Strategies and Predictors of EFL Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to compare the efficiency of two methods for teaching listening comprehension – the *cognitive strategy-based instruction method* (CSBM) and the *metacognitive strategy-based instruction method* (MetSBM). Additionally, this study aims to evaluate the way in which three co-variables – *vocabulary knowledge* (VK), *word recognition* (WR) and *working memory* (WM) – contribute to individual differences in listening comprehension. The subjects of this study, 44 female students studying on an English programme at the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), were placed in two groups and taught a range of listening comprehension strategies, in accordance with the MetSBM and the mainstream CSBM. Seven pre- and post-tests were used (a listening comprehension test (LCT), vocabulary knowledge tests (VKK1 and VKK2), the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), an Aural Word Recognition test (AWR), an Orthographic Word Recognition test (OWR), a Working Memory Span test (WMS). This study considers three questions: (1) Is metacognitive teaching likely to lead to higher listening comprehension scores than the teaching of cognitive strategies, (2) Are students in the control group likely to develop metacognitive strategies on their own, and (3) Are there other variables that are likely to contribute to listening comprehension. The results suggest that the MetSBM is more effective in teaching and learning how to listen for comprehension than the CSBM. In addition, other variables – OWR, AWR, and WM contribute to listening comprehension. A number of recommendations to teachers, material developers, and researchers are provided. The present study contributes to the field of listening comprehension in an Arab context (a so far an unmapped territory). It equips English teachers with feasible ways of teaching EFL listening comprehension more efficiently.

Keywords: Cognitive, metacognitive, listening comprehension recognition, working memory

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