.

KEY WORDS: CALLA, reading skills, cognitive strategies, academic language, metacognition, language learning, bilingual education, comprehension strategies, student autonomy.

ANNOTATSIYA: O'qish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish akademik muvaffaqiyatning asosiy omillaridan biri hisoblanadi, ayniqsa ikkinchi tilni o'rganayotgan yoki ikki tilli muhitda tahsil olayotgan o'quvchilar uchun. Anna Uhl Chamot va J. Maykl O'Malley tomonidan ishlab chiqilgan Kognitiv Akademik Tilni O'rgatish Yondashuvi (CALLA) kontent fanlari bo'yicha ta'limni til rivojlanishi bilan birlashtirishga qaratilgan kognitiv va metakognitiv strategiyalardan foydalanishni nazarda tutuvchi kompleks o'quv modeli sifatida namoyon bo'ladi. Ushbu maqolada CALLA nazariy asoslari va uni o'quvchilarning o'qish savodxonligini oshirishda amalda qo'llash yo'llari tahlil qilinadi. CALLA'ning tayyorlov, taqdimot va amaliyot bosqichlari asosida tuzilgan o'qish mashg'ulotlari orqali strategik o'qish uslubi akademik tilni o'zlashtirish, tushunishni chuqurlashtirish va o'quvchining mustaqilligini shakllantirishga xizmat qilishi ko'rsatib beriladi. Adabiyotlar sharhi, sinfiy metodlar, ma'lumotlar tahlili va muhokamalar orqali ushbu maqola CALLA'ni o'qish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda samarali pedagogik vosita sifatida taqdim etadi.

KALIT SO'ZLAR: CALLA, o'qish ko'nikmalari, kognitiv strategiyalar, akademik til, metakognitsiya, til o'rganish, ikki tilli ta'lim, tushunish strategiyalari, o'quvchi mustaqilligi

АННОТАЦИЯ: Развитие навыков чтения является важнейшим компонентом академического успеха, особенно для учащихся, изучающих второй язык или обучающихся в билингвальной среде. Когнитивный академический подход к обучению языку (CALLA), разработанный Анной Ул Чамот и Дж. Майклом О'Мэлли, представляет собой всестороннюю модель обучения, сочетающую преподавание предметного содержания с развитием языковых навыков через использование когнитивных и метакогнитивных стратегий. В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические основы CALLA, а также его практическое применение для повышения уровня

чтения у студентов. Путем согласования инструкций по чтению с тремя этапами CALLA — подготовка, представление и практика — статья подчеркивает, как стратегическое чтение способствует овладению академическим языком, углублению понимания текста и развитию самостоятельности учащихся. На основе анализа литературы, методов, данных и обсуждений статья демонстрирует CALLA как эффективный педагогический инструмент для развития навыков чтения.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: CALLA, навыки чтения, когнитивные стратегии, академический язык, метакогниция, изучение языка, билингвальное образование, стратегии понимания, автономия учащихся.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is not only a fundamental skill for everyday communication but also a critical component of academic achievement across all subject areas. For learners, especially those acquiring a second or foreign language, reading poses challenges that go beyond decoding words; it involves understanding vocabulary in context, grasping syntactic structures, interpreting meaning, and engaging in inferential and critical thinking processes. The development of these higher-order reading competencies is crucial for success in academic settings. In this context, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) emerges as a pedagogical model that combines language development with cognitive and metacognitive strategies to enhance learners' ability to process and comprehend academic texts. This article aims to examine how CALLA can be effectively integrated into reading instruction to improve students' reading proficiency, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The CALLA framework was introduced in the late 1980s by Chamot and O'Malley, who recognized the need for an instructional approach that could address both the academic content and the language development needs of students, particularly those learning in a second language. CALLA draws upon cognitive psychology, second language acquisition theories, and academic learning strategies to support learners in acquiring both content knowledge and language proficiency. Research by Chamot (1995), O'Malley & Chamot (1990), and more recently by Cohen (2011), has underscored the effectiveness of CALLA in teaching strategies for listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with a significant emphasis on developing metacognitive awareness.

