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**An Action Research on the Improvement of Learners' Listening Proficiency
through Metacognitive Strategy Instruction**
(Course Name: English Listening and Oral Practice)

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I. Content

1. Research Motive and Purpose

Listening comprehension is a complicated process as it involves receiving input, interpreting and negotiating meaning and finally reacting or responding to both verbal or nonverbal outputs. To make L2 listening comprehension happen, what a listener hears must parallel with what he/she has already known, which associated directly with prior knowledge, the ability of L2 sound discrimination (including stress and intonation), and familiarity with L2 syntax structures, and other linguistic and nonlinguistic hints. It is a laborious assignment, thus deserving more attention and support. Learners often encounter various difficulties when they listen to L2. Azmi, et al. (2014) pointed out in detail the potential comprehension-interfering factors that L2 learners could face. They were (1) quality of recorded materials, which resulted mostly from the lack of suitable teaching equipment, such as computer or multimedia systems; (2) cultural differences, linked directly to learners' unfamiliarity with the L2 culture. (3) accent, resulted mostly from the diverse English users all over the world; (4) unfamiliar vocabulary, which causes learners' demotivation for listening if too many new words or words of many meanings unknown to the listeners are used in the listening passage; (5) length and speed of the listening, which poses difficulties and challenges to learners if the content is lengthy and the pace is fast; (6) physical conditions, including convenience of classroom, class size or even temperature, and (7) lack of concentration, which links to the degree of interest of the listening text. The more interesting the text, the greater the comprehension (p. 3-4). Hasan (2000) examined Syrian EFL learners' difficulties in listening to academic lectures and suggested that 'unfamiliar words', 'difficult grammatical structures', and 'the length of spoken text' are the major impediment to listening comprehension. Flowerdew and Miller's (1992) investigation confirmed that speed of delivery, new terminology and concepts, difficulties in concentrating and factors related to physical environment were the top five issues causing problems in EFL learners' understanding of L2 academic lectures.

Teng (2002) suggested that two factors influenced listening comprehension of Taiwanese students: the internal factor and the external factor. Internal factor refers to the inside factor of the listener, such as L2 proficiency. The external factor indicates the factor outside of listeners, including speaker, context and stimulus. According to her, among the four factors, stimulus, relevant to vocabulary load and vocabulary expression caused the most difficulties among learners. Yang (2011) conducted a research via a quantitative method to investigate the listening comprehension difficulties of 32 students of technical university. The subjects were asked to keep a

listening diary to record their English experience and problems encountered. The result suggested that while the students faced certain challenges of diverse degrees, unknown words in the text, the speed of the listening content delivery and limited vocabulary knowledge were the most frequently mentioned problems. Chen and Cheng's (2007) study examined the possible listening obstacles faced by 51 civil engineering students enrolled in two-year junior college. Based on the outcome of the students' three listening exams and responses of a survey, they found that speed, limited vocabulary and lack of knowledge were the three major issues impeding students' listening comprehension. Kuo (2011) conducted a research to probe 64 university students' major listening difficulties and provided evaluation of the effectiveness of seven listening activities. The result concluded that word activation was the most identified problem, followed by memory. Lexical segmentation was the third. Listening activities, such as word/phoneme variation teaching, film watching, English song teaching... etc., could significantly improve students' listening comprehension.

In the words of Vandergrift (1999), "an awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension can help students capitalize on the language input they are receiving." (p.170). Growing evidence have confirmed the essentiality of L2 strategy instruction in the classroom (Oxford, 2003). Scholars have long argued the necessity of the integration of explicit strategy training into listening curriculum (Chen, 2009, 2013; Goh, 2000). Rubin (1990) insisted that instruction in listening strategies enhanced effectively learners' listening skills and improved learning motivation. Liu (2008) further argued that explicit strategy-based instruction was surely needed, for it not only improved students' consciousness in learning, but also allowed practical implementation of the strategies acquired to various contexts beyond the classrooms.

One concern raised from the previous interviews with my students is what I can/should do with the knowledge of my students' listening issues. My students have encountered problems hindering them from their listening ability improvement. If I decide to alleviate their distress, and by any chance improve their confidence in and motivation for English listening, I should take effective actions. Now that I am aware of their struggles, I need to consider the alternative means of illumination. I believe this can be done by introducing and instructing the suitable listening comprehension strategies and further encourage them to develop a repertoire of themselves in order to comprehend produced English utterance and sound for better communication in the future.

