

Listening comprehension is not innate to elementary school students: they need to be taught listening strategies

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This study investigates what early elementary students do during a new listening task and the effects of teaching listening strategies. An instructional program was implemented in four classes of 6- to 7- year-olds in low socioeconomic index schools in French-speaking Belgium. In three classes, there was explicit teaching of listening strategies, but not in the fourth class. Twelve students (three students with different learning profiles in each class) were observed and interviewed while performing two text/image association listening tasks. A qualitative analysis was conducted on the videos of students at work and the metacognitive interviews with them. All students had broadly the same type of difficulties with the task the first time. When the task was repeated, the students with average and high-performance profiles used the instructed listening strategies and were successful. Struggling students and those with an average profile who did not receive listening strategies instruction acted similarly, and were unsuccessful both times. The study shows a need to teach listening strategies to students, regardless of their learning profile. It also invites further research on listening strategies, their teaching and use by students.

Keywords: oral comprehension; listening skills; teaching listening strategies; elementary school

Introduction

The literature shows that throughout history, first language (L1) teaching has traditionally focused on the written language, and particularly on reading (Dolz and Schneuwly 1998). As a result, ‘oral language has long been minoritized (...), insofar as the school system gave itself as essential objectives to learn to read and write and grammar ignored the specific syntax of oral language’ (Simard et al. 2019, 292). As a result, it has been shown that the majority of teachers emphasise reading and writing instruction more in the curriculum, while listening and speaking are taught less often in the classroom, if at all (Bourdeaud'hui, Aesaert, and Van Braak 2020; Colognesi and Deschepper 2019), not least because oral language is primarily viewed as supporting reading and writing skills (Alexander 2012). This is especially true for L1 instruction (Kaldahl, Bachinger, and Rijlaarsdam 2019). There are currently initiatives in many school curricula that attempt to address this disconnect. For example, in our context of French-speaking Belgium, it is stated that ‘disciplinary skills - listening/reading, speaking/writing - must be of equal importance’ (Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence 2017, 48).

However, it is not enough just to tell teachers to teach oral language for this to be implemented. They still need to have the knowledge, both conceptual and methodological, to do so. Yet, teachers have mentioned that they currently lack just that knowledge (Colognesi and Deschepper 2019; Daszkiewicz et al. 2020; Dumais, Lafontaine, and Pharand 2017; Dupont and Grandaty 2020). It also requires that teachers believe it is useful to teach oral language. Even now, L1 listening comprehension is often perceived as innate, and is therefore rarely worked on in the

classroom (Gallahue and Ozmun 2006; Turgeon 2011). This makes working on listening comprehension problematic in the classroom (Dolz and Mabillard 2017).

Yet, instruction that focuses on listening comprehension promotes academic success (Nonnon 2016). This is particularly the case because over 70% of academic learning occurs in a listening context (Campbell 2010; Vandergrift and Goh 2012). In addition, listening comprehension predicts students' reading comprehension (Kendeou et al. 2009; Snowling and Hulme 2011; Storch and Whitehurst 2002).

Research has shown that not all students naturally respond well to this type of task, which assesses skills that have not been explicitly taught (Brown 2008; Fogelson 2016; Lau 2017). Teaching students 'how' to listen before assessing them, from an instructional alignment perspective (Biggs and Tang 2007), requires going through the teaching of listening strategies (Bourdeaud'hui, Aesaert, and Van Braak 2020). This is where our contribution lies. We sought to understand how early primary school students function when presented with a novel listening task. We also wanted to understand whether explicit teaching of listening strategies could lead them to function more effectively in a repeat of a similar listening task. For this purpose, we followed 12 students with various learner profiles in the performance of two listening tasks. These students belonged to four school classes from low socio-economic index schools in French-speaking Belgium. In three of the classes, there was prior instruction on listening strategies.

Theoretical framework

Oral comprehension

Allen (2014) defined listening comprehension as ‘an active and dynamic process that relies on taking oral cues, and builds on the student's background knowledge and experiences in various domains’ (2). This process is based on the listener's intention: the listener must consciously put himself or herself in a listening posture (Turgeon 2011). Otherwise, the listener may simply ‘hear’, that is, perceive sounds and receive information, but not consciously process what is heard (Rost 2002; Trabasso and Magliano 1996). In a listening posture, the listener relies on his ability to process heard lexical information, to understand its meaning in order to develop interpretations (Burleson and Caplan 2007; Hogan, Adlof, and Alonzo 2014; Imhof 2016; Massonié, Bianco, and Lima 2019). Thus, vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental language skill for listening comprehension (Colognesi and Deschepper 2018; Kim 2016; Wolfgramm, Suter, and Göksel 2016).

