

IMPROVING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL USING METACOGNITIVE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract. This study is aimed to describe the implementation of metacognitive instruction and to improve students' listening ability on TOEFL listening comprehension section by using metacognitive instruction at the second semester students of English Education Department of Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang in the academic year of 2015/2016 and to know the enhancement of students' listening ability on TOEFL listening comprehension section after being taught using metacognitive instruction. The design of this study is classroom action research that was conducted in two cycles with four activities in each cycle, they are planning, acting, observing, reflecting. Pre-cycle was also done before this study was conducted. The result of this study showed that using metacognitive instruction could improve students' listening ability on TOEFL listening comprehension section. This was proved by the enhancement of students' test result that improved in every cycle. The result of the study also showed that metacognitive instruction could improve the students' listening ability on TOEFL listening comprehension section.

Keyword: Metacognitive Instruction, Metacognitive Strategy and Listening Skill

INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the obligatory courses taken by English Education Department students in all universities. It is a skill they have to acquire due to its important role both in academic and in real-life communication context. In academic context, this skill is really necessary for them since English is used as the instructional language in their class. Learning references they use are also mostly in English.

Meanwhile, in real-life communication context, the most important role of this skill is to help them communicate appropriately with the other people for various purposes and contexts. Because, communicating is not only about being able to speak fluently but also to understand what the others say. They should be able to do their role both as a speaker and a listener.

As listeners, students need to process the spoken text they listen to quickly and appropriately. They should be able to use not only the linguistic information available in the utterance but also the non-linguistic one to support their comprehension. By doing so they can be easier to recognize the words and understand the meaning.

In this research, the researcher used TOEFL listening comprehension section as the main material and the assessment of the students' listening skill. In Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang where the researcher conducted this research, TOEFL is an obligatory test that must be taken before doing comprehension and thesis examination. It is also a material taught in the intermediate listening course taken by the second semester students of English Education Department.

Unfortunately, based on the researcher's experience of learning TOEFL listening comprehension section when she took this course, there were many English Education Department students who still had difficulty in understanding the spoken English on this section. The result of her analysis on the second semester students of this department in the academic year of 2015/2016 before conducting this research also found the same problems. It can be seen from the result of the given questionnaire that 81% of students who became the subject of this research considered listening as the most difficult language skills compared to the others. The result also revealed that they often faced some difficulties when they listened to the spoken text. The extent of the difficulties based on the number of students who answered "Yes" to each questionnaire item ranging from the least to the most problematic one was 50% of them felt difficult to make a mental representation in their mind, 69% of them felt difficult to recognize the words they actually knew, 75% of them felt difficult to understand the implied meaning of the speaker's utterance, 81% of

them didn't understand what the speaker said in the audio because he/she spoke so fast, and 89% of them often missed the next part of the text because of thinking about the meaning of the previous word they heard. All these problems made many students have less motivation to learn listening course. Moreover, their lack of awareness to practice more out of the classroom and to evaluate their learning development also affect their listening skill since repetition is important in language learning (Harmer, 2007, p. 57).

The problems that had been explained above became the background of this research. As a response to these problems, the researcher implemented Larry Vandergrift's metacognitive instruction in the intermediate listening class of the 2nd semester students of English education department at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang. The purpose of this instruction was to improve the students' listening skill on TOEFL listening comprehension section. According to Larry Vandergrift, metacognitive instruction is pedagogical procedures that enable students to increase their awareness toward listening process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the demands of listening task, and about the use of strategies for listening. It is an approach to listening instruction that explicitly elicits and enhances students' knowledge about learning to listen, as well as teaching effective strategies for comprehending the spoken text and managing their overall listening development (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 13).

Metacognitive strategy is the main strategy used in this instruction to guide the students to listen to the spoken text on TOEFL listening comprehension section. This strategy includes planning, predicting, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 97). This strategy encourages students to think about their learning process, to plan for their listening, to monitor their comprehension and to do self-evaluation after the activity ends. After being involved in this instruction, they could become self-knowing, self-directed, and self-managed in their listening process.

