AN INVESTIGATION OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TURKISH EFL STUDENTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF BILKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BY

YASAR CINEMRE

AUGUST 1991

ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension is viewed as an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge. This theoretical view has not been sufficiently supported by empirical research which clarifies what the listeners actually do when they engage in a listening task. The mental processes that take place during an aural input are known as listening comprehension strategies. This study focused on listening comprehension strategies of EFL learners in a foreign environment. The differences in strategy usage between good and poor listeners were investigated.

The subjects in this study were all from Turkish backgrounds, intermediate in English proficiency, university graduates from different majors. They were enrolled in prep classes at Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, in order to reach a sufficient level of proficiency to be able to use English references for their academic needs. Data were collected through an interview guide which included questions asked to the subjects during individual interview sessions.

Findings indicated that good listeners and poor listeners engaged in different mental processes during the listening activities. The main strategy types that

differentiated good listeners from poor listeners were self reinforcement, elaboration, transfer, contextualization, resourcing, and questioning for clarification. Translation was found the most predominant strategy type employed by poor listeners, whereas it was used infrequently by good listeners.

AN INVESTIGATION OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TURKISH EFL STUDENTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF BILKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BY

YASAR CINEMRE

AUGUST 1991

Yaşar Cinemre
tarafından [illegible].

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

July 31, 1991

The examining committee appointed by the
Institute of Economics and Social Sciences for the
thesis examination of MA TEFL student

Yasar Cinemre

---

has read the thesis of the student.
The committee has decided that the thesis
of the student is satisfactory.

Thesis title	:	An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Strategies in Intermediate Level Turkish EFL Students
Thesis Advisor	:	Dr. James C. Stalker Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program
Comittee Members	:	Dr. Lionel Kaufman Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program
		Mr. William Ancker Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

James C. Stalker
(Advisor)

Lionel Kaufman
(Committee Member)

William Ancker
(Committee Member)

Approved for the
Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Ali Karaosmanoglu
Director
Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

To My Wife and Children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my special thanks to Dr. James C. Stalker, my thesis advisor and the director of MA TEFL program, for his great contributions to my thesis. I also thank him for his endless patience and constructive guidance throughout this study. My special thanks to Dr. Lionel Kaufman and Mr. William Ancker for their efforts to widen my perspective by their helpful guidance and valuable lectures.

CHAPTER I

1.1 Introduction

Parallel with the explosion of methodologies in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which language teachers faced increased options in the selection of methods and materials, there has been a growing interest in considering the language learning task from the learners' point of view and in changing the focus of classrooms from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered one. In particular there is a growing interest in defining how learners can manage their own learning and become more autonomous. As a consequence, there is now a substantial body of research outlining learner behaviors and describing the thought processes they engender while learning a foreign language. The behaviors and thought processes that directly contribute to learning are called learning strategies.

Learning strategies are broadly defined as a set of operations used by learners that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information (Chamot, 1982). Brown and Yule (1983) categorized learning strategies into two groups: a) Cognitive Learning Strategies are inferencing, guessing from the context, and elaboration, or relating new information to other concepts in memory; b) Metacognitive Learning Strategies are applicable to a variety of learning tasks and include knowledge about cognition or applying

thoughts about the cognitive operations of oneself or others, and the regulation of cognition, or planning, monitoring and evaluating learning or problem solving. In addition to these learning strategy categories, Chamot (1982) added Social-affective Learning Strategies such as cooperation and questioning for clarification. Working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pooling information, or modeling a language activity as well as asking a teacher or a native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation or examples are all Social-affective Learning Strategies.

Studies in learning strategies have mostly focused on reading, writing, and speaking strategies of EFL-ESL learners. Learning strategies in listening skills have been widely ignored by researchers. However the skill of listening comprehension has been thought to be the core of learning a language.

> Until the last decade, the ability to understand the spoken language was seen as a natural process of perception and expected to be gained naturally along with the other skills. It seemed reasonable to assume that he would learn to understand the spoken language as he learned to speak it. Sadly, this apparently natural process does not seem to produce the desired results. (Brown and Yule 1983)

There are a number of possible reasons for this insufficient importance that was attributed to

listening comprehension. Brown and Yule (1983) note that students are taught to speak slowly and clearly, and their teacher generally addresses the class in a public style which is also clear and slow. This speech-style contrasts with the speech-style of native speakers who do not speak slowly or particularly clearly. Furthermore students are usually exposed to one accent of English, that spoken by their teacher.

If Brown and Yule are correct and the ability to understand spoken English does not occur naturally, then it appears obvious that this ability should be taught. As a response to this insight, classes on listening comprehension have begun to be introduced into curricula since the early 1970s. The large amount of material on listening comprehension which is now available on the market tells us that teaching listening comprehension has become an inevitable part of every language teaching program.

1.2 What is the Role of Listening Comprehension Among Other Skills?

In the language teaching arena, the four skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking are seen as the parts of a whole. Out of the four skills, listening comprehension is at least as important as any of the others, perhaps more so. As Chastian (1971)

states, the phonological aspect of the language is acquired by listening, and oral communication is impossible without a listening ability that is much more highly developed than speaking. Listening serves as the basis for the development of speaking.

According to Chastian (1971), first, the learners perceive a certain segment of language and discriminate among what they consider to be the important linguistic aspects of the language. Second, they comprehend the distinctions involved and begin to formulate their own language system. Third, based on their hypotheses about the language, they develop a personal competence. Fourth, once they have that competence, they begin to use performance skills. Fifth, as they activate their performance skills, they make adjustments, moving their language competence into line with that of the language they perceive around them. Sixth, the performance skills consist of both receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills are put into operation before productive skills.

Past experience of language teachers clearly indicates that not all second language learners are acquiring a listening proficiency level necessary to function in a second-language communicative situation. Students need practice in listening to the second language in communicative contexts so that they can

tune their ears to the rhythm and sounds of the language. They need to be made aware of the many aspects of vocalic communication: rate of speech, volume, characteristic and relative pitch, type, and frequency of juncture and vocal quality (Mueller, 1974). In addition to this, one of the most important tasks required of language teachers in promoting the acquisition of listening skills is to help students develop long attention spans and good listening habits (Chastian, 1971).

Based on the sequence of operations Chastian describes, audio-lingual proponents have advocated what they see as the natural sequence in learning a foreign language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Once receptive skills have been established by means of listening and reading, speaking and writing can be undertaken and developed toward communicative fluency. Listening and reading provide the means of acquiring additional vocabulary and new language structures. Therefore, the teacher needs to be most careful that the students have the means before he asks them to continue in language learning toward speaking and writing. Without making the first step, they will be unable to take the second. Unless they have the ability to decode an incoming message, they certainly can not be expected to encode an outgoing one (Chastian, 1971).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Because listening is an important skill in the language teaching arena and given the lack of research on how learners acquire listening ability, the main focus of this study will be:

What learning strategies are employed by good intermediate level EFL students in K.T.U post graduate prep calasses which make them superior in listening comprehension to their poor peers?

Research shows that successful learners of other language skills differ from unsuccessful learners in the particular set of cognitive processes and behaviors which they use to enable them to be successful. For example, although they have the same learning environment, the classroom; the same target language, English; the same native tongue, Turkish; and the same age group, adults; the distribution of success in acquiring the different skills is not equal. A student from an intermediate EFL or ESL class, for example, may be more successful in reading comprehension than listening or vice versa, or more successful in writing than speaking. This difference in the distribution of general success in the particular skills suggests that learning strategies in listening comprehension in Turkish settings need to be investigated.

Research and theory in second language learning

strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies to assist them in gaining command of new language skills. By implication, less competent learners should be able to improve their skills in a second language through training in strategies evidenced among more successful language learners. With successful training, less competent learners should be able to apply strategies to the acquisition of a variety of different language skills and transfer the strategies to similar language tasks. Teachers can play an important role in this training by conveying strategy applications to students and thereby supporting student efforts to learn the new language (Rubin, 1985).

1.4 Variables

Independent Variable: Types of learning strategies in listening comprehension.

Dependent Variable: Proficiency level of students in listening comprehension.

1.5 Hypotheses

Directional Hypothesis: There is a systematic relationship between the learning strategies employed by the students in listening comprehension and their proficiency level in understanding the spoken language.

Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the proficiency level of students in listening

comprehension and the types of listening strategies they employ in acquiring this skill.