In sum, understanding an oral message is a complex task (Dolz and Mabillard 2017) that requires the processing of low- and high-level information. These types of information contribute to the construction of a coherent mental representation (Gagnon and Martinet 2021; Massonié, Bianco, and Lima 2019). Low-level processing involves the memorization of one or more segments of the message. High-level processing concerns the use of representations that refer to larger parts of the text or to the whole text and its structures (Weirich et al. 2019).

Studies have shown that listening and reading share common cognitive activities (Nation et al. 2010; Vellutino et al. 2007), even if they require different decoding processes (Bourdeaud'hui, Aesaert, and Van Braak 2020). It has been shown that students who have difficulty understanding texts when reading them also have

difficulty when it comes to understanding written texts presented orally (Bianco 2015). Furthermore, a distinction should also be made between literal (understanding the explicit meaning) and inferential listening comprehension skills (Kim 2016; Ulu 2016).

In-class listening activities

Dolz and Mabillard (2017) explained that listening comprehension in the L1 classroom also takes place with recorded audio listening activities. In order to get students to gradually understand the oral messages they must listen to, the messages can be replayed several times (Adams and Cox 2010) or even cut up (Graham, Santos, and Vanderplank 2011). However, this transforms the discourse, which is naturally continuous (Allen, Lafontaine, and Plessis-Bélair 2016) insofar as the listener has, a priori, no control over the rhythm of the communication (Gagnon and Martinet 2021).

In addition, there are certain conditions to consider when conducting listening comprehension activities. Indeed, Rudner et al. (2018) studied the impact of background and extraneous noise and voice quality on comprehension and listening effort with 245 8-year-olds. The results showed that even low levels of background noise interfered with listening comprehension. Voice disturbances did not significantly reduce listening comprehension scores, but they were considered unpleasant and made listening difficult. This would suggest not having background noise or changes in the voice quality during the listening comprehension activities.

To structure such activities, Lafontaine (2007) recommended dividing the listening activities into several stages. The first step involves announcing that students will be expected to listen for a particular purpose and activating their knowledge of

the subject in question. In the second step, students engage in ‘global listening’. That is, they listen to the whole message once. The third step consists of ‘analytical’ listening, in which the students respond to the intended purpose of listening. The fourth step consists of a time of a transfer task. This means that a listening task of the same type is presented, with another oral message. Based on more recent work, it seems that a step should be added to this sequence before requiring reinvestment. This step would be a time to work on listening strategies (Allen 2014). Indeed, Vandergrift (2006) explained that a good listener is ‘one who knows how to adapt his or her cognitive functioning to the task at hand, detecting his or her own difficulties and providing solutions through the implementation of strategies’ (65).

Teaching listening strategies

Explicit strategy instruction is one of the practices of effective teachers (Ko, Sammons, and Bakkum 2014). Such instruction allows students to be successful in the problem-solving activities they encounter in the classroom (Boyle, Rosen, and Forchelli 2016). Gagnon and Martinet (2021) surveyed the cognitive and metacognitive strategies involved in listening comprehension. They identified 8 cognitive strategies: (1) activating lexical knowledge; (2) activating syntactic knowledge; (3) activating knowledge about one's own culture and those of others according to the communication situation; (4) identifying the main thematic content of the text; (5) understanding the mental states of the characters, the explicit and implicit aims of the speaker; (6) understanding the structure of the text that links the information together; (7) removing the implicit from the text and (8) constructing a mental representation of the text. Three metacognitive strategies were also pinpointed:

(1) planning for the listening activity and questioning oneself about the text; (2) regulating one's comprehension during listening; and (3) monitoring one's comprehension following listening.

If not made explicit, these strategies remain invisible during listening comprehension (Allen, Lafontaine, and Plessis-Bélair 2016; Berne 2004). Thus, the challenge is to get students to make explicit the thinking that led them to the answers they reached. This is possible through metacognition time (Colognesi and Lucchini 2016; Veenman et al. 2006). Bosson, Hessels, and Hessels-Schlatter (2009) explained that it is interesting for students to have metacognitive knowledge that consists in knowing in which situations to use which strategies. In addition, when automated, strategies decrease the student's cognitive effort during tasks (Burleson 2011; Liotta-Kolencik and Hillwig 2011).

