

EFL Listeners' Strategy Development and Listening Problems: A Process-Based Study

Ai-hua Chen

Asia-Pacific Institute of Creativity, Taiwan

This study particularly looked into students' perceived listening problems over time as they develop their listening strategies in the context of a Taiwanese technological college. The participants were 31 Taiwanese college students who received listening strategy instruction two hours per week for fourteen weeks. The data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively to examine changes in EFL listening problems encountered by students and how they dealt with these listening problems as they develop their strategy use over time. The quantitative results showed that there were three major significant differences in students' perceived listening problems after the strategy instruction: they are unfamiliar vocabulary, rapid speech rate and linking sounds between words. In addition, the qualitative data showed that the patterns of changes in students' perceived listening problems seem to be more complicated. While students reported less listening problems at a superficial level, they encountered more listening problems at deeper processing level as they attempted to heighten their strategy use. Based on the results, pedagogical implications and suggestions were provided.

Keywords: EFL listening problems, listening strategy use, EFL adult learners

INTRODUCTION

The listening macro-skill is the basic building block of EFL communication, and failing to comprehend when listening leads to misunderstanding or non-understanding. Hence, to equip students with EFL communicative competence, the most fundamental and important step is to help students activate their learning in listening comprehension. However, EFL listening instruction in Taiwan has typically adopted the Grammar-Translation method or the Audio-Lingual method, which have an emphasis on repeated patterns and structures (Mendelsohn, 1994; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Rost, 2002). This form-based listening instruction has been also accompanied by "testing listening," the practice of answering listening comprehension questions followed by the provision of the correct answers and finishing with an explanation of the meaning of the transcripts. This form of repeated drill-based practice may inhibit students from being active listeners, reducing their interest and motivation to learn how to listen in EFL context. As a result, listening comprehension has been regarded as one of the most difficult skills for most students to learn.

Some problems resulting in such ineffective EFL listening pedagogy in Taiwan may be that, on the one hand, teachers merely focus on what students have learned by testing listening and often overlook the process by which students learned to comprehend while listening (Mendelsohn, 1994; Vandergrift, 2004). On the other hand, students rely passively on teachers' instruction and seldom realize that they themselves must be active in their listening and learning to listen (Chen, 2010; Goh & Taib, 2006; Vandergrift, 2003). One way to remedy these problems would be to shift the attention from test-oriented teaching toward more student-oriented instruction, in which the key focus is on helping students to develop their listening strategies and learn how to listen actively (Richards, 2005). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the processes of learners' listening strategy development. In particular, this study looked at listeners' changing processes of their perceived listening problems over time and how listeners learn to solve these obstacles during their listening processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening Processing

The listening process is the continuing construction of interpretation to the spoken input, and thus the ability to adjust the interpretation to response new information is especially crucial in the L2/FL listening (Buck, 2001). First language listeners may process the listening input automatically without much conscious attention to word-by-word input. In contrast, most L2/FL listeners need to consciously decode the details and construct the meaning of the listening input; comprehension usually breaks down easily primarily due to listeners' limited working memory and linguistic knowledge (Vandergrift, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the complex cognitive process in L2/FL listening instruction, and more intervention is necessary in assisting listeners to achieve successful comprehension. Based on this premise, this study takes the cognitive processing perspective as the main theoretical basis for examining the L2/FL listening process.

The most widely acknowledged information processing model in the listening process is probably drawn from Anderson's (1985, 2000) three-stage comprehension model perception, parsing and utilization each of which is interrelated, recursive and overlapping. This model has probably been the dominant paradigm adopted in the listening process; for example, it has been applied in many research studies to the use of listening strategies at different stages (Bacon, 1992, Goh, 2000; O'Malley et al., 1989). Furthermore, Rost's (2002) listening processing phases of decoding, comprehending, and interpreting also provide a comprehensive understanding of how listeners process decoding, comprehending, and interpreting the multiple levels of knowledge to react to the appropriate responses to incoming information. This may incorporate the characteristics of linear steps and parallel processing, with both bottom-up and top-down processing interacting simultaneously.

