Original Paper

A Study on the Use of Listening Strategies and Listening Barriers of Chinese Training Institution Learners

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Abstract

This study analyzes the challenges faced by 90 English language learners enrolled in a Chinese educational institution. It compares high-level and low-level listeners and investigates strategies for students to improve their listening skills. Data was gathered through a questionnaire and an interview that prompted recollection. The initial method assesses students' attention abilities, while the latter is self-reflective. In the listening phase, participants utilized sensory recall strategies and oral expressiveness to stimulate internal cognitive processes. The researcher also interviewed an instructor to gain insight into Chinese students' listening difficulties and strategies from an educational standpoint. Hybrid methods enhanced research reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS. Transcription, decoding, and qualitative analysis were conducted. Distinct strategies are employed by high- and low-level Chinese listeners, as revealed by the study. Listening problems exhibit significant variability. The study found that poor listening skills can hinder language proficiency, including the ability to articulate sounds, modulate pitch, and control tension. The primary objective of this study is to assess the incidence of listening comprehension strategies through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study aims to investigate the listening comprehension of L2 learners from the viewpoints of both the learners and the instructor.

Keywords

L2 academic listening, listening comprehension strategy, stimulated recall interview

1. Introduction

This study investigates listening strategies and obstacles faced by Chinese students in a language education institution located in China while learning a foreign language. The author, who had a previous position within the institution, noted that trainees who achieved high IELTS scores still lacked sufficient comprehensive listening skills and proficiency to adapt to an English-only environment when

relocating abroad. According to cognitive psychology, the acquisition of a second language depends on cognitive mechanisms and the assimilation processes of knowledge in the human brain. This study examines the differences in listening strategy use between high-level and low-level learners, as well as the common obstacles faced by Chinese students during listening tasks. To enhance student learning, it is recommended to organize information into coherent segments and limit the scope of practice to a manageable extent.

Communicative methodologies may be more appropriate for English language instruction. This study employs a mixed-method approach to examine the listening strategies and challenges faced by mixed learners at a private training institution in China. Questionnaires are the main method for strategic research in China. However, the data collected is limited to descriptive information and relies solely on self-reporting strategies used by learners. A personalized interview was conducted with the listening skills instructor to improve the reliability and precision of the research. The study entailed collecting, analyzing, and transcribing data to comprehend learners' decoding processes, use of learning strategies to improve comprehension, and identification of possible obstacles during listening activities.

This manuscript includes a literature review, research design and methodology, analysis of findings, discussion, and conclusion. The survey, interview transcripts, inventory of listening techniques, instructional materials, and learners' annotations will be included in the appendices. This study's research questions are informed by O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) cognitive theories and learning techniques, as well as the study's objective.

1) What are the differences in listening tactics in terms of frequency and variety between high-level and low-level learners?

2) What are the common difficulties encountered by Chinese students in comprehending English during language training programs?

3) What are the differences in listening preferences between high-level listeners and low-level listeners?

1.1 Listening Comprehension Cognitive Process

The literature on listening comprehension encompasses diverse theoretical perspectives. Anderson (1985) proposed that listening comprehension is a multifaceted and dynamic process that involves linguistic proficiency, cognitive abilities, cultural background, and knowledge exchange. Cutler and Clifton (1999) and Rubin (1990) propose that auditory comprehension involves constructing meaning across three linguistic levels: words, sentences, and contexts. According to Rost (2002), failure to recognize the boundary of a cue word may lead to challenges in recognizing the word. Cutler and Clifton (1999) argue that "listening" should not be confused with auditory perception, and offer a cognitive perspective on its definition.

The subjective experience of sound is attributed to neural processes in the brain. Listening is a cognitive process that aids learners in understanding and interpreting spoken English. The main goal of comprehending language is to determine meaning through various linguistic modes. During listening

comprehension, the listener converts the perceived auditory signal into a semantic representation. The process encompasses linguistic knowledge (phonetics, lexis, grammar, and meaning) and non-linguistic knowledge (foundational knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, and physical universe awareness). Language proficiency is crucial for understanding auditory content through abstract cues and principles.

