

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the present study, which includes the background of study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of study, scope of study, and the conceptual framework of this study. Besides that, this chapter provides the operational definitions of key terms used in this study.

1.2 Background of Study

Malaysia, as a rapidly developing country within the Asian region, has adopted a system of bilingual education in order to achieve a balance of national and international needs and interests (Gill and Kirkpatrick, 2013). Moreover, the Malaysian educational institutions have become increasingly aware of the significance of the English language as the mainstream language of the global community and its significant impact on the academic and socioeconomic progress of learners (Razak and Babikkoi, 2014). Nevertheless, as a multilingual country, problems in learning English language as second language (ESL), especially the mastery of listening skill, are inevitable in Malaysia, especially when most learners are from vernacular medium background during their formative period and early education phase.

Listening, in general, is a challenging language skill that causes frustration to most learners (Arnold, 2000; Goh, 2000). In a study conducted by Graham (2006), mastery of listening skills among learners was identified as the area with the least success rate compared to the mastery of other language skills. In particular, the study

revealed that the learners encountered difficulties when it comes to perception in relation to the speed of delivery due to mishearing or missing essential words (Graham, 2006). Hiew (2012) elaborated that the pace of speech and the meaning of words in the English language frustrate most learners in their attempt to comprehend their teacher's words.

Furthermore, there also exists lack of meaningful lessons in the current teaching practices on listening skill for the English language in most of the Malaysian educational institutions. While it has been a common practice for list skills to be taught using surface-level method such as memorisation and repetition, it is then recommended that in-depth approach to be incorporated in Malaysian English classrooms for learners to master the listening skill (Lim, 2013). Adding to that, different learning strategies of ESL learners with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds in Malaysia have remained as a significant issue among instructors and educational experts for decades. To date, the development of an approach that is accustomed to the diverse cultural and multilingual backgrounds, such as Malaysia, has yet to be found. Therefore, it was deemed timely to examine the strategies used in teaching and learning of listening skill among ESL learners in Malaysia by exploring alternative methods that way contributes to ELS learners' success in the listening skills.

Learning a second language depends on the enhancement of four equally important skills (Robbins, 1999). Listening and reading skills are receptive skills, while speaking and writing skills are productive skills. In order to learn a language, both receptive and productive skills are equally significant. However, teachers demonstrate the propensity to emphasise certain skills and overlook other skills in language learning (Roberts and Gous, 2014). In this case, listening skill tends to be

overlooked by most teachers despite its significance in learning a second language. Hence, despite its importance, listening skill has been characterised as the forgotten skill and art for more than 50 years as it is rarely taught in the elementary classrooms (Tompkins, 2002, as cited in Swain, 2004).

Likewise, in Malaysia, ESL learners do not receive adequate exposure in mastering listening skill. In the present study (based on the researcher's knowledge), the researcher who is a language practitioner also believes that most teachers tend to focus on speaking, reading, and writing skills due to the lack of knowledge on the methodologies used to teach listening skill. Additionally, Mohana and Shamara (2012) found that learners are unable to listen and understand effectively. Although, the interviewed teachers in their study perceived listening skill as a significant skill, especially at the tertiary level. Furthermore, Abbas and Reza (2011) highlighted the crucial need of effective strategies and guidance for ESL learners to learn and apply the listening skill. Thus, when ESL learners plan to pursue their study at local international universities or foreign universities, such as in the U.S., U.K., or Australia, taking on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, which is a mandatory entrance requirement for most of these universities, is a challenge for them.

The IELTS test is an internationally accredited measurement used for different levels of English language competence in terms of speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills. There are two types of IELTS test—the IELTS candidates can either choose to sit for IELTS Academic or IELTS General Training, which assesses these four language skills. Every IELTS candidate would take the same listening and speaking tests. The IELTS Academic is for those who plan to pursue their study at an undergraduate or a postgraduate level or for those who seek professional registration.

Meanwhile, the IELTS General Training is for those who plan to migrate to English-speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and U.K. or for those who pursue their study below the undergraduate level. Given the scope of this study, this study exclusively focused on the IELTS listening test paper (IELTS Org.). However, for the purpose of investigation on the listening skills of L2 student & IELTS Academic will be the focus for this study.

