

The Interplay of Metacognitive Listening instruction and Form focused Instruction for Teaching Grammar

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Abstract.

Research on grammar learning has been a concern for many scholars to find a path toward teaching grammar effectively. The sort of interaction between the learners and teachers has been regarded highly in the past decades resulting in taking focus on form approach into account focusing on form in the context of meaningful interaction. The fact that how learning grammatical features can be in contact with other language skills seems to be of importance since, to date, researchers have been studying various approaches toward grammar learning concentrating on initial grammar translation methods toward newly adopted methodologies such as focus on form approach or computer-assisted grammar learning. In this regard, it seems that metacognitive listening instruction as a process-based approach toward teaching listening and in favor of encouraging communication to enhance the learners' listening ability interactively, can be taken at the service of teaching grammar as highlighted in focus on form. Hence, the present research, aims to review the studies done in the areas of teaching grammar in a meaningful communication, which is in line with focus on form approach and metacognitive listening instruction. In fact, the purpose of the study is to provide various literatures and find a bridge to incorporate metacognitive listening instruction into teaching grammar in the context of meaningful communication.

Keywords: teaching grammar, focus on form, metacognitive listening, meaningful interaction

1. Teaching Grammar: Theoretical Issues.

Research on both SLA and psycholinguistics shows that second language acquisition is not a process of accumulating entities (Long, 1991; VanPatten, 1994). Language learning rarely happens with bits of language being learnt separately in an additive fashion. In addition, teachers cannot predict and determine what students are going to learn at any given stage (Willis, 1996). Traditional grammar-based instruction ignored the language learning developmental processes through which L2 learners normally pass, and the fact that progress is not necessarily unidirectional (Ellis, 2008; Long & Robinson, 1998). Furthermore, as for the authenticity of the input, Widdowson (1989) states that as fabricated by teachers, the classroom interactions and the practiced language forms will not necessarily transfer to actual language use in real-life situations. As a result, traditional grammar teaching has failed to prepare learners for spontaneous, contextualized language use. "The belief that a precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatization no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology" (Skehan, 1996, p. 18).

Recognizing that treating the language purely as an object of study cannot develop the expected level of interlanguage proficiency, some researchers attempted to abandon grammar-based instruction in favor of more communicative-oriented language teaching which focused on language use (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). They argued that formal language lessons would develop only declarative knowledge of grammar structure, not the procedural ability to use forms correctly, and that there was no interface between these two types of knowledge since they existed as different systems in the brain (see Dekeyser, 2007; Ellis, 2002). As such, they see formal instruction as unnecessary for interlanguage development.

Theoretically, this reflects Krashen's (1985) distinction between conscious learning and unconscious acquisition of language which involves entirely separate processes. Language acquisition is an implicit, subconscious process which occurs as a result of engaging in natural communication where the focus is on meaning. By contrast, language learning is an explicit, conscious process which derives from formal instruction where the primary focus is on grammar and practice (Krashen, 1985). Krashen claims that learned or explicit knowledge which results from language learning cannot turn into acquired or implicit knowledge. According to Krashen, most of L2 cannot be taught; it must be acquired.

Proponents of communicative teaching claim that people of all ages learn languages best by experiencing them as a medium of communication. The essence of communicative language teaching is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence (Long & Robinson, 1998). Another tenet of communicative teaching is that exposing learners to large quantities of positive input that is comprehensible and meaningful is sufficient for language acquisition to occur. Grammar is acquired implicitly or incidentally (Krashen, 1985). This communicative language teaching approach underlies a variety of L2

classrooms, including those implementing Prabhu's procedural syllabus, Krashen's Natural approach, some content-based ELS instruction (e.g. immersion education), and task-based instruction.