1.2 Listening Comprehension Models

There are two types of language comprehension models: sequential (Rubin, 1981) and interactive (Oxford, 1990). The sequential model comprises a hierarchical processing stage, which is succeeded by a gradual shift from lexical to syntactic and semantic processing. The methodology follows the sequential procedures shown in Figure 1
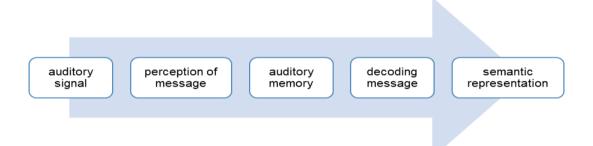

Figure 1. The Series Model (Rubin, 1981)

Scholars posit that spoken language comprehension involves two distinct processes: a top-down process and a bottom-up process. The top-down process entails utilizing a pre-existing schema and knowledge base to generate hypotheses, assimilate and integrate new information. The bottom-up approach involves introducing specific information into the cognitive system, which activates the schema at a low level. The interaction model integrates bottom-up and top-down processing mechanisms and their interplay. Language acquisition follows a bottom-up approach that limits the acquisition of non-linguistic knowledge, while the use of non-linguistic knowledge follows a top-down approach that aids in the comprehension of auditory materials.

Schema theory is a well-researched concept in the area of listening comprehension. According to Cohen (2011, 2017), a schema is a cognitive unit that accumulates knowledge. According to schema theory, understanding and explaining new ideas rely on the existing schema in one's cognitive framework. Listening comprehension is an active cognitive process that involves the use of pre-existing schemata to process incoming information and comprehend the speaker's underlying purpose. Comprehending spoken language involves a creative element, as the language materials may lack contextual meanings and different recipients may interpret the same input data in various ways. Effective meaning construction requires the listener to integrate contextual cues with their pre-existing social and cognitive knowledge.

1.3 Studies Related to the Listening Cognitive Process

Information processing depends on both the properties of the information and the cognitive abilities of the recipient. According to Anderson's (1985) study, short-term memory has distinct functions for storage and processing. Vandergrift (2005) argues that language inputs differ in importance and only those that are consciously perceived can be effectively processed. The author's experience in learning Portuguese demonstrates the effectiveness of receiving guidance. The field of second language acquisition is currently debating the optimal approach for second language listeners.

Academic discourse revolves around the debate on whether individuals should prioritize "paying attention to meaning" as a "top-down model" by relying on schema knowledge, or prioritize "paying attention to form" as a "bottom-up model" by utilizing linguistic knowledge to identify word syntax. It is essential to explore the most efficient models for listening instruction to improve the listening skills of L2 learners. Several scholars, such as Field (2003), Richards and Richards (1990), and Ur (1984), have made noteworthy contributions to this research field. Scholars contend that co-textual cues and prior knowledge, such as familiarity with the topic and general knowledge, are vital for inferring and predicting meaning in listening comprehension. According to Anderson and Lynch (1998), in the initial stage of language acquisition, meaning construction is limited to identifying the theme and evaluating possible directions for its progression.

According to Goh (2000), individuals with lower proficiency levels use both bottom-up and top-down processes interchangeably when interacting with unmodified materials. Noroozi et al. (2014) empirically studied Spanish listening comprehension and found that top-down processing models were more commonly used in familiar settings than in unfamiliar settings. O'Malley et al. (1989) have shown that top-down and bottom-up models can be effectively integrated through frequent and simultaneous interactions.

1.4 Listening Comprehension Strategies

The study of English listening strategies is grounded in the theoretical foundations of learning strategies. The study aimed to identify shared characteristics among proficient language learners, as specified by Stern's 1975 framework. In the 1980s, scholars began exploring the relationship between language learning and learning strategies, as well as examining the cognitive mechanisms involved in input language. Numerous scholars have researched the impact of learning strategies on linguistics, with multiple studies demonstrating their effects. Acquiring learning strategies is a vital component of learners' approaches, involving intentional cognitive or emotional actions taken by learners to improve their language learning process.

The strategies are categorized as metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective. Metacognitive strategies encompass planning, monitoring, and evaluating, while cognitive strategies involve input information processing, and social/affective strategies entail communication between language learners and others.

The analysis of listening comprehension strategies employed by second or foreign language learners

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demonstrates six distinct features (Liu & Chu, 2010; Rost, 2013).

● Studies' main participants are non-native English-speaking students, encompassing languages such as French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, and others.

