THE IMPACT OF LISTENING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN SENIOR EFL STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION, METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN LISTENING, AND LISTENING STRATEGY USE

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CALLA	Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach
CH	Correct Responses by High Group
CL	Correct Responses by Low Group
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FL	Foreign Language
HSG	High Scaffolding Group
ID	Item Discrimination
IF	Item facility
L1	First language
L2	Second or foreign Language
LC	Listening comprehension
LCT	Listening Comprehension Test
LP	Listening Problems
LSG	Low Scaffolding Group
LSI	Listening Strategy Instruction
LSS	Language Strategy Survey
LSU	Listening Strategy Use
LSUS	Listening Strategy Use Survey
MA	Metacognitive Awareness

MALQ	Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire
NCLRC	National Capital Language Resource Center
NUEE	National University Entrance Exam
SE	Strategy Effectiveness
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

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IMPAK DARIPADA PENGAJARAN STRATEGI PENDENGARAN TERHADAP KEFAHAMAN PENDENGARAN, KESEDARAN METAKOGNITIF DALAM PENDENGARAN DAN PENGGUNAAN STRATEGI PENDENGARAN DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR SENIOR IRAN YANG MENGIKUT KURSUS EFL

ABSTRAK

Banyak kajian deskriptif dan eksperimen menunjukkan wujudnya suatu hubungan yang positif di antara kejayaan dalam pembelajaran dan varibel seperti kesedaran metakognitif dan penggunaan strategi pendengaran. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak banyak kajian yang dijalankan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran, penggunaan strategi pendengaran, dan kefahaman pendengaran dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Kefahaman pendengaran merupakan suatu kemahiran yang penting, tetapi kurang difahami dan dikaji dalam pembelajaran bahasa, terutamanya di Iran, kerana penekanan yang lebih ditumpukan terhadap kemahiran bertutur, membaca dan menulis.

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menentukan impak daripada pengajaran strategi pendengaran terhadap kefahaman pendengaran, kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran dan penggunaan strategi pendengaran dalam kalangan pelajar senior Iran yang mengikuti kursus EFL (bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing). Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk: (1) mengkaji keberkesanan pengajaran strategi pendengaran bagi menghasilkan pelajar yang mampu menjadi pendengar yang efisien, yang kerap mengamalkan strategi pendengaran, dan mempunyai kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran; (2) menyelidik saling kait di antara tahap kefahaman pendengaran, penggunaan strategi pendengaran, dan kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran; dan

(3) mengenal pasti strategi pendengaran yang digunakan oleh para pelajar apabila mereka menghadapi masalah semasa mendengar dan juga keberkesanan strategi ini.

Suatu kaedah gabungan digunakan untuk mengumpul data termasuklah reka bentuk kuasi-eksperimen, kajian korelasi, dan protokol 'think aloud'. Sampel kajian yang terdiri daripada 60 orang pelajar universiti di Iran, yang mengikuti kursus EFL dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan iaitu kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan eksperimen. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah LCT (Listening Comprehension Test), dua soal selidik iaitu LSUS (Listening Strategy Use) dan MALQ (Metacognitive Awareness in Listening Questionnarie) dan protocol 'think aloud'. Kedua-dua kumpulan diberikan praujian dan pascaujian tentang LCT, MALQ, dan LSUS. Pengajaran strategi pendengaran selama 12 minggu diadakan khusus untuk kumpulan eksperimen, dan hanya pengajaran pendengaran yang teratur diberikan untuk kumpulan kawalan.

Keputusan kajian kuantitatif menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan eksperimen lebih baik dibandingkan dengan kumpulan kawalan, dengan kesan saiz yang besar dalam penggunaan strategi pendengaran dan kesedaran metakognitif, tetapi dengan kesan saiz yang kecil dalam kefahaman pendengaran. Terdapat juga korelasi yang lemah tetapi positif di antara kefahaman pendengaran dan kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran. Walau bagaimanapun, suatu korelasi yang kuat wujud di antara penggunaan strategi pendengaran dan kesedaran metakognitif dalam pendengaran. Keputusan kualitatif menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar menghadapi masalah dalam kemahiran pendengaran 'bottom-up' semasa sesi pendengaran secara dalam-talian dan sebahagian sahaja daripada strategi ini berkesan dalam menyelesaikan masalah ini.

