効果的リスニング活動のための理論と実践
―アクションリサーチを通して―

小林　和歌子

日本大学文理学部

Theory and Practice for Effective Listening Activities
― An Action Research Study ―

Wakako KOBAYASHI

College of Humanities and Sciences, Nihon University

リスニングは4技能の内，最も難易度の高い活動だと言われている（Rost, 2002; Peterson, 1991）。リスニングの理解は複雑な過程であり，聞き手はそれぞれの音を識別したり，語彙や文法構造を理解し，イントネーションやストレスを解釈するために，活発に活動しなければならない。何故リスニングは初級者にとって特に難しいのだろうか。本論文では，初級者・中級者・上級者の間の聴解の差，効果的なリスニングの授業，3つのリスニングの目的，リスニング戦略を教示すること等を理論的に考察しながら，実際の教室でアクションリサーチを行いそれらの理論の妥当性を質的に検証する。

　　Some researchers mention that listening is one of the most difficult of the four primary language skills (Rost, 2002; Peterson, 1991). Vandergrift (1999) explains that listening comprehension is a complex process in which listeners play an active role in discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation and stress, making use of all the skills mentioned above, interpreting the utterance within the socio-cultural context. For not only Japanese learners of English, but also many EFL learners, listening is the thing they feel most frustrated with. I pick up three to four reasons for Japanese learners' listening difficulties. How could we teachers help them in dealing with these difficulties?

Literature Review

The Input Features that Affect Listening Ease or Difficulty

　　Anderson and Lynch (1988) claim that firstly, a principle feature of language input that affects the ease or difficulty of listening is information organization. There are two types in this criterion: narrative texts and expository texts. In narrative texts, when events are described in the order in which they occurred, the story is better understood than if the events are described out of chronological sequence. Any description or flashback seems to make the information more difficult to understand. In expository texts, listeners were able to remember and pass on more of the content (a) when the text had an informative

title, and (b) when the main point in the text came before illustration of those points.

The second feature of the input that affects the ease or difficulty of listening is familiarity of topic. In listening, background or schematic knowledge can be shown to play a powerful role in listening performance. The teacher should choose listening material on familiar topics at least in the early stages of a course.

Thirdly and fourthly, there are two difficulties confronting a listener: "processing load" and "support material". As for "processing load", two factors that influence the difficulty of listening are the amount of information that has to be processed and the amount of time available. For example, it would be more difficult to respond to the instruction, "Give me the brass screw", if there were many screws of varying sizes and materials in view, or if you were under time pressure. As for "support material", learners benefit from further help in the form of visual support material, such as pictures, videos, maps, etc. that is designed to assist their interpretation of what they hear.

Awareness of these features of the input and the task as potential sources of listening difficulty, teachers could present learners with a gradual increase in difficulty, which is likely to raise learners' motivation.

Differences among Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced Learners in Listening

According to Peterson (1991), there are differences among beginning, intermediate, and advanced students in terms of listening.

Beginning level learners lack ability in bottom up processing, because they have not yet developed cognitive categories against which the language must be heard. They perceive the new language as undifferentiated noise. They are not yet able to segment the speech stream into word units. Learners have no idea about phonological rules which change sound in certain environments or cause reduction of sound. With regarding structural competence, they are not familiar with rules for word formation, inflection, and word-order rules. Their vocabulary store is nonexisting.

Intermediate level learners have moved beyond the limits of words and phrases: their memory can retain longer phrases and sentences. They can listen to short conversations or narratives that are one paragraph in length. They are able to get the gist, find both the main idea and some supporting details. They are ready to practice intermediate discourse level skills; predicting what will happen next, and explaining relations among events and ideas.

Advanced learners listen in the language to learn about the content of other areas. They can listen to longer texts, such as radio, TV, academic lectures, and their vocabulary include topics in current events, history, and culture. Again, they can deal with a certain degree of abstraction. They can fill in gaps and can make inference when the text is incomplete or their background knowledge is lacking.

Peterson (1991) explains that language learning depends on the movement from controlled to automatic processing; Bottom up processing and schemata use promote restructuring of language data so that greater segments of text can be grasped as a whole in top down processing.

Effective Lessons in Listening

Hedge (2000) and Rost (2002) indicate that the stages of effective listening lessons are as follows:
(a) Pre-listening ・・・ Students and teacher prepare themselves for the task and familiarize themselves

with the topic. The teacher tries to arouse interest and create expectations. There may be some preparation of key vocabulary concepts. In this stage, the teacher tries to build schemata, or background knowledge of learners.

