

Fostering B1 Learners' Listening Comprehension through Metacognitive Strategy Instruction: An Action Research Study

Ibodullayeva Diyora Orifjon qizi

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

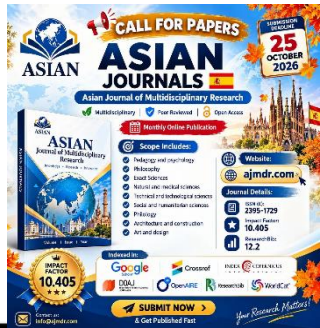
diyoraibodullayeva50@gmail.com

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Abstract. This study investigates the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction in enhancing the listening comprehension abilities of B1-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In traditional ELT classrooms, listening instruction frequently focuses on assessing performance rather than guiding the cognitive processes underlying listening. To address this gap, an Action Research design was implemented using Vandergrift's Metacognitive Pedagogical Cycle over a six-week period with 30 B1-level learners at a private language center. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests (Cambridge PET listening papers) and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). Quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in participants' mean test scores (increasing by 21.6%), alongside a notable enhancement in metacognitive planning and a substantial reduction in listening anxiety. The study concludes with practical pedagogical recommendations for language teachers aiming to transition from outcome-based to process-oriented listening instruction.

Keywords: Listening comprehension, Metacognitive strategies, Action Research, ELT, Metacognitive Pedagogical Cycle, B1 level.

Introduction. Listening is one of the most challenging skills for EFL students, and creates anxiety for them. Students usually do not understand the content because of speech speed, connected speech as well as unfamiliar words. In traditional classrooms, teachers are limited only to playing the audio and do exercises related to it [1; 765-781].



This approach does not teach how to do listening tasks, but it assesses students' knowledge.

This research aims to improve their listening skills by planning, monitoring and teaching metacognitive strategies based on evaluating.

Research questions:

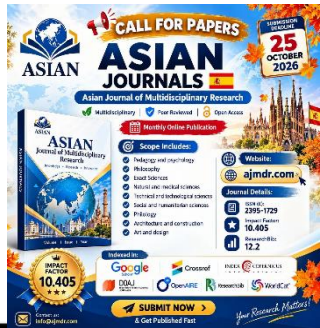
1. How does metacognitive pedagogy affect B1 students' performance on listening tests?
2. Can mastering metacognitive strategies reduce students' anxiety during the listening process?

Literature review. Listening is based on two main information processing categories: top-down and bottom-up [2; 553-573]. While Top-down technique relies on students' general knowledge and context, Bottom-up is based on extracting sounds, words, and grammar structures [3; 126-135]. In order to be effective listener, metacognitive awareness should be shaped [4; 222-232]. Metacognition is the process of understanding and managing one's thoughts. Metacognition is divided into three categories [6; 387-409]:

1. Planning: before listening to the audio, put goals and guess the answers.
2. Monitoring: while listening, check level of understanding.
3. Evaluating: after listening, analyze how predictions are match and which parts are confused.

Teaching these strategies enables students to be independent as well as capable of self-assessment [5; 15-51].

Methodology. Research was held among 30 students at B1 level (based on CEFR) in the language education center. They are from 16 to 22-year-old, and they were taught based on special Action research. During 6 weeks, metacognition was used in every



listening lesson.

- Pre-listening (planning): students discussed what about the audio is, relying on titles and pictures, and predicted the words and ideas.
- First listening (first verification): the audio was played once. Students checked their predictions and understood general meaning.
- Pair discussion (monitoring): students discussed what they understood and which parts they hesitated in pairs. They made plans for the second time.
- Reflection and evaluation: students analyzed which strategies helped understood the listening task and which phrases were confusing.

Data collection.

- Pre-test and post-test: Standard Cambridge PET listening comprehension tests at the B1 level were used (maximum score: 25).
- MALQ questionnaire: Metacognitive Awareness listening questionnaire adapted form was used to assess students' planning, monitoring, and anxiety levels.

Results. The results obtained after the six-week action research intervention showed positive changes in the students' listening comprehension skills.

Quantitative results

Figures	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
Average test score (max.25)	14.2	19.6	+21.6%
Planning and monitoring	2.8	4.1	+13 point
Listening anxiety level	4.2	2.5	-1.7 point



As the table shows, the students' average test score rose from 14.2 to 19.6 points. One of the most significant changes was the decrease in anxiety levels during the listening process from 4.2 to 2.5 points.

Discussion. The results show that metacognitive strategies are beneficial for B1 level students. Planning before listening to the audio shapes the students' general knowledge in their brain. Discussion in pairs enables them to compare their thoughts and approach intently for the second time. Once students realized that understanding every single word was not essential – and that the general meaning could be grasped through context and metacognitive monitoring – their psychological barriers and anxiety diminished significantly.

Conclusion. This Action Research study addressed a widespread pedagogical challenge in EFL listening instruction: the tendency of language classrooms to focus on testing listening outcomes rather than explicitly teaching the cognitive processes underlying effective listening. By systematically integrating Vandergrift's Metacognitive Pedagogical Cycle over a six-week intervention with B1-level learners, the study provided concrete empirical evidence that explicit metacognitive strategy instruction significantly improves listening performance, increases metacognitive awareness, and reduces listening anxiety.

Pedagogical Implications. The findings offer several actionable insights for language educators, curriculum designers, and materials developers striving to enhance listening pedagogy:

Re-orienting Instructional Focus from Testing to Process: Teachers should move away from traditional "listen-and-answer" routines toward a process-oriented methodology. Allocating explicit instructional time to teaching learners how to listen – through structured planning, real-time monitoring, and post-listening evaluation – builds essential cognitive framework necessary for decoding real-time speech.

Prioritizing Contextual Schema Activation: Pre-listening activities should go beyond simple vocabulary pre-teaching. Teachers should guide learners to generate contextual predictions and set clear listening goals, which activates prior knowledge and enables more targeted processing of auditory input.

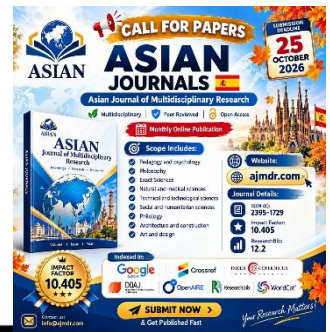
Institutionalizing Peer-Mediated Monitoring: Brief pair-discussion intervals between the first and second listenings create a collaborative, low-anxiety environment. This allows learners to verify their comprehension, resolve ambiguities with peers, and set focused tasks for the subsequent listening phase.

Embedding Systematic Self-Reflection: Short, routine post-listening reflection tasks help learners evaluate which strategies yielded success and which required adjustment.

Over time, this reflective practice fosters metacognitive awareness and promotes learner autonomy.

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