

Developing students' reasoning abilities through listening instruction

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<p>Keywords: <i>listening, reasoning, learning strategy</i></p>	<p><i>The teaching of listening has been the most complicated task for teachers. Since students' learning of listening skills is a complex process that takes place in the brain, the teaching and the evaluation of students' learning are not easy to do. Hence, many teachers have slipped into testing their students listening comprehension rather than teaching them listening strategies. Teachers tend to focus on the product of their students' learning of listening skills rather than on the process of learning listening skills Field (2008). The notion of receptive skill of listening as opposed to productive skill of speaking and writing is often misinterpreted as a passive skill in that all that the students need to do is understand text, both spoken and written, in a very narrow perspective. It has led to a condition that students are not provided with much opportunity to do reasoning and to explore any appropriate learning strategies. It is therefore important that when a teacher teaches listening skill, he/she must facilitate the students with strategies that promote student learning. The strategies adopted should facilitate student learning in that, by means of the strategies, the teacher provides students with opportunities to do reasoning in both written and spoken language. Teachers must bear in mind when teaching receptive skills that they must avoid testing their students. Rather, they had better ask their students about the reasoning behind their answers.</i></p>
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1. Introduction

Second/foreign language (L2) listening has been the most difficult skill for students to acquire and the most problematic skill course for teachers to teach. Teachers are prone to do their teaching L2 listening by giving their students tasks which are like listening tests; they tend to test their students. Thus, the impact on the students is quite predictable: they tend to regard learning L2 listening as completing listening tasks; they learn listening skills like doing a listening test. Listening has been mistakenly considered as a product, not as a process.

Little research has been done to investigate L2 listening as to how L2 listening can be approached by students and how L2 listening can be better taught by teachers. Some experts argue that the success of learning L2 listening skills depend on listening strategies employed by student (Cross, 2009; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). Some studies have indicated that strategy instruction in listening class contributes to student learning of listening comprehension (Chen, 2009; Cross, 2009; Goh, 2000; and Vandergrift, 2002, 2003a). In this case, teachers are supposed to include listening strategy instruction in their instruction.

On the other hand, since there is no strong empirical evidence on the relationship between the use of certain listening strategies and the success of learning L2 listening skills, some experts claim that the success of student learning of L2 listening skills might be due to the students' use of L 1 listening strategies, which are inherent in their first language (L 1) acquisition (Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Renandya, 2012). In other words, what is claimed to be L2 listening strategies taught to students are basically L 1 listening strategies. They claim that extensive listening, which provides students with joyful learning (listening for pleasure) and comprehensible input, is the more effective model of listening instruction as opposed to strategy-based listening instruction.

2. Research Methodology

This paper is intended to highlight the importance of helping students build listening skills by means of developing cognitive and meta cognitive listening strategies. An explicit elicitation of process taking place in the students' brain is proposed in the form of teachers' instruction that encourage students to do reasoning to decide the best way to approach the listening tasks. The reasoning proposed in this paper covers reasoning behind the use of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies.

The teaching of listening

Despite the controversy over the inclusion of listening strategy instruction in L2 listening classrooms, teachers need to help their students build awareness of using best ways of learning L2 listening skills in the teaching and learning process. Teaching students listening strategies, however, must not be regarded as the only key to student learning success. There are still some other aspects that contribute to student learning success. Krashen's theory of second language acquisition (2009), especially the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis, should be taken into consideration when planning a listening instruction. The strategy instruction provided should be tailored with the students' level of understanding. The materials used in the instruction must also be the ones which are of students' interest, so that they enjoy listening to the material.

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have summarized three types of listening instruction: text-oriented instruction, communication-oriented instruction, and learner-oriented instruction. The text-oriented instruction is emphasized on decoding skills, imitation and memorization of sound and grammar patterns; listening activities are used to test the accuracy of students' comprehension. The communication-oriented instruction is featured by the division of listening skill into listening sub-skills, or the micro skills of listening proposed by Richards

(1983). With this type of listening instruction, learners are supposed to build complex communicative skills (Brown, 2001; Richards 1983; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The learner-oriented instruction puts heavy emphasis on facilitating learners with activities for raising metacognitive awareness; the students learn how to listen in addition to learning what to listen. In addition to the three types of listening instruction listed above, Field (2008) have suggested seven approaches to teaching L2 listening as follows.