THE IMPACT OF LISTENING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN SENIOR EFL STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION, METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN LISTENING, AND LISTENING STRATEGY USE

ABSTRACT

Many descriptive and experimental studies have shown a positive relationship between success in language learning and variables such as metacognitive awareness and learning strategy use. However, few studies have been done on how to improve metacognitive awareness in listening, listening strategy use, and listening comprehension. In this study, an attempt was made to determine the impact of listening strategy instruction on Iranian senior EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' listening comprehension, metacognitive awareness in listening, and listening strategy use. The objectives of the study are (1) to examine the effectiveness of listening strategy instruction in making students efficient listeners, frequent users of listening strategies, and more metacognitively aware of their listening; (2) to investigate the interrelationships among listening comprehension level, listening strategy use, and metacognitive awareness in listening; and (3) to identify the listening strategies learners actually use when they encounter problems during real-time listening and the effectiveness of these strategies

A mixed method design was used for data collection including a quasi-experimental design, a correlational study, and think aloud protocols. The participants were 60 Iranian university students majoring in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) that were divided into experimental and control groups. The instruments were a

Listening Comprehension Test (LCT), two questionnaires on Listening Strategy Use (LSUS) and Metacognitive Awareness in Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), and think aloud protocols. Both groups were pre-and-post tested on LCT, MALQ, and LSUS but only the experimental group verbalized their thought processes as a post-test. The treatment was a 12 week listening strategy instruction for the experimental group but regular listening instruction for the control one.

The quantitative study results indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group with a large effect size in listening strategy use and metacognitive awareness but with a small effect size in listening comprehension. There was also a low but positive correlation between listening comprehension and listening strategy use as well as between listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness in listening. However, a high correlation was found to exist between listening strategy use and metacognitive awareness in listening. The qualitative results showed that the learners had problems in bottom-up processing listening skills during real-time listening but mostly used top-down processing strategies in dealing with them. It was also found that the strategies were partly effective in solving these problems.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Communication among speakers of different languages is of paramount importance nowadays because of economic and technological developments that require all nations to use a common international language. English is the most widely spoken language in the world and is the main language of internet, news, business, diplomacy, science, tourism, entertainment, international conferences, and the language of instruction in many universities throughout the world (Kitao, 1996). Kitao (1996) further states that it is used as a second language for communication between people in India, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia while in some other countries like Iran, China, and Japan, English is not commonly used as a medium of communication and is spoken as a foreign language.

English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) began to replace French in Iran at the outset of the twentieth century after the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was founded in 1901, and many English people surged into the country afterwards. It has been taught formally at high schools and universities after the Second World War when the authorities of the Ministry of Education decided that English was more useful for the economic development of the country (Manafi, 1977). Since then, learning English has been a problem for Iranians mainly because of inappropriate teaching methods, poor teacher education programs, and ineffective materials (Manafi, 1977; Ostovar, 1997; Hassani, 2003; Mehdizadeh, 2005). Many researches have been conducted to highlight these inadequacies at both secondary and tertiary levels and have made useful

suggestions for reforms, but to date, no noticeable improvement has taken place in English language learning in Iran (Najafi, 1996; Ostovar, 1997; Shahsavan, 2004; Mehdizadeh, 2005).

Nevertheless, English language remains to be influential in economic development of Iran. For instance, in 1997, Iran joined the Developing 8 (D8) countries that have similar objectives such as developing their economic position in the world, creating new opportunities in trade relations, and participating more actively in decision making at the international level (Aral, 2005). All these objectives indicate the importance of English as a communication tool for the member countries and the world. Moreover, they necessitate effective measures in improving the present English language situation in Iran for establishing a more desirable relationship with the rest of the world.

This research is intended to investigate the feasibility of helping Iranian students to improve in listening comprehension through strategy instruction that is believed by many researchers to be effective in helping unsuccessful students become better learners. This purpose can be achieved by making students aware of their cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective resources and through training them to use these resources for better learning (Oxford, 2003; Chamot, 2005a; Naughton, 2006).

1.2 Background of the Study

Since 1980s, a number of studies have been conducted on the types of listening strategies that learners use, the ways in which they use them, and the effect of strategy instruction on listening comprehension (Fujita, 1985; Bacon, 1992a; Goh & Taib,

2006). Most of these studies show that listening strategies improve listening comprehension and the learners can learn to use them.

However, researchers such as Vandergrift (2007b: 191) still claim that listening is the least understood and researched skill in spite of its importance as the "heart of language learning". This skill has received the least attention in Iran by teachers, syllabus designers, and policy makers in the field of language learning despite its vital role in communication (Siahcheshm, 1994; Zandi, 2003; Zare, 2004).