There are two directions to approach listening input, bottom-up and top-down processing. Anderson and Lynch (1988) described bottom-up processing as "listener as tape-recorder" that involves a decoding or text-based process and top-down processing as "listener as active model builder" that involves a

knowledge-based process. However, the issue of whether there is more bottom-up or top-down processing to comprehend input among listeners of different proficiency levels has attracted contradictory views in various studies (Field, 2004; O'Malley et al., 1989; Osada, 2001; Tsui & Fullilove, 1998; Vogely, 1995). It is suggested that successful listening comprehension relies on the integration of and the balance between both bottom-up and top-down strategies (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift, 2007), while the nature of that balance may vary depending on a number of different factors (e.g., the text, task, speaker, listener and input processing factors). Hence, it is imperative to probe these factors and identify possible problems learners may encounter during their input processing, with the aim of helping learners find the best ways to solve these obstacles and arrive at comprehension successfully.

Listening Problems

As listening comprehension is a complex ongoing process which involves the interaction of various factors, many learners find it difficult to comprehend spoken input and have little awareness of why that happens. Some studies further clarify the L2/FL listening problems encountered by listeners. For example, Flowerdew and Miller (1996) investigated EFL learners' problems in listening to academic lectures. The problems reported by students included the fast speed of delivery, new terminology and concepts, difficulties in concentrating, and problems related to the physical environment. Goh (2000) examined real-time listening problems of ESL learners within Anderson's (1985) three-phase model of language comprehension – perception, parsing and utilization. Most problems reported by learners were associated with perceptual (low-level) processing, such as word recognition and attention failure, while relatively few problems were linked to inefficient parsing and failure in utilization (high-level processing). Goh (2000) also pointed out that less proficient listeners have more problems with low-level processing. Meanwhile, Hasan (2000) investigated how Arabic EFL learners perceived their problems in listening. Although a range of listening problems pertinent to the factors of task, text, speaker and listener were identified, the most frequently reported problems were

limited to text factors or bottom-up processing, such as fast speech rate and new vocabulary. More recently, in Graham's (2006) study, the main listening problems reported by foreign language learners were related to the speedy delivery of text leading to failure in identifying and recognizing words in a stream of input. From these studies, although having identified a range of listening problems related to factors of text, task, speaker and listener, it can be noted that the most commonly identified problems are fast speech rate and unfamiliar words perceived by learners. Generalizing from the results of these studies, there seems to be a tendency for most learners to falsely assume or blame their listening difficulties on external factors of text or task, rather than internal factors such as learners' anxiety, background knowledge, language proficiency or their ways of processing listening. Even though the reported problems were related to listener factors or process factors, they were mostly confined to the lower level processing problems such as difficulties in identifying words they know and chunking streams of speech and concentration.

This may imply that most learners have limited knowledge of their ways of dealing with listening input and little awareness of the actual problems occurring during their online processing. As a result, comprehension usually breaks down at the low-level of processing, which inhibits listeners from arriving at successful comprehension. These listening problems have long been ignored and remained unresolved in the conventional teaching of listening, which simply involves practicing answering the listening test questions and explaining meaning (Field, 1998). It is imperative to guide and assist learners to process listening tasks more efficiently and effectively in order to overcome obstacles that occur during the listening process. One of the most important ways to help learners achieve successful listening is to guide them to raise their awareness on their listening problems and use effective listening strategies.

Strategy Instruction

Consequently, more systematic models of strategy instruction (SI) have been provided (Chamot, et al. 1999; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). These models share some similar steps to some extent: raising strategic awareness, modeling, practicing, and evaluating strategy use. In general, these models emphasize the importance of explicit strategy training, the development of metacognition, modeling and presenting new strategies, learners' practice, self-reflection and expansion of effective strategy use, as well as the gradual shift from teachers' scaffolding to learners' self-directed learning in selecting and applying appropriate strategies.

Particularly for listening SI, Mendelsohn (1994) has proposed a strategy-based approach which provides structured rationales, procedures, and implementations for strategy instruction in L2/FL listening. Similarly, Chamot (1995) has suggested procedures for integrated listening SI such as identifying students' listening strategies, raising their metacognitive awareness, modeling the selected strategies through thinking-aloud, discussing what strategies are used before, and encouraging students to plan, practice and reflect on their strategies. In doing so, learners might be able to facilitate strategies transfer to new listening tasks and achieve successful listening.