1.6 Definitions

Learning Strategies: Learning strategies are a set of operations and steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage and retrieval or use of information (Chamot, 1982).

Intermediate Level of Language Proficiency: Those students who got a score of 45 or above from the (non-standardized) language proficiency test before the beginning of the language teaching program in prep classes at Karadeniz Technical University.

Good Listeners: Those who were designated good in listening comprehension by their teachers of the listening comprehension class based on the scores they got from the listening tests during the semester.

Poor Listeners: Students in the same class with the good listeners but are said to have a lack of proficiency in listening comprehension by their listening comprehension teacher based on the same criteria in the selection of good listeners.

1.7 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to answer the following questions by investigating the learning strategies students use in listening comprehension

i) Do good and poor intermediate level EFL

learners in a Turkish setting employ the same learning strategies in listening comprehension?

ii) If the answer is "no", what are the different types of learning strategies employed by good and poor learners?

According to Cohen (1987), once the learning strategies of good language learners are identified, they can be made available, and where necessary, used by less successful learners to enable them to learn a foreign language more effectively.

1.8 Expectations

Research on learning strategies has indicated that, in general, good language learners employ more strategies than poor ones in developing their own language proficiency. These general expectations are to be confirmed specifically for listening. Furthermore, the specific learning strategies most useful to the good listeners will be identified.

1.9 Methodology

Listening comprehension is viewed theoretically as an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge. This theoretical view has not been sufficiently supported by empirical research which clarifies what listeners actually do while engaged in

listening tasks in a Turkish setting. Therefore,this study focused on the mental processes EFL learners use in listening comprehension, the strategies they use during listening comprehension activities.

Subjects in this study were from Karadeniz Technical University, post graduate prep classes where they had an intensive English course for one year in all skills. They all had an intermediate level of general English proficiency and were designated as poor and good listeners by their teachers depending on the scores they had on listening comprehension tests. Their teachers were informed about the study and the requirements that the subjects should possess to be included in this study. By using listening comprehension test scores and the students' performances in listening comprehension in classroom activities, the teachers defined 8 poor and 8 good listeners for the study. Of the 16, 9 were females and 7 were males and their ages ranged 23 to 28.

The researcher developed an interview guide for use while conducting taped interviews. The interviews were completed within one week. A classroom in the prep school was used to interview the subjects individually. Each interview session took about 30 minutes.

1.10 Organization of Thesis

The introduction chapter includes general information about the study with a statement of the problem and definitions of the terminology used in the study. The second chapter reviews the literature in the field of learning strategies. The first part of the second chapter gives brief information about the available research in the literature and the common results. The second part focuses on research conducted specifically to explore listening comprehension strategies.

The third chapter explains the methodology designated for the study. The setting, subjects, their school, and all the details of the study with the instruments are presented in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the collection and analysis of data are presented. Tables and graphs are given in the data analysis. Conclusions are drawn for discussion in the final chapter.

The last chapter is the conclusion chapter where the results are compared with the hypothesis to determine the validity of the hypothesis. The results are also compared with findings of previous research to determine whether these findings are consistent. Suggestions for further research have also been made.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The investigation of learning strategies is a new endeavour in the field of foreign language learning. Until the early 1980s language teachers' pedagogical options centered on the selection of methods all of which were teacher-centered. But since then considering the task from the learner's point of view has become the main focus of researchers. Thus, the main focus of language teaching classrooms has changed from being teacher-centered to learner-centered This change in focus in foreign language learning has led researchers to investigate the possible thought processes of learners during the learning activities. Learners are required to report what they do during learning and all the learning behaviors reported by learners are defined as learning strategies (Chamot, 1982).

Although the focus of this study is on learning strategies in listening comprehension, the research on general learning strategies, behaviors, and thought processes that contribute directly to learning, will be dealt with first.

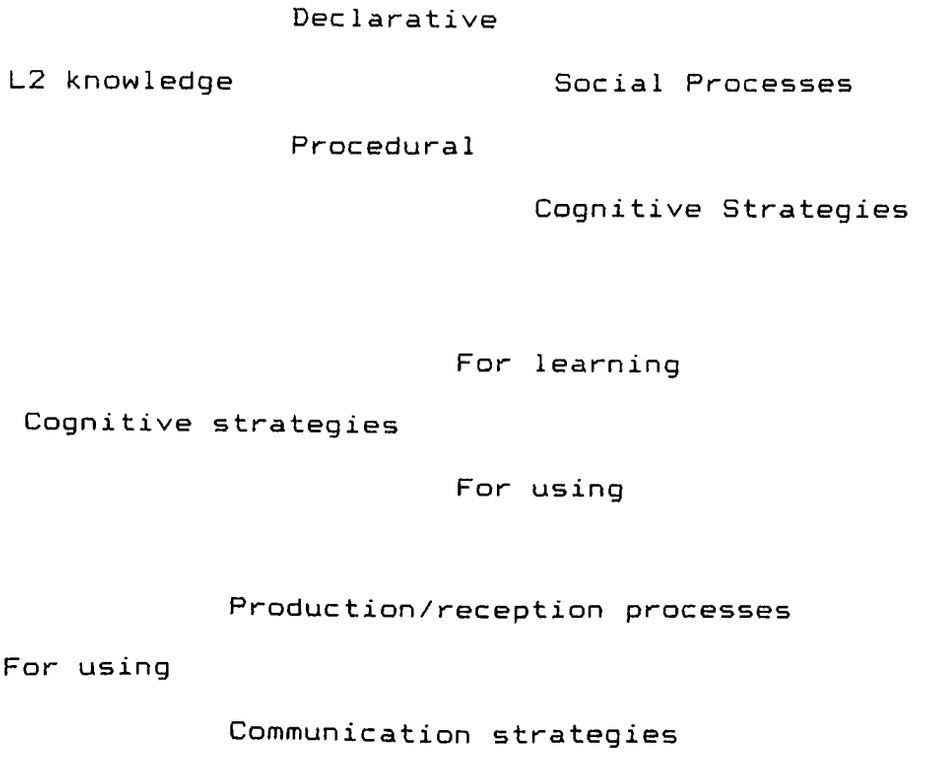
2.2 Mental Processes of L2 Knowledge

Since the focus of the study is the investigation

of listening comprehension strategies of Turkish EFL learners, it will be helpful to clarify the general mental processes in foreign language learning. Incoming L2 knowledge is subjected to a set of mental processes before it is stored in long term memory by the learners. A general guideline to these mental processes was given by Ellis (1985) in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

Types of L2 Knowledge (from Ellis 1985).



Learners have two types of L2 knowledge: declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is 'knowing that'; it consists of internalized rules and memorized items of language. That is, they are acquired and stored in long-term memory and made available to use. Procedural knowledge is 'knowing how'; it consists of the strategies and procedures used by the learners to process L2 data for acquisition and use.

Procedural knowledge can be divided into social and cognitive components: the social component includes behavioral learning strategies that L2 learners perform in a face to face communication or in contact with L2 texts. The cognitive component is the mental processes involved in automatizing and internalizing L2 knowledge, and in using L2 knowledge in conjunction with other knowledge sources to communicate in the target language.

The cognitive processes are using and learning the target language. Learning processes are self-directed behaviors relating to accumulation of L2 rules, automatizing them and relating them to already existing ones, thus, putting them in practice. Learners will build a sound bridge between learning and using; learning and using encompass a two-way movement, from learning to using and vice versa.

Similarly, Rubin (1985) indicated the theoretical assumptions of learning strategies by hypothesizing that some language learners are more successful than others and their success is a result of the ability to use cognitive processes in general. Accumulating and processing of information is a matter of personal perceptual capacity reinforced by consciously and unconsciously used behaviors, cognitive and metacognitive behaviors which are put into operation by the learners during the process of learning. This learning process includes both implicit and explicit knowledge.

This general assumption formed the focus of research carried out by a number of researchers discussed below since the beginning of the investigations of learning strategies. The general aim of the earlier studies in this field was to improve learners' abilities to obtain, store, and retrieve information. This consciousness-raising in language learning leads students to use their learning strategies more effectively and efficiently. Through their improved strategic performances, they are expected to become good language learners.

