INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS AT STAIN BATUSANGKAR

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Abstract

One of the strategies of metacognitive introduced by the listening lecturers in listening comprehension III at STAIN Batusangkar is problem solving strategies. It is assumed that the strategies can help to solve students' problem in listening comprehension in order to comprehend oral text. The problems of the research are what problem solving strategies used in that class and how they are applied. Therefore the purposes of this research are to find out the students' problem solving strategies and to investigate what problem solving strategies they used and how they applied it in listening comprehension. The research method is qualitative which applied case study design . All participants (91 students) were the respondents for questionnaire, and 12 students among them were selected to be interviewed had been chosen through snowball sampling technique. The data of the research were collected by using questionnaire, interview, and observation. After analizing the data it was found that most of students used problem solving strategies in poor category with the percentage 42,86% in listening comprehension. They had applied these strategies in many ways but some of the them did not do it properly in listening comprehension. It can be concluded that the result of the study indicates that the problem solving strategies used by the students in listening comprehension need to be developed and increased in to the correct ways to get better comprehension in listening.

Keyword: Metacognitive Strategies, Problem Solving Strategies , Listening Comprehension

Introduction

At first sight, Listening is no longer considered just a skill to comprehend a target spoken language but an avenue to acquire linguistic knowledge. This change implies that developing good listening skills English Foreign Language (EFL) development. It can be regarded as an important language skill to develop language students are interested in understanding English speakers and they want to be able to access the rich variety of aural an visual English text available via net work-based multimedia. However, in a foreign language environment, comprehending the target spoken language without difficulty is by no means easy, and factors affecting listening difficulties have been widely discussed in second language listening.

Second foreign language students at STAIN Batusangkar view listening as a demanding skill. When they listen to a text, they have to review sounds, pronounciation, spelling, letters, vocabularies, the meaning of the word, pace and accent of the speaker and preview grammar. It affected to their comprehension. they have to concentrate on active process to get the meaning in both of linguistic and non linguistic cues. Because of that, The ability to comprehend the text should be possessed. It is needed by the students since listening comprehension is viewed as an active process in which the students focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge. Many ways have done by the lecturers to improve their comprehension, one of them was guided them to apply metacognitive strategies. This strategies plays as important rules in language learning. It is steps taken by students to enhance their own learning process. Prominent scholars (Chamot (1999), Oxford (1990), and Papaleountiou (2008) are suggested four strategies in metacognitive, they are: planning, monitoring, problem solving and evaluating strategies. These strategies can help students to govern their listening process from pre, whilst and post listening activities.

One of strategies in metacognitive is Problem solving strategies. It is viewed as a way to solve problems in comprehending oral text. It is a set of strategies guiding students to find the solution of their listening problems. These strategies was used by the students in listening comprehension class. Based on the researcher preliminary observation, some of students still doubt to apply problem solving strategies in listening comprehension. She point out the students problems into four point; (1) They got problem to guess the meaning from the text, (2), they got difficulties to clarify the information from the text, (3) They still confused to substitute many words or phrase from the text with their own word or phrases to get the meaning of the text, (5) they seldom used resource such as dictionaries, internet, or book to comprehend the text.

Based on the problems above, the researcher elaborate her research about investigating students problem solving strategies in listening comprehension to find out what problem solving strategies are used by students and the way they applied it in listening comprehension.

B. Review of Related Theories

1. Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is important when the listeners need to gain the message from the speaker. Without comprehension, the listeners will not understand well what the speakers are saying. The listener can not do if she/ he does not listen carefully, concentrate on and pay attention to what the speaker says. Comprehension is a main part of listening skill since comprehension is understanding message deeply. While listening something, listener needs to acquire the message well.

Fang (2008) and Magnera (2010) conceptualized listening comprehension as the understanding of the implications and explicit meanings of words and sentences of spoken language. They suggest the listeners to concentrate on an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but their nonlinguistic knowledge as well. The listener should also know that not every clue is equally important to the message. Therefore, even when they miss a piece of language, they need not worry there is a good chance that other clues will make them understand the message, or at least, enough of the message for their own aim. It is regarded theoretically as an active process in which individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge.

