

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings regarding the three research questions and describes the conclusions based on the findings of the study. Moreover, the thesis strengths and limitations are taken into consideration and suggestions for further research on metacognitive strategies. The chapter concludes with recommendations for teachers, policy makers and future researchers.

5.2 Overview of Study

The present study employed both the quantitative and qualitative method by adopting a experimental research design with 150 diploma students from a higher education institution in Kampar, Perak (Malaysia). All courses at the selected institution are conducted in English. For this study, the MALQ, IELTS listening tests and interviews were employed as research tools to obtain main data. The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. The study addressed the following research questions:

- i) What is the level of awareness on metacognitive strategies between the participants in the experimental group and control group?
- ii) How do the IELTS listening test scores of the participants in the experiment group differ from the IELTS listening scores of the participants in the control group?
- iii) What do the participants think about the use of metacognitive strategies in the IELTS listening preparatory course?

5.3 Conclusion

This study dwelled on the use of metacognitive strategies for learners to improve their listening performance as well as for teachers to monitor the learners' thinking and learning progress. This study focused on listening skills as it is often ignored. Helping learners to improve their listening skills can improve their comprehension, which will affect the development of other skills and overall success in L2 learning.

Metacognitive instruction is viewed as a form of method-based approach addressing the listening skills' complexity as it helps learners during the listening process. Besides that, the study also examined the impact of using metacognitive strategies on ESL learners' listening performance which provided vital evidences on the difficulty of mastering listening performance (as compared to other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing skills).

The study involved 150 diploma students who were later divided into two groups, specifically the control group and experimental group. The control group underwent conventional instruction of learning methods whereas the experimental group underwent metacognitive instruction. The participants' existing knowledge of difficult English words were used to gauge the level of their language proficiency.

The instrument used for this purpose was the MALQ, which allowed the researcher to elicit data on the participants' level of awareness of their metacognitive strategies, specifically their ability to plan and evaluate, direct attention, person knowledge, mental translation and problem solving strategies. The MALQ item analysis allowed the researcher to identify any significant changes in the learners' level after the treatment of metacognitive strategies and conventional instructions. The item analysis showed that learners were aware of these metacognitive strategies during the listening tasks.

After receiving explicit instructions to apply metacognitive strategies in their listening skills, participants in the experimental group showed more advancement in using and adjusting their metacognitive strategies during the listening activity.

Furthermore, the resultant outcomes of pre-test and post-test in this study also highlighted that planning and evaluation strategy was significant among the participants in both groups. The participants were prepared for the listening activity and the preparation gave them the time to evaluate themselves on how well they had done and what would they had done better when tasked with similar listening activities. However, most participants either completely disagreed or slightly disagreed on the level of their awareness of planning and evaluation strategy.

Notably, the participants in the control group mentally formed a plan on their listening goals. The level of their awareness only increased after they were exposed to conventional instruction. On the contrary, the participants in the experimental group demonstrated substantial increase in the level of awareness when they linked their schemata to other similar listening texts that they had heard or read prior to their listening tasks. From the gathered responses, the participants admitted that they had difficulty to focus when they encountered problems while listening.

Nevertheless, it was crucial for them to regain their concentration in order to sustain the adequate level of comprehension. The participants in the experimental group displayed better ability to redirect their attention after treatment with explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies. A high number of participants in the experimental group agreed that they were able to recover concentration right away when their mind started to wander off while listening.

Apart from that, the participants also perceived mastering the listening skills, compared to other language skills, to be the most challenging task. They faced difficulty in

mastering the required listening skills to excel in the listening practices and tests. Similar to other challenging learning tasks, most of the participants in the study easily gave up when they encountered these problems in terms of their listening skills. Nevertheless, the participants in the experimental group demonstrated perseverance in completing the listening tasks after the exposure to metacognitive strategies during the intervention stage. Therefore, this study proved that the awareness on metacognitive strategies plays a fundamental role in guiding learners to monitor their listening skills effectively and to instil confidence for learners to comprehend the aural texts or the assigned listening tasks.