The mental processes of L2 knowledge were studied from another point of view by Rubin (1985). He argues that human language use depends on both creative and

critical faculties. The creative faculty assembles the strings of language for private articulation of utterances. They are memorized and used automatically when necessary like greetings, openings and closings in conversational speech. The critical faculty gives awareness of what has been created making it possible to check either before or after the articulation. Thus, the critical faculty, which is the learner's awareness of language, gives way to the creative faculty, keeps it in check and possibly learns from it. He suggests that the critical faculty may also be linked to learning in the process of monitoring. Learners will identify the problem, make decisions about it, decide whether to correct it or not, and notice any feedback on whether their correction was acceptable.

2.3 Research History

Research on learning strategies dates back to 1966 when Carton first published his study "The Method of Inference in Foreign Language Study". In his study Carton noted that the learners vary in their tendency to make inferences and in their ability to make valid, rational and reasonable inferences. Carton's study is generally recognized as the earliest study in learning strategies (Rubin, 1985). Following Carton, a lot of researchers have focused on the investigation of

learning strategies, and a large body of research has been made available in the literature of language teaching.

As mentioned above, there was a great emphasis on language teaching methods until the early 1980s and not many studies were conducted on learning strategies. Later, researchers focused on learning strategies and a lot of work has been carried out since then. Chamot (1982) and Abraham (1983) conducted research on the relationship between the use of the strategy of monitoring and cognitive style. Accordingly, the investigation of communicative strategies of ESL students was the main focus of the study carried out by Politzer and McGroarty (1985). Until the beginning of the 1990s, researchers focused their attentions on defining the possible types of learning strategies based on learners' self-reported data, with the result that a variety of strategy types have been identified (O'Malley, et al., 1985a; Politzer and McGroarty, 1985; Cohen, 1987; Rubin, 1985)

Investigation of listening comprehension strategies is relatively new. O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper (1989) conducted a study to define the strategy types in listening comprehension differentiating effective listeners from ineffective ones. Following the guidelines of their study, this study aimed to

investigate the listening comprehension strategy types of Turkish EFL learners to find out the strategy types that differentiate good listeners from poor ones.

2.4 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are a set of operations and steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage and retrieval or use of information (Chamot, 1982). Learning strategies are distinguished from teaching strategies in which the control of learning depends on the teacher rather than the learner. However, in learning strategies, learners are able to exercise control over their own learning. As Politzer and McGroarty (1985) noted, in describing the relationship between teaching methods and learning, the successful learner is essentially the pupil who has devised a successful self-teaching method. What they meant by the term self-teaching method was actually what we know as learning strategies today.

2.4.1 Research on Learning Strategies

Research on learning strategies has taken many different forms. It is not possible to review all of the studies here. Those that are thought to be useful in understanding the nature of this study have been discussed briefly.

Si-Qing (1990) studied communication strategies in interlanguage production by Chinese EFL learners. The

study focused on the nature of the relationship between learners' target language ability and their strategic competence. Strategic competence is the ability to use learning behaviors that contribute to learning directly or indirectly. Twelve Chinese EFL learners of both high and low proficiency spoke to native speakers of English while the researcher observed the conversation; 220 communication strategies were identified. Analysis indicated that the frequency, type, and effectiveness of the strategies employed by the learners varied according to their proficiency levels. The language distance between the learners' L1 and L2 was also found to affect their choice of communication strategies. This result supported the hypothesis that communicative competence could be increased by the development of strategic competence. Strategic competence is closely related to strategic performance. Strategic performance is the activated form of strategic competence. Linguistic and communicative competencies are the products of strategic competence.

Other researchers provided some evidence on the relationship between linguistic and communicative competence. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) carried out an explanatory study of learning behaviors and their relationship to gains in communicative and linguistic competence. A questionnaire containing presumed good

learning behaviors was administered to 37 students enrolled in an eight-week intensive ESL program. The answers to the self-report questionnaire were classified according to the students' cultural background (Hispanic versus Asian) and field of specialization, and related to gains on four English language proficiency measures: linguistic competence, auditory comprehension, overall oral proficiency, and communicative competence. Data analysis indicated that while Hispanics engaged in more 'good' language learning behaviors, they tended to make fewer gains in linguistic competence and communicative competence. On the other hand, the Hispanics made more progress in overall oral proficiency and in auditory comprehension than Asian subjects.

2.4.2 Interaction of Strategies with Learning Activities

Chamot (1982) assessed the interaction of learning strategies with learning tasks and identified the number of learning strategies used among beginning and intermediate level students for different learning activities. Nine types of activities were studied: inferencing in listening comprehension, interaction, oral presentation, operational communication, social communication, analyzing in listening, oral drills, pronunciation, and vocabulary learning. The general

methodology of this study was to collect interview data from 70 students and 22 teachers from three different high schools to determine the amount of strategy usage for each activity. Students were grouped according to their proficiency level. Data were collected from in and outside the classrooms. All the subjects were native Spanish speakers.

In addition, interviews with teachers and students were held to determine possible strategy usage distribution in different learning activities. All interviews were tape recorded. All the data were analyzed by listening to tapes, and the rater prepared an abbreviated transcript to note the strategy types used during the activity based on the listed strategy definitions. The analysis chart also included the student's name and proficiency level.

Research results revealed that beginning students used more strategies in the tasks of inferencing and analyzing listening comprehension, vocabulary learning, operational communication and oral drills than intermediate level students. Results of the study also indicated that beginners used more strategies than intermediate level subjects in total strategy use. As for the types of strategies used, beginning students used 27.4% metacognitive and 72.6% cognitive strategy types, intermediate subjects used 34.9% metacognitive

and 65.1% cognitive learning strategies. The results suggest that beginners employ more cognitive strategies than intermediate subjects because of their metalingual inefficiency. Intermediate subjects use more metacognitive strategies than beginners, and this shows that they have developed a better metalingual ability than the beginners.

2.4.3 Data Collection Procedures

In order to conduct this study in listening comprehension strategies, guidelines for data collection procedures and instruments were reviewed. In the research literature in learning strategies the validity and reliability of the instruments are open to question. Three different instruments have been used by various researchers (O'Malley, et al., 1985b and, 1989): interview guides, class observation reports, and teacher and student questionnaires.

Cohen (1987) indicates that data collected through classroom observations is not reliable because only students' observable behaviors can be recorded. Observers can not easily capture what the learners are thinking about and how they are thinking or feeling. Such data tell us nothing about those who remain quiet, and not a great deal about those who do not. According to Cohen, direct interview data is still the fundamental tool of research in strategy studies, but

it has been subjected to a great deal of discussion among psychologists. Although a lot of other researchers support the reliability of verbal data, whether it can really be used as evidence regarding the inner workings of the learners' minds has been called into question. According to Cohen, an objection to the use of self-reported data depends on the assumption that much of the language learning takes place at an unconscious level and is therefore inaccessible to mental processes of learners. On the other hand, Cohen (1987) points out that the collection of self-reported data is still beneficial in that it provides direct evidence about the processes that are otherwise invisible, it yields rich data and thus promotes exploration of cognitive processes.

2.4.4 Taxonomy of Learning Strategies

The range of learning strategies identified through existing research in the field that were identified through self reported data has revealed that there are three main categories of learning strategies: metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective learning strategies. Each strategy category has a set of strategy types.

2.4.4.1 Metacognitive Learning Strategies

Metacognitive learning strategies, as described by Brown (1974), Rubin (1985), O'Malley, et al. (1985a)

and Chamot (1982) involve knowing about learning and controlling learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning activity. Metacognitive strategies contribute to learning indirectly, because learners can facilitate their own learning and provide themselves new and interesting opportunities to learn in an effective way (Cohen, 1987). The main types of metacognitive strategy types are as follows:

Advance organizers in which the learner makes a general but comprehensive preview of the organizing concept or principle in an anticipated learning activity.

Directed attention is the elimination of irrelevant parts of the language and focusing on particular parts of the language which learners decide in advance to attend to in a learning task and to ignore all irrelevant distractors.

Selective attention is deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will cue retention of language input.

Self management has been described as understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions.

Monitoring is described as a key process that consists of maintaining awareness of the task demands

and information content. Selective attention and directed attention are the types of metacognitive strategies that support monitoring.

Self evaluation and **self reinforcement** are based on learners' judgement of themselves such as arranging rewards for oneself when a task is successfully completed and making judgments upon their own success in learning activities (O'Malley, et al., 1985b, Rubin, 1985)

2.4.4.2 Cognitive Learning Strategies

Cognitive learning strategies involve active manipulation of the learning task. They contribute to learning directly. Research has shown that beginners use more cognitive than metacognitive strategies because they focus on learning activities rather than thinking about the conditions that help learning in a positive way (O'Malley, et al., 1985b). The cognitive learning strategy types defined in the literature are as follows:

Repetition is the imitation of the language model including overt practice and silent rehearsal.

