

# English Language Education Study Program Students' Self- Perceived Listening Comprehension Strategies: Identifying the Problems

*by* Anandari Christina

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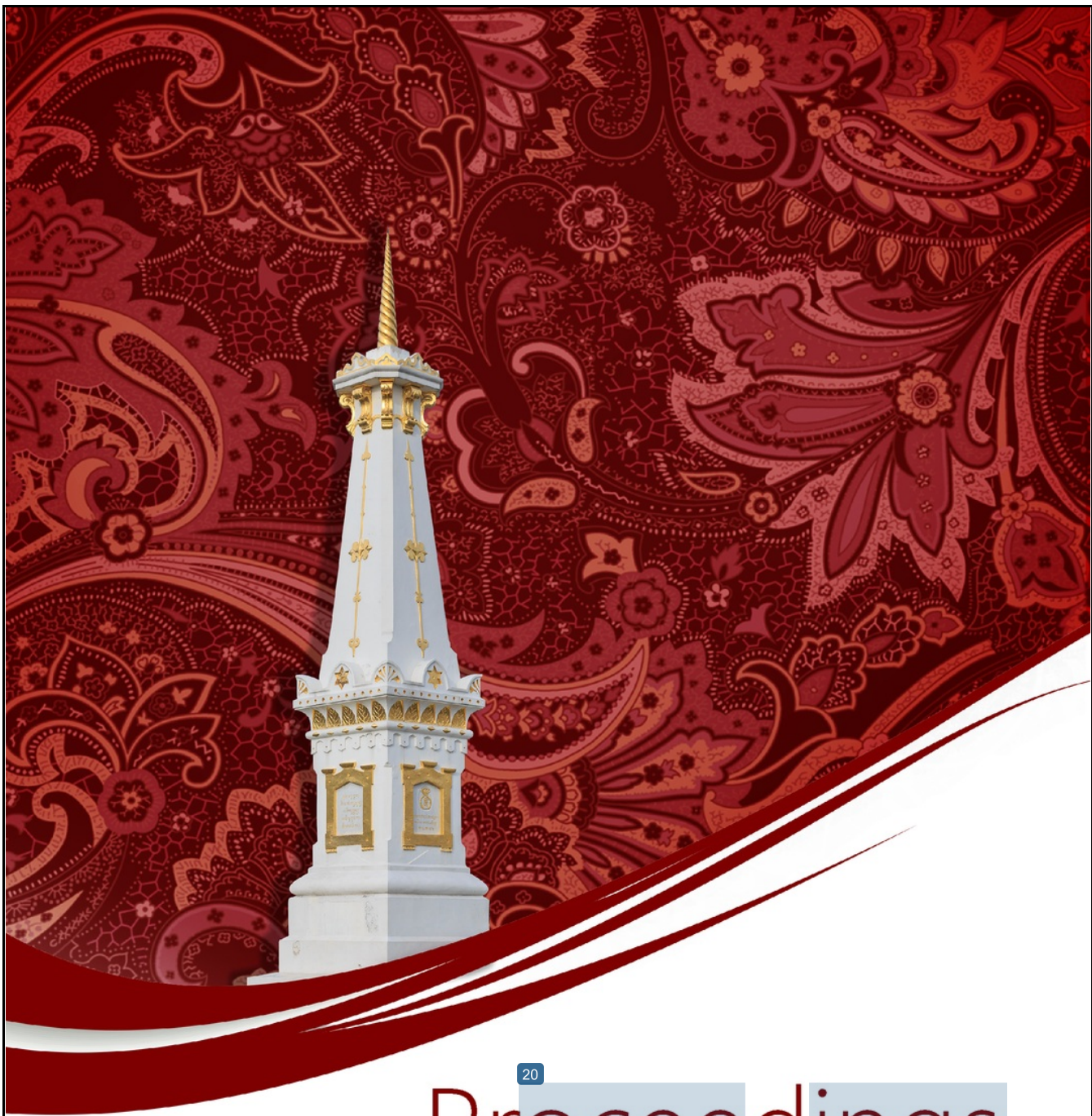
**Submission date:** 29-Aug-2019 10:34AM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 1164671400

**File name:** LLTC2015\_proceedings\_international\_conference.pdf (5.82M)

**Word count:** 3863

**Character count:** 20656



# Proceedings

The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Language and Language Teaching Conference

Friday-Saturday, 25-26 September 2015  
at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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# PROCEEDINGS

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Sanata Dharma University

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Telp: (0274) 513301, 515352 ext. 1131

ISBN 978-602-18681-9-5

## Preface

The Organizing Committee are delighted to present the proceedings of the Second International Language and Language Teaching Conference (2nd LLTC), whose main theme is English as a Second Language (ESL) Teaching in the 21st Century: Research and Trends. There are 87 full papers in the compilation, covering various topics in language learning-teaching, linguistics and literature, mostly related to the English language. As an academic forum, LLTC is organized by the English Language Education Study Programme of Sanata Dharma University or *Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (Prodi PBI) Universitas Sanata Dharma (USD) Yogyakarta*. It is expected that all complete papers in the proceedings will enrich our knowledge and broaden our insights into language learning-teaching, linguistics and literature.

