"I Give Up And Stop Listening": Fostering Metacognitive Listening Strategy Awareness In The English Classrooms in Taiwan

Chiung-chiuen Chen
Department of English
National Changhua University of Education, Taiwan

David S. D. Tseng
Department of English
National Changhua University of Education, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the instructional effect of metacognitive listening strategies on EFL college students' metacognitive listening strategy awareness as well as their perceptions of strategy instruction. This study uses a process-based approach for instruction of metacognitive strategies. The instruments in this study include a metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire (MALQ) and a stimulated-recall on MALQ. The results show that there is slightly positive effect of instruction though there is no statistically significant effect of listening strategy instruction on student's metacognitive listening strategy awareness. Plus, surprisingly, it is found that students are conscious of their metacognitive strategy use as they listen. It is suggested that teachers use various authentic listening text for fostering EFL college students' metacognitive listening strategy awareness.

Key words: metacognitive listening strategy awareness, metacognitive Strategies, listening strategy instruction

INTRODUCTION

For decades, much research into L2 listening (e.g. Bei and Xinguang, 2017; Chamot et al, 1989; Peters, 1999; Rahimirad, 2015; Vandergrift, 2006, 2010) has been paid much attention on L2 learners' listening strategy use. Studies (e.g. Chamot et al, 1989; Goh, 1998; Peterson, 2001;) indicate that listening strategies use, including cognitive and metacognitive strategies, is in relation to L2 learners' listening performances. Some studies have focused on investigating L2 learners' listening strategies awareness (Rahimi and Katal, 2012; Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's 2010). Rahimi and Katal (2012) found that L2 learners are not aware of their metacognitive strategy use in listening. According to Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's (2010), there was a relationship between metacognitive strategy instruction and L2 listeners' listening performances. Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) adopted an "integrated instruction of a sequential repertoire of strategies" to improve ESL learners' listening comprehension. Most of previous studies were conducted either in the ESL context or in the teaching languages other than English context. Few of them have been conducted to examine whether metacognitive listening strategy instruction has similar effect in the EFL context, as in contrast to the ESL context. This study, by replicating Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's (2010) "process-based approach," aimed at investigating the instructional effect of metacognitive listening strategies on EFL college students' metacognitive awareness development. Research questions posed in this study are:

1. What are the instructional effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL college students' metacognitive listening strategy awareness in Taiwan?
2. What are EFL college students' perceptions of taught metacognitive listening strategies in the English classrooms in Taiwan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

listening processing

Theories of the listening comprehension process have been proposed for in the past decades (Peterson, 2001). Anderson (1983) proposed a theory to explain a three-stage listening processes – the perceptual phase, the parsing phase, and the utilization phase. In the perceptual stage, the listener works on decoding sound unit and syllable boundaries to identify words. In the parsing stage, the listener works on decoding words and phrases to form meaningful units. Lastly, in the utilization stage, the listener relates old information and new information for comprehension (Anderson, 1985). For proficient listeners to understand a spoken discourse, various levels of processes, e.g. top-down and bottom-up processes, simultaneously interact (Peterson, 2001). Here, "Top-down" refers to a higher level processing driven by "listener's expectations, understandings of the context, the topic, the nature of text, and the nature of the world;" while "bottom-up" refers to a lower level processing "triggered by the sounds, words and phrases…to decode speech and assign meaning" (Peterson, 2001, p.88).

listening strategy use and L2 listening performances

Based on the listening comprehension models, the listener would seek appropriate strategies in the listening process (Chamot and Küpper, 1989; O'Malley et al, 1898; Peterson, 2001). Chamot and Küpper (1989) pointed out that some specific metacognitive strategies are related to listening, such as advance organization, selective attention, monitoring, problem identification, and self-evaluation. Previous studies have also shown the significant relationship between listening strategy use and listening comprehension performance. Bacon's (1992a, 1992b) studies examined the strategy use on the phases, e.g. perceptual processing, parsing, and the utilization phase, of the listening process by university students who were learning Spanish as an L2. She found that "monitoring" appeared to be used equally by both the more and the less skilled listeners. On the other hand, Chien and Wei's (1998) study revealed that more competent EFL college students tended to use various types of listening strategies.

Metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive listening strategy awareness

Metacognitive knowledge consists of "knowledge and beliefs about the factors, e.g. task, person, and strategic, that interact during any cognitive activity" (Vandergrift et al., 2006; Vandergrift, 2010, p.473). Metacognitive listening strategy awareness refers to learners' metacognitive knowledge- understanding their metacognitive listening strategy use in listening (Rahimi and Katal, 2012). According to Vandergrift et al. (2006), metacognitive knowledge can explain about 13 % of variance in listening performances. Some studies (Vandergrift, 2010; Rahimirad, 2015) found that L2 listeners' degree of metacognitive awareness is related to their listening performances. Vandergrift (2010) suggested that the proposed "process-based approach", in which L2 listeners may use such strategies as prediction, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving, can help develop their metacognitive listening awareness.

Listening Strategy Instruction Research

Listening strategy instruction has been believed to be important for the improvement of L2 learners' listening ability (Vandergrift, 2010). Some studies (Carrier (2003), Graham & Macaro,

2008; McGruddy, 1995; O'Malley et al.,1985; Schwartz,1992;Seo, 2000;Thompson and Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 2003) examined the effect of L2 listening instruction on L2 listening performances. Among them, O'Malley et al.'s (1985) study investigated the impact of different amounts and different types of listening strategy instruction, including selective attention, note-taking, encouragement and cooperation, on 75 high school ESL learners in listening. They found that listening strategy instruction can significantly improve students' listening performance. Students that were taught both metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies outperformed those that only received cognitive strategy instruction. They pointed out that the amount of strategy training may also positively influence the learners' listening task performance.

In the EFL setting, Ross and Rost (1991) taught the listening strategies that are commonly used by high-proficiency Japanese EFL college students to low-proficiency students. The results showed that certain strategies are effective in helping L2 learners of all proficiency levels comprehend oral texts. In another foreign language setting, Thompson & Rubin (1996) conducted a study to investigate the effects of metacognitive and cognitive listening strategy instruction on foreign-language learners' listening comprehension. The subjects in their study were university students learning Russian as a foreign language. The results showed that listening strategy instruction was effective in helping foreign-language learners comprehend video texts. Kohler's (2002) study compared the difference in listening comprehension between the intervention group and the nonintervention group and found that listening strategies can be taught to lower achievers who were learning Spanish as a foreign language at the university level.

Although improvement in L2 listening can be achieved through listening strategy instruction as indicated by the above reviewed studies, some other studies have reported that there was no improvement in learners' listening performance after strategy instruction, and that the improvement was limited to certain types of listening strategy instruction (Ozeki, 2000; Seo, 2000). Then, an important issue raised by these studies was "how listening strategy instruction can be most effectively implemented" as noted by Macaro et al. (2007). The inquiry can be, for example, what types of strategy should be integrated for instruction and may be most beneficial to L2 learners' listening performances? Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) conducted an "integrated instruction of a sequential repertoire of strategies" to examine its effect on L2 listeners' listening comprehension achievement, and on their growth in metacognitive awareness of listening. Their study suggested that their pedagogy framework can best benefit the "less skilled listeners" (ibid: 490). However, although the results of this study were able to show the positive effect of strategy instruction, the researchers themselves indicated that replication of this kind of study is needed to further validate the effect of such an instruction approach. Therefore, this study, by using the "process-based approach," aimed to investigate whether classroom EFL listening strategy instruction can effectively raise learners' metacognitive awareness.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quasi-experimental study. An experimental group and a control group were formed by two intact college classes. In this study, in additional to the regular freshmen English class instruction in both groups, a seven-week metacognitive Listening Strategy Instruction session was implemented in the experimental group, in contrast to the regular instruction in the control group. A Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) and a Stimulated-recall on MALQ Responses were administered in both groups. Paired-Sampled T Test and ANCOVA were used for data analyses.

Participants

The participants, registering in a required Freshman English course, 3 hours per week, were eighty-eight freshmen of non-English majors from two intact classes at a university in central Taiwan. One was assigned as the experimental group (N=44), and the other, the control group (N=44). Out of the total 88 participants, 11 were later excluded in the study due to their absence from one of the data collection sections.

Instruments

The instruments employed in this study were a Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) and a stimulated-recall on the participants' MALQ responses.

Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)

The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) adopted in this study was developed by Vandergrift et al., (2006). It was to measure the participants' metacognitive knowledge about listening (see also Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010, for more details). A pretest and a posttest were conducted to find out the possible changes of the participants' metacognitive awareness before and after the listening strategy instruction treatment. This questionnaire is composed of five categories, with a total of 21 items. That is, Planning and Evaluation (items 1, 10, 14, 20, & 21), Problem Solving (items 5,7,9,13,17, &19), Directed Attention (items 2, 6, 12, &16), Mental Translation (items 4,11, &18), and Person Knowledge (items 3,8, &15) (cited in Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010: 477).

