

## Metacognitive Strategies Used by EFL Listeners: A Student Need Analysis in Developing Listening Tasks

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### Abstract

Listening has been claimed as one of the most challenging skill to teach since many research found that the students, especially EFL students worried to have a listening class. Listening gives a fear for the students as long as they couldn't deal with their worriness in joining listening class. It may be caused by their nescience in figuring out what strategy they could use while they are trying to do listening tasks given. This study aims to investigate metacognitive listening strategies used by EFL students in listening class. This study is to find out what strategies mostly adopted by the students in listening class. Besides, this study also tries to propose a need mapping for constructing listening tasks. The students were English Department students of Universitas Tidar. In this study, the data were collected by using Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) adopted form Vandergrift. The results revealed that the students mostly used problem-solving strategies while doing listening tasks. The use of this strategy implies that most of the students belong to effective listeners. On the other hand, the use of mental translation is the least use among the students. These results are needed as one of the basic needs in developing listening tasks. The result could give a clear guidance and limitation for developing listening tasks for the students.

**Keywords:** listening, metacognitive strategies, MALQ

### Introduction

Listening in a foreign language is a complex but underestimated skill, as stated by Graham in 2003 cited by (Alhaisoni, 2017). On the otehr hand, since listening was believed on emphasizing and giving a boost for oral skills, many researchers are required to pay much attention to listening skill. Attention to listening comprehension has attracted many researchers in digging various roots of problems and difficulties faced by students in listening. The students in listening class, especially EFL students, have been facing difficulties in improving their listening comprehension. The worriness of the students during listening has become one of the most common problems usually found in the process of improving listening comprehension (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, &



Tafaghdtari, 2006). The worriness usually appears when the students are instructed to do a listening task which requires their ability to reconnect between their prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge.

For many years, many researchers have been conducted studies in revealing what takes as dominant aspect in students' listening learning success. One of those which take quite powerfull impact is metacognitive abilities. In the same line, metacognitive abilities are claimed to be responsible for students' consciousness during a learning process. (Al-alwan, Asassfeh, & Al-shboul, 2013). Furthermore, (Vandergrift et al., 2006) pointed out that students who have higher metacognitive awareness will be able to process a new information and find the best ways to practice and reinforce what they have learned better. So far, the existence of metacognitive abilities are still being an important need for students to develop. The ability of the students in using and developing metacognitive strategies surely will help the students in improving their skills, including listening skill.

Cohen and Dörnyei, cited in (Altuwairesh, 2016), state that metacognitive strategies refer to all process which is used by students consciously in order to supervise or manage their language learning. Those strategies allow them to control their own cognition by planning what they will do, checking how it is going and then evaluating how it went. When students are actively monitor, control, and arrange their learning process, it means that they are using metacognitive strategies to gain their learning purposes. (Vandergrift et al., 2006) mentioned that metacognitive strategies play a critical role in the cognitive processes of language learning. Moreover, Flavell (1979:906) as cited by Alhair (Alhaisoni, 2017) argues that metacognition includes both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences. Metacognitive experiences may activate strategies aimed at cognitive or metacognitive goals. Furthermore, Flavell points out three major categories of metacognitive knowledge, which are person, strategy knowledge and task.

In line with Flavell's arguments, (Al-alwan et al., 2013) add that a learning task entails some metacognitive requirements for the most effective strategies learners have at their disposal to select. It means that a task also plays a role in activating students' ability in using their metacognitive strategies. Therefore, in conducting listening learning, it is more likely to be advised to do interactive and interpretive activities that allow students to use their metacognitive and cognitive abilities. That kind of activities can be managed in a form of task. Having a suitable task in listening class can be a means in promoting the students' success in the listening learning. On the other hand, students' listening strategies seems also to have a role in promoting students' success in listening learning activities. For the reasons mentioned before, this study focus on investigating metacognitive listening strategies used by EFL students in listening learning.