The importance of attending to form becomes clear to both SLA researchers and teachers. Given that communicative language teaching by itself has been found to be inadequate (Ellis, 1997, 2002; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004), pedagogical interventions need to be interwoven into primarily communicative activities so as to overcome the limitations of both traditional grammar instruction and communicative language teaching (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

2. Emergence of Focus on Form Approach.

Researchers find it is necessary to look for an alternative approach, rather than to foster a single-sided teaching approach to promote both linguistic and communicative competence. In this context, motivated pedagogically by the findings of immersion and naturalistic research mentioned above and theoretically by the notion of noticing and the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), 'focus on form' (FonF) was proposed in an attempt to capture the strengths of the meaning-focus communicative approach while dealing with its limitations (Long & Robinson, 1998). In the Interaction Hypothesis, interaction between learners and other speakers, especially more proficient speakers, is of crucial importance for language development. Negotiation of meaning occurring in interaction produces negative feedback (e.g. recasts, a corrective reformulation of learners utterances) to draw learners' attention to mismatches between input and output, thus induce them to notice the forms which are not only comprehensible but also meaningful (Long & Robinson, 1998). As such, negative feedback during negotiation of meaning may facilitate L2 development (Long, 1996). Motivated by the role of negotiation of meaning during interaction, Long (1991) proposed the option of 'focus on form' to be incorporated in meaning-based communicative language teaching as an alternative to either traditional grammar instruction or pure communicative language teaching.

Since teaching came into existence, teachers have been concerned with error correction. Some schools of thought like behaviorist and nativist considered errors as sin which hinders communication and must be avoided at all cost (Schulz, 1996) and corrected immediately if noticed. Corrective feedback was regarded as something unimportant which had no place in classrooms. On the other hand, advocates of interactionist regarded errors as natural and treatable. They believed that positive evidence had a significant role in learning, but negative evidence, which was provided through feedback, was proved to be important as well. Since exposing learners to only one type of input is not sufficient; they must be provided with different input types if noticing is to occur. As a result, by the arrival of communicative language teaching (CLT), error treatment gained more value. Behaviorism was strongly anti-error. However, natural approach regarded correction as being useless according to Krashen's view which was based on the idea that learning a second language occurs naturally like first language acquisition and regarded errors as an indispensable part of learning. Interactionist, on the other hand, paid some more attention to the role of correction provided to the learners in forms of different feedback types. Here, doomed necessary, errors are corrected while students are involved in conversations.

The most recent theory of language, which is in line with 'focus on form' approach, is Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) that is in favor of teaching grammar in the context of meaningful interaction (Long, 1991).

Sociocultural theory emphasizes that social interaction and collaborations are two important requirements for learning a language. According to Vygotsky, isolated learning cannot contribute to individual cognitive development, and that learning is in nature a social enterprise. Central to this theory is the zone of proximal development, which refers to "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). By the notion of ZPD, the significance of collaborated work which is highlighted since by collaborating within their ZPD, learners develop what they have not yet transferred into their interlanguage through using their existing knowledge. In addition, when learners interact, especially with a more proficient interlocutor, less knowledgeable participant can gain some help to expand and elevate his/her language skills to higher levels of competence by a more knowledgeable participant in the process of interaction. However, in sociocultural theory, the instructor makes no attempt to prepare a specific set of corrective procedure to be given to the learners. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) corrective procedures in the ZPD must be negotiated between the novice and the expert. Here, learners must be provided with sufficient assistance to be persuaded to participate in the activity, and they should also feel responsible for arriving at the appropriate performance.

Since its conception, the idea of FonF has been widely advocated in the SLA literature. However, due to its popularity among researchers and teachers, there is considerable variation in how the term 'focus on form' is understood and used, and the construct has been interpreted and used differently by different researchers and teachers.

3. Focus on Form: Definitions.

In his seminal work, Long (1991) initially introduced the notion of 'focus on form': "Focus on form...overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose

overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (Long, 1991, 45-46). Based on this theoretical notion, Long & Robinson (1998) later raised a more pedagogically applicable definition of ‘focus on form’ as: “Focus on form consists of an occasional shift in attention to linguistic code features-by the teacher and/or one or more students-triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production” (Long & Robinson, 1998, p23).

The notions include minimally the following central features of FonF (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Williams, 1999):

1. A primary emphasis on the communication of meaning.
2. A brief attention shift from that emphasis on communication to focus on language as object.
3. A problem-oriented trigger for the attention shift.

