

## **An Investigation of Metacognitive Strategies Used by Korean College Students in the EFL Listening Class**

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### **I. Introduction**

Acquiring English listening abilities is quite difficult assignment for EFL students. Many English teachers and researchers have tried to develop English listening pedagogy to help the students to enhance their listening abilities. However, the students seemed not satisfied with instructors' help for listening skills; researchers started to build up the method to develop students' listening abilities as looking at the important aspects of the cognition during listening process. They had not tried to find out students' cognition processes for language learning as they are not observable; still, it was necessary for the researchers to investigate as there are differences of learning strategies between the students relatively at higher proficiency level and those relatively at lower proficiency level according to some researches (Rubin 1975; Brown 2000).

In order to help students develop their listening skills, instructors can guide them to discover and apply the important aspects of the listening process; it can let them have more attention and build up their own strategies for the tasks. Of strategies, metacognitive strategies which are learners' knowledge on processing their cognition while listening are more used by the students at the higher proficiency level compared to those at the lower proficiency level; metacognitive strategies are the skills such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. In this respect, this study is to investigate which aspects of metacognitive strategies Korean students who are at the higher proficiency level and at the lower proficiency level use during listening processes and whether it is helpful for them to acquire listening abilities.

In this study, Korean college students had a pre-test before they got treatment of metacognitive strategies which are based on Vandergrift (1997); a pre-test could verify students' English proficiency levels, and they had a questionnaire to check whether they used metacognitive strategies; the strategies were not mentioned on the questionnaire. For treatment, Vandergrift's metacognitive strategies were used to help the students have knowledge on using metacognitive strategies through a semester. After they got treatment, they had a post-test and another questionnaire on whether they used metacognitive strategies and which strategies they

used while taking the post-test to check metacognitive strategies help the students improve their listening comprehension.

## II. Method

### 1. Objectives

This study is to find out whether Korean students who have relatively high English proficiency use their metacognitive strategies when listening and whether metacognitive strategies help Korean college students develop their listening skills based on Vandergrift's listening strategies (1997) and Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari's metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire (2010).

1. Do students who are in the higher proficiency level use their metacognitive strategies when doing listening tasks?
2. Do using metacognitive strategies help students improve listening comprehension?

### 2. Participants

The subjects in this study were 53 Korean college students who were sophomores, taking a class, 'English listening 2' during a semester; however, since two students did not participate the questionnaire, the actual number of the subjects were 51. The students had already taken the previous class 'English listening 1' during their freshmen year; some of them had experiences to stay overseas and got higher scores of listening comprehension tests such as TOEIC. They were at the different proficiency levels and did not have placement tests before being assigned the class. Therefore, it was needed to verify their English listening proficiency levels before the research. They took a pre-listening test to differentiate students' levels; the pre-test was based on the question types of TOEIC, and the questionnaire was given to the students to check whether the students who were at relatively higher proficiency level used their metacognitive strategies. After the thirteen-week treatment, they got a post-test to examine whether their listening comprehension had been improved or not. In addition, another questionnaire based on Vandergrift's (2003) metacognitive strategies was given to the students to investigate whether they helped the students develop their listening comprehension or abilities. As a result, the relation of students' English proficiency levels and usage of their metacognitive strategies can be estimated.

### 3. Treatment and Data Collection

## Extensive Reading and Listening: Why, What and How?

The students had thirteen 3-hour classes; during every class, they were instructed to use their metacognitive strategies before starting the lesson. The class was designed based on the aspects of Vandergrift's (2003) metacognitive strategies.

**[Table 1] The design for the English Listening class**

<b>I. Prediction &amp; Planning</b>	<b>Treatment</b>
a. Advance organization	The teacher helped the students read through the tasks explaining what kinds of tasks they are.
b. Directed attention	The teacher explained what the main aspects would be in the tasks and encouraged them to focus on listening.
c. Selective attention	The students were told to focus on the important aspects of listening tasks. (numbers, specific nouns or phrases etc.)
d. Self-management	The teacher informed the students the importance of their condition during the listening.
<b>II. Monitoring</b>	<b>Treatment</b>
a. Comprehension monitoring	The teacher explained the specific aspects of the tasks in order to make the students verify and correct the errors they made at the local level.
b. Double-check monitoring	The students were encouraged to make sure of their understanding across the tasks by the explanation of the teacher.
<b>III. Evaluation</b>	The students were encouraged to check their mistakes and misunderstanding of the tasks so that they could check the outcomes of their listening comprehension.

The students were instructed those strategies before they took listening tasks; the tasks were designed based on TOEIC. Two or three examples of the task were shown to make them understand how to adopt and apply metacognitive strategies (prediction and planning) to listening tasks. After completing tasks, the instructor explained the task based on metacognitive strategies (prediction and planning) and the students scored and evaluated; this students' process was based on monitoring and evaluation. The data on this process for 13 weeks were collected and estimated for the result.