The teaching of metacognitive listening strategies is very limited in classrooms (Dumais and Lafontaine 2011). Even when they are taught, Allen, Lafontaine, and Plessis-Bélair (2016) showed that struggling students do not readily adopt them. This is because these students feel that the strategies do not help them or because using them causes cognitive overload.

Methodology

This study focuses on students' functioning during listening activities, and the effects of explicit instruction in listening strategies. The focus is on early elementary L1 students, as little is known about their oral language processing (Dumais, Lafontaine, and Pharand 2017). Moreover, research explaining differences in students' L1 listening skills is scarce (Andringa et al. 2012; McKendry and Murphy 2010). Two

research questions were formulated:

- Q1: What do early elementary students do during a novel listening activity?
- Q2: How does explicit teaching of listening strategies influence their functioning during a second, similar activity?

Materials and methods

A qualitative approach was chosen to have access to reality in order to understand it (Van der Maren 2004). The research was based on investigating activities in a natural setting (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

Participants

The instructional program was implemented in four classes of 6- to 7-year-olds (first grade). They were in schools selected for their very low socio-economic index¹. The population is mainly of immigrant origin. The majority of students come from impoverished families. Students from a wide range of nationalities live together in these neighbourhoods. In three classes, as described in the next section, there was explicit teaching of listening strategies. All three of these classes were from the same school. Three students in each of these classes were selected for their particular

¹ Socio-economic index of 1 (lowest socio-economic index). The socio-economic index of a school is determined by a decree organizing a differentiated environment to ensure that each student has equal opportunities for social emancipation in a high-quality educational environment. The index is calculated by considering a total of 11 variables based on five main categories: per capita income, level of education, unemployment rate, professional activities and housing comfort. A formula is used, weighting each of these indices, to arrive at a synthetic index attributed to each student according to his or her sector of residence (Villers & Desagher, 2011).

learner profiles (Colognesi and Gouin 2020). This profile was determined based on the results of a pretest assessing oral skills (Colognesi, Lyon Lopez, and Deschepper 2017) and in consultation with the teacher, following De Croix et al. (2020). There was one student per profile per class:

- Profile 1. Students generally have difficulty engaging with academic tasks in L1. The tasks seem too complex for them. Their pretest scores are below the group average: CR, SI (girls) and ER (boy);
- Profile 2: Students respond to activities according to the teacher's expectations. They do not usually have major difficulties. They have pretest scores within the class average: SU (girl), FA and IM (boys);
- Profile 3. Students are seen as high achievers. They do not usually have difficulty in L1. They complete tasks quickly or faster than others. They have higher than average pretest scores: AM, ME (girls) and KO (boy).

In a fourth class, from another school, the students engaged in the same tasks, but the listening strategies instruction stage did not take place. This allowed an element of comparison. The three students observed were MA (girl), TI and PO (boys). They all had profile 2.

Instructional program

The study took place during the month of January. The activity presented to the students lasted two 50-minute periods. It was a text/image association task, an activity often used in the school environment (Bianco et al. 2012; Gentaz et al. 2013). This was the first time that students in all four classes had been asked to complete this type

of task. The activity came from the textbook, *Ca s'écoute (It's Listening)* (Colognesi, Gillet, and De Visscher 2015). It is presented in detail in Table 1. It follows the recommendations of Lafontaine (2007). The materials used in the activity were taken from the children's books *La Limace* (The Slug) and *Le Rat* (The Rat) by Elise Gravel, of which audio recordings have been made.

Table 1. Details of the instructional program.

	Steps
Starting Task 1: <i>The Slug</i>	- The objective is announced to the students: 'to be able to associate illustrations with sentences in a children's record.' - The title of the record is noted on the board, and the cover is displayed. The students say what they see and explain what they know about the creature. - The illustrations are distributed to the students: they first place them in the order they want by imagining a possible text. Then, some explain that they have imagined. - The students are given instructions: they are going to hear audio that gives the story, and must put the illustrations in the order of the information they hear. - The teacher explains the complex vocabulary.
First listening	- The audio version of the story is played once, straight through in its entirety. There are no stops planned.
Second listening	- Students listen a second time. The soundtrack is played through once. There are no stops planned.
Third listening	- Students listen a third time, but this time broken down into parts. If necessary, the teacher would re-explain the complex vocabulary covered at the beginning of the lesson.
Comparison in pairs	- Students compare their answers (their arrangements of the illustrations) in pairs. They adjust their work if necessary. They are invited to discuss with each other.