The idea of attention to form differs from explicit formal instruction. The definitions and the central features of FonF make ‘focus on form’ distinguishable from the notion of ‘focus on forms’ (a term for traditional grammar teaching in Long, 1991) and focus on meaning (a term for meaning - focused communicative language teaching in Long 1991). ‘Focus on form’ *entails* a focus on formal elements of language with the prerequisite engagement in meaning, whereas ‘focus on forms’ is *limited* to such an isolated language focus with no intention for effective communication, and focus on meaning *excludes* much effort concerning language elements (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 4).

In Long’s definition, FonF would be viewed as a responsive teaching intervention for online occasional attention shifts to problematic form in a communication setting. The problematic form occurs incidentally as a breakdown or error of some difficulty in either production or comprehension. From a pedagogical perspective, this means that teachers should wait for issues to emerge and respond to them as needed.

This original conception of FonF has been broadened to the extent of allowing for a planned, and even separated instructional ‘focus on form’ that need not be derived from a real-time problem-trigger (Doughty & Williams, 1998). In Doughty and Williams’ definition, FonF includes both reactive and proactive FonF. Reactive FonF is consistent with Long’s original definition. A reactive FonF would require that the teacher notice and be prepared to handle various learning difficulties as they arise. Reactive FonF would seem to be most congruent with the general aims of communicative language teaching. However, in the majority of language class settings, a more proactive FonF approach is likely to be feasible as well (Doughty & Williams, 1998). In proactive FonF, the teacher must make a determination in advance as to which form - among the language forms that are potentially good candidates for focus - to select for attention at any particular time. Based on considerations of individual differences, developmental language learning sequences, input quality, formal and functional complexity, and L1 influence on SLA processes, the suggestion for proactive FonF should be distinguished from that of the traditional structural approaches in which isolated language forms are selected and sequenced on the basis of intuition (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Proactive FonF emphasizes the design of tasks that ensure that opportunities “to use problematic forms while communicating a message will indeed arise” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 211).

In addition to the reactive-proactive distinction, Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) use the term *preemptive* FonF. In this case, the trigger for the attentional shift from meaning to form may not be an actual or perceived problem; instead, it may simply be a problem that is anticipated. In this way, no problem-trigger is required. However, some researchers question whether it is a FonF at all (Williams, 1999). In Ellis et al’s (2001) teacher-initiated preemptive FonF, this focus is purely incidental and the teacher decides on the spur of the moment that learners might encounter difficulty processing a word or form, and therefore he/she launches into a brief, explicit instructional sequence. The ‘problem’ is only anticipated, and unfortunately as Ellis et al show, the prediction of the problem is not always accurate. It therefore cannot be treated as a real problem trigger. However, as we mentioned above, the problem-trigger (or the problematicity) is one of the three central features of FonF. This is an example to show that the term FonF is used and interpreted differently to a large extent to meet the different requirements of various research.

4. Studies on Focus on Form Approach.

Nassaji and Fotos (2011) argue that grammar should be taught through meaningful interaction caused by the application interactional tasks in which the learners engage in the meaningful participation to acquire the linguistic forms while benefitting from the role of teacher or peer feedback as well as teachers’ scaffolding. They call this approach to teaching grammar as focus on form (FOF), aiming to focus on the target form through involving the learners in meaningful peer or teacher-learner interaction. As to the present study, it benefits from metacognitive listening instruction as an educational intervention to foster interaction through process-based listening and paving the way for the learners to learn the simple past through interaction caused by the teachers’ discussion questions within the listening phases, assisting the learners to learn the simple past tense through FOF. To put it simply, metacognitive listening intervention will be taken as a tool to teach grammar through FOF approach. In fact, as no studies, up to the present might have taken the role of metacognitive listening instruction in teaching grammar into account, in the following, research on FOF and its importance in teaching grammar will be reviewed.

