

The Effect of Teaching Listening Strategies in the EFL Classroom*

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The present study has attempted to explore the effect of teaching listening strategies to the high school students. Forty six students in a science high school participated in the study. Twenty three students were assigned to the control group and the other twenty three students were assigned to the experimental group. Both classes were provided with one month period listening class, but the experimental group was treated with additional listening strategies and the exercises associated with them. The listening strategies include listening for the main idea, listening for details, listening for specific information, listening for numerical information, listening with inferences and listening for cause and effect. The results showed that the experimental group has gained more scores than the control group at the post-test.

Key words: listening strategy, metacognitive strategy, experimental group, pre-and post test, percentile score

1. Introduction

In a second language communicative situation, the participants often employ various communicative strategies to overcome their linguistic barriers. They might use linguistic fillers, ask for clarification, refer to their first language or even use body languages. Strategies are, however, not just confined to the real communicative situations, but applied in the classrooms too. Often, we observe that good language learners are those who employ various learning strategies effectively. For this reason, the effort toward teaching learning strategies to the students is prevalent in the second or foreign language classrooms.

Recently, several research has been made to explore the effect of strategy instruction. Song (1999) has investigated the impact of reading using strategies on L2 reading ability with other predictive variables of

L2 reading ability such as grammar, vocabulary, etc. Song has concluded that among the variables hypothesized as predictors of L2 reading ability, students' use and awareness of effective reading strategies is the most important factor in determining their reading comprehension ability accounting for 52% of the total variance of L2 reading ability.

Park (1999) has investigated the effect of strategy instruction on listening comprehension with EFL university students in Korea. The students received instruction in metacognitive strategies—attention, monitoring, and evaluation—and cognitive strategies—prediction, inference, and elaboration—for 30 minutes per week for 12 weeks. The result was that the strategy instruction did have some effect on listening comprehension, but failed to reach significance.

In general, the research seems to support the effect of strategy instruction. In the current paper, an attempt to suggest listening strategies for the high school students in Korea, and explore the effect of teaching those strategies has been made.

2. Listening Strategies

Listening comprehension is best described as series of interwoven construction and integrating processes, and it includes both bottom-up and top-down processes. The bottom-up process includes the perception of the surface code of an oral text, establishing a mental representation of the language input and constructing the overall meaning of the text. The top-down process refers to relating the text to prior knowledge by integrating it into existing and evoked schemata. The effective listeners employ both of these processes.

Since listening comprehension was included in the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) English section, more emphasis has been placed on listening skills in the classroom. Despite the necessity of developing listening comprehension skills, virtually all the teachers have instructed just testing tactics in relation with CSAT listening questions. The tactics and problem solving skills might have helped students get high scores on the tests, but it is dubious that they have enhanced the students' listening competence. Therefore, in the present study, the listening strategies assumed to be effective to enhance the high school students' listening competence were suggested and tested for their effectiveness, and some implications will be drawn.

The listening strategies that the present study attempts to treat are as in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Listening Strategies

Listening Strategies	Contents
① Listening for the main idea	The attempt to understand the main idea of the text
② Listening for details	The attempt to understand details supporting the main idea
③ Listening for specific information	The attempt to understand specific information through skimming
④ Listening for numerical information	The attempt to focus more attention on numbers with which some important information is presented
⑤ Listening with inferences	The attempt to draw an inference regarding implied information such as the place in which a conversation takes place
⑥ Listening for cause and effect	The attempt to understand cause-effect relations in a text, giving special attention to expressions of transition

The strategies stated in Table 1 are provided by Lee, Choi, and Hong 2002, which explicates the nature of the CSAT listening items. Those strategies are rather cognitive strategies in that they involve an active manipulation of the task (O'Mally et al, 1989). With the strategies suggested, the present study attempts to explore the following research questions:

- 1) Will teaching strategies enhance the students' performance in listening comprehension?
- 2) How many hours of teaching strategies are required to yield the students' progress?

3. The Experiment

3.1. Subject

The subject of the study is the total of 46 high school 1st year students in two classes (23 students in each class). The high school is located in the Kyungin area, and it is a science high school. The students in this school are higher ability group in general. One class is assigned to the control group, and the other class, to the experimental group. The experimental and the control group were not manipulated but from the natural classes.

3.2. Method

3.2.1. The Pre-test

The students in both groups were pre-tested with a listening test composed of 20 questions. The results of the pre-test scores in the experimental group and the control group were later compared with the results of the post-test. The mean percentile score of the control group was 83.9 and the experimental group was 78.1 in the pre-test. Since the natural classes were used as the experimental and control groups, the differences in the pre-test scores were not controlled.

