

The Use of Metacognitive Listening Strategy among English-majored Students

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Abstract Teaching a suitable listening strategy is really important to English majors. Thanks to the effective strategy, it helps students improve their listening skills as well as become interested in English. This study aims to find out students' use of metacognitive listening strategy at Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City (NLU). Mixed methods research design was employed and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in this study. Ninety students from three classes participated in this study. They were divided into the experimental group and control group. Listening pre- and post-tests was used for data collection. The study found that most students used metacognitive strategy when they listened. The study also made several recommendations for both teachers and students.

Keywords: English-majored students, listening skills, metacognitive listening strategies, Vietnamese university context

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1. Introduction

Listening is one of the four basic skills of language learning, and it plays a major role in everyday communication. Especially when learning a language for communication, listening plays a vital role, because it can help language learners to obtain pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary and grammar, and the understanding of the conveyed information can be completely based on the intonation of the voice, tone and accent. It is only possible when we listen without a proper understanding of the input, no progress can be made in learning. In addition, communication cannot be achieved without listening skill. Furthermore, every study on language skills acquisition proves that when we communicate, we will gain 45% of language ability from listening, 30% of ability from language, and 15% from language of reading, 10% in writing. The highest proportion of information exchange is involved in effective communication, so listening must be regarded as the skill of language. Unlike other language skills, listeners find it relatively difficult to learn because it has all the interrelated sub-skills, such as receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. However, with the emergence of communicative teaching and therefore the specialization in proficiency, the learning and teaching of listening has begun to receive more attention. However, listening has not been fully integrated into the curriculum, and more attention needs to be paid in the language learning environment.

Listening is a necessary skill for students to acquire knowledge and information in text. In listening, students are required to understand information about what has been explained in the text. While listening, students also want to use their skills to process information and become an effective listener. In fact, listening comprehension is not as easy as exploration many pages in book and explain the information appropriately. This is a very complex task. Underwood [1] stated seven potential problems in learning English. Firstly, "The audience cannot control the speed at which the speaker speaks" (page 16). Secondly, the major problem in learning English is that students do not decide to have words repeated. Thirdly, sometimes when the listeners listen to a new word, they have to stop to find out the meaning of that word, so they miss the next part of the text. Fourthly, listeners may not recognize the signals which the speakers use to move from one point to another, or repeat a point. Fifthly, listeners find that it is challenging to concentrate in foreign language even when the topic is interesting. Sixthly, learning habits in the classroom are emphasized. Students often worry and are discouraged if they fail to understand the meaning of the words. Lastly, lacking contextual knowledge makes comprehension problems arise, even if students understand the main idea of the text, it may be difficult for them to understand due to differences in cultural background.

In terms of listening strategies, they are considered a motivation for learners to become successful in listening skills. Listening strategies are "strategies that listeners consciously or unconsciously use in order that they can understand, analyze and interpret the text" (Vandergrift,

[2], p.10). It is important to consider that the choice of listening strategies has an influence on listening competence. The role of teachers plays an integral part in teaching listening strategies. Teaching listening strategies is not only engaged with students' ability but also teaching strategies, techniques, methods that use in classroom. Teachers not only follow the principles, but they should implement the stages of teaching reading comprehension including pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Teaching listening is a very hard and responsible job; therefore, teachers need to find out effective tools, techniques and principles for their teaching process so that their students can achieve their listening comprehension better and better. In conclusion, to evaluate the effectiveness of listening strategies on students' listening skills, the following question is formulated:

- What are the effects of metacognitive listening strategy on English-majored students?

2. Literature Review

Metacognitive listening strategy includes processes of planning, monitoring, selective attention and evaluating [2]. Stein [3] carefully defined "the various tactics listeners use in order to comprehend or achieve whatever their goal might be" (p.22). Sheorey and Mokhatari [4] stated that metacognitive strategy is used to plan specific actions to get a specific aim. Holden [5] suggested that metacognitive listening strategy has highly positive influence on learners' listening skills. Wenden [6] demonstrated that the metacognitive strategy is a basis step to build the character of learners. It means that the deployment of this strategy helps learners to achieve autonomy in education. Students become more active to manage and find out the best solutions to practice and reinforce what they have learned. For this kind of strategy, learners must make a plan for listening, analyzing the listening process dynamically and evaluating the outcomes through listening tasks. Learners can be awareness of what specific strategies are as well as how and when they are used with metacognitive strategy.