LISTENING

Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary defines skill as a mental or physical capacity, power, or ability to do something well. So, the student's listening skill can be defined as their ability to comprehend spoken input well. A listener's skill to comprehend listening materials and to accomplish the tasks is not only supported by his knowledge on English, but also by the ways he processes the spoken text he heard, so called strategies, and the ways he uses the result to complete the task.

In this research, the researcher intended to improve the students' skill in listening for specific details, for main ideas and gist's, as well as for making inferences and deductions to understand the speaker's utterance. By improving them, they would be able to understand the implied and the stated meaning of the speaker's utterance in TOEFL listening comprehension section.

TOEFL Listening Comprehension Section is taught in the intermediate listening course of English education department students at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang. It is an important material that they should learn well for passing the course and passing the TOEFL test that becomes a requirement to register for comprehension examination. In addition, TOEFL score is also one of requirements for taking master and doctoral degree both in many universities in Indonesia and overseas. It is also really necessary for those who want to participate in short course or student exchange program to the other countries and to apply for scholarship or even for a job (Riayanto, 2007, p 2). Thus, it is important for them to understand and to be familiar with kinds of text, typical questions, necessary information, strategies and other materials used in TOEFL listening comprehension part A, B, and C.

TOEFL Listening Part A contains short conversation between two people followed by a question. It is aimed to know the students' ability in understanding conversations on common everyday topics that occur in most public places and to measure how well they may be able to function in the daily life of English speaking country (Hinkel, 2005, p. 19).

For TOEFL Listening Comprehension Part B, there are two long conversations followed by a number of questions. The topic of the

conversation is often about school life, general living, or about topics currently in US news (Phillips, 2004, p. 30). Meanwhile, part C consists of three talks or monologues talking about university orientation sessions for new students, description of course, assignments, examinations, and shortened lectures in order to know students' ability in comprehending oral academic presentations (Hinkel, 2005, p. 33).

The definition of metacognitive instruction used in this research is pedagogical procedures that enable students to increase their awareness toward listening process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the demands of listening task, and strategies for listening" (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 37). It is a listening instruction that explicitly elicits and enhances students' knowledge about learning how to listen as well as teaching them some strategies for supporting their comprehension and overall development of their listening skill. Metacognition itself is defined as "our ability to think about our own thinking, by extension, to think about how we process information for a range of purposes and manage the way we do it" (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 84). Students with high metacognitive awareness will become self-knowing, self-directed, and self-managed in their learning that can lead them to be a better listener. Yang (2009) supports the idea that teaching the role of metacognition in English listening helps students to approach their listening task more effectively (as cited in Coskun, 2010, p. 36).

The purpose of implementing metacognitive instruction in this research was to improve students' listening skill on TOEFL listening comprehension section. In this instruction, students were prompted to use metacognitive strategies to regulate their mental processes during listening activity and to achieve successful comprehension. Besides using metacognitive strategy, this instruction also made use of the advantage of pair work and class discussion. It is supported by Steven Brown and Dorolyn Smith who said that listening in pair will make students help each other by pointing out what they understood rather than worrying about what they missed (Brown and Smith, 2007, p. 1).

Larry Vandergrift and Cristine C.M. Goh also explained that students store three kinds of knowledge about their cognition: person,

task, and strategy knowledge (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 86). First, person knowledge includes what students know about themselves as listeners and the beliefs they have about what leads them to success or failure in comprehending listening materials (Murray and Christison, 2001, p. 175). Second, it is task knowledge, It is the knowledge about the purpose and demands of the listening task including knowing how to approach and to complete it. The last is strategy knowledge. It is students' knowledge about strategies that can be used to accomplish a specific goal. It includes the awareness of when and how to use specific strategies to achieve comprehension goals. All this knowledge was improved through some stages of metacognitive instruction.