2. Literature Review

Metacognitive Strategies

Based on Ehrman and Oxford (1990), Oxford (1990; 2003) and Oxford and Crookall (1989), metacognitive strategies are approaches to governance and assessment of learning. They are

managerial control behaviors linked to centering, organizing, planning and evaluating of learning. Examples of such behaviors include setting a timetable for English learning, errors tracking, evaluating task success, etc. Vandergrift (1997) integrated metacognitive strategies into three major categories of ten sub-skills.

A. Planning: developing an awareness of what needs to be done to accomplish a listening task, developing an appropriate action plan and/or appropriate contingency plans to overcome difficulties that may interfere with successful completion of the task.

1. Advanced organization: clarifying the objectives of an anticipated listening task and/or proposing strategies for handling it.
2. Directed attention: deciding in advance to attend in general to the listening task and to ignore irrelevant distractors; maintain attention while listening.
3. Selective attention: deciding to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that assist in understanding and/or task completion.
4. Self-management: understanding the conditions that help one successfully accomplish listening tasks and arranging for the presence of those conditions.

B. Monitoring: checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension or performance in the course of a listening task.

1. Comprehension monitoring: checking, verifying, or correcting one's understanding at the local level.
2. Auditory monitoring: using one's "ear" for the language (how something sounds) to make decision.
3. Double-check monitoring: checking, verifying, or correcting one's understanding across the task or during the second time through the oral text.

C. Evaluation: checking the outcomes of one's listening comprehension against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy.

1. Performance evaluation: judging one's overall execution of the task.
2. Strategy evaluation: judging one's strategy use.
3. Problem identification: explicitly identifying the central point needing resolution in a task or identifying an aspect of the task that hinders its successful completion.

The Instruction of Metacognitive Strategies

Previous research has found that metacognitive strategies were strong forecasters of L2 competence (Oxford, 1996). In an investigation of high school students of French, Vandergrift (1997) revealed that the utilization of metacognitive strategies, such as activating proper knowledge or making appropriate predictions for a listening task, individuated a skillful listener among a group

of learners. Cao and Lin (2020) also confirmed that the ability to orchestrate monitoring strategies significantly differentiates high-achievers and low achievers on vocational college students in China. Yang (2009) reviewed the use of metacognitive strategies by Chinese undergraduate students of English as a foreign language (EFL). It was found that successful learners were typically skillful users of directed attention, self-management, selective-attention, functional planning and evaluation.

In addition to predicting L2 proficiency, metacognitive strategies were said to be the most useful for enhancing listening comprehension of L2 learners and should therefore be taught within classroom settings (Abolfathiasl & Dousti, 2013; Cao & Lin, 2020; Sheshgelani, Saddeghli & Aidinlon, 2013). In a study of Iranian English-majored students, Rahimirad and Shams (2014) found that metacognitive strategies instruction raised significantly not only students' listening performance, but metacognitive awareness as well. Bozorgian (2014)'s study examined the impact of metacognitive strategies instruction on high-intermediate Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated that although the students improved their listening skill after being trained with metacognition; no meaningful use of metacognitive awareness was reported. The empirical evaluation of Hanafiyeh and Mafakheri (2013) observed that intermediate-level students increased significantly in their listening achievement test after five weeks of metacognitive strategy training. Accordingly, they argued for the inclusion of metacognitive strategy training in regular listening instruction sessions. Using quasi experiment, Coskun (2010) observed that metacognitive strategy instruction increased students' listening proficiency and insisted that "English teachers need to incorporate strategy training into their skills lesson and train students systematically about what metacognition is, what role metacognition plays in learning, and how these strategies can be transferred to other listening tasks and even skills" (p.43). Goh (2008) also asserted that the training of metacognitive strategies, in which he coined "metacognitive instruction", not only reduced learners' learning anxiety, but also enhanced their confidence and motivation to some extent. Few studies have been conducted to examine the practice of metacognitive strategy instruction and its effects on listening comprehension in Taiwan. Chou (2017) implemented a task-based instructional framework to examine how intermediate-level students develop metacognitive awareness, and thereby facilitated their use of metacognitive strategies. The findings noted a positive correlation between metacognitive awareness and metacognitive strategy use, leading to a better listening comprehension performance. Gan and Lin (2014) observed that students in English majors often used metacognitive strategies to plan and assess their own listening, making it easier for them to acquire listening skills. Wang's (2002) analysis asserted that monitoring and self-managing strategies in metacognition were the most preferred by the Taiwan learners in order to promote their listening comprehension. In their study of students majored in Applied Foreign

Language, Chan and Teng (2008) reported that the strategies most frequently deployed by students when they listen were “directed attention” and “selective attention” in planning, and “strategy evaluation”, and “problem identification” in evaluation.

