


Research Article

Exploring Listening Learning Strategies of L2 Students at Different Proficiency Levels

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Abstract: Enhancing second language (L2) listening skills is a major goal in L2 teaching and learning. Despite its importance, there are insufficient studies on the learning strategies L2 learners use during listening. Using a pilot research design, this study explored the similarities and differences in strategy use between high and low proficiency groups of 12 EFL learners in a semester-long course at a university in Vietnam. In addition to statistical analyses of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire, the instructor's interview data were analyzed. The findings revealed significant differences in the frequency of strategy use between the two groups; however, both high and low proficiency groups experienced anxiety before listening tests or exams. Interestingly, all participants were actively engaged in teamwork, though the lower proficiency group sometimes hesitated to work with peers due to limited linguistic knowledge. The findings contribute to L2 listening teaching and learning, with suggestions for training courses in listening strategies.

Keywords: English language learning; learning strategies; listening comprehension; listening learning strategies; EFL students; proficiency level

1. Introduction

Listening is one of the four language skills fundamental to language learning. However, its complex, temporary and simultaneous nature challenges second language learners when they listen, making it one of the most difficult language skills. Listening comprehension involves constructing meaning from various knowledge sources based on acoustic signals (Rost, 2013). Developing listening skills is crucial for acquiring a second language (L2). Research indicates that L2 listening abilities can be enhanced through methods such as teaching metacognitive strategies (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010), focusing on segmentation and phonetic variations (Field, 2003), using audio-visual techniques, and implementing pre-listening activities like introducing vocabulary and discussing speech content.

Listening comprehension can be influenced by many person factors, including cognitive aspects like linguistic and metacognitive knowledge, as well as affective aspects such as self-efficacy and anxiety (Vandergrift & Goh, 2021), and listening strategy use (Nix, 2016). Research indicates a relationship between these factors and L2 listening comprehension (Nix, 2016; Wallace, 2020). For instance, vocabulary knowledge is a key predictor of L2 listening comprehension (Wang & Treffers-Daller, 2017; Vandergrift & Baker, 2018), and listening metacognitive knowledge significantly contributes to it (Goh & Hu, 2013; Zeng & Goh, 2015). Affective factors like anxiety and self-efficacy also play a crucial role (Chen, 2007; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). However, in language learner strategy research, listening has long been noted as a neglected skill and this situation has remained largely unchanged over recent decades of strategy research (Zeng and Goh, 2018).

Identifying effective strategies for enhancing student learning has long been a complex task for researchers and educators. Students can boost their academic success by using suitable learning strategies (Wang et al., 2013; Radford et al., 2015), while teachers can significantly enhance student achievement across different settings (Radford et al., 2015; Schroeder et al., 2017).

Vietnam, like many Asian nations, has reformed English language education. The

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National Foreign Language Project (NFLP) 2020 aims to transform language education, focusing on English. Under this initiative, university graduates are expected to reach level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Nevertheless, despite recognizing the importance of English and significant efforts in language teaching policies, Vietnamese students' English proficiency remains below expectations (Bui & Nguyen, 2016).

Numerous studies on second language acquisition have highlighted that language learning strategy use is the most critical factor (Chamot, 2004; Ellis, 2008). Consequently, educators and researchers prioritize language learning strategies over teaching methods. These studies have identified several factors influencing language learning strategy use, including English proficiency, learning environments, learner characteristics, and educational background, as well as cultural and experiential aspects (Oxford, 2003; Deneme, 2008; Khamkhien, 2010). Additionally, research has examined the relationship between strategy choice and influencing factors, suggesting that gender, age, motivation, language proficiency, etc. affect strategy selection. Therefore, investigating both the use of language learning strategies and the factors influencing these choices is advantageous for students and educators, which provides valuable insights for enhancing English learning and proficiency. This study, for these reasons, aimed to explore first-year students' use of language learning strategies and the related factor of English proficiency level, with results aimed at improving English teaching and learning, particularly in the Vietnamese context. The study, therefore, addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do L2 students of different levels of proficiency use different or similar strategies in learning listening?
2. What strategies are mainly employed by students with higher proficiency?

