The Study of the Relationship Between Listening Learning Strategies and College English Listening Comprehension——A Case Study of Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology

Yunshu Zhao

Zhanjiang University of Science and Technology

1 Introduction

Among the four basic language skills, listening takes up the most significant position, and listening is an intricate and active procedure of interpretation where listeners connect what they hear with what they have already known. However, the current situation is even though most Chinese college English students have already made great efforts to improve their listening ability, they have only acquired a little effect.

Many studies have focused on how listening strategies, how learners could master and develop learning strategies. Therefore, it is necessary, urgent, and feasible for both language instructors and learners to explore effective listening learning strategies. Basing on the background of learning strategies' theory and practice, this small-scale research aims to provide statistical information or experimental support to understand the students' listening process, the importance of listening strategies in strengthening listening ability, and give out some tentative suggestions for listening teaching.

2 Literature Review

Basing on Rost(2005:155), listening strategies mean that the skills listeners adopted to understand the meaning of income utterance and for language use or communication. He further pointed out the category of different listening strategies, as the table is shown:

Meta- cognitive	Self-planning: Advance planning; While-listening and after-listening planning Self-monitoring Self-evaluation Selective and Directed attention
Cognitive	Inferencing; Rehearsal or Repeating; Summarizing; Elaboration;Translation; Note-taking; Predicting; Transfer;Imagery
Socio -Affective	Cooperation; Lowering Anxiety; Self-encouragement; Motivation;Asking for clarification

3 Research Questions

The study mainly aims at investigating the effect of applied listening strategies between non-English majors and English majors in the experiment for bettering and accelerating listening comprehension of college English students. The research results attempt to engage in obtaining responses serving the following questions:

1.What listening strategies do non-English majors intend to use in the listening comprehension process?

2.What listening strategies do English majors intend to use in the listening comprehension process?

3.What are the differences in listening strategies between non-English majors and English majors applied? Are they have different effects?

3.1 Participants

The participants involved in the research are selected from two classes of second-year students in Cunjin College. One class is from the Department of Culture and Media, majoring in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language and the other is from the Department of Foreign language, majoring in English. They are altogether 61 students who will participate in this study, with one class of 30 students and the other of 31. They were 52 females and 7 males, age between 19-20 years old. They both have been taken the listening course for the past year, and are of similar English proficiency levels. Altogether there are 61 questionnaires are collected from the website, and both of them are valid.

3.2 Instrument

The instruments mainly consist of two parts: questionnaires, and SPSS software for data statistical analysis. To collect data of general situation of two different majors' listening strategies, the questionnaires are designed based on the model proposed by O'Malley

& Chamot(1990), Wen Qiufang(1996), Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Julie C. Chi (2001) and make some modification to match and suit the real conditions of listening strategies before use. Two classes are asked to finish the same questionnaire.

The questionnaire on the students' use of listening strategies is designed in Chinese version for total understanding of the asked questions and consists of 40 questions, in which the first 10 items are open questions which are designed to obtain the students' personal information and the facing problems of listening study. While the other 30 questions primarily focus on students' recognition of listening comprehension, each of which represents one strategy category: meta-cognitive strategies (from 11 to 20), cognitive strategies (from 21 to 30), and social/affective strategies (from 31 to 40). All of the 30 strategy items are valued on a five-point Likert scale, in which 1 point stands for Never or rarely true of me, 2 stands for Usually not true of me, 3 stands for Sometimes true of me, 4 stands for Usually true of me and 5 stands for Completely or almost completely true of me. Based on their use of listening strategies in the real listening process, students from the two classes to be sure to choose a number representing the corresponding statement from among the five statements, where the higher the score is, the higher the strategies are used frequently for statistical convenience.

The second instrument is employed to collect data in this research is the follow-up interview. Fifteen interviewees are from two different classes voluntarily were participated in the interview and they were interviewed after finishing the questionnaire. There are no such specific questions for the students to ask, which mainly focus on students' understanding of listening strategies, feeling towards and specific strategies, and existing problems in listening learning. To make the interviewee feel free and relax, they are expected to answer the questions in Chinese. According to Arafat (2012), the interview helps to triangulate the information coming from the questionnaire and provides opportunities for learners to report in their own words. In this case, the interview is helpful for the researcher to obtain more data about whether the strategies are consciously used or not, the reason and how they deal with them when doing listening strategies

3.3 Data collection and data analysis

61 students are willing to participate in the study and are asked to finish the questionnaire through their phones during the class. All the valid data information is placed into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 18.0) and processed to give the quantitative answers to the research questions. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire is analyzed through the Descriptive Analysis process. Table 1 below shows the result of the reliability of the applied questionnaire, which presents the Alpha coefficients are 0.922, 0.909(>0.7), so according to the statistic standard, the questionnaire is reliable.