The IELTS candidates sitting for the IELTS Academy test are required to answer 40 questions in the IELTS listening test paper with different types of questions, such as multiple-choice questions, matching, plan, map, or diagram labelling, form completion, note completion, table completion, flowchart completion, summary completion, sentence completion, and short-answer questions, in 30 minutes. Additional 10 minutes are provided for them to transfer their answers to the provided answer script. A variety of voices and native-speaker accents are used for all sections. The audio for each section is played only once. The test assesses different aspects of listening skill, such as (1) understanding the main ideas of the dialogues, (2) understanding of the specific factual information, (3) recognising the opinions, attitudes, and purpose of a conversation or lecture, and (4) following the development of an argument. The candidates are awarded one mark for every correct answer provided. The total score (out of 40) is then converted to the IELTS nine-band scale (to a total worth of 25%). Samples of the IELTS listening test paper are provided in appendix E, the IELTS Listening test papers which were used as research instruments for the present study. There are four sections in total; each section consists of 10 questions:

- Section 1 focuses on a conversation between two people in an everyday social context, such as a conversation in an accommodation agency;

- Section 2 focuses on a monologue set in an everyday social context, such as a speech about local facilities or a talk about the arrangement for meals during a conference;
- Section 3 focuses on a conversation that involves two to four people in an educational or training context, such as a discussion between a university tutor and student on an assignment or a group of learners planning a research project;
- Section 4 involves a monologue on an academic subject, such as a university lecture.

As stated in the early section of this chapter, learning skills has been identified as one of the key skills that is different to master (Lim 2013, M.Reza 2011) Learning a second language is a complicated task, but there are numerous strategies and methods to make this task stress-free and exciting for learners. According to Littlewood (1999), learning language autonomously is essential, which can be achieved using numerous strategies, such as “metacognitive strategies”. The effectiveness of the application of metacognitive strategies in language learning was demonstrated in numerous studies (e.g., Oxford, 1990; Victori and Lockhart, 1995; White, 1995; Miserandino, 1996; Goh, 1997; Fleming and Walls, 1998). Additionally, in the aspect of acquiring effective learning skills in L2, metacognitive strategies facilitate language learners to achieve autonomous learning with respect to the following two objectives: (1) metacognitive strategies create the readiness to learn the language; (2) metacognitive strategies boost the listening ability of the language learners. Essentially, metacognitive knowledge involves cognitive knowledge, affective states, activities, and control over the understanding gained based on the acquired knowledge to achieve a specific goal. Besides that, metacognitive strategies

include different mechanisms that are useful for language acquisition; for example, the enquiry form, practical knowledge, and provisional knowledge. Flavell (2007) described that metacognitive experiences and metacognitive knowledge are part of the mechanisms of metacognition. Flavell (2007) further identified different categories of metacognitive knowledge in terms of enquiry form:

- i) What is the information?
- ii) Why should the information be knowledgeable?
- iii) How to use the information?
- iv) When to use the information?
- v) Where to use the information?
- vi) How to assess the practicality of the information?

1.2.1 Listening Skill and Metacognitive Strategies

Essentially, listening skill is the heart of L2 learning, as the development of L2 listening plays an important role in the development of other language skills (Dunkel, 1991; Rost, 2006; Vandergrift, 2007). Despite its importance, listening skill is often regarded as a great challenge and a source of frustration for second and foreign language learners, resulting in poor learning performance and inadequate attention to listening instruction in the classroom. The complexity of listening may be attributed to external factors (e.g., the speaker, text, and even the content) or other factors, such as the ephemeral nature of the listening input, the inherent nature of listening, and the difficulty in accessing the listening process (Vandergrift, 2007). However, the organised practice of L2 listening with the emphasis on the listening process, rather than the listening product, have gained little attention (Mendelsohn, 2001; Berne, 2004; Vandergrift, 2007). Despite all efforts to adequately support the mastery of

listening skill among learners in the classroom, teachers tend to focus on the listening product instead.