Correction	- The work is corrected collectively by listening again, piece by piece, and placing the illustrations in the correct order. Students discuss this as a class and the teacher tells them what the right answers are.
Instruction in listening strategies (except in class 4)	- The teacher asks the students to say what strategies they used to match the sentence they heard and the illustration. There were 6 illustrations to put in order. The teacher asks them to justify their suggestions. The teacher asks a few questions, such as: How did you manage to match the text and the illustration; We're going to do the same task again soon, how will you do it? The teacher specifies the best strategies for succeeding in this type of task and has the students rephrase them. The teacher says why they're the best strategies and copies them on a 'summary' poster.
Task 2	- A week later, the same task is presented to the students, with the same steps. The illustrations and audio text are different. They are for <i>The Rat</i> by the same author. There were also 6 illustrations.

The three teachers in the classes where strategy instruction took place were trained in this beforehand. The researchers introduced them to the activities and the different steps. There was a discussion about the strategies and how they could be considered together with the students. For the fourth class, where there was no reflection with the students on the strategies, a discussion also took place with the teacher on the steps of the activity. Strategies were not mentioned. This class was specifically chosen from another school. That was so that this teacher would not share information with the others.

Data collection and analysis

Video recordings were made: one filming the entire room, and three others allowing for closer filming of each student selected for observation. A student researcher was also present in the classrooms while the activities were carried out. She filled out an observation grid on the spot, which was then completed in more detail by viewing the videos as many times as necessary (Veillard 2013). To enhance reliability of the observations that were made, the fragments that were difficult to code were discussed between two researchers until a consensus was obtained (Creswell 2007). The fidelity of implementation was verified (Resnicow et al. 1998). In this respect, the program was implemented in the four classes as planned by the designers.

Through completion of the observation grid, a detailed synopsis was produced for each selected student (Dolz et al. 2018). In this way, the behaviours of each selected student (actions, reactions, gestures, demeanour, etc.) for each step of the instructional program were highlighted. Then, the synopses for the 12 students were put side-by-side. This was done to compare what the students did at each step. On this basis, a summary table was created.

In addition, to access the strategies they used, metacognitive questions (Colognesi et al. 2019; 2020) were asked in the three ‘strategies’ classes. This was done both during the task (e.g., explain what you are doing, is it difficult?) and at the end of each task (e.g., How did you match the story with the illustrations?). This is also a type of metacognitive support, in addition to the instruction the teacher provided. These data were recorded on separate audio, transcribed and content analysis was applied (Creswell 2007; Miles and Huberman 1994).

Results

The key findings are as follows. The 12 students had globally the same type of behaviours and difficulties in the first task. Only one of them reached the correct solution before the correction step with the teacher. On the other hand, when the task was repeated, six of the 12 students showed more efficient and confident behaviours. These six students all arrived at the correct solution. These were the students in profiles 2 and 3 who had benefited from time spent reflecting on the strategies they used. Profile 1 students who received strategy instruction and profile 2 students who did not receive strategy instruction behaved similarly, and their behaviours did not change between the first and second tasks. So they were similar to each other and similar to themselves over time.

Students with ‘average’ and ‘high performing’ profiles had difficulties at the beginning, but benefited from the teaching of strategies in the second task

The analysis of the data showed that the six students in profile 2 (‘average student’: FA, SU, IM) and profile 3 (‘high-performing student’: AM, ME and KO) in the classes receiving strategy instruction had similar reactions and behaviours, summarised in Table 2. Their responses during the two tasks are put side-by-side.

Table 2. Behaviours of profile 2 and 3 students during the two tasks

Step	Task 1 <i>The Slug</i>	Task 2 <i>The Rat</i>
Starting	All six students engage in the task. They place the illustrations on their desk, and seek to participate in explaining what they see, and what they imagined as a story.	
First listening	Five students look closely at the illustrations while listening but do not touch them, while ME closes her eyes. They seem to be unsure of how to do this.	They arrange their illustrations next to each other. They look at the illustrations all the time. They move them as the soundtrack is played. They are very focused.