● Study aims to analyze the employment of listening strategies among students with different levels of listening proficiency.

● Study employs various auditory resources, including audio, video, and other materials, for listening purposes.

● Various listening modalities exist, including interactive and communicative listening.

● Academic discourse prioritizes cognitive and metacognitive strategies over social and affective strategies.

● The use of subjective introspection and recollection as research methods has led many scholars to avoid making conclusive statements.

1.5 Studies Related to the Listening Strategy Instruction

Vandergrift's (2003) study is a thorough empirical analysis of strategy utilization and is considered the most extensive investigation on the subject. The study found that students who attained greater levels of achievement demonstrated noticeable differences in their utilization of metacognitive skills. Goh (2002) researched Chinese ESL learners. The study provided evidence on the use of listening strategies in employment, but did not explore whether highly skilled learners use a more specialized strategy. According to Ushioda (2008), skilled learners can grasp the general organization of a text and distinguish between significant and insignificant details, while less successful learners tend to remember all information presented to them. Successful learners tend to use learning strategies proactively.

Wen (1995) found that English learners' performance is impacted by their learning strategies. Spencer and Xiong (2006) evaluated the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of Chinese students in the United Kingdom. Badger and Yan (2012) investigated the information processing of Chinese English language learners in response to multiple-choice listening questions using reflective methods. The survey results suggest that participants, regardless of their language proficiency, utilize both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Zhu (2002) determined that linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge are equally important in language communication. The topic of listening comprehension has received limited research attention, specifically in relation to the influence and function of diverse factors that influence it, such as linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge.

1.6 Factors to Influence the Difficulty of L2 Listening

Comprehending spoken language differs from casual conversation because individuals cannot ensure the consistency of their pronunciation with the listening materials. Various factors, including article characteristics, listener characteristics, listening context, and test conditions, influence the level of listening difficulty encountered by second language learners. Listening comprehension barriers can be classified into seven categories: (1) uncontrollable speech rate, (2) non-replicable corpus, (3) limited

lexicon, (4) difficulty in distinguishing auditory signals, (5) inadequate background knowledge, (6) lack of focus, and (7) personal study habits.

Features of a passage. Spoken and written language can be differentiated based on their phonology, lexicon, syntax, and semantics. Formal speech is a distinct written form that varies considerably from casual, everyday conversation. This study analyzed spoken language characteristics in lectures using written dictation to define lecture content.

Phonetic alterations. Gimson (1970) posited three phonetic processes in spoken language: assimilation, elision, and intrusion. Assimilation denotes a seamless merging of two adjacent sounds, whereas elision refers to the omission of a consonant sound without any accompanying release of breath. Missed departures and interjections can result from the introduction of a new sound. Chinese students studying abroad may face linguistic challenges and may need to acquire phonetic knowledge to comprehend English fluently.

Stress and intonation. English sentences are marked by accents, which are ideographic symbols aiding word comprehension. Chinese learners struggle with comprehending the tension and rhythm of English, as well as the fluctuating intonation patterns in spoken language. Intonation patterns, such as falling and rising tone, are influenced by factors such as tone, intensity, and word length. Chinese students encounter difficulties in comprehending English questions that involve rising and falling tone.

Incomplete sentence and decontextualized situation. Please provide more information or clarify the intended meaning. Oral communication selectively highlights certain terms while omitting others that are deemed insignificant. This is not a complete sentence or statement. Please provide more context or information.

Repetition and hesitation. According to Graham (2006) and Vandergrift and Tafaghodtaru (2010), pauses, hesitations, and self-corrections are significant components of human communication. Speech economy involves the reduction and simplification of language, and spoken English frequently employs elliptical sentences. According to Gimson (1970), informal or ungrammatical phrases or clauses are considered as concept units. Chinese students encounter difficulties in comprehending oral English phenomena such as hesitation and self-correction. They endeavor to comprehend all details, including those that may be superfluous.

Speech rate. It refers to the speed at which an individual speaks. Listening speed is influenced by factors such as the complexity of the listening materials, the listener's background knowledge, and their language proficiency. These factors are interconnected with comprehension and cannot be considered independently.