Resourcing occurs when the learner is at task and he comes up with unfamiliar language items and needs some sources to get detailed information. Resourcing is the process of finding and using target language reference materials.

Directed physical response is relating new information to physical actions as with directives. Some learners prefer to imitate the physical actions that take place in a learning task. They initiate and listen simultaneously and learn better while some prefer only listening to them without imitation of the actions.

Translation is using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language.

Grouping is reordering or reclassifying and perhaps labeling the material to be learned based on common attributes. Grouping may be done among linguistically similar items to learn them better.

Note-taking is writing down the main idea, important points an outline, or a summary of information presented orally or in writing.

Deduction is defined as consciously applying rules to produce or understand the second language.

Recombination deals with reconstructing a meaningful sentence or larger language sequence by combining known elements in a new way.

Imagery is relating new information to visual concepts in memory via familiar, easily retrievable visualizations, phrases or locations.

Auditory representation deals with the retention of sounds or similar sounds for words, phrases or

longer language sequences.

Key word is the process of remembering a new word in the target language by identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word or generating easily recalled images of some relationship between the new word.

Contextualization is placing a new word in a meaningful language sequence.

Elaboration can be defined as relating new information to other concepts in memory.

Transfer is using previously acquired linguistic and conceptual knowledge to facilitate a new language learning task.

Inferencing is using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.

Question for clarification can be defined as asking a teacher or a native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation, or examples.

2.4.4.3 Social Affective Learning Strategies

The only strategy type that has been defined in this category is the strategy of cooperation.

2.5 Listening Comprehension strategies

Listening comprehension is not a passive skill in foreign language learning as it was thought to be until the late 1970s. On the contrary, it is an active

construction process whereby listeners take in raw speech, isolate and identify constituents of surface structure, and build propositions appropriate to each. As they build each proposition, they add it to the interpretation they have formed of the sentence so far, and the propositions taken together constitute the final interpretation. Listeners have a number of strategies by which they infer what the constituents are and what they are meant to convey (Henner-Stanchina, 1982). Although there are not many studies in the research literature in listening comprehension, the available ones are summarized in the following part.

2.5.1 Research on Listening Comprehension Strategies

Henner-Stanchina (1982) studied listening comprehension strategies and autonomy and noted error correction in listening comprehension. The purpose of the study was to investigate how to take learners who were primarily dependent on perceptive skills for comprehension and widen their comprehension systems. The learners involved in this study were at the English Language Institute, Queens College, The University of New York. They all came to New York City to enter undergraduate programs. The requirement for entrance to any university with respectable standards was a minimum score of 500 on the TOEFL examination.

The students were given the opportunity to formulate and test hypotheses on oral texts and to discover the strategies they could have been using. Learners were presented with a variety of texts from radio-talk shows, news broadcasts, radio commercials, comedy sketches, and semi-authentic recordings of native speakers carrying out certain speech acts. The predominant activities were detailed listening and completing partial transcripts of oral texts. Papers were collected and errors were listed and classified.

A clear result of the study was the manifestation of a kind of self monitoring, self-correcting reflex in listening, where learners often repeated their hearings of something aloud, realized that these initial hearings were impossible, and continued the construction process until a reasonable interpretation was obtained and confirmed. This technique worked against avoidance, encouraged the development of compensation strategies, reinforced the construction reflex, and improved the learners' judgement and hypothesis formation. Moreover, one side effect of the use of detailed listening comprehension was that by demonstrating the redundancy of language, learners finally understood that they did not need to understand every single word of an oral text.

O'Malley et al. (1989) Studied listening

comprehension strategies in second language acquisition. In this study, he tried to answer the following questions.

1. Can the listening comprehension processes of students be differentiated into phases such as perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization?

2. Can the learning strategies used in each phase of listening comprehension be clearly identified?

3. Are there differences in listening comprehension strategies between students designated as effective and ineffective learners?

The participants of the study were students enrolled in ESL classes in two suburban public high schools in the north-eastern United States. All the students were identified by the school district at the intermediate level of English proficiency, which the district defined as limited proficiency in understanding and speaking English. All the subjects were from Spanish speaking countries.

ESL teachers designated students as effective or ineffective listeners. Students were provided with information in Spanish about the task they would perform during the study and were taught how to use think aloud strategies during the performance of a task. The students then were asked to listen to a taped passage in English which contained eight pauses.

After each pause, students were asked to think aloud about how they had made sense of what they had heard.

Data collection was taped individually and neither interviewers nor the coders were informed which students had been designated effective or ineffective. Findings indicated that the mental processes students use in listening comprehension paralleled three theoretically-derived phases of the comprehension process: perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization (see section 2.5.2). Each phase was characterized by active processing and by the use of learning strategies. Three predominant strategies which differentiated effective from ineffective listeners were self monitoring, elaboration, and inferencing. The findings were related to implications for instructional practice.

2.5.2. Components of Listening Comprehension

In an attempt to focus on what teachers can do to aid listening comprehension in instructional settings, there has been a tendency to put the emphasis on what listeners do while comprehending spoken language. Listening to spoken language has been acknowledged in second language theory to consist of active and complex processes that determine the content and level of what is comprehended. The processes use utterances as their basis for constructing meaning-based propositional

representations that are identified initially in short-term memory and stored in long-term memory (O'Malley, et al., 1989). These processes differentiate comprehension into three interrelated and recursive processes: perceptual processing, parsing and utilization.

2.5.2.1 Perceptual processing

In perceptual processing, attention is focused on the oral text and the sounds are retained in echoic memory. The essential characteristics of echoic memory are that capacity limitations prevent specific word sequences from being retained longer than a few seconds, and that new information to which the listener attends replaces the former information immediately. While the oral text is in echoic memory, some initial analysis of the language code may begin and encoding processes may convert some of the text into meaningful representations (O'Malley, et al. 1989). The attention of the listener turns on certain words and phrases of the incoming message and the reconstruction process of the incoming message is formed by the listener by using his own words. Perceptual processing focuses on the same meaning but on different forms with the same message. This is a kind of adaptation of language made up by the listener.

2.5.2.2 Parsing

Complex propositions may be differentiated into simpler, meaningful utterances that can be recombined by the listener to generate new sentences whose essential meanings do not change. Thus, through parsing a meaning-based representation of the original words can be retained in short-term memory. The size of the segments processed by the listener depends on the listener's knowledge of the target language, general knowledge of the topic, and how the information will be presented. Meaning is the most important clue in the segmentation process of listening comprehension. According to O'Malley, et al. (1989), second language listeners may have difficulties in understanding the language spoken by native speakers if they are unfamiliar with the rules for segmentation, even though they may understand individual words when they hear them separately.

2.5.2.3 Utilization

The third process, utilization, consists of relating a mental representation of text meaning to existing knowledge. Existing knowledge is stored in long-term memory. Corrections between the new text meaning and existing knowledge occur through spreading activation in which knowledge in long-term memory is activated to the degree that it is related to new

meanings in short-term memory. According to Kasper (1977), comprehension takes place when input and knowledge are matched with each other.

2.5.3 Taxonomy of Listening Strategies

Following the research carried out by O'Malley, et al. (1989), listening comprehension strategy types for this study were chosen from their study. The general learning strategy taxonomy that was presented in 2.4.4.1 and 2.4.4.2 constituted the main source of the listening strategy taxonomy for the current study. Because the definitions are the same as the general learning strategies, the definitions are not repeated once more here. Only the types and main categories of listening comprehension strategies that took place in O'Malley's study are given below.

2.5.4.1 List of Metacognitive Listening Comprehension Strategies

1. Directed Attention
2. Selective Attention
3. Self-management
4. Self-monitoring
5. Self-evaluation
6. Self-reinforcement

2.5.4.2 List of Cognitive Listening Comprehension Strategies

1. Repetition

2. Directed Physical Response

3. Translation

4. Grouping

5. Note-taking

6. Deduction

7. Imagery

8. Auditory Representation

9. Key Word

10. Cotextualization

11. Elaboration

12. Transfer

13. Inferencing

14. Question for Clarification

15. Resourcing

2.5.4.3 Social Affective Listening Comprehension Strategies

They involve individual or group activities in listening. The main type is cooperation which deals with the understanding of verbal messages depending on the people around the listener.

