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METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LISTENING AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGY TRAINING

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Abstract: Listening is an essential skill and plays a crucial role in learning and using a second language. It is stated by various researchers that learners become successful and efficient listeners by means of employing strategies during listening (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). This study included the aim to provide learners with training in two different types of listening strategies, namely note-taking and shadowing. While there is abundant information on L2 learners' metacognitive awareness in listening, there is the need to analyze metacognition in relation to different listening strategies. For this purpose, the present study intends to investigate the influence of note-taking and shadowing as two listening strategies on learners' awareness of their own second language listening process. The specific research question asked was: Is there a significant difference in metacognitive listening awareness levels of students who receive shadowing training and who receive note-taking training? In order to gather data, the Meta-cognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was implemented on 82 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who were pre-intermediate level students at the language preparatory classes of a state university in Turkey. Half of the participants had shadowing instruction and practice, whereas the other half had note-taking instruction and practice in their listening lessons for six weeks. All of the participants answered the questionnaire both before and after the treatment period. In order to analyze the data, means were calculated and statistical tests were run. To compare the listening meta-cognitive awareness levels of students in the two groups, the Mann Whitney U-test was employed. Results show a statistically significant difference between the two groups on twelve items in various components of the scale, with the advantage of shadowing group.

Keywords: EFL listening, listening strategies, MALQ, shadowing, note-taking

Introduction and Literature Review

Listening is an essential skill and plays a crucial role in learning and using a second language. Despite its importance, second language (L2) learners usually face great difficulty comprehending spoken English. Two of the innovative ideas in terms of developing listening skills in recent years is strategic listening and metacognition. It is stated by various researchers that learners become successful and efficient listeners by means of employing strategies (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011) and by becoming metacognitively aware during listening (Goh, 2008). While there is abundant information on L2 learners' metacognitive awareness in listening, there is the need to analyze metacognition in relation to different listening strategies.

A listening strategy could be defined as the art of organizing and ordering activities or tactics for learners' utmost benefit in listening to decode, comprehend and interpret the aural input (Gonen, 2009). There are different lists of listening strategies provided by various researchers. One of them is Vandergrift (1997), whose taxonomy of listening strategies is the most widely-used and includes cognitive, socio-affective and meta-cognitive strategies as three categories of listening strategies.

Cognitive strategies involve the direct manipulation of listening tasks or application of specific strategies. Socio-affective strategies associate with strategies utilized by learners in order to reduce anxiety or cooperate with

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other learners. Meta-cognitive group of strategies concerns learners' own perception and thinking of their listening process. Improving one's meta-cognition in listening allows the learner to evaluate, plan and monitor his/her listening process and find the convenient listening strategies to enhance their listening ability (Goh, 2000; Huang, 2005).

Meta-cognitive listening strategies could be discussed through pre-listening planning strategies, while-listening monitoring strategies, and post-listening evaluation strategies. The present study examines two while-listening strategies, namely note-taking and shadowing. Taking notes while listening to a lecture is a routine owned by learners of all ages with the aim of promoting learning and recalling the learned input later (Teng, 2011). Shadowing is a while-listening strategy which requires learners to repeat the aural input without stopping, unlike repetition, while following the in-coming input at the same time (Rongna and Hayashi, 2012).

Despite considerable body of literature on the use of listening strategies in English and metacognitive awareness, there is need for further research. Previous studies on the issue have mainly focused on either the relationship between learners' listening comprehension and meta-cognitive awareness in listening (Coskun, 2010; Goh & Hu, 2014; Vandergrift, 2005) or strategy use and meta-cognitive awareness in listening (Rahimirad & Shams, 2014).

Research Questions

For the above-mentioned reasons, the present study intends to investigate the influence of note-taking and shadowing as two while-listening strategies on learners' awareness of their own second language listening process. The specific research question asked was: Is there a significant difference in metacognitive listening awareness levels of students who receive shadowing training and who receive note-taking training?

Methodology

Context and Participants

This experimental study takes place at the Foreign Languages School of a state university in the Marmara Region of Turkey. The institution serves English preparation education to freshman students before they start their education in their fields. All students are exposed to a skills-based English as a foreign language (EFL) education for at least 22 hours a week. There are seven hours of listening and speaking lessons per week for the pre-intermediate level classes.

Participants in this study consist of 84 students aged between 18 and 20, in four randomly selected pre-intermediate level EFL classes. They have learnt English as a foreign language as a subject at secondary and high schools for almost a period of six years before starting their university language preparatory class. Out of four classes, for this study, two groups were randomly assigned into shadowing and two of the groups were assigned into note-taking training. The training period lasted for six weeks, where both groups were taught by the same instructor who was also the first researcher of this study.

Data Collection

The means of data collection was Meta-cognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) which was applied right before the training has started and again right after the training period. This questionnaire was generated by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006). With the use of this instrument, the researchers aimed to discover how much awareness learners had of their own L2 listening process. The questionnaire which included 21 items comprised five discrete categories that are problem-solving, planning and evaluation, mental translation, person knowledge, and directed attention. Reliability statistics of the scale was analyzed and Cronbach's Alpha was found as 0,635.

After a pilot training and testing session, actual data were collected in the fall semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. Participants in each group were exposed to listening strategy training sessions for two hours per week for six weeks where the relevant while-listening strategy was practiced and tested. Each training session included instruction on the strategy, followed by practice activities and a test. During the instruction, trainees initially were exposed to detailed information about the strategy, crucial points about it, and different techniques to implement. Then, as modelling, learners were shown videos of young adult foreign language learners who were describing that strategy. Lastly, they had a listening comprehension practice and test.