Proficiency in L2 language acquisition. Cohen (2017) and Rost and Candlin (2014) suggest that the difficulty level of listening materials can impact comprehension. Kikuchi (2009) and Halliday (2007) contend that individuals with limited listening proficiency tend to involuntarily disengage and lose concentration when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary or intricate sentence structures. Research indicates that learners' listening abilities are significantly influenced by their use of vocabulary, syntax,

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and grammar in the target language.

Prior knowledge of L2 learners. Previous studies have shown that prior knowledge plays a crucial role in the comprehension of spoken language in a second language setting. Graham and Santos (2015) suggest that individuals with prior knowledge can effectively listen by using their background knowledge to understand complex language and fill in any gaps in information. Acquiring cultural background knowledge involves formal instruction and extracurricular reading. Incorporating appropriate warm-up exercises is necessary for effectively activating students' prior knowledge. A theoretical framework has been established for this study.

2. Method

This study focuses on a Chinese private language school's summer intensive program designed for second language learners seeking to enhance their language proficiency prior to commencing postgraduate studies. The IELTS listening level is categorized into two groups based on proficiency: Group A comprises listeners with higher proficiency (band 6 or above), whereas Group B comprises listeners with lower proficiency. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with six learners of varying listening abilities and also interviewed the listening tutor. The research findings were analyzed from the viewpoints of both students and tutors to enhance teaching practices.

2.1 Questionnaire Survey

Dornyei's (2007) eight principles for questionnaire design are consistently adhered to. 1) Select the questionnaire survey methodology. 2) Elucidate the acquired data categories. Determine the process for sorting the data. Establish the substance and wording of each thematic element. 5) Select questionnaire structure; 6) Arrange questionnaire questions; 7) Determine questionnaire format; 8) Perform pilot testing. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) observed that respondents' responses are influenced by positive and negative statements. The questionnaire in this study categorizes listening techniques into metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective groups, based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) classification of learning strategies. The research questionnaire comprises two parts. The first section covers basic information such as gender, age, major, and comprehension of English listening strategies. The questionnaire for English listening learning strategy is categorized into three groups: metacognitive (questions 1-13), cognitive (questions 14-29), and social/emotional (questions 30-37).

The online survey is scheduled for early June and is expected to take 15 minutes for participants to complete. Descriptive statistics will analyze the frequency and concentration trend of English listening strategies used by students in training institutions to comprehend sample data. The study will employ independent sample T-tests to compare the listening learning strategies of high- and low-proficiency groups. Correlation analysis will be employed to investigate the relationship between IELTS scores and listening practices of the informants.

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2.2 Stimulated Recall Interview

Listening techniques are subjective processes that cannot be evaluated solely through external observations or surveys. Therefore, it is insufficient to rely solely on surveys to assess students' listening abilities and teachers' supervision. The utilization of the stimulating recall method in strategy studies is a reliable means of enabling individuals to express themselves. Stimulated recall interviews are a qualitative research technique that involves reviewing rather than verbalizing cognitive processes to gather data on execution behavior and event involvement. Intense stimulation aids in the faithful reconstruction of the scenario by participants. The researcher will employ the identical audio material utilized in class and the notes taken by the subjects to recollect their cognitive processes during the listening exercise. This approach facilitates retention among listeners and furnishes sufficient information for research purposes.

Participants. Wen et al. (2004) suggest selecting interview subjects based on their suitability and cooperation with the research process. The criteria comprise extroversion, effective communication skills, openness to utilizing this research approach, and willingness to collaborate. Six students completed intensive summer courses focused solely on English language listening skills, with varying levels of proficiency ranging from poor to intermediate to advanced, as determined by their IELTS listening scores. The data of the respondents is presented below. The individual's nationality is Chinese and their age range is between 22 and 26 years old.

Table 1. Basic Information of Informants

	Lin	Chen	Nan	Fei	Duo	Yuan
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female
Group number	Group A	Group A	Group A	Group B	Group B	Group B
Major in master degrees	Chemistry	Computer science	Accounting and finance	Aerospace	Education	Accounting and finance
Listening band in IELTS	7	7	7.5	5	5.5	5.5

2.2.1 Data Collection and Implementation

Stimulated recall interview training is utilized to acquaint individuals with research methodology and ensure smooth implementation. Individualized instruction is employed due to diverse learning styles among students and to promptly address any participant misunderstandings. The researcher minimized misleading or directive language in training to mitigate potential misguidance of trainees during

presentations. This study utilizes self-description and self-reflection to examine the listening strategies employed by learners with varying levels of hearing and the difficulties they encounter. The researcher provided interview instructions to enhance subjects' comprehension of the study methodology. The researcher administered a one-minute audio excerpt exercise to each participant and posed random questions, such as "What were your thoughts?" and "Is this part more complex or easier?" An advanced research interview was conducted after ensuring participants' familiarity with the research method and eliminating potential confusion. On average, interviews last for around 40 minutes, which includes approximately 7 minutes of audio playback time.