In addition, the introduction of metacognitive strategies clearly motivated the participants in this study and improved their experience of learning the required listening skills. At the beginning of the study, their awareness on metacognitive strategies were inadequate, as they were not able to identify the relevant strategies that can assist them in enhancing their learning although they were equipped with metacognitive knowledge. A majority of the participants expressed unfamiliarity when introduced to metacognitive strategies during the intervention stage even though they had been subconsciously applying these strategies successfully in reality.

The execution of classroom-based explicit instructions on how to apply metacognitive strategies in this study revealed several vital points. It was deemed fundamental for the learners to familiarise themselves with the listening strategies through precise categorisation and explanations on how and when to apply these strategies. As revealed in the interviews, most of the participants agreed that the use of metacognitive strategies improved their listening skills although the recorded improvements did not achieve an adequate level of statistical significance.

Fundamentally, the obtained findings of the current study supported the researcher's view on the close link with the ways in which learners engage and process

aural input using selective strategies. The improvement in the selected metacognitive strategies according to the choices made by the learners themselves could facilitate the learners to become better learners. Ultimately, learners would be able to achieve better scores for the IELTS listening test.

Overall, this experimental study provided essential insights on the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners using both quantitative and qualitative research design. The acquired relevant data revealed a positive correlation between the impact of metacognitive strategies and the performance of listening skills.

Metacognitive strategies present an operational solution for learners to obtain significant listening skills. Although most learners of normal intelligence engage in metacognitive regulation when they handle an effortful cognitive task, there are those who are more metacognitive than others—those with greater metacognitive abilities tend to be more successful in their cognitive endeavours. Furthermore, teaching listening skills is also another challenge in a highly diverse country with rich cultural heritage, especially in terms of language and communication.

This study recommended the following: 1) teachers to use metacognitive strategies in a teaching and learning environment to improve students' listening skills 2) policy makers to consider integrating metacognitive skills in the school curricula and 3) future researchers to look into assessing and expanding knowledge expertise to include the evaluation of strategic expertise.

In conclusion, this study showed that the use of metacognitive strategies could heighten the learners' experience and listening performance, which help them to cope with the listening tasks.

5.4 Implications of the study

This study has significant implications on the use of metacognitive strategies to enhance listening skills among Malaysian ESL students. The implications of the study are depicted in Figure 5.1 and are explained further in the sub-sections below

