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Listening as Process: Learning Activities for Self-Appraisal and Self-Regulation

Christine Goh

Summary

The strategy approach is by now familiar to many teachers. While it emphasizes the use of various techniques to facilitate comprehension, strategy training alone does not go far enough in addressing learners' cognitive, affective and social needs that can influence second language listening development. The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework that takes account of these needs and suggest practical ideas for developing learners' ability to facilitate and improve their own listening development. Grounded in the concept of metacognition which encompasses both knowledge about and control over learning processes, the activities and materials I am proposing can help learners become more aware about themselves as L2 listeners, as well as better understand the cognitive, linguistic and social demands of L2 listening. The first kind of activities – integrated experiential learning tasks – can be used with existing listening tasks in a language course, whereas the second – guided reflections on listening – can be carried out before or after listening tasks to help direct learners' efforts at planning, monitoring and evaluating their listening and learning experiences. By using materials based on a principled and systematic metacognitive approach, we are enabling learners to comprehend listening texts better while at the same time guiding them in taking greater control over their listening development.

Introduction

Picture this scene during a listening lesson: A teacher introduces the topic of a listening text and invites students to say what they know about it. She writes their ideas and unfamiliar words on the board. Next, she tells the students to read the instructions for the listening activity carefully to find out what information in the listening text to pay attention to. After this, the teacher plays the recording and the students listen attentively. They complete the activity by giving appropriate written responses (for example, choosing the correct options, filling in the blanks, sequencing information, drawing a diagram, jotting down notes.). The teacher plays the recording again and instructs the students to confirm or change their responses. After that, she tells the class what the correct responses are and the students find out "where they have gone wrong." Does this sound familiar to you? Well, that was what I used to do when delivering listening lessons. My emphasis was on the product or the outcome of my students' listening. What mattered most was how accurate or complete their responses were. In retrospect, even though I did many listening exercises. I was not *teaching* my students how to listen effectively. I was merely *testing* their comprehension without showing them how they could improve their listening.

I found out from my conversations with many language teachers that their listening lessons had the same features of the product-based lesson I have just described. Moreover, listening instruction in many language courses tends to focus almost exclusively on understanding the content of spoken texts, with little time given to teaching about the process of listening and how to listen. While many published materials provide support for listening, this is typically in the form of pre-listening activities to generate factual or linguistic knowledge related to the listening texts. Post-listening activities also tend to focus on the product of

listening; learners use what they have comprehended to complete another language activity (for example, using the notes they make to write a report or give a talk). Conspicuously absent in the key stages of a listening lesson are learning activities that directly develop learners' capacity to listen beyond the topic. I have argued elsewhere that we should help learners develop metacognitive knowledge and strategies because they need to learn *how* to listen and not just what to listen for (Goh 1997, 2005, 2008). In other words, listening lessons should include activities that teach learners explicitly how to listen effectively as part of their on-going language development. Every lesson can be an opportunity for them to develop greater awareness about themselves as second language listeners, the nature and demands of listening, and strategies for facilitating comprehension and progress in listening.

I will refer to this type of process-based listening instruction as metacognitive instruction in listening, based on the theory of metacognition that is now widely acknowledged to be an indispensable part of human learning. 'Metacognition' is often defined as awareness about one's processes in learning, and the appraisal and regulation of these processes. By 'metacognitive instruction in listening' I refer to pedagogical procedures that enable learners to increase their awareness about the listening process while at the same time develop effective skills for self-appraising and self-regulating listening comprehension and the progress of their overall listening development.

Theoretical Principles

The principles of metacognitive instruction and the design of process-based instruction materials I propose are situated within a broad cognitive framework of learning. This

framework has four key characteristics: (1) learning is an active, strategic and constructive process, (2) it follows developmental trajectories in subject-matter domains, (3) it is guided by learners' introspective awareness and control of their mental processes, and (4) it is facilitated by social, collaborative settings that value self-directed student dialogue (Bruer 1998: 681). Metacognitive instruction in listening is based on the premise that learning to listen requires learners to be actively engaged in cognitive, affective and social domains. Such an involvement will prepare learners to act strategically during listening as well as manage their overall listening development. In addition, by actively engaging in thinking and talking about their own listening, learners construct their understanding of what it takes to succeed as a second language listener. Metacognitive instruction also takes into account the trajectories or the developmental paths that language learners follow when learning to listen. Broadly speaking, listeners develop from controlled to automatised processing of spoken information while they build increasingly sophisticated neural networks for faster parallel processing of text and meaning (Hulstijn 2003; Segalowitz 2003). Although the degree of control and automaticity may vary according to different texts and tasks, it is reasonable to say that for unskilled listeners, even low-level processes such as perception and recognition of spoken input are still very much controlled or 'effortful'. Whereas perception of spoken input is largely automatised for competent listeners, weaker listeners have to consciously attend to aural signals before interpreting the meaning of the message effectively (Buck 2002, Goh, 2000, Rost 2002).

Learners' introspective awareness and control of mental processes are central to metacognitive instruction. An individual's metacognition involves an awareness about

mental processes when participating in a learning task and the self-regulation of such processes in order to achieve the goal of the task.

> 'Metacognition' refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them… Metacognition refers, among other things, to active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective (Flavell, 1976: 232).

With respect to awareness, Flavell made a distinction between metacognitive experience and metacognitive knowledge. Metacognitive experience is a feeling we have about our thinking, such as when we know we do not understand what we are listening to; metacognitive knowledge consists of our beliefs and knowledge about learning. Some metacognitive experiences are fleeting and do not invoke any particular knowledge pertaining to learning. For example, when we hear something we may feel a momentary sense of puzzlement that we subsequently ignore.

Flavell distinguished three dimensions of this knowledge: person, task, and strategy. *Person* knowledge is knowledge about ourselves as learners, and includes our perceptions of our abilities and factors that affect the success or failure in our learning (for example age, aptitude, personality, gender and learning style). Person knowledge also includes beliefs about oneself as a learner. *Task* knowledge is knowledge about the purpose, the demands, and the nature of learning tasks. It includes knowledge of the procedures involved in accomplishing these tasks. S*trategy* knowledge is

knowledge about which strategies are useful for achieving learning goals. It also includes knowing which strategies that are currently being used should be avoided and eventually abandoned. Table 1 gives examples of how the three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge are applied to listening:

Table 1: Types of metacognitive knowledge about listening

Person knowledge

Self-concepts and self-efficacy about listening

Specific listening problems, causes and possible solutions

Task knowledge

Mental, affective and social processes involved in listening

Skills (e.g. listening for details, gist) needed for completing listening tasks

Factors that influence listening (e.g. text, speaker)

Ways of improving listening outside class

Strategy knowledge about listening, for example, types of cognitive and metacognitive strategies

General and specific strategies to facilitate comprehension and cope with difficulties.