Questionnaires	Alpha coefficients
Questionnaires for English Majors	0.922
Questionnaires for Non-English Majors	0.909

(Table 1: The reliability of two questionnaires)

4 Findings and discussions

In this part, the main problems students face, the analysis and discussions of the questionnaire data and interview, and measure rate usage concerned will be expounded in detail.

The overview of listening strategies use

Basing on Oxford(1990), strategies can be divided into three frequency levels: high level(the mean between 3.5 to 5.0), medium level (the mean between 2.5 to 3.4), and low level (the mean of 2.4 or lower). This measurement means that the higher the mean is, the more frequent and common the strategies will be used.

As for the research questions of "What listening strategies do non-English and English majors intend to use in the listening comprehension process?", the mean and the standard deviation (SD) will be used and analyzed here. Of all the participants listing the listening strategies, the following table presents the overall situation:

Rank	Type of Listening Strategies	Mean	SD
3	Metacognitive strategies	3.055	1.020
2	Cognitive strategies	3.350	1.072
1	Social/ Affective strategies	3.438	0.856
	Total	3.281	0.982

The table above clearly presents the overall mean and SD of students' listening comprehension strategies, which include the English and Non-English majors. The mean of total strategies is 3.281, between 2.5 and 3.4, which means that for the participants involved in this research, the frequency levels of using listening strategies during their learning process is medium. Among the whole main categories, it can be seen the mean of social/ affective strategies is 3.438, which shows that Social/ Affective strategies are the most frequently used strategies in this questionnaire. While it is clear to find that the mean is still below 3.5, that is to say, the students didn't fully reach the high level within this strategy. The mean of Metacognitive strategies is 3.055, which means the students less frequently used this kind of metacognitive strategy. In the follow-up interview, many students even reported that they have no ideas of the concept of metacognitive and do not mention using this kind of strategy.

The standard deviation, providing the information on how heterogeneous and homogeneous participants are concerning their use of listening strategies, is the most commonly and frequently used measure of variability. The more the scores deviate from the mean, the larger the standard deviation will be or vice versa, that is to say, the smaller the standard deviation is, the nearer the scores will be to the mean. As the table shows, the standard deviation of the cognitive strategies is 1.072, which is the largest of the three comparatively. It also means that the attitudes of students towards these particular categories are not similar. Many students reported that they may use different cognitive strategies in different listening materials and situations. It largely depends on the difficulty of the listening materials and the learner's personal autonomy proficiency.

4.1 The use of meta-cognitive strategies in listening

Meta-cognitive means the process by which learners make good use of meta-cognitive knowledge and strategies to monitor and regulate their learning. Specific to the listening comprehension process, it means the skills and particular strategies the learners used to organize and arrange the listening procedure and also monitor and evaluate the listening performance, to have a better understanding of their learning proficiency, formulate a suitable plan and supervisory control. Meta-cognitive Strategies in Listening can be divided into three main categories: Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating. The table below reveals the results of sub-strategies use between the two majors from mean scores and standard deviations.

Subcategories	English Majors Mean	SD	Non-English Majors Mean	SD
Advanced Organization	3.483	0.911	3.330	1.155
Self-monitoring	3.276	0.996	3.067	1.081
Self- evaluation	2.966	0.865	2.533	0.893
Selective Attention	2.931	1.033	3.000	1.050
Self- Management	3.207	0.978	2.767	1.006
Total	3.172	0.955	2.939	1.085

The result indicates that English majors(mean:3.172) employ more metacognitive strategies than non-English majors, while there are no extinct differences between to groups. As for the specific categories, most students report that they are inclined to use strategies of the advanced organization, which the mean are 3.483 and 3.330 respectively. The follow-up interview suggests most students look for chances to practice listening in class or out of class; most of the English class students inform that they are likely to download the listening materials through Internet and report that the listening materials during the classroom are medium-level but not authentic or out-dated. While for the non-English interviewees, they said that they only focus on the listening materials and exercises in the classroom and hardly access to the out-classroom materials. But students' self-evaluation skills of their listening comprehension are comparatively weak. They could find out the errors but fail to seek solutions to those mistakes.