Second listening	Four students show concerned behaviours (SU, IM, AM, KO). They look at others on several occasions. All manipulate the illustrations as they listen and try different positions. They look unsure of themselves. The first illustration is correct for all students; the others are still mixed up.	They place the illustrations more accurately, look confident, do not look away. The first two and last two illustrations are placed correctly in each case.
Third listening)	Only ME places the illustrations in the correct order. For the others, two (AM, KO) or three (FA, SU, IM) errors are present. When the teacher explains a vocabulary word (e.g., sea), it allows AM, FA and KO to find the correct illustration.	They check the position of the illustrations and adjust those that were not placed correctly. All of them place the illustrations correctly.
Comparison in pairs	They check that both partners have the same answers. ME gives directions to her partner to change the order, she explains why.	They check and see that they have the majority of the illustrations in the same place.
Correction and sharing of strategies	AM and KO seem anxious. They are all very focused on the corrections, they move their illustrations according to the explanations of the others. They also participate in the discussion and explain the choices they have made. They use 'because' to do so. They specify the clues they used (the words that allowed them to find the illustration).	They participate, they explain why they chose that order, they specify the clues.

All six students were engaged in the tasks. When they first received the illustrations, they were not sure what to do with them. During the second task, it was interesting to observe how they reacted to receiving the illustrations. For example, we see that they were quicker to manipulate the material. They were more attentive to observing the illustrations. They paid attention to the organization of the illustrations on their desks.

In the first task, during the first listening, the students were not able to listen and move the illustrations at the same time. They were a bit lost. None of them touched the illustrations. It was during the second and third listenings that the students worked by trial and error, manipulated the images and tried to complete the task. The

fact that the story was segmented part by part in the third listening made the task much easier for the students. Nevertheless, only one student, ME, had the correct solution.

All six performed better on the second task. Indeed, they hesitated less, changed the position of the illustrations less often less and made fewer mistakes. In the first listening, they looked at the illustrations all of the time and, despite the quantity of information received, they tried to move and replace some illustrations. The whole arrangement was done during the second listening, while the third one was used either as a moment to place the illustrations in a final way or as a moment to check their answers.

During the peer-to-peer discussions, whether with their partner or as a class during correction with the teacher, all six students participated and justified their answers. They explained ‘why’ each illustration was in a particular place. They also participated in the development of the summary that highlighted the way to succeed in such a task. In particular, they said that they had to locate sound clues that corresponded to the illustrations. When students tried to explain how they completed the task the first time, they say that they observed the illustrations, listened carefully to the story, and memorised the words. They also acknowledged that listening to the story in small chunks allowed them to sequentially organise the illustrations, despite making mistakes. This was not a strategy that they enacted, but an instructional support that was provided.

First, was difficult because the story on the radio went by too fast, but then was easier because madam cut the story into small pieces so I found the pictures more easily. (CR)

Because the story went by too fast and it was difficult to understand, but afterwards when Mister cut it into small pieces it was easier. (FA)

After completing Task 2, students were able to identify other mechanisms they used to complete the task, such as manipulating the illustrations and trying to find the correct order, paying attention to the clues given by the same story, and thinking before giving a final answer. Although they were not able to explain in detail the strategies they used, there was a slight improvement in their responses.

You have to look at the pictures carefully. There are details. You can hear them on the radio (SC).

I'll listen carefully, look at the pictures of the man, open my ears and open my eyes to see the clues in the pictures. (FA)

In general, the students in profile 2 and 3 whom we observed in the classes receiving strategy instruction showed a rather anxious attitude the first time they had to complete the task. They looked at others on several occasions. They engaged in parasitic gestures and mimicking that suggested that they were stressed. These aspects disappeared during the second task. Students looked more confident and expressed this in their responses to metacognitive questions:

The rat was easier than the slug because we had already done it once (CR)

It was easy, I was able to do it on my own without getting it wrong. (IM)

I was more efficient because I was more trained. (KO)

I was more efficient because I already know The Slug and I know how to do it.

(ME)

Students with a ‘struggling’ profile and control students performed similarly, and they did not improve on the second task

The three students in profile 1 all had difficulties working in L1. While all three did not respond in the same way to all steps of the instructional program, what they had in common was that they failed to complete the task correctly, both the first and the second times. This was also the case for the three average-performing students in the fourth class, where listening strategies instruction did not take place. Table 3 shows the reactions of these six students during Task 1. Because ER had a particular type of behaviour, it is described in a separate column. We have not included a column for task 2, because the students' behaviours were more or less the same as in the first task.