Although the effectiveness of listening strategy instruction on improving learners' listening proficiency has been recognized across various studies in a range of settings (Carrier, 2003; Chamot, 2005; Harris, 2007; Thompson & Rubin, 1996), most of these studies have been based on quantitative pre- and post-test design that examined the quantitative results of strategy instruction (e.g., learners' gains on listening test scores or on increasing number of listening strategies use), while little research has been based on qualitative development of learners' strategy acquisition in dealing with their listening problems during the process of strategy instruction (e.g., how learners adapt their strategy use to overcome obstacles that occur during the listening process). In addition, more recent research has argued that it is not the quantity of strategy use, but the quality of strategy use, that is crucial to solving learners' listening problems and arriving at successful listening comprehension

(Chen, 2010; Goh, 2002; Graham, 2003; Oxford, 2001). Therefore, this study intended to investigate listeners' changing processes of their perceived listening problems over time during the course of strategy instruction, aiming to explore in-depth insights into learners' listening strategy development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This classroom-based study focused on raising students' awareness of their listening problems and strategy use so as to guide them to employ effective strategies for listening tasks and in turn to empower them to take charge of their own learning about EFL listening when they leave the EFL classroom. This study focused in particular on examining learners' perceived listening problems as they developed their strategy use during the course of strategy instruction. More specifically, the research question guiding this investigation was as follows: How, if at all, do EFL learners cope with their listening problems over time as they heighten their strategy use?

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 31 EFL college students who enrolled in a course entitled "English Listening Practice" at a technological college in Taiwan. They had learned English as a subject in school settings for at least six years, and their English proficiency ranged from high-beginning to low-immediate level. They had not studied abroad before, nor were they attending additional English classes besides this class.

The class met for two hours every week for fourteen weeks, and the listening materials adopted in this course included the textbook, some supplementary daily-life authentic audio and video clips (around 140 words/minute with a range of 1-3 minutes) and listening comprehension test practice. The strategy instruction was

integrated as an extension of the listening curriculum, which focused on participants' listening and learning to listen.

Listening Strategy Instruction

In every strategy instruction session, the instructor modeled listening strategies shown to be effective and appropriate for the unidirectional listening tasks. The general listening strategies that were taught in SI sessions were as follows:

Metacognitive strategies which involve planning, monitoring and evaluating the listening process have a central role in learning and can be applied to every learning task. Therefore, the training of metacognitive strategies was emphasized in each session. That is, students familiarized themselves with the procedures of pre-listening planning, while-listening monitoring, directed attention and selective attention as well as post-listening evaluation as strategies to deal with a listening task.

Cognitive strategies directly involve the learning task and are adapted to different task demands. Since this study focused mainly on the strategies for unidirectional listening tasks, the modeled cognitive strategies in each session were those appropriate to that purpose. The modeled cognitive strategies included listening for gist, listening for details, inferencing, predicting, elaborating, visualizing, summarizing and note-taking. In addition, students were reminded to use *Social/affective strategies* such as cooperation and confidence building during the SI sessions.

The strategy training procedures followed the general steps which have been suggested from several strategy training models (Chamot 1995; Chamot, et al. 1999; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Mendelsohn, 1994; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). These training phases are summarized below:

Strategic-awareness raising phase: the teacher raised students' strategic awareness by modeling and employing think-aloud procedures.

Demonstration phase: the teacher modeled the strategies appropriate for the task demands in this session.

Practice phase: students practiced the focused strategies with similar tasks and discussed their strategy use, the problems they encountered, and possible solutions.

Evaluation phase: students then self-evaluated the effectiveness of the focused strategies.

In addition to the above in-class strategy instruction, this study adds another phase of outside-class *self-directed practice*. Participants were encouraged to self-observe and self-reflect on their listening strategy use and listening problems outside class. This aimed to expand their strategy repertoires in a wider context of out-of-class self-directed learning.

Data Collection

Questionnaires

In this study, the questionnaire included two parts, the listening strategy questionnaire and the listening problem questionnaire. The survey for listening strategies and listening problems was conducted both before and after the listening strategy instruction. It adopts a 5-point frequency scale (“almost never,” “seldom,” “sometimes,” “often,” and “almost always”). Since this study focused on students’ changes in listening problems as they developed their listening strategies, the results of the listening problem questionnaire were mainly discussed.

Reflective Journals

Participants were required to keep reflective journals about their EFL listening learning activities fortnightly over the fourteen-week intervention period. Students were asked to reflect on and evaluate how they had tried to comprehend the input and what listening problems they encountered while they were listening right after completing their listening tasks. In order to objectively collect consistent data, participants were asked to complete the same listening task for each of their reflective journals. These tasks were similar to the video or audio listening clips that were practiced in class sessions. Furthermore, in order to encourage them to report honestly and without reservations participants were informed that the purpose of

keeping reflective journals was not related to assessment, but was to help them reflect on and evaluate their listening problems as they tightened their strategy use. By structuring the data collected, students' journals could be more objectively compared and analyzed. In addition, to examine the changes over longer and potentially more meaningful intervals (one-month), only the first, the middle and the last of each student's reflective journals were sampled and analyzed.