Scholars such as Anderson (2005) and Grabe (2009) have highlighted the importance of strategic reading in language learning, noting that proficient readers utilize a range of strategies including predicting, summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and evaluating to construct meaning from texts. CALLA operationalizes these strategies in a structured manner, helping learners become conscious of their reading processes and encouraging them to take control of their own learning. Moreover, research has shown that the integration of strategy instruction with content learning, as emphasized in CALLA, leads to improved academic performance and increased motivation (Chamot, 2004; Chamot & Robbins, 2006).

METHODS

To explore the effectiveness of the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) in developing students' reading skills, this study employed a qualitative classroom-based intervention design, supported by a combination of descriptive and interpretive research techniques. The methodological approach was selected to capture the complexity of language learning processes, the dynamic nature of strategic reading instruction, and the individualized student responses to CALLA-based pedagogy. The study was conducted at an urban secondary school where English is taught as a foreign language [Zhang, L. J., & Wu, A., 2009; 37–59]. The participants included 25 students aged

14–16 years, enrolled in the 9th grade, with mixed proficiency levels ranging from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate, as determined by standardized placement tests [Chamot, A. U., & Robbins, J., 2006; 45]. None of the students had previously received any formal strategy-based instruction in reading. The classroom teacher, who was also the primary instructor during the intervention, held a Master's degree in English Language Teaching and received prior training in CALLA methodology through a professional development course.

The instructional intervention lasted for 10 consecutive weeks, with two 45-minute reading sessions per week, totaling 20 instructional hours. All reading activities were designed around CALLA's three instructional phases:

Three instructional phases

Preparation Phase	Students activated background knowledge related to the reading topic, discussed learning objectives, and were introduced to specific cognitive (e.g., inferring, summarizing) and metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, evaluating).
Presentation Phase	The teacher modeled the use of targeted strategies using think-alouds while engaging with expository and narrative academic texts drawn from subjects such as science, history, and global issues.
Practice Phase	Students applied strategies independently in guided reading tasks, participated in group discussions, completed graphic organizers, and wrote reflections [Oxford, R. L., 2011; 90-98]. Peer collaboration and self-assessment were embedded in this phase to reinforce strategy internalization.

table.1.

Each lesson was built around authentic, content-rich reading texts aligned with the school curriculum, promoting the integration of language and academic subject learning. To capture both qualitative and quantitative evidence of reading development and strategy use, multiple data sources were employed:

Data Collection Instruments

Pre- and Post-Intervention Reading Tests	These included comprehension questions, vocabulary tasks, and summarization exercises designed to measure changes in reading proficiency.
Classroom Observations	Learners recorded their reflections on strategy use, difficulties encountered, and insights gained after each reading task.
Semi-Structured Interviews	Selected students (n = 10) and the classroom teacher were interviewed at the end of the intervention to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of the CALLA approach and its impact on reading skills.

Teacher's Reflective Logs	The teacher maintained weekly notes describing the lesson progression, students' reactions, challenges, and adjustments made to strategy instruction.
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table.2.

A combination of thematic content analysis and descriptive statistics was used to analyze the collected data. Qualitative data from journals, interviews, and observations were transcribed and coded using NVivo software to identify recurring themes related to strategy use, motivation, metacognitive awareness, and reading comprehension development.

RESULTS

The implementation of the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) in the reading classroom yielded notable improvements in students' reading proficiency, strategic behavior, and metacognitive awareness, as observed through qualitative and quantitative data sources. The results are organized into three key thematic areas: (1) development of reading comprehension skills, (2) increased use and internalization of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and (3) changes in learner attitudes and engagement toward reading tasks [Grabe, W., 2009; 67-70]. Quantitative data from the pre- and post-intervention reading assessments revealed a substantial increase in students' comprehension abilities [Chamot, A. U., 2009; 59]. The average class score on the initial reading test was 56.4%, while the final assessment average rose to 74.3%, indicating an overall improvement of 17.9 percentage points. Students demonstrated enhanced abilities to identify main ideas, make inferences, recognize contextual meanings of vocabulary, and summarize paragraphs effectively.