Two important features that gave rise to this study are noticeable in strategy related studies in Iran. First, few studies have been conducted on listening strategy use and the role of listening strategy instruction on listening comprehension (Asgary, 2001; Sedaghat, 2001; Hadji Vosuq, 2000). Most of the strategy based studies are either descriptive, general in nature (not related to only listening), or focused on reading and vocabulary, if experimental (Farshid, 2003). Second, in most of the descriptive studies, it has been found that metacognitive awareness is highly correlated with language learning success and that successful learners use more strategies, particularly metacognitive ones (Ranjbari, 2000; Borzabadi, 2000; Rahimi, 2004).

Therefore, because of the paucity of intervention studies on listening strategies in Iran and because of the positive relationship between metacognitive awareness as well as strategy use and success, this study is intended to examine the feasibility of improving listening comprehension as an important but neglected skill on one hand, and metacognitive awareness along with general strategy use on the other.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Due to a paradigm shift towards interaction-based acquisition since the last 30 years, listening has accrued much more importance as a means of language learning in communicatively instructed environments (Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007). It is very important in communication and is the first skill to be developed by the learners because it provides input and without comprehending input, no learning begins (Rost, 1994). Listening comprehension is a complex process and plays a significant role in learning a second language (Vandergrift, 2002), and is also positively related to overall foreign language proficiency, specially oral proficiency skills (Feyton, 1991). To show the critical role of listening comprehension in interaction, Gilman and Moody (1984) claim that adults devote 40 - 50 percent of communication time to listening. However, its importance is often overlooked in foreign and second language contexts by teachers (Oxford, 1993).

Listening is also very difficult in foreign or second language learning since it involves both correct interpretation of the incoming speech and responding appropriately to the speaker in a face to face interaction (Farrell & Mallard, 2006). As Vandergrift (2004: 11) puts it, due to the mostly implicit nature of this skill, it is the most difficult one to learn and the students need strategies such as "planning, selective attention, directed attention, monitoring, and evaluation" to overcome the related problems.

The difficulty in listening is more prominent for Iranian university students of EFL since they have no background or experience in listening skill after seven years of studying English at junior high schools and high schools so that they have to start from

scratch when they enter universities (Siahcheshm, 1994). Most of the university students are not able to understand authentic listening materials as they are expected to (Shahsavan, 2004) and many of them are dissatisfied with the instruction they receive because of the ineffective methodology in meeting their needs in real life situations (Zoroufchian, 2005). When dealing with a communicative task like listening, tertiary level language learners do not know what works best for them in fulfilling the task and only resort to traditional ineffective strategy of looking up every word from the dictionary (Farshid, 2003). It shows that they need training in using listening strategies more frequently that according to Vandergrift (1997a) will help them succeed in communication.

A large amount of listening input at universities is based on teacher talk mostly in mother tongue (Siahcheshm, 1994; Bigdeloo, 2001; Shahsavan, 2004; Bustamante, 1991). Therefore, we can conclude that actually there is little or no listening practice in English when teachers speak in native language. In addition, in spite of the fact that many innovative methods such as Asher's Total Physical Response, Krashen's Natural Approach, Curran's Community Language Learning, Lozanov's Suggestopedia, and Gattegno's Silent Way have been proposed since the last 30 years and emphasize on the superiority of listening over speaking (Feyten, 1991), many teachers in Iran still stick to Audio-Lingual Method (Najafi, 1996). According to Vandergrift (2002), Audio-Lingual Method only develops structural and pronunciation accuracy not listening skill. Scarcity of audio-visual facilities and the reluctance of teachers to use them in class also play a role in poor listening performance of Iranian students (Hassani, 2003).

Although most Iranian students are interested in listening skill and need it in their every day life for understanding western music or English films, there isn't sufficient authentic practice for this purpose (Zare, 2004). The teachers are not knowledgeable enough to expose students to native-like input or to involve them in interactive activities (Zoroufchian, 2005). Iranian teachers are not aware of the latest debates and developments in the English language teaching (henceforth ELT) profession despite some positive changes in language learning pedagogy in the last three decades. They still use traditional methods of Grammar Translation or Audio-Lingual in classes and are neither familiar with the innovative methods nor proficient enough in language (Akbari, 2005; Hassani, 2003).

Focus on traditional methods of teaching and excluding active involvement of students in the natural use of language such as listening has made students passive. This phenomenon is not specific to language learning and is an epidemic afflicting the whole educational system so that an international conference on exploring ways to improve the Iranian educational system was held in 1995 jointly by the Iranian Ministry of Education and UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in Tehran. Researchers from all around the world were called to explore new methods of teaching in order to change passive students into active learners (Kamyab, 2004).