From the theories above, it can be concluded that in listening comprehension, the students have to comprehend what the speaker says since it is important to understand the message deeply and to get the meaning from the message well. Without comprehension, they will not understand well, as a result they can not give good respond for what the speaker is saying so that the communication can be miss understanding. To get good comprehension the students have to use their intelligence to receive the message, they also have to active their mental process both linguistic and non linguistic knowledge.

2. Factors Influencing Listening Comprehension

Listening is not an easy acquired skill for students. A student may think he/ she is listening but he/ she does not understand what is being said by the speaker. There are some factors that influence listening comprehension. Gronet and Duzer (2010)," there are some listening process including the factors effecting listening, namely the listener, the speaker, and the content".

The factor influencing listening comprehension can come from the listener. If the listener is familiar with or interested in the topic, comprehension will likely increase. In contrast, if the listener has little background knowledge, he or she may struggle and then tune out the message. Therefore, the teacher should teach listening to his or her students as much as possible, because it will increase students' comprehension.

The other factor influencing listening comprehension can come from the speaker. A speaker's rate of delivering may be too fast, too slow, or may have many hesitations for a listener to follow. All of these may affect concentration. Gronet and Duzer (2010: 25) states that " awareness of a speaker's corrections and use of rephrasing (er..., I mean... that is...) can enable the listener to recognize speech habits as clues to deciphering meaning". The teacher can teach their students to listen for patterns in speech and to use strategies which help them comprehend, such as asking a speaker to repeat.

The third factor influencing listening comprehension is from the content of the text. "The content that is familiar is easier to comprehend than content that is unfamiliar". This becomes a bigger advantage when students are listening and talking about their study. They talk about topics that are familiar. The contents may be unfamiliar only when explaining a new topic or process. When background knowledge is essential to understanding content, more listening strategies may be necessary.

Another factor is the strategies used by students in listening comprehension. O' Malley and chamot (19190) classified learning strategies into three categories depending of the type processing involved: cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. cognitive strategies consist of strategies elaboration, inferencing and translation. Metacognitive strategies refers to thinking about learning process, planning for learning, monitoring learning, problem solving learning and evaluating comprehension. social strategies include cooperative learning and asking question. Listening strategies can aid learning to improve student listening comprehension. They can choose strategies they need for completing their listening task.

In conclusion, listening comprehension has four influencing factors namely, the listener, the speaker, the content of the text and strategies used by students. These factors can affect the students listening comprehension, as a result it gives no good effect of the communication take place, because these four factors related each other, and vice versa.

5. What is Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive as a concept has been developed time by time. Flavell and Wenden in Goh (1998) define metacognitive as consisting primarily of an understanding or perception of the ways different factor act and interact to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises. They point out three major categories among these factors: person, task, and strategy. Person knowledge consists of general knowledge learners have about how learning takes place and how different factors like age, aptitude, and learning style can influence language learning. It includes what learners know about themselves as learners and the beliefs they have about what leads to their success or failure in learning a language. Task knowledge refers to what learners know about the purpose, demands, and nature of learning tasks. Strategic knowledge relate to what learners know about strategies. Papaleontiou (2008) has different perspective to define metacognitive. He conceptualize metacognitive as "cognition about cognition: thoughts about thoughts, knowledge about knowledge or reflection about actions". He point out cognition involves perceiving, understanding, remembering, and so forth, then metacognitive involves thingking, remembering, etc. He labeled various cognitions about cognitions as "metaperseption", "metacomprehensionn" and "metamemory" with ' metacognition" remaining the superordinate term.

Metacognitive strategies are needed by the students to govern their listening process. Oxford (1990:136) define metacognitive strategies as beyond, beside, or with the cognitive". He views it is as " action which go beyond purely cognitive devices that is provides" a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process".

According to Wenden (1987:25) "Metacognitive strategies are set of strategies which the listeners employ to govern the listening process from the beginning to the end of the listening process". Carrier (2003:338) suggests that "a metacognitive strategy refers to the 'understanding when and where to apply and the gains produced by strategies when used". O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper (1989) and Rubin (1994) states that "metacognitive strategies involve knowing about learning and controlling learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning activity". Goh (2006:92) suggests that "metacognitive strategies refer to 'an understanding of the ways different factors act and interact to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises". In particular, O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) and Goh (1998) describe two strategies in monitoring processes while listening; namely selective attention and directed attention. Selective attention refers to focusing on specific information as directed when beginning to listen, while directed attention focuses on a general sense of the task demands and content. While Vandergrift (2004) points out four metacognitive strategies namely planning, monitoring, problem solving and evaluation.