Strategies appropriate for specific types of listening task

Ineffective strategies

Metacognitive knowledge can lead an individual to select, evaluate, revise or even abandon tasks, goals and strategies; in other words, to self-regulate their learning and thinking. This

executive aspect of cognition was elaborated upon by Brown (1978) who further distinguished three processes: planning, monitoring and evaluating one's thinking. Table 2 shows how this is applied to learner listening at the levels of general listening development and specific listening tasks.

Table 2 Metacognitive strategies for self-regulation in learner listening

Planning	A strategy for determining learning objectives and deciding the means by which the objectives can be achieved.
General listening development	Identify learning objectives for listening development Determine ways to achieve these objectives Set realistic short-term and long-term goals Seek opportunities for listening practice
Specific listening task	Preview main ideas before listening Rehearse language (e.g. pronunciation) necessary for the task Decide in advance which aspects of the text to concentrate on
Monitoring	A strategy for checking the progress in the course of learning or carrying out a learning task
General listening development	Consider progress against a set of pre-determined criteria Determine how close it is to achieving short-term or long-term goals Check and see if the same mistakes are still being made
Specific listening task	Check understanding during listening Check the appropriateness and the accuracy of what is understood and compare it with new information

	Identify the source of difficulty
Evaluating	A strategy for determining the success of the outcome of an attempt to learn or complete a learning task.
General listening development	Assess listening progress against a set of pre-determined criteria Assess the effectiveness of learning and practice strategies Assess the appropriateness of learning goals and objectives set
Specific listening task	Check the appropriateness and the accuracy of what has been understood Determine the effectiveness of strategies used the task Assess overall comprehension of the text

Most researchers have adopted these twin concepts of metacognition to emphasise "(a) knowledge about cognitive states and processes and (b) control or executive aspects of metacognition" (Paris & Winograd, 1990: 17). To use terms that many readers may now be familiar with, I will refer to the former as metacognitive *knowledge* and the latter, metacognitive *strategy*. The emphasis on knowledge and strategies remains the cornerstone of a unified understanding of metacognition (Veenman, et al. 2006). Wenden (1998) noted that language learners' metacognitive knowledge can influence their plan and objectives for learning as well as how they choose to evaluate their learning outcomes. With respect to listening, we may say that learners who understand the processes of listening and believe they have the ability to reach their goals will be more ready to handle challenging listening tasks and set demanding goals for their listening development.

The fourth principle underpinning metacognitive instruction is the value of social and collaborative settings for learning. Although some metacognitive tasks require learners to work individually, there are many opportunities for them to cooperate with one another to share their knowledge, beliefs and skills in learning to listen. Metacognitive instruction places a high premium on the importance of talk among learners and their co-construction of knowledge as they work together evaluating and applying their knowledge and experiences. The tasks also create positive interdependence among learners, leading each learner to play an active role not only in their own learning but also in the learning of their peers (Jacobs, Power, & Loh 2002).

To sum up, the purpose of metacognitive instruction in listening is to help learners develop greater awareness about factors that influence their own listening and learning processes and learn strategies from their teachers and fellow learners for self-directing these processes. (For a more in-depth discussion of the theoretical basis for metacognitive instruction, see Goh, 2008)

Evidence from Research

Metacognitive instruction in listening has been shown to have several achievable goals, and is particularly beneficial to the weaker learners. First, it improves learner affect (confidence, motivation and interest) in listening. Second, it increases learners' knowledge about the listening process and themselves as second language listeners. Third, it improves listening performance and strategy use for facilitating comprehension. Vandergrift (2003a) provided empirical evidence of the benefits in his study on a group of French as second language learners. The research made use of a lesson sequence that combined

metacognitive awareness-raising activities with normal listening activities. The participants were guided in the use of listening strategies through a number of activities that included individual planning, pair-discussions and post-listening reflections. The learners reported that they were highly motivated by the approach and further examination showed an increase in the learners' metacognitive knowledge and engagement with learning to listen. Vandergrift (2003b) found that skilled listeners were "able to systematically orchestrate a cycle of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to arrive at a coherent mental representation of the text in memory" (p. 490).

The use of such closely guided tasks which Vandergrift referred to as the "metacognitive cycle" (2004), was partially replicated by Liu and Goh (2006) among a group of Chinese tertiary-level ESL students. In addition to experiencing the metacognitive cycle in the main listening activities, the learners also participated in teacher-led process-based discussions (Goh 1997) and self-directed listening tasks (Goh 2002). The participants reported that pair and group discussions had helped them to understand the content better and that they also learnt more strategies for tackling listening problems from working collaboratively with other students. Interestingly, positive written comments doubled after they experienced the integrated lesson sequence a second time, strongly suggesting that when the participants became more familiar with the new way of doing listening activities, they also became more convinced of its benefits.

Mareschal (2007) collected self-report data from a group of adult French learners who experienced a similar process-based, self-regulatory approach to listening instruction over nine weeks. The learners participated in a pedagogical cycle that involved writing down

their responses and discussing them with one another. All sources of data concurred in indicating that students of different proficiency levels were positive about the instructional approach and at the same time experienced an increase in their metacognitive awareness, strategy use, confidence and interest in listening. The learners who benefited most from such an approach were the low proficiency students. In an in-depth study on joint listening activities amongst Japanese EFL learners, Cross (2009) provided empirical evidence on the positive effects of collaborative dialogue on heightening learners' metacognitive awareness about L2 listening, and specifically in the learners' awareness about features of strategy, comprehension and text.