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## English Language Education Study Program Students' Self-Perceived Listening Comprehension Strategies: Identifying the Problems

Christina Lhaksmita Anandari  
Sanata Dharma University  
chrisanda@gmail.com

### Abstract

Despite the fact listening is the first skill used in language learning, this particular skill has not been given sufficient amount of attention because of its complexities. Also, listening comprehension skill is challenging to be investigated since it deals with many “unseen” processes within the learners’ mind. English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) students’ listening comprehension strategies are not yet deeply explored and investigated. Since there has not been many researches concerning students’ perception on listening comprehension strategies, the researcher intends to investigate the ELESP students’ self-perceived listening comprehension strategies by identifying the students’ cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective listening strategies, using Chen, Lee, & Lin’s (2010) Listening Comprehension Strategies Inventory (LCSD). The results hopefully can provide a description of the students’ listening comprehension strategies preferences and provide a new perspective in teaching listening.

Keywords: listening comprehension, self-perceived, cognitive, metacognitive, socio-affective

### Introduction

According to the theory of language learning, listening skill is the first and foremost skill that is used by language learners as the window to comprehending the target language. Without listening, it is difficult for a language learner to achieve fluency and competence. This is no exception to English language learning. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia and most likely in other non-English speaking countries are often introduced to English through listening activities.

However, in the area of language learning research, listening is not given the same portion of attention compared to speaking, reading, and writing. One reason is that listening is often considered as a passive skill since the listeners seem to not doing anything besides listening. Moreover, listening is considered to be the most difficult skill to assess and to analyze due to the absence of visible results compared to reading and writing (Mianmahaleh & Rahimy, 2015).

In the context of the listening activities in the English Language Education Study Program, listening activities have been emphasized on listening to an audio or watching a video but with minimum amount of listening comprehension strategies knowledge. Most of the activities embarked from the literal purpose of listening, i.e. answering the given questions. Students are not given the sufficient amount of time to analyze their listening comprehension strategies. As a consequence, these students were only able to answer the given questions but also lack the comprehension of the whole context of the given audio or video.

The students in Critical Listening and Speaking 2 have a similar problem. Despite the fact they are in their fourth semester and have taken three semesters of

listening classes, it was obvious that they are still having difficulties in determining which listening comprehension strategies that can help them succeed in the listening class. On top of it all, many of these students feel lost in their effort in increasing their listening comprehension skill. These conditions exhibit one major problem: there is no definite answer as to why these students are clueless about their current listening comprehension skill. They are at lost as to why they had been able to pass the listening classes with flying colors. Thus the researcher believes this is a situation that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

Adult second language learners (henceforth L2 learners) have their idealisms in their language learning process. The reason is simple, i.e. each of them has different background knowledge, different life experiences, different goals, and different levels of language proficiency. Each of these types of learners has different expectations. Lightbown & Spada (2006) state a similar tone. They regard these learners in having different beliefs and learning systems in their effort to gain new knowledge from the learning materials. Despite its complexities, listening is the very first skill that opens the language learners' window to the new adventure of learning a new language. Through listening, the learners can hear the use of the language and how the words are pronounced. In other words, listening comprehension increases the "process of language learning/acquisition" (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 168). Listening comprehension strategies enable the L2 learners to organize the information that they hear and retell it in an organized manner (Mianmahaleh & Rahimy, 2015). Once an L2 learner shows such ability, he/she is considered as a learner who "possesses competent language performance" (Eslahkonha & Mall-Amiri, 2014, p. 190).

Hence it is clear that listening comprehension strategies does not only require cognitive ability, but it should also require metacognitive ability. An L2 learner who learns listening comprehension skill should not disregard the fact that he/she should also have awareness in his/her learning process. Besides cognitive and metacognitive abilities, social support is needed. Therefore, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classify listening strategies into 3 types: cognitive (mental activities for manipulating the language to accomplish a task), metacognitive (mental activities for directing language learning), and socio-affective (activities involving interaction or affective control in language learning).