3.2.2. The Treatment

The students in both groups were provided with listening classes for one month—3 hours per week, the total of 12 hours. The listening classes were composed of phonological issues and various test-taking tactics followed by exercises. The phonological issues and the test-taking tactics were developed by the teacher who was participated in this experiment and those are the ones he uses in his classes. The students in the experimental group were additionally provided with the listening strategies suggested in Table 1 (page 3, in the current paper). The one month period was assumed to be the minimum to observe the effectiveness of the strategy instruction in the current study. The strategies and the exercises for the experimental group are provided in the appendix.

Table 2. The Treatment for the Experimental and Control Groups

Period	Class	Experimental/Control group		Experimental Group Only
		Phonological issues	Test-taking Tactics	Listening Strategies
1st week	1	Liaison	Intensive Listening	Listening for numerical information
	2	Liaison		Listening for cause and effect
	3	Assimilation		Listening for cause and effect
2nd week	1	Assimilation	Responsive/Elicitation	Listening with inferences
	2	Dissimilation		Listening with inferences
	3	Dissimilation		Listening with inferences
3rd week	1	Consonant Deletion	Selective Listening	Listening for details
	2	Consonant Deletion		Listening for specific information
	3	Tapping		Listening for specific information
4th week	1	Tapping	Extensive Top-Down Process	Listening for the main idea
	2	Glottalization		Listening for the main idea
	3	Glottalization		Listening with inferences

3.3. Post-test

After one month, the students took another listening test as a post-test. The post-test was the listening section of a standardized test. Unlike the pre-test, the post-test was composed of 17 items, which was designed for 3rd year high school students. Since the number of the items differs between the pre-test and the post-test, the percentile score is provided.

4. Results

After the post test, the scores of the pre- and the post-test were compared as in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The Results of the Pre- and the Post-test

Control Group					Experimental Group				
Pre-test			Post-test		Pre-test			Post-test	
student #	raw score	percentile score	raw score	percentile score	student #	raw score	percentile score	raw score	percentile score
1	15	75	15	88.24	1	19	95	17	100
2	16	80	17	100.00	2	18	90	15	88.24
3	15	75	15	88.24	3	18	90	16	94.12
4	15	75	17	100.00	4	18	90	17	100
5	15	75	16	94.12	5	12	60	15	88.24
6	17	85	17	100	6	15	75	13	76.47
7	15	75	15	88.24	7	13	65	14	82.35
8	15	75	16	94.12	8	13	65	16	94.12
9	15	75	14	82.35	9	20	100	15	88.24
10	18	90	10	58.82	10	15	75	9	52.94
11	17	85	12	70.59	11	14	70	12	70.59
12	18	90	17	100	12	14	70	14	82.35
13	17	85	13	76.47	13	18	90	12	70.59
14	18	90	17	100	14	12	60	14	82.35
15	17	85	14	82.35	15	13	65	14	82.35
16	19	95	14	82.35	16	15	75	16	94.12
17	16	80	13	76.47	17	17	85	17	100
18	20	100	16	94.12	18	15	75	17	100
19	19	95	15	88.24	19	13	65	13	76.47
20	17	85	17	100	20	19	95	17	100
21	16	80	12	70.59	21	14	70	10	58.82
22	20	100	14	82.35	22	17	85	12	70.59
23	16	80	16	94.12	23	17	85	15	88.24
Mean	16.8	83.9	14.9	87.5	Mean	15.6	78.1	14.4	84.4

The mean score of the pre-test in the control group was 83.9, while the one in the experimental group was 78.1. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the two groups at the beginning. However, after the treatment, the experimental group students gained more scores than the control group. At the post-test, the mean percentile score of the control group was 87.5 while that of the experimental group was 84.4. Table 4 summarizes this difference.

Table 4. The Mean Difference Between the Pre- and the Post-test of Both Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control	23	83.9130	8.2512	1.7205
	Experimental	23	78.0435	12.3158	2.5680
Post-test	Control	23	87.4680	11.3986	2.3768
	Experimental	23	84.3990	13.3443	2.7825

Although the fact that the experimental group gained much more than the control group in the post-test points to the effect of the treatment, it was necessary to test whether the mean difference of the gain score of the two groups is statistically significant. To this end, a t-test was done. The results of the t-test are in Table 5 below.