2.6 Summary

Due to the vast number of learning strategies in the research literature, the strategies have been listed in two different parts in this chapter to provide a sound background to understand the study better. In the first part general learning strategies

have been dealt with giving the background knowledge to support the details of the study. The main focus of the study, which is the investigation of learning strategies in listening comprehension has been discussed. Following the research findings carried out earlier, a set of listening comprehension strategies were identified and listed in the end of this chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Listening comprehension is viewed theoretically as an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input and construct meaning from it by relating what they hear to existing knowledge. Research indicates that listeners who use a larger number of listening comprehension strategies will comprehend more easily and fully than listeners who use fewer strategies. Better comprehension leads to more efficient acquisition of a second language. Based on these research findings, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship between strategy use and language proficiency in listening comprehension. Data supporting this hypothesis will generally extend and confirm previous research data, and will establish as well that L2 students learning in an EFL context use some strategies discussed in Chapter II and that poor and good listeners use others or none at all. The research design presented in this chapter attempts to incorporate those factors which have been found to be most relevant in exploring the use of learning strategies in listening comprehension by L2 students. The design was set up as an interview based on the earlier research designs described in the literature.

The physical conditions of the place where

interviews were conducted were carefully controlled by the researcher because the interviews were tape recorded. Data were collected from interviews with each student based on an interview guide which focused on identifying the listening comprehension strategy types of both groups of the subjects to see which strategies differentiated good listeners from poor listeners. Research indicates that interviews give the most reliable data in that interviews are the only means to reach the inner mental activities passing through students minds during a listening task (see section 2.4.3). Observational data can only give some information about the observable behaviors of the learners but they are not completely satisfactory because the observer can not see what is happening in the minds of those who keep quiet during the lesson (Rubin, 1985).

3. 2 Subjects

The participants in this study were 16 university students between the ages of 23 and 28 enrolled in the graduate prep school of Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey. The subjects were 7 males and 9 females. They were all university graduates who had formerly received only service English courses, four hours per week for four years. During the study they were enrolled in intensive English programs in the prep

school where they received 27 hours of English classes in all skills weekly. The four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing were given as separate classes. The aim of the prep classes was to provide language proficiency in all skills to enable graduate students to be able to use reference materials written in English during their graduate studies and to participate in international meetings and seminars. Although they do not usually take their post graduate courses in English, because of the needs just listed, English has been seen to be of importance to them. All the subjects were classified as being at the intermediate level of English proficiency based on the scores they got from a placement test at the beginning of the first semester of the prep program.

The placement test's goal was to measure the general proficiency level of the students. Because it is secure and unavailable to the researcher, it has not been included in the appendices. It is a standardized test provided by a program supervisor who is appointed to Karadeniz Technical University by the British Council. The test includes five parts: grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, listening comprehension and writing. Those who knew no English were put in the beginning classes; those who had very limited proficiency were put in the elementary classes;

and those who had average proficiency were put in the intermediate classes.

Students did not receive a separate listening comprehension test, only a short part of the placement test. In other words, the placement test included all skills and a short part of the test was listening comprehension. In forming the classes, students' total scores were taken into consideration, not just the scores they got from the separate skill parts of the test. All the subjects were native Turkish speakers from different parts of Turkey.

Students were nominated for participation in the study by their teachers, who designated students as poor or good listeners. The primary selection of criteria was the teacher's judgement. In addition to the general class performance, the teacher consulted the placement scores and his scores on a subsequent listening test administered by the teacher. This test was prepared by the listening comprehension teacher of the students and included 15 items. Students were to find the missing information for five items, select the correct words that were mentioned in the listening tape for five items, and select the facts that were mentioned in the tape for the last five items.

3.3 Materials

The main instruments used in this study were an

interview guide and a ten-minute listening tape which each subject listened to before answering the questions in the interview guide. Each interview was recorded on a separate audio tape.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

The main instrument used in this study to collect data was a student interview guide (see appendix A) developed by the researcher based on the strategy definitions of Brown (1982) and Chamot (1982). The interview guide included three parts. The first part focused on the five metacognitive listening comprehension strategies: directed attention, selected attention, self-management, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement, and self-monitoring. It included six questions, the answers to which would reveal the strategy types among the six metacognitive strategies. It also included fifteen questions in the second part to reveal the usage of the fifteen cognitive strategy types and a question to reveal cooperation as a strategy type of the social affective strategy category. The questions were based on Richards' (1983) taxonomy of listening skills, and Politzer and McGroarty's (1985) learner behavior questionnaire based on Brown and Yule's (1983) and Chamot's (1982) strategy definitions.

As the data collection procedure, researcher had a

personal data collection paper including spaces for metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective strategy types (See Appendix C). While he was recording the interviews, he also coded the strategy types on the data report paper by writing the names of the strategies he elicited from the student's answers to the researcher's questions. After the interview sessions were completed, the researcher listened to the same interviews from the tapes and checked the data report papers.

Subjects listened to the ten-minute listening tape about buying a car, where a lot of names of cars with prices and some other specifications were introduced. They were asked whether they concentrated on the specific information or the general comprehension after completing the listening activity. This question was expected to reveal the strategy of directed attention. They were asked whether they decided to concentrate on the specific language aspects like car brands and prices while they were listening.

They were also asked whether they would listen to the passage in the same way if they were to listen to it alone as a class assignment, and what other things they would do to listen to it more effectively, and how many times they would listen to it and why (self management). They were also asked whether they

evaluated their capacity to understand spoken English and if they arranged rewards for themselves when they performed a listening task successfully.

Questions in the second part were intended to reveal the use of cognitive strategies types from among fifteen cognitive listening strategies. The listening comprehension passage was used in this part but not all the questions were about this passage, because cognitive strategy types include strategies which are directly related to general listening comprehension activities rather than a particular listening task. They were asked whether they imitated the speaker overtly during listening and repeated some particular sentences (repetition), or if they took notes while listening (note-taking), and if they would prefer to use reference materials in the target language to get information about their notes after the listening activity (inferencing), or if they translated the incoming message into the mother tongue to understand it better (translation). Questions on these points were prepared and put into the interview guide to reveal the particular strategy types.

The third part included questions, answers to which were to identify the social affective listening strategy. The main strategy type in this section was cooperation. Students were asked whether they

preferred individual or group listening activities.

All questions were based on the interview guide, although they were not presented verbatim. Questions were phrased as necessary to insure that the students understood what was being asked for. In addition to the student interview guide, a complete checklist including the definitions of all strategies was in the hand of the interviewer to consult when a problem of understanding of the question arose and further clarification was needed, and to record the strategies the researcher noted during the interview. The same checklist was used when the researcher listened to the tape of the interview in the follow up analysis. Besides these materials, a data report including the interviewee's name, age, sex and English language background was provided for each interview by the researcher. This report was completed before the taped interview began.

3.3.2 Listening Tape

The ten-minute listening tape was selected from the intermediate listening materials by the listening comprehension teacher of the subjects. It was about buying a car and a handout was prepared by the researcher including some missing information about the car brands and prices. During the listening session the interviewee was asked to fill in the missing

information, because these presumed mental processes were to be reported by the learners during the follow-up and the strategy types would be identified.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected through taped interviews. The researcher prepared a time table by conducting a meeting with all subjects before the interview sessions began and chose the time for each subject's interview. In addition to setting the time, the subjects were informed about the nature of the interview, so that they would arrive knowing that they would be recorded.

After listening to the tape, the researcher asked the questions on the interview guide of the student and when necessary explained the questions in detail to ensure that the subject understood them. When the subject was answering the questions, the researcher sometimes found it necessary to interrupt and provide more clarification of the questions. The strategy types identified on the individual data report sheet for that participant were marked by the researcher during the interview. All interviews were completed within two weeks.

3.5 Analytical Procedures

The data will be analyzed by tabulating the number of strategy types used and calculating the simple percentages of each strategy category. Since there are

22 different strategy types, 6 metacognitive, 15 cognitive and 1 social affective, it will not be possible to use any other statistical method to analyze the data. In a similar study O'Malley et al. (1985) investigated learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students and interaction of strategies with learning activities and used percentages to analyze data. In this study the same procedure will be used to analyze the listening comprehension strategies.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate the learning strategies of intermediate level EFL students in listening comprehension and to find out which strategy types differentiated good listeners from poor ones. Based on the research before this study, two hypotheses (see section 1.5) were investigated.

