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Episiasi

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Januarius Mujiyanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Suwandi

Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia

Rudi Hartono

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Exploring the Effects of Metacognitive Strategy on EFL Students' Listening Performance in Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to describe the effects of metacognitive strategy on students' listening performance. The quasi-experimental design was employed. The participants were Indonesian undergraduate learners majoring in English education programs. Listening tests and close-response questionnaires were used for collecting the data. The results revealed a significant effect on listening performance after being tutored by using a metacognitive strategy. It also revealed that seven factors affecting students' difficulties in the listening comprehension process covered comprehension process, linguistic features, psychology, lack of concentration, listeners' problem, speakers' problem, and environmental factors. Findings underlined that metacognitive strategy effectively increased EFL students' listening performance.

Keywords: *metacognitive strategy, listening achievement, EFL students*

Introduction

Listening is a major aspect of success in academic settings before mastering speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is a skill that plays a vital role while teaching, learning, and communicating. Regarding communication, 40-50% of people listen,

25-30% speak, 11-16% read, and 9% write (Mendelsohn, 1994). Listening is generally used in regular activities and enables people to comprehend the world. It is also one of the essential components for creating an effective conversation (Rost, 2009). According to Hasan (2000), listening is instrumental in supporting other language skills. Oxford (1990) stated that listening grows quicker than the three other language skills, which could help develop these skills.

Despite its importance, students' comprehension of listening performance appears difficult and needs teachers' increased attention (Saraswaty, 2018; Sari & Fithriyana, 2019). The difficulty is linked to EFL learners' problems, including lack of concentration, speed, unclear speakers, listening material, listener, and physical settings (Diora & Rosa, 2020; Jyoti, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2021). Those problems also relate to listening performance (Bingol et al., 2014; Gilakjani, 2016). Buck (2001) found several difficulties in discovering the meaning of unfamiliar words, recognising unknown issues, and the speed of rapid speech. Many English students believe that the most complicated aspect of listening is the students have insufficient control speaking speed of the speakers. Indonesian learners also struggle to comprehend listening skills (Agustiana, 2019; Nanning, 2014). Therefore, university teachers should train students using new techniques to enhance effective listening (Al-Nafisah, 2019). In line with this idea, understanding students' difficulties in listening enables teachers to increase their ways of training listening skills (Alzamil, 2021).

Creative teaching strategies are needed to improve their listening comprehension mastery and overcome students' listening comprehension problems. Moreover, Brown (2007) states that strategy is a specific procedure to solve a problem or task, an operation mode to accomplish a certain goal or a plan designed for manipulating and controlling certain information. It means students need a specific learning strategy to help them acquire knowledge and skills. It is in line with Vandergrift (1999), who believes that listening strategies encourage students to learn the language successfully regarding language input. Students need to master the skills and knowledge of various listening strategies. Teachers can use the listening strategy to increase the students' listening performance. Furthermore, several metacognitive strategies in teaching listening are conducted in EFL classrooms (Cao & Lin, 2020; Al-Jahwari et al., 2019).

Metacognition relates to the listener's understanding of the cognitive processes included in comprehending and the ability to supervise, regulate, and guide these processes (Goh, 2008). Metacognition is determined as a structure which refers to the ability of a person to think about a person's thoughts or human beings to realise a person's mental process (Rahimi & Katal, 2012). It means that when students are

aware of their learning process, they have implemented metacognitive strategies. These strategies involve five types of strategies, namely problem-solving, planning and evaluation, psychological translation, personal knowledge, and directed attention (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The metacognitive strategies refer to the actions students consciously use when listening to a passage attentively. Metacognitive strategies are management techniques that students use to manage their learning through planning, checking, assessing, and change. In the metacognitive planning strategy, the listener clarifies the goal of the listening task and applies the specific characteristic of the auditory language input to create an understanding of the auditory input easier. Learners may use metacognitive strategies to check and evaluate their understanding of the listening text (Buck, 2001).