Table 5. The Equality of Variance and Means of the Pre- and the Post-Test of Both Groups

		Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
pre-test	Equal variances assumed	7.689	**0.008	1.899	44	.064	5.8696	3.0911
	Equal variances not assumed			1.899	38.438	*.065	5.8696	3.0911
post-test	Equal variances assumed	.529	.471	.839	44	.406	3.0691	3.6594
	Equal variances not assumed			.839	42.951	.406	3.0691	3.6594

** p<.05 *p<.01

First of all, with regard to the equal variance of the experimental and the control groups, they were significantly different at the pre-test at the significant level .05. However, at the post-test the variance of the two groups was not significant. Secondly, the mean difference of the two groups was significant at the pre-test at the significance level $p < .01$, but there was no significant difference at the post-test. These findings showed that the two groups were significantly different on their performance in the listening test at the pre-test. However, the two groups became similar after the additional treatment to the experimental group, showing no significant difference in their mean score. This is a rather significant result that supports the effect of teaching listening strategies to the students.

5. Discussion

The present study has attempted to explore the effect of teaching listening strategies to the high school students. Forty six students in a science high school participated in the study. Twenty three students were assigned to the control group and the other twenty three students were assigned to the experimental group. Instead of manipulating these two groups, the natural classes were used in the experiment, one class as the control group and the other as the experimental group. Both classes were provided with one month period listening class but the experimental group was treated with additional listening strategies and the exercises associated with them. The listening strategies include listening for the main idea, listening for details, listening for specific information, listening for numerical information, listening with inferences, listening for cause and effect.

Since the two groups were based on the natural grouping, control for the equal variance and the equal group mean score were not possible. The mean percentile score of the control group was 83.9 and the mean score of the experimental group was 78.4. However, after the one-month treatment the experimental group has gained the mean score of 6.4, while the control group has gained the mean score of 3.6. This shows that the experimental group has gained more than the control group. The statistics proved that a significant variance of the two groups was present at the pre-test ($F=7.689$, $**p=.008$), but it disappeared at the post-test

($F=.529$, $p=.471$). The mean difference for the two groups at the pre-test was significant ($t=1.899$, $*p=.065$), but not so at the post-test ($t=.839$, $p=.406$).

It is often said that good language learners are those who employ various kinds of learning strategies effectively. Given this, it is expected that teaching listening strategies should enhance the learners' performance and it was proved in the present study. The experimental group, which showed the lower performance in listening at the beginning, has better improved their listening competence after the one month listening classes focusing on some basic listening strategies.

In the present study, it was also found that one month of intensive strategy training was enough to improve the students' performance significantly. However, with regard to the period of yielding effectiveness of strategy instruction, cautious generalization need to be made. First, these students as well as the ones in the control group are in general high-performing students, and this condition would affect the effectiveness of raising their cognitive awareness. Second, there is a possibility that the students in the experimental group might be aware that they were under experiment and worked harder, which yielded the result of Hawthorne effect.¹⁾ Therefore, more studies should be done before stating that just one month is a period long enough for the teachers to help their students improve listening performance through listening strategies.

It may be the teachers' role to provide the students with various well-designed types of learning strategies. Nonetheless, the learning strategies suggested in the literature are rather conceptual. No matter how difficult it is, if the teachers can develop practical strategies and provide them for the students along with appropriate exercises, as suggested in the present study, the students can have an opportunity to improve their ability to a great deal, even in a one month period. Many attempts to teaching various effective strategies in a foreign language classroom are required.

1) The Hawthorne effect refers to a type of reactive arrangement resulting from the subjects' knowledge that they are involved in an experiment, or their feeling that they are in some way receiving "special attention."

Appendix

The Treatment: Listening Strategies for the Experimental Group

① Listening for the main idea (directed attention, elaboration (activation of script))

-Before-listening activity

While anticipating the content of what you'll hear, answer the following questions:

- When a friend of yours leaves for a foreign country, what present do you want to give to him?
- What would you say to this friend?

-While-listening activity

- What is the purpose of the dialogue?

[Telephone rings.]

M: Hello.

W: Hello. This is Susan. Can I speak to Min-ho?

M: Hi, Susan. What's up?

W: Hi. I'm calling to say good-bye. I leave Korea next week.

My father started a new business in Sydney, Australia.

M: Really? Then we should have farewell dinner before you leave.

W: Thanks, but I am pretty busy. I have so many things to do.

M: That's too bad. Take care of yourself, and give my best regards to your parents.

W: Thanks, I will.

② Listening for details (selective attention, organization, elaboration (activation of script))

-Step 1

The following advice is about safe driving. Listen and fill in the blanks with an appropriate word from the box below.