Table 3. Behaviours of profile 1 students (ER, CR, SI) and profile 2 students who did not have strategy instruction (MA, TI, PO) during the first task

	ER	CR, SI, MA, TI and PO
Starting	He huffs and puffs, drops his cards on the floor, expresses that it seems ‘difficult’, refuses to tell the story he has invented.	They place the illustrations on their desk, complete the task and build a story. They raise their hands to tell the story they have made up.
First listening	ER, CR, SI and TI touch some illustrations without replacing them. They stop after a few minutes. MA and PO do not touch the illustrations. All look at the others at some point.	
Second listening	He does not touch the illustrations.	They move the illustrations and place the first one correctly. They change the position of several illustrations without showing certainty. CR, TI and PO often look at others and show uncertainty.
Third listening	He looks at the order of the other students' illustrations and does the same thing.	CR and SI place the second illustration correctly. They change the order of the others, look at what the other students

		have done, and place the rest of the illustrations in the same order. The order is incorrect. They do not use the vocabulary that is explained by the teacher. MA, TI and PO do not have the correct order (three errors), but change according to the vocabulary specified by the teacher.
Comparison in pairs	They look at what the other student has done. ER, CR, SI do not talk. They shift the illustrations that are not yet in the same order as their partner. MA, TI and PO talk to their partner and try to find a solution together.	
Correction and sharing of strategies	He leaves the illustrations in the prearranged order on the desk. He no longer participates.	They raise their hands to participate in the correction. They place their illustrations according to the correction. CR and SI do not know how to explain how they found the first illustration when the teacher asks them.

Regarding the three profile 1 students, even though ER did not engage directly in the task, as CR and SI did, identical behaviours can be noted. For example, they were lost at the first listening and stopped working. They did not speak during the scheduled discussion time with their classmate. CR and SI managed to place only one illustration correctly during the second and third listenings. As the end of the activity approached, these three students came up with way to organise the illustrations by imitating the order used by others. In the end, they expressed that the task was difficult for them. They explained this by saying that the person's speech was too fast:

At first it was difficult because the story on the radio went by too fast. But then it was easier because the lady cut the story into small pieces (CR)

The rat was easier than the slug because this time the story was read by the lady. She read the story more slowly than the man on the radio. (SI)

As the behaviour of the three students was strictly identical during the second task, this suggests that they did not take advantage of the activities involved in doing the first task to learn strategies for solving this type of problem. However, these

strategies were made explicit, collectively and orally. The answers to the metacognitive questions were similar for these three students in both tasks. They did not make explicit the strategies that were useful for succeeding in the task:

When I listen, I must be quiet, in silence. (ER)

To listen attentively, to remain in silence, to open my ears very, very well to listen. (CR)

You have to listen carefully to the story and not talk to others. (SI)

The students in profile 2 who did not receive instruction on listening strategies behaved during the first task in the same way as the students in profile 2 in the other class, presented above. On the other hand, we did not see any change in their functioning during the second task. They seemed to have the same concerns, the same difficulties. They did not succeed in finding a correct solution either the first or the second time.

Discussion

Our first research question was how early elementary students behave during a listening task that is offered to them for the first time. This was a task where they had to put illustrations into the order corresponding with the heard text. We showed that 11 of the 12 observed 6- to 7-year-olds had difficulties, regardless of their learning profile. Indeed, only one student, with a high-performance profile, found the correct order on the third listening. This reinforces the fact that performing a listening task in the school setting is a complex task (Dolz and Mabillard 2017). This was reflected in students' anxiety that was observed. Indeed, students do not naturally respond

successfully to this type of task (Brown 2008; Fogelson 2016; Lau 2017). They need to learn strategies for successful listening tasks (Vandergrift 2006). Nonetheless, it appears that playing the oral message multiple times and segmenting it on the third listening were supportive aspects for students. This echoes the recommendations of Adams and Cox (2010), Lafontaine (2007), and Graham, Santos, and Vanderplank (2011). Vocabulary clarification was also a necessary point for the students. This was fundamental to their understanding of the message, as Kim (2016) and Wolfgramm and colleagues (2016) have shown.