2.2.2 Data Collection and Implementation

According to Wen et al. (2004), three steps are necessary for creating an interview plan. The process of conducting an effective interview involves identifying the desired information, arranging the questions in a logical sequence, and selecting appropriate phrasing for each question. The interview plan yielded the following information: This study aims to investigate the impact of various factors, such as behavior, feelings, viewpoint, knowledge, competence, and background information, on the experience of learning English.

The interview questions are not arranged in a predetermined sequence, but adhere to the principle of progressing from simple to complex and from general to specific. The researcher employed standard interview techniques, including the use of silent, repeated, and affirmative questions. Modal particles, such as "um", are often used in silence to indicate agreement. The researcher in this study frequently employed the strategy of repeated questioning. Active questioning is crucial in conducting successful interviews as it fosters a positive response from interviewees and encourages them to ask further questions.

The researcher posits that the acquisition of valuable information during interviews can be enhanced by skillfully posing effective follow-up questions. The study's interview questions are categorized into three types: what questions, elaboration questions, and how and why questions. The researcher employs specific questions to gather information on the listening task strategies employed by learners. Additionally, elaboration questions are utilized to confirm the researcher's comprehension of the subjects' intended meaning. How and why questions investigate the process by which a subject arrives at a particular inference.

2.2.3 Procedures

The researcher is studying the listening strategies of the subjects. According to Oxford (2011), the stimulated recall interview should be conducted promptly after the event. The teacher has chosen Study Listening, a publication by Lynch (1996), intended for individuals with an intermediate or higher level of English proficiency who plan to reside or study in an English-only communication setting. The online listening class is structured into three distinct phases, namely pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening, each centered on specific themes. The duration of each class is 90 minutes. The text highlights the use of guided listening skills through PowerPoint and the introduction of diverse

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checklist materials by the instructor.

Data was collected online and interviews had a duration of approximately 40 minutes. The interviewer utilized the same audio frequency heard in class as a stimulation source and provided listening materials to the subject as needed. The interview process was recorded using both the iPad's built-in recording equipment and an external recorder.

2.2.4 Language for the Recall Comments

According to Gass and Mackey (2000), subjects have the option of responding to interview questions in either Chinese, English, or a combination of both languages. This allows the subjects to feel more at ease and relaxed while also reducing the impact of linguistic barriers to the greatest extent possible. During the interview, questions were asked in Chinese to guarantee that they were completely comprehended.

2.2.5 Data Analysis Process

The study utilized semi-structured interviews and a qualitative research approach to collect data. The interviews underwent two rounds of translation from Chinese to English, separated by a two-week interval. The researcher rectified grammatical errors that could impede comprehension. All six interviews were transcribed in full, with the exception of repetitive and redundant content. The study revealed that participants recognized, comprehended, and stored information related to strategy utilization and listening difficulties during the interviews. The researcher utilized established taxonomies to create a coding list of strategies for the present study.

This study utilized a semi-structured individual interview with the listening instructor at the conclusion of a Chinese language course in training institutions. The aim of the interview was to examine the listening strategies employed in Chinese training institutions and to analyze the challenges encountered by second language learners in English listening, as perceived by teachers. The interview focused on three main topics: the type of listening instruction provided, the participants' attitudes and awareness regarding the use of listening strategies before and after attending the courses, and the listening barriers encountered by the tutor from an L2 listening perspective. The study's research methods adequately addressed the research questions, and the subsequent section will present specific findings and discussions.

3. Result

The study administered 90 questionnaires, of which 82 were retrieved and 4 were significantly incomplete. The response rate for the questionnaires was 95.12%, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values were high, indicating strong internal consistency.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

α coefficient	No. of Items
0.860	37

Note. 0.7 ≤ α **<** 0.8 is acceptable; 0.8 ≤ α **<** 0.9 is preferred, with high reliability; α ≥ 0.9 is ideal.