And last but not least, it has been found that metacognitive awareness is important in learning efficiency of Iranian students and that more proficient learners use more metacognitive strategies namely in vocabulary and reading as a result of training and experience (Ranjbari, 2000; Borzabadi, 2000; Rahimi, 2004). Therefore, when they

enter universities, the students have some background in reading and vocabulary knowledge but as to listening, lack of experience and training at state-run junior high schools and high schools causes problems for them at universities. A survey of listening studies in Iran shows that all of them have been conducted on subjects either at private institutes (Shiramiry, 2000; Hadji-Vosuq, 2000) or at universities (Adel, 1995; Noorshams, 2003; Asgary, 2001; Sedaghat, 2001) excluding the majority of students at public schools who like to continue their studies at universities and need the experience for their future success.

To solve the above-mentioned listening problems of university EFL students, listening strategy training can be considered as a plausible alternative. Listening strategy instruction can help students become autonomous and take responsibility for their own learning (Williams & Burden, 1997).These strategies can have a major role in helping to shift the responsibility for learning off the shoulders of teachers and on to those of the learners (Cohen, 1996).

Many researchers throughout the world have demonstrated the usefulness of learning strategy use for diverse groups of learners including first language (L1) and second or foreign language (L2) (Allen, 2003). Strategy training makes learners more involved in practicing English and organizing their activities effectively (Brown, 2002; Yang, 2003). For systematic and effective presentation of strategies in all skills including listening, some instruction models are suggested for involving students in multiple strategy practice opportunities, self evaluation, and transfer of strategies to new tasks and situations. One general model developed by Chamot et al., (1999) and updated by Chamot (2005a), is called the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach

(CALLA) that includes the six stages of preparation, presentation, practice, self-evaluation, expansion, and assessment.

A more practically specified model is offered in Malaysia by Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) who encourages students to use in class, out of class, and exam strategies to improve the quality of their learning. For developing the listening skill, for example, they can listen carefully to the teacher and their classmates in class; listen to the radio or watch TV outside the class; and listen to others in discussion groups before the exams. For listening strategy instruction, Vandergrift (2003b, 2007b) suggests a five stage process including planning/prediction, three verification stages, and reflection. For a detailed explanation about this model, refer to section 2.5.3 in the next chapter.

In Iran, strategy related researches have been chiefly descriptive in identifying the types of strategies used by university students (Borzabadi, 2000; Rahimi, 2004). Some intervention studies have also been conducted and confirmed the positive impact of learning strategies on reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge (Keshavarz & Estaji, 2005; Kamalizad, 2005; Bigdeloo, 2001; Farshid, 2003). However, no listening strategy instruction has been conducted to examine the effectiveness of strategy training on developing university EFL students' listening proficiency. This study is an attempt to address the above mentioned problems by giving Iranian university EFL students listening strategy instruction to improve their listening proficiency and general strategy use, particularly metacognitive ones.

This local need is also highlighted by an international call for more research by Chamot (2005b) who states that although we have learned a lot about the usefulness of

incorporating strategy instruction in foreign and second language education, much still remains to be investigated. This is mostly because the relationship between strategy use and achievement is complex, multi-factorial, and often nonlinear so that differential intervention methods should be devised based on individual differences (Yamamori et al., 2003). Certain strategies have varying importance across diverse socio-cultural contexts as shown by a collection of papers edited by Oxford (1996). We have to increase our awareness of our students' strategy use and needs in order to facilitate the language learning process more effectively in line with contemporary eclectic developments in theory and practice of English language teaching (Griffith & Parr, 2001). This study will shed light on the effectiveness of listening strategy instruction in Iranian context with its own unique socio-cultural parameters unparalleled in other parts of the world.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The present study on Iranian senior EFL students is an attempt to 1) explore the extent to which listening strategy instruction is effective in improving these learners' listening comprehension, metacognitive awareness in listening, and listening strategy use; 2) determine if any correlation exists among listening comprehension, metacognitive awareness in listening, and strategy use; 3) identify their problems in listening comprehension, the listening strategies they use when they encounter problems while listening; and 4) determine if the used strategies are effective. This study will be carried out to add to the present body of strategy research in Iran since most investigations so far in this country have been descriptive in nature.

1.5 Research Questions

On the basis of the above-mentioned objectives, there are nine specific research questions in this study associated with both quantitative and qualitative research methods used. The first six questions are investigated quantitatively while the last three ones are studied qualitatively:

1. What is the impact of listening strategy instruction on students' listening comprehension?
2. What is the impact of listening strategy instruction on the learners' metacognitive awareness in listening?
3. What is the impact of listening strategy instruction on the students' listening strategy use?
4. What kind of correlation is there between listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness in listening?
5. What kind of correlation is there between listening comprehension and listening strategy use?
6. What kind of correlation is there between metacognitive awareness in listening and listening strategy use?
7. What problems do the learners encounter during listening?
8. What strategy or combination of strategies do the students use for solving their problems?
9. How well do the strategies work in solving the listeners' problems?