Participants' reflective journals were analyzed in two ways. First, the listening problems that participants reported were quantitatively coded. Furthermore, journal entries were analyzed qualitatively to understand the problems and the nature of strategy use reported by students. This twin focus not only provided a basis for comparison among individual students, but also presented a picture of the changing patterns of strategy use in terms of the overall group. The incidences of participants' listening problems from these three sets of reflective journals were coded. All the transcripts were coded independently by the researcher and then compared with those coded by another researcher. The inter-rater reliabilities for these three sets of data were .80, .84 and .82, respectively, and any discrepancies found were resolved through discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the students' perceived listening problems between the pre-test and the post-test questionnaires were compared with a one-sample t-test. The five-point frequency scale ranges for each listening problem were counted as follows: "almost never"= 1, "seldom"= 2, "sometimes"= 3, "often"= 4, and "almost always"= 5. The average frequencies of each listening problem perceived by the participants were calculated. As Table 1 shown, the results showed that the mean frequency of each listening problem generally decreased from the pre-test to post-test. Among all the perceived listening problems between the pre-test and post-test, there were significant decreases on the categories of "Unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases" ($t = 3.89, p < .001$), "Rapid speech rate" ($t = 3.62, p < .01$), "Linking sounds between words" ($t = 3.42, p < .01$), followed by the problems of "Cannot listen to the next

part when thinking about meaning” ($t = 2.63, p < .05$) and “Speaker’s accent” ($t = 2.38, p < .05$), and all of these categories with significant differences belong to the problems of the superficial level. Hence, it was found that students became better able to deal with their listening problems (especially more on lower-level listening problems than on high-level ones) as they attempted to develop their strategy use.

TABLE 1
T-test Results of Pre-test Questionnaire and Post-test Questionnaire (N=31)

Listening problems	Pre-test		Post-test		<i>t</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	
Unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases	3.63	0.76	2.74	0.65	3.89***
Rapid speech rate	3.49	0.44	3.00	0.40	3.62**
Speaker’s accent	3.40	0.52	2.98	0.57	2.38*
Linking sounds between words	3.42	0.51	2.82	0.58	3.42**
Cannot listen to the next part when thinking about meaning	2.97	0.75	2.39	0.59	2.63*
Cannot segment the speech	3.05	0.55	2.71	0.63	1.78
Cannot remember what was heard	3.16	0.50	2.87	0.52	1.74
Cannot form a mental image from words heard	3.05	0.62	2.68	0.75	1.65
Cannot figure out main ideas of the message	3.82	0.56	3.47	0.54	1.92
Lack of background knowledge to understand the intended meaning	3.61	0.77	3.21	0.89	1.46
Mean of total listening problems	3.36	0.60	2.89	0.61	1.71

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: the bold figures indicate significant differences.

Furthermore, when further looking at changes of students’ perceived listening problems as students heightened their strategy use over time, results of students’ listening problems reported from their initial, middle and final sets of reflective journals were analyzed.

TABLE 2
Listening Problems Reported from Initial, Middle and Final Sets
of Reflective Journals (N=31)

Listening Problems	RJ1		RJ2		RJ3	
Unfamiliar vocabulary	25	37%	17	20%	12	16%
Rapid speech rate	19	28%	13	16%	10	13%
Speaker's accent	4	6%	3	4%	4	5%
Linking sounds between words	8	12%	7	8%	7	9%
Cannot listen to the next part when thinking about meaning	11	16%	9	11%	6	8%
Cannot segment the speech			8	10%	8	11%
Cannot remember what was heard			10	12%	9	12%
Cannot form a mental image from words heard			4	5%	5	7%
Cannot figure out main ideas of the message			7	8%	8	11%
Lack of background knowledge to understand the intended meaning	1	1%	5	6%	7	9%
Total Entries	68	100%	83	100%	76	100%