Data Analysis

Data obtained through MALQ, were analyzed by calculating means and running descriptive statistical tests. The listening metacognitive awareness levels of the two groups were compared with the help of a Mann-Whitney U Test.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of shadowing and note-taking as two distinct while-listening strategies to find out about their possible influence on learners' meta-cognitive listening awareness. In order to analyze the pre-training responses of learners, the normality was determined by Shapiro-Wilk test. As a result of this test, the distribution of the data for the two groups was not normal. Therefore, Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the learner responses to MALQ before the treatment, and it was found that responses to the items of the scale were not statistically different, indicating homogeneity between the two groups.

MALQ was implemented again at the end of the data collection, subsequent to the treatment sessions, and learner responses were analyzed. The normality of the data was tested by Shapiro-Wilk test, and the distribution of the data for note-taking and shadowing groups was not normal, necessitating the use of Mann-Whitney U Test. As a result of this test, learner responses were found statistically significantly different in items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 20 and 21 for the two treatment groups. The median, maximum and minimum values indicate that the shadowing group had higher level responses to all statistically significant items in the scale (as can be seen in Table 1).

Results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between four of the five items in the Planning-Evaluation category. This finding shows that learners in the shadowing group had a plan in their mind about their upcoming listening process more than the note-taking group (item 10). Additionally, shadowing learners analyzed how they listened and what they needed to do next time more than the other group (item 14). Furthermore, the shadowing group learners questioned their satisfaction with their listening comprehension more than note-takers (item 20) and they were in a more purposeful listening process than the other group (item 21).

The second meta-cognitive awareness listening category was Directed-Attention category, and there were four items in this group. However, a statistically significant difference was found in learner responses to only the sixth item. This finding shows that the shadowing group learners were better at concentrating on their listening when they lost their attention.

Person-Knowledge strategies were included in the third category in the scale and responses to items 8 and 15 demonstrate a statistically significant difference between the two groups. In other words, learners who considered listening as a challenge but not a problem exist more in the shadowing group (item 8), and the shadowing group learners were more relaxed than the note-taking group during listening (item 15).

The fourth category which reflects statistically significant difference among two items is the Mental-Translation strategies group. This result indicates that the shadowing group translates the aural input more than the note-taking group (item 4). In addition, there exists a small difference between the two groups which displays that the shadowing learners do translation during listening more than the other group (items 11 and 18).

Finally, the fifth category, named as the Problem-Solving group, included five items and responses to two of its items demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This finding indicates that shadowing learners make more use of the words they comprehend so as to guess the meaning of unknown words (item 5). Furthermore, shadowing learners make more comparison between their background knowledge and their listening context compared to the note-taking learners (item 7).

Table 1. Post-MALQ comparisons between groups

| MALQ Categories | MALQ Items | Note-taking group Median (Min:Max) | Shadowing group Median (Min:Max) | P |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Planning-Evaluation Strategies | 1 | 5(1:6) | 5(2:6) | 0,520 |
| | 10 | 3(1:6) | 6(6:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 14 | 5(3:6) | 6(5:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 20 | 4(1:6) | 6(6:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 21 | 5(2:6) | 6(6:6) | <0,0001 |
| Directed-Attention Strategies | 2 | 4(1:6) | 4(3:6) | 0,216 |
| | 6 | 4(1:6) | 6(5:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 12 | 4(2:6) | 6(1:6) | 0,377 |
| | 16 | 5(4:6) | 6(2:6) | 0,282 |
| Person-Knowledge Strategies | 3 | 3(1:5) | 2(1:6) | 0,742 |
| | 8 | 2(1:6) | 5(4:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 15 | 5(1:6) | 6(1:6) | <0,0001 |
| Mental-Translation Strategies | 4 | 5(1:6) | 6(6:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 11 | 5(3:6) | 6(2:6) | 0,012 |
| | 18 | 2(1:6) | 6(1:6) | <0,0001 |
| Problem-Solving Strategies | 5 | 5(3:6) | 6(6:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 7 | 4(1:6) | 6(4:6) | <0,0001 |
| | 9 | 5(1:6) | 6(1:6) | 0,127 |
| | 13 | 5(4:6) | 6(2:6) | 0,282 |
| | 17 | 5(2:6) | 1(1:6) | 0,158 |
| | 19 | 4(2:6) | 6(3:6) | 0,495 |

Discussion and Implications

The main aim of this study was to explore whether there are any significant differences in meta-cognitive listening awareness of students in the shadowing and note-taking training groups.

Findings demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences between the two treatment groups on twelve MALQ items, and it was the shadowing group who had higher level responses to all of these items. This

finding indicates that shadowing as a while-listening strategy has a bigger influence than note-taking on L2 learners' meta-cognitive listening awareness.

To sum up, responses to planning-evaluation category items of the MALQ suggest that shadowing seems to improve learners' self-evaluation of their own listening process, and thinking of their background before listening, their satisfaction about their listening comprehension ability during listening, and analysis of their listening performance subsequent to listening. Furthermore, shadowing group could concentrate better after they had confusion. Findings also confirm that shadowing group had a more positive and relaxed attitude towards their strategy. Interestingly, shadowing group considered L2 listening as a challenge more than the note-taking group. Even though this finding seems as a negative attitude, this reflection could reveal that shadowing listeners placed more importance and emphasis on listening, which indicates a high level of awareness. Finally, shadowing appeared to be more helpful than note-taking in supporting learners to find practical solutions to their problems during listening.

Past studies in literature mostly include studies which sought the effect of meta-cognitive strategy treatment on learners' listening comprehension performance. However, the current study emphasizes the influence of two distinct listening strategies and its training on students' meta-cognitive listening awareness, which makes this study and its design a contribution to the field. Further studies need to be conducted with other participants in other settings to shed more light on shadowing and note-taking.

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