

The Relationship between Teaching Metacognitive Strategies and Performance on Academic
Listening Comprehension

Valeria Bogorevich

Northern Arizona University

Abstract

The present study addressed the impact of teaching metacognitive strategies on listening comprehension of PEE level three. The quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design included two groups of students – treatment and comparison. All students took a pretest to measure their level of listening comprehension and then filled out the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) (Vandergrift et al., 2006) for the first time. After that, the treatment group received treatment on metacognitive strategies using the pedagogical stages of listening instruction (Vandergrift, 2004) and the comparison group followed regular listening instruction for one month. When the treatment was finished, the students of both groups took a similar to the first test and fill out the MALQ again. The statistical analysis showed no significant difference in terms of students' performance on the listening comprehension tests or MALQ pre-questionnaire. In contrast, the treatment enhanced learners' awareness of the metacognitive processes of L2 listening because the treatment group significantly outperformed the comparison group on MALQ.

Keywords: academic listening comprehension; metacognitive strategies; ESL; MALQ

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Background

Little is known about the L2 (second language) listening processes when students are in academic environment (Field, 2011) but listening strategies can be utilized to make L2 listening easier (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Goh, 1997; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The researchers promoted teaching cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective strategies. Metacognitive strategies help students to evaluate, monitor, organize and are considered to be effective. Persuasive evidence (Goh, 2002; Vandergrift, 2003) showed metacognitive strategies to be highly beneficial for L2 listening improvement. The recent empirical studies (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Goh & Hu, 2014) also showed that teaching metacognitive strategies is beneficial. In Plonsky (2011) it was noted that strategy instruction is more effective at intermediate and advanced levels while in other studies (Goh and Taib, 2006; Bozorgian, 2012; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010) the results highlighted that less skilled learners benefit more from metacognitive strategies.

Research Questions

1. Are comparison and treatment groups comparable according to the listening comprehension pretest and the MALQ pre questionnaire?
2. Does teaching metacognitive listening strategies effect students' performance on the listening comprehension posttest and the MALQ post-questionnaire?

Methods

Participants

The sample groups were from PIE level three (N=16). Two sections became the treatment (n=8) and comparison (n=8) groups. Both groups of students consisted of mostly male (only one female in the comparison group) and mostly Arabic-speaking (one Chinese in the comparison and one Kiswahili student in the treatment group). The age of participants varied from 18 to 35 with the median at 21.

Measures

Two instruments were used in the current study, one for measuring listening comprehension and the other one for measuring metacognitive strategy use. The pretest and the posttest, created by the researcher, were used to measure students' listening comprehension. Each test had four listening passages with six questions (two detail, two main idea, and two inference questions) totaling in 24 items.

The second measure was MALQ (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006). The questionnaire had 21 questions on a six-point Likert scale so that the possible score could range from 21 to 126. MALQ addressed the use of metacognitive strategies for listening such as planning and monitoring, problem-solving, mental translation, directed attention, and person knowledge strategies. The subconstructs representing metacognitive strategies were treated as one, and were not explored separately. The statements on MALQ were adapted by the researcher to be more comprehensible for intermediate level students. To describe the sample, several questions were added to the end of the questionnaire eliciting gender, age, and first language.

Procedures

Although the treatment and comparison groups were taught by different people, the same syllabus was used, and the students were exposed to the same listening materials. The researcher taught metacognitive strategies to the treatment group following the pedagogical stages for teaching listening (Vandergrift, 2004) and the control group had the regular instruction during the period of four weeks (24 hours of instruction); the regular syllabus does not have any explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies. The pedagogical stages used with the treatment group included pre-listening, first listen, second listen, third listen and the reflection stage. Each stage addressed several metacognitive strategies which can be used at it. Within this period of time, students in the treatment group were instructed on using metacognitive strategies using 12 academic listening passages from the syllabus; the comparison group was exposed to the same 12 listening passages but without any explicit instruction on metacognitive strategies.

Results

Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test was used to compare the sum of scores of the treatment and comparison groups on the listening comprehension pretest and on MALQ pre-questionnaire. According to the statistical tests, there was no significant difference between the treatment and comparison groups' performance wither on the listening comprehension pretest or on the MALQ pre-questionnaire.

Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test was used to compare the sum of scores of the treatment and comparison groups on the listening comprehension posttest and on MALQ post-questionnaire. According to statistical tests there was no significant difference between comparison and treatment groups on the listening comprehension test; however, the treatment

group outperformed the comparison group on the MALQ post-questionnaire. The strength of association showed a large effect ($\eta^2 = 0.47$).

Relevance to PIE and Second Language Learning

The purpose of this study was to address the impact of teaching metacognitive strategies on listening comprehension PIE students level three. The research question asked was how teaching metacognitive strategies affect academic listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness of students. Based on previous studies, it was expected that the group exposed to metacognitive strategy instruction would show better results on the posttest and post-questionnaire. However, the test results did not show any difference in listening comprehension although students' metacognitive awareness increased; further research can be held to see if metacognitive strategy use is more helpful at higher or lower PIE levels.

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