More ever, Wenden (1987:25),"metacognitive strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning". He focused on what learners know about various aspects of their language learning and how this influences their choice of strategies. Furthermore, he identified several planning strategies which is used by the students. Students may choose what they want to learn and how they should learn a language. By choosing and prioritizing, they can set their own learning goal. Finally, students may plan what their learning strategies should be and change them if they are not successful. In addition, O'Malley in wenden and Rubin (1987:25) states, "an extended list of planning strategies: "self management, advance preparation, advance organizers, direction attention, selective attention and delayed production".

In short, metacognitive strategies may include planning, monitoring, problem solving and evaluation. In planning strategies, the learners may activate their background knowledge about the incoming input, set a purpose and propose some questions before listening. Monitoring deals with maintaining an awareness of what has previously been set up and tracking information if it satisfies the questions and tasks. Problem solving refers to identifying a particular problem that may occur while listening and finding the solution to the problem. Evaluation allows the learners to reflect upon their involvement during the process of listening by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Such strategies would obviously be applied throughout the pedagogical sequence of pre-listening, listening and post-listening activities so that such a sequence attains meaning.

It is clear that metacognitive strategis can help the students to be successful in listening comprehension by planning, monitoring, problem solving and evaluating their learning process. This strategy can help the students to solve their problem in listening, in which they can arrange and plan their language learning in an efficient and effective way. Furthermore they can monitor their learning process to focus and have responsibility to seek as many practice opportunities as possible. Finally they can evaluate their learning process by self evaluating in order to see their comprehension about the topic and the content of the information they have listen.

4. Problem Solving Strategies in listening comprehension

Problem solving strategies are set of strategies to govern the listening process in whilts and post listening activities. When the students have difficulty to comprehend English oral text, and get problem to finish their listening task, these strategies can guide them to solve their listening problems. Vandergrift, L. (1990) and O'Malley (1990) suggests the students to apply problem solving strategies in listening comprehension since these strategies support them to solve their problem to reconstruct general and specific information from the text.

Furthermore, Chamot (1990), points out four strategies in problem solving that can be applied by the students in listening comprehension. The first strategy is inference. This strategy encourages them to guess the meaning of unfamiliar word, phrase, and sentence from English oral text based on their background knowledge about the content, the language and contextual clues. The second strategy is substitute. It enables students to substitute known words or phrases. It allows them to solve their problem quickly so that they keep their listening comprehension going since it is not easy to know every word in the target language. The next strategy is asking question to clarify. This strategy supports them to get comprehension by asking question to their self about the information they do not know from the text. By applying this strategy, they can get explanation, verification or example in order to solve their comprehension problem. The last strategy is use resources. This strategy encourages the students to solve their listening problem by using reference material such as dictionaries, textbooks, and computer. They can get specific information about the text and get the meaning correctly about the word, phrase or sentence of the text.

From the previous theories above, applying problem solving strategies can encourage students to get comprehension in listening. They can do inference, substitute, asking question to clarify and use resource.

C. Data Analysis and Discussion

The research method was qualitative which applied case study design. This study investigated problem solving strategies used by student and the way they applied it in listening comprehension. Data analysis and discussion of this study point out to four strategies of problem solving. The data were collected by using questionnaire, observation, and interview. The data was analized by using Miles and Hiberman procedure. (Mile and Hiberman (1984).The students have categorized into five categories such as; very good, good, sufficient, and poor based on their listening comprehension achievement. Based on data description Most of students used problem solving strategies in poor category with the percentage 42.86%. The following analysis discussed four strategies of problem solving.