Some scholars believed that students who highly pay attention to and develop their own learning strategies will get more achievement in their learning than those who do not focus much on learning strategies. Metacognitive learning strategies can help learners deal with problems when they have difficulties (Ratebi [7]). Oxford ([8], p.1) added that "strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active and autonomous participation, which are essential for the development of communicative competence". Besides, Anderson [9] mentioned that metacognitive strategies are the most essential strategies for developing students' learning skills. Coskun [10] even made sure that without metacognitive strategies, students will lose their directions in further learning. According to Wenden [6], students who have metacognitive strategies awareness can get benefits for their learning such as improve learning process, becoming confident to learn English subject, easily solving problems in language skills and being able to cope with new situations successfully.

Coskun [10] stated that metacognitive strategies have a direct and beneficial effect on listening performance. In

the listening process, learners with more knowledge of metacognitive strategies will be more active in discovering and solving problems, rather than accepting or ignoring them (Goh [11]). In addition, Jinhong [12] reiterated O'Malley and Chamot's [13] generalization of the relationship between metacognitive strategies and listening comprehension, that is, "metacognitive strategies are useful for improving students' listening. It's important to adapt to yourself" (p.14). Goh [14] summarized three benefits of metacognitive teaching in listening:

- "(1) It improves affect in listening, helping learners to be more confident, more motivated and less anxious;
- (2) It has a positive effect on listening performance;
- (3) Weak listeners potentially benefit the greatest from it." (p.10)

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Sampling Procedures

The population of the study was 90 students from three different classes at NLU. The participants were considered to possess similar level of English. All participants were selected randomly into two groups by using lottery system. Thanks to the lottery system, participants had an equal chance of being in the treatment group or in the control group. The key to random assignment of experimental research is that the members of the experimental group and the control group are the same.

3.2. Research Instruments

3.2.1. Pre-test

In this study, the pre-test was used to check the listening ability of the participants and they could learn in the texts as well as their performance in the listening test before the treatment. The listening test consists of 18 questions, which in the research's view, is difficult for students to concentrate and complete all the questions. In the first part, the researcher designed 8 short and easy sentences about multiple choices from A to C and the second part was included 10 sentences about gap-filling in which participants of two groups in listening test.

3.2.2. Experiment

In terms of the teaching procedure of the experimental group, there were 3 different topics related to three different listening selections in the course book. For each topic, the lecturer introduced a list vocabulary in advance. The responsibility of students in this group was to put check mark next to the words they had already known. They are not allowed to use the dictionary to look up words. Instead, students were instructed the strategy of guessing meaning from metacognitive strategy. Also, they had a chance to practice this strategy by doing some vocabulary and listening tasks. Finally, they worked the listening choice and then applied this strategy to do some tasks related to the listening including listening topic, main idea and answering many questions. For the control group, they have similar learning procedures; however, they used their listening skills to listen.

3.2.3. Post - test

The post-test aimed to check whether using metacognitive listening strategies instruction could facilitate their listening comprehension or not. The post-test is similar to the pre-test in terms of format, types of tasks and numbers of tasks with 18 questions for the listening test to use metacognitive listening strategy.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Before starting the treatment, a pre-test was conducted. The pre-test was checked by expert and then it was piloted with a group of 35 participants to check the comprehensibility of the content of the test. On the first week of experiment, two groups joined the pre-test to ensure that they had the same starting point of English proficiency. From week two to twelve, the researcher instructed the listening module for two groups, but the experimental group was instructed with the metacognitive strategy of listening while the control group received no treatment.

At the end of the module, both groups took the post-test in 60 minutes to find out whether there were any differences between the two groups. Also, the participants in the experimental group responded the questionnaire to assess their attitudes towards what they had learned on their metacognitive listening strategy on listening comprehension after the treatment.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

After finishing all tests and collecting data for the questionnaire, the data were analyzed and tested reliability by using SPSS version 20. More specially, Descriptive Statistics was run to examine students' comprehension in listening before and after the treatment.

At the same time, the Independent Samples T-test was run to compare mean difference, mean scores and standard deviation of two groups in the pre-test and the post-test. Next, the researcher analyzed the data by using Descriptive Statistics and Pair Samples T-test to compare the mean difference and mean scores before and after treatment within each group. The Pair Samples T-test is used to test the difference between the mean of two pair groups on the same subjects. Lastly, the Descriptive Statistics was run to analyze the results of the experimental group's performance in the post-test regarding to metacognitive listening strategy in order to examine the effect of each type of metacognitive listening strategy on students.

4. Findings

The comparison of the mean scores of listening test between control group and experimental group before the treatment.