2. Materials and Methods

This pilot study was carried out in a public university in Vietnam. Participants (N=12 with 2 groups of 6 students each; 3 boys and 3 girls in each group; aged 19) were drawn from one of the two English-major classes. The participants needed to take a 3-hour listening class per week. The participants were divided into two groups according to the scores on the past replacement test which was employed for this study. Each group included 6 freshmen majoring in English. The participants in the first group were considered as higher proficiency L2 learners.

This pilot study was conducted at a public university in Vietnam. Participants were English majors (N=12), consisting of two groups of six freshmen each, with three boys and three girls per group, all aged 19. They were selected from one of two English-major classes and attended a 3-hour weekly listening class. The groups were formed based on scores from a previous placement test used in this study. The first group comprised higher proficiency L2 learners. Data were collected through statistical analyses of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire and structured interviews with both groups. These methods explored the frequency of language learning strategy use, the correlation of strategy use frequency between the groups, and a detailed analysis of each strategy component used by the groups.

In this study, three variables were taken into account in order to ascertain the validity of the findings. They were categorized as Moderator variables, Controlled variables, and Extraneous variables based on the results of questionnaires analysis of students' individual background and English knowledge.

a) **Moderator variables:**

Gender: male and female learners may use different language strategies. However, that three boys and three girls are equally put in each of the proficiency groups can minimize the effect of these variables.

b) **Controlled variables:** these variables can be controlled because they are fixed factors.

- *Students' origins:* all of them are non-ethnic minorities.
- *Students' age:* all of them are at the age of 19.
- *Learning facilities and materials:* the Department's Management Board decides the materials of the language programs. All the classrooms are equally equipped. The teacher is qualified and experienced.

c) **Extraneous variables:** these variables may affect the finding validity because they can not be exactly measured.

- *Students' motivation:* the collected data on questionnaires showed that all of students chose teachers of English, interpreters and translators as their future careers.
- *Students' personalities:* active, highly participated, hardworking
- *Students' background of English knowledge and listening experiences:* all of them have experienced English learning for 8-9 years. They are also taking evening extra courses to improve knowledge of English and spend one or more hours every day practicing listening. It should be noted that listening was almost ignored in secondary and high school.

There have been a numerous studies conducted on students' responses to language learning strategies. In this pilot study, the six categories including Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social strategies are used to explore how students of different proficiency in listening employ these strategies. The results were collected by interview and SILL.

Interview: There are a total of six questions in the one-to-one interviews. The questions of the interviews were designed based on the six categories in Oxford's taxonomy (1990) of language learning strategies such as Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social to seek students' oral responses to language learning strategies they employ in listening.

SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning): Version 7.0 of the SILL (Oxford, 1990), a self-report instrument that assesses the frequency with which the subjects use a variety of techniques for foreign language learning were administered to twelve students in order to collect their written responses to the use of Memory (Memo), Cognitive (Cog), Compensation (Comp), Metacognitive (Metacog), Affective (Aff) and Social (Soci) strategies in listening. The instrument includes 50 statements. Items 1-9 focus on memory strategies; items 10-23 cover cognitive strategies involving mental processes; items 24-29 address compensation strategies for gaps in knowledge; items 30-38 pertain to metacognitive strategies related to organizing and evaluating learning; items 39-44 deal with affective strategies for managing emotions; and items 45-50 involve social strategies related to learning with others. Students answered each item statement using a 5-point Likert-scale that ranged from 1 (Never or almost never true of me) through 5 (Always or almost always true of me).

3. Results and Discussion

The data analysis results of the frequency of language learning strategy use of the two proficiency groups are presented as follows (Tables 1 and 2):

Table 1. Mean scores of frequencies of learning strategy use among high proficiency students.