Disaggregated analysis showed that students in the lower-proficiency subgroup made the most pronounced gains some improving by over 25 percentage points suggesting that CALLA's structured and explicit strategy instruction is particularly beneficial for learners who initially struggle with academic texts [Cohen, A. D., 2011; 46]. These improvements were supported by teacher observations, which recorded a shift from surface-level decoding to deeper textual analysis and interpretation during class discussions and reading tasks. Evidence from reading journals and classroom observations indicated that students gradually began to adopt and internalize a wide range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies introduced through CALLA. In the initial weeks, strategy use was largely superficial and teacher-dependent. However, by the mid-point of the intervention, students independently employed strategies such as predicting content, underlining key phrases, creating mental images, formulating questions, and monitoring their own understanding while reading.

Student reflections revealed an increasing awareness of how and when to apply these strategies [Chamot, A. U., 2004; 14-26]. For example, one student noted, "Before, I just read without thinking. Now I stop and ask myself questions to understand better." Another remarked, "I didn't know I could use a plan for reading like we do in writing. It helps me not get lost." This shift toward strategic autonomy was one of the most significant outcomes of the intervention. Additionally, students began to engage in self-evaluation practices, identifying which strategies worked best for them and adjusting their approach accordingly. This growth in metacognitive regulation was particularly evident in their journal entries and peer discussion contributions, where students articulated their thought processes with increasing clarity.

Beyond measurable improvements in reading scores and strategy use, the intervention also led to positive shifts in students' attitudes toward reading and language learning in general [Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M., 1994; 67]. Interviews revealed that many students who had previously viewed reading in English as a burdensome or intimidating task began to express a sense of confidence,

curiosity, and motivation. The act of successfully navigating complex texts using tangible strategies gave students a sense of accomplishment that contributed to improved self-efficacy.

Classroom participation rates increased, with more students volunteering to read aloud, pose questions, and summarize readings. The teacher's reflective journal also noted that group work became more productive and focused, with students collaboratively discussing strategies and supporting one another during reading activities. This social interaction further reinforced the CALLA principle of learning through collaboration and reflective dialogue. The combined data from assessments, observations, journals, and interviews consistently pointed to the effectiveness of CALLA in:

Summary of Results

Enhancing reading comprehension performance across proficiency levels.
Enhancing reading comprehension performance across proficiency levels.
Encouraging greater engagement and learner autonomy in reading activities.

table.3.

These results affirm the value of integrating cognitive academic strategies into reading instruction, particularly in contexts where students are acquiring a second language or learning academic content in a non-native language.

DISCUSSION

The integration of CALLA into reading instruction proved to be a highly effective strategy for developing students' academic reading skills [Anderson, N. J., 2005; 1-9]. One of the core strengths of the CALLA model lies in its emphasis on making learning strategies explicit and teachable, thus demystifying the reading process for learners. By systematically guiding students through cognitive and metacognitive processes, CALLA not only improved their ability to decode and comprehend texts but also fostered a sense of ownership and autonomy in their learning [O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U., 1990; 34-40]. The study also confirmed the importance of teacher modeling and scaffolding in the initial stages of strategy instruction. When students observed the teacher thinking aloud, posing questions, and making predictions, they were able to internalize these processes and gradually adopt them in their independent reading. Additionally, the reflective component of CALLA, where students assess their own strategy use, helped in reinforcing metacognitive awareness and encouraged continuous self-improvement. Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified some challenges. Some students initially resisted the use of unfamiliar strategies, and there was a need for sustained support to help them integrate these strategies into their habitual reading practices. Time constraints and curriculum demands also posed barriers to the full implementation of CALLA, suggesting the need for careful planning and administrative support.

CONCLUSION

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach offers a robust framework for enhancing students' reading skills by integrating cognitive and metacognitive strategies with language and content instruction. The results of the study clearly demonstrate that CALLA not only improves reading comprehension but also equips learners with lifelong learning strategies that transcend individual subject areas. In the context of language education, especially for EFL and ESL learners, CALLA provides an effective means of bridging the gap between language proficiency and academic achievement. It is therefore recommended that educators receive training in CALLA methodologies and incorporate its principles into reading curricula to foster deeper engagement, critical thinking, and learner independence.

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