In a quasi-experimental study Spada and Lightbown (1993) attempted to examine the impact of instruction and corrective feedback on the development of interrogative constructions in the oral performance of ESL learners. The sample of the study consisted of francophone ESL learners aged 10-12 who participated in intensive communicative programs which were provided over a 5-month period in one school year. They were divided into two experimental classes and one control group. One experimental group received metalinguistic less explicit error correction; another one was provided with explicit error correction with no metalinguistic or implicit feedback, whereas in the comparison group instructor used implicit feedback most frequently. Both experimental classes received explicit instruction in the form of questions. The results of the pre-test and three post-tests (one immediately following the instruction, another one 5 weeks later, and the other one 5 months later) indicated that if form-focused instruction and corrective feedback are provided within the context of communicative interaction, they could lead to second language development.

Similarly, Lewon (2005) investigated the effectiveness of focus on form in developing second language learning. 118 learners who were distributed among 12 intact classes participated in the study at a private school in Auckland, New Zealand. The data were gathered by observing and recording the classes during 17 hours of meaning-focused L2 lessons. The learners were presented with individualized test items and focus-on-form episodes one day and two weeks after the treatment and were asked to recall the linguistic items provided in them. The findings revealed that incidental focus on form was useful in L2 learning. The immediate test showed that participants could produce nearly 60% of the targeted items correctly, and in the delayed posttest they were able to recall 50% of the correct form.

Long (1991) proposed an approach called FFI, which is an umbrella term to include both focus on forms and focus on form. Ellis defined FFI as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form”, (pp. 1-2). It seems that learners who begin learning when they are beyond early childhood appear to benefit from FFI. Long (1991) differentiated between focus on meaning, focus on forms, focus on form approaches. Focus on meaning describes purely communicative approaches (e.g. the Natural Approach) that emphasize pure meaning-based activities with no attempt to draw learners’ attention to form. Learners only attend to the content of what they want to communicate. Focus on forms, in contrast, constitutes principled selection and presentation of linguistic features and structures in isolated manners. Focus on forms is based on structural syllabi and includes PPP, i.e. presentation, practice, and production stages, with paying little attention to communicative use. On the other hand, in focus on form, which came into existence as a rationale to highlight CF, there is some effort to draw learners’ attention to form through CF while the primary focus is on meaning. Focus on form (FonF) includes all optimal conditions to meet learning. It is under learner control, i.e. it occurs when learner has a communication problem.

According to Fotos (1998), “FonF provides some type of implicit focus on grammar during communicative language teaching”, (p.2). In FonF, attention can be either planned or incidental (Ellis, 2002). In planned FonF, the instruction will be intensive. It includes presentation of linguistic rules to attend to during a meaning-focused activity, while in incidental FonF the instruction will be extensive and attention to various forms will arise spontaneously during meaning-focused activities. In incidental FonF, attention will be distributed to a whole range of forms that have not been preselected which may not be enough for acquisition, but in planned FonF intensive attention will be given to preselected forms; hence, it can promote acquisition. Pretests and posttests can be used with planned FonF to measure learner’s ability to use the targeted linguistic features; on the contrary, it is not feasible with incidental FonF since the linguistic items which arise during a meaning-focused activity are unpredictable (Loewen, 2005). Planned FonF involves the employment of focused tasks, but incidental FonF involves the use of unfocused tasks. Although planned FonF involves the use of focused tasks in the context of meaning-centered language use, it differs from the traditional grammar translation method due to the fact that target rules are embedded in meaning-focused activities, and learners are not aware of the fact that a particular form is being targeted; thus, they act as language users rather than as language learners when they perform the task.

In another study, Muranoi (2000) conducted a quasi-experimental study to find out the effects of two types interaction enhancement, (IE) plus formal debriefing (IEF), and IE plus meaning-focused debriefing (IEM) on the learning of English articles. The participants involved 91 Japanese university EFL students. They were assigned to two treatment groups: IEF and IEM. The former received implicit negative feedback and explicit explanation, while the latter was provided with negative feedback without any explicit grammar instruction. There was also a contrast group which received non-enhancement interaction plus meaning-focused debriefing. In terms of the pretest scores, there were no significant differences among the three groups, whereas they performed differently on the posttests. It was revealed that both the IEF and IEM groups were superior to the NEI group. However, IEF had a greater effect than IEM.