The pre-test was designed to measure the participants' ability on using metacognitive listening strategy on students' English listening comprehension before the treatment in the study. This self-constructed test consisted of four parts. The first part was 10 short sentences that

were multiple choice questions in which participants of two groups had to choose the best answers in these sentences based on metacognitive strategy. There were three options for them to choose the correct answer from A to C. In the second part, there was gap-filling with 8 sentences in total adapted from the course book. The total score of this test was 10 points in which each correct got 0.5 for the twenty questions. More specially, the total mean score of the control ($M=6.33$) and that of the experimental group ($M=6.03$) just above the average on the scale of "1 as minimum" to "10 as maximum" which indicates that before the treatment, the participants had a little capacity of listening in their listening comprehension. Besides that, the mean difference between two groups ($MD=.401$) was very low. It highlights that two groups had the same initial level of using metacognitive strategy on listening learning. Moreover, the results in the Independent Sample t-test signify that the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is non-significant. The Sig (2-tailed) value as .243 was higher than .05. It means the homogeneity of the control and experimental group in listening learning and listening comprehension before the treatment was confirmed.

The comparisons of the mean scores of listening test between control group and experimental group after the treatment.

The post-test was designed to measure the ability of participants on using metacognitive listening strategies instruction on students' English listening comprehension after the treatment in the study. This post-test was a self-constructed test and it had the same format with the pre-test.

After the treatment, the total mean score of the listening test of the experimental group ($M=8.77$) was very much higher than that of the control group ($M=7.37$) with the mean difference between two groups ($MD=-1.200$). In addition, an Independent Samples T-test was also conducted to evaluate whether there is a significant difference between two groups in the ability of using metacognitive listening strategies instruction after the treatment. The results signify that the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is statistically significant. The Sig. (2-tailed) value is .003 which indicates that after the treatment, the participants' ability of listening comprehension between two groups was significantly different: the level of using metacognitive listening strategies learning of the experimental group was greater than that of the control group. The experimental group's listening comprehension was much better.

The comparison between the results of pre-test and post-test within each group.

To compare the mean scores of the participants' ability of using metacognitive listening strategies in listening comprehension within the control group and experimental group before and after treatment, the Descriptive Statistics and Paired Sample T-test were run to gain the participants' performance. The control group, the mean score creased from the pre-test ($M=6.33$) to the post-test ($M=7.37$) with the mean difference ($MD=-.833$). Furthermore, the Sig.(2-tailed) value as .010 indicates there was a significant difference of the participants in the control group before and after the treatment. For the experimental

group, the mean score creased from the pre-test ($M=6.03$) to the post-test ($M=8.77$) with the mean difference ($MD=-2.433$). Moreover, the Sig. (2-tailed) value as .000 indicated there was significant difference of the participants in the experimental group before and after the treatment.

However, when considering the values of mean difference between the control group and the experimental group, it can be clearly observed that the mean score of the experimental group was much greater than that of the control group after the treatment. In other words, the mean score of the experimental group was significantly developed after the treatment.

Figure 1 offers a general view on two groups' performance on using metacognitive listening strategy on listening comprehension in the pre-test and the post-test. The ending point in the post-test was much higher than in the pre-test. It revealed that the use of metacognitive listening strategy made progress in students' listening comprehension.

5. Discussion

At the beginning of experimental teaching, the pretest of listening was given to the experimental group and the control group. The results of the pretest showed that there was an insignificant difference in mean scores of two groups. It came to the conclusion that it was valuable for the researcher to conduct the experimental teaching applying metacognitive strategy for the experimental group.

The experimental group was trained listening with metacognitive strategy. As a result, they improved their listening comprehension through the experimental teaching. In addition, their scores were higher than the control group. It means that students with the

experimental teaching had better results than students without experimental teaching. Besides, the pretest and posttest proved that metacognitive strategy improved students' scores. To conclude, with strong evidence from the t-Test, the researcher could affirm that applying metacognitive strategy in listening comprehension brings the students' achievement. This result agreed with the hypothesis of the study that metacognitive strategy have good effect on improving listening comprehension of students at Nong Lam University. The finding of this research supports the studies of Nguyen [15]; Tavakoli et al. [16]; Sheory and Mokhatari [4]; Vandergrift [2]; Stein [3]; Wenden [6]; Ozeki [17]; Birjandi and Rahimi [18]; Mansoor and Ebrahim [19] and Mehdi et al. [20] because they claimed that metacognitive strategy improves students' performance on listening comprehension. On the other hand, the result of this study contradicted that of Rahimi and Katal [21] and Malik et al [22]. Rahimi and Katal [21] just found that metacognitive strategy only improves oral proficiency but do not influence students' listening performance. Besides, Malik et al [22] also concluded that metacognitive strategy does not improve students' listening comprehension.

The effect of strategy training towards students is very important because it helps students improve listening skill. Moreover, it is very crucial for teachers to help students be more aware of their learning situation and potential setbacks they may encounter, and to cultivate their ability to cope with difficulties repeatedly. It can be concluded that the traditional concept of only allowing learners to access listening texts in listening courses should be reconsidered. On the contrary, the strategy training plan that embeds the strategy in the listening course should be included in the regular listening teaching plan to help learners become more effective listeners and ultimately enable them to master another language more effectively and faster.