The first type is the cognitive listening strategies. This is usually the first type that L2 learners aim for at the beginning of the learning process. The reason is because it focuses the basic concept of acquiring listening comprehension strategies (Nowrouzi, Sim, Zareian, & Nimehchisalem, 2014): top down (listening for the main idea, making predictions, making inferences and making summaries) and bottom up (listening for details, recognizing the origin of the sounds and language). Furthermore, cognitive listening comprehension strategies enable the learners to assess their ability in various conditions (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal & Tafaghodtari, 2006).

The second type is the metacognitive listening strategies. Besides the cognitive strategies, L2 learners should also have the ability to "...oversee, regulate, or direct the language learning process...involve thinking about the learning process, include planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 170). The reason is because these learners should have the problem solving ability in their learning process. Thus, in order to achieve success in the learning process, L2 learners should experience "self-reflection and self-direction" (Vandergrift, et. al, 2006, p. 435).

The third type is the socio-affective listening comprehension strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) believe that although listening comprehension seems like an individual type of skill to be learned, humans as social beings should also find support from their peers and teachers. Vandergrift (1999) describes learning "...happens when



language learners co-operate with classmates, question the teacher for clarification, or apply specific techniques to lower their anxiety level” (p. 170).

There have been researches done in relation to listening comprehension strategies. Mianmahaleh & Rahimy (2015) conducted a research on Iranian listening comprehension strategies. The result showed that gender played a big role in the choice of the strategies. The participants used more of the metacognitive strategies rather than cognitive and socio-affective. Eslahkonha & Mall-Amiri (2014) found that there is a correlation between the listening strategies (metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective) done by different language competence level of TEFL students (advanced, intermediate and lower-intermediate) and their listening comprehension ability level.

In their research, Nowrouzi, Sim, Zareian, & Nimehchi (2014) revealed that there were low levels of self-perceived use of cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies among the students. They also indicated that there should be more portion of attention to the effort of the students’ listening comprehension skills in general and their listening strategies in particular. Chen, Lee, and Lin (2010) discovered that L2 adult learners are usually aware of the variety of listening comprehension strategies and they use them in moderation. Another significant result indicated that the learners’ uses of listening comprehension strategies are highly influenced by their learning style preferences. Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, and Al-Shboul (2013) showed that adult students in Iran had moderate awareness of metacognitive listening strategies, comprehension performance, problem solving, planning and evaluation. From this result, they emphasized the need to increase the students’ metacognitive strategies awareness should be emphasized. Therefore, this research attempted to answer the following question: To what extent do the students in Critical Listening and Speaking (CLS) 2 class use their metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective listening strategies?

### **Method**

This is a quantitative research using a cross-sectional design to answer the questions. The data were collected using a survey method (Nunan, 1992). The respondents were 147 students from the English Language Education Study Program batch 2013 who took Critical Listening and Speaking 2 classes, consisting of 107 female students and 40 male students. All of the respondents were at the age of between 19-21 years old. They already had taken listening classes in their previous semesters. The data were collected through the Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) developed by Chen, Lee, & Lin (2010). The questionnaire consisted of 45 items which they are divided into three parts based on O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) listening comprehension strategies classifications: cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. There are 21 items which help the researcher investigate the participants’ metacognitive strategies, 19 items for cognitive strategies, and 5 items for socio-affective strategies.

The answer to the research question (respondents’ tendencies in using the listening strategies) in the listening class helped the researcher map the students’ tendencies in using the listening comprehension strategies. The mapping hence provided a good description of the condition which gave the researcher a good chance to provide a new perspective on teaching listening.

### **Findings and Discussion**

As has been explained in the previous section, the LCS questionnaire is divided into three strategies. They are: Metacognitive strategies, Cognitive strategies, and Socio-

affective strategies. Table 1 provided information on the result of the calculation of each item, in which it gave a clear distribution on each student's preference.

**Table 1. Students' LCS Result**

No.	Item	Mean	SD
<b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>			
1.	Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen.	2.75	.798
2.	I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding.	3.17	.645
3.	I find that listening in English is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English.	2.93	.873
4.	I translate in my head as I listen.	2.85	.830
5.	I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don't understand.	3.42	.607
6.	When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away.	2.89	.638
7.	As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.	3.25	.748
8.	I feel that listening comprehension in English is a challenge for me.	3.58	.584
9.	I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand.	3.47	.654
10.	Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to.	2.46	.733
11.	I translate key words as I listen.	2.97	.721
12.	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	3.31	.649
13.	As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct.	2.93	.674
14.	After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.	2.73	.796
15.	I don't feel nervous when I listen to English.	2.42	.921
16.	When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.	1.49	.666
17.	Use the general idea of the txt to help me guess the meaning of the words that I don't understand.	3.21	.542
18.	I translate word by word, as I listen.	1.93	.841
19.	When I guess the meaning of word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense.	3.17	.528
20.	As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension.	2.76	.763
21.	I have a goal in mind as I listen.	3.02	.706
<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>			
22.	I guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words.	3.18	.617
23.	I guess by means of the tone of voice.	2.51	.715
24.	I guess by the meaning of unknown words by referring to paralinguistic clues.	2.42	.721
25.	I guess based on other clues, such as what is required in the task.	3.02	.544
26.	I make use of certain words in the text that may not be related to the task to get more information about the task.	2.63	.721
27.	I use prior personal experience to comprehend the task.	2.92	.652