Participant	Memo	Cog	Comp	Metacog	Aff	Soci
Kim Long	3.78	3.43	2.83	4.67	2.83	3.33
Ngoc Hoang	3.00	3.43	3.33	3.78	3.00	4.17
Huy Cuong	3.67	3.64	3.33	3.44	3.17	4.33
Tuyet Mai	3.11	3.00	2.83	4.00	2.83	3.33
Bich Tram	2.89	3.50	2.83	3.78	3.00	4.33
Thuy Van	2.56	3.36	3.33	3.22	2.33	3.83
Grand mean scores of frequencies	3.17	3.39	3.08	3.82	2.86	3.88

Table 2. Mean scores of frequencies of learning strategy use among low proficiency students.

Participant	Memo	Cog	Comp	Metacog	Aff	Soci
Anh Phuong	2.78	3.36	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.67
Quang Vinh	2.00	2.64	1.83	3.22	3.00	2.83
Dinh Khoi	2.33	2.21	3.00	3.11	2.50	3.00
Minh Tham	2.55	2.71	2.67	3.67	3.00	3.67
Thi Nga	2.33	2.64	2.67	3.00	1.83	3.00
Thi Dinh	2.56	2.50	2.33	3.33	2.67	3.83

Grand mean scores of frequencies	2.43	2.68	2.64	3.22	2.61	3.17
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3.1. Memory Strategies

The results reveal that the frequency of Memory strategy use of the high proficiency (HP) group (3.17) is 0.74 point higher than that of the low proficiency (LP) group (2.43). The result of the interview also favors the HP group in employing Memory strategies. The score that represents the correlation of the frequency of these strategies used between the two groups is quite clear (0.74). However, the score for the category of strategies labeled “*Remembering more effectively*” of the HP group is rated as “*medium*” in the SILL key and means that they sometimes use these strategies. In line with this, the score of the LP group for these strategies is classed as “*low*” (2.43). This means that this group’s strategies are not frequently used.

The result of the individuals’ strategies analysis shows that both high proficiency group and the low one seem to be in favor of “*reviewing well*” rather than other memory strategies. This finding may imply that Vietnamese students during their school years must review every lesson they have learnt for a check-up in the following class. Thus, when they study at the university, they keep this hard-working habit. Interestingly, the LP group tends to make use of this strategy a little bit more than the HP group with the score for “*reviewing well*” is 3.50 and 3.33 respectively. In the interview, when the researcher asked Bich Tram (the third of the highest proficiency students) why she rarely used this strategy, she reported that she could remember what she has learned at school. Instead, she tried to seek other opportunities to improve her knowledge by the extra sources like watching English movies and reading magazines in English or preparing for the next class; in contrast, most of the LP students responded that they needed to review often in order to remember the lessons more effectively.

Apart from “*reviewing well*” strategy that is frequently used by the learners of the LP group, other Memory strategies such as “*associating, using imagery, using key words and representing sounds in memory*” are more favorite among students of the HP group than those of the low one. However, the score for “*using imagery*” strategy of the high group is just at an acceptable level (2.83). This situation may imply that Vietnamese listeners who are considered to possess rote learning style and be auditory learners have difficulties in going beyond the language to create a mental image of a particular situation while listening. Moreover, that listening is almost neglected during secondary and high school doesn’t aid students employ various and useful strategies for their listening.

Huy Cuong (shown as the highest proficiency student) came out as having a broad range of memory strategies with the score of 3.67 which is classed as “*high*” in the SILL key and means that he usually used these strategies, especially “*associating and using key words*”. So, it is reasonable to assume that he makes use of these strategies more often by relating previous known ideas with new information or combining sounds and images helps him remember more easily what he hears, therefore, getting the whole meaning of the task.

In general, the results discussed above confirm that high proficiency listeners tend to use Memory strategies more frequently than the low ones. However, this frequency is not classed as “*high*” in the SILL key.