In a descriptive study in 2001, Williams investigated the effectiveness of spontaneous attention to form. The study also examined reactive language-related episodes (LREs) initiated by both the teachers and learners in forms of different feedback types. The data were gathered from 8 learners from 4 proficiency levels who took part in an intensive English program. Altogether 65 hours of audiotapes from listening classes were collected

during 8 weeks. The findings indicated that all learners benefitted from the collaborative practices. However, there was a correlation between the effectiveness of LREs and learners' proficiency level; that is, learners with higher proficiency levels benefitted more from the LREs than those learners with lower proficiency levels. It was also revealed that low proficiency learners benefitted more from teacher feedback than the feedback provided by other peers, but with students in higher levels, the feedback provided by both the teacher and other learners proved to be effective.

5. Metacognitive Listening Instruction.

Learning to listen remains mainly an individual affair, however. Learners do not benefit significantly from the knowledge and experiences of their peers and teachers. More importantly, many language programs still lack curricular support for overall listening development during and beyond the formal classroom. Learner-oriented listening instruction, therefore, needs to take advantage of the whole gamut of learning processes that learners experience in order to develop different aspects of their listening competence. Teachers need to nurture self-regulated learning and promote peer dialogue so that learners can learn to listen in a holistic manner (Goh, 1997, 2000; Vandergrift, 2004, 2007). In addition to the practice of listening, learners should know how to put metacognition into action. They can learn to use strategies appropriately during real-time listening and to direct their own learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluation, so that they continuously improve their listening abilities over months and years.

Metacognition has been shown to be one of the most reliable predictors of learning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012)). In fact, many education scholars consider it central to the learning process and key to its success (Alexander, 2008; Borkowski, 1996). The benefits of metacognitive instruction have been reported in different subject domains, such as mathematics and reading. More recently, the positive outcomes of different kinds of metacognitive interventions for L2 listening have also been reported (see for example, Cross, 2009; Goh & Taib, 2006).

Metacognitive experience, awareness at a particular moment, can be fleeting; for this reason, immediate follow-up is important. Learners need to reflect more deeply on their feelings in a particular context in order to construct a deeper understanding of themselves as learners and the nature of the task at hand. Learners who are aware of learning needs or problems can either choose to do nothing differently or they can select appropriate strategies to improve their learning. We see metacognition in action when learners show awareness of gaps in comprehension and take immediate action, such as orchestrating the use of selected strategies to bridge the gap. Learners may also involve other participants in an interaction to help out when they experience difficulty in oral communication. For example, a learner senses that he or she does not understand what is being said and asks the speaker to repeat or clarify. A learner may also learn to use backchannelling or response tokens (e.g., "Yes," "That's really interesting," etc.) as strategies to keep the conversation going for as long as possible. Metacognition in action is also demonstrated when learners critically reflect on their knowledge about learning, before, during, or after a particular listening experience or task, or when they actively involve other agents in their environment to facilitate their learning as a result of these reflections (e.g., classmates, computers).

The concept of self-regulation, for example, is used by some scholars to describe an individual's ability to change cognitive processes in response to new or changing task demands (Graham, 2004). While the two concepts are similar, metacognition has "a clear cognitive orientation," and self-regulation focuses more on the "human action than the thinking that engendered it." The construct of self-regulation also draws attention to the role of environmental factors as a stimulant for self-awareness and a trigger for regulatory responses (Kim, 2002).

Cross's (2010) listening study, situated within a socio-cultural paradigm, demonstrates the important role of peer dialogue in metacognitive instruction and the impact it has on developing learners' metacognitive awareness about listening text, listening comprehension, and listening strategy. Cross meticulously cross-matched three sets of data from transcripts of dialogues and listening diaries. He was able to show that learners' metacognitive knowledge had indeed increased as a result of the dialogic interaction, through individual knowledge construction and peer jointconstruction. The way learners engaged in the process of learning to listen during dialogues at various points in their activities and their post-listening diary reflections clearly illustrated metacognition in action. This study also demonstrates how the pedagogical sequence, presented in the next chapter, can be utilized for planning lessons that have an explicit focus on "sharing, selecting, and reflecting on listening strategies by learners as a mechanism for stimulating their metacognitive awareness" (p. 285).