Tapes of interview data were analyzed according to the taxonomy of listening comprehension strategies developed by O'Malley, et al. (1989). The subjects' answers to the questions during the interview sessions were clear and satisfactory enough to refer to certain strategy types within the existing taxonomy.

After determining the strategy types used by each subject, data were analyzed with a particular focus on whether a strategy-proficiency link existed, that is, were there strategy types that cause high and low proficiency in understanding spoken English.

4.2 Total Strategy Use

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show all the strategy types that were used by all of the subjects. They give an overall view of the strategy use. In these tables, metacognitive, cognitive and social affective strategy types are all given and the type and number of the strategies each subject used is given. Note that most

subjects used strategies only once, but that a few used the strategies twice. The term "used" refers to the repetition of any strategy type by a subject during the course of the interview. When the subject is asked, for example, "what sort of preparations would you do if you were listening to this tape alone?" and when the researcher gets an answer indicating some pre-listening arrangements, like being quite close to the tape recorder or listening more than once, the researcher codes the strategy type in the individual data report checklist (self management) by putting a cross (+). If the same strategy type is mentioned on another occasion during the interview, then the researcher codes it once more. In this case, it means the subject has used the same strategy twice. The numbers given in the tables indicate the instances of strategy use, that is the number of times a strategy was used by a subject. As mentioned above, a subject could use a strategy, self management for example, more than once.

Table 4.1

The overall Distribution of the Number of Strategies Used by Each Subject in Good Listener Group

Subjects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Metacognit. strategies	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Selective attention	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Directed attention	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Self-manage.	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Self-monito.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Self-evalua.	2	1	1	1	–	1	1	1
Self reinfor.	1	2	1	1	–	1	1	1
Total	8	8	7	7	4	6	6	6
Cognitive strategies								
Repetition	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Grouping	1	1	1	1	–	1	–	–
Directed phs.resp.	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1
Resourcing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–
Note taking	1	1	2	1	1	1	–	2
Deduction	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
Transfer	1	1	1	–	1	2	1	2
Translation	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Contextualization	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Imagery	1	–	1	1	1	1	–	1
Auditory representation	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1
Key word	1	–	1	1	–	1	–	1
Eleboration	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Inferencing	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Question for clarification	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	14	13	16	12	11	15	9	15
Social affect.								
Cooperation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	23	22	24	20	16	22	16	22

Table 4.2

The overall Distribution of the Number of Strategies Used by Each Subject in Poor Listener Group

Subjects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Metacognit. strategies	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Selective attention	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Directed attention	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–
Self-manage.	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
Self-monito.	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Self-evalua.	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	–
Self-reinfor.	–	1	–	–	1	1	–	–
Total	6	7	5	5	7	7	5	3
Cognitive strategies								
Repetition	1	1	2	1	1	1	–	1
Grouping	–	1	2	1	–	1	1	–
Directed phs.resp.	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Resourcing	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Note taking	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	–
Deduction	–	1	–	–	–	1	1	–
Transfer	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Translation	–	1	–	1	1	1	1	1
Contextualization	–	1	1	1	–	1	1	–
Imagery	–	–	–	2	–	1	1	–
Auditory representation	1	1	1	–	–	1	–	1
Key word	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	1
Eleboration	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inferencing	–	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Question for clarifica.	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	
Total	6	11	14	9	6	11	9	7
Social affct.								
Cooperation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–
TOTAL	12	19	20	15	14	19	15	10

These data indicate that there is a systematic

relationship between the learning strategy types employed by intermediate level EFL students in listening comprehension and their proficiency level in understanding spoken English. Analysis of the data relied on a procedure similar to that of O'Malley, et al. (1985a) used in their study. Based on the students' answers to the questions that they were asked during the interview, metacognitive, cognitive and social affective strategy types were coded, tabulated and their percentages were calculated. The frequency of strategy use by each group of subjects differed noticeably (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Number of Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategies Used by Good and Poor Listeners

Type of strategy	Good subj. N=8		poor subj. N=8		Total N=16	
	Strategy N	%	Strategy N.	%	Total N	%
Metacogn.	52	31.5	44	35.4	96	33.2
Cognitive	105	63.6	73	58.9	178	61.6
Social affective	8	4.9	7	5.7	15	5.2
TOTAL	**165**	**100.0**	**124**	**100.0**	**289**	**100.0**

The total amount of listening comprehension strategies used by good listeners was 165, 52 metacognitive (31.5 %), 105 cognitive (63.6%), and 8 social affective (4.9%). The average strategy use of each subject in the good listeners group was 20.6. The poor subjects reported that they used 124 listening comprehension strategies in all three strategy categories. They employed 44 metacognitive (35.4%), 73 cognitive (58.9%), and 7 social affective (5.7%) strategy types. The average strategy use of each subject in the poor group was 15.5. These numbers noticeably differed in both groups.

The percentages of social-affective listening strategies are similar, the numbers for both groups are virtually the same, so this type of strategy does not differentiate the two groups.

In the study on learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate level ESL learners conducted by O'Malley, et al. (1985a), intermediate level ESL learners tended to use proportionately more metacognitive strategies than students with beginning level proficiency; intermediate level students used 34.9% metacognitive strategies, beginning level students used 27.4% metacognitive strategies. In the present study of Turkish intermediate EFL classes the focus is on listening comprehension strategies and good

listeners used 31.5% metacognitive listening comprehension strategies and poor listeners used 35.4% metacognitive strategies. The results of the two studies do not agree in terms of metacognitive strategy use.

Likewise, in the study conducted by O'Malley, et al. (1985a) beginning students employed 72.6% cognitive learning strategies and intermediate level subjects employed 65.1% of cognitive learning strategies. In this study good subjects used 63.6% cognitive listening comprehension strategies and poor listeners employed 58.8% cognitive learning strategies. The use of cognitive strategies also does not agree with the results presented by O'Malley, et al. (1985a). Possible reasons for the differences between the O'Malley studies and this study will be discussed in Chapter V.

4.3 The Distribution of Metacognitive Strategies

Table 4.4
Number of Metacognitive Listening Strategies
Used by Good and Poor Listeners

Metacogn. strategy types	Good N	Ss %	Poor N	Ss %	Total N	%
-Selective attention	8	15.4	8	18.2	16	16.7
-Directed attention	8	15.4	7	15.9	15	15.6
-Self-management	12	23.0	13	29.6	25	26.0
-Self-monitoring	8	15.4	7	15.9	15	15.6
-Self-evaluation	8	15.4	6	13.6	14	14.6
-Self-reinforcement	8	15.4	3	6.8	11	11.5
TOTAL	52	100.0	44	100.0	96	100.0

Six types of metacognitive strategies were investigated. The first is directed attention, which is deciding in advance to attend in general to a learning task and to ignore all irrelevant distractors. Selected attention is deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will cue the retention of language input. Good listeners used 8 (15.4%) selective attention and 8 (15.4%) directed attention, poor listeners used 7 (15.9%) directed attention and 8 (18.2%) selective attention.

Self management, the third type of metacognitive strategy, is understanding the conditions that help one

learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions. The number of this strategy type used by good listeners was 12 (23.0%) and used by the poor listeners was 13 (29.7%).

Self monitoring, the correcting of one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary or for appropriateness related to the setting or to the people who are present, was used 8 times (15.4%) by good listeners and 7 times (15.9%) by poor listeners.

Self evaluation and self reinforcement are evaluating oneself and creating self motivation. The most prominent metacognitive strategy type was self reinforcement. It was used 8 times (15.4%) by good listeners and 3 times (6.8%) by poor subjects. This type of strategy could yield evidence that poor subjects usually lack motivation and ability to create self reinforcement. This is the only metacognitive strategy type that differentiated good listeners from poor listeners.