In light of both theoretical arguments and evidence from previous studies stated before, this study tried to examine the following questions:

- 1) What metacognitive listening strategy is used most frequently by the students?
- 2) What needs can be considered in constructing a listening task related to the students' use of metacognitive listening strategies?



The result of this study further can be used as a mapping to create listening tasks which may assist the students in achieving better listening comprehension.

## Method

This study adopted qualitative approach, which the data is described descriptively. The participants of this study included 79 college students from English Education Study Program of Universitas Tidar. They enrolled for the Intensive Listening Course for one semester. The participants were considered to have more sufficient English learning background which is appropriate for investigating metacognitive listening strategies.

(Vandergrift et al., 2006) states that questionnaires and interviews are commonly used to investigate students' metacognitive strategies. However, questionnaires have been used widely in many studies related to listening startegies. Hence, this study adopted Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) adopted form Vandegrift. The questionnaire concerns about L2 listening and metacognition. The questionnaire itself is to seek what strategies are mostly used by the students during listening tasks. It pays attention on an awareness of five distinct strategies, they are personal knowledge, mental translation, direct attention, problem-solving, planning and evaluation.

Those distinct strategies refer to specific conditions. Personal knowledge shows the students's confidence in listening tasks, mental translation strategies show how the students translate the information they heard, direct attention shows the students' ability to concentrate while doing listening tasks, problem-solving strategies show how the students make inferences when they do not understand a certain word, and finally planning and evaluation strategies show how they prepare before the tasks and how they evaluate their performance after the tasks.

The questionnaire consists of 33 statements by rating their responses on a five-point Rating Scale. Those 33 statements were categorized into five strategies: planning/evaluation (11 items), directed attention (2 items), person knowledge (2 item), mental translation (4 items), and problem-solving (14 items). The questionnaire was administered by the researcher during a regular listening class period. After having the questionnaire, the students were also interviewed for knowing more about their attitudes toward the metacognitive strategies they used.

## Findings and discussion

The main intent of this study is to investigate what metacognitive listening strategy is mostly used by the students. In conducting the investigation, a set of questionnaire was distributed to the students. It was conducted during a regular class of Intensive Listening course. Before distributing the questionnaire, the students were informed to fill in the questionnaire based on their condition when they did listening tasks.

The first step conducted after collecting the questionnaire from the students was analyzing the questionnaire. The concern in analyzing the questionnaire is to find out the frequency of the metacognitive listening strategies used by the students. In analyzing the questionnaire, some steps were conducted. The steps



were finding the total score, finding the percentage intervals, finding index (%), and the last step was categorizing the result of final interpretation.

After getting the total score, the next step in processing the questionnaire data was to find percentage intervals. The percentage interval was used to determine the category of final interpretation of the questionnaire.

From the formula, there is an interval of "20". The interval is the distance interval from the lowest 0% to the highest 100%. The results of the interval were used as intervals for interpreting the final score from the results of the questionnaire. The interpretation category of the final score based on these intervals is as follows:

**Tabel 1. The Interpretation Category**

No.	Percentage	Category
1	0% – 19,99%	Very low
2	20% – 39,99%	Low
3	40% – 59,99%	Medium
4	60% – 79,99%	High
5	80% – 100%	Very high

As for the completion of the final results, the formula used is:

$$\text{FI: Total Score/Y} \times 100$$

IA: Final Interpretation

Y: the highest likert-scale point x total number of respondent

For the final interpretation of the questionnaire regarding to the metacognitive listening strategies used by the students, it can be seen from the table below:



**Table 2. Percentage of the Use of Planning/ Evaluation Strategy**

No.	Item	Total Score	Y	Final Interpretation (%)
6	Before listening to English, I skim the comprehension questions to get an idea for the content of the text.	266	395	67,34
7	I plan my schedule so I will have time to listen to English.	232	395	58,73
8	I listen to English audio tapes or audio books.	245	395	62,03
9	I go to a private language institute or study with tutors to improve English listening skill.	297	395	75,19
21	Before listening to English, I try to be in a quiet and neat place to concentrate on listening.	287	395	72,66
22	After listening, I record the new words and expressions on words cards and memorize them.	269	395	68,10
23	I review and practice words or part of text I listened to and learned	238	395	60,25
24	If I don't understand the text, I listen repeatedly until I can understand.	267	395	67,59
25	I practice dictating English text.	275	395	69,62
26	I watch TV and movies spoken in English.	299	395	75,70
28	I look for as many opportunities as possible to listen to English.	255	395	64,56
29	I clearly identify the purpose of the listening activity, for example, I might need to listen for the general idea or for specific facts.	284	395	71,90
<b>Average</b>		<b>292,18</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>73,97</b>



**Table 3. Percentage of the Use of Directed Attention Strategy**

No.	Item	Total Score	Y	Final Interpretation (%)
14.	While listening to English, I ignore the individual sounds that I can't hear clearly.	235	395	59,49
15.	I listen carefully to English native speakers pronounce words and echo them.	291	395	73,67
<b>Average</b>		<b>263</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>66.58</b>

**Table 4. Percentage of the Use of Person Knowledge Strategy**

No.	Item	Total Score	Y	Final Interpretation (%)
3.	While listening to English, I understand the meaning in English without translation into Indonesian.	317	395	80,25
30	I have clear goals for improving my English listening ability.	259	395	65,57
<b>Average</b>		<b>288</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>72,91</b>

**Table 5. Percentage of the Use of Mental Translation Strategy**

No.	Item	Total Score	Y	Final Interpretation (%)
1.	I look up new words in a dictionary or resource book when I don't know the meaning of each word or sound.	261	395	66,08
4	While listening to English, I translate words or sentences into Indonesian to understand the meaning.	132	395	33,42
5	While listening to English, I try to translate the meaning to understand unfamiliar words or expressions.	296	395	74,94
16	While listening to English, I focus on the meaning of each word or sound.	263	395	66,58
<b>Average</b>		<b>238</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>60,25</b>



**Table 6. Percentage of the Use of Problem-Solving Strategy**

No.	Item	Total Score	Y	Final Interpretation(%)
2.	While listening to English, I relate the new words or expressions to the words or expressions I already know to help me understand and remember.	276	395	69,87
9	While listening to new English words, I understand and remember them using the spoken contexts or sentences that are used.	282	395	71,39
10	While listening to English, I try to guess the meaning from the intonation or stress used in the text in order to understand unfamiliar words or expressions.	293	395	74,18
11.	While listening to English, I try to translate the meaning from the words that I already know in the text in order to understand unfamiliar words or expressions.	282	395	71,39
12.	I try to understand the lyric when listening to popular English songs.	332	395	84,05
13.	While listening to English, I make picture of the conversation and situation on my mind.	293	395	74,18
17	While listening to English, I take a note of the major points in the next.	256	395	64,81
18.	While listening to English, I summarize the conversation in my mind or in the margins.	332	395	84,05
19	While listening to English, I look at the pictures, charts or tables to guess what will happen or what other person will say next.	287	395	72,66
20	While listening to English, I try to consciously to pay attention to the listening when distracted.	269	395	68,10
27.	While I listen to English, I try to listen to the end without giving up if I encounter unfamiliar words in the text.	289	395	73,16
31.	While listening to English, I try to listen for main ideas in the text.	332	395	84,05
32.	While listening to English, I try to pay attention to specific parts according to the listening comprehension questions of the listening task.	292	395	73,92
33	While listening to English, I relate the new information to my personal experiences or world knowledge to help me understand and remember.	332	395	84,05
<b>Average</b>		<b>296,21</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>74,99</b>



In summary, the proposition of Metacognitive Listening Strategy used by the students can be seen in the table below:

**Table 7. The Percentage of the Use of Metacognitive Listening Strategies**

No.	Metacognitive Strategies	The Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Planning/ Evaluation	73,97	High
2.	Directed Attention	66,58	High
3.	Person Knowledge	72,91	High
4.	Mental Translation	60,25	High
5.	Problem-solving	74,99	High

From the table above, the readers can see that all strategy belongs to high category. It can be inferred that most of the students usually use the metacognitive listening strategies when they are doing listening tasks. Even though the distinct strategies belong to high category, There is still found that there a metacognitive listening strategy mostly used by the students, it is problem-solving strategies. This strategy holds the highest percentage, which reaches 74,99%. Based on Vandergrift (2006), the use of problem-solving strategies shows how the students make inferences when they do not understand a certain word. The result shows that most of the students usually try to make inference or conclusion when they find difficulties in understanding a word or a meaning.