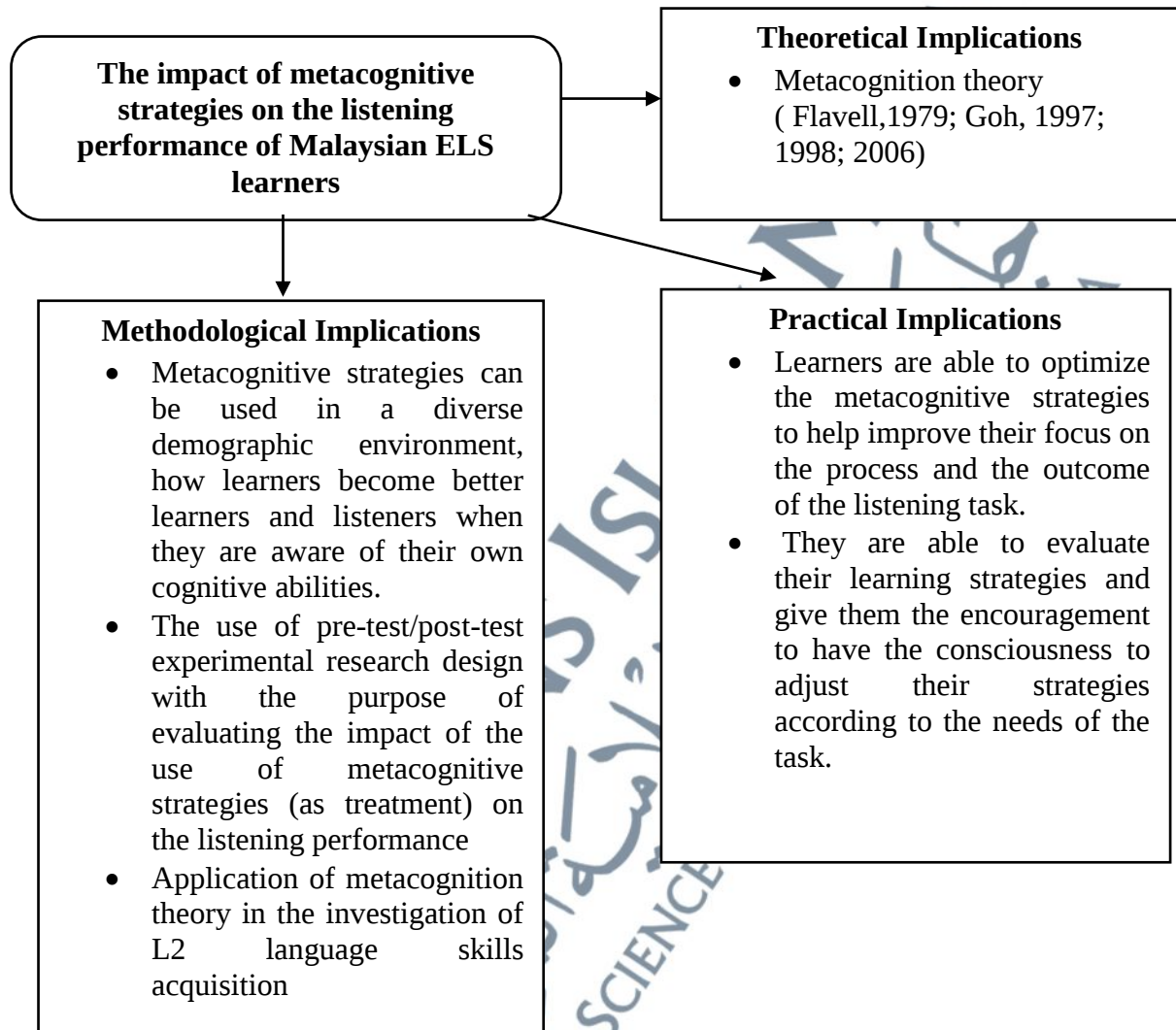


Figure 5.1: Implications of the study

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

The use of the metacognition theory proposed by Flavell (1979) and further developed by Goh (1997; 1998; 2006) allowed the evaluation of metacognitive strategies impact on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. Concerning this study, the incorporation of metacognitive strategies

into the learning process of listening was expected to facilitate the adaption of appropriate listening skill strategies among ESL learners.

With regards to the study seen through the lens of metacognition theory, it looked into how the learner's knowledge of their own cognitive processes and uses the knowledge to control cognitive activities with the purpose of achieving a cognitive goal. The correlation analysis and t-test reaffirmed the positive impact of the intervention performed in the present study, which was aligned with the findings of Goh (2008) on the use of metacognitive strategies in enhancing listening skills.

The current study also successfully identified the constructive impact of metacognitive strategies through the positive correlation between the IELTS listening test scores and the level of awareness on metacognitive strategies among the participants. This is in agreement with Goh (2008) who put a focus on the constructive nature of learning and its significance among L2 learners' listening skills. Listening is a skill of interest in this study as it is a process of activities for the listener to hear speech symbols with complete attention, understanding, appreciation, and interpretation in order to acquire the meaning of the verbal communication delivered by the speaker. Hence, the use of metacognitive strategies can help learners to compensate for their bottom-up listening process and provide them with an overview of the listening process.

Through these strategies, learners are trained to extract important details from ongoing speech, identify the gist of a segment, and then predict the content of the next segment. Additionally, these strategies also build the characters of learners to become competent, independent, confident, creative, and responsible, which echoes the sentiment of character building in the Malaysian education.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

Developing L2 listening skills can be considered as an important as it plays an important role in the development of other language skills. It is central with regard to being competent communicatively. Learner receive input through listening to instructions or explanations before responding orally or in writing. However, they could not cope with the listening input and could not assess the listening process. Despite listening being the most frequently used language skill, the art of listening effectively has not been taught extensively in Malaysian ESL classrooms as teachers tend to focus solely on the product of the listening task instead.