3. Research Question

The study will be administered using the course of English Listening One and intend to conduct thematic investigation on the inquiry about the usefulness of explicit listening comprehension strategy instruction. Consequently, the present study tries to find the answer to the following question:

RQ1. Did explicit metacognitive strategy instruction improve novice-level EFL learners’ listening comprehension proficiency?

RQ2. To what extent did explicit metacognitive strategy instruction help raise the awareness of novice-level EFL learners’ use of metacognitive strategies?

4. Research Methodology

Setting and participants

The study was conducted at a regular university located at Southern Taiwan. It was identified here as RU for confidentiality. Like most universities in Taiwan, most newcomers at RU must take English-related courses of 4-6 credits in order to fulfill the general education requirement. The freshmen at RU were sorted into three English-proficiency levels (novice, intermediated and advanced) based on their scores on General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT) or Advanced Subjects Test (AST) once they are enrolled. The 33-per cent rule (Cureton, 1975) was implemented for grouping.

The subjects were 42 novice-level freshmen who enrolled in three English Listening (I) classes. English Listening (I) is one of compulsory courses within the English for general purposes program undertaken by first-year undergraduates from all majors at RU. Students’ English proficiency varied approximately between CEFR A1-A2. Sixty-six percent (85) of the participants were female and 34% (44) were male.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to gather needed data for this study. Two listening proficiency tests using Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) were completed in the first (pre-test) and the last (post-test) of the course to assess students for the listening comprehension improvement.

Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), developed by Vandergrift et al. (2006)

was implemented at the first and last week to measure the possible changes of students' use of strategy. It is a 21-item Likert-type questionnaire with five-scale responses (1 = never true of me, 2 = rarely true of me, 3 = sometimes true of me, 4 = usually true of me, 5 = always true of me). The items were categorized five major groups: planning-evaluation, directed attention, person knowledge, mental translation and problem-solving. In addition, students were invited to write weekly class-based reflective journals to record their development of strategy use over time and their adaption to learn in more autonomously. Students were asked to reflect and assess how they had tried to understand the listening input and what they had understood as soon as they finished their tasks. The content was integrated with quantitative data for triangulation to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell, 2008).

Data analysis

The results of the two OOPT were analyzed using Paired Samples t-test (SPSS25) to compare the means of the pre-test and post-test to verify the students' overall learning. The statistics yielded from MALQ were computed using Paired Samples t-test to trace and compare students' potential transformation in the awareness of metacognitive strategy and the actual practice. The content of students' class-based journal entry was inspected using both quantitative analysis (for Questions I2 and II) and narrative-qualitative interpretations (Oxford et al., 1996). To consider changes over a longer period and for greater significance, only the first (weeks 2, RJ1), the middle (weeks 8, RJ2) and the last (week17, RJ3) of each student's reflective journals were sampled and analyzed.

The narrations were examined and analyzed recursively by the researcher and an invited coder several times (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). They were then coded in accordance with the five categories of metacognitive strategy and independently by the researcher and the invited coder. Discrepancies in code agreements were resolved through discussion. The response frequency was calculated to reflect students' changes in strategy use.