The stimulated-recall on MALQ responses

The stimulated-recall sessions was designed by Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) to understand the participants' explanations for the discrepancies in their MALQ responses.

Listening strategy instruction

The pedagogical stages

The listening strategy instruction in the current study followed closely the pedagogical framework used by several previous researchers, e.g. Field (2001), Vandergrift (2004), and Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010). Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari identifed their instructional framework as the "process-based approach", through which the process-based activities were designed for raising students' awareness of metacognitive processes of listening. The framework of the pedagogical stages and metacognitive processes of listening, adopted from Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010, p. 475), is presented as follows:

Pedagogical stages	Metacognitive processes
Prelistening: Planning/predicting stage	
1. After students have been informed of the topic and text type, they predict the types of information and possible words they may hear.	1. Planning and directed attention
First listen: First verifications stage	
2. Students verify their initial hypothesis, correct as required, and note additional information understood.	2. Selective attention, monitoring and evaluation
3. Students compare what they have understood/written with peers, modify as required, establish what still needs resolution, and decide on the important details that still require special attention.	3. Monitoring, evaluation, planning, and selective attention

Second listen: Second verification stage

4. Students verify points of earlier disagreement, make corrections, and write down additional details understood.	4. Selective attention, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving
5. Class discussion, in which all class members contribute to the reconstruction of the text's main points and most pertinent details, is interspersed with reflections on how students arrive at the meaning of certain words or parts of the texts.	5. Monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving

Third listen: Final verification stage

6. Students listen specifically for the information revealed in the class discussion which they were not able to decipher earlier.	6. Selective attention, monitoring, and Problem-solving

Reflection stage

7. Based on the earlier discussion of strategies used to compensate for what was not understood, students write goals for the next listening activity	7. Evaluation, planning

Lesson plans for the experimental treatment
The instructor worked over a six-week period to raise the participants' awareness of metacognitive processes about listening by instructing them a repertoire of listening strategies. During this period, they listened to a variety of authentic texts they often encounter in their daily life. The instructional steps and the materials used for instruction are presented as follows:

Instructional steps
Step 1: The participants were informed of the topic and text type. Based on their prior knowledge, they were required to predict what information, what words and phrases they might hear from the lecture, and write them down.

Step 2: After completing their predictions, students listened to the text for the first time. After listening to the text, they were asked to verify and correct what they had written down, and to add the information they understood.

Step 3: Students compared what they had understood and written with peers, and were encouraged to modify their information.

Step 4: Students listened to the text for the second time. They were encouraged to write the details they understood.

Step 5: Students worked in pairs to discuss points and disagreements, and to add more details they understood.

Step 6: Students listened to the text for the third time. They were encouraged to listen specifically to the information revealed in the class discussion.

Step 7: Based on this listening activity, students shared their experience in the listening process and wrote down the goals for the next listening activity.

Materials
Week 1: The participants listened to a simulated ibt TOEFL text- a lecture from an anthropology class.

Week 2: The participants watched a film from "National Geographic", entitled "The Science of Stress."

Week 3: The participants listened to Taiwan EZ news from ICRT, a radio station.

Week 4: The participants listened to one of the oral texts from their textbooks, which is a conversation between 2 students discussing about what they have for breakfast.

Week 5: The participants watched a film talking about the great ways to improve their study habits.

Week 6: The participant listened to a text, in which a Brazilian talks about the manners and etiquettes in her country.

Week 7: The participants listened to a simulated ibt TOEFL text- a lecture in an introduction session of a literature class.

Lesson plans for the control group treatment
The control group listened to the same texts and watched the same films as those in the experimental group. However, the participants in this group did not "engage in any formal prediction activity, nor were they given an opportunity to discuss, predict, or monitor their comprehension with a classmate." (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010, p.479). They did not discuss about the strategy use and engage in any reflection on their listening, either.

Procedure
MALQs were administered to all the participants before and after the experimental treatment. Four voluntary students participated in the stimulated-recall session for the MALQ responses.

From week 1 to week 9, the two groups maintained their regular English listening activities (e.g. listening to news report via the Internet, watching films, completing the tasks in the textbooks, etc.) The experimental treatment, i.e. the listening activities aiming at raising students' awareness of metacognitive processes, was carried out over a 7-week period, from week 10 to week 16.