Metacognitive instruction can also benefit young learners. As children approach middle childhood and adolescence, they become increasingly adept at monitoring and evaluating their thinking, and acting strategically (Flavell, Miller, & Miller 1993). Vandergrift (2002) showed that when Grade 4 to 6 students completed reflection exercises, they became sensitized to listening processes and developed their metacognitive knowledge. Goh and Taib (2006) also found similar positive results among a group of 11 and 12 year old ESL learners who experienced listening lessons that combined guided reflection and teacher-led process-based discussions. At the end of the period of metacognitive instruction, the children reported in their diaries a deeper understanding of the nature and the demands of listening, increased confidence in completing listening tasks, and better strategic knowledge for coping with comprehension difficulties. There was also an increase in the scores in the listening examinations of the majority of the students, particularly the weaker listeners, suggesting that metacognitive instruction may have had an impact on listening performance. In another study among 10 and 11 year-olds, Nathan (2008) reported the

positive effects of collaborative learning during process-based listening activities. The learners showed an increase in their strategy knowledge with respect to planning and evaluation, and problem-solving.

The above studies showed the positive impact metacognitive instruction can have on learners' knowledge and affect. But can metacognitive instruction also lead to better listening performance? Two recent studies investigated whether there was a causal relationship between metacognitive instruction and actual listening performance, and the results are encouraging for anyone considering metacognitive instruction. Zeng (2007) conducted a randomized intervention study among 60 Chinese non-English major college EFL learners. Thirty students in the experimental group received training in the use of selected listening strategies and process-based listening activities (discussions and listening diaries). The instruction was incorporated into normal listening practice activities that the Chinese college students used when preparing for their national-level college listening examinations. At the end of seven weeks, this group of students showed a statistically significant improvement in their listening examination scores compared with the control group, which received the traditional, teacher-centred mode of listening instruction. Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (in press) investigated the effects of using a lesson sequence that incorporated a "metacognitive cycle" on the listening performance of a group of French learners. The experimental group which consisted of 60 learners not only reported a higher degree of metacognitive awareness than the control group, they also achieved significantly better results in their listening test.

Activities for Metacognitive Instruction

In this section, I present two types of activities to help learners engage with the process of listening. The first enables learners to experience cognitive and social-affective processes of listening comprehension while working on a listening-related task. I refer to this as *integrated experiential listening tasks*. In these tasks, metacognitive activities are integrated with normal listening activities in course books or prepared by their teachers. The second type directs learners' attention to specific aspects of their learning when they reflect on their listening performance and overall progress, and is referred to as *guided reflections on listening*. Figure 1 shows the different activities belonging to these two types of metacognitive instruction. Although there are some minor overlaps in some activities, the activities have been differentiated according to their primary instructional objectives and mode of delivery.

These metacognitive instructional activities can be woven into a lesson sequence during formal instruction time. Many of these can be adapted for use with prescribed published materials, to be included at key stages of a listening lesson sequence, i.e. pre-listening, post-listening and during listening. Others can be carried out as separate reflection or enrichment activities when learners do extensive listening with recorded or downloaded materials on their own.

Figure 1 Activities for metacognitive instruction in listening

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │    Activities for       │
                    │ metacognitive instruction│
                    │      in listening       │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                                │
              ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
    ┌───────────────────────┐          ┌───────────────────────┐
    │ Integrated Experiential│          │  Guided Reflections on │
    │    Listening Tasks     │          │      Listening         │
    └───────────────────────┘          └───────────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────┐
      │  Metacognitive   │                  │    Listening     │
      │    listening     │                  │     diaries      │
      │    sequence      │                  └──────────────────┘
      └──────────────────┘                  ┌──────────────────┐
      ┌──────────────────┐                  │   Anxiety and    │
      │   Self-directed  │                  │ motivation charts│
      │    listening     │                  └──────────────────┘
      └──────────────────┘                  ┌──────────────────┐
      ┌──────────────────┐                  │  Process-based   │
      │    Listening     │                  │   discussions    │
      │     buddies      │                  └──────────────────┘
      └──────────────────┘                  ┌──────────────────┐
      ┌──────────────────┐                  │   Self-report    │
      │  Peer designed   │                  │    checklists    │
      │    listening     │                  └──────────────────┘
      │   programmes     │
      └──────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────┐
      │  Post-listening  │
      │   perception     │
      │   activities     │
      └──────────────────┘
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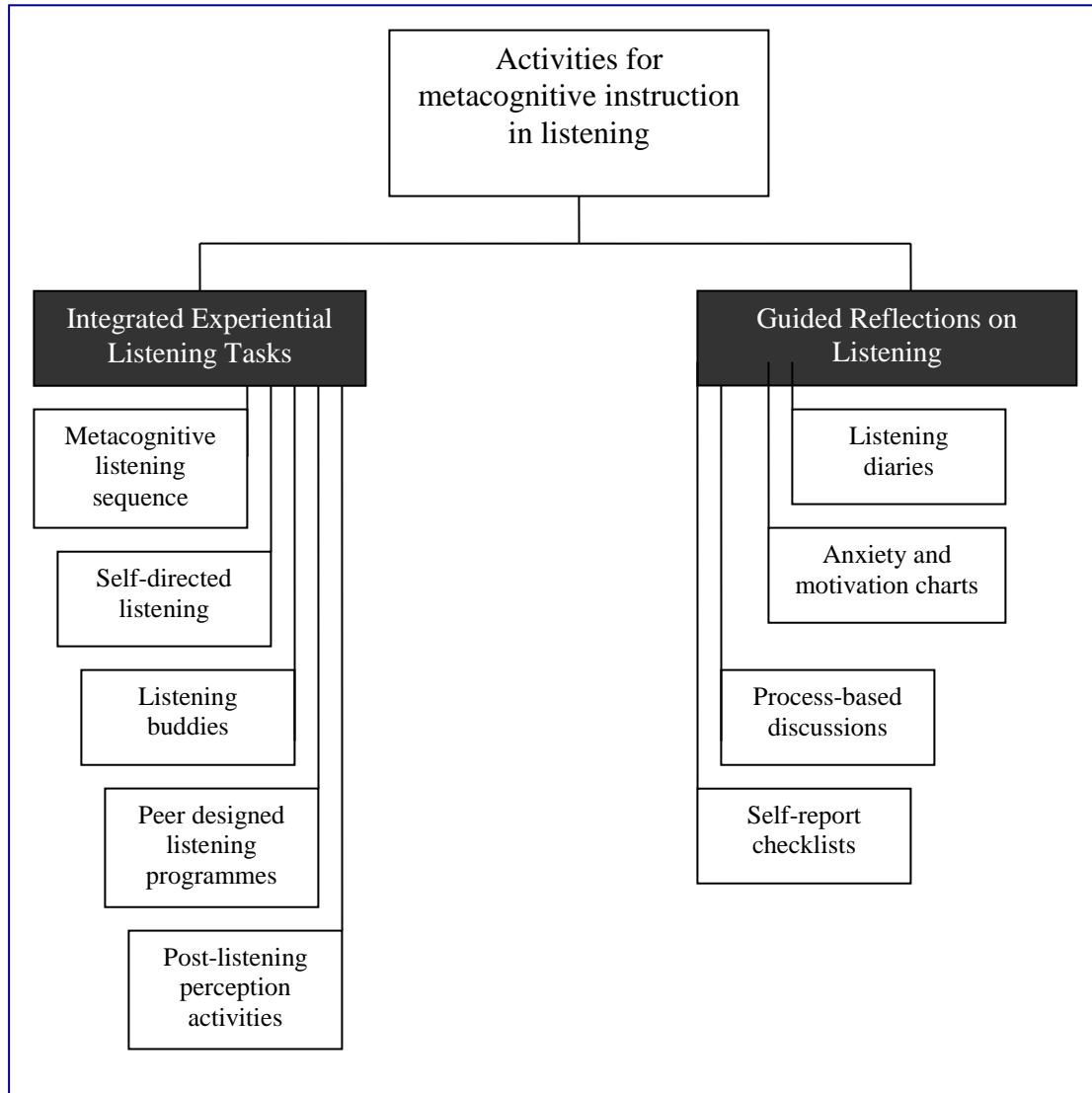
Integrated Experiential Listening Tasks