Fundamentally, these learning strategies operate through the interaction of four processes, specifically planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluation. Specifically, the comprehension in L1 and L2 was empirically demonstrated to involve similar strategies, in enhancing learners listening skills, similar to other mode of language skills using the metacognitive strategies. Similar strategies, such as translation, summarising, self-evaluation, self-monitoring inferences, elaboration, and deduction, can be used to overcome listening skill problems in both L1 and foreign language (FL). In order to listen to L1 and L2, listeners apply existing knowledge about the world, situation, human interaction, words, syntax, and grammar in order to comprehend what they listen. However, L1 and L2 learners tend to have difficulty with phonological processing due to the absence or ineffectiveness of cognitive processing in listening. This has led to the identification of “metacognitive instruction” as a method-based approach that addresses the complexity of listening skill by facilitating the process of listening for language learners (Goh, 2008) which was the focus of this study.

There has been a growing need for almost two decades in the use of metacognitive instruction to facilitate the development and outcome of listening. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) described metacognitive instruction as “pedagogical procedures that enable learners to increase awareness of the listening process by developing better-off metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the nature and requirement of listening, and strategies for listening”. The pedagogical evidence supported the notion that metacognitive instruction not only assists learners in what they choose to learn, but also to improve useful language learning through

metacognitive strategies. In the same vein, Goh (2008) propounded that metacognitive instruction can inherently strengthen the learners' awareness and their listening skill, which assist the use of appropriate strategies. With respect to the demand for metacognitive instruction, Pressley (2002) asserted the need for a long-term direct explanation and modelling strategies with guided practice to use appropriate strategies in different contexts for learners. Metacognitive instruction in listening can be presented to language learners in different forms, such as a series of activities that promote the use of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies for a given text (Mendelsohn, 1998). Accordingly, metacognitive instruction and metacognitive awareness play significant roles in enhancing the learning process of language learners.

In metacognitive strategies, the concept of metacognitive is crucial. There are various definitions of metacognition. The term "metacognition" was first coined in the late 1970s, which indicated "cognition about cognitive phenomena" or more simply "thinking about thinking" (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). Metacognition was described as "knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena" (Flavell, 1979). Meanwhile, Brown (1980) defined "metacognition" as an individual's ability to control their cognitive actions. Basically, it is the ability to administer, control, and "direct the language learning tasks and invoke thinking about the learning process" (Vandergrift, 2002, p. 559). Metacognition is widely known in surveys on learning because it shows how learners arrange, observe, and amend their comprehension.

Hartman (1998) highlighted the significance of metacognition in terms of its impact on the execution of learning and critical thinking. Metacognitive learning focuses on the techniques used and the assignments that the learners have to take on (Garner, 1987). On a similar note, Shimamura (2000) and Niemi (2002) highlighted

that metacognition can be viewed as the information on cognitive methods from the efficient utilisation of this awareness to self-regulating these cognitive techniques. Basically, the metacognitive structure describes the learning process more precisely given its dependence on the ability (beyond cognitive). According to Larkin (2009), teaching metacognition significantly affects the learning process of learners. Metacognition in terms of one's capacity to reflect upon learning and control reasoning facilitates learners in their attempt to recognise significant parts of a task, which affect their capability to settle on specific strategic decision. Additionally, metacognition is a fundamental part of learners' capability to screen their execution and adequately control their learning in crosswise over disciplinary ranges and learning in the circumstances (Azevedo and Whitherspoon, 2009).

In essence, the characteristic of metacognitive, can be identified as follows (e.g., Serra and Metcalfe, 2009) identified characteristics of metacognition as:

- 1) Metacognitive awareness of cognition or metacognitive knowledge, alluding to the learners' consciousness of their learning, the undertaking, and their thinking or learning methods; and
- 2) Metacognitive regulation, alluding to how learners use metacognitive mindfulness to screen and control their particular thinking and learning.

Metacognition involves two mechanisms, namely metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation (Flavell, 1979; Cross and Paris, 1988). Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge about oneself as a learner and about the factors that may affect the performance (declarative), knowledge about strategies (procedural), and knowledge about when and why to use the strategies (conditional) (Cross and Paris, 1988; Kuhn and Dean, 2004). On the other hand, metacognitive regulation refers to how an individual regulates one's cognition or how one controls his or her

thinking to facilitate learning. Nevertheless, numerous studies emphasised the inclusion of activities of planning, monitoring, and evaluating as part of the metacognitive knowledge (Cross and Paris, 1988; Schraw et al., 2006; Whitebread et al., 2009).