These are the stages of metacognitive instruction (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 110-111):

1. Planning/predicting stage

Students are guided and encouraged to discuss the topics, contexts, structures, expressions, vocabularies, types of questions and the necessary information that are usually used in TOEFL listening comprehension section. Then, they discuss how they are going to listen and what strategy they are going to use to get the information they need. Then, they preview the available multiple choices on the worksheet to predict the possible question, the needed information, to plan for which parts of the text they need to pay attention to.

They write down their prediction and planning in the form of metacognitive instruction stages. Gradually, the role of lecturer will be relinquished, start from leading to brainstorm the prediction with the whole class, let the students discuss it in pairs, then get them predict and plan for their listening on their own.

2. First Listen - First Verification Stage

The goal of the first verification phase is to compare new information they get from the first listen and what they have understood so far to their pair. Then, they explain the strategies used for arriving at their comprehension and determine whether it is working or not. They also identify the parts that cause confusion or the necessary information they haven't got in the first listening.

A further goal of this stage is to set the students up for the second listen. They prepare themselves to monitor their listening processes more carefully during the second listen, to determine the parts of the text that need most careful attention and to use more appropriate strategy to get the necessary information.

3. Second Listen - Second Verification Stage

After the second listen, students begin revising and adding new information to their notes, as required. Once students have updated their understanding of the text, the lecturer leads a class discussion to reconstruct the main points and most salient details of the text that become the correct answer of the questions and to share the appropriate strategies they have successfully used to get those information.

4. Third Listen - Final Verification Stage

The final verification stage begins with the third listen while looking at the text transcription given by the lecturer. It allows students to listen for information that they may not have understood earlier. The lecturer may introduce all or parts of the text transcript so that learners can follow along for the purpose of verifying sound–symbol relationships and recognizing the spoken words. The unfamiliar words or idioms are also discussed in this stage.

5. Reflection and Goal-Setting Stage

During the last stage of this instruction, the lecturer encourages students to evaluate the difficulties they confronted, their strategy use in this activity, and how they were or were not successful in coping with these difficulties. After that, they set plans for what they need to do to avoid themselves from the same problems and to improve their ability to comprehend the text in the next meeting.

Each of the stages helps and leads the students to be a better listener as described in the following explanation:

1. In metacognitive instruction, students are required to activate their background knowledge related to the common topics, vocabularies, expressions, structures, and types of questions on TOEFL listening comprehension every time they do planning and

- predicting stage. It can prepare their mind before starting to listen to the audio and can make them easier to recall the information they need to comprehend what the speaker says in the audio.
2. In the second up to the third stage, they are required to monitor their comprehension, to identify their difficulty, and to solve it together with their pair. They are encouraged to determine what kind of information they need to understand for answering the questions on TOEFL listening part A, B, and C and to choose a certain strategy which is effective to get that information. This process can make the students know more about the demand of the task, whether it demands them to listen for detailed information, for main idea, or for the gist of the speaker's utterance. It can also make them pay attention more on the process they do when they listen to the audio and to be selectively implement a strategy that can help them get a better understanding on the audio.
 3. Then in the last stage of this instruction, students are required to reflect on what they had done during the listening activity and to set a plan for the next listening session. It can make the students know more about themselves as a listener because they are always encouraged to evaluate the development of their listening skill as well as the problem they frequently face. By knowing that, they will know what aspects they need to improve or what material they need to learn more in order to make their listening skill better.

METHODS

This research was classroom action research on the use of metacognitive instruction in teaching TOEFL listening comprehension section. Its purpose was to improve the students' listening skill on this listening section, especially the second semester students of English Education Department at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang in the academic year of 2015/2016. In this research, the researcher did a pre-cycle followed by two cycles.

Before conducting this research, the researcher did pre-cycle on Monday, 14 March 2016. It was conducted in PBI 2B of Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang. The number of students in this class was 31, three of them were absent. In this pre-cycle, the researcher

observed teaching learning process done by the lecturer. In the end of the class the researcher gave a pre-test to know their listening skill on TOEFL listening comprehension section and gave a questionnaire to know listening difficulties they usually faced, especially on TOEFL listening comprehension section.