In the modern world, almost everyone affirms that listening is an important skill in learning. Teachers and researchers have explored listening by focusing on students' difficulties to help them master listening skills. However, students face various difficulties in listening. Other studies are conducted (Abu Bakar, 2019; Bingol et al., 2014; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Sa'diyah, 2016); they mainly focus on listening problems. Students have problems comprehending listening comprehension because they have to differentiate between sounds, understand the vocabulary and grammatical structures, and interpret the meaning simultaneously. In line with this idea, factors affecting students' difficulties in listening comprehension are accents, lack of concentration, speed, lack of vocabulary, and unclear speakers' statements (Purwanto et al., 2021; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the use of metacognitive strategy in teaching listening to Indonesian university students and to find out the influencing factors on students' difficulties in listening comprehension.

Research Problem

This study aims to explore the effects of metacognitive strategy on students' listening performance in the EFL setting. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Do EFL students taught through metacognitive strategy achieve better listening performance than EFL students taught by traditional language teaching strategy?
2. What are the influencing factors on students' difficulties in listening comprehension?

Research Methodology

Research Sample

In conducting the study, the writer employed a quasi-experimental design involving sixty undergraduate students in the English department of a private college in South Sumatera Province, Indonesia. They were taken as samples by using the purposive sampling method. There were two kinds of variables: independent variables (metacognitive strategy and traditional language teaching strategy) and a dependent variable (students' listening performance).

Instruments

In this study, the English teacher used the standardised test after giving the treatment to the students in the listening class. The test was in the form of fifty multiple-choice questions of listening proficiency test to find the students' listening proficiency. The questions comprised short conversations, long conversations, and long talks. The test was adopted from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) listening comprehension section (Phillips, 2001). The test was utilised in measuring the students' listening proficiency because this test was standardised and familiar in measuring the English ability of University students in Indonesia.

The second instrument is a close-ended questionnaire employed to collect the data. A questionnaire is generally used for gathering survey information, offering structured numerical data that can be applied without the presence of a study and is truthful to examine (Cohen et al., 2018). Close-ended questionnaire items were designed after evaluating the literature on listening comprehension problems (Hamouda, 2013). The questionnaire consisted of three factors: students' difficulties in listening comprehension, linguistic features, and psychological characteristics. Thirty-one descriptions were about students' listening comprehension problems, and answers to the questions were determined using the Likert Scale format (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). To acquire content validity and reliability, five EFL experts volunteered to give comments and suggestions about the items' vocabulary, structure, and order. The contents were then calculated and revised to ensure the validity of the instruments.

Procedures

For data collection, the students were administered to do a listening test. The test was distributed twice at the pre-test and post-test to both groups. The pre-test was given to find the students' listening mastery before treating a metacognitive strategy. The post-test was given to seek the students' listening performance after the treatment using the metacognitive strategy in teaching listening. The data were gathered in sixteen meetings for one semester. In the experimental group, students learned listening through a metacognitive strategy, while students in the control group were tutored through a traditional language teaching strategy. There were three teaching steps: pre-activities, whilst activities, and post-activities. After that, the students were asked to listen to a long talk about a librarian. In listening class, students and teacher planned the listening task, monitored comprehension, evaluated comprehension, and strategy used by the students.

In the control group, EFL learners were studied through a traditional listening strategy in the classroom. The teachers faced activities, such as listening to the tape-recorded. The teacher explained and asked the students about the listening material that had been listened to and found the main idea of the listening materials. At the last meeting, both groups were given the post-test after giving the treatment. After doing the post-test, students were asked to fill in close-ended questionnaires. The questionnaires were given to the students to gather information about factors affecting students' difficulties in listening comprehension.

Data Analysis

There were three statistical analyses: the statistical analysis of the experimental group, the control group, and the difference analysis of both groups. The data were scored by employing the SPSS 23 program. A t-test analysis was used to describe the metacognitive strategy's effects on listening performance. Furthermore, the average scores of each statement in the close-ended questionnaires were analysed to determine factors affecting students' difficulties in listening comprehension.