It is true that we cannot manipulate learners' mental processes while they are listening, but there are activities that develop and strengthen their ability to control these processes for themselves. The purpose of integrated experiential tasks is to help learners bring to their conscious attention what these processes are and show them how they can regulate and manage the processes better in order to meet comprehension goals. As the name suggests,

the activities are integrated with actual listening input and experience. This is done by weaving awareness-raising and strategy training tasks into listening lessons, listening practice and enrichment activities. As learners carry out these activities, they share their observations and comments with one another. Some activities also require learners to cooperate on small listening projects to produce tangible outcomes. The key characteristic of integrated experiential tasks is that they combine the teaching-of-listening-as-product approach with the metacognitive approach of teaching listening as process. In other words, learners are encouraged to arrive at an understanding of what they hear but are at the same time supported by activities which enable them to discover and use listening strategies as well as understand the nature of second language listening. Learners not only become more aware of themselves, the nature and demands of various listening tasks and effective strategy use, they are also explicitly socialised into the effective mental and social behaviours of skilled listeners. Research has shown that successful listeners use appropriate cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. In particular, skilled listeners use comparatively more metacognitive strategies for monitoring and evaluating their comprehension and they adopt an approach that orchestrates these processes effectively to achieve comprehension goals.

Metacognitive Listening Sequence

The metacognitive listening sequence creates a lesson where learners are guided at specific stages to orchestrate metacognitive processes underlying successful listening. It integrates awareness-raising activities with normal listening input and comprehension activities that learners do in class. Each sequence of lesson is aimed at teaching learners how to use listening strategies through teacher scaffolding and modelling, peer collaboration and

individual practice. This procedure is based on the integrated pedagogical model for teaching listening proposed by Vandergrift (2004, 2007). The model provides opportunities for learners to experience three verification phases of a text. In so doing, learners deepen their understanding of the content and become more familiar with the metacognitive processes involved. The model focuses on the use of the following metacognitive strategies: planning, predicting, monitoring, evaluation, directed attention, selective attention and problem solving. A key feature of Vandergrift's model is the structure it offers for guiding learners through collaborative learning activities. Learners who experience these activities may gradually increase their autonomy and control over their listening processes.

Vandergrift's model was adapted by Mareschal (2007) to include the use of specially designed listening note-books to support the learners' listening process during various listening stages. The purpose of the listening note-books is to offer learners visual support (in the form of notes) to aid their listening and memory during the listening exercises, and to provide a written record of some of the processes they engage in during listening. As a result, the learners will have tangible evidence of their listening process which can allow them to further reflect on and review the strategies they have used. Liu and Goh (2006) also adapted Vandergrift's (2004) model to include peer-dialogue in process-based discussions and personal evaluation at the reflection stage. Instead of writing goals for the next listening activity as proposed in the model (thus creating the beginning of a new cycle), students ended the sequence by evaluating the listening lesson and wrote about their perceptions of the task and views on insights gained from the discussions. They also evaluated the strategies they had used to understand the text.

Based on Vandergrift's model and its variations, I describe here a set of integrated sequence of lesson procedures that includes further planning activities and active modelling by teachers of some processes:

1. *Planning*: In pairs, students state what their goal is. They discuss what they know about the topic and predict the information and words/phrases that they might hear. They write these down in the target language as well as their first language. They also predict the difficulties they might encounter and select appropriate strategies for coping with these problems.

2. *Listening 1*: As they are listening to the text, students underline or circle words or phrases (including first language equivalents) that they have predicted correctly. They also write down new information they hear.

3. *Pair process-based discussion*: In pairs, students compare what they have understood so far and explain the strategies used for arriving at their understanding. They identify the parts that cause confusion and disagreement and make a note of the parts of the text that require special attention in the second listen. At the same time, the teacher models thinking aloud of how he/she would listen selectively to problematic parts of the text.

4. *Listening 2:* Students listen to those parts that have caused confusion or disagreement and make notes on any new information they hear.

5. *Whole-class process-based discussion*: The teacher leads a discussion to confirm comprehension before discussing with students the strategies that they reported using. Based on what is discussed, he/she models the use of a selected strategy or strategies for achieving comprehension goals.

6. *Listening 3*: Students who have not used strategies successfully in steps 2 and 4 can now practise the use of a strategy or a combination of strategies (modelled by the teacher) with the same input.

7. *Script-sound recognition*: Students are provided with a transcript of the recording so that they can match sounds to print and vice versa for difficult words or phrases. The teacher elicits these lexical items and demonstrates the pronunciation or phonological modifications found in the listening text.