Metacognitive strategies on the other hand, compel learners to ponder their particular thinking as they take part in academic learning tasks (Cubukcu, 2008), which include regulating their cognitive techniques in handling information to successfully execute the tasks (Phakiti, 2003). Learners' metacognitive information envelops learning about and control over their particular thinking and content preparing (Walczyk, 2000). Metacognition in this manner includes the consciousness of cognitive methods and the regulation of cognitive techniques. Besides that, metacognition itself involves gauging the necessities of the problem of interest, making an answer arrangement, selecting a suitable solution, checking advancement towards the established objective, and adjusting the results (if necessary) (Mayer and Wittrock, 1996). Hence, metacognitive information in this way eludes to the conscious cognition control of the cognitive action, which may be sorted into two parts, specifically knowledge about cognition and its regulation learning (consists of strategies).

Accordingly, metacognitive learning strategies help learners to know what to do when they encounter difficulties in language learning. Metacognitive strategies are used to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning process, arrange the condition for learners to learn, set long- and short-term goals, and check their comprehension during the listening task (Oxford, 1990). Students without metacognitive learning strategies are basically learners without opportunity to review their progress, accomplishment, and future learning direction (O'Malley, 1985). According to Chamot et al. (1985),

language learning strategies and strategies for learning content are similar. These strategies are selective attention, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation, which can be used for every type of learning task. Chamot et al. (1999) subsequently incorporated these strategies and metacognition components in the Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning, which is applicable for effective and autonomous learning of language and content. In the case of employing metacognitive strategies listening skills in language learning, studies found that proficient listeners, compared to those who are less proficient, often use metacognitive strategies (Anderson, 2003). The metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive awareness reflect the learners' awareness of controlling, managing, and regulating these strategies (Anderson 2002). Metacognitive awareness is known as the main element for effective learning. Hence, learners who benefit from effective learning demonstrate better learning performance, effective use of necessary strategies in language learning tasks, and effective application of these strategies in their listening skill (Carrell 1989), which are associated to better academic performance. In view of the above, the use of metacognitive strategies for listening is believed to enable language learners to overcome the problems they face during the listening process, which ultimately results in achieving effective listening skill.

1.3 Problem Statement

It is evident that listening is one of the fundamental skills for independent language learning, especially for ESL learners in Malaysia. Listening is an essential aspect of communicative competence and the most frequently used language skill. Listening is not only the first language skill developed, but also the most frequently used skill in the classroom. Additionally, the listening skill of language learners in the

classroom plays a significant role in the development of other language skills. Most students receive essential language input aurally and subsequently, develop their aural proficiency skills and strategies to support the process and management of their listening skill.

The increasingly interesting topic of listening skill has contributed to the growing number of studies on metacognitive strategies for listening. Among the language learning strategies, metacognitive strategies are regarded as high-order skills that make use of knowledge on cognitive processes and constitute an effort to regulate one's learning using planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In this case, metacognitive strategies for listening include self-monitoring and self-regulating activities that focus on both process and product of listening. The strategies also include the listeners' perception on whether they can comprehend what they hear, their ability to judge the cognitive demands of listening task, and their knowledge of when and how to employ a specific cognitive listening strategy with respect to the text difficulty, situational constraints, and individual cognitive abilities (Baker and Brown, 1984).

The use of metacognitive strategies for listening enables listeners to overcome problems in listening and ultimately, to achieve listening skill. Metacognitive strategies for listening encourage learners to learn as they foresee and build conclusions and inquire about the content. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), as cited in Anderson (2003) developed the Online Survey of Listening Strategies based on different subdivisions (specifically listening, academic texts, and items used in the survey) to measure the use of metacognitive strategies for listening among learners. For instance, Boulware-Gooden (2007) found that different metacognitive strategies that focused on vocabulary obtaining process did enhance the third-grade learners' comprehension throughout the listening process.

Adding to that, the use of metacognitive strategies for listening is widely supported as a valuable aid with cognitive, social, and linguistic benefits. Numerous studies (e.g., Carrell, 1995; Wenden, 2001; Chamot, 2005) had demonstrated the positive impact of utilising metacognitive strategies in the listening process. Metacognitive strategies also assist learners in becoming more efficient learners by allowing them to individualise their language learning experience. Despite the extensive research on the impact of using metacognitive strategies for listening skill, the questions on the frequent use of metacognitive strategies for listening, which include different subcategories and certain types of metacognitive reading strategies, remain.