1. speed

2. safer

3. driving

4. danger

5. yield

6. traffic signals

M: Today I'd like to talk about what you should do when (). First, always observe the (). If you run a red light, you are running the risk of killing others as well as yourself. Second, do not (). Driving too fast means putting other people in (). It also causes noise pollution. Finally, () to other drivers. Always be polite to other drivers, and you'll enjoy () and more pleasant driving. In conclusion, you should think of others when driving.

-Step 2

Listen again and complete the following chart.

Rules for Safe Driving
1. Always observe the ().
2. Do not ().
3. () to other drivers.

③ **Listening for specific information (selective attention, elaboration (activation of script))**

-Step 1

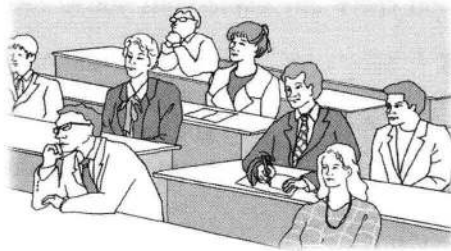
The following is what you'll hear. However, some parts are not readable. Listen and decide if each of the statements is true or false.

- He's wearing glasses.
- He's wearing a tie.

M: What picture is that, Susan?
 W: Look. My father's here.
 M: Which one is him?
 W: Have a guess.
 M: Does your father wear glasses?
 W: No, he doesn't. He's in a grey suit with a checked tie.
 M: A checked tie? Then this gentleman must be your father.
 W: Yes, that's right.
 M: Umm. He's taking notes. He looks busy.

-Step 2

Listen and choose the one the man is looking for.



④ **Listening for numerical information (selective attention, organization)**

-Step 1

Listen to the dialogue that takes place at the hotel front desk. Circle the numbers you've heard.

809 819 1202 1204 760-1568 760-1528

W: What's your name, please?
 M: Bill White.
 W: Is that W-H-I-T-E?
 M: Yes, that's right.
 W: And what's your address?
 M: 809 Oak Avenue, Apartment 1204, Westwood, New York, New York.
 W: And what's your phone number?
 M: It's 706-1568.
 W: Thank you very much.
 M: You're welcome.

Step 2

Listen again and correct any mistakes in the following registration form.

<u>Hotel Registration</u>					
NAME	STREET	APT. NO.	CITY,	STATE	PHONE
Bill White	890 Oak Street	1202	New York	New York	760-1658

⑤ **Listening for cause and effect (selective attention, rehearsal, elaboration (activation of script))**

-Step 1

The following is what you'll hear. However, some parts are not

readable. Listen and check any expressions you've heard.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> this evening | <input type="checkbox"/> study a little and relax |
| <input type="checkbox"/> what do you think | <input type="checkbox"/> going out to celebrate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> what's the matter? | <input type="checkbox"/> got the first prize |
| <input type="checkbox"/> school essay test | <input type="checkbox"/> want to finish the homework |

M: Linda! What are you doing this evening?

W: Maybe study a little and relax. Why?

M: What do you think about going out to celebrate?

W: What's the occasion?

M: Well, I got the first prize in the school essay contest.

W: You won the contest? Congratulations! You'll be a famous writer.

M: Thanks. Just forget about the homework and let's party.

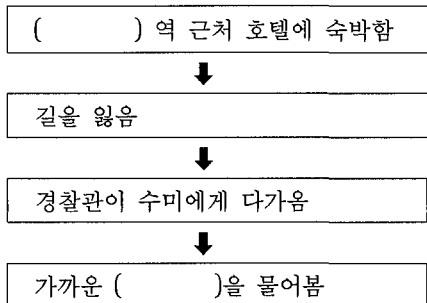
-Step 2

Why is the man so happy?

⑥ **Listening with inferences (directed attention, organization, elaboration (activation of story grammar))**

-Step 1

The following is what you'll hear. Some parts are not readable. Listen and complete the following flow chart.



M: Su-mi is **lost in a foreign city** while traveling. She is staying at a **hotel** near the Central Station. The Central Station is on subway line No. 7. Su-mi sees **a police officer coming towards her**. She wants to ask for his help **to find the nearest subway station**. What would she say to the policeman?

-Step 2

Listen again and choose the one that best completes Su-mi's response.

Su-mi: Excuse me. _____

- ① What seems to be the problem?
- ② When does the train leave?
- ③ Where is the subway station?
- ④ How long will you stay there?
- ⑤ Where is the police station?

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