The questionnaire's coefficient of 0.860 is reliable and appropriate for educational assessments, rendering it a valid instrument for investigating English listening strategies in educational settings.

Descriptive statistics. The survey data was statistically analyzed using SPSS software. Table 3 displays the mean and standard deviation of listening strategies employed by learners.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Listening Strategy Dimensions (N=78)

Type of Strategy	Mean （M）	Standard Deviation （SD）
Metacognitive Strategy	3.84	.619
Cognitive Strategy	3.61	.582
Social/Affective Strategy	3.32	.488

According to Oxford (1990), the mean value of each listening learning strategy indicates its frequency of use. Oxford categorizes the implementation of the approach into three levels: high frequency, medium frequency, and low frequency. The classification is as follows.

Table 4. The Frequency Scale of Strategy Use

Frequency class	Meaning	Mean value
High frequency	Always or almost always used.	4.5-5.0
	Often used	3.5-4.4
Medium frequency	Sometimes used	2.5-3.4
	Not often used	1.5-2.4
Low frequency	Never use or hardly use	1.0-1.4

Table 4 illustrates that Chinese training institution students employ three distinct listening styles, namely metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective, while listening to English. Metacognitive methods are preferred over cognitive and social/affective strategies, and metacognitive tactics exhibit superior performance compared to cognitive strategies. Chinese students tend to use metacognitive strategies, specifically self-management methods, more frequently during interviews, as reported by Badger and Yan (2012). Institutional learners exhibit limited awareness of social and affective tactics, as they use them the least. Educators ought to foster students' social and emotional strategies, impart pertinent social and emotional theories, and enhance instruction.

Correlation. Correlation analysis is employed to establish the existence of a relationship between two or more variables. Spearman's correlation analysis was employed to examine the association between listening strategies and sequence variables such as IELTS scores. Table 5 displays the correlational analysis outcomes that are consistent with previous research.

Table 5. Correlation Analysis of IELTS Scores and Listening Strategy Dimensions (N=78)

	Metacognitive Strategy	Cognitive Strategy	Social/Affective Strategy
Spearman's Rho	-0.060	0.036	0.003
Significance (bilateral)	0.604	0.755	0.980

The independent samples t-test. The study employed t-test to examine the correlation between learners' utilization of strategies and their English listening proficiency. The participants were categorized into high and low-score groups according to their IELTS bands. The study found no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table 6. Listening Strategy Difference Test for High and Low IELTS Scores (M ±SD)

High & low grouping	No. of participants	Metacognitive Strategy (M±SD)	Cognitive Strategy (M±SD)	Social/Affective Strategy (M±SD)	Total (M±SD)
Low-level group	21	3.91 ±0.58	3.51 ±0.57	3.40 ±0.56	3.55 ±0.58
High-level group	21	3.71 ±0.78	3.51 ±0.71	3.39 ±0.47	3.63 ±0.44
Significance (bilateral)		0.338	0.974	0.942	0.629

High-level students utilize listening skills more frequently and broadly than low-level pupils, according to several studies. The researchers found two plausible causes for the inconsistent results: cultural backgrounds and lack of subjects. Cultural backgrounds may influence strategy choice and familiarity, while lack of subjects may impact study results. Wen et al. (2004) recommended a minimum questionnaire survey sample of 30 and a large sample of 500.

Isurvey data analysis. The Isurvey data is intriguing because more than half of the informants had never received specialized listening training or knew English listening strategies. The researcher believes all study participants had taken at least one IELTS test and had one-on-one or small-group listening training. The data also shows that 3 of 37 questions in the second portion of the listening strategy had an average of less than 3, while the rest had an average of 3. 7-4.1.

Question 2.5—Metacognitive Strategies Before listening, I will review the new terminology and key

concepts and understand the prior information.

Question 2.5

在听力之前，我会预习所听材料的生词及重要概念，并了解相关的背景知识。

	Response Count
1	10
2	22
3	18
4	14
5	14
Total Responses	78
Average	3

This study found that two-thirds of participants did not preview the new words and concepts in the instructional materials before listening or understand the prior information. The author hypothesizes that listening, a dependent subject, has been neglected and exams are the only way most students can practise listening without looking up new terms. The researcher interviewed the listening instructor semi-structuredly to gather necessary data, and her reaction supported the statistics.