1. A process approach, an approach based upon training learners in the different processes which have been shown to contribute to skilled listening.
2. A task-based approach to strategy instruction that raises awareness of strategy use and links it to the circumstances that give rise to it.
3. A targeted approach to certain more generalisable strategies, which demonstrates and practices the strategies individually.
4. A diagnostic approach to general comprehension work, where the teacher's goal is to identify the processes which have led learners to give particular answers.
5. Autonomous listening practice, in which learners are free to listen and re-listen to passages in order to tackle problems of understanding that may be specific to the listener.
6. Gradual exposure to authentic materials from an early stage of listening development, with a view to ensuring that learners become familiar with the sounds, rhythms, vocabulary and syntax of natural speech.
7. Awareness-raising sessions to draw attention to features of authentic connected speech that learners may encounter. (pp.327-328)

He further explains that the seven approaches above are interdependent; teachers may alternate from one approach to another based on the instructional contexts. Teachers are supposed to use the approaches purposefully, focusing on helping their students' ability to use the techniques they have learned. This should also be based on the problems faced by the students. Teachers must be able to benefit from any approaches suitable to the instructional contexts since approaches are complementary.

3. Findings

In teaching students listening skills, teachers must encourage students to think actively before, during, and after listening. Since the process of listening takes place in the brain, the teaching of listening, which must be supported by appropriate assessment, is quite difficult to do. This is so since there is no instrument that directly measures one's listening ability (Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Rost, 1996, 2002; Vandergrift, 2007; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). On the other hand, in order to provide students with effective instruction, teachers must be able to see what is taking place in the students' brain, which covers the cognitive aspects of listening and the metacognitive aspects, the ways the students achieve the purpose of learning listening skills. This is not an easy task for teachers to do since they cannot look into their students' brains. One of the ways that teachers can use to accomplish

their task is by eliciting students' understanding of skills being learned and the ways they approach the listening tasks. In this case, students need to be encouraged to elicit their understanding by reporting the class or after they do listening exercises. In this way, teachers can spot what the students are learning and what students have learned, and what students have not learned.

Incorporating reasoning in the classroom procedures

Developed on the advantages of current theories and evidence from some research studies, the proposed student reasoning in the listening class should embrace the benefits of diagnostic approach, process approach, and input hypothesis as well as affective filter hypothesis. Based on the diagnostic approach, teachers' listening instruction can be directed to troubleshoot students' learning problems as well as their learning success. This is very important for designing the next listening tasks or for deciding any remedial teaching with a limited scope based on the problems found. What teachers elicit from students learning process constitutes data for determining the current standing of student learning. Based on these data, teachers can develop appropriate tasks which are enjoyable. They can also determine which materials suit the needs of student learning based on the students' interlanguage. Once the teachers are informed about the types of tasks and the appropriate level of materials, they can decide activities that are process-based.

There are three main general sections in most language classroom procedures, namely: pre-activity, main activity, and post activity. Within this model, the diagnostic approach takes precedence. In the pre-activity, students are encouraged to articulate what they are thinking about the listening tasks and how they think they can approach the tasks. Teachers, at this point, are supposed to help students articulate their problems and suggest solutions. They also have to be able to spot any learning progress and learning problems faced by students, which should be used as the basis for determining the next tasks and materials. In this phase, teachers can help students plan their listening and give them some models. In the main activity, students are encouraged to work in pairs or in groups to develop their understanding of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies. In order to help students with the listening tasks, teachers should provide students with clues or hints and ask them triggering questions that help them comprehend the task as well as articulate their thinking process. From this activity, teachers can obtain much information about students' learning progress and learning problems. In the post-activity, teachers lead students to evaluate their learning progress as well as their learning problems. Students are encouraged to do self-evaluation and articulate their understanding so that any learning success and learning problems are understood by both teachers and students. Teachers hear from the students about their learning success, learning problems, and their wants and expectation.