Accordingly, the metacognitive strategies for listening are classified into three subcategories, namely global, problem-solving, and support strategies. The global strategies are when listeners plan their listening by previewing the text or having a purpose in mind. Meanwhile, problem-solving strategies refer to the actions that listeners do when they listen to a text, such as guessing the meaning of words. On the other hand, support strategies are the actions that listeners do in order to assist their listening process, such as referring to the dictionary. Accordingly, Anderson (2003) compared the use of metacognitive strategies for listening among ESL learners, which revealed no difference between both groups in using global and support strategies. However, the study found that ESL learners employed more problem-solving strategies. Similarly, in a study by Jaengsaengthong (2007) found that problem-solving strategies were also used more often than global and support strategies among ESL Thai students (Jaengsaengthong, 2007). Besides that, Pookcharoen (2007) also obtained similar results where problem-solving strategies were used more often than global and support strategies.

The current technological advancement may have provided learners the opportunities to access English language with ease, which has transformed teaching and learning methods from traditional methods to methods that offer practical ways to make use of resources beyond the classroom. However, teachers and researchers continue to struggle to determine effective strategies to teach students to locate information and critically evaluate and comprehend texts. In fact, listening text has become a much-needed activity for learners these days. The attempts to promote learning autonomy may be satisfactory in Malaysia, but Malaysian learners at the undergraduate level are perceived to be unable to think and listen critically (Zuhana et al., 2014). This highlighted the significance to assess the development of the learners' ability to listen in English, especially in Malaysia, as listening skill reflects the ability of learners to comprehend language in terms of their learning skills. Considering that metacognitive strategies appear to be general for tasks in both L1 and L2, assisting ESL learners in Malaysia to acquire enhance their listening skill in an FL context is presumably achievable.

Prior studies, which were mostly conducted in foreign countries (e.g., Vandergrift, 1997; Goh, 2002; Vandergrift, 2002; Vandergrift, 2007; Farinaz and Hamidah, 2011), revealed that successful listening comprehension can be achieved through explicit instruction of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective strategies. The obtained findings of these studies are further discussed in Chapter 2. These studies established the underlying basis of the current study where the metacognitive instruction was expected to facilitate the learners' ability to cope with listening skill problems, particularly in the IELTS listening test. This notion promptly highlighted the significant need to introduce and teach effective listening strategies that can help language learners to improve their listening skill—in the case of IELTS test, not only

these learners can perform better in the IELTS listening test, they can also become skilful listeners. With that, this study attempted to unravel the effectiveness of the metacognitive instruction in improving the listening skill of Malaysian ESL learners in the context of IELTS listening, while raising the awareness of learners on the importance of metacognitive strategies in language learning, especially in enhancing their listening skill. The use of metacognitive strategies was explored in this study as a solution for language learners to acquire effective listening skill.

1.4 Research Objectives

In general, this study aimed to evaluate the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. The specific objectives of this study are presented as follows:

- 1) To examine the level of awareness on metacognitive strategies among Malaysian ESL learners
- 2) To assess the IELTS listening test scores of Malaysian ESL learners
- 3) To explore the perspectives of Malaysian ESL learners on the use of metacognitive strategies in the IELTS listening preparatory course

1.5 Research Questions

With respect to each specific objective, this 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?

1.6 Significance of Study

This study provided valuable insights on the listening performance of Malaysian ESL learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. The obtained findings of this study were deemed potentially helpful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the learning approach in the listening component of the IELTS test for Malaysian learners. Besides that, the findings of this study expanded the current perspectives on the use of the metacognitive strategies considering that the quantitative results in this study were obtained from a diverse demographic environment, which can be relatively useful for the population of similar settings beyond the Malaysian context.

Additionally, the adopted metacognition theory in this study is closely associated with the active control of the cognitive processes that are involved in learning. Therefore, the obtained findings of this study can be used as an example for teachers who seek to apply the same principle in language learning or other similar disciplines. Similarly, these findings would benefit educational institutions and other related organisations as a reference to formulate pedagogical guidelines for English language instructors to teach listening skill.

Last but not least, the obtained data and the provided recommendations would benefit researchers as reference to acquire statistical information for future studies on

similar courses. Additionally, policymakers 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 were also expected to guide syllabus designers in providing comprehensible input on teaching listening skill.

