The relationship between metacognitive strategies awareness and listening comprehension of non-Iranian advanced level Persian language learners

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1. Introduction

One of the challenges of second language learners is listening comprehension. In this context, Field (2008: 4) says that if we ask many language learners to determine the relative difficulty of the four language skills, many of them consider listening to be the area in which they feel most insecure. Various reasons have been mentioned as to why listening skill, or in other words, the process of listening in a second language, is considered difficult and challenging (e.g., see Brown and Yule, 1983; Field, 2008). Considering these challenges, one solutions to facilitate the listening process for language learners is to change their listening status from a passive listener to an active listener.

Goh (2014: 73) defines an active listener as someone who uses a range of skills and strategies to direct and manage their listening processes according to their communication goals. Regarding "listening skills", Rost (1990; cited in Lynch and Mendelson, 2010: 185) mentions two categories: enabling skills and enacting skills. He considers the first category to be the skills that are used to perceive what the speaker is saying and interpret the intended meaning (such as recognizing the prominences within utterances and inferring implicit information), and the second category to be the skills that play a role in responding appropriately to the message or text. The second component that exists in the definition of an active listener is *Strategy*. In a general definition, strategy can be seen as a method of facing a problem. In the context of the present research, *strategy* can be a method or a tactic used by language learners for encountering listening texts, either in one-way (non-participatory) or two-way (interactive or participatory) listening contexts.

Strategies are generally divided into three categories: cognitive, metacognitive, and social/emotional. Metacognitive strategies are those strategies that direct attention to the input and coordinate various cognitive processes (Goh, 2014: 73). According to Anderson (2005: 758), attention has been paid to the role of strategies in second language learning since the mid-1970s. This attention to strategies in language teaching can be understood from the emergence of two approaches in the

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context of teaching methodology that have given a central role to strategies: Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI) and Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Regarding these, it is naturally expected that the more language learners use strategies for listening and understanding, and in fact, the more they focus their listening on strategies, the more comprehending and interpreting of the listening messages and speech interactions or one-way listening will be achieved. Therefore, it is necessary to get information about the language learners' level of awareness of different strategies and their application.

2. Materials and methods

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between Persian language learners' awareness of metacognitive strategies and their listening comprehension skills. The subjects of this research were 29 male and female Persian language learners of the advanced level of the Persian Language Teaching Center of Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU), who were studying Persian language to continue their education in technical-engineering and medical university fields in Iranian universities.

To examine the four research hypotheses, two data collection tools were used: (1) A 21-item questionnaire on awareness of metacognitive listening strategies (Vandergrift, et al., 2006) including five components of planning and evaluation, guided attention, individual knowledge, mental translation, and problem solving; (2) A listening comprehension test with 25 questions. To analyze the obtained data, correlation tests, linear regression, and independent t-tests were used.

3. Results and discussion

The results of the data analysis showed that there is a positive relationship between learners' awareness of metacognitive strategies and their ability in listening comprehension, and about 47% of the changes in the dependent variable are explained by five independent variables. Also, there is no difference in knowledge of metacognitive strategies between Persian learners with university education (Bachelor and master's degree) and Persian language learners with pre-university education, as well as between male and female learners. The same status is also evident regarding their level of awareness of strategies regarding academic fields (technical and medical).

4. Conclusion

In general, the research results suggest that non-Iranian Persian language learners' awareness of metacognitive strategies can play an effective role in improving their listening skills. Therefore, it is necessary for Persian language teachers in listening comprehension classes to use these strategies and procedures to strengthen the metacognitive awareness of learners and to teach them these strategies.

Keywords: strategic competence; learning strategies; metacognitive strategy; listening comprehension