In the Name of God

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The Relationship among Metacognitive Listening Strategies, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Listening Comprehension among Iranian EFL University Students.

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Hereby, we recommend that this thesis submitted by Ehsan Kazemian be accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Science in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (M.Sc.).

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To my mother, father, and wife

Who have been great source of motivation

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Abstract

The present study attempted to investigate the relationship among metacognitive listening strategies (MLS), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), and listening comprehension (LC) among Iranian EFL learners. Gender was taken into account, regarding males and females use of MLS and score of FLCA. 100 Iranian EFL students studying at Azad and Shahid Bahonar universities of Kerman took part in this study. The participants were junior and senior students majoring in English Translation and English Literature. To obtain the required data the following scales were capitalized on: Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) by Vandergrift et al. (2006) , Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986), and a 50-item listening test taken from Longman Complete Course For The TOEFL Test(Phillips, 2001). The findings revealed that first, there was a significant negative relationship between MLS and FLCA(r=-0.76); second, there was a significant positive relationship between MLS and LC(r=0.76) ; third, a significant negative relationship between FLCA and LC (r= -0.65) was found. In sum, FLCA yielded a negative relationship with the other two variables. As a final point, there was no significant difference between males and females regarding their MLS use and FLCA score.

Key Words: Metacognitive Listening Strategies, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, Listening Comprehension, Gender.

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List of Abbreviations

CLT……. Communicative Language Teaching

COLTAS…….…… Communicative Language Teaching Attitude Scale

EFL…….……. English as a Foreign Language

ESL……..…. English as a Second Language

FL……...…….……...…….…. Foreign Language

FLA …….…….……... Foreign Language Anxiety

FLCA…….…….. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

FLCAS…….……..…. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

FLLA……..…… Foreign Language Listening Anxiety

FLLAS……..… Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale

GPA ……..…….. Grade Point Average

ILA……..…..… International Listening Association

LC…… Listening Comprehension

LLOS …….…….. Language Learning Orientation Scale

MALQ…….. Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire

MLS……..... Metacognitive Listening Strategies

L2…….. Second Language

SLLS ……..…….…… Second Language Listening Strategies

STAI …….……..……. State- Trait Anxiety Inventory

TOEFL……. Test of English as a Foreign Language

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the current study which aims to provide the essential background. Statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, theoretical background of the current investigation, as well as, research questions, limitations of the study, and definition of key terms have been embedded in this section.

1.2. Overview

Language learning strategies have widely been studied and researched. The birth of language strategy research began in 1975by Rubin. According to Grenfell and Macaro the article by Rubin 'what the "Good Language Learner" Can Teach Us' introduced the birth of language learner strategy research (cited in Cohen & Macaro, 2007, p. 11). So far a myriad of research has been done on language learning strategies including listening strategies, reading strategies, oral communication strategies, writing strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. However, in some cases metacognitive strategies have been studied separately apart from other strategies such as cognitive and

affective strategies. Flavell (1979) believes metacognition is cognition of cognition. Chastain (1988) enumerates three levels of mental activity. These activities are conscious, subconscious or paraconscious and metacognition is the last but not the least important mental activity. This level, metacognition, is conscious, but is exploited to monitor and direct one's mental processes (Chastain, 1988).

Anxiety in foreign language classrooms has been reported to be frequent in foreign language settings (Horwitz, Horwitz. & Cope, 1986; Young, 1992). This feeling (apprehension) can be useful if it is facilitative anxiety and harmful in case of debilitative anxiety. Anxiety can be associated with second language contexts such as speaking, listening, and learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Early studies produced inconsistent results due to lack of a device to measure anxiety. However, with the development and establishment of reliable and valid measures of foreign language anxiety in the 1980s (Horwitz et al., 1986), researchers consistently have found a moderate negative relationship between language anxiety and various measures of language achievement (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1986).

As one of the most important language skill, listening has been ignored in most EFL class rooms. Due to its priority in first and

second languages, it can be considered the most important skill. Despite the fact that listening had been ignored for many decades (Richards & Renandya, 2002), listening skills have been given more attention over the last two decades and have been capitalized on in methods such as Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and the Natural approach.