3.2. Cognitive Strategies

3.2.1. Differences of strategy use between High Proficiency (HP) Group and Low Proficiency (LP) Group.

Students of the HP group came out as having a more frequent use of cognitive strategies than those of the low one. This is compatible with students’ reports in the interview. The results shown in Chart 5 and Chart 6 reveal a significant difference between HP and LP groups in cognitive (means = 3.39 & 2.68 respectively). This situation may imply that HP learners themselves often feel confident to engage in the learning process. In other words, they are active to seek the opportunities they may make use to find different ways that will facilitate their learning while LP ones by their nature do not feel comfortable enough to take part in the classroom activities and are not active enough to discover their own ways to improve their learning situations. However, the score for this strategy of the HP group is not classed as “*high*” according to the SILL key.

The results show that listeners of the HP group are very much familiar to the strategies

of “*getting ideas quickly and formally practicing with sounds*” with the score of 4.33 for both. In answer to my asking them what they did when listening to a spoken text for the first time, all of students of the high proficiency group replied that they just tried to cover the whole passage to find out what it was about. They left note-taking or anything else at the second or the third time. In contrast, the less proficiency students said they tended to focus on some words they didn’t understand, so this inhibited them from following the playing content. Also, the former group mentioned practicing pronunciation as one of the useful techniques that helps them comprehend the spoken message more effectively. By practicing how words were pronounced they were able to recognize them in the spoken text. However, the latter group reported that they needed time to adjust incorrect pronounced words they had used for ages. The lowest proficiency student Vinh said he needed help with this problem. It is a sad reality that most Vietnamese students are not formally trained with pronunciation during the school years. This results in wrong pronunciation produced by students and mishearing is unavoidable though they certainly know that word when reading it in written texts.

HP students use less “*translating*” strategy than the low ones. In line with this situation, the interview result reveals that the former students just listened to the content which is relevant to the following questions or the general idea of the text while the latter ones wanted to know every word in the text in order to get the content of it. In other words, less competent listeners tend to pay attention to the details to comprehend the whole meaning of the text.

Apart from these strategies, successful listeners are also quite more familiar with using “*taking notes*” strategy than the less successful ones. Five out of six students in the high proficiency group reported in the interview that they often wrote some key words that they use later for the answers to the comprehension questions or noted down some main points made by lectures. Only two out of six students in the low one replied that they sometimes used this strategy. The rest said they could not catch up with the speed if they focused on taking some notes.

3.2.2. Similarities of strategy use between HP and LP Groups

Both high and low proficiency students have in common employing “*repeating*” strategy at a high frequency use (means = 4.33 & 4.17 respectively). It is reasonable to assume that Vietnamese students who experienced the traditional teaching method which favors rote repetition are quite familiar with learning everything by heart through doing some repetition. When the author asked students of the two groups about “*repeating*” for listening, most of them responded they usually listened to English songs many times or repeated listening to a recorded task until they comprehended it.

Students of both groups seem to be interested in “*using resources for receiving and sending messages*”. Indeed, they said that they tried to make use various sources such as using dictionaries to look up new words they encountered when listening to on tape recorders, watching movies on Disney Channel or reading “*Sunflower*” or “*Special English*” magazines to aid in listening comprehension. This accords well with their hard-working personality and high motivation in English learning.

Unexpectedly, two groups came out with a very low frequency use of “*summarizing*” strategy, especially the less proficiency group. It may imply that teachers rarely ask for a summary to a listening task or summarizing is a hard skill for less proficient students.

3.3. Compensation Strategies

The results show that the frequency of Compensation strategy use of HP participants is 0.44 point higher than that of the low ones. This result also accords with the interview result. However, the frequency use employed by both groups in Compensation is rated as “*medium*” and “*low*” in the SILL key (means = 3.08 & 2.64 respectively).

