

Metacognitive Strategies In Teaching Listening In 7-8 Grade Students

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Abstract

This article examines the role of metacognitive strategies in the development of listening skills among middle school students. The concept of metacognition is analyzed through the works of Flavell, Vandergrift, Goh, and other scholars, emphasizing its importance for conscious regulation of learning processes. The study highlights three main categories of strategies planning, monitoring, and evaluation and explores their integration into the digital learning environment. The results of a pedagogical experiment involving seventh- and eighth-grade students demonstrate the effectiveness of applying metacognitive strategies in improving comprehension, motivation, and learner autonomy. Practical recommendations for language teachers are also provided.

Keywords: metacognitive strategies; listening comprehension; second language acquisition; planning and evaluation; learner autonomy; digital tools; monitoring; middle school students.

Introduction

People spend more time listening than speaking, reading, and writing in their daily lives. Young children learn to listen before they can speak. In their first year of life, kids can discriminate between various sounds, utterances, and speakers. Over the course of a few years, they fully develop their ability to listen and engage with others. Listening is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, yet it is often considered one of the most challenging aspects for learners. Unlike reading, which allows for rereading and reflection, listening requires learners to process information in real time, retain it in working memory, and interpret it immediately (Field, 2008).

Middle school students frequently face difficulties when dealing with authentic listening materials, including fast speech rates, unfamiliar accents, and reduced forms. These challenges often result in lower comprehension and reduced motivation. To address these problems, researchers emphasize the importance of metacognitive strategies, which enable learners to consciously plan, monitor, and

evaluate their listening processes (Flavell, 1979; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The novelty of this study lies in exploring the integration of metacognitive strategies into the digital educational environment, which provides new opportunities for developing listening skills in adolescents.

Research Objectives: The main objective of this research is to investigate the pedagogical potential of metacognitive strategies in teaching listening to seventh- and eighth-grade students in a digital environment.

The study is structured around the following tasks:

1. To analyze the theoretical foundations of metacognition and its role in second language acquisition.
2. To classify and describe the main metacognitive strategies applied in listening instruction.
3. To explore the use of digital tools (Edpuzzle, Quizlet, Kahoot, podcasts) for strategy development.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of applying these strategies in middle school listening instruction.

5. To provide practical recommendations for language teachers.

Theoretical Background

The concept of metacognition was introduced by Flavell (1979), who defined it as the awareness and regulation of one's own cognitive processes. Within second language learning, metacognitive strategies refer to learners' ability to plan their approach to listening tasks, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate the outcomes of their performance.

According to Vandergrift (1999) and Vandergrift & Goh (2012), metacognitive strategies can be classified into three categories:

Planning – setting listening goals, predicting content, and activating prior knowledge.

Monitoring – checking comprehension during listening, using contextual clues, and adjusting strategies.

Evaluation – analyzing difficulties, self-assessing comprehension, and setting new learning goals.

Research (Zhang & Goh, 2006) indicates that students who actively use metacognitive strategies achieve better comprehension of authentic texts and develop greater learner autonomy.

Li (2013) explored the metacognitive awareness of non-English majors in relation to English listening and examined how this awareness correlates with listening comprehension performance. The study employed three instruments: the MALQ questionnaire developed by Vandergrift et al. (2006), interviews, and a listening comprehension test. Findings from the MALQ revealed that participants achieved higher mean scores in Problem-solving (4.27) and Directed Attention (4.13), moderate scores in Planning and Evaluation (3.47) and Mental Translation (3.23), and the lowest score in Person Knowledge (2.48). The overall mean score across all strategies was 3.65. Based on listening test results, participants were

categorized into high- and low-scoring groups. The analysis demonstrated that learners with greater metacognitive awareness achieved better listening outcomes, with the strongest correlation found between Planning and Evaluation strategies and listening comprehension.

Taheri and Zade (2018) investigated the impact of metacognitive strategy instruction on the listening comprehension of English as a Foreign Language learners. A total of 57 students participated, divided into an experimental group and a control group. Initially, all participants completed the Preliminary English Test (PET) as a pretest and responded to the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). The experimental group then received five sessions of listening practice combined with metacognitive strategy training, while the control group received no instruction related to strategies. At the conclusion of the study, both groups took a parallel version of the PET as a posttest, and the experimental group completed the MALQ once again. Results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in listening tasks, and their metacognitive awareness showed marked improvement following the training. Specifically, scores increased from 3.79 to 4.74 for Planning and Evaluation strategies, from 3.90 to 4.75 for Directed Attention, from 3.46 to 4.80 for Person Knowledge, from 3.98 to 5.13 for Mental Translation, and from 4.16 to 4.93 for Problem-solving strategies.

Methodology

Participants: The study involved 60 seventh- and eighth-grade students from two secondary schools. Their ages ranged from 12 to 14. All participants were learning English as a foreign language within the national curriculum. To ensure balance, the students were divided into two groups: an experimental group (30 students) and a control group (30 students). The English

proficiency level of both groups corresponded to Pre-Intermediate (A2).

Research Design: The research was organized in three stages:

Diagnostic Stage: Objective: to determine the initial level of students' listening skills and their awareness of metacognitive strategies
Instruments: a listening comprehension test based on the Preliminary English Test (PET), a student questionnaire, and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) developed by Vandergrift et al. (2006).