As to the metacognitive instruction, it refers to pedagogical procedures that enable learners to increase awareness of the listening process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the nature and demands of listening, and strategies for listening. At the same time, learners also learn to plan, monitor, and evaluate their comprehension efforts and the progress of their overall listening development. Metacognitive instruction will enable learners to become better learners of listening as they take positive action to self-regulate their learning. When integrated with well-planned listening tasks, metacognitive activities can be an effective way to improve listening proficiency and learner motivation.

The metacognitive pedagogical sequence (Vandergrift, 2004, 2007) can develop awareness of the process of one-way listening, and help listeners acquire the metacognitive knowledge critical to success in

comprehension and in becoming self-regulated listeners. It builds on knowledge about skilled L2 listeners (e.g., Goh, 1997, 2000), comprehension instruction in cognitive psychology (e.g., Bernat, 2008), and the development of self-regulated language learners (e.g., Zimmerman, 2005). This sequence involves the orchestration of metacognitive processes and other pertinent comprehension strategies, most notably inferencing and elaboration.

Metacognitive instruction adopts a process-based approach to instil in learners (1) knowledge about themselves as listeners (person knowledge); (2) the inherent complexities of L2 listening in relationship to task demands (task knowledge); and (3) effective listening strategies (strategy knowledge). The goal is to open up avenues to regulate listening comprehension and, ultimately, achieve greater success in L2 listening. We will illustrate this pedagogical sequence in three different listening activities; the first two are generic in that they can be used with any text and the last one is text-specific.

A high degree of metacognitive knowledge is a mental characteristic shared by successful learners; in fact, metacognition accounts for a relatively high percentage of variance in learning performance (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). There is extensive evidence that learners' metacognition can directly affect the process and the outcome of their learning (; Wenden, 1988). Research shows that it is positively linked to motivation and self-efficacy (Vandergrift, 2004) and that it can help learners regulate their comprehension (Pressley, 2002). There is, indeed, a strong theoretical basis for arguing that this pedagogical sequence can enhance listening success. Empirical support for metacognitive instruction as applied in this approach has been documented in recent studies with (1) federal public servants learning French; (2) Japanese-speaking learners of English; and (3) English-speaking learners of French.

6. Studies on Metacognitive Listening.

The pedagogical sequence was investigated by Mareschal (2007) with two groups of civil servants in intensive language training (French) for purposes of meeting bilingualism requirements in Canada. One group, at the low-intermediate level, had been assessed as poorly motivated, low achievers; the other group, at the low-advanced level, had been assessed as motivated, high achievers. The study used questionnaires, stimulated recalls, think-aloud protocols, interviews, and listening logs to investigate the effects of the pedagogical sequence on development of metacognitive awareness of L2 listening processes, overall success in comprehension, and student perceptions of this approach to instruction.

Triangulation of the rich qualitative data from all sources suggested that both groups of learners responded positively to the pedagogical approach and that it had beneficial effects on metacognitive awareness, strategy use, and confidence and interest in L2 listening. The beneficial effects were most evident in the lower proficiency group, whose think-aloud protocols revealed a considerable improvement in listening comprehension success over the course of the 12-week instruction. This was not a controlled experiment, however, and evidence for increased listening performance was based on qualitative data only. From the beginning to the end of the study, substantial differences were observed in the difficulty level of aural texts and demonstrated comprehension of these texts, through analysis of the think-aloud protocols by the lower proficiency group. While similar increases in listening achievement were not observed in the higher proficiency group, these learners responded positively to the metacognitive instruction. In particular, they noted the opportunity to discuss their comprehension with a partner and to consult a transcript of the text as beneficial for improving their listening comprehension skills.