In order to learn the material successfully, students need to know how to start their learning and how to proceed. Knowing how to start is not only understanding the content material or skill to be learned prior to learning the materials or skills, but also knowing the best way to learn. Students need to be made aware of the importance of planning their learning so that they can learn effectively, step by step, and purposefully. They will not learn something which is difficult to understand before they learn the prerequisites (the input hypothesis theory). They will also not learn well if they do not know which material or skill to focus on and how to

approach the tasks given. What listening teachers can do to help their students know how to start is raising students' awareness of the importance of using listening learning strategies. Once students are aware of the importance of using listening learning strategies, they need to be made aware of what they can do with the strategies. Students must be able to choose the best strategies that suit their ways of learning and use them in their learning.

In a listening class, teachers need to introduce the procedures of using listening strategies, including the cognitive listening strategies and meta cognitive listening strategies. Students' understanding of types of cognitive listening strategies will help them decide which skill to learn first and which skill next. With metacognitive listening strategies, students can oversee and direct their learning of listening skills, deciding how to start their learning and how to proceed. Based on the advantages of using diagnostic approach in the process approach and by considering the importance of input hypothesis as well as affective filter hypothesis, the reasoning model proposed in this paper is expected to give contribution to better listening classroom. This model emphasizes on the needs assessment done by means of diagnostic approach. Students are encouraged to articulate their learning progresses well as their learning problems and teachers are encouraged to use the data to design the next listening task and to adjust the listening materials. The sample lesson plan below shows how teachers can encourage students to do reasoning behind their use of listening strategies during their learning listening skills.

4. Discussion

Pre- activity

Teacher introduces the nature of listening to different types of listening materials¹ by using pictures depicting different communicative events. Teacher explains the typical topic, setting and participants within certain domain of language use as represented by the pictures. Students are invited to elicit any possible information exchanged by the characters in the pictures. In doing this task, students are asked to articulate how they can do the task.

Main activity

Teacher distributes two pictures A and B, each of which corresponds to recording A and B respectively. The pictures depict certain communicative events. Picture A depicts a conversation between two students and picture B depicts a conversation between a hotel guest and a receptionist. Each student receives one picture A or B. Students with picture A tell students with picture B about the possible information exchanged by the characters in picture A (predicting) and students with picture B take notes. Students with picture B tell students with picture A about the possible information exchanged by the characters in picture B and students with picture A take notes. Teacher observes the activity and helps students with some clues or hints, if necessary. Teacher also helps students find ways to approach the listening task.

Teacher plays" recording A and B, which correspond to picture A and B respectively. Students with picture A answer the questions³ of listening exercise about picture A and students with picture B take notes on any information dealing with the information they get from students with picture A during the pre-activity. Students with picture B answer the questions of listening exercise about picture B and students with picture A take notes on any information dealing with the information they get from students with picture B during the pre-activity.

Students A and B exchange information they get during the listening process. They are encouraged to tell their partner how they find the information.

Teacher checks students' answers after they do the listening exercise. Students should provide answers with arguments or explanation. Teacher gives comments if necessary. Every student reports their findings about the information they get from their partners as well as from the recordings. During the report session, students take notes on any listening strategies used.

Post-activity

Students do self-reflection and report their learning to the class. Students write a short paragraph of report about their learning listening skills based on their notes (approximately a half page). They report things that work and do not work in their listening based on their own experience. The report is to be submitted after the class.

1. The material/topic used sample lesson plan above is adjusted to the level of students' English proficiency and their interest.
2. The recordings are played twice, but teacher may decide to play the recordings more than two times by considering students' difficulty.
3. The questions may vary, ranging from questions about topic, details, inference, etc. and the types of questions may vary as well, including gap filling, multiple choice, true-false, and matching question.
4. The strategies can be taught overtly by the teacher, but it would be better if the students find the strategies with the help of the teacher.

5. Conclusion

Basically, teachers can alternate from one approach to another, but the privilege of choosing any appropriate approach must be based on needs analysis, which should be based on diagnosis of previous students' listening ability. In order to maximize student learning of listening skills, it is suggested that teachers put emphasis on helping students articulate their learning process, both their learning of cognitive listening strategies and how they approach the listening tasks-the metacognitive listening strategy. When students are aware of their learning progress in terms of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies, they will become more self-directed learners. This will in turn make listening a joyful activity. With the support of comprehensible input, the listening class will foster student learning of listening skills. Teachers should bear in mind that listening comprehension is not an end of the listening instruction. They must give emphasis on process, not on the product of students' learning. Students listening comprehension should be treated as a means to an end of the instruction.

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