Results

Listening tests and close-ended questionnaires were analysed for both groups of students. The results of the data analysis are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Post-test results between metacognitive strategy and traditional language teaching groups

Groups	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Metacognitive strategy	72.40	7.868	5.09	.000
Traditional language teaching	67.00	6.762		

Table 1 shows that the mean score of metacognitive and traditional language teaching groups were 72.40 and 67.00. It means there was a significant difference in the listening performance among students who were trained by metacognitive strategy and those who were not since the value of t-obtained was higher than the t-table value.

Furthermore, the results of close-ended questionnaires showed three factors affecting students' difficulties in listening comprehension, which can be seen from the following tables.

Table 2. Students' Listening Comprehension Process

No	Statements	Mean
1	I struggle to associate what I listen to with the previous listening materials.	3.20
2	I have difficulty comprehending text in listening.	3.13
3	I have difficulty understanding the content of the dialogue.	3.23
4	I have difficulty summarising the information acquired through listening.	3.17
5	I struggle to apply the content to guess parts of the listening text that I cannot get.	3.23
6	I have difficulty evaluating whether I properly understand definitions of texts during listening.	3.13
7	I struggle to guess the definition of new vocabulary during listening, connecting them to common words.	3.27
8	I have difficulty developing meaningful personal associations with the current information during listening.	3.23
9	I have trouble evaluating my understanding of the text due to a lack of prior knowledge.	3.3
10	After listening, I have trouble evaluating my listening strategy.	3.07

Table 2 displays students' listening comprehension process. There are ten questionnaire statements in which the lowest can be found in items 10, 2, and 6. The students found it difficult to evaluate their listening strategy after listening, had problems comprehending text in listening and difficulty evaluating whether they properly understood text definitions during listening.

Table 3. Students' Linguistic Features

No	Statements	Mean
1	I have difficulty guessing the meaning of a new vocabulary while listening.	3.13
2	I use my background knowledge to comprehend spoken dialogue.	3.40
3	I have difficulty comprehending listening idioms and other new phrases.	3.23
4	I have difficulty comprehending complex grammatical structures in listening.	3.32
5	I have difficulty interpreting signals showing speakers are moving to another point.	3.33
6	It is hard to deal with colloquial language and slang.	3.33
7	I forget the succeeding section of the listening text while focusing on defining an unknown word(s).	3.23
8	It is hard for me to understand a listening passage.	3.23
9	I get bored and confused listening to a long-spoken text.	3.30
10	I experience difficulty in tracking the order of the dialogue when conversations are long and complex.	3.10
11	I have difficulty in interpreting the meaning of a long dialogue.	3.27
12	I have difficulty in spelling homophones clearly.	3.17
13	Long dialogue interferes with my listening comprehension.	2.80
14	I rarely focus on speakers' intonation.	3.23
15	I have difficulty in comprehending the next word in a speech.	3.20
16	I experience difficulty comprehending English texts with unfamiliar topics.	3.13

Table 3 provides data on students' linguistics features. The highest score from sixteen statements is 3.40, which stated that they found it difficult to interpret signals showing speakers are moving to another point and getting bored or confused with listening to a long-spoken text.

Table 4. Psychological Characteristics Factor

No	Statements	Mean
1	I feel nervous when the listening session begins.	2.87
2	The listening topic is tedious and makes the spoken text hard to understand.	3.17
3	Failure to understand the spoken text makes me worried.	2.97
4	I stop listening when I encounter problems understanding the dialogue.	3.13
5	I get disappointed if I become unsuccessful in understanding the listening materials.	3.03

The students' psychological characteristics factor were shown in Table 4. It was identified from five statements. Item 2 was categorised as the highest score, 3.17,

including the listening topic is tedious, which makes the spoken text difficult to understand. The lowest score can be found in item 1, is identified the students feeling nervous when the listening session begins.