The first strategy was inference strategy. The student from very good, good, and sufficient with the same way. The way they applied inference by knowing the context of the text, and knowing the first and the last sentence of the text. After that they did reference to get the meaning of the vocabularies or sentences. The way they applied this strategy still need to be posed as Chamot (1990) suggests the students to do inference by guess the meaning of unfamiliar word, or phrase by figuring out the word and then guess it based on the context The students from poor category did not understand this strategy. They did not implement this strategy in listening comprehension. From the data, it was clear to say that the poor student could not implement inference in order to solve their problem in listening comprehension. It dealt with observation done by the researcher in the classroom. The students had limited time to do the task and comprehend the text. Most of them used inference to understand and comprehend the text. It can be seen when the lecturer asked the student comprehension. If they did not know the meaning of vocabularies or sentences most of them inference saw dictionary or asked their friends. The lecturer have guided them to use inference to get good comprehension quickly as a strategy to solve their problems in listening comprehension but just many of them did with the

The second strategy on problem solving was substitution. The students applied substitution on the way to solve their problem if they do not understand the information from the text. The students from very good until sufficient category applied this strategy in the same way but they did not applied it with the correct ways. They substituted the words or phrases based on the context of the text. If they found the difficult words, they substituted the words with another word that easy to understand. They did it by knowing the general and detail information of the text. While, the students from poor category did not apply this strategy, they did not understand the way to apply it. From the analysis, it was found that the poor category of students did not know the way to apply substitution strategy, despite the fact that this strategy can help the student to get the meaning of the word by substituting it with another word in order to solve their problem in listening.

The next strategy on monitoring was asked question to clarify. The students have implemented this strategy in many ways. Very good category never applied this strategy because she can comprehend the text. While another students from good until poor category applied this strategy, but still not in the correct way. This finding goes in line with the view that If they did not comprehend the text, they asked the information from their friend or lecturer. They thought that, it was kind of strategy to solve the problem in listening. From

the analysis, it can be inferred that very good students tend not to apply this strategy because they can solve their problems themselves.

The last strategy on problem solving was use resource. The students implemented very good, good and poor category of students applied this strategy by using dictionary if they did not know the meaning of the information, but they did not use another sources such as book or internet to get the meaning or to understand the text. From all category, most of the sufficient student did not apply this strategy. They did not use resource because listening was oral and it could spend their time to comprehend the text.

The students who actively and appropriately engage in problem solving would be more successful at learning task. The finding for problem solving strategies showed that most of students used problem solving strategies in poor category in listening comprehension. Even thought they got poor category but, they have used these strategies as proposed by chamot (1999: 25-29) who states " four strategies in problem solving, they are; inference, substitute, ask question to clarify and use resource". The finding also line with theories were proposed Vandergrift (1990) that the second verification stage in listening is used in' order to verify points of disagreement and reconstruct general points of the text through problem solving strategy.

In contrast, the data finding from interview to know the students application of this strategy was found that many students did not used these strategies in listening comprehension. They did not understand how to apply these strategies correctly, even though they have used it. Their lecturer did not guide them intensively the way to apply it correctly . These strategies was not success applied by the student with 4 reason; (1) they have limited knowledge about how to apply it in listening comprehension, (2) they were not focus to apply these strategies since they have applied another strategies in the sometime, (3) They did not identify their problem specifically so that they do not know the alternative solution to solve their problem quickly, (4) they got difficulties to know the context of the text and lack of background knowledge.

Comparing the finding and what the theories says, not all of the students used these strategies in listening comprehension. Even though most of them used the strategies, but they still confused how to apply it well. They just applied what they know for completing listening task.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

To conclude, most of students used problem solving strategies in the level of poor with percentage 42,86 %. The way they applied problem solving strategies point out into four; (1) the students from very good until sufficient category had the same way to apply inference strategy. Poor category did not understand inference strategy. They did not implement this strategy in listening comprehension, (2) The students from very good until sufficient category substitute strategy in the same way, (3) the students from very good until poor category applied the strategy of asking question to clarify. (4) the students from very good, good and poor category applied the strategy of using resource, just sufficient student who did not apply it in listening comprehension.

One of the most significant contribution of the research is looking at the application of problem solving strategies based on the level of the students and student comprehension process. The way they applied problem solving strategies still not in the correct way for all level of students. This describe that they are not familiar with these strategies. It is necessary that EFL teachers enhance students using problem solving strategies in listening class. They should give more attention to guide the students from poor category in applying these strategies since they do not understand fully the way to apply these strategies.

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