Meta-Cognitive Strategy Training for Listening Comprehension Through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

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Abstract

The paper tries to investigate and explain the conditions that are needed for Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the learners listening comprehension strategy development. It also examines the challenges that Computer Science Engineering students face while doing listening tasks in the language laboratory and discusses how students are engaged in prediction, monitoring, problem solving and evaluation (the major groups of meta-cognitive strategies). The experiment is based on Vandergrift's (2002) research on meta-cognitive cycle in which learners employ strategies to regulate listening and achieve good comprehension.

Key words: computer assisted language learning, prediction, monitoring, problem solving and evaluation
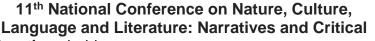
Introduction

In language learning listening and speaking skills have a prominent place in classroom pedagogy and designing curriculum around the world today. Gilman and Moody (1984) demonstrated that adults spend 40-50% of communication time listening, but the importance of listening in language learning has been recognized relatively recently (Oxford 1993). Since the early 70's, researchers such as Asher, Postovsky, Winitz, Krashen and many educationalists have emphasized the need of listening as a tool for understanding and one of the key factors in facilitating language learning. Listening seems to be difficult to describe in a sentence as it is an invisible mental process.

Richards (2008), in his book titled *Teaching listening and Speaking: from theory to practice* considers listening acquisition from two different perspectives: listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition It is observed that most of the methodological frame works listening and listening comprehension seem to be synonymous and remains as the least understood processes in language learning.

Vandergrift (1999) states that listening to oral texts is more challenging than doing written tasks. Focus on personal traits such as learning strategies and styles to incorporate technology-based listening tasks and activities can help to overcome their listening comprehension. Even though there is a rapid development of technological devices in the 21st century and the accessibility to a computer-supported tools and applications across disciplines of study, research yields mixed findings concerning the positive influence of technology on learning outcome (Reynolds, Treharne & Tripp, 2003). Crystal (2009: 92-134) has discussed the extensive use of English on the internet through which a two interesting methods have appeared from the technology point of view in language learning: (i) Google-Assisted Language Learning (GALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning MALL (Chinnery 2006, 2008). With this background, the paper explores the challenges that Telugu speakers face while listening to English text using computers and

International Journal of Research
ISSN: 2348-6848 Vol-5, Special Issue-14
**11th National Conference on Nature, Culture,
Language and Literature: Narratives and Critical
Practices** held on 16th and 17th April 2018 at **The Department
of English, SRM University**, Kattankalathur, Chennai, Tamilnadu

analyzes learner's self-assessment data on improving listening skills. In listening, there are several major steps that may occur sequentially or simultaneously, in rapid succession, or backward and forward. The major points that include: determining a reason for listening, predicting information, attempting to organize information, assigning a meaning to the message, and transferring information from short-term memory to long-term memory.

Methodology

For the study, 120 students from Computer Science Engineering Course (UG Level) were taken as the sample, whose mother tongue is Telugu. Of 120 students, 80 are male and 40 are female, aged between 19-21 years. All students were administered to questionnaire as Pre-test (MALQ) in beginning of the treatment and same questionnaire was administered after the strategy training (Post-test). All the respondents of the study were introduced to the use of technology and its usefulness in learning listening skills. They were also given treatment on listening skills and how meta-cognitive strategies will enhance their learning awareness. Respondents were asked to use desktop computers in the language lab to listen/play mp3 audios selected by the researcher. The average time spent on each activity was 3 hours.

For the study, Vandergrift et al. (2006) Meta-cognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was used to assess the language learners' awareness and perceived notions and use of listening strategies. The questionnaire contains 21 items and each item is rated on a six-point Likert scale rating from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) without a neutral point so that respondents could not hedge. MALQ consists of five factors including problem-solving (six items), planning (three items), person knowledge (three items), and directed attention (four items). Vandergrift's pedagogical sequence can develop an awareness of the process of listening and help students acquire the meta-cognitive knowledge critical to success in listening

comprehension. Pre-listening activities help students make decisions about what to listen, to what extent but While-listening students are able to focus their attention on meaning and get to infer meaning of the listening text. Further, they can understand and arrive at taking decision about what they have heard/perceived.