1.6 Rationale of the Study

Due to the previously mentioned problems of listening skill in Iran, it is necessary to find ways for improving the present situation. One alternative is the students' awareness and use of cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies in listening, and listening strategy instruction can be useful in achieving this goal. Strategy research evidence in general, confirms the positive role of strategy awareness and use in learning efficiency and the teachability of these strategies in learning a second language (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Through strategy instruction, students will be equipped with conscious or unconscious thoughts and actions to achieve the desired efficiency (Chamot et al., 1999) , to get actively involved in the process of learning (Bejarano et al., 1997), and to become autonomous learners (Yang, 2003). Through strategy research, we learn about the cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective processes involved in language learning (Chamot, 2005a).

In listening strategy research, relatively few studies have been conducted into the effects of strategy instruction for listening comprehension. Two of the most successful studies are done by Thompson and Rubin (1996) and Kohler (2002) that show the positive effect of metacognitive awareness in listening comprehension. Goh (1999) also found that more effective listeners possess a wider range of metacognitive knowledge and have a clearer understanding of their role in the listening process. Nonetheless, many issues in this regard remain unaddressed so that listening comprehension strategies will remain a vital and fertile field for researchers to explore (Berne, 2004).

Studies describing listening strategy use and the relationship between variables have so far provided an incomplete picture of the real process in this very complex and

hidden skill. Research has perhaps not yet reached the stage of being able to offer clear guidelines as to how students can be helped to listen better (Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007). Now, according to Vandergrift (2004:18) "we need to continue to investigate the relative contribution of top-down and bottom-up processes at different proficiency levels for different listening tasks".

In Iran, some researchers have shown the relationship among metacognitive awareness of strategies, language proficiency, and language learning success (Ranjbari, 2000; Borzabadi, 2000; Rahimi, 2004). However, the focus of all these strategy strategy related studies has been on general proficiency, vocabulary, or reading not listening (Ranjbari, 2000; Farshid, 2003). Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate the feasibility of improving metacognitive awareness in listening, listening comprehension, and listening strategy use by the students through listening strategy instruction in Iran.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Learning strategies make learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990:8). She also claims that strategies are very important to activate the students in the conscious process of learning and self-regulation in all four language skills in a way that they take control of their own learning by seeking opportunities in and out of class for practice. Some examples in listening are getting information or help from all sources available (such as teachers, classmates, native speakers, radio, TV, songs, and movies), guessing the meaning of unknown words, and summarizing what is heard. Some metacognitive strategies which are also related to listening are monitoring ones own learning or planning for learning.

Listening strategy training involves learners in the above-mentioned strategies in a way that they are exposed to a variety of authentic materials such as monologs, dialogs, TV shows, songs, and movies with different levels of difficulty. Such materials involve students both in structural and discoursal aspects of language to compensate for the present shortage of interactive listening materials in high school and tertiary level ESP (English for Special Purposes) materials in Iran. In this way, learners can have access to real life materials that are interesting as well as motivating in satisfying students' needs for listening in future.

Listening strategy instruction makes students aware of such strategies which can be used both inside and out of the class so that teachers can involve them more actively and efficiently in the process of language learning. Such strategies, if used appropriately, will make students more autonomous, motivated, and confident learners (Chamot et al., 1996; Nunan, 1997), and if integrated into regular language classrooms, speeds up learning (Oxford, 1990, 1996). Therefore, listening strategy instruction can help students develop autonomy, motivation, and a sense of self efficacy because of reasonably rapid learning, specially in a highly centralized educational system like that in Iran where certain traditional textbooks and methodologies are imposed on the teachers and students (Ostovar, 1997). Teachers can integrate strategies into regular classroom activities both inside and outside the class to compensate for the problems.

Through listening strategy identification and instruction, teachers can get useful information about the learners' cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective processes involved in listening (Chamot, 2005a). Therefore, such a listening strategy intervention may enable teachers to understand their students better in order to adapt their teaching

styles to the individual cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective preferences; to introduce appropriate strategies for certain tasks; and to give necessary feedback during the actual practice in or out of class.

1. 8 Limitations of the Study

The data interpretation was done with caution for two reasons: First, the internal validity of a quasi-experimental study is lower than that for a true experimental one because of the assignment of the subjects to the groups without randomization. The threats to internal validity are history, maturation, statistical regression, selection bias, testing, instrumentation, design contamination, experimental mortality, and experimenter bias (Naderi & Seif, 1995). Although the researcher tried to minimize these threats through preventive measures, study control, inclusion of qualitative research, and specific data analysis methods (as explained in chapter three), the results were viewed with caution. Second, the number of participants was limited to 60 final year students of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) at Islamic Azad University of Torbat Heydarieh in Iran that influenced the representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the results.