Previous studies showed that listening is intricate where the input has to be actively interpreted requiring the listeners to suit what they have heard to what they already know. This is a complication process for ESL learners, particularly those with limited vocabulary. Hence, it is imperative that they should know how to use correct listening strategies.

Learners face difficulties with listening could not understand the speaker which eventually affecting the understanding of the context as a whole. Listening is not easy to master, as the listeners are required to decipher meaning from verbal input where they have to use their prior knowledge of the subject and L2. This will lead them producing relevant information and allowing them to interpret the verbal input. In short, the listeners have to process the information actively.

Metacognitive strategies are highly essential to develop learners' skills to listen from the perspectives of teaching listening skills. The general use of metacognitive strategies in listening involves planning, regulating, monitoring, and management. In particular, learners can use these metacognitive strategies to enhance their listening skills in the second language through prediction, monitoring (of errors or breakdowns), and evaluation. Adding to that, the metacognitive process in learning also involves planning

for learning, thinking about the learning process (as it takes place), monitoring one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after the completion of an activity. This is in line with Goh (1997) who emphasises on the significance of training the learners to have good metacognitive awareness.

The significant implication is that the use of metacognitive strategies helped to optimize learners' capacity to stay focused on both process and outcomes of listening tasks. Their listening performance improved as they are able to evaluate their own learning strategies, which gives them the motivation to adjust their strategies to meet the needs of the tasks.

5.4.3 Methodological Implication

Apart from theoretical implication, this study also contributes to the methodological perspective as it investigated the effect metacognitive strategies have on the listening performance among Malaysian ESL learners.

The first methodological implication is where the study took into account how metacognitive strategies can be used in a diverse demographic environment, how learners become better learners and listeners when they are aware of their own cognitive abilities.

Another methodological implication lies in the experience obtained from the use of pre-test/post-test experimental research design with the purpose of evaluating the effect of the use of metacognitive strategies (as treatment) on the listening performance (in terms of the test scores), which comprised of three stages namely pre-experimental stage; intervention stage and post-experimental stage for data collection purposes in the context of IELTS listening skills pertaining to Malaysian ESL learners. This research design may benefit future studies on other language skills among ESL or EFL learners.

Finally, it also contributes to the application of metacognition theory in the investigation of L2 language skills acquisition as this will help future researchers to apply similar approaches when investigating other aspects of learning.

5.5 Contributions of Study

This study provided greater or specific knowledge about the effects of metacognitive strategies on ESL learner's performance for IELTS listening skills in an IELTS preparatory course.

The study has proven that explicit instruction on metacognitive strategies can aid students to control and monitor their listening acquisition skills. Furthermore educators need to explicitly impart knowledge about strategy usage that can be of help to students when acquiring IELTS listening skills.

Furthermore, IELTS listening monitored via metacognitive strategies have proven to aid listening acquisition and also helped to improve students' confidence level as they are able to have a 'build-in instruction' to deal with the intriguing listening comprehension. As for the IELTS teachers, teaching listening will no longer be a passive skill that focuses only on the product of listening.

This present study had managed to narrow the gap between research on listening skills and other skills such as reading and writing in order to claim its rightful throne for listening to be the most important skill to be mastered in learning a language. Besides that, it has also helped to create awareness on the importance of listening skill which may be regarded as passive and listening processes are difficult to access due to their covert nature. However, listeners are engaged in a number of active cognition as they construct meaning where they perceive sounds, segment words that they transform into meaningful units, register stress and intonation, and activate their retention memory (Vandergrift and Goh 2012).

