# In the Name of

# God

**Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University**

**Faculty of Humanities**

# The Impact of Metacognitive Listening Strategies Awareness Raising on Iranian EFL Learners' Listening and Speaking Proficiency

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this master thesis to my beloved family. There is no doubt that without their unconditional love, support and counsel I could not have followed my academic dream.

I also would like to dedicate this master thesis to my professor Dr. Mehrak Rahimi, whose constant attention, scrupulousness, and support enabled me to carry out this study. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Rahimi for her support on this thesis.

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## Abstract

The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1980s and the ever-growing need for fluency in English as an international language around the world in recent years have led to the changing views toward listening and speaking and placed oral skills at the heart of language teaching pedagogy. Accordingly, finding the effective ways to teach listening and speaking has been given the most priority in ELT pedagogy. Hence, this study aimed to explore the effect of metacognitive listening strategies instruction on Iranian learners' listening and speaking proficiency. Fifty EFL students participated in the study. Metacognitive listening strategies were taught to the experimental group based on Vandergrift's cycle of teaching listening. The control group received conventional listening instruction that is pre-listening, listening and post-listening; however, the students did not participate in formal prediction stage nor were they engaged in monitoring, reflection, and strategy use discussion. Metacognitive listening strategies awareness questionnaire (MALQ) and the speaking and listening sections of the TOFEL test were administrated to the students before and after the treatment to investigate their improvement from pre- to posttest. The result of the study revealed that the

experimental group's metacognitive listening strategies awareness raised as a result of metacognitive listening strategy instruction. Moreover, results revealed an improvement in the experimental group's listening comprehension ability but not to the significant level. However, metacognitive listening strategies instruction has been found to have a positive effect on students' speaking proficiency. The findings of this study would be helpful for English language teachers, teacher trainers, and syllabus designers.

**Key words:** Metacognitive; instruction; listening; speaking; EFL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication

Acknowledgements

Abstract……i

Table of content……...iii

List of tables……ix

List of figures……...x

List of abbreviations……xi

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1. Introduction…….....2

1.2. Statement of the problem……..4

1.3. Significance of the study……...……...6

1.4. Research questions…….…….....9

1.5. Research hypotheses…….……...10

1.6. Definition of key terms……...….....10

1.7. Limitations of the study……..12

**CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE……..13**

2.1. Introduction…….……14

2.2. The role of listening comprehension in the ELT curriculum……..14

2.3. An interactive model of listening comprehension……...17

2.4. Information processing in listening……..…19

2.4.1. Bottom-up processing……...19

2.4.2. Top-down processing……...21

2.5. What makes listening difficult?.....22

2.6. Teaching listening comprehension……..27

2.7. Teaching activities in listening instruction……..33

2.8. The role of speaking in ELT curriculum…….35

2.9. Current issues in teaching speaking……36

2.10. Reasons of neglecting speaking in ELT curriculum……...39

2.11. A psycholinguistic model of speaking……..40

2.12. What makes speaking difficult? ……..43

2.13. Functions of speaking…….....45

2.14. Language learning strategies…….49

2.14.1. Oxford's framework……..50

2.14.2. O'Malley and Chamot's framework……...51

2.14.3. Cohen framework…….……..51

2.15. The role of learning strategies in language learning…….....52

2.16. Listening strategies……54

2.16.1. Vandergrift's classification…….....55

2.16.2. Goh's classification……58

2.16.3. Buck's classification……..….60

2.17. Learning strategies and metacognition……..62

2.18. Metacognition……63

2.19. Metacognitive knowledge and language learning…….66

2.20. Metacognitive listening strategies awareness……69

2.21. Metacognition and academic performance……74

2.22. Metacognitive knowledge and autonomy……..75

2.23. Research on listening strategies……..77

2.24. Research on learning strategies in Iran……..83

2.25. Studies on metacognitive listening strategies in Iran……89

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**……..90

3.1. Introduction……..……...95

3.2. Participants……..95

3.3. Instruments……..95

3.3.1. Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)……..…96

3.3.2. Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)…….98

3.4. Procedure……99

3.4.1. Preliminary steps ……99

3.4.2. The instruction……..……100

3.4.2.1. Lesson plan for the experimental group treatment ……100

3.4.2.2. Lesson plan for the control group ……..…103

3.5. Research design…….....104

3.6. Data analysis……..……105

3.6.1. Descriptive statistics……...105

3.6.2. Inferential statistics……..……...105

**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION……106**

4.1. Introduction……...…107

4.2. Results and discussion……...…... 107

4.2.1. Research question one……..….107

4.2.2. Research questions two and three……...112

4.2.2.1. Test of normality…….……..112

4.2.2.2. Test of multicollinearity……117

4.2.2.3. Homogeneity of Regression slope……..…118

4.2.2.4. Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices… 119

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**……...…….120

5.1. Introduction……...133

5.2. Conclusion……..…...133

5.3. Pedagogical implication……134

5.3.1. English language teachers……...135

5.3.2. Teacher trainers……..136

5.3.3. Syllabus designers…..…….136

5.4. Suggestions for further research……137

**REFERENCES…….……..139**

**APPENDICES…….……151**

Appendix1: Vandergrift's classification of listening strategies (1997b)…….151

Appendix 2: Metacognitive awareness listening strategies questionnaire (MALQ)……155

Appendix 3: Vandergrift's cycle of teaching listening…….157

Appendix 4: A sample of the lesson plan used for the experimental group……..……...159

Appendix 5: A sample of the lesson plan used for the control group..165

Appendix 6: Sample of TOEFL listening section……170

Appendix 7: Sample of TOEFL speaking section……...182

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Approaches to listening instruction (Goh, 2008)…….....32