RESULTS
Question one: What are the instructional effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL college students' metacognitive listening strategy awareness?
Table 1 shows the mean scores on MALQ pretests and MALQ posttests of both the experimental group and the control group. Paired-Sampled T Test was conducted to examine the growth on awareness of metacognitive knowledge of these two groups. The results showed that there was a difference on the mean score between the pretest and the posttest on each group. However, the difference of each group was not statistically significant at the 0.05 probability level (EXP, $t=.69$, $p > .05$; CON, $t= .64$, $p> .05$). The experimental group had higher mean score in the post-test (M= 3.60, SD=.451) than that in the pre-test (M = 3.31, SD=.48), while the control group had lower mean score in the post-test (M= 3.64, SD=.53) than that in the pre-test (M=3.75, SD=.63).

Table 1 Effects of listening strategy instruction on growth in metacognitive knowledge

	Pre-test		Post-test		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Experimental group (n= 38)	3.31	.48	3.60	.45	0.69
Control group (n=39)	3.75	.63	3.64	.53	0.64

Note: Means for metacognitive knowledge ranged from 1 to 5.
P*< .05

Question 2: What are EFL college students' perceptions of taught metacognitive listening strategies in the English classrooms in Taiwan?

Four participants in the experimental group made comments on any changes in their MALQ responses.

It can be seen that participants became conscious of their metacognitive strategy use as they listen.

The first student explained:
After a lot of listening training, my listening has improved a lot. Now, I realize that as I listen, I can utilize my prior experience and knowledge to predict what have heard and to guess what the listening is about. In addition, in the past, I always lost concentration as I listen. Now, I can concentrate more on particular parts as I listen to a specific topic.

The second student said:
As I listen, I did not try to understand every word. Instead, I use my knowledge to help me understand the difficult words in a listening text. For example, I use my experience to guess that "college students can **get a loan** for school tuition" not "**get alone** for school tuition".

The third student described:
I try to translate key words as I listen. It helps in listening test. But, it might not help to improve my overall listening ability. In addition, I think I should have a goal in mind as I listen. But, I still don't know if it helps improve my listening comprehension. Lastly, it is true that when I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening. I have to think about this.

The fourth student said:
I usually translate in my head as I listen. But, it does not help improve my listening comprehension. I think that having a goal in mind might help as I listen. I'll think about it. However, the listening strategies trained in class did not help a lot. Probably I've not tried to use them as I listen.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effect of metacognitive listening strategies instruction on EFL college students' metacognitive awareness of listening by using Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's (2010) "process-based approach" to teach listening strategies. The finding indicates that the listening strategy instruction can raise the participants' metacognitive knowledge of listening to a certain degree, though not statistically significant (t=.69, p > .05). The finding also indicates that the participants in the experimental group had a growth in metacognitive awareness of listening while the control group regressed on it. However, the difference between the two groups is

not statistically significant (F= .067, p > .05). It is possible that the integrated instruction of listening strategies in the experimental group may help the participants raise their metacognitive strategies in listening; however, the non-significant difference between these two groups may be due to the length and intensiveness of training. In other words, the participants in the experimental group may become conscious of the instructed metacognitive strategy use but they were still not able to apply those strategies to the listening of various authentic texts. The evidence can be found from the fourth participant's MALQ responses, when said, "Probably I've not tried to use them as I listen," while the other three indicated that they were able to use the metacognitive strategies they learned from the class.

Although no statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of the pretest and the posttest in the intervention group, it is suggested that the proposed guided practice can help L2 listeners acquire metacognitive knowledge through "task performance" and through "practice with the naturalistic oral texts' (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010). As Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) put it, L2 listeners' listening performances may get improved when they are trained "the clustering of cognitive strategies with metacognitive strategies and the task-specific and learner-centered characteristics of the intervention." (p.472). Also, based on the previous study results (e.g. Goh, 2008; Pressley, 2002), it is implied that the L2 listeners' growing metacognitive knowledge of L2 listening may help them regulate and improve their listening comprehension. From the findings, it can also be seen that EFL college students benefit from the metacognitive listening strategy instruction. They become conscious of various types of metacognitive strategies about listening, such as problem-solving, planning and evaluation, mental translation, and directed attention.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the findings suggest that the pedagogical framework of metacognitive strategies of listening can help EFL college students become aware of metacognitive strategies of listening. Also, using this integrated approach can make authentic oral texts more accessible to EFL listeners. As suggested by Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010), the pedagogy for this study provided the greater diversity in metacognitive activities (e.g. providing the various authentic texts, such as, a film and an interview) to make the process of listening more motivating and interesting. However, although the findings of this study show positive effect of the metacognitive strategy instruction to college EFL learners, more rigorous studies of this kind with a particular emphasis on the intervention magnitude are still needed.

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