No.	Item	Mean	SD
28.	I use my world knowledge to comprehend the task.	3.22	.507
29.	I use knowledge gained during my formal learning experiences.	3.10	.511
30.	I question myself about what I do know, and what I do not know about a topic.	2.90	.709
31.	I try to adapt what I hear to make the story more interesting to myself.	2.95	.719
32.	I use mental imagery to create a picture of what is happening.	3.07	.773
33.	I make a mental or written summary of what I hear.	2.92	.735
34.	I translate from the first language verbatim what I hear in the second language.	2.49	.665
35.	I repeat words I listen to so that I become familiar with the sounds.	2.72	.774
36.	I use any resources to aid myself in my understanding (e.g. dictionaries, diagrams, notes, peers).	3.08	.780
37.	I group words together based on common attributes.	2.29	.694
38.	I write notes as I follow some spoken text.	3.10	.737
39.	I apply rules I have learned or have developed myself to follow a text.	2.84	.648
40.	I substitute words I know to fill in gaps in my listening to see if my overall comprehension makes sense.	2.93	.620
Socio-affective Strategies			
41.	I find out more about the text by asking questions.	2.79	.778
42.	I work together to pool comprehension.	2.93	.601
43.	I try to relax before listening to the message.	3.47	.634
44.	I develop a positive attitude toward the task and believe that it is possible for me to understand what I will hear.	3.42	.596
45.	I realize that sometimes I will not feel happy about listening in a second language.	2.51	.850

Table 2 provided information on the level of frequency for each Strategy. Based on this table, it was clear that the overall Mean for the 21 items in Metacognitive Strategy is 2.890 (SD = .710), the overall Mean for the 19 items in Cognitive Strategy is 2.857 (SD = .675), and the overall Mean for the 5 items in Socio-affective Strategy is 3.024 (SD = .691).

**Table 2. Mean Values for each Strategy**

Strategy (Item)	Overall Mean	Overall SD
<b>Metacognitive (1 – 21)</b>	2.890	.710
<b>Cognitive (22 – 40)</b>	2.857	.675
<b>Socio-affective (41 – 45)</b>	3.024	.691

The calculation in Table 3 showed that students of Critical Listening and Speaking 2 Batch 2013 used all of the three strategies. Of all the three strategies, the highest was the Socio-affective strategy ( $M = 3.024$ ,  $SD = .691$ ), followed by Metacognitive strategy ( $M = 2.890$ ,  $SD = .710$ ) and Cognitive Strategy ( $M = 2.857$ ,  $SD = .675$ ).

As have been shown in the statistics, it was evident that all of the 147 students used the three strategies to some extent. Interestingly, the strategy that helped them in the listening class was the Socio-affective strategy. Social support and social interaction provided the students a good amount of information needed to increase their listening comprehension level. Socio-affective strategy provided the students with a sense of togetherness, and thus this atmosphere reduced the students' level of anxiety (Tsai, 2015).

Moreover, another possible reason for the high level of Socio-affective strategy among the students was because the cues and discussions done in the class helped increase their comprehension level. Having to communicate with each other and discuss their ideas, the students were able to practice their Metacognitive strategy because the discussions with their peers became a good medium for them to develop their "selective attention" strategy (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 172). Throughout these processes of discussions and communication, the students' cognition was continuously provoked since they were conditioned to monitor and plan their effort to have good comprehension level, and, at the same time, were asked to retrieve their background knowledge of the topics discussed. This step enabled the students to achieve self-awareness.

### **Conclusion**

The result indicated that there was a tendency for the students to use Socio-affective strategy to help them gain good listening comprehension level. This strategy can assist the students in gaining confidence on their listening comprehension ability. Once they become confident, they can have a good sense of self-awareness, i.e. awareness on their true capacity of comprehension and therefore leads to opening the path for the students to use the Metacognitive and Cognitive strategies. This reality hopefully can provide another perspective for EFL teachers when teaching listening. In order to achieve good listening comprehension, teachers can always approach the teaching listening by providing a medium for the students to have meaningful discussions because meaningful discussions can evoke the students' comprehension.

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