Our second research question was concerned with the possible effects of explicit teaching of listening strategies. Several aspects were shown. First of all, the three students with an average profile who were not taught listening strategies did not show any improvement in their behaviours from the first to the second task. This supports the idea that practicing - or even assessing - knowledge that has not been taught does not help students perform better on listening tasks (Biggs and Tang 2007). Yet, this is often what is done in classrooms with regard to listening comprehension (Colognesi and Deschepper 2019). Thus, it is not because they have already performed a task once that they perform it better the second time: additional learning seems necessary (Dolz and Mabillard 2017; Gallahue and Ozmum 2006).

Indeed, six of the nine students who received listening strategy instruction showed different behaviours on the first and second tasks. They were more effective the second time. This is especially encouraging given the students' low socioeconomic backgrounds that can lead to difficulties in L1. This means that the results can reasonably be transferred to any class. These were the students with average and high

performing profiles. This reinforces research showing the benefits of listening strategy instruction for students (Burleson 2011; Chou 2017; Käsper, Uibu, and Mikk 2020). The strategy instruction was done through addressing metacognition. The students verbalised and justified the strategies they used. These strategies were then taken up, validated and completed by the teacher, who summarised them. During the first task, one of the responses some students gave to the researcher was ‘open ears, be quiet.’ This students’ instinctive response is similar to what was recommended by Rudner et al. (2018). The sharing of strategies, by both students and the teacher, allowed for a broader range of strategies and highlighted effective strategies related to the task (Gagnon and Martinet 2021; Graham, Santos, and Vanderplank 2011).

Among the listening strategies highlighted by Gagnon and Martinet (2021), several were useful to students in completing these listening tasks: activating lexical knowledge (identifying key words); identifying the main thematic content (identifying important information); understanding the structure of the text (connecting information with other information and with the illustrations); and constructing a mental representation of the text (in order to grasp the information as a whole and to use the sound indices). Moreover, the three metacognitive strategies identified by Gagnon and Martinet (2021) were visible in the second task for these students. They planned their listening by arranging the illustrations, giving themselves a listening project (Turgeon 2011). They regulated their comprehension during the first and second listening sessions. They moved and replaced the illustrations. They checked and verified their understanding after listening. They took advantage of the third listening session.

It is also interesting to note that these six students were able to verbally express how they functioned and justify their responses. This may provide some insight about the possible age at which students can engage in metacognition, which has been debated (Veenman et al. 2006).

The three of the students with the ‘struggling’ profile showed no change in behaviours between the two tasks. This points to the same conclusions as Allen, Lafontaine, and Plessis-Bélair (2016). Based on the finding that these students were experiencing cognitive overload, it seems that one avenue, as we have shown elsewhere (Colognesi and Gouin 2020), would be to simplify the task initially for them. Thus, by having fewer illustrations to manipulate, for example, they could both solve the problem presented by the task and still have cognitive space to think about strategies.

Limitations

This research is not without its limitations. We will point out the three main ones. The first limitation is the small number of students who were observed. This does not allow us to generalise and leads us to consider the results with caution. The second limitation is that this is a text/image matching task. The students might have performed differently in another listening comprehension task, and perhaps on more than two occasions. The third limitation lies in the sound medium used for the two tasks. Each was a written text that was read aloud (children's records). It would seem more appropriate to use an authentically oral message, using the language in its spoken form (Gagnon and Martinet 2021).

Practical implications

Some practical implications can be suggested from this study. First, include input on teaching listening strategies in teacher training. In that sense, the instructional materials we analysed in this study could serve as an example. Second, special attention could be paid to students having difficulty with L1. Indeed, if they do not benefit like the others from the teaching of strategies, then having specific interventions for these students that allow them to have access to these strategies seems important. These elements all suggest the importance of future research on listening strategies, their teaching, and their use by students.

Conclusion

This research has shown that teaching listening strategies is beneficial for students' success in school listening tasks. They are then more effective and confident. This is because students do not naturally respond successfully to this type of task, which can be stressful for them. The study also shows that students are able to use the strategies fairly quickly in performing a new task. The highlighting of strategies can be done by sharing the strategies that students use to succeed in the task. It is also necessary for the teacher to make these strategies explicit himself and to highlight effective strategies in relation to the listening task to be performed. The study also showed that students with academic difficulties do not easily use the strategies that are taught. This is because the overall task is too complex for them. This reinforces the idea of differentiating and adapting the task for them at the outset.

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List of tables

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