Activity

Goh (1997, 1998) cited in Richards (2008) saying how the meta-cognitive activities of planning, monitoring, and evaluating can be applied to the teaching of listening. Meta-cognitive strategies are for self-regulation in learner's listening. The approach to the listening strategies in guided meta-cognitive sequence in a listening lesson taken from Goh (2006) is followed:

Step 1: Student predicts the possible words and phrases that they might hear. He is asked to write down his predictions first.

Step 2: As he is listening to the text, he underlines or circles those words or phrases that he has predicted correctly. He also writes down new information they hear.

Ex: In the listening activity, there are ten questions on filling in the details about Paul's apartment. (Reporting Repairs).

Address: Block……. Flat no. …….

………. Enclave, Guntur.

Problems: a) Leaking bathroom tap

b) …………….

c) Window bolts…..

There are also 10 questions on "fill in spaces in the flow chart about "Mango fruit".

Another activity is 'Banana trees' which student should fill in the spaces in not more than three words.

Step 3: Student compares what he has understood so far and explains how he arrives at the understanding. He identifies the parts that cause confusion and disagreement and makes a note of the parts of the text that requires special attention in the second listen.

Step 4: Student listens to those parts that has caused confusion or disagreement areas and makes notes of any new information he hears i.e. second listening.

Step 5: After completing second listening, the teacher leads a discussion to confirm comprehension before discussing with all the students the strategies that they reported using.

Results and Discussions

1.Some of the Responses of the Pre-Test MALQ

1	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I find that listening is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English	12	8	10	10	10	70
3	As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.	13	20	30	7	15	35
4	I translate key words as I listen	68	12	14	6	10	10
5	When I have difficulty understanding	20	5	11	14	-	70

	what I hear, I give up and stop listening.					

1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Partially Disagree, 4-Partially Agree, 5-Agree, 6-Strongly Agree　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Digits are no of Responses

2. Post-Test Responses MALQ

1	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I find that listening is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English	55	10	5	16	14	20
3	As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.	13	-	15	12	15	65
4	I translate key words as I listen	27	15	3	5	60	10
5	When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.	14	56	-	15	25	10

1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Partially Disagree, 4-Partially Agree, 5-Agree, 6-Strongly Agree

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Digits are no of Responses

As it can seen from the Pre-test and Post-test responses, it is evident that Mata-cognitive Awareness Listening training has a positive impact on the students listening skills and its awareness. 66% (80) of the respondents for item no.1 on pre-test felt that listening was difficult than other skills but after the treatment, 54% (65) of them responded saying that listening may not be so difficult comparatively.

Moreover, item no.2 on Pre-test, we have somehow mixed responses like 41.5% responded positively whereas 30% of them partially agreed/disagreed, also 27% respondents have agreed with statement. Therefore, it may be inferred that respondents seemed to have confused state of

mind while answering the questionnaire which means they are not aware of the listing strategies of language learning.

It is also an indication from the responses for item. no 4 that strategy training had impacted the understanding and perceptions of the students after the rigorous training. In pre-test responses i.e. 66% strongly disagreed/agreed while in post-test scores indicate around 58% said that they translate key words as they listen.

Hence, it is understandable that students studying Computer Science and Engineering course participated in this strategy training relatively improved their perceptions of listening skills. Approximately 65% of felt that listening to the activities had improved their learning while 16-20% indicated that they did not feel that it was necessary for them to learn. Students felt that it was not hard for them to listening using computers and some students explained listening tasks were the most difficult one.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is inferred that there is an opportunity for raising language awareness by employing computer assisted learning which allow learners to carry out the assignments at their own pace. Follow-up class room discussions of benefits or failures of listening enable learners to evaluate their ability to understand authentic records. Teachers can help Telugu speakers at the beginning-level learn how to comprehend short, authentic texts on topics related to student's level and their interest. The meta-cognitive strategies underlying this approach help learners become more aware of how they can use and what they already know to fill gaps in their understanding.

Therefore, we can suggest that we first distinguish between the situations where comprehension only is the appropriate instructional goal and those where comprehension plus acquisition is a

relevant focus as stated Richards. The stages which we discussed based on Goh (2002b) and Vandergrift (2003b), can be used successfully with beginning level language learners at different ages especially Telugu speakers. It is agreed and proved in this study that students need systematic practice in using listening strategies that will be useful as most learning takes place outside the classroom.

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