The effect of strategy instruction was investigated by Cross (2009) over a 10-week period with advanced-level Japanese learners of English. In this controlled experiment, both groups experienced the pedagogical sequence while listening to news videotext. The experimental group received explicit strategy training in addition to the implicit, activity-based, process-based instruction underlying the pedagogical sequence. Results showed that both groups made significant gains in comprehension scores on the listening post-test, but that there was no significant difference for the group receiving the additional explicit strategy instruction. Cross attributes this result to the salience of the pedagogical sequence. In other words, systematic practice using the pedagogical sequence prompted learners in both groups to activate metacognitive processes and other appropriate cognitive strategies embedded in the listening activity.

In addition to providing empirical support for the pedagogical sequence, the Cross's study is important for our understanding of explicit strategy instruction in listening. There is some evidence that explicit strategy instruction can result in successful use of one or two strategies, but only immediately following the instruction period (Graham, 2003). The Cross study suggests that systematic practice with strategy-embedded activities using the pedagogical sequence, cued by activity performance, can better lead to overall listening improvement.

In another study, Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) examined the effects of the pedagogical sequence with three intact classes of university learners. Over the period of one semester (13 weeks), learners in one high-beginner and two low-intermediate French classes were guided through a process approach to listening, using the pedagogical sequence as outlined in the opening scenario of this chapter and described in the discussion of Activity 1. Learners recorded their predictions in a listening log where each page had three columns: a prediction column and one column each for the first and second listening notes. The bottom of each page included a line for goal-setting for the next listening activity. Each week, the classes followed the same procedure with a new

listening text, and the teacher took a less active guiding role as the semester progressed. All variables were carefully controlled. The control group of three similar level classes was taught by the same teachers; one teacher taught both high-beginner groups and another teacher taught all four low-intermediate groups. The control group also listened to the same texts three times. Before beginning the activity, similar to the experimental group, learners in the control group were given the same contextual information. The listening log for the control group differed in that it had only three columns for notes, one column for each of the three listens to the text. Learners in the control group did not engage in any formal prediction activity, nor were they given an opportunity to discuss, predict, or monitor their comprehension with a classmate. After the third listen, the instructor engaged the class in a discussion in order to confirm comprehension of the text. No discussion of strategy use took place, nor did learners engage in any formal reflection on their approach to listening or goal-setting for their next listening activity. The hypothesis that the experimental group would significantly outperform the control group was confirmed. There was a modest but significant difference between the two groups on the post-test, after initial differences in the listening ability between the two groups was taken into account. A closer examination of the final scores established that the difference in favor of the experimental group could be accounted for by the less skilled listeners: that is, the learners scoring below the median in the listening pre-test made greater gains than their more skilled peers. This finding demonstrates that, similar to findings by Goh and Taib (2006), less skilled listeners in particular can benefit from this kind of guided listening practice. The researchers attribute these results to the fact that the experimental group acquired implicit knowledge on an incremental basis over time.

To conclude, it seems that metacognitive listening instruction can provide an interactive atmosphere for second or foreign language listeners to improve their listening comprehension by engaging in a pedagogical process-based listening activity.

7. Conclusion.

In a nutshell, teaching grammar has encouraged researchers to take the focus on form approach to provide an atmosphere for the learners to interact in a meaningful communication and internalize the target form. Moreover, teaching in general has been seeking new methods to incorporate language skills into teaching sub-skills, which demands more elaboration and research. As metacognitive listening instruction has been proved to be an appropriate tool for gaining listening improvement in a course of time, in this regard, it seems that metacognitive listening strategy, which is a process-based approach toward teaching listening and in favor of encouraging communication to enhance the learners' listening ability interactively, can be taken at the service of teaching grammar as highlighted in focus on form. However, it is the listening strategy training which of importance in that it paves the way for both teachers and learners to interact with each other and raise the listening abilities as well as enhancing the target form during the interaction caused by the listening task.

Up to the present, there seems to be no research done to figure out the effect of metacognitive listening instruction on the learners' acquisition of grammar in general and simple past tense in particular. Moreover, most of the studies conducted in the context of metacognitive listening focused on adult language learners or university students (e.g. Goh & Tiab, 2006) particularly in second language setting, therefore, paving the way for more research to be carried out on the EFL young language learners who study in language institutes.

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