5. Teaching and Research Outcomes

(1) Teaching process and result

A. Teaching process

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), a metacognitive strategies training proposed by Chamot and O'Malley (1994) will be practiced with the teaching method. Chamot and O'Malley's CALLA, attested to be useful and allowing teachers the combination of the target language, content and learning strategies in a designed lesson plan, contains five aspects:

1. Preparation: students prepare for strategy instruction by linking their prior knowledge with the topic of the unit with focus on learning strategies, the special techniques that help them

- learn, their belief in the importance of the strategies. They set goals and objectives of the lesson and identify the purpose of a learning task, over-view and link with prior knowledge.
2. Presentation: teachers instruct explicitly the new learning strategy and provide guidance for its' application. They name concretely the strategy to be learned, inform how the strategy is used with a specific task and explain why the strategy is important.
 3. Practice: students practice and develop independence in using the strategy with regular class activities and teachers' gradual withdrawal from instructional support.
 4. Evaluation: students reflect on their strategy use, which includes both their success or failure in the application. They can self-monitor, self-evaluate and evaluate the learning using dialogue journals at this phase.
 5. Expansion: students extend and teachers encourage the applications of the learned strategies by applying it to new situations, materials or advanced learning. (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994, p.67-70)

The teaching methods embedded in CALLA are as follows:

- I. Teacher-centered lecture (Presentation): One of the advantages of teacher-centered lecture is that it allows instant transmission of information to most of the students simultaneously. Therefore, it is a convenient and time-saving tool in providing knowledge and guiding skills. Teacher-centered lecture will be conducted on the situations of (1) explaining and defining the instructed strategies; (2) giving examples of strategy practice; (3) doing demonstrations of the strategies; and (4) introducing the topic of each lesson.
- II. Learner-centered approach (Preparation / Evaluation / Practice): The responsibility for learning is put on the learners under this approach. Students will take the active roles in constructing their own knowledge and learn information through deliberate and careful examination into the learning content and outcome during the learning process. The learner centered approach in this study is further divided into two types of tasks:
 - a. Discussing task (Preparation / Evaluation) – The pair, group or whole class discussions conducted for various purposes. For example, at the preparation phase, discussion will be used to raise students' consciousness about metacognitive strategies. It will also be utilized to link students' background knowledge for the listening tasks followed. At the evaluation phase, students will then evaluate the results drawn from a listening task. They will also talk about the usefulness of the strategies based on their experience and previous learning background.
 - b. Listening task (Practice) - The tasks given to the students for the purpose of informing the students the proper situation for strategy realization and the actual strategy implementation.

B. Result

1. Students' learning progress after metacognitive strategy instruction

Table 1 shows the result of students' two OOPTs. Although the novice-level students had an average difference from pre-test and post-test scores of .83, an insignificant difference, $t(42) = -.91$, $p = .37$, showed that explicit metacognitive strategy instruction failed to bring on any meaningful learning improvement. The contradiction may raise the questions about the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction and the necessity to include it in elementary-level listening teaching.

Table 1

Paired samples t-test results of students' OOPT test scores

N	Tests	Mean	SD	t	p	d ^a
42	Pre	71.29	22.14	- .91	.37	.04
	Post	72.12	19.60			

Note: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ^a $d = .2$ indicates a small effect size; $d = .5$ indicates a medium effect size; $d = .8$ indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988;1994)

2. Changing metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension

Table 2 presents the finding concerning students' use of metacognitive strategy and five major categorized strategy groups before and after explicit strategy instruction. The novice-level learners had a significant average difference from pre- and post - MALQ survey scores of 0.1 ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .34$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.47$, $SD = .35$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -7.42$, $p = .000$.), indicating explicit metacognitive strategy instruction resulted in a substantial increase in students' awareness of strategy usage. This was evident from a more detailed analysis of the five strategy groups. The increases in mean scores between pre- and post-survey were noted. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were observed in three types of metacognitive strategies: (1) directed attention, $M = 3.28$, $SD = .39$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.49$, $SD = .44$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -5.36$, $p = .000$, (2) mental translation, $M = 3.42$, $SD = .60$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.54$, $SD = .53$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.59$, $p = .01$, and (3) problem-solving, $M = 3.49$, $SD = .54$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.57$, $SD = .51$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.48$, $p = .02$.

Table 2

Paired samples t-test results of pre- and post-MALQ survey based on groups.