Table 2 shows students' listening problems as reported in the three sets of reflective journals. To begin with, the results in the first set showed that "Unfamiliar vocabulary" (37%) and "Rapid speech rate" (28%) were the two major frequently reported problems followed by "Cannot listen to the next part when thinking about meaning" (16%). These problems were fairly typical of the reflections that students had on their habitual strategy use that they had brought with them into the SI program. For example, most participants tried to understand each word and detail while listening, leading them to be more aware of any unfamiliar words they encountered. Since they tended to be involved in word by word processing, this also prevented them from keeping up with rates of authentic speech. In addition,

they frequently stopped and thought hard about the meanings of words, which also blocked their attempts to continue to listen to the next section. These dominant problems reported in students' first set of reflective journals were indicative of students' bottom-up mode of processing listening. These findings also corroborate some studies on listening problems (e.g., Goh, 2000; Graham, 2006; Hasan, 2000), indicating that most students had limited knowledge of dealing with their listening processes and that as a result comprehension usually broke down at the level of superficial processing.

During the strategy instruction, as students acquired more appropriate top-down or higher level strategies to deal with listening input, the results in the middle and final sets indicated that their initial major problems gradually decreased. For example, students who reported using strategies of Direct Attention, Monitoring, or Listen for Gist were less likely to have the following three listening problems: frequently encountering unfamiliar words, rapid speech rate, and getting stuck when thinking hard about the meaning. As examples of students stated:

I tried to be very careful about my ongoing comprehension. If I missed some small parts, I just let them go, and I would be more attentive to the coming information to make up the parts I just missed. (S18 RJ2)

When I heard some words I didn't know, I didn't just focus on those words. I would quickly keep up with speed and continued to listen, and paid more attention on the overall meaning. (S23 RJ2)

However, while some problems decreased, there emerged more categories of listening problems, which were reported by students fairly equally in the middle and final sets of reflective journals. These categories were, for example, "Cannot segment the speech," "Cannot remember what was heard," "Cannot form a mental image from words heard," "Cannot figure out the main idea," and "Lack of background knowledge." From these reported listening problems, it was found that students seemed to become more aware of real-time problems caused by internal factors such as processing difficulty, rather than simply blaming external factors

such as text or task difficulties, as they had reported in the initial set of reflective journals. The patterns of these variations over time were analyzed as follows.

First, students were better able to speculate about their specific listening problems. For example, students who initially blamed their problems on external text factors such as "too many new words in the texts," shifted to address more explicitly their inability to recognize words they knew, a student (S21) stated:

I could recognize some words while reading, but I couldn't recognize them while listening, even some very easy words. Maybe I'm not familiar with the sounds but the spellings. (S21 RJ2)

This example revealed two extreme positions. On the one hand, this typical problem reflected conventional instructional methodologies where students were merely required to memorize word meanings and spellings, but the pronunciation was often ignored. As a result, students had difficulties in making associations between sounds and written words. On the other hand, students seemed to be better able to reflect more specifically on their problems, suggesting increased metacognitive knowledge about their listening processes. Once they had a better understanding of their difficulties, they were more willing to employ more effective strategies as solutions.

Second, there appeared a tendency that more listening difficulties emerged in accordance with students' use of higher level of strategies. For example, in the category of "Cannot figure out the main ideas of the message," students stated:

Although I listened to key words, I still didn't know what the news really going to express for. (S7 RJ2)

I predicted what was going to say and inferred the words meanings from the context, but when all the parts were put together, I still couldn't get the overall meanings. (S10 RJ2)

Although students attempted to employ some top-down strategies, they were still unable to find any key idea about the texts. This might be due to their lack of background knowledge or insufficient linguistic ability to take in the important points. At this point, some students felt frustrated and would return to their former habitual strategy use. For example, one student reported:

I think “listen for gist” was ineffective. If I didn’t understand each detail, I couldn’t get the meaning. I still want to pay attention to every word. (S22 RJ2)

While there were some other students who stated:

I tried to encourage myself to keep going, although I couldn’t get much of this message. Maybe I need more practices to figure out the main idea. (S27 RJ2)

These two examples illustrate individuals’ internal factors (e.g., affective status, habitual behavior, and English proficiency) in dealing with the difficulties they confronted while listening. Some students might not be confident to keep listening through the next part with their partial comprehension, and some might not be tolerant of the ambiguity in processing listening input. As a result, they would rather return to their habitual strategy use of local level processing, and they might repeat their former complaints about listening difficulties. This might persist until they would engage in higher level strategy use again to try to be more effective in strategy application. By contrast, some students were more confident of their adapted strategy use and would keep reflecting on how to deal with their newly emerging difficulties. Nevertheless, these reported problems revealed that students were undergoing the process of adapting their strategy repertoires over time. There appeared to be an indication that the higher the level of strategies they employed, the deeper the insight into their listening problems they discovered.