(b) Teacher preparation for task (While listening)･･･The teacher makes sure learners understand the requirements of the task. (ex.) make notes, fill in a chart.

(c) While-Listening･･･Learners carry out the task. This is usually an individual listening, but it may also involve pair or group work.

(d) Teacher feedback on task (While listening)･･･Teacher helps learners to see if they have completed the task successfully.

(e) Post-Listening･･･The follow up task or tasks can take many forms (ex.) detailed language study, integrated skill work.

According to Hedge (2000), the elements of effective lessons in listening include activities assigned before, while, and after listening. For listening activities, she recommends to include the five steps stated above. The rationale for this sequencing is to maximize the effect of the lesson as a whole. The Pre-listening activities are to build schema for the activity; teacher preparation ensures learners understand what to do. Then the main task is conducted by the learners. Teacher feedback after listening is to ensure students understand the purpose of the task and the follow up activities are to remind the learners to know what was learned or to have been utilized during the lesson as much as possible.

Rost's Three Purposes for Listening

Rost (2002) explains that there are three purposes for listening as follows:

(1) Selective listening: Informational input to task

Selective listening exercises are aimed at helping learners derive specific information from texts, even when the texts themselves are well beyond the learners' current level of linguistic and content knowledge. There are three principles: (a) providing information in large enough context that allows the listeners to make inferences. (b) providing tasks support which focuses learners' attention on information to be derived from the text. (c) assisting listeners in a pre-listening phase to predict the form that the information will take and to anticipate the cues that will precede the needed information. This consists of a well- structured pre-listening phase which should make the context explicit, consequently clarifying purposes for listening, and establishing roles, procedures and goals. In selective listening, task outcome should be closed. The post-listening phase should allow for simple negation of information and feedback on outcome.

(2) Global listening: Semantic input to task

Global listening exercises are aimed at helping students construct an overall sense, gist of text. It is helpful in developing the ability to identify topics and transition points between topics. There are four principles: (a) building expectations of the topic before listening, (b) providing redundant cues to the same information in order that listeners can build inferences, (c) providing minimal task structure and allowing for rather open responses and (d) evaluating the outcome.

(3) Intensive listening: Formal input to tasks.

Intensive listening exercises are aimed at focusing learner attention on features of the language system once text meaning has been established to some extent. There are four principles: (a) Drawing

attention to language features in a text which affects interpretation of the text (i.e. phonological features, grammatical features, lexical features, and discourse features); (b) Assuring that features to be focused upon are learnable by the learners; (c) providing closed outcomes; and (d) allowing opportunities for learners' questions about the feature.

Based on the nature of these purposes, it is obvious that the sequence of the activities should be in the order of global → selective → then intensive listening. Therefore, a sample lesson plan will be as follows.

(a) First, learners are given some information on the subject of the listening, and they listen to a text with a task to identify the topics and transition points between topics, and understand what is meant.

(b) Next, the same text will be listened to again with a task. This time, they try to get a specific point.

(c) Lastly, when the meaning of the text has been established, the text is listened again with a task to look for specific language features, such as phonological, grammatical, lexical, and discourse features.

Effective EFL Listening Comprehension Strategies

While listening, the learners use top-processing or bottom-up processing or both. Here top-down means using our prior knowledge and experiences; bottom-up processing means using information we have about sounds, words' meaning, and discourse markers to assemble our understanding of what is heard one step at a time (Brown, 2006). Rubin (1988) argues that listening comprehension is a highly interactive skill, and it plays an important role in the process of language learning / acquisition, facilitating the emergence of other language skills. For these reasons, an awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension strategies can help students capitalize on the language input they are receiving.

First of all, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have validated a body of language learning strategies and an accompanying classification scheme grounded in cognitive theory. Though listening strategies are clearly a way to ease the burden of listening and should be directly taught to learners, with so many strategies available, how can teachers benefit learners? Brown (2006) suggests that systematically presenting (a) listening for main ideas, (b) listening for details and (c) listening and making inferences helps students to understand better. Vandergrift (1999) also indicates that the pedagogical sequence of pre-listening, while listening, and post listening activities could guide learners through the mental processes for successful listening comprehension, and promote acquisition of metacognitive strategies in three categories: planning, monitoring and evaluating. Rost (2002) also presents six listening strategies of successful L2 listeners, explaining that these strategies are often practiced by successful L2 listeners and by incorporating them into listening activities, the teacher gives all students an opportunity to practice them: (a) predicting, (b) inferencing, (c) monitoring, (d) clarifying, (e) responding, and (f) evaluating (See Appendix A).