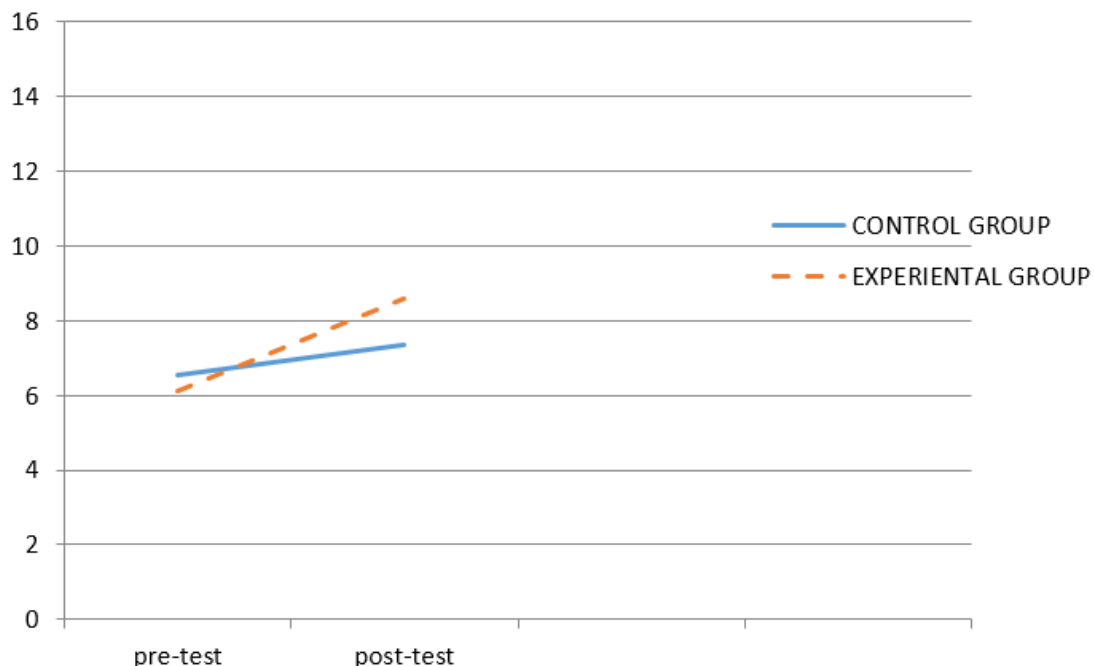


Figure 1. Participants' ability of using metacognitive listening strategy

6. Conclusion

The results in this study have indicated that students' listening comprehension could be enhanced by using metacognitive listening strategy. The experimental group performed better than the control group in the post-test. In other words, after processing with metacognitive listening strategy, students' listening comprehension has been improved. Moreover, the participants who are treated with metacognitive listening strategy also had positive perceptions towards the effects of metacognitive listening strategy on students' English listening comprehension. They also recognized the importance of metacognitive listening strategy on their improvement of listening learning. Furthermore, they believed that using metacognitive strategy could help them figure out and do better and easier. In the respect of listening comprehension, using metacognitive listening strategy could support them to find out the topics, main ideas and inferencing information in the listening texts. Therefore, students paid more and more interest in learning listening thanks to the use of metacognitive listening strategy.

7. Recommendation

This study has some recommendations for both English teachers and students. Teachers should understand clearly about metacognitive listening strategy and stages of listening, so they can help students in guiding them the right instruction while they are listening. Secondly, teachers have to make sure that students understand fully and exactly about the strategy. Teachers should provide students the knowledge of strategy that relates to each stage of listening. Thirdly, teachers should help students figure out the way to listen in order to understand the text and do the exercises step by step. Also, they should encourage them to participate in listening text. To do this, teachers have to make sure that students have fully understood the information and have enough information they need. Finally, while introducing the metacognitive strategy to students, teachers realized that students had difficulty in doing listening guide sheet. Some steps of listening guide sheet made students confused. To avoid this situation, teachers should explain clearly the listening guide sheet before listening. Besides, teachers should monitor the students in order to help them if they do not understand or have problem while doing listening guide sheet. For the students, they should know clearly the effect of metacognitive strategy, so they can apply these strategies in listening and even other skills effectively. To do that, students have to understand exactly each strategy in metacognitive strategy by listening carefully to teacher's instruction. Besides, they should participate in training metacognitive strategy in class. Furthermore, planning strategy before listening as well as reflective strategy after listening help students create good habit in listening and learning in general. So, they can train themselves by using metacognitive strategy.

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