1.9 Operational Definition of Key Terms

1.9.1 Language Learning Strategies

Oxford (1990:8) defines learning strategies as “a plan, step, or conscious action towards achievement of an objective”. Similarly, Chamot (2005b: 112) define strategies as conscious phenomena but with some degrees of subconsciousness:

> "Learning strategies are procedures that facilitate a learning task. Strategies are most often conscious and goal-driven, especially in the beginning stages of tackling an unfamiliar language task. Once a learning strategy becomes familiar through repeated use, it may be used with some automaticity, but most learners will, if required, be able to call the strategy to conscious awareness."

Oxford (1990) offers one of the best known taxonomies of learning strategies (Appendix A) in which there is a distinction between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are used for working with the language itself while the indirect ones deal with general management of strategies.

Data on strategies (including listening strategies) can be collected through different instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, stimulated recall interviews, think aloud protocols, and diaries. According to Grenfell and Harris (1999, cited in Chamot, 2005b: 115), self reports are still the only ways of "getting inside the black box of the human brain" to identify the mental processing. However, Macaro, Graham, and Vanderplank (2007) believe in the triangulation of these instruments and state that combining retrospective tools with introspective ones (for example, questionnaires with think aloud protocols) will bring about more valid and reliable data. Additionally, White, Schramm, and Chamot (2007: 115), recommend a "contextual" research method that is "appropriate for particular groups of learners in new and emerging contexts, namely online learning and heritage language use". They also believe that it is possible to "incorporate collaborative action research approaches into strategy instruction" in order to involve practitioners and learners more directly in the process of research for eliciting more accurate and reliable data.

1.9.2 Listening Strategies

Listening strategies are "techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input" (National Capital Language Resource Center, 2004). In line with general learning strategies categorized by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), listening strategies are classified by Bacon (1992b), Vandergrift (1997b, 2003b), and National Capital Language Resource Center (2004) into three types: cognitive (mental activities for manipulating the language to accomplish a task), metacognitive (mental activities for directing language learning), and socio-affective (activities involving interaction or affective control in language learning). These strategies are explained in detail in chapter two, section 2.8. A detailed list of listening strategies with definitions and examples is also presented in Appendix B.

1.9.3 Listening Strategy Instruction

In listening strategy instruction (henceforth LSI), less successful learners are explicitly trained to improve their listening performance through using cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Cognitive strategies include predicting content, listening to familiar words and cognates, listening for redundancy, listening to the tone of voice and intonation, inferencing, note-taking, summarization, and resourcing (writing down phrases to see what they mean). Metacognitive strategies are directed attention, selective attention, self-evaluation, planning, defining goals, and monitoring. Scioaffective strategies are cooperation and asking for clarification (Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007).

The instruments for measuring the effects of listening strategy instruction can be questionnaires (Henner Stanchina, 1986/1987), standardized and teacher-made audio or

video tests (O'Malley et al., 1985b; McGruddy, 1995), interviews (Kohler, 2002), think aloud protocols (Goh & Taib, 2006), classroom discussions (Goh & Taib, 2006), diaries (Chen, 2007; Zeng, 2007), and classroom observations (Kohler, 2002; Graham & Macaro, 2008) to determine the effectiveness of strategy training. In this study, LSI will be measured through a teacher made listening comprehension test, think aloud protocols, and two questionnaires: one on metacognitive awareness in listening, and another on listening strategy use.

1.9.4 Metacognitive Awareness in Listening

Vandergrift et al. (2006:438) refer to this term as the "student awareness of the listening process (i.e., students' perceptions of themselves as listeners, their perceptions of the requirements of listening tasks, and their awareness of the strategies they deploy to achieve comprehension)". In other words, metacognitive awareness "includes both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies, which are regarded as separate and distinct, but complementary components" (Wenden, 1999, cited in Mareschal 2007: xii). Similarly, drawing on Paris and Winograd's (1990, cited in Vandergrift et al., 2006: 437) terms of "declarative and procedural" types of metacognitive awareness, Veenman and Spaans (2005, cited in Mareschal, 2007: xii) make a distinction between these two components as follows:

> "Metacognitive knowledge refers to the declarative knowledge one has about the interplay between personal characteristics, task characteristics, and available strategies in a learning situation (while) metacognitive strategies refer to the procedural knowledge that is required for the actual regulation of and control over one's learning activities. Task analysis, monitoring, checking, and reflection are manifestations of such skills".