Items	Mean	SD	t	p	d ^a
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Metacognitive strategy	3.37	.34	-4.42	.000***	.29
	3.47	.35			
Planning-evaluation	3.31	.54	-1.40	.16	.10
	3.36	.51			
Directed attention	3.28	.39	-3.36	.000***	.50
	3.49	.44			
Person knowledge	3.30	.56	-1.80	.07	.15
	3.38	.51			
Mental translation	3.42	.60	-2.59	.01**	.21
	3.54	.53			
Problem-solving	3.49	.54	-2.48	.02 *	.15
	3.57	.51			

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ^a $d = .2$ indicates a small effect size; $d = .5$ indicates a medium effect size; $d = .8$ indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988;1994)

Further analysis of how individual metacognitive strategies were used by the students also reveals an increasing trend (Table 3). Statistically significant differences were observed in strategies, including (1) Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .89$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.47$, $SD = .84$ for post-survey, $t(48) = -2.01$, $p = .05$); (2) I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.00$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.84$, $SD = .87$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.94$, $p = .00$); (3) I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don't understand ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.13$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.08$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.25$, $p = .03$); (4) I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .96$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.85$, $SD = .93$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.27$, $p = .03$); (5) After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .70$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.47$, $SD = .74$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.38$, $p = .02$); (6) When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .85$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.40$, $SD = .87$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -6.99$, $p = .00$); (7) I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I don't understand ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .77$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.58$, $SD = .77$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.39$, $p = .02$); (8) I translate word by word, as I listen ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .84$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.55$, $SD = .74$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.39$, $p = .02$) and (8) As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .93$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.32$, $SD = .74$ for post-survey, $t(42) = -2.68$, $p = .01$).

Two decreasing significant differences in students' strategy usage were noted. They were (1) When

my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .86$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.16$, $SD = .83$ for post-survey, $t(42) = 2.96$, $p = .00$) and (2) Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .84$ for pre-survey and $M = 3.12$, $SD = .99$ for post-survey, $t(42) = 2.86$, $p = .01$).

Table 3

Paired samples t-test results of pre- and post-MALQ survey based on each metacognitive strategy

Items	Mean	SD	t	p	d ^a
Q1. Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen.	3.29 3.47	.89 .84	-2.01	.05	.21
Q2. I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding.	3.63 3.84	1.00 .87	-2.94	.00	.22
Q3. I find that listening in English is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English.	3.29 3.47	1.06 .72	-1.66	.10	.20
Q4. I translate in my head as I listen.	3.43 3.29	.78 .70	1.67	.10	.19
Q5. I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don't understand.	3.51 3.65	1.13 1.08	-2.25	.03	.13
Q6. When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away.	3.43 3.16	.86 .83	2.96	.00	.32
Q7. As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.	3.38 3.43	.87 .86	-.60	.55	.06
Q8. I feel that listening comprehension in English is a challenge for me.	3.80 3.81	.98 .96	.00	1.00	.01
Q9. I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand.	3.74 3.85	.96 .93	-2.27	.03	.12
Q10. Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to.	3.45 3.12	.84 .99	2.86	.01	.35
Q11. I translate key words as I listen.	3.72 3.78	.84 .83	-1.47	.15	.07
Q12. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	3.41 3.56	.92 .92	-1.28	.20	.16

Q13. As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct.	3.43 3.50	.73 .91			
			-.77	.44	.08
Q14. After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.	3.29 3.47	.70 .74			
			-2.38	.02	.25
Q15. I don't feel nervous when I listen to English.	2.82 2.88	.99 .89			
			-.48	.63	.06
Q16. When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.	2.67 3.40	.85 .87			
			-6.99	.00	.84
Q17. I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I don't understand.	3.47 3.58	.77 .77			
			-2.39	.02	.14
Q18. I translate word by word, as I listen.	3.12 3.55	.84 .74			
			-4.41	.00	.54
Q19. When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense.	3.44 3.39	.79 .82			
			.55	.59	.06
Q20. As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension.	3.14 3.32	.93 .92			
			-2.68	.01	.19
Q21. I have a goal in mind as I listen.	3.36 3.40	.82 .87			
			-.45	.66	.05

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ^a $d = .2$ indicates a small effect size; $d = .5$ indicates a medium effect size; $d = .8$ indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988;1994)

(2) Teacher's teaching reflection

The findings generally imply that explicit metacognitive instruction does not guarantee an efficient and enhanced listening performance for students with low level of English. Different cognitive and affective problems exist among these low achievers, which potentially impede their ability to improve listening proficiency. To efficiently teach a listening class, a teacher must deal with not only techniques, methods and materials involved, the linguistic features, the strategies, but also learners' diverse characteristics. Numerous aspects make a contribution to student acquisition process. Although, developing learners in metacognitive strategies may have no immediate impact in assisting them to achieve better test scores, the results of this study indicate that explicit teaching of metacognitive strategy helps make them be more aware of the strategy. Hopefully, this will help

them become more autonomous listeners and facilitate the development of listening comprehension within and beyond the classroom.