Listening is a challenging skill especially to ESL learners as they often feel insecure about the ability to grasp the meaning and are at the mercy of the sound stream or the speakers. They should be made aware by that listening can be a proactive activity that can be attained through constant regulation of metacognitive strategies when they use their prior knowledge to listen and anticipate what they will hear. The present study has proven that if they anticipate correctly, they will reinforce their prediction and if they go wrong, they can problem-solve the reason for the difference. This clearly shows that planning, predicting, monitoring, problem-solving and evaluation as presented by metacognitive strategies are vital learning and listening tools. The implementation of metacognitive strategies in acquiring IELTS listening skill is a way for ESL students to compensate their bottom-up listening process and provide them with an overview of the listening process. Under the strategy, ESL students are trained to extract essential details from continuous speech, identify the gist of a segment, and then predict the content of the next segment. Plus, this strategy also builds the character of the students to become competent, independent, confident and responsible; this echoes the sentiment of character building in Malaysian education.

Due to these values, these strategies are beneficial from the perspective of teaching listening and are considered essential in developing ESL learners' listening skills. Application of the metacognitive strategies in listening involves planning, regulating, monitoring, and management. Accordingly, students can use these strategies to enhance their listening of the second language through prediction, monitoring of errors or breakdowns, and evaluation. Moreover, the process consists of planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Finally the problem solving strategy should be used to allow ESL learners to reflect on their whole learning process.

On the whole, the findings of the present study that metacognitive can be a guide for ESL students to acquire successful listening skills through the following principles: planning, monitoring, evaluating and problem solving. These methods are useful in assisting the language learners, developing their awareness of the listening process, and facilitate them in acquiring metacognitive knowledge. Apart from the general aspects, metacognitive strategies also have many potentials in the area of listening skills specifically.

5.6 Limitations of Study

There were several limitations in this study. Firstly, the study exclusively focused on the IELTS listening component that involved different genres (e.g., talks, directions, and statistics). However, this study did not specifically assess the impact of these different genres on the listening performance of ESL learners.

This study solely focused on the ability of ESL learners in applying metacognitive strategies, specifically planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving strategies, to acquire the required listening skills to improve listening performance. Therefore, other strategies developed in other recent studies were not discussed in the present study.

Secondly, the participants of this study were Malaysian students from the Information Technology, Business, and Hospitality programmes. Therefore, the obtained findings of this study may not apply to the population of interest given the limited sample that did not include participants from other programmes, such as Engineering, Education, and others.

Thirdly, this study only used materials designed for IELTS listening preparatory course. The use of other English language references or workbooks may produce different resultant outcomes.

5.7 Recommendations

This study showed that metacognition could help students to become effective learners. Metacognition is an intrinsic human trait that enables students to resolve challenges in different circumstances and offers great benefits when integrated in learning situations. The teaching and learning of language, particularly listening, will be more effective when metacognitive strategies are used. Hence, this study recommends that findings of these study could be used by ESL, Policy makers and future researchers to improve the teaching of listening skills and improving listening performance among students in Malaysian schools and institutions of higher learning.

5.7.1 Teachers

With regards to the findings from this study, it is beneficial for ESL to teachers emphasize on listening by increasing listening activities in the language classroom as mastering listening skills is as important as being proficient in reading, writing and speaking. Teachers have to show the importance of having good listening skills particularly among L2 learners as metacognitive strategies can be improvised to suit the learners' needs and level of proficiencies. It is imperative to expose the learners to spoken form of the texts as frequent as possible to help them comprehend the texts better as they familiarise themselves with the vocabulary in the texts.

Metacognitive strategies help learners by providing them with knowledge and skills needed to comprehend original texts. Learners with increased metacognitive awareness will have the capacity of dealing with listening activities, plan for suitable strategies and monitor their own learning. Based on these findings, ESL teachers can use the strategies in enhancing learners' abilities to plan, evaluate, direct attention and personal knowledge.

Teachers are able to guide the students effectively to acquire key listening skills through planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies. These methods were effective in assisting the language learners, developing their awareness of the listening process, and assisting them in acquiring metacognitive knowledge. Apart from the general aspects, metacognitive strategies also offer numerous potentials in the specific area of listening skills.