Finally, some students seemed to be better able to explore effective solutions for their existing listening difficulties. For example, in the category of “Cannot

remember what was heard," due to short-term memory span, students might not be able to remember what was heard, especially when attempting to retain a long text, as one student (S5) stated in the middle set of her reflective journal:

I listened carefully, and I could understand very well. But I usually forgot what was said when I listened to the next part. After listening, I almost forgot half part of the information." (S5 RJ2)

However, she revealed in the final set of her reflective journal that using strategies of Monitoring, Summarization and Notetaking could help her solve this problem:

I tried to mentally summarize the main points for each small part and consciously monitor what I've understood when I was listening to this passage, and sometimes I would also quickly jot down some key words to help me to remember the information. (S5 RJ3)

Through consistent self-revelation, students seemed to have learned how to employ effective strategies to cope with listening when these difficulties arose.

The results of students' reported listening problems over time revealed deeper insights into how students have adapted their strategy use to help them overcome comprehension obstacles. It was found that, as strategy training progressed, students seemed to have a better understanding of their specific difficulties and to have increased their metacognitive knowledge for processing listening. Furthermore, there was a tendency for students to raise higher level processing difficulties as they developed positive changes in their strategy use. Finally, although the reported listening difficulties seemed to be multifaceted, students were better able to manage and harmonize their strategy use and the difficulties inherent in the complex listening process.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the pre-test and post-test of listening problem questionnaires indicated that students were better able to deal with their listening problems, especially more on lower-level of processing problems than higher-level ones after the listening strategy instruction. Furthermore, students' changes of perceived listening problems over time showed the trends that, as students heighten their strategy use, they were better able to solve their superficial listening problems, but meanwhile they encountered in-depth or higher level listening processing problems. Although these problems encountered by students were multifaceted, students became better able to harmonize their advanced strategy use to deal with the obstacles involving various individual factors during the process of listening. It seemed that the strategy instruction engaged individual learners in recursive problem-solving processes. They began to be aware of their weaknesses and problems of their former habitual strategy use and then became more willing to consciously employ higher level strategies to remove the obstacles to listening involving local processing. Meanwhile, there emerged a higher level of listening problems complicated by different individual internal factors. This was then followed by another problem-solving process.

Therefore, the findings of this study showed that the strategy instruction (e.g., modeling and discussions in class and self-reflections outside class) positively empowered students with problem-solving abilities, so that they were better able to harmonize their strategy use, listening problems, learning progress and other individual factors as they tighten their strategy use. As a result, students were better able to orchestrate their strategy use in an effective chain to perform the listening tasks more successfully. Finally, strategy instruction also strengthened students' self-directed learning abilities and helped guide them toward success; that is, toward the goal of autonomous learning in listening comprehension. Based on the results of the present study, some pedagogical implications for listening SI are suggested.

First, one important part of teaching listening is to spend more time on helping learners tackle their listening problems. In the EFL listening instruction, the first

step is to identify students' listening problems so that teachers can deal with each problem specifically. In addition, teachers need to include more practice activities that can help learners overcome or cope with these listening problems so that they can have better control over their listening comprehension. By focusing more on those areas that affect students' comprehension most, more effective listening pedagogy can be achieved.

It is recommended that listening comprehension assessment focus more on fostering students' listening processes that enhance their listening skill rather than merely testing their recall of listening content. Hence, there is a pressing need to develop appropriate testing systems that measure the listening performances which students are actually developing.

Finally, consistent and systematic SI integrated into listening instruction is recommended. The teacher can adapt the systematic strategy training procedures suggested from research to help students develop metacognitive awareness and control (Goh, 2008; Graham, et al. 2008). These procedures have been shown to empower learners in executing better control over their listening processing, to expand and fine-tune their own strategy repertoire and in turn, and to approach their listening tasks more successfully. Furthermore, it is crucial to help students develop balanced strategy use of both bottom-up and top-down processing in coping with different task demands. Once the strategy training is scaffolded within a consistent climate, the responsibilities of learning will gradually shift to learners themselves through self-reflection and self-regulation of their listening processes.

THE AUTHOR

Ai-hua Chen is an assistant professor in the Center for General Education at Asia-Pacific Institute of Creativity in Taiwan. Her research interests focus on TESOL pedagogy, second language acquisition and language learner strategies. Email: aihua@ms.apic.edu.tw

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