"There seems to be a lack of background knowledge among the students I teach, regardless of their levels. For example, the lecture's content is about urbanization, but it is far from enough to rely on the basic knowledge related to urbanization taught in class. It urgently requires students to expand their knowledge storage in the extracurricular time. However, most learners tend not to attach much importance to background knowledge or subject knowledge. (T)

Question 2.36 (Social/Affective Strategies) In listening, I will lose patience when I encounter situations that I do not understand. The tabular view data are as follows:

Question 2.36

在听力过程中，遇到听不懂的情况时，我会失去耐心。

	Response Count
1	10
2	20
3	19
4	20
5	11
Total Responses	80
Average	3

Studies have shown that learners' negative emotions, including anxiety, affect their listening performance, which is addressed in the instruction implication section. Most Chinese English listening training institutions focus on linguistic expertise, metacognitive, and cognitive tactics.

The project identified Chinese training institution students' metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective techniques. The researcher listed all listening strategies in code and carefully examined interview transcripts to identify participants' strategies. The content was divided into two parts: high-level listeners vs. low-level listeners and peer strategies. High-proficiency listeners use more listening strategies than low-proficiency listeners, while low-level listeners rarely utilise tactics. Poor learners can only draw simple assumptions, while more successful learners can use their world, subject, topic, and other knowledge to make inferences when listening.

Individuals with advanced listening skills tend to take concise and coherent notes, accompanied by relevant symbols, organised in a linear fashion. However, those with limited proficiency often lack logical connection and are often expressed as isolated words or phrases. They tend to eschew the use of abbreviations and diligently transcribe auditory information.

3.1 Learner Problems in Listening Comprehension and Discussion

The researcher studied the records to identify any hearing issues during a lesson. She found nine comprehension issues using Anderson (1985)'s three cognitive processing phases (perceptions, analysis, and utilisation). The listener concentrates on the material and stores it in short-term memory during perceptual processing. They segment input knowledge into sentences, phrases, words, or phonemes and reconstruct the brain's meaning through psychological representation.

After careful analysis of the interview data, four main categories are identified, including nine secondary types, as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Categories of Obstacles Reported in Listening Comprehension

Category 1: **Information processing obstacles**	Type 1：lack of automaticity in dealing with the aural input
	Type 2: neglect the next part when constructing the meaning
	Type 3: fail to recognize the signpost markers or list markers
	Type 4: inability to concentrate
Category 2: **English proficiency obstacles**	Type 1: limited English vocabularies
Category 3: **Belief obstacles**	Type1: focus on every single word or cannot listen selectively
	Type 2: stick to established learning habits
Category 4: **Materials obstacles**	Type 1: unfamiliar topics
	Type 2: spoken feature-accent

Limited English vocabularies. The research results of this study provide a theoretical basis for future research and discussion on the implementation of teaching methods for different levels of listeners. Common problems included limited English vocabulary, new words and unfamiliar technical jargon, and insufficient linguistic understanding. Both high-level and low-level listeners adopted listening tactics to overcome this impediment, but their efficiency differs. High-level listeners also feel neologisms do not affect text comprehension, while low-level listeners may experience anxiety or depression due to repeated new words. Below are the extracts:

Chen (Group A): Well, first, I would identify whether they are keywords or not. If the word is less important, I will ignore it (SEL). Or I will guess the meaning according to the context (INF). If you don't understand it at all, there is nothing you can do. You can only skip it and continue listening to the following content, but I will try to guess the meaning of this new word. And I find that most new words will not affect my listening comprehension (DIR).

Nan (Group A): One of the current problems should be the lack of vocabulary. But I will make some guesses and inferences according to the context and understanding of the topic (INF&ELA).

Duo (Group B): In addition, there is often a word that I am not familiar with, which will appear many times in practice. At this moment, I will be very anxious.

Inability to concentrate. Psycholinguistics (Anderson and Lynch, 1988) reveals that we remember all we hear until the next clause, and even a brief distraction can negatively impact comprehension. Mother tongue listening habits may be involved.

Nan (Group A): The length of the text will have a tremendous relative influence. If the text is too long, I may get distracted.