Good listeners tend to use more “*Guessing intelligently*” than the poor ones. In answer to my asking students in both groups what they would do when they did not understand the meaning of a spoken text, five out of six students of the HP group said that they made guess by recognizing word order in the text. When asked to do multiple-choice exercises in a listening task, they predicted on their own based on linguistics clues such as prefixes or suffixes they heard and sometimes if they misunderstood some parts in an utterance, they waited for the next information in order to understand the whole meaning of it. They also noticed the speaker’s voice, attitude and facial expressions to comprehend what he/she said. In contrast, only two out of six students of the low proficiency group reported that they sometimes made a guess when they failed to comprehend a spoken message by some key words they heard or the speaker’s tone or voice. The rest replied that they didn’t want to take

risks because their guesses were usually not right. They tended to guess without basing on any clues because they were not able to recognize them in a spoken message.

It may imply that good learners guess willingly and accurately. Therefore, they are not afraid of taking risks and view errors as a useful tool for learning. The good guesser “*uses his feel for grammatical structures, clues from redundancy in the message. He uses non-verbal clues, word-association clues, outside knowledge. He makes inferences as to the purpose, intent, point of view of a message or communication*” (Rubin, 1975, p. 46). On the contrary, the poor ones with their limited knowledge of lexis and grammar are hesitant to take risks.

3.4. Metacognitive Strategies

The indications reveal that there is a significant difference of frequency of Metacognitive use between the HP group and the low one (means = 3.82 & 3.22 respectively). It means that students of the former group usually use these leaning strategies and students of the latter group use these strategies less often (sometimes use). This situation is compatible with the interview result. Although metacognitive strategy is rated as one of the indirect strategies in Oxford’s taxonomy, it is crucial for directing language learning and has great potential for enhancing success in target language listening (Vandergift, 1997b, cited in White, 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that good listeners tend to set the goal for themselves and find ways to attain that goal. Also, they evaluate what they have learnt to improve their language knowledge. The poor learners who are often not good at organizing or evaluating their own learning come out with unsatisfactory results.

The individuals’ frequency of Metacognitive strategy use at each item of the SILL in shows that:

- High proficiency learners are more interested in using “*paying attention*” strategy than the low ones (means = 4.83 & 3.33 respectively). In the interview, all of the good listeners said they paid attention to the listening task despite of difficulties and avoided distractors that were not relevant. They also replied that they would decide what information necessary to listen in order to focus more on the purpose of listening. In contrast, the less competent listeners didn’t recognize this. Similarly, both groups reported that they took the strategy “*Identify the purpose of a language task*” into account, but students in the higher proficiency group showed a greater enthusiasm in setting the purpose for listening such as taking notes of salient ideas when listening to a lecture or the content that related to the questions given.

- Apart from the strategies above, HP students make much use of “*seeking for practice opportunities*” with the score at 4.17 while students’ score of low proficiency group for this strategy is just at an acceptable level (2.83) and means that these students sometimes use this strategy. This may imply that good learners tend to create and make use of any opportunities that facilitate their learning.

- According to Oxford (1990), “*students without aims are like boats without rudders, they do not know where they are going*”. Good learners usually set goals and objectives to channel their learning in the right direction. Therefore, this may result in high proficiency students’ score for “*setting goals and objectives*” strategy at 3.83 higher than that of low proficiency students (3.16).

- Although both proficiency groups are quite familiar with “*self-monitoring*” strategy, there is a tendency that students of high proficiency group use this strategy more frequently than those of the low one. This is because competent learners are willing to make mistakes in order to learn and to communicate. (Rubin, 1975, p.47)

- Learners of both proficiency groups employ “*self-evaluating*” strategy with a high score (3.67). It is reasonable to assume that their strong desire is to attain the most satisfied results for the future career. Therefore, evaluating their own improvement to know where they are in their learning process to adjust their learning is really important.

3.5. Affective Strategies

The results indicate that students of HP group use this strategy more often than those of the low proficiency group (means = 2.86 & 2.61 respectively). However, the correlation of frequency use of Affective is not very high (0.15) which means that students of the former group sometimes use this strategy and so do students of the latter one.