8. *Personal reflection:* Students make short entries into their listening diaries about the lesson. They note down what they have learnt and understood from the listening text. They also reflect on the guided listening process, insights gained from the various discussions, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of strategies they used to understand the listening text.
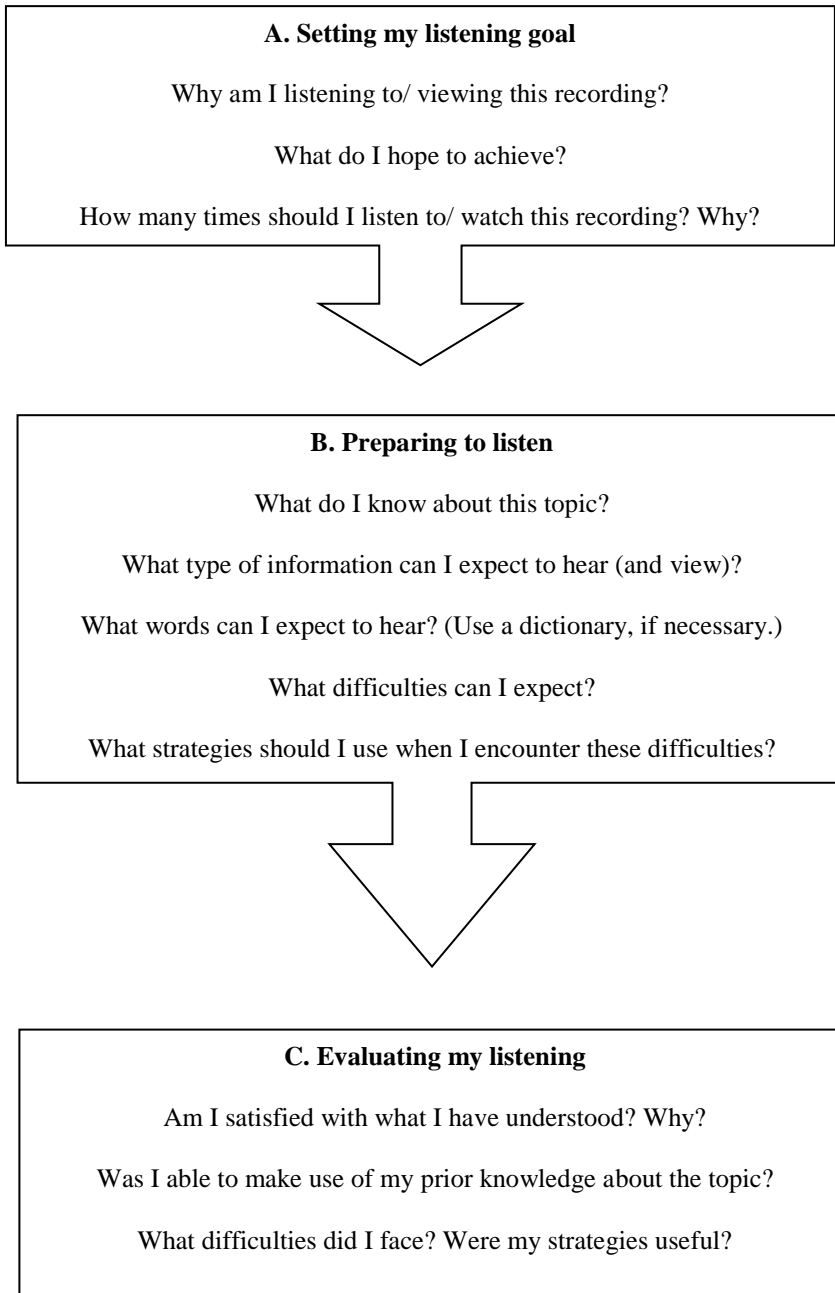
A distinguishing feature of this set of procedures is the availability of just-in-time input from teachers on strategy use and the opportunity to practise the use of all three types of strategies – cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective –after the learners have attempted to process the input on their own. It addresses a limitation noted by Chamot (1995) of strategy training programmes that do not take into consideration learners' existing strategy knowledge. As some listening strategies are transferable from first language to second language use (Mendelsohn 1995), learners may not see the need to undergo strategy training. However, when learners are actually listening to different kinds of input, they may experience difficulties in employing strategies, or may fail to achieve their comprehension goals in spite of using certain familiar strategies. The just-in-time strategies modelled by teachers will help learners to explore strategy use in a contextualised manner. For learners

who fail to use appropriate strategies in earlier attempts, they will get another opportunity to practise using these strategies.

Self-Directed Listening

This technique can be used to help learners use listening strategies when they are practising listening on their own. Students respond to a set of prompts before and after a listening task to guide them in their pre-listening preparation, evaluating their performance and planning their strategy use for future listening (see figure 2). The self-directed listening/ viewing guide is based on the three key components of self-regulation: planning, monitoring and evaluation. An appropriate time to carry out self-directed listening is after the students have received some prior instruction on listening strategies through one of the techniques suggested in this chapter. Liu and Goh (2006) found that when students were asked to direct their own listening after they knew something about strategy use, their independent use of cognitive strategies, particularly inferencing strategies and contextualisation strategies, increased substantially. Learners also reported using confidence-building strategies to overcome anxiety, think positively and motivate themselves to persist with their listening tasks even though the tasks were challenging. To help learners experience the full benefits of the directed-listening/ viewing guide, it may be necessary for the teacher to first model how to use the list of prompts, as Tan (2007) did with her Vietnamese EFL learners, to show them how to self-regulate their listening practice when using web-based resources. She also found that the students demonstrated a significantly higher degree of metacognitive awareness in planning/ evaluation and problem solving.

Figure 2 A self-directed listening/ viewing guide

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 A. Setting my listening goal                 │
│                                                               │
│           Why am I listening to/ viewing this recording?      │
│                                                               │
│                 What do I hope to achieve?                    │
│                                                               │
│     How many times should I listen to/ watch this recording? Why? │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                     B. Preparing to listen                    │
│                                                               │
│               What do I know about this topic?                │
│                                                               │
│      What type of information can I expect to hear (and view)? │
│                                                               │
│    What words can I expect to hear? (Use a dictionary, if necessary.) │
│                                                               │
│                 What difficulties can I expect?               │
│                                                               │
│   What strategies should I use when I encounter these difficulties? │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  C. Evaluating my listening                   │
│                                                               │
│          Am I satisfied with what I have understood? Why?     │
│                                                               │
│     Was I able to make use of my prior knowledge about the topic? │
│                                                               │
│       What difficulties did I face? Were my strategies useful? │
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Listening Buddies

This activity has some similarities with self-directed listening/ viewing in that it encourages learners to carry out guided listening practice. The difference is that learners now work in pairs or with a 'buddy' to plan their own listening practice by selecting from their choice of resources: radio/TV broadcasts, videos and movies, podcasts and 'live' talks. They are advised to spend 45 – 60 minutes each time for each session. Here is a simple procedure they follow:

1. Discuss and submit a listening plan outlining schedules, selected listening/ viewing programmes, equipment (e.g. MP3 player, computer) and strategies for comprehension.