1.7 Scope of Study

This study exclusively focused on the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ESL learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. This study identified the use of metacognitive strategies among the ESL learners in answering the IELTS listening test during the pre-experimental stage and the post-experimental stage. Furthermore, this study compared the difference in the IELTS listening test scores among ESL learners between both experimental stages. Adding to that, this study explored the perspectives of Malaysian ESL learners on the use of metacognitive strategies.

1.8 Conceptual Framework of Study

This section discusses the conceptual framework of this study. The listening skill among ESL learners is placed within the context of second language acquisition. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. The metacognitive strategies used, specifically planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving (refer to table 3.6: Metacognitive Instruction In L2 Listening Skill Lesson Plan), were assessed in this study as the independent variables whereas the dependent variable of this study was the listening performance of Malaysian ELS

learners in the IELTS listening test. Figure 1.1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

In particular, this study employed both quantitative approach and qualitative approach with respect to the objectives of this study. The conceptual framework of this study, which was developed based on the metacognition theory, and was proposed by Flavell (1979) and further developed by Goh (1997; 1998; 2006), incorporated one of the metacognitive strategies to acquire the listening skill. According to Goh (1997; 1998; 2006), learners should be taught on how to apply metacognitive strategies to enhance their listening skill. The developed framework encompassed the strategies of planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving where the resultant outcomes of this study established the acquisition of listening skill required by the ESL learners to achieve better performance for the IELTS listening test. In this study, upon completion of the IELTS listening preparatory course, 10 students were selected from the experimental group for interview to gain in-depth insights on the usage and outcomes of the metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, this study performed a pre-test and post-test to assess their performance on the IELTS listening test, specifically prior to and after the implementation of metacognitive strategies in their learning process.