After checking and analyzing the answers of the students to the given pre-test, the researcher got the average score of the students which was 55. It was lower than the criterion that has been stipulated by KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/ Minimum Passing Grade Criteria) which is 70.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the students' pre-test score analysis showed that most of them tended to choose the answers containing the words used by the speaker in the audio of TOEFL listening comprehension part A. They were mostly tricked by multiple-choice items containing vocabularies, sounds, and types of sentence which had the closest similarity to what they heard. It can be seen from the most incorrect answers they gave to the question number 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10. In question number 1, 4, and 5 that contained negative, double negative and almost negative expression, 72% of them chose the multiple-choice item that had a negative expression too instead of choosing the restatement form of what was stated by the speaker. 72% of them also did the same thing when they answered question number 6, 8 and 9. These questions contained the expression of agreement, the emphatic expression of surprise and wish. They didn't pay careful attention to the intended meaning of these expressions. In addition, 72% of them could not understand the meaning of idiom used by the speaker. On the analysis of the students' answers in Part B and C showed a better result. It showed that 50% to 90% of them could successfully get the detail information needed to answer the questions.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that the students' skill to understand the spoken text in TOEFL listening comprehension part A was still less than that in part B and C. Because, the listening questions in Part A required them to carefully understand the implied meaning of what the speakers said and to find the correct restatement

of it. They should not be influenced by the vocabularies, sounds, and structures which were similar to what the speaker used in the conversation. Instead, they must be able to understand its meaning or its idea and not rely on the literal meaning of the words used in the conversation. The questions in part A also required them to make an inference for understanding the meaning of unfamiliar word or idiom they found.

Meanwhile, the questions in part B and C mostly required students to understand the information which was clearly and literally stated by the speakers in the conversation and talk. Therefore, it was easier for them to answer the questions. But, the length of the conversation and talk became the challenge for them. Because, to get the necessary information, they should be able to keep their concentration well when listening to the audio. It also required them to be careful in storing and recalling the information they got during the listening process.

After the pre-cycle was done, the researcher and the lecturer started to implement metacognitive instruction on teaching-learning process of TOEFL listening comprehension section. However, the result was not good enough. the average score of students on the first cycle test was 68.5. Although it was higher than the mean score on pre-test which was only 55, but it had not reached the stipulated KKM yet. Based on the analysis of their answers, it could be stated that they were still difficult to understand the implied meaning, to find the correct restatement of what the speaker said, and to get the numerical data they needed to answer the detailed questions.

In addition, some of students did not pay attention to the lecturer's explanation and did not participate actively in pair and class discussion. Besides, after observing their pair work in the class, the researcher found that in the verifying stage, there were some student who only compared their answers without discussing the reason or the key word that made them chose their answers. In the reflection stage, there were also some pairs who only wrote the problems they met without making a plan for the next listening activity.

Therefore, the researcher conducted the second cycle in order to solve these problems and to get a better result. In this cycle, the

lecturer and the researcher gave more motivation and attention to the students, especially those who tended to make noise in the backside. The lecturer encouraged and gave them chance to freely ask any parts of TOEFL listening comprehension material they had not really understood. The researcher also gave more explanation of the material and the purpose of using metacognitive strategy before, while, and after the listening activity. Students were also encouraged to make various restatements and did some exercises together to accustom them getting the detailed information.