(3) Students' learning feedback

Overall, students expanded their use of metacognitive strategies as the course proceeded. In addition to the broad scope of use of metacognitive strategies, changes in the quality of students' use of strategy over time were also noted. Early in instruction, the students had very little knowledge of metacognitive strategies, which led them to use strategies in a 'superficial' way. For example, in the strategy of person knowledge, these responses were provided in the first journal entry:

Listening comprehension is really difficult. (S3)

I had trouble listening in English. (S18)

I felt nervous listening to English. (S42)

As the training progressed to the halfway point, the students are better able to manipulate their strategies, and more clearly about what they should be doing while listening.

Similarly, for the strategy of planning-evaluation, the students declared:

Before listening, I think of similar related texts that I listened or read before. (S25)

I verified my understanding by reading the English transcript afterwards. (S38)

I could figure out almost 70% of the listening content today. I found the use of planning and person knowledge strategies helped me to understand more. Although a couple of small details I didn't realize, they didn't influence my general understanding. (S37)

Finally, as the explicit instruction continued to the end, the results of the last series of journal entries showed that most students appeared to be able to implement the full range of metacognitive strategies at a more sophisticated level. They reported the process in a greater detail. The following reports were written by the students on the use of directed attention, mental translation and problem-solving respectively.

When listening, I pay attention to stressed and transition words, which I found important and useful for comprehension. (S23)

Since I can understand more of the listening passage, I found that it is easier for me to identify and pay attention to key words or phrases and translate them to understand.
(S10)

I use contextual clues to help guess the meaning of the words. (S25)

The journal entries provided by the students at various stages demonstrated that these low-proficiency students learned to acquire more control over their listening process by explicitly learning the metacognitive strategy. Not only did they expand their use of the strategy, they also enhanced it in a more systematic manner.

(4) Suggestions

The current research examined the contribution of explicit metacognitive strategy instruction to improving listening comprehension and raising awareness of the strategy use of low-proficiency university students in Taiwan. The study adopted a mix-methodical approach, employing three types of instrument – Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT), Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) and reflective journals to explore listening comprehension and strategy development in students over time. The comparison of the pre- and post-OOPT showed that the influence of explicit metacognitive strategy instruction on enhancing the listening comprehension of learners with low competence was limited. This observation was inconsistent with what was reported in the previous studies with learners of higher English proficiency, which argued that explicit metacognitive strategy instruction led to better listening performance (Bozorgian, 2014; Chou, 2017; Hanafiyeh & Mafakheri, 2013; Rahimirad & Shams, 2014).

Notwithstanding, the results of MALQ survey and three reflective journal entries showed that there seemed to be positive changes in students' awareness of the strategy to promote their listening process due to explicit instruction. Similar remarks were noted in studies by Chou (2017) and Rahimirad and Shams (2014) with learners of intermediate-level or a major in English. Explicit metacognitive strategy instruction enabled students to practice and develop several categories of metacognitive strategy, like problem-solving, mental translation, etc, enabling them to strengthen their ability to listen and activate their procedural knowledge on the use of strategy in the long term (Field, 2008).

According to the findings of the present study, a number of pedagogical implications for listening comprehension are suggested. As the results indicate, students with low-proficiency raised their awareness of the strategy after receiving explicit instructions on the metacognitive strategy. Despite that, the increase in listening comprehension remained

insignificant. Such an outcome pointed to a fact that although metacognitive strategies should be taught to help students to develop the capacity to understand and control cognitive process, thereby facilitating learning, more measurements need to be taken to enhance listening performance. It was mentioned earlier that during the process of listening, L2 learners faced various internal and external factors, such as limited knowledge of vocabulary, lack of motivation, anxiety, cultural difference and so forth (Azmi, et al., 2014; Chen & Cheng, 2007; Kuo, 2011; Teng, 2002; Yang, 2011). These caused students to struggle to understand L2 content, particularly for less competent learners who merit cognitive and affective support (Chen & Cheng, 2007).