In answer to my asking whether they felt anxious when confronted with a listening task in the classroom or in the exam and what they would do in those situations, all of them responded they did. However, good listeners tended to be less worried than the poor ones. More than half of students of HP groups replied that they usually spent a few minutes taking a deep breath or relaxing to lower their anxiety whenever they felt anxious. So did some of

the less proficiency students. The rest of the LP group said that they didn't know how to relax or even didn't think of lowering anxiety, either. Especially, the second lowest proficiency student, Nga never uses relaxing as a way to lower her anxiety.

On the basis of the 12 students' report about using Affective strategies, it is clear to conclude that high proficiency students with their broad knowledge of lexis and grammar gain their confidence from anxiety soon. The less proficiency ones who, in contrast, always feel uncertain about their knowledge and worry about their unsatisfactory results, seem to be unlikely to think of relaxing or other sorts of things as strategies to lower anxiety.

3.6. Social Strategies

The results indicate students of high proficiency group came out as having wider range of Social strategies than those in the lower group (means = 3.88 & 3.17) and there is a significant difference between the two groups in using Social (the correlation is 0.71). It means that students of the former group usually use this strategy and those in the latter group sometimes use it.

Students in both proficiency groups show a great frequency of using strategy "*Asking for clarification and verification*". However, low proficiency students are not as interested in "*cooperating with others*" strategy as the good ones. It may be assumed that good learners are more active and confident to share their ideas with the others and seek the information they don't possess from their peers to enrich their knowledge while poor learners are hesitated to take part in cooperative activities because of their limited knowledge to share.

4. Teaching Implications

From the findings of the current research, the effect of strategy use on students' achievement is confirmed. Indeed, research indicates that differences in achievement in second language learning are often related to differences in strategy use (Oxford, 1986). Therefore, it is important for English teachers to believe that effective strategy use can determine students' success and a key element to help students become autonomous. Learners can increase their own motivation, and their learning becomes more effective if they are actively involved in the process of their own learning. However, most of students do not know how to learn a foreign language. Thus, "*learners need to learn how to learn, and teachers need to learn how to facilitate the process*" (Oxford, 1990, p.201). We, as teachers, must be good and know how to help our students understand good language learning strategies and should train them to develop and use these different kinds of learning strategies. By doing this, we can "*lessen the difference between the good learner and the poor one*" (Rubin, 1975, p.50). From these insights, I should express some suggestions on strategy training that may be implemented in the classroom settings by incorporating learning strategies into our teaching method to help students explore the most useful strategies that work for their learning.

a) *Teaching implications for helping learners to exploit the advantages of Memory Strategies*

According to Oxford (1990), this kind of strategy is considered as the most important of all the six types because it "aids in entering information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication". Therefore, to encourage students make use of these strategies in order to facilitate them in comprehending a spoken message more effectively, some suggestions can be made as follows:

- Making students aware of the importance of memory strategies by explaining how it facilitates them in getting input in order to encourage them to choose and build the useful strategies that will work for them.
- Making use of various classroom activities that would favor different preferred learning styles and interests of students by offering instructions involving using both images and sounds such as listening tasks with charts, images, graphics...

b) *Teaching implications for helping learners to exploit the advantages of Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies*

Cognitive strategies "are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language" (Oxford, 1990). In other words, cognitive strategies are considered as "power tools" in helping learners understanding and producing language in various ways while metacognitive strategies involve monitoring learning while it is taking place, and evaluating learning after it has occurred. Vandergrift (1997b as cited in White, 2008) claimed that the effective use of metacognitive gave the learners an overview of how well other listening processes were working. Therefore, to encourage students to employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies effectively would

increase students' listening competence by integrating these in our teaching method:

- Train students in pronunciation so that they can practice formally with sounds. Correct pronunciation may facilitate students in comprehending a spoken message.
- Provide sufficient and appropriate English teaching materials from various sources such as listening tasks from books, magazines, radio etc...in order to increase students' opportunities to improve their listening skill and inspire them to explore the language they are learning from those sources.
- Offering authentic language consisting of carefully chosen samples of authentic native speech and activities which should be designed with at least some features similar to real life situations such as daily conversations for students to listen to would be very beneficial for them.
- Give students opportunities to do with a wide range of listening subskills like scanning or skimming.
- Inventing meaningful pre-tasks in order to let students express their own linkages between new materials and what they already know and direct their attention to the listening task.
- Help students set long- term and short- term aims for their studying so that they can know what they are going to learn and how to achieve their goals. Then, encourage them to evaluate their learning in order to make appropriate adjustment to improve learning process and help them discover more about themselves as learners.
- Give tasks which have clear instructions so that students can identify the purpose of those tasks, which enables them to channel their listening in the right direction.