4.4 The Distribution of Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive listening strategies involve active manipulation of the learning task. The number and distribution of the 15 cognitive listening comprehension strategies investigated are shown in table 4.5

Table 4.5
Number of Cognitive Strategies Used by
Good and Poor Listeners

Cognitive Learning Strategies	Good Subj. N	%	Poor Subj. N	%	Total N	%
-Repetition	8	7.6	8	11	16	9
-Resourcing	7	6.7	2	2.7	9	5.1
-Directed physical response	5	4.8	2	2.7	7	3.9
-Translation	2	1.9	6	8.2	8	4.5
-Inferencing	10	9.5	8	11	18	10.1
-Grouping	5	4.8	6	8.2	11	6.2
-Note-taking	9	8.6	8	11	17	9.6
-Deduction	2	1.9	3	4.1	5	2.8
-Transfer	9	8.6	2	2.7	11	6.2
-Imagery	6	5.7	4	5.5	10	5.6
-Auditory representat.	7	6.7	5	6.8	12	6.7
-Key word	5	4.8	3	4.1	8	4.5
-Contextual ization	10	9.5	5	6.8	15	8.4
-Elaboration	12	11.4	8	11	20	11.1
-Question for clarification	8	7.6	3	4.1	11	6.2
Total	**105**	**100.0**	73	**100**	178	**100.0**

Of the fifteen cognitive strategies studied, good listeners employed 105 times and poor students employed them 73 times. As percentages good subjects used 63.6% and poor subjects used 58.8% cognitive strategies. Analysis of cognitive listening comprehension strategies used by good and poor listeners can be done in three different headings:

4.4.1 Similarity in Strategy Use Between Two Groups

The types of cognitive listening comprehension strategies that were used in nearly the same numbers were repetition, 8 by good and 8 by poor listeners, grouping, 5 by good and 6 by poor listeners, note-taking, 9 by good and 8 by poor listeners and deduction, 2 by good and 3 by poor listeners. Because these two groups of subjects used these strategy types similarly, they do not differentiate good listeners from poor ones.

4.4.2 Cognitive Strategy Types of Good Listeners

4.4.2.1 Types That Distinguished Good from Poor Listeners

Six types of cognitive strategies were used noticeably more by good listeners than poor listeners. These are resourcing, directed physical response, transfer, contextualization, elaboration and questioning for clarification.

Transfer, which is the ability to use previously acquired linguistic and conceptual knowledge to facilitate a new leaning task, was used 9 times (8.6%) by good listeners and 2 times (2.7%) by poor listeners. They were asked which subject matter they would prefer to listen to and most of the good subjects reported that they would like to listen to the subjects related to their majors.

Contextualization, which is the ability to put the new language items in context was another type of cognitive listening strategy that showed great difference within these groups of subjects. Good subjects reported that they always put the new language items in context and learn them in this way, but poor subjects did not do it often in this way. They usually preferred to memorize their corresponding meaning in their native language. Good subjects used contextualization 10 times (9.5%) but poor subjects employed it only 5 times (6.8%).

Another type of cognitive listening comprehension strategy type in this category was questioning for clarification. Poor subjects said that they did not usually ask for unclear words to be reported or defined for clarification; they just let them pass, whereas good ones reported that they were eager to find out the correct forms of new language items by asking the speaker for repetition. Good subjects used this strategy 8 times (7.6%) and poor ones used it only 3 times (4.1%).

Resourcing indicates the ability to use target language reference materials, such as monolingual dictionaries and other target language materials. Good subjects employed this strategy 7 times (6.7%), while poor ones employed only 2 (2.7%) resourcing strategy

types.

Elaboration is the ability to relate new information to the other concepts in memory. It was used more by good listeners than poor ones. The first group employed elaboration 12 times (11.4%) but the poor ones employed elaboration only 8 times (11.0%).

Good subjects were found better at relating new information to physical actions (directed physical response) than poor ones. The researcher posed a hypothetical situation which was based on a popular aerobics television show. The aerobics show is conducted in Turkish, but the subjects were asked to pretend that it was conducted in English. Given that supposition, they were asked whether they would simply watch the show, or whether they would perform the aerobics while listening to the English. Five (4.8%) good listeners indicated that they would do the aerobics while they follow the English directions, while only 2 (2.7%) poor listeners said they would perform the aerobics.

4.4.2.2 Types That Did Not Distinguish Good From Poor Listeners

Four different cognitive listening strategy types were used more by good listeners than poor listeners but they can hardly be said to be the differentiating strategy types of the two groups of listeners. Good

subjects used 10 (9.5%) and poor subjects used 8 (11.0%) inferencing; imagery was used 6 times (5.7%) by good and 4 times (5.5%) by poor listeners, auditory representation 7 times (6.7%) by good and 5 times (6.8%) by poor listeners, and key word 5 times (4.8%) by good and 3 times (4.1%) by poor listeners.

4.4.3 Cognitive Strategy Types of Poor Listeners

According to the research findings in this study, two cognitive strategy types, translation and deduction, were used more frequently by poor listeners. A one point difference is not considered sufficient to claim distinctiveness so deduction is classified as similar strategy use (see section 4.4.1).

Good listeners used the translation strategy only twice. They said that they never translate a verbal message into their native language to understand it better. Translation is using the first language as a base for understanding and producing the second language. For example when they hear an utterance they automatically perceive the meaning in English without referring to the Turkish equivalent of that message. Poor subjects reported that they understand the message by translating overtly. Because this takes time, they miss parts of the verbal utterance. Good listeners used translation 2 times (1.9%) and poor listeners used it 6 times (8.2%).

4.6 Summary

The results showed that the number of cognitive and metacognitive strategy types varied noticeably between the good and poor listeners and the directional hypothesis that there is a relationship between the strategy use and proficiency level of Turkish EFL students in listening comprehension seems to be supported. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Conclusions and results will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Study

Because listening is an important skill to acquire and given the lack of research on how foreign language learners acquire listening comprehension ability, the main focus of this study was to investigate the listening comprehension strategies of intermediate level Turkish EFL students in listening comprehension.

In order to determine what learning strategies some intermediate level EFL students employ which make them superior in listening comprehension to their peers, this study investigated the listening comprehension strategies of good and poor listeners. Two groups of subjects from the intermediate level EFL students at Karadeniz Technical University post graduate prep classes, Trabzon, Turkey were chosen by their teachers based on the scores they got from listening comprehension tests and the teachers' own experiences with the students (O'Malley, et al., 1989, O'Malley, et al., 1985a). The subjects that were chosen for the study were 16 students, 8 good and 8 poor.

The subjects listened to a short listening comprehension tape before they were asked questions from an interview guide. The short passage elicited

only some strategy types, such as directed attention, selected attention, self management, and key word strategies, so general questions about their listening comprehension activities were asked to elicit the other strategy types (see appendix A).

5.2 Discussion of Results

O'Malley, et al. (1989) in their study, found that selected attention and directed attention, which were also called monitoring by them, were the metacognitive strategy types that differentiated effective listeners from ineffective listeners. The results of this study disagree with the study of O'Malley et al. (1989).

In the use of metacognitive strategies, self reinforcement was the only strategy type that showed a noticeable difference in use between good and poor subjects. Good subjects employed the self reinforcement strategy eight times whereas poor listeners employed it only three times. The eight good listeners said that they got pleasure from performing a task successfully and this success motivates them toward further listening activities. However poor listeners reported that they never thought of such a strategy, and they usually performed the task without thinking of self-reinforcement or self-reward, because they assumed that they were not good enough to perform a listening task successfully. They held the belief

that they were not good at listening comprehension. This idea always prevented them from self-motivation.

There were only slight differences between good and poor listeners in the use of selective attention, directed attention, self management and self evaluation. Therefore these metacognitive strategy types did not differentiate good listeners from poor listeners.

The cognitive listening comprehension strategies that seemed to distinguish good from poor listeners in descending order of importance were: transfer, contextualization, questioning for clarification, directed physical response, resourcing, and elaboration. In this study, then, only one metacognitive and 6 cognitive strategies differentiate good listeners from poor listeners. However, O'Malley, et al. found that 3 metacognitive strategies, (selected attention, directed attention, self-monitoring), and 2 cognitive strategies, (inferencing and elaboration), differentiated effective listeners from ineffective listeners. The findings of this study differ not only in number of strategies selected, but the kind as well.

Although further research needs to be conducted to explain these differences, the differences may be caused by the different setting of this study. On the one hand the subjects in this study were all native

Turkish speakers in a foreign language environment. In O'Mally's study subjects were all Hispanic students, and they were investigated in an English speaking country where there are a lot of possibilities for applying certain strategy types in listening comprehension. On the other hand in a country like Turkey students are very limited in creating self learning opportunities because English is not normally used by the native people and most of the Turks do not know English.