Table 2.2. Examples of metacognitive listening strategies……71

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for gained scores on MALQ……..…108

Table 4.2. Independent samples T-Test to compare MALQ gained scores……109

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics for independent variables……..113

Table 4.4. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables……...113

Table 4.5. Result of normality test for pretest and posttest……..…114

Table 4.6. Test of normality…….115

Table 4.7. Residuals statistics of speaking……..……117

Table 4.8. Residuals statistics of post listening comprehension……..117

Table 4.9. Tests of between-subjects effects to check the homogeneity of regression……..118

Table 4.10. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices……119

Table 4.11. Multivariate tests……...120

Table 4.12. Levene's test of equality of error variances……...121

Table 4.13. Tests of between-subjects effects……..123

Table 4.14.Group statistics……...124

## List of Figures

Figure.2.1. Processes in speech production……43

Figure 3.1. The schematic representation of the design of the study...104

Figure 4.1. Normal probability plot for listening post test……..…115

Figure 4.2. Normal probability plot for speaking post test……..116

Figure 4.3. Spread vs. level plot of listening comprehension post test…….121

Figure 4.4. Spread vs. level plot of speaking post test…….122

## List of abbreviations

ACTFL: American Counsel on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

BA: Bachelor of Art

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a foreign language

ESL: English as a second language

ETS: English Testing Service

GLLQ: Good Language Learner Questionnaire

L2: Second language

LC: Listening comprehension

MALQ: Metacognitive Listening Strategies Awareness Questionnaire

MANCOVA: Multivariate Analysis of Covariance

MARSI: Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory

OPI: Oral Proficiency Interview

SILL: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TL: Target Language

TOEFL: Test Of English as Foreign Language

# Chapter One

# Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

Under the influence of communicative approach to teaching English and focused attention on the development of communicative competence in language learning, studies on the role of oral skills especially listening comprehension in communication have gained popularity in recent years (Goh, 2008). As a consequence, the study of listening comprehension has become the 'polestar' of second language acquisition (SLA) theory building, research, and pedagogy (Dunkel, 1991).

Recent approaches to teaching second language listening are more oriented toward learner' needs. In this framework, the strategic approach within a socio-cognitive paradigm aims at training learners to apply different types of strategies in the process of their language learning to be able to handle the demands of listening in the real world (Mendelson, 1998; Goh, 2008). It is suggested that "an emphasis on listening comprehension, as well as the application of listening strategies, will help students to capitalize on the language input they receive, and to

achieve greater success in language learning" (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 174).

Embedding strategy training within listening tasks can heighten learners' awareness of their listening and learning process and, consequently, facilitates listening comprehension and brings about the use of appropriate strategies for successful interaction. Further, metacognitive knowledge plays a role in the outcome of students' listening comprehension by influencing the manner in which learners approach the task of listening and learning to listen. By having appropriate task knowledge about listening, students may plan, monitor and evaluate what they do more efficiently while they listen in comparison to those who approach listening in a random or incidental manner. This awareness raises learners' motivation to learn English and their self-efficacy and ultimately makes them more skilled listeners (Goh, 2008).

In addition to the importance of metacognitive knowledge in listening comprehension, the effective role of metacognitive awareness and strategic knowledge on speaking as an oral skill has been at the center of attention in SLA. It is specifically suggested that metacognition plays an important role in many cognitive activities related to language use such as oral communication of information, oral persuasion, and oral comprehension (Flavell, 1979).

Limited empirical evidence in L2 setting also supports a closely related link between the use of oral-practice strategies and learners' beliefs about the nature and value of spoken English (Yang, 1999) and the importance of learning strategies for listening and speaking (Zhang & Goh, 2006). However, there is a dearth of research in EFL setting to clarify the role of metacognitive training in learners' development of language skills in general and oral skills in particular.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem

There are different views towards implementing strategic-based instruction in teaching listening skill in the literature. Zhang (2008) in a comprehensive review of the topic supports the fact that although some scholars deny the effective role of strategy-based teaching in listening and prevent teachers from adopting a skill/strategy-based approach to L2 learner/listener training (Reese-Miller,1993; Ridgway, 2000a, 2000b), there are still many other leading scholars who have adopted the strategic approach toward teaching listening and emphasized its effectiveness in the process of listening comprehension (e.g., Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Goh & Yusnita, 2006; Pressley & Harris, 2006; Zhang, 2008; Vandergrift, 2003). These scholars have capitalized on the vital role of listening strategies in an increasingly dynamic communicative

environment of globalized human interaction (e.g., Wenden, 1987, 1991; Chamot & Rubin, 1994; Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Goh, 2002; Goh & Yusnita, 2006; Oxford, 1993; Vandergrift, 2006). In addition, it is evident that adopting an appropriate skill/strategic approach during instruction enables teachers to help learners to listen more effectively (Zhang, 2008) as strategies are learners' deliberate attention to the comprehension processes in order to construct meaning (Cohen, 1998).

As listening is the most difficult language skill (Brown, 2001), metacognitive listening strategies awareness is crucially important in successful listening (Vandergrift, 2004). "The application of these strategies activates learners' knowledge about their own cognitive processes or product or anything related to them and brings about active monitoring, regulating and orchestrating cognitive processes usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective" (Flavell, 1976, p. 232).

As the proficient use of metacognitive strategies seems to be rare among students (Bannert, 2009; Stadtler & Bromme, 2004), more research on metacognitive awareness is crucial to determine how students can be taught to apply the cognitive resources in order to activate their repertoire of metacognitive knowledge and strategies and to enhance their learning in developing language skills (Birjandi, Mirhassani, & Abbasian, 2006; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).