And recently, Goh (2008:192) defines metacognitive awareness as a concept concerned with one's "awareness of thinking and learning" as well as "the ability to

regulate the thinking processes". She also uses Paris and Winograd's (1990, cited in Vandergrift et al., 2006: 437) ideas and calls these two components as "self appraisal" (metacognitive knowledge) and "self regulation" (metacognitive strategies) in her own model of metacognitive instruction (Goh, 2008: 194). Finally, based on Flavell's (1979) definition, she defines metacognitive awareness as a concept including both "experience" and "knowledge"(Goh, 2008: 193):

> "Metacognitive awareness takes the form of experience and knowledge (Flavell 1979). Metacognitive experience is a feeling we have about our cognition, such as the feeling we have when we do not understand something, while metacognitive knowledge consists of our beliefs and knowledge about learning. Flavell defined metacognitive experiences as 'any conscious cognitive or affective experiences that accompany and pertain to any intellectual enterprise' (1979: 906). An example of this in L2 listening is when a learner is struggling with a word recognition problem and suddenly remembers a similar problem that he or she managed to solve in another listening event. Using the knowledge he or she has, the learner applies a similar strategy for solving the new word recognition problem. Some metacognitive experiences, however, are fleeting and do not invoke any particular knowledge pertaining to learning. An example is when a learner feels a momentary sense of puzzlement and forgets or ignores it immediately".

For assessing metacognitive awareness in listening, think aloud protocols, diaries, interviews, questionnaires, and group discussions can be used (Goh, 2008). For example, Vandergrift et al. (2006) developed a 21-item questionnaire which is divided into five distinct parts: problem solving, planning and evaluation, mental translation, directed attention, and person knowledge. The first four factors represent the self-regulative procedural knowledge (strategies) while the last one (person knowledge) is related to self-evaluative declarative knowledge (perceptions) as mentioned above. In this study, the same test is adapted through a validation process to be made appropriate for use in Iranian context

1.9.5 Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is defined by O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) as "an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge". It is also defined by Vandergrift (2006: 10) as "the ability to process samples of realistic spoken language in real time (as well as the questions to be answered) and to answer direct content or inference questions based on these language samples". Listening comprehension can be assessed through standardized tests (Feyten, 1991), teacher-made tests (Vandergrift, 2006), and introspective interviews (Bacon, 1992a). In this study, listening comprehension will be assessed by a teacher made listening test based on real life situations similar to those experienced by the students during the course.

1.9.6 Listening Strategy Use

Listening strategy use refers to the application of listening strategies to cope with the problems in listening through increasing one's exposure to the new language, getting familiar with the sounds and conversational language in the target language (Cohen, Oxford, & Chi, 2005). Bacon (1992a) divides the strategy use into what the listeners do metacognitively, cognitively, socially and affectively in order to understand what others say in the target language. Similar to metacognitive awareness in listening, listening strategy use can also be investigated through questionnaires, interviews, think aloud protocols, and diaries (Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007). A detailed explanation about the listening strategy research tools is presented in chapter two, section 2. 9.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

Since the onset of language learning strategy research, numerous descriptive studies have been conducted on the effect of learner variables such as sex (Green & Oxford, 1995; Kaylani, 1996; Lan & Oxford, 2003; El Dib, 2004) , proficiency level (Chamot et al., 2003), motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Yamamori et al., 2003), and so forth as well as cultural factors on the learners' choice of strategies (Bedell & Oxford, 1996). However, comparatively fewer intervention researchers have documented the usefulness of listening strategies in helping unsuccessful learners become efficient in the listening, metacognition, or strategy use. Therefore, both descriptive and experimental studies of learning strategies are accounted for in this conceptual framework which is the adapted form of the model of L2 language acquisition suggested by Ellis (1994).

As shown in the framework (figure 1.1), an experimental research will be conducted on the effectiveness of listening strategy instruction on students' listening comprehension, metacognitive awareness in listening, and listening strategy use. Then the interrelationship between listening comprehension, listening strategy use, and metacognitive awareness in listening will be identified. Moreover, the quantitative data obtained by the formal listening comprehension test will be complemented qualitatively through students' verbalizations during real-time listening in order to present a fuller picture of the learners' listening comprehension problems, the strategies they use, and the effectiveness of these strategies in listening comprehension.