2. Report two listening events each week on a weekly worksheet in writing or as oral summaries in class.

This activity may be carried out fortnightly or monthly depending on the programme and learner needs. Figure 3 outlines the structure for their personalised listening programme. Apart from the benefits of improving strategy use and metacognitive knowledge, students also learn to work cooperatively to select programmes and ways of practice that suit their interests and learning styles. Because of the freedom of choice, this activity can motivate many learners to carry out extensive listening outside class. By working with a partner, they can also get mutual support and encouragement.

Figure 3 Outline for a personalised listening programme for listening buddies

Our Personal Listening Programme

Listening buddies: _____ and _____

Week _____

(Write your responses on separate sheets of paper)

Session 1

Listening material: _____

Type of text::

Source:

Equipment:

Date:

Time:

Other considerations, if any:

Our Listening Goal

1. Why are we listening to/ viewing this recording?

2. What do we hope to achieve?

3. How many times should we listen to/ watch this recording? Why?

Our Listening Plan

1. What do we know about this topic?

2. What type of information can we expect to hear (and see)?

3. What words can we expect to hear? (*Use a dictionary, if necessary.*)

4. What difficulties can we expect?

5. What strategies should we use when we encounter these difficulties?

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Our Listening Report                                         │
│                                                              │
│    1.  Why did we choose this recording/ listening text?     │
│                                                              │
│    2.  What was the most interesting thing about it?         │
│                                                              │
│    3.  Are we satisfied with what we have understood? Why?   │
│                                                              │
│    4.  Were we able to make use of our prior knowledge about the topic? │
│                                                              │
│    5.  What difficulties did we face? Were our strategies useful? │
│                                                              │
│    6.  What did we discuss after our listening?              │
│                                                              │
│    7.  What did we agree or disagree about?                  │
│                                                              │
│    8.  What have we learnt from each other about listening?  │
│                                                              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Peer-Designed Listening Tasks

The idea of a group listening project which has a metacognitive dimension was introduced by Liu (2005) in an intensive English programme for Chinese ESL learners in Singapore. Here is an outline of the procedure:

1. Students must work in groups of four to develop or select an 8 to 10 minute audio or video programme.

2. They plan listening activities for the whole class based on the programme. They have to make a number of important decisions such as the kinds of listening material to use, the types of listening skill they want their classmates to practise, strategies for motivating them to listen and participate, and the problems that they might encounter.

By temporarily taking on the role of a teacher, the learners can develop greater collective metacognitive knowledge about second/ foreign language listening. More importantly, according to Liu (2005), the presentation of the projects can give teachers valuable insights into what learners understand about listening comprehension, and that "listening is more than receiving information and completing exercises" (p. 74).

Post-Listening Perception Activities

Language learners often complain that native speakers speak too fast. Most of the time, this perception of speed is really due to the students' inability to recognise words and phonological modifications in streams of speech. Bottom-up processing which involves perception of words and lexical segmentation is an important factor in successful listening, and it is something that all listening lessons should address (Field 2003). A common technique used in the 60's which is still found in some classrooms today is the use of minimal-pair drills or sentence-level perception exercises. These activities, however, can be decontextualised, dry and repetitive.

To make learning relevant to learners' needs, perception activities are best done after they have completed some listening tasks involving a selected text. Post-listening perception activities enable your students to notice sounds in connected speech when they are not under pressure to process what they hear and bearing a heavy cognitive load. One of my former ESL students from China did not recognise the word "hostel" in her listening text. When we carried out the post-listening perception activity, she realised that it was a word she actually knew and that she had not recognised it because of the way she pronounced 'hostel' with the same word stress pattern as 'hotel'. By noticing sounds and phonological rules, learners will increase their task knowledge, viz. the nature of spoken English and the demands of listening in another language. This knowledge is particularly important for beginning learners because the perception phase of their comprehension has not been automatised and many still depend largely on bottom-up processing as a way of 'getting into' the message. Through repeated exposure to unfamiliar sounds and noticing how some

sounds are changed in speech, they will learn to cope better with these phonological features and improve their perceptual processing.

Features that learners should familiarise themselves with are weak forms, rhythm, word stress, prominence, tone, pauses and meaning segments. Here are some steps to follow to increase learners' awareness about phonological factors:

1) Select a segment of a recording that your students work with during the listening task. If the text is very short, use the entire text.

2) Identify one or two phonological features that you want to highlight. (This may have to be modified during class depending on the type of problems your students report with their listening.)

3) Play the segment and ask the students to transcribe it or write down prominent words they hear.

4) Give each student a copy of the transcript or project it on a screen. Highlight phonological features that contributed to listening difficulties.

5) Allow students to listen to the segment a few times, pointing out the way particular sounds or words have been modified in the utterances. Another alternative technique is to let your students listen to the entire recording with a transcript. Tell them to notice how certain words are pronounced and listen out for those parts that they cannot hear accurately during the task. Ask them to explain why they have the problem. (It is useful to teach students names of the feature, e.g. word stress, rise tone etc.)

Guided Reflections on Listening

Activities that involve guided reflections encourage learners to attend to implicit processes in listening and help them make their knowledge of listening explicit. They also encourage learners to co-construct some of this knowledge when they share their reflections with one another. There are limitations, however. Learners may find it monotonous if they have to do the same reflection task each week. To help maintain the relevance of reflective tasks, we can vary the reflection guides and the way they are used during the listening course. By doing this we ensure that learners' insights are fresh, focused and relevant. Guided reflections are not necessarily retrospective. They can also encourage forward planning, which is an important part of self-regulation and management of learning. It involves thinking back to learning that has taken place and thinking ahead to how learning can be facilitated. The set of materials presented here can be used at different points of the language course - at the start, during mid-term review and at the end - or used regularly with some variations.

a) Listening Diaries

Listening diaries have been used successfully in helping learners attend to what they implicitly know about their own listening abilities, behaviours, problems and strengths (Goh, 1997; Liu 2005; Sinanu et al. 2007). There are different ways in which learners can reflect about their learning in their diaries. They can respond to a set of generic prompts (see figure 4, a), evaluate specific listening skills they are taught each week or biweekly (see figure 4, b) or write about some specific points about the lesson immediately when it is over (see figure 4, c). All these templates have one thing in common – the guiding questions direct learners' attention to three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge.