Bottom-up processing (decoding) and top-down processing (meaning construction) are highly interdependent and equally essential to successful L2 listening (Nunan 2001; 2002). Non-linguistic knowledge of L2 listeners is often used to compensate for the lack of linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary, phonological, syntactical, and semantic knowledge (Broersma & Cutler, 2008). To support the students with insufficient L2 cognition from the top down, teachers can teach the background and cultural knowledge of the language before listening so as to make the input the students receive while listening more comprehensible.

There is no doubt that low competent learners do not know well the characteristics of the spoken form of the L2 used by native speakers. Thus, appropriate training is necessary to help them build the ability to overcome the obstacles. We knew that the significance of a sentence is derived from the combination of the words constituting, while the meaning of the word can be determined from its context or from the sentence in which it is expressed. To construct students linguistically from the ground up, teachers should offer sufficient repetitive form-focused and word-sentence practices through controlled exercises within a narrow setting before listening. Clear and concise rules with sufficient examples should be provided, explained and enforced to raise their awareness and help them internalize the knowledge. In this way, students' automation of L2 words and sentence recognition will be promoted and improved listening comprehension will result.

Affective filters, such as anxiety, tension, low motivation and pressure are negative emotions, intimidating L2 listeners, contributing to their poor comprehension performance. To reduce the emotional barriers for students, teachers should encourage peer cooperation and organize listening activities around tasks with purposes. In the words of a popular

proverb, “Two heads are better than one.” When learners work together, they help one another and exchange knowledge, lowering the anxiety and pressure. An aim brings expectation. That is when listening with a purpose, learners know what to expect and how to respond. additionally, L2 listeners should be educated to try to learn to be tolerant of their own faults and those of peers. Errors are an inherent learning process. The process of making mistakes and mutually correcting helps them to achieve success in L2 listening. With the increasing utilization of collaborative listening tasks, teachers’ and students’ perception of listening instruction and classroom roles must be modified. Teachers are no longer information transmitters, nor should students be passive receivers. The students should be negotiators who consistently self-reflect and self-regulate their own learning. As the learning activities progress and metacognitive strategies are implemented, the responsibilities for listening learning are gradually moving towards the learners themselves. Therefore, they should progressively act as mediators among the selves (themselves and their peers), the learning resources and activities and classroom dynamics. With respect to teachers, besides being actively involved in the implementation of metacognitive strategies, they should be (1) needs analysts, shouldering the responsibility for identifying and addressing students’ language needs, (2) group process advisor, offering timely and effective feedback and opinion by paraphrasing and confirming, (3) class manager, monitoring of learning, providing encouragement, rewarding achievement and filling the lexical, syntactic and strategic gaps of learners, and (4) activity facilitator, promoting mutual interaction among teachers and students through creating a supportive environment.

As Krashen (1987; 1998) agreed that language acquisition occurred through using the language communicatively. Listening instruction should not merely test listening or to decipher words into words. It is expected that learning activities will be more interactive and communicative. The range of exercises integrating the communicative spirit is limitless as long as the they allow learners to reach the goals of communicative listening, engaging them in meaningful communication that demanding negotiation, information sharing, and interaction. Littlewood (1981) divided communicative-oriented activities into two categories: functional communication and social interaction, allowing students to interact primarily and orally with each other. When they become embedded in listening, functional communicative activities would be tasks, such as students compare two sets of listening content and observe similarities and differences; discover missing information in a picture

while listening to related content; and follow directions in the listening content when one student gives instructions to another on how to solve a problem and complete a mission. Social interaction listening activities include conversation, discussion, presentation and improvised role play based on or related to listened segment or watched video clip.

The method of assessing listening needs to be modified following explicit strategy instruction and the alternation of listening teaching. Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) provides a good model, addressing the need for valid and reliable evaluation to determine student proficiency (Adair-Hauck et al., 2006). The IPA framework sets out three types of assessment tasks. They are (1) Interpretive communication task: Students are required to listen to an authentic text (weather forecast, commercial, news clip...etc.). They then reiterate the content or answer relevant questions in spoken or written form; (2) Interpersonal communication task: One student receives exclusive video information which the other person does not have on a specific topic. They need exchange and negotiate to get the missing information, and (3) Presentational task: Learners are required to give presentation of an assigned topic to a specific group of audience (teachers, classmates or parents), such as introducing a movie.

II. References

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