According to Brown (2001) there are some factors that affect listening comprehension such as learners' strategies and characteristics of speaker and listening text. However, a problem for listening comprehension is posed by affective factors, especially anxiety. Community Language Learning was designed to reduce anxiety. Due to the fact that anxiety acts as an affective filter (based on Krashen's term), it can significantly reduce the listener's ability in comprehending the message. Based on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, non-anxious learners perform better than anxious learners. Apart from anxiety, self-confidence and motivation are among the factors in Krashen's affective filter hypothesis.

The affective filter is raised when learners have low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety; as a result, the amount of language intake will be reduced in spite of high input. Nagle and Sanders (1986) proposed that lapses of the comprehension process

probably may occur when anxiety is experienced about failure to understand or being answerable for a response (cited in Sadighi, Sahragard & Jafari, 2009). So far it is clear that anxiety plays an important role in the case of language learning. Lynch (1996), believes listening is an ongoing process of making and reinforcing an interpretation of what a specific text in a particular situation is about, according to the information that seems pertinent at the time. The listener, as a result, receives the incoming data by means of the acoustic signals and, capitalizing on a wide range of knowledge, interprets the incoming data for a particular communicative purpose. In every communicative moment, listening is a frequently used mode of communication. So, listening has appeared as an important component of language pedagogy to promote facilities for the language learners to enhance their progress in the conveyance of reciprocal information in a speech moments.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The crucial role of listening comprehension as an indispensable part of language proficiency has been accepted by experts in the field of EFL learning and instruction (Celce-Murcia, 1997). However, listening was given little attention for many years in the heyday of behaviorism, there was no stance for cognition and learning was

deemed as a mechanical process whose control was in the hands of external forces. In the meantime by the advent of cognitive theoreticians, and the attention which was given to brain, the role of the learner variables got recognition and learners' emotions, attitudes, and personalities, as the factors of decisive successful and unsuccessful learning, received substantial attention. Teaching methods put the emphasis on productive skills and overlooked the relation existing between receptive and productive skills (Richards & Renandya, 2002). It was until 1960s that listening gained importance and was given proper attention in Krashen's Natural Approach and James Asher's Total Physical Response. The emphasis on this skill could result in anxiety due to its fading nature.

Anxiety, as an affective variable, plays a vital role in learning a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Elkhafaifi, 2005). According to Elkhafaifi (2005) listening anxiety and foreign language classroom anxiety are separate, but they are related and have a negative correlation with achievement. Therefore, it can be concluded that listening, as a classroom activity, can be anxiety provoking. However, learning strategies have come to the help of the learners. Learners who apply strategies are more successful in the task of learning.

As far as metacognition, as a conscious activity, controls every mental activity (Chastain, 1988), there might be a relationship between metacognitive listening strategies and foreign language classroom anxiety apart from other skills. The aim of this study is to discover any potential relationship between metacognitive listening strategies, FLCAS, and listening comprehension.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

FLCA has been researched for decades. The researchers are now armed with the consciousness that this factor can immensely reduce the ability of the learners when it is experienced at high degrees. The pioneers in this field are Horwitz et al. who devised a scale to measure the level of FLCA in the 1980s. Listening has also been researched for quite a long time. Listening has a fading nature and this characteristic of listening can be anxiety provoking.

In 2005 Elkhafaifi explored how FL classroom anxiety and listening anxiety were related. His study disclosed that learners who had high levels of FL classroom anxiety were more susceptible to experience the terrifying ordeal of listening anxiety. However, the insufficiency of study on metacognitive listening strategies especially in relation with personality factors like FLCA prompted this study. As a result, this study was carried out to examine the relationship

among metacognitive listening strategies, FLCA and listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. Gender was also taken into account.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The three factors associated in this study have been proved to be of importance on their own. The link between some of them has been explored. For example Sadighi, Sahragard and Jafari (2009) explored the negative relationship between FLCA and listening comprehension. Wu (2010) investigated the relationship between language learner anxiety and leaning strategies in CLT courses.

Needless to say that much interest exists among the researchers working on the aforementioned factors. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, very little research has been done on the relationship among these factors. Consequently, it is significant to carry out such research.

1.6. Theoretical Framework of the Study

For each of the variables in this study there exists a framework Metacognitive strategies are under the category of learning strategies. Learning strategies according to Chamot (2004) are strategies used by the learners to enhance their learning. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define learning strategies as "special thoughts or behaviors that