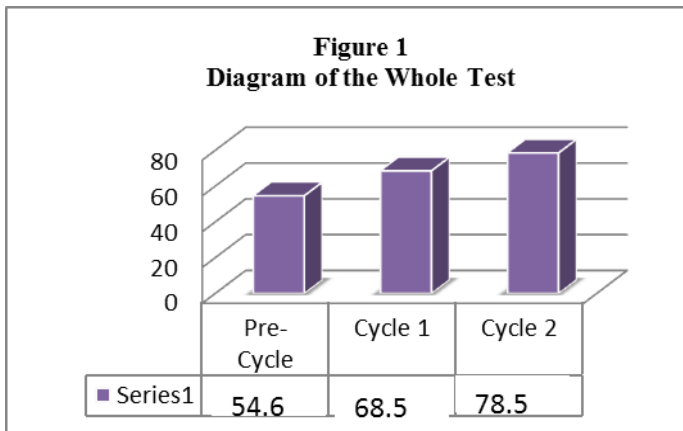
The result of observation scheme and the students' average score in this cycle was much better than the previous one. The students' activeness and engagement in learning activity improved from 70% to 85% and so as their average score which became 78.5. It had reached the KKM. In this cycle, the students' activeness and engagement in learning activity was very good. For example, in the explanation session, they asked what they had not understood and used different sentences to restate what the speaker said in the short dialogue played by the researcher. Some of them even voluntarily made their own examples and gave comments to the inappropriate restatement made by their classmates.

Besides, when they did five stages of metacognitive instruction to accomplish their TOEFL listening task, they supported and helped each other to comprehend the conversation and talk instead of doing it individually and hiding their confusion like in the previous cycle. They shared what they had understood and told the difficulty they found to their pair. Then, they tried to solve it together and set a plan for the next listen and verification stage.

In the fourth stage in which the researcher and all students discussed the answers to the given TOEFL listening task together, they did not only answer the question but also gave the reason or showed the key-word they used as the base of choosing their answer. Some students even gave comment when the answer given by the other pairs was different from theirs or when the reason they conveyed was considered insufficient. In this stage, they also discussed the meaning of the unfamiliar words or idioms used by the speaker and the context in which they commonly used.

Then, in the last stage, they wrote the difficulty they faced during the listening process in this meeting and wrote a plan to make it better in the next meeting. Some of them also consulted their problems to the other pairs or to the lecturer and the researcher in order to get some suggestions on what they needed to do or what ability they should improve to make their comprehension better.

After analyzing all the data collected from pre-cycle until the second one, the researcher concluded that the students' ability in understanding the conversations and talks on TOEFL listening comprehension section as well as their ability in answering each of the questions had improved. It could be seen from the improvement of their test result.



From the figure above, the researcher concluded that the use of metacognitive instruction had improved the students' listening skill on TOEFL listening comprehension section.

CONCLUSION

Metacognitive strategy used in this instruction was helpful to make the students easier to listen to the TOEFL listening comprehension section. Because, After being involved in metacognitive instruction the students knew what to do before, while, and after they listen to the audio.

By doing prediction and planning stage with their pair, they actually activated as well as getting more background knowledge related to TOEFL listening comprehension section. The repeated

practice of this stage made them understand and remember the vocabularies, expressions, structures, topics, contexts, and any other things related to this section more than before. Therefore, it made them easier to recall any necessary information that helped them to comprehend the text.

They also felt the advantage of pair and group discussion they did during the implementation of this instruction. In this stage, they conveyed their confusion in understanding the content of the text or in determining the correct restatement in the available multiple-choice items and tried to solve it together. They learned from their pair and their classmates about what part to be paid attention to, what part that was typically became the important key-word, and what kind of information they needed to answer the questions on part A, B, and C. It also made them understand what strategy they could use when they wanted to get the information. Through this discussion, they shared various knowledge related to the TOEFL listening comprehension section and shared some effective strategies to comprehend the audio.

Furthermore, the reflection and goal-setting that they did in the last stage of this instruction encouraged them to consciously monitor the development of their listening skill. After doing a listening activity, this stage encouraged them to think about some ways that could make their ability better, instead of just building a self-concept that they were not good listeners.

So, the researcher concluded that the use of metacognitive instruction in this classroom action research was successful in improving the students' listening skill on TOEFL listening comprehension section. Because, this instruction did not merely focus on the outcome of the listening process done by the students, but focused on the process of learning to listen itself. Thus, it guided them to learn how to listen and to understand the conversations and talks in TOEFL listening comprehension section, instead of just testing their listening skill.

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