AN INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECT OF EFL LEARNERS’ STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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The Study

- This study is an inquiry into the relationship between EFL learners’ listening comprehension and the strategies they developed in undertaking listening tasks.
- The study included twelve student participants, 10 females and 2 males, from an English listening class in National Hsinchu University of Education.
- The study lasted three months, during which the students attended a two-hour strategy instruction session given by the author once every other week.
Data Collection

(1) transcriptions of group interviews with the students
(2) transcriptions of video-taped discussions
(3) voluntary reflections by the students
(4) results of pre- and post-tests
Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of the listening strategies developed by the students?

2. Is there any difference between the listening strategies developed by the high- and low-achievers? If yes, what is the difference?

3. What is the impact of the students’ development of listening strategies on their listening comprehension?
Discussion of Findings

- Characteristics of Listening Strategies Used by Low-Achiever Students
- Characteristics of Listening Strategies Used by High-Achiever Students
- Difference between listening strategies developed by the students
- Effect of the development of listening strategies on listening comprehension
Characteristics of Listening Strategies Used by Low-Achiever Students

1. Looking at title and questions
2. Continuing listening
3. Taking notes (writing down key words)
4. Guessing meaning (from the context, by the pictures or by speaker’s tone of voice)
5. Discussing with others
6. Repeating
7. Connecting parts
1. Looking at title and questions

- I will try to find out what I am asked to do with the listening task. I will look at the title of the recording or the questions asked on the task so that I will be able to pay attention to those parts that I need to.
2. Continuing listening

- I think I won’t stop on the words that I don’t understand as I used to. I will continue listening and won’t be distracted by words I don’t understand.
3. Taking notes (writing down key words)

- I will also write down key words, not many though, that might help me recall what I heard because sometimes I will forget what I hear. When I hear some words clearly among the slurred speech, I think they might be key words and will write them down.
4. Guessing meaning (from the context, by the pictures or by speaker’s tone of voice)

- …and guess the meaning of what I listen from the context. I would try to realize the context first and try to grab the meaning of the key words in the context.

- Sometimes by looking at the pictures on the news, I try to guess what the news is about.

- I would listen to the speaker’s tone and voice to guess what they probably said.
5. Discussing with others

- Very often, after discussing with my group members, I will be able to figure out some key words that I didn’t catch well and get some ideas about the listening text.
6. Repeating

- I will repeat in mind what the speaker said, which helps me keep what I hear in mind, so that I can remember what I heard and understand better what the speaker said.
7. Connecting parts

- I will try to connect what I hear and try to figure out what it means. I won’t be able to understand what I hear when I listen to it the first time. But after listening to it twice, I might be able to put the information together and guess what it means.
Characteristics of Listening Strategies Used by High-Achiever Students

1. Continuing listening
2. Taking notes (writing down whole sentences)
3. Guessing meaning (from the context, from speaker’s facial expressions, or by pronunciation inference)
4. Discussing with others
5. Repeating
6. Connecting parts
1. Continuing listening

- I will try to listen to the whole sentences and not to be distracted by unknown words.
2. Taking notes (writing down whole sentences)

- I will take notes of whole sentences instead of key words. In this way, I will be able to connect those sentences after listening to the text because I still can’t recall what I hear by simply looking at key words.
3. Guessing meaning (from the context, from speaker’s facial expressions, or by pronunciation inference)

- I will try to guess the parts I don’t understand in a logical way. I will guess by placing possible words or phrases to see if they make sense in the context.
- I will observe the speaker’s facial expressions to judge the possible meaning of what he said.
- I will spell out words I am not sure based on its pronunciation and then discuss with my group mates.
4. Discussing with others

- Though we can’t understand the whole conversation, we can discuss for the answer and tell others what we’ve heard and combine our information. This is a good way to make improvement.
5. Repeating

- As well, I will repeat what I hear in mind, which helps me to remember what I hear. I think the better I recall the listening text, the better I understand the content.
6. Connecting parts

- …I will try to make connection between the parts of the text and to guess the meaning of the content in a logical way.
While there are similarities between the strategies utilized by the students, differences of how the strategies worked for the students are found.

It appears that the low-achiever group developed a slightly wider repertoire of listening strategies.
The overall performance of the high-achiever group on the post-test was less favorable than that of the low-achiever group, whereas strategy development instruction seems to have a positive impact on the low-achiever students’ listening comprehension.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Score on pre-test (full score is 10) (A)</th>
<th>Score on post-test (full score is 10) (B)</th>
<th>Difference between two scores (C)=(B)-(A)</th>
<th>Difference shown by percentages (D)= (C)/(A)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>L2</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>L6</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Score on pre-test (full score is 10) (A)</td>
<td>Score on post-test (full score is 10) (B)</td>
<td>Difference between two scores (C)= (B)-(A)</td>
<td>Difference shown by percentages (D)= (C)/(A)</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<td>-6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>-24.20%</td>
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</table>
Challenges facing the students in dealing with listening tasks

- For low-achiever students:
  - speech speed
  - unfamiliar words/expressions
  - losing track of listening while taking notes
  - difficulty of English grammar
  - pronunciation

- For high-achiever students:
  - speech speed
  - speaker’s accent
  - unfamiliar words/content
There are some unknown words to me. The pronunciation is slurred and is difficult for me to understand what the speaker said. The speed is so fast that I can’t even catch the key words. My handwriting is slow. I can’t do note-taking and listening at the same time. When I try to figure out what the words and the sentences mean, I miss the words and sentences that follow. I am distracted. Also, I tend to translate what I hear into Chinese. Difficult grammar is also a cause of my listening comprehension problems.
I think the most difficult part is the speakers’ speaking speed and accent and my poor word bank. If I confront some vocabulary I didn’t know before, I will feel very anxious and it bothers me.
Suggestions and Conclusion

- Use of handouts
- Use of transcripts
- Use of recordings
Thank you for listening.