By developing their metacognitive strategies in this way we are helping learners take greater control of their own learning and encouraging the kind of active involvement and personal investment that has proved crucial to successful second language acquisition

c) *Teaching implications for helping learners to exploit the advantages of Compensation, Affective and Social Strategies*

The findings of the current study reveal that the less successful learners who are not confident of their competence and performance are hesitated to take part in social contexts. The feeling of being afraid of making mistakes inhibits students from comprehending the content of a spoken message smoothly while good students with their confidence of knowledge know how to overcome difficult situations. As Arnold (2000) says, "Either exam anxiety or other factors in classroom learning produce negative feelings about the class. These feelings, if experienced repeatedly, may lead students to associate anxiety with language learning itself". Teachers, therefore, should bear in mind that:

- Create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and try to interact with students humorously in order to involve them in their learning process.
- Encourage students to think of positive thoughts that they will be successful if they believe in themselves.
- Encourage students to transfer what they know about the world to language learning and help students understand how topic, context, mood, human relationships help them narrow down the possible meaning of a sentence, or a word and help them guess what the linguistic function of a particular item might be.
- Create communicative opportunities as many as possible in order to involve students in classroom interaction by giving interesting and communicative pre-listening and post -listening to improve learner's listening performance in different kinds of contexts.

Hopefully, although orienting students in perceiving learning strategies that work for them is a big challenge for teachers, they, with great patience and enthusiasm make students' learning easier, quicker, more effective and more fun.

5. Conclusions

This research has explored language learning strategies and their relationship with language proficiency by examining how frequently and differently competent and less competent listeners apply these strategies to enhance their learning comprehension. The findings align with previous studies which indicate that the higher a learner's language proficiency, the more frequently they employ language learning strategies. This relationship underscores the importance of strategic learning in language acquisition and suggests that proficient learners are more adept at utilizing a wide range of strategies to aid their understanding and retention.

Given the limited sample sizes in this pilot study, there is a clear need for future

investigations to identify which specific language learning strategies are most effective at various proficiency levels. Understanding these nuances can help educators tailor their teaching methods to better support learners at different stages. Identifying the optimal strategies for each proficiency level will enable more targeted instruction, therefore maximizing learning outcomes and fostering greater language acquisition success. Moreover, it is particularly important to explore the role of strategy training in the classroom. Such training could significantly enhance learners' listening performance across diverse contexts, including classroom tasks and everyday conversations. By integrating strategy training into the curriculum, educators can provide learners with practical tools to improve their listening skills, which are essential for effective communication in both academic and real-world settings. Last but not least, future research should consider larger and more diverse sample sizes to ensure the generalizability of the findings. Investigating the impact of cultural and individual differences on strategy use could provide deeper insights into how learners from various back-grounds approach language learning to support learners in achieving their language goals.

This research regarding language learning strategies and their relationship with language proficiency has investigated the significance of how frequently and differently competent listeners and less competent ones applied strategies to facilitate their learning. The finding of this research is consistent with the previous studies that the higher the language proficiency of the learners are, the more frequently they use language learning strategies.

The limited sample sizes in this pilot study implied that future investigations are desirable:

1. What types of language learning strategies appear to work best with certain levels of proficiency?
2. What language learning strategies should be taught at different proficiency levels?
3. Would the strategy training in the classroom be useful for improving learner's listening performance in different kinds of contexts? (e.g., completing tasks in the classroom or in daily conversation)

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