What's more, it can be found that the use of" self-management" is significantly different between the two groups, in which English majors are likely to have a high degree of autonomy during the listening process. Many English majors (6 out of 10) reported that the reason for listening plan and self-management is to make the preparation for the TEM-4 in the following months, which the great marks in the listening test are their main goal and motivation.

By contrast, it can be concluded that non-English majors could employ "selective attention" a lot more than English-major class students to build better emotion for listening. Before listening, they often put their attention to connect new information with previous knowledge and context to prepare to guess or to predict meaning. And the mean of the use of "Self- evaluation" for both groups is lower than 3, which indicates that both students fail to evaluate and adjust the effectiveness of listening comprehension objectives and the use of strategies. The interview further points out the problems of evaluation which is there is no such standard and measurement for them to check whether their plan effective or not.

Many factors are affecting the meta-cognitive strategies, both extrinsic factors including family education, school culture, and teacher's teaching instruction and intrinsic factors involving motivation, various learning styles, and self-recognition.

Of these factors, the teacher's guidance and learning opportunities or attribution have a great impact on these factors, and the language teacher should carefully consider how to help the students understand the concept and importance of meta-cognitive and improve their meta-strategies awareness.

4.2 The use of cognitive strategies in listening

The meta-cognitive strategies emphasize advanced planning, arranging, and evaluating, which are not directly involved in the while-listening process. Unlike meta-cognitive strategies, Cognitive Strategies are closely related to specific language tasks and skills. The following table presents mean scores, standard deviations, and t-value between the two groups.

Subcategories	English Majors Mean	SD	Non-English Majors Mean	SD
Note-taking	3.276	0.996	3.900	0.923
Translation	3.345	0.897	3.867	0.776
Inference	3.310	1.004	3.367	0.999
Prediction	3.448	1.213	3.267	1.202
Imagery	3.000	1.069	3.200	1.324
Elaboration	3.379	1.049	3.167	1.053
Analysis	3.655	1.111	3.600	1.248
Total	3.310	1.058	3.391	1.086

The results of this part show that the total mean of both groups is 3.310 and 3.391 respectively, between 2.5 and 3.4, which indicates that in this investigation students sometimes use listening strategies that are at a medium level. They could select suitable and appropriate listening strategies and employ them consciously during listening exercises. The use analysis skill of both groups in the high-frequent level (the mean are 3.655 and 3.600), which means they could apply those logical words(First, Second...) for understanding the content and structure of a listening selection. By contrast, the imagery skill is the least frequently used one. Students found that difficult to form visual imagery after catching the information. Another evident finding is that non-English majors(total mean=3.391) were found that are more likely to use cognitive strategies during listening comprehension than English majors.

Specifically, the note-taking skill is the widely used one for the non-English groups. Some interviewers from this group reported that they would write down some numbers, names, or places during the listening test which are quite useful for them to focus on what the speakers said, to review the main ideas of the materials, while none of the students in English group mention note-taking skill in the interview. Another interesting finding is that this group of students often use translation skills and rely on their mother language in listening. One possible explanation is that it is closely related to their majors(Teaching Chinese as a Second Language). Translating or transferring some vocabularies or sentences into Chinese and then comprehended the meaning becomes the habit and gives them a sense of confidence. But one student said sometimes it wastes a lot of time to translate the words and missed a lot of important points in the following part. So in the actual listening classroom, the teacher should pay attention to help the students know it would be proper to use the translation skill after the listening exercise. As for the English majors, the most common use strategy is Prediction, followed by Elaboration. During listening, they often employ elaboration to connect new information with previous knowledge and inference to guess the meaning or to predict.

In the language classroom, meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies are closely correlated to each other. Therefore, one good method for improvement of the meta-cognitive strategies are to make students take notes about listening learning process, which could not only strengthen the awareness of using strategies for students, but also lead students to know how to take notes about listening learning the process from teachers.