The result of this study is in line with previous studies, as cited by (Alhaisoni, 2017). Altuwairesh in (Altuwairesh, 2016) found that the subject used problem-solving strategies more than other types of metacognitive listening strategies. While Chamot and Küpper (1989), cited in (Altuwairesh, 2016), found that effective listeners reported using comprehension monitoring and problem identification strategies, which are related to the factor of problem-solving strategies, more frequently than ineffective ones. Furthermore, Barne (2014) reviewed findings from several studies which concerned on more and less proficient listeners. She found that the more proficient listeners are more able to guess the meaning of words and relate what they hear to previous experiences; both are related to problem-solving strategy.

On the other side, there is a metacognitive listening strategy which reaches the lowest percentage, it is Mental Translation Strategy. It only holds 60,25%. It explains that this strategy is rarely used by the students when they are doing listening tasks. The use of Mental Translation Strategy shows how the students translate the information they heard. Based on Graham and Macaro in 2008 , as cited by (Alhaisoni, 2017), they explain that translation is a bottom-up strategy which represents ineffective listeners. Whereas (Vandergrift et al., 2006) believes that the students need to overcome the urge to translate word by word when they find difficulties while listening, since it can fail to activate conceptual process.



Regarding to the strategies which come under problem-solving strategies, there are some strategies which were used most frequently by the students. Those strategies are as follow:

1. Linking new information to student experience.
2. Understanding and remembering using the spoken contexts or sentences that are used
3. Understanding the meaning in English without translation into Indonesian.
4. Making picture of the conversation and situation on my mind.
5. Guessing the meaning from the intonation or stress used in the text in order to understand unfamiliar words or expressions.
6. Guessing the meaning from the context or situation to understand unfamiliar words or expressions
7. Trying to understand the lyric when listening to popular English songs
8. Looking up new words in a dictionary or resource book
9. Looking at the pictures, charts or tables to guess what will happen or what other person will say next
10. Making notes of important parts of a text that is heard.
11. Making a general description of a text or a conversation that is heard.
12. Making summarize
13. Looking for the main ideas in the text that is heard.
14. Reiterating the situation or context of the text being heard.

Otherwise, there are some strategies underpinned by mental translation strategies which should be avoided by EFL listeners in order to be skillful listeners. They are mostly in the area of translation.

The results of the questionnaire can be used as a reference in choosing and creating listening tasks. The strategies that are often used by students when listening class are transformed into the form of listening tasks for students during listening learning.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the metacognitive listening strategies used by English Education students of Universitas Tidar in listening learning. The findings reveal that there were high frequencies of the use metacognitive listening strategies used by the students. The results also show that problem-solving strategy is used more significantly than all the other. The result is next followed by planning/evaluation strategy, which is used significantly by the students, and mental for inference is the way students deal with words or ideas that might cause them listening comprehension difficulties translation strategy which, in turn, is the least frequently metacognitive listening strategy used in this study.

Based on these findings, it is important for EFL teachers to consider those strategies in constructing listening tasks. In order to help the students to activate their metacognitive listening strategies maximally, the teacher is suggested to concern more in improving their metacognitive awareness. It can be triggered from listening tasks. By considering metacognitive listening strategies in constructing listening tasks, it will further involve and activate the students'



metacognitive awareness. As it is said by Alhaisoni (Alhaisoni, 2017) that nurturing learners' metacognition is the key to successful learning

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