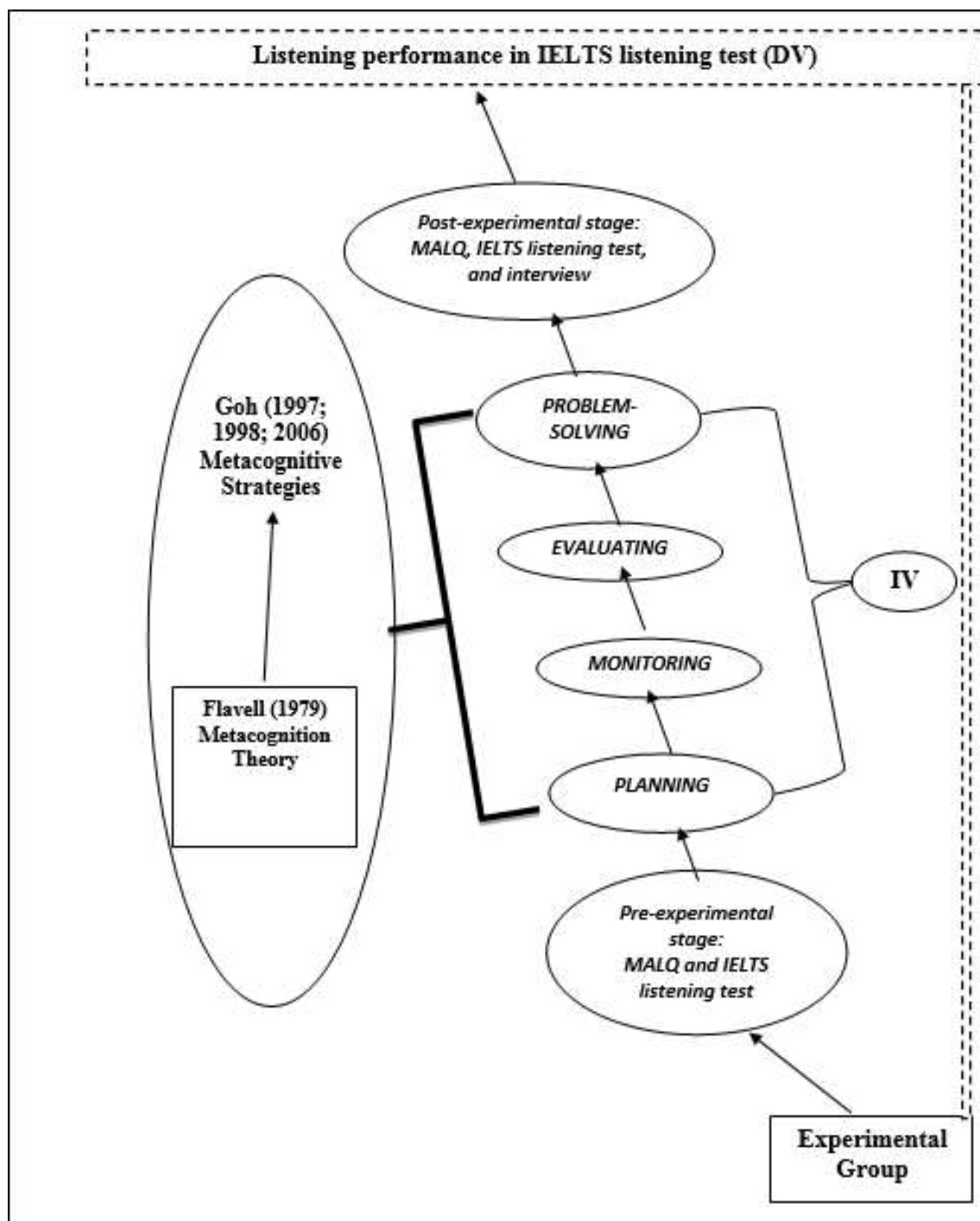


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of study to evaluate the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of ESL learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course.

1.9 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1.9.1 Listening skill

Listening skill refers to the cognitive processes of learners (in this case, Malaysian ESL learners) that include attending to, receiving, and interpreting the language. Listening is a vital aspect of communicative competence and the most frequently used language skill (Richards, 2008).

1.9.2 Metacognition theory

Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking. It refers to one's knowledge on one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them, such as the learning-relevant properties of information or data (Flavell, 1979).

1.9.3 Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies refer to the strategies of metacognition that involves planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving. According to Vandergrift (2002), metacognitive strategies are related to one's ability to administer, control, and direct the language learning tasks and invoke one's thinking about the learning process.

1.9.4 Planning

Planning refers to the determination of comprehension or learning goals and identification of the means to achieve the established goals. According to Goh (1997; 1998; 2006), learners determine their own listening (i.e., preview of main ideas, rehearse language needed for the task, or identify important parts of input) and learning goals (i.e., set personal goals for listening development or seek appropriate

opportunities for listening practice) as well as the means by which the goals can be achieved.

1.9.5 Monitoring

Monitoring refers to the checking of the progress of unfolding comprehension or overall listening development plan. According to Goh (1997; 1998; 2007), learners check the progress of one's own comprehension while listening (i.e., check one's understanding of the message by drawing on appropriate sources of knowledge, such as context, factual, and linguistic knowledge, or check the appropriateness and accuracy of one's understanding against old and new information) and general effort at developing one's own listening ability (i.e., consider one's progress of listening development in light of what is planned or assess one's chances of achieving learning goals).

1.9.6 Evaluating

Evaluating refers to learners' ability to judge the success of their comprehension for a listening task and the plan to develop their listening skill. According to Goh (1997; 1998; 2006), learners determine the overall acceptability of one's understanding and interpretation of the message or information.

1.9.7 Problem-solving

Problem-solving refers to the learners' ability to check the appropriateness and accuracy of their understanding against old and new information. According to Goh (1997; 1998; 2006), learners are able to assess the effectiveness of strategies for learning and practice.

1.9.8 International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test

This present study focused on the IELTS listening test. According to Taylor and Falvey (2006), the IELTS test focuses on testing four language skills separately. Taylor and Falvey (2006) further elaborated that there is undoubtedly an element of incorporation for each component in the same way that language skills are integrated into the real world.

1.10 Chapter Summary

With the current changes in the knowledge transfer, learning, and general demands of contemporary society, it was deemed highly imperative to determine the appropriate approach to learn the English language with respect to the needs of today's world. This chapter provided insights on the present challenges among Malaysia ESL learners in terms of listening skill. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of metacognitive strategies on the listening performance of Malaysian ELS learners in the IELTS listening preparatory course. In particular, this study focused on the incorporation of metacognitive strategies, specifically planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem-solving, into the learning process as an alternative to the existing strategies in the IELTS listening preparatory course curriculum. For that, this study quantitatively and qualitatively assessed the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in helping ESL learners to acquire effective listening skill.