Learners are invited to reflect on specific listening events: person knowledge (what problems did I experience, how I responded to the task), task knowledge (what were the demands of the task) and strategy knowledge (what special ways of listening did I do to help me understand, which strategies were useful/ not useful? How can I improve my comprehension when I have to listen again in similar situations or to similar kinds of text?)

Figure 4   Variations in focus and prompts of listening diaries

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a) Focus: Weekly listening activities in and out of class

1. What was the listening event? (for example, TV news broadcasts, radio broadcasts, films, conversations with English speakers, explanations by lecturers.)

2. How much of it did you understand?

3. What did you do to understand as much of it as possible?

4. How did you feel about what you did?

5. Are you pleased with the result?

6. What do you plan to do to practise your listening this week?

(based on Goh, 2002)

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b) Focus: Specific lessons in a fortnight

(i) *Performance on skills.*

Complete the table by using the symbols[1] provided.

√ = Yes, I feel I have learnt the skill (Alternative: ☺ ☺ ☺)

x = No, I have not learnt the skill very well (Alternative: ☺)

? = Not sure, I am not sure I have learnt the skill (Alternative: ☺)

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[1] This can be used with small children by using smiley icons and simplifying the way skills are described.

Skills for Weeks 1 & 2	My performance
Asking for repetition and explanation/clarification	
Listening for descriptions of past events	
Recognizing words of time order	
Distinguishing styles of requests	
Listening for positive and negative opinions	
Inferring speakers' attitude from their tone of voice	

(ii) Specific questions for weeks 1 and 2[2]

1. Describe your previous experiences in learning to listen.

2. Do you think the lessons you've had so far are helpful? Compare them with your previous experiences.

(based on Liu, 2005)

c) **Focus: Weekly listening lessons in class**

You will be given 10 minutes at the end of the class to write about:

1. The listening comprehension activities done in each class

2. Your feelings towards the class today and what makes you feel that way

3. The problems encountered

4. Your plans to overcome similar problems in future

(based on Sinanu et al., 2007)

Another mode of open-ended reflections is the spoken word – learners can talk aloud and record their speech instead of writing about their thoughts.

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[2] The question(s) are changed every fortnight.

Anxiety and Motivation Charts

Besides responding to the mainly task- and strategy-focused prompts, you can also get learners to reflect on specific aspects of their person knowledge, such as motivation and anxiety. Research has shown that anxiety can be a great set-back for many second language listeners (Arnold 2000; Lynch 1997; Vogely 1999) and that motivation is also positively correlated with metacognitive awareness about listening (Vandergrift 2005). One way in which language learners have been asked to report on their perceived motivation and anxiety levels is through the drawing of graphs and charts. Diagrams are not only a creative way for learners to reflect and report their person knowledge, but they can also present information in a concise and visually attractive manner for learners who may not enjoy writing. See figure 5 for an example of a listening anxiety graph, which offers a way by which learners can track their changes in anxiety levels according to type of listening tasks they do in and out of class. To help children explore their feelings of anxiety, you can also use symbols such as smiley faces which they can attach to a chart.

Figure 5: A listening anxiety graph and a record of listening events
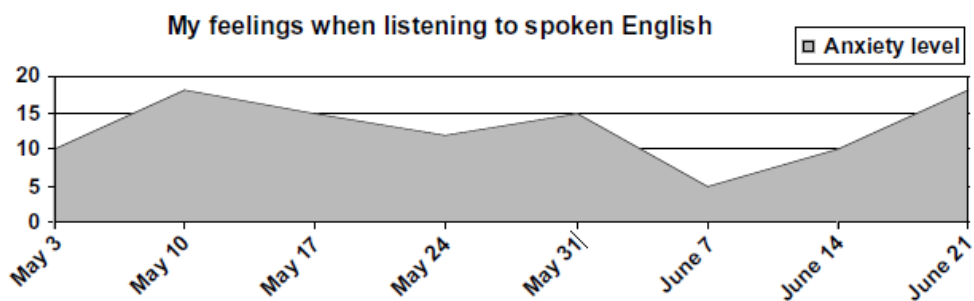
Date	What I did
3 May	*Watched a movie in class*
10 May	*Made a telephone call to the department secretary*
17 May	*Listened to a lecture and took notes in class*
24 May	*Discussed a listening plan with my listening buddy*
31 May	*Listened to a lecture and took notes in class*
7 June	*Had a long chat in the café with classmates*
14 June	*Did a creative dictation activity in class*
21 June	*Mid-term listening and note-taking exam*

Process-Based Discussions

Process-based discussions are discussions that are centred on the theme of learning to listen in another language rather than on the listening text and accurate answers for listening tasks (Goh 1997). These discussions can be conducted as separate lessons where learners can share the beliefs or strategies that they mention in their diaries or other post-listening activities. For the former, teachers can use specific discussion questions, such as "What I do to understand spoken English" and "How I practise my listening outside class." When conducted as post-listening activities, the focus can be on specific strategies that the students used during the listening task. One way to do this is to include a short time for individual reflection before the group or class discussion, as Goh & Taib (2006) did in their intervention study with primary school English language learners.

Process-based discussions can also be carried out at the pre-listening phase to generate task and strategy knowledge relevant to the particular listening activity. For example, after

learners have completed a short pre-listening activity based on the contents in the listening materials, you can ask them to identify skills and strategies that are essential for the task they are about to do. In addition, you can guide them in predicting challenges they might face and suggesting ways of dealing with them. You can also explain the reasons for the content-specific pre-listening activities you have used. This can help learners notice the planning strategy that you have incorporated into the listening task for them. Some of the prompts presented for self-directed listening can be used for group discussion.

Self-Report Checklists

A limitation of using open ended reflection guides such as listening diaries is that some learners may not have learnt to observe their learning beyond one or two familiar perspectives. As a result of their limited metacognitive knowledge, the scope of their reflection can be narrow and their comments repetitive. This is where self-report checklists play an important complementary role in guided reflections. A list of carefully pre-selected items of metacognitive knowledge is a handy tool for directing learners' thinking to specific areas of listening. They can be used for a number of purposes, such as general self-appraisal of listening or focused reflection on specific listening tasks, and are equally useful to adult and young learners.