Formative Stage: The experimental group received instruction that incorporated metacognitive strategies. Over a period of eight weeks, students practiced activities involving planning (predicting content, setting listening goals), monitoring (checking comprehension, using contextual cues), and evaluation (self-assessment and reflection after listening). Digital tools were actively used, including Edpuzzle (comprehension monitoring through video-embedded questions), Kahoot (reflection and quizzes), Quizlet (vocabulary preparation before listening), and authentic resources such as BBC Learning English, TED Talks, and VOA Learning English. The control group continued with traditional instruction using the textbook and standard listening exercises without explicit training in metacognitive strategies.

Control Stage: Both groups took a post-test (an equivalent version of the PET listening test). The experimental group also completed the MALQ again to assess changes in their metacognitive awareness.

Results

The findings of the study are presented according to the diagnostic, formative, and control stages of the experiment.

Diagnostic Stage: The initial assessment revealed that both the experimental and control groups had similar listening proficiency levels. The majority of students

experienced difficulties with authentic listening materials:

68% reported that the fast pace of speech hindered comprehension.

54% failed to identify the main idea of the passage.

72% demonstrated little or no use of self-monitoring strategies.

The results of the MALQ questionnaire indicated moderate awareness of strategies, with higher scores in Problem-solving ($M = 4.12$) and Directed Attention ($M = 4.05$), but lower scores in Planning and Evaluation ($M = 3.41$) and Person Knowledge ($M = 2.73$).

Indicator	% of students (both groups)
Difficulty understanding fast speech	68%
Failure to identify main idea	54%
Lack of self-monitoring strategies	72%

Table 1.

Formative Stage: During the eight weeks of instruction, the experimental group actively practiced prediction, monitoring, and reflection strategies while using digital tools such as Edpuzzle, Quizlet, and Kahoot. Observation showed increased student engagement: learners began to set personal listening goals, monitor their comprehension in real time, and conduct self-assessment after tasks. In contrast, the control group continued traditional listening practice without explicit strategy training. No notable changes in classroom engagement were observed.

Control Stage: The post-test results demonstrated clear improvement in the experimental group:

Overall comprehension scores increased by 22% compared to the pretest.

Ability to identify key ideas improved by 28%.

Self-reported use of strategies rose significantly: 73% of students reported regularly applying prediction and monitoring strategies during listening.

The MALQ results for the experimental group also showed marked progress: Planning and Evaluation increased from 3.41 to 4.56.

Directed Attention improved from 4.05 to 4.72.

Person Knowledge rose from 2.73 to 4.38.

Mental Translation scores declined slightly (3.62 to 3.21), suggesting reduced reliance on word-for-word translation and a shift towards global comprehension strategies.

Problem-solving strategies showed a moderate increase (4.12 to 4.78).

Meanwhile, the control group's scores on both the listening test and MALQ remained largely unchanged.

Strategy	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
Problem-solving	4.12	4.78	+0.66
Directed Attention	4.05	4.72	+0.67
Planning & Evaluation	3.41	4.56	+1.15
Mental Translation	3.62	3.21	−0.41
Person Knowledge	2.73	4.38	+1.65

Table 2.

The data suggest that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies has a significant positive effect on listening comprehension. The strongest improvements were observed in students' ability to plan and evaluate their listening processes, and to rely less on inefficient strategies such as mental translation. In addition, the use of digital tools enhanced learner motivation and promoted autonomous strategy use.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that explicit training in metacognitive strategies

has a significant positive effect on listening comprehension among middle school learners. The experimental group not only achieved higher post-test scores but also demonstrated increased awareness of their own listening processes. In particular, improvements were most evident in Planning and Evaluation and Person Knowledge, while reliance on Mental Translation decreased, suggesting a shift toward more effective global strategies. These results align with the findings of Li (2013), who reported that learners with higher levels of metacognitive awareness performed better on listening comprehension tests. In Li's study, the strongest correlation was observed between Planning and Evaluation strategies and listening performance, which is consistent with the present research where students significantly improved in this area.

The outcomes also corroborate the results of Taheri and Zade (2018), who demonstrated that metacognitive strategy training enhanced both listening performance and learners' overall awareness. In their study, strategy training produced notable gains in Planning and Evaluation, Directed Attention, and Person Knowledge—patterns that closely mirror the progress observed in the current research. Another important result of this study is the reduction in reliance on Mental Translation strategies. While many beginner learners tend to translate word-for-word, strategy training encouraged students to focus on the overall meaning of the text. This shift reflects the recommendations of Vandergrift and Goh (2012), who emphasized the importance of developing top-down listening strategies to support comprehension in real-time communication. The integration of digital tools such as Edpuzzle, Quizlet, and Kahoot also proved beneficial. These tools not only facilitated strategy use but also increased learners'

engagement and motivation. Similar conclusions were drawn by Vasilieva (2023), who highlighted that gamification and interactive platforms enhance student motivation and self-regulation. Overall, the results suggest that metacognitive strategy instruction, especially when supported by digital technologies, can significantly enhance listening comprehension, learner autonomy, and motivation in foreign language classrooms.

Conclusion

Metacognitive strategies planning, monitoring, and evaluation are essential for developing effective listening skills in foreign language classrooms. Explicit training in these strategies helped students in the experimental group achieve significantly higher comprehension scores, adopt more effective listening approaches, and develop stronger self-regulation.

The integration of digital tools further enhanced the process, providing learners with opportunities for prediction, reflection, and interactive assessment. Teachers are encouraged to implement metacognitive strategy instruction systematically, ensuring that students learn not only how to listen, but also how to manage their own listening processes effectively.

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