Apart from teaching learners to use metacognitive strategies to improve listening performance, roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are also crucial for learners to perform better in tasks requiring both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. As learners are not aware of their own resources or abilities, ESL teachers play a major role in boosting learners' morale and self-confidence as confidence is recognised as a strong influence on the learners' ability to cope with the cognitive tasks in general, specifically listening skills.

Teachers should provide continuous support to learners to learn how to become effective listeners as the motivation to learn is important element for the successful implementation of any teaching and learning strategies, which should be considered accordingly. The effectiveness of planning, monitoring, and evaluation strategies also depends on the readiness of learners as the teacher should train them to have a good understanding of their own learning process.

5.7.2 Policy makers

Listening is an important component of language skills but it is often side-lined as the teaching and learning of language normally focused on reading and writing. Participants in this study were able to use metacognitive strategies effectively in ESL, but not in the learning of English listening skills. Essentially, learners need to have adequate

exposure to the knowledge of how to apply metacognitive strategies. The current practices include teaching and practising language and linguistic knowledge and skills.

Due to that, Malaysia's education policy makers should consider introducing metacognition in the school curricula as the study demonstrated significant difference attributed to the metacognitive strategies used in listening for ESL learners. Metacognition strategic methods enhances deeper learning such as development of growth mindset, self-monitored learning goals, and resilience which eventually lead to permanent learning advantages.

Exposing students, from primary school age onwards, to metacognitive strategies from an early stage would train them to be independent learners as the metacognitive practices help them to monitor their own learning and resolve problems. Learners with good metacognitive strategies are higher achievers across the learning domains as the metacognitive awareness allows them to maximise their capabilities. Although high achievers benefit from the use of metacognitive strategies, low-achieving students would also benefit as the strategies give them the opportunity to reflect on their current learning strategies and identify their own strengths and weakness. Metacognitive strategies are flexible, can be weaved into the subjects and easy to implement as long as teachers are trained professionally to teach metacognitive strategies in their classrooms.

For implementation purposes, the policy makers can also make use of the provided data in the formulation of comprehensive guidelines on adapting and implementing suitable learning strategies for ESL learners at different educational levels. The obtained findings would be able to guide syllabus designers to provide comprehensible input on teaching listening skill.

Hence, based on the obtained findings of the current study, it is recommended that the curriculum at the tertiary level include the teaching and learning of strategic knowledge of how, why, where, and when to apply the four metacognitive strategies identified in this

study. Through the curriculum, learners are expected to gain essential skills of recognising opportunities to apply metacognitive strategies.

5.7.3 Future Researchers

Further research is necessary to study how metacognitive strategies affect the students' listening performance, as well as, to conduct interventions that will encourage metacognitive awareness. The assumption was that ESL learners would develop L2 listening skills through opportunities to improve their knowledge and learning skills. Nevertheless, the results of MALQ and learners' discussion in the current study put forward other significant findings, specifically the lack of concern to apply learning strategies.

Although this study may not provide definite conclusions on this topic based on the gathered evidences, different metacognitive strategies to accomplish the listening tasks were observed in this study. One's language proficiency can affect a few strategies, such as preparing for class or being ready to overcome obstacles. Besides that, several strategies are specific to listening or reading, such as using hints or body language, rehearsing, re-reading, and responding in the classroom.

Based on the review of related literature, metacognitive knowledge and control as well as regulatory strategies are key aspects to the realisation of learner autonomy. Learners need to use effective strategies in their learning of language to reinforce the development of independent learning. Hence, more research is needed on metacognitive-related awareness as being able to use metacognitive strategies effectively and being aware of the strategies' benefits means that the learners have the capacity to think at a higher level and possess abilities to become confident learners and outperform their peers. Future researchers can also delve into identifying types of classroom-friendly interventions that may benefit learners and help them as they learn a new language. Moreover, it is also

recommended for future research to assess and expand knowledge expertise to include the evaluation of strategic expertise.