Discussion

Metacognitive strategy facilitates the students to improve students' listening performance. The metacognitive strategy is the main element towards understanding a foreign language. The finding showed that the mean metacognitive score was higher than conventional language teaching groups. The paired sample test inferred that it was a significant difference in listening achievement among students trained through the metacognitive strategy and learners taught by the conventional teaching strategy because F-value 5.09 was higher than the F-table 2.042 and it is proved by the significance value (0.00) was lower (0.05). It concluded that it significantly affected the use of metacognitive strategy on listening performance. It is in line with (Cao & Lin, 2020; Rahimirad, 2014) investigating the use of metacognitive strategy to increase listening achievement. The advantages of applying the metacognitive strategy were that students' listening comprehension improved significantly among EFL learners. It made students independent and self-regulated to evaluate their strategies and problems in learning and confident in learning. Using the strategy, students can increase academic success, especially in listening performance, through planning, monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-test (Buck, 2001).

The questionnaire results show that students still experience problems in listening comprehension. Buck (2001) identified similar listening problems, including finding the meaning of new vocabulary, identifying unfamiliar topics, and the rate of quick speech. This process begins with students' listening comprehension process, in which students must associate what they listen to with the previous part of the listening materials. Students encounter difficulties comprehending text while listening because of unfamiliar words and topics (Donglan, 2004). Those with limited vocabulary have problems creating a meaningful association with the new information while listening. Effective listeners use their background knowledge while listening and relate that information to the updated spoken content.

Students' linguistic features are related to students' difficulty when finding long dialogue interferes with their listening comprehension, which makes it difficult to track the order of the dialogue when conversations are long and complex. Students have difficulties understanding a text when speakers talk too quickly and with

several accents. This result is in line with the previous studies that revealed existing difficulties faced by students concerning speed and the length of the spoken text, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and accents (Erzad, 2020; Novika et al., 2020; Yahmun et al., 2020). Consequently, they can comprehend the text during listening (Goh, 2000). The results of students' linguistic features strengthen the former hypothetical questions among students with difficulties. It also confirms that students had difficulties with linguistic features, namely complex grammatical structures, pronunciation, distinguishing word boundaries, unfamiliar topics, and accents (Jaya et al., 2021; Jyoti, 2020).

Concerning psychological characteristics, students have difficulties in comprehending listening skills relating to psychological factors. These factors include low motivation and personal interest when the topic is unfamiliar, negative experiences gained earlier while taking listening comprehension tests, new vocabulary, and complex sentence structures that make students nervous during a listening class (Kharzhevskaya et al., 2019). The results show that students faced with negative psychological factors while listening have a low comprehension of the reading material.

Conclusion and Future Research

The study results underline that a metacognitive strategy for teaching listening can be an option for teaching listening among EFL learners. Students who received the listening class through metacognitive strategy achieved better writing performance than those who learned listening through traditional language teaching. It also reveals that students faced listening comprehension problems influenced by students' listening process, linguistic features, and psychological factors. Also, listening is an essential skill in English because it can support other skills (Hamouda, 2013). Understanding speech is difficult for students, leading to several challenges during listening classes. Teachers may select appropriate teaching materials and strategies to train students' listening comprehension. Furthermore, this study uncovers issues affecting the listening performance of students and offers solutions. For further studies, English teachers should use various teaching media or strategies to improve students' listening achievement.

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AUTHORS

EPISIASI

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
Doctor
Jl. Kelud Utara III, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, 50233
E-mail address: episiasi2023@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3343-7001>

JANUARIUS MUJIYANTO

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
Professor
Jl. Kelud Utara III, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, 50233
E-mail address: yanmujiyanto@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2627-9789>

SUWANDI

Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia
Professor
Jl. Sidodadi Timur No. 24, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia
E-mail address: dr_suwandi@yahoo.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9983-1311>

RUDI HARTONO

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
Professor
Jl. Kelud Utara III, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, 50233
E-mail address: rudi.hartono@mail.unnes.ac.id
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9331-8744>