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Chen (Group A): Second, I just can't concentrate for a long time. I am also easily distracted when using Chinese.

Fei (Group B): Then, the second problem is that I may not be able to keep up with the lengthy speech. For example, if I keep on listening for more than five minutes, I can easily be distracted.

Distinctive obstacles of high-proficiency listeners

Unfamiliar topics. The researcher identified an unexpected phenomenon: high-level listeners felt topic familiarity would affect their listening performance, while low-level listeners did not mention topic knowledge. Low-level listeners pay more attention to language knowledge and use a bottom-up processing model, so they may ignore their familiarity with the topic. One interviewee said familiarity with themes affected his listening.

Chen (Group A): If you are not familiar with this topic, it may be difficult to understand it completely.

R: OK. Will the familiarity with this topic affect your listening performance?

Nan (Group A): It will have an impact. For example, if this is an academic article, and I know nothing about this topic before, it would be quite challenging.

Distinctive obstacles of low-proficiency listeners

Focus on every single word or cannot listen selectively. Low-level learners may struggle to understand every word in audio due to lack of selective listening, not knowing the article's theme, genre, or structure.

Fei (Group B): I can't understand every single word in English, which is entirely different from using Chinese.

Duo (Group B): Some people seem to be able to listen selectively and automatically, that is to say, decide which part to ignore or not listen to, but I can't do it for the time being, and I can't clearly distinguish between what to listen to and what to choose.

Neglect the next part when constructing meaning. Low-level learners struggle to integrate sentence logic. Thus, they may forget the previous sentence or ignore the next one, as shown below.

Yuan (Group B): But sometimes, if I focus on the previous content, I will not have enough time to listen to the following content. Then, when I thought about the meaning of the previous word, I skipped the following information.

Fei (Group B): Sometimes, I can't catch up. For example, I am recording this part of the content, and I will miss the following content.

4. Discussion

The present investigation investigated common challenges encountered in English listening among language learners in training institutions through the utilization of questionnaire surveys and stimulated recall interviews. The study revealed that individuals employ diverse levels of metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies when engaging in listening activities. Listeners with advanced proficiency employ a greater variety of listening strategies in comparison to those with lower

proficiency, whereas individuals with lower levels of language proficiency seldom make use of such tactics. The study's participants frequently experienced difficulties with concentration, exhibited deficits in language abilities, and reported hearing atypical accents. Individuals with a higher level of listening proficiency exhibited greater sensitivity towards unforeseen themes in comparison to those with a lower level of listening proficiency. Furthermore, the note-taking practices of these two groups varied significantly. The potential and practicality of strategy instruction has been a topic of discussion among numerous linguists. Their research has demonstrated that learners who are less successful have exhibited improvement subsequent to acquiring the strategies employed by learners with higher levels of proficiency. The present study recommends that learners, particularly those with limited proficiency in listening, should be provided with customized strategic support to enhance their listening abilities and equip them for pursuing higher education overseas.

The significance of metacognitive strategies in fostering self-directed listening is also expounded upon in this article. The utilization of metacognitive strategies, such as self-awareness and self-monitoring, has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of English listening instruction through targeted training. The findings of this study indicate that individuals with a lower level of English proficiency exhibit a limited tendency to engage in metacognitive strategies aimed at enhancing their language acquisition or to conduct post-class reviews. It is recommended that educators instruct their pupils on the importance of verifying their listening comprehension, encompassing strategies, orientation, and methodology. The enhancement of listening comprehension can be achieved through the utilization of cognitive techniques that involve the development of information processing skills. Additionally, social and affective strategy instruction can be employed to mitigate listening anxiety.

The present investigation centers on lectures; however, it is important to note that the limited sample size may not be indicative of the broader population of Chinese learners. The aforementioned findings hold significant implications for future research endeavors, including but not limited to augmenting the sample size and expanding the scope of the study. Additionally, incorporating listening strategies may enhance the practicality and relevance of the study's outcomes. This study investigates the listening learning methodologies and prevalent issues in China's training institutions, thereby uncovering novel research avenues. The acquisition of English listening skills necessitates the implementation of listening strategies, and it is incumbent upon educators to provide instruction to students in this regard. The provision of listening tutors has been found to be an effective means of enhancing students' listening abilities and facilitating their adjustment to foreign environments.

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