4.3 The use of affective/social strategies in listening

Two different affective factors have a positive impact on listening learning: one is related to student's individuality, which includes motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety; the other is the emotional communication between students and the interaction between students and teachers. The following table presents mean scores, standard deviations of Affective/Social Strategies between the two groups.

Subcategories	English Majors Mean	SD	Non-English Majors Mean	SD
Motivation	4.517	0.688	4.433	0.728
Self-encouragement	3.759	0.830	4.233	0.935
Cooperation	2.033	0.844	1.934	0.780
Reducing Anxiety	3.345	0.936	3.267	1.112
Total	3.412	0.824	3.465	0.888

Generally speaking, it can be seen that the mean of total social/affective strategies is 3.412 and 3.465, between 3.4 and 4.4, which indicates that in this participated students use this kind of strategies which is in high-frequent level.

Among these subcategories, it is clear to find that the motivation strategies is the most usually use one. Activating the students' motivation is the main factor to achieve their own language performance. There are three types of motivations for practicing listening according to the one-by-one interviews : (1)individual development: " the motivation of listening for me is to pass the exam and get useful certification", " Good listening skills may help in finding the better jobs"; (2) Intrinsic interest: " Listening class is useful and interesting "; (3)Going abroad: " I need to have better listening comprehension skill because I want to study abroad." Those who have positive motivations and study goals towards listening learning may promote their learning efficiency and performance.

And the differences are shown from cooperation and self-encouragement. Students majors in Chinese are inclined to use the "self-encouragement" strategy more frequently, but English students are inclined to employ "cooperation" more often. But on the whole, the mean of cooperation strategy is the lowest. One possible reason is that they are not performed and practiced well in finishing the listening tasks in groups. On the other hand, students still hold the idea that listening practice should be separated and individual tasks and there is no need to work in groups. The reason for this result may be that under the long-term influence of exam-orientated listening teaching, it is indeed a high demand for the students to finish or communicate or clarify the listening tasks in different teams. The teacher's guidance on how to set listening tasks in groups is vital for improving the situation.

In terms of how to relieve the anxiety during listening, the students reported various ways to deal with it. One way to reduce is through so-called " lightning speed and material" exercises, that is to find some easy and interesting materials to listen to at first or to slow down the speed recording in order to understand each word and sentence carefully.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

From the statistic analyzed and collected from 60 participants, combined with the follow-up interview, the research focuses on the listening strategies in English listening learning and the main findings can be summarized as follow:

As for the students, whether of English majors or Non-English majors, the most difficult problem confronted is the vocabulary and idiom, followed by speech rate and intonation, unable to concentrate. In listening, those barriers not only hinder comprehension but also make it difficult to develop their own listening strategy.

Generally speaking, in this specific study, students make use of listening strategies to support themselves to improve listening ability only at a medium level. Among the three major listening strategies, students use affective and social strategies most. They tend to use cognitive strategies occasionally, but they employ metacognitive strategies the least.

There exists much difference between English majors and Non-English when listening strategies are used. In meta-cognitive strategies, it is shown that they tend to use the advanced organization for English majors while non-English majors are inclined to use selective attention. In cognitive strategies, the English majors frequently use prediction, elaboration, and analysis, and the other group employs translation more often, which may closely related to their major study.　In social/affective strategies, the differences are shown from motivation and reducing anxiety. Students in English-major class are inclined to use "motivation" strategy more

frequently, but non-English-major students are inclined to employ "self-encouragement" more often.

5.2 Implication

(1)Improve students' listening vocabulary. Most participants always give attention effort to the form and meaning but give less attention not to the pronunciation when learning vocabularies. Therefore, it is effective for the teachers to foster the competence habit of learning vocabulary such as provide specific sections of words and sentence dictation before listening, as well as mastery of the pronunciation of vocabulary such as asking them to repeat the words and sentences of the materials.

(2)Developing students' awareness of using listening strategies. It can be seen that our participants are not aware of the importance of using listening strategies. Therefore, in the listening class, teachers should deliver lectures on language learning strategies to see clearly what a strategy is, what function it is, and how it can be used in listening, when it should be used and why it should be used to enhance their efforts in listening, which later will lead students in their listening.

(3)Create more opportunities for the students to reflect and use the strategies. Teachers should let the learners make discussions after lectures, which could make students share their learning strategies and experiences with others. The students should practice, understand and practice consciously at first and subconsciously develop their own strategies in various situations.

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