### III. Results

**[Table 2] The Number and Percentage of Listening Comprehension and Metacognitive Strategy Use by Groups**

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Prediction & Planning	6/8	17/25	3/18
	75%	68%	16.6%
Monitoring	5/8	7/25	5/18
	62.5%	28%	27.8%
Evaluation	6/8	7/25	2/18
	75%	28%	11.1%

Table 2 indicates the number and percentage of listening comprehension and metacognitive strategy use by three different groups. 'Group 1' included the students who were at the relatively higher proficiency level, and those included in 'group 2' were at the mid-high proficiency level; the final 'group 3' included those who were at the relatively lower proficiency level. The students were differentiated based on the pre-test which they took at the first class of a semester; the students who scored 10 out of 10 were in 'Group 1' and those who scored 8 out of 10 were in 'Group 2'; the final 'Group 3' included those who scored under 8 out of 10.

75% of the students in 'Group 1' used prediction and planning of metacognitive strategies; 62.5% used monitoring and 75% used evaluation. It indicates that the students who have relatively higher proficiency often use their metacognitive strategies. On the one hand, 68% of the students in 'Group 2' used prediction and planning, and 28% used monitoring and evaluation. It shows that the students who are at the mid-proficiency level sometimes use their metacognitive strategies compared to those in 'Group 1'. Among those in the last group 'Group 3', only 16.6% used prediction and planning, and 27.8% for monitoring and 11.1% for evaluation used their metacognitive strategies. This research proves that those at the relatively higher proficiency level used more metacognitive strategies than those at relatively lower proficiency levels. Furthermore, those in 'Group 2' used little more strategies than those in 'Group 3'. It also indicates that the students who are at the higher proficiency level use more metacognitive strategies. In the respect of this result, there is the relation between the proficiency level and listening comprehension. If so, is it helpful for language learners to be encouraged to use metacognitive strategies for better listening comprehension of a foreign language?

**[Table 2] The Number and Percentage of Metacognitive Strategy Use by Group 4 Whose Listening Comprehension Improved**

	Group 4
Prediction and Planning	9/14 64.3%
Monitoring	6/14 42.9%
Evaluation	7/14 50%

To answer the question above the table 2 'is it helpful for language learners to be encouraged to use metacognitive strategies for better listening comprehension of a foreign language?', the subjects were instructed to use their metacognitive strategies before they took the tasks for 13 weeks. 14 students' listening comprehension among 51 got improved. Table 2 indicates the number and percentage of metacognitive strategy use by 'Group 4' whose listening comprehension improved. 64.3% of them used prediction and planning; 42.9% used monitoring and 50% used evaluation. Those numbers are not high figures; however, compared to the numbers of group 3, Group 4 has relatively higher figures; it represents that as the students get higher proficiency, they use more metacognitive strategies. Consequently, it is needed to instruct language learners how to adopt and apply metacognitive strategies to enhance their comprehension of a language.

#### IV. Discussion and Conclusion

The result of this study was that the correlation of students' use of metacognitive strategies to English proficiency was significant in some degree; however, the numbers did not show much difference among the groups. This result could be due to several variables; the students may have different background knowledge, different linguistic knowledge, and they may or may not have motivation. Therefore, it is limited to verify students' English proficiency levels. In the other hand, the students at the relatively lower proficiency level may use their own strategies to do their tasks (Vandergrift, 1999).

In the previous findings on learners' metacognitive strategy use, both effective and ineffective learners used monitoring strategies to check their listening comprehension (Vandergrift, 1997). However, in this study, a different result came out; the students who were at the relatively higher proficiency level and at the mid proficiency level used prediction and planning more than monitoring. Only the students at the relatively lower level used

monitoring more than other strategies. Besides, another finding compared to previous studies came out; the students who have higher scores can predict and plan for the tasks better than those who have lower scores in listening comprehension tasks. In another previous study, Vandergrift (2003) found out both less skilled students and more skilled students are familiar with metacognitive and cognitive strategies; Vandergrift (2010) expanded his research from the study on students' strategies to that on pedagogy based on those strategies. He argued that less skilled students who are at the beginning stage of learning English can take more advantages from this pedagogy. It helps students connect their knowledge to learning by using metacognitive strategies. Similarly, this study showed that the students whose listening comprehension improved used metacognitive strategies more than those at the relatively lower proficiency level. This represents that pedagogy on metacognitive strategies helped the students enhance their listening comprehension.

The result of this study was different to some previous studies while another result proved the finding of the previous study; this study was conducted with limited subjects and data, more further researches should be conducted with various types of methods and data. Investigating learners' learning strategies such as metacognitive strategies will contribute to second language acquisition. Specially to teaching methods.

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