5.3 Pedagogical implications

Research and theory in second language learning strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies to assist them in gaining command over new language skills. By implication, less competent learners should be able to improve their skills in the second or foreign language through training on strategies evidenced among more successful language learners. With successful training, less competent students should be able to apply strategies that they did not use before in the acquisition of a variety of different language skills. Teachers can play an important role in this training by conveying strategy applications to students and thereby supporting student efforts to learn the new language (O'Malley, et al. 1987).

Predominantly used listening comprehension strategies evidenced among good listeners should be taught to poor listeners, and they should be encouraged to develop these strategies in their listening comprehension activities. The strategy training theory developed by Rubin (1985) supported the idea that poor listeners will improve in their listening comprehension ability at the end of a strategy training session.

Another implication that underlies strategy training theory is the learners' beliefs. Learners are important elements of the learning task, and they are the only sources that will facilitate their own learning (Rubin, 1985). Students' beliefs form the essence of learning strategies, and what strategies that good listeners reported using in listening comprehension resulted from their beliefs of how one can learn listening comprehension effectively. Given their success these beliefs should not be ignored.

5.4 Some Implications for Further Research

In this study in listening comprehension strategies that differentiated good listeners from poor listeners a range of strategy types that are accepted as useful in listening comprehension have been identified. The problem stated in this study was to find out the differentiating strategy types of good

listeners. In addition to the study of the research question, another important point that needs to be studied has been revealed. Poor subjects used translation frequently. But the listeners were still poor in understanding verbal messages. Thus another research question has been generated from this conclusion. What learning habits do poor listeners have that affect their listening comprehension negatively? Does the use or over use of translation cause their low success rate, rather than just the lack of other strategies?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, R. G. (1983). Relationship between the use of the strategy of monitoring and cognitive style. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 6, 17-32.

Blundel, L. and Stokes, J. (1981). Task listening. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). Teaching the spoken language: An approach based analysis of conversational English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, H. D. (1974). Affective variables in second language acquisition. Language Learning, 23, 231-243.

Chamot, A. U. (1982). The learning strategies of ESL students. In Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (Eds.), Learner strategies in language learning (pp. 119-127). New York: York College, City University of New York.

Chastian, D. K. (1979). Testing listening comprehension. TESOL Quarterly, 13, 81-90.

Chastian, K. (1971). Developing second language skills: Theory to practice. Virginia: University of Virginia Charlottesville.

Cohen, D. A. (1987). Studying learner strategies: How we get the information. In Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (Eds.), Learner strategies in language learning (pp. 31-39). New York: York College, City University of New York.

Ellis, R. (1985). Understanding second language acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Henner-Stanchina, C. (1982). Listening comprehension strategies and autonomy. Melanges Pedagogiques, 1, 1-11.

Kasper, J. T. (1977). Foreigner talk input in child second language acquisition. Los Angeles: University of California.

Krashen, S. (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Mueller,T. (1974). Another look
listening comprehension and read
Modern Language Journal, 18, 19-23.

O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manz
Kupper, L. and Russo, P. R. (19
strategies used by beginning and
learners. Language Learning, 35,

O'Malley, J.M., Chamot, A.U., Stewner-Manzares, G.,
Kupper, L., and Russo, R.P. (1985b). Learning
strategy applications with students of English as
a second language. TESOL Quarterly,

O'Malley, J. M. (1987). The effects
the use of strategies on learn
second language. In Wenden, A. and Rubin, J.
(Eds.), Learner strategies in language learning
(pp. 43-55). New York: York College, City
University of New York.

O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, U. A., and Kupp
Listening comprehension strateg
language acquisition. Applied Linguistics, 10,
418-437.

Politzer, R. L. and McGroarty, M. (19
explanatory study of learners beha
relationship to gains in
communicative competence. TESOL
103-123.

Richard, C. J. (1983). Listening comprehension:
Approach, design, procedure. TESOL Quarterly, 17,
219-240.

Rubin, J. (1985). Learner strategie
assumptions, research history and topology. In
Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (Eds.), Learner
strategies in language learning (pp. 145-157).
New York: York College, City University of New
York.

Si-Qing, C. (1990). A study of
strategies in interlanguage production by Chinese
EFL learners. Language Learning, 40, 155-187.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Listening Comprehension)

This interview guide has been developed by the researcher based on the "Strategy Definitions" of Brown, (1982) and Chamot, (1987). The questions defining the strategy types have been prepared according to the "Taxonomy of Listening Skills"of Richard (1983) and the" Learner Behavior Questionnaire" Politzer and McGroarty (1985).

Before having the subjects answer these questions, a ten-minute listening tape which was selected from an intermediate listening activity book. The subject was "Buying a Car". Because of the copy right of the publisher, it was not included in appendices (Blundel & Stokes, 1981).

I. METACOGNITIVE

1. Selective Attention

What points did you concentrate on when you were listening to the tape? The tenses, special vocabulary items, etc.

2. Directed attention

Did you try to understand the general meaning of the passage or the specific information that you were to find out and fill in the missing information on the

hand out? Did the hand out affect your listening comprehension positively or negatively? why?

3. Self Management

If you were listening to this tape by yourself at home, what sort of preparations would you do? Such as being closer to the tape recorder or listening more than once, etc.

4. Self Monitoring

Do you check the phonological or grammatical accuracy of what you listen to when you are listening? Do you control your own knowledge about the words and sentences you hear?

5. Self-evaluation

What is your listening comprehension proficiency level, poor, good enough to communicate with the foreigners and use target language references?

6. Self Reinforcement

Do you reward yourself when you complete a listening task successfully? Do you get pleasure from being successful enough to use the English language in your professional life?

II. COGNITIVE

1. Imitation

Do you imitate the listener when he is speaking? In what ways do you think that this contributes to your listening comprehension?

2. Grouping

Do you classify the words and phrases according to their lexical meanings, for example they are car brands or these words have the same final ending -ly, etc?

3. Directed physical response

Consider that your teacher is having you listen to a passage about "square-dancing" do you prefer to listen to it only, or to do the actions when you are listening to it? Which contributes to your learning more effectively?

4. Note-taking

Do you take notes when you are listening?

5. Resourcing

What do you do with your notes? Do you use target language references to get answers, such as bilingual dictionaries, grammar books, or do you use materials written in Turkish?

6. Contextualization

When you get the meaning of your problematic vocabulary items that you noted when you were listening, do you write their meanings in Turkish? Do you write just the word manning or a sentence that exemplifies the word usage?

7. Transfer

(The answer for this strategy definition is expected to be elicited by the previous question.)

8. Imagery

What sort of relationship do you build between the words that you have just learned and those you have already learned to remember the new ones better? Do you use mental visualizations that help you remember them better?

9. Auditory representation

What sounds have you experienced in English that you have difficulties in pronouncing?

10. Key word

When you are learning a new item, do you associate it with those in your mother language that sounds similar in terms of pronunciation ? For example "swim" and a Turkish female name "Sevim".

11. Elaboration

What subject matter materials do you prefer to listen to? How do you feel about those related to your major at the university? Do you understand them better?

12. Inferencing

How good do you think you are in guessing the meaning of word in a listening passage? Do you try to guess their meanings from the content or do you look up the dictionary? Do you think that you can guess the missing information without listening to the complete passage? Have you ever tried to do so?

13. Translation

Do you translate the listening passage into your native language after listening to it in your mind by imagining the concepts or do you imagine the concepts in the target language?

14. Repetition

How many times do you listen to a listening passage? Why?

15. Question for clarification

What do you do if you can not understand the passage items when you were listening to them? Do you interrupt and ask somebody for clarification or do you leave it after the listening.

III SOCIAL AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

1. Cooperation

Do you prefer to listen to a tape alone or within a group of students? What advantages and disadvantages do you imagine in group listening?

APPENDIX B

Handout : 1

A. Listen to the passage carefully and rank the cars in order of value

Brand	Price
1.....	.....
2.....	.....
3.....	.....
4.....	.....
5.....	.....

B. Which car did the young couple prefer and why?
(Write three reasons for their choice)

1.....

2.....

3.....

APPENDIX C

Individual Data Collection Checklist

Name: School: Age:

Sex: Place of birth:

English background:..... years of English learning

Major: GROUP:

poor ( ) good ( )

Strategy types identified:

A. Metacognitive B. Cognitive C. Soc. Aff.

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

6-

7-

8

9-

10-

11-

12-

13-

14-

15-