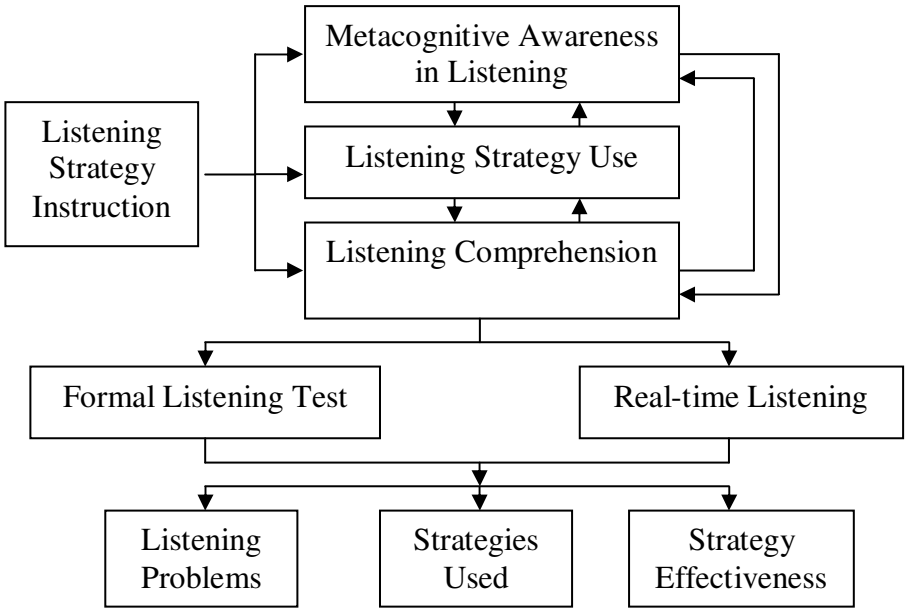

Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework

1.11 Summary

Learning English communicatively in Iran is an indispensable part of everyday life due to the importance of this language mainly in education, business, science, diplomacy, tourism, and entertainment. However, since the beginning of its use for about 70 years ago as a foreign language, English has not attracted due attention at high schools and universities judging by the fact that students are unable to communicate well and have problems even in making simple sentences let alone being successful in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at an internationally accepted level. Fortunately, there is a national will among researchers to make reforms and many studies have been conducted to address the problems in learning vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking, and writing. Similarly, this study is intended to improve learning English with a focus on listening through strategy based instruction. Listening is the mostly neglected skill in high schools and universities despite its importance in interaction. Furthermore, an effort will be made to improve students' metacognitive

awareness in listening and listening strategy use which are reportedly correlated with language learning success.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

Since late 1970s, there has been a widespread research interest in the strategies that learners use for learning foreign or second languages and in variables related to effective strategy use including language proficiency and metacognitive awareness. These researches range from studies on the use of all strategies in general to thorough exploration of certain strategies regarding particular skills or language areas (Eckerth, Schramm, & Tschirner, 2009). The body of work to date suggests a possible relationship between strategy use and second language learning success. This interest has also given rise to a number of researches in language learner strategy instruction that provide some evidence on the possibility of helping learners to use strategies more effectively (Macaro, 2006).

Similarly, listening strategies, however less researched in comparison with other skills, have been investigated by many scholars since the last 30 years. Research in this area has witnessed considerable progress in understanding the strategies that listeners use but studies on the teaching of listening strategies have been limited (Carrier, 2003). More studies are needed to show the effectiveness of strategy training in helping unsuccessful learners (Chamot, 2005b) and listening strategy research in particular, continues to be a very fruitful area for researchers to explore (Berne, 2004).

This chapter is an account of the existing literature on listening strategy research and is composed of different sections covering social constructivism as the theoretical

foundation of this study, listening process, listening instruction approaches, language learning strategies, listening strategies, listening strategy research methods, listening strategy use in relation to different variables, metacognition in listening, listening strategy instruction, a review of listening strategy intervention studies, and listening strategy research in Iran.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

2.2.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism (as shown in Figure 2.1) and also called “sociocultural theory” (Coyle, 2007:65) argues that the most optimal learning environment is one where a dynamic interaction between instructors, learners and tasks provides an opportunity for learners to create their own truth due to the interaction with others. Social constructivism thus emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what is happening in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997).

An important concept in social constructivism is scaffolded learning that involves mediation on the basis of Vygotsky’s (1978, cited in Coyle, 2007: 66) "Zone of Proximal Development". Mediation is defined as the interaction between the learner, parents, teacher, and peers through "symbolic artifacts (language, literacy, numeracy, concepts, and institutions) and material artifacts (pictures, diagrams, and videos)" (Williams & Burden, 1997: 40) in order to "regulate the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006: 79). In the following section, the important roles played by the main components of social constructivism, that is, the learner, the teacher, and the context will be discussed in detail.