A set of checklists that has been used both for research and classroom teaching is the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire or MALQ for short (see Vandergrift et al. 2006). From a research perspective, it in an instrument with psychometric properties uncovering perceived use of strategies during listening. As a teaching tool, it can be used as a yardstick for learner self-appraisal to identify current levels of metacognitive awareness and strategy use, or to chart metacognitive development when used at specific points in a

listening programme. The MALQ can also be used as an awareness-raising tool to influence learners' strategy use in listening. This 21-item questionnaire comprises five distinct factors related to the four listening strategies - planning and evaluation, problem-solving, mental translation and directed attention - and person knowledge. Learners can respond to the items by selecting a point in the likert scale. (See Goh 2008 for an adapted classroom version of the MALQ.)

It is important to keep checklists relatively simple and short, especially when they are aimed at younger learners. Although having a relatively short checklist may mean that not every item you think is important can be included, it will make the checklist easy to read and respond to. (Some learners may lose interest when they find they have a lot to read!) To allow learners space to include other observations, you can complement checklists with other open-ended reflection activities discussed in this section. Figure 6 shows items that can be included in post-listening evaluation checklists suitable to be used even with young learners.

Figure 6 Post-listening evaluation checklist

Thinking about what you did during your listening lesson

You have just finished doing a listening comprehension activity. Read the statements below and think about how you listened. Draw a smiley face next to the statements to show what you think

Yes ☺   No ☹   Only a little 😐

a) Listening to my teacher or a recording

1. Before I began listening, my teacher told me what the listening text was going to be about.

That helped me to

- guess what I am going to hear _____

- listen out for the important words _____

- understand the meaning of the text better _____

2. While I was listening, I paid very close attention to the passage _____

3 When I couldn't hear clearly, I wanted to ask my teacher to

- repeat part(s) of the passage _____

- speak more slowly _____

- to explain the word(s) I didn't understand _____

b) Listening to my classmates

1. Before we started the speaking-listening activity, I knew what we had to talk about

That helped me to

- guess what I am going to hear _____

- listen out for the important words _____

- understand my classmate's meaning better _____

2. While I was listening, I paid very close attention to what my classmates were saying ____

3. When I couldn't hear clearly, I asked my classmates to

- repeat part(s) of the passage _____

- speak more slowly _____

- to explain the word(s) I didn't understand _____

My reflection notes:

Principled Design of Metacognitive Instructional Materials

The purpose of metacognitive instruction is to provide different kinds of scaffolding so that learners can experience the processes of listening and become aware of factors that influence overall comprehension and listening development. It is important to apply a sound cognitive framework for learning to ensure that activities and materials are designed systematically and in a principled manner. Without a metacognitive framework, process-based listening instruction will at best be intuitive. The framework I have proposed identifies key components of self-appraisal and self-regulation in learning, and when applied to learning materials can help students attend to selected aspects of learning each time. Careful planning and design of materials will ensure that all important aspects of learning are covered. The key items of metacognitive knowledge and strategies are summarised in Figure 7, which also gives examples of prompts that can be used in both integrated experiential tasks and guided reflections on listening.

Figure 7 Prompts for raising metacognitive awareness in listening

	Examples of Prompts
Metacognitive Knowledge (Self-Appraisal)	*Person knowledge* What listening problems do I commonly face? What are my strengths when listening to spoken English? Do I think I'm a good listener? Why do I say that?
	Task knowledge What makes listening to a lecture/ conversations difficult? What must I do when trying to understand someone who speaks fast? I did an activity today before listening to the passage. What does it tell me about listening?

	Strategy knowledge
	What are some good strategies I can use when watching a movie in English?
	What strategies do I need when making a telephone call?
Metacognitive Strategies (Self-Regulation)	*Planning*
	What do I plan to do to improve my listening comprehension this term?
	I am going to listen to a lecture on climate change. What should I do to help me understand the explanations given?
	Monitoring
	Does what I hear match my knowledge of the topic or the person?
	Am I making progress in my listening? What are some setbacks I'm facing right now?
	Evaluating
	I used some strategies to help me understand the listening passage. Are they useful? Should I use them again?
	Are my goals for developing listening this term realistic?

Conclusion

Metacognitive instruction in listening has produced many encouraging results. Not only is increase in confidence, motivation and interest consistently reported among learners who have experienced this process-based approach, recent studies have also provided preliminary evidence of its positive effects on improving listening performance. Clearly, more needs to be done by way of research to strengthen the current findings. Nevertheless, verbal reports from participants involved in process-based learning of listening demonstrated the enormous benefits they had derived from it. Informal interviews I conducted with teachers also showed a high level of interest amongst them. Before they

learnt about metacognitive instruction, these teachers had been delivering the lessons in much the same way as the scenario I described at the start of this article. Many were encouraged by the way their students had responded to the metacognitive activities they used and were themselves motivated to continue to teach this way, as a result. As one teacher put it, "I never knew there was so much more to teaching listening." Many of them also saw the output of the various metacognitive activities as important materials that students can include in their learning portfolios, or more specifically, listening portfolios. Buck (1995) notes that it is not possible for teachers to manipulate learners' listening processes for them. He adds, however, that teachers can facilitate learners' listening development if we understand the nature of listening comprehension and can sensitize learners to important aspects of it, while at the same time provide them with 'optimum' practice. In this chapter I have tried to make a case for metacognitive instruction as a theoretically sound and workable method that can contribute to the type of optimum listening practice that all language teachers aim for.

Discussion Questions & Tasks

Reflection

1. What do you think is the difference between teaching listening and testing listening?

2. Refer to the examples given in the table on metacognitive knowledge about second language listening. What other examples can you add to each types of knowledge: person, task and strategy?

3. Listen to a piece of spoken text in a language you are not very familiar with. Describe in writing some of the problems that you face. Compare your notes with another person and suggest what you can do to improve your listening in that language.

4. What do you think are some challenges to using process-based materials as suggested in this chapter? Suggest some possible ways of addressing these challenges.

Evaluation

5. Select three metacognitive listening tasks suggested in the chapter. Discuss their relative strengths and limitations when applied to a group of learners of your choice.

Adaptation/Design

6. Select a listening activity from a published course book. Using one of the integrated experiential listening tasks, plan a lesson (or a series of lessons) to improve learners' metacognitive knowledge and/or strategy use.

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