Research Questions

I present two research questions as follows: (a) How can a self-assessment checklist influence learners' attitude towards listening activities? (b) How can implementing listening strategies effect the participants' listening activities?

Method and Participants: An Action Research Study

Participants of this study are 15 students (10 male and 5 female) who are all in the first year and belong to the faculty of history in a university in Tokyo area. Their proficiency level is relatively lower than other classes, and many of the participants have from Eiken 3rd grade to 4th grade. The class, in which the focus is put on speaking and listening, is held once a week, 90 minutes.

In the first semester, they have 15 classes in all. The data by the questionnaires were collected two times in June and July by the instructor. The participants use the textbook, *Interchange 2*, 4th edition by J. Richards from Cambridge University Press.

This research follows the form of action research. Nunun (1992) argues that a form of research which is becoming increasingly significant in language learning is action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) claim that the three defining characteristics of action research are (a) it is carried out by practitioners, (b) it is collaborative, and (c) it is aimed at changing things. Cohen and Manion (1985) offer a similar set of characteristics. They argue that action research is first and foremost situational, being concerned with identification and solving of problems in a specific context. It is important for the teacher to reflect on, return to and extend the initial inquiry (Nunun, 1992).

Procedure: In -Classroom Practice

Sample Lesson (1)

Instrument: *Interchange 2*, Unit 4, Exercise 11: Listening (Tempting snacks)

Process of a listening activity in a class (June, 2016)

(a) Implementing listening strategies (See, APPENDIX A)

(b) Pre-listening

(c) While-listening

(d) Post-listening

(e) Distributing a questionnaire (See, APPENDIX B)

(f) Collecting the questionnaire

Sample Lesson (2)

Instrument: *Interchange 2*, Progress Check Exercise 2: Listening (I really need a change)

Process of a listening activity in a class (July, 2016)

(a) Reviewing listening strategies (See, APPENDIX A)

(b) Pre-listening

(c) While-listening

(d) Post-listening

(e) Distribute a questionnaire (See, APPENDIX D)

(f) Collecting the questionnaire

Results

Table 1: *Results for the Self-Assessment Check Sheet* (*n* = 15)

Self-Assessment Check	A (can)	B (cannot)
Q1: Listening to English Sounds	46.7%	53.3%
Q2: Inferring word meaning	20%	80%
Q3: Understanding meanings as listening	33.3%	67.7%
Q5: Inferring the main idea of theme	46.7%	53.3%
Q6: Predicting what will come next when I am listening to English	26.7%	73.3%
Q7: Mental control	60%	40%
Q8: Concentration	73.3%	26.7%
Q9: Self -Assessment	40%	60%

Q1: Do you like listening activities? And why?

① No, As it is too fast, I can not catch the information and feel difficult. (Kodai and many)

② Not really. Although I read on the text and can understand them, I can not catch the words while listening (Yasuna and Takuma).

③ Yes, I can enjoy listening to the information. (Yuuma)

Q2: Did you think it is good to know the listening strategies when you solve listening quizzes?

① I think it is good and effective to know the strategies. (Kodai and many)

② I try to use the strategies which I learned, however, as it is so fast, I cannot use them while listening (Sayaka and Ran)

③ Not really (Yuuma)

Q3: Which listening strategies did you use and why?

① Inferencing (Kodai, Hiroki, Takuma, Rin)

② Predicting (Yasuna, Nao, Kana, Tomoaki,,Kaede, Takuma

③ Monitoring (Ran)

④ Clarifying(Sayaka, Kotaro, Hideaki)

⑤ All (Ryuu)

⑥ None (Yuuma)

Q4: Do you want to solve listening activities more? What kind of listening activities do you want to solve?

① Yes,: Eiken examination (Yasuna), daily conversation (Ran, Hiroki, Hideaki) easy one (Nao) phone conversation (Sayaka) chatting with friends (Kana) announcement in the airport (Tomoaki) story telling (Yuuma) Japanese culture (Rin)

② Not really, Noting special (Ryuu, Kotaro, Kaede)

③ I like the way as it is. (Kodai)

Q5: If you have any comments on listening activities, please write here.

① I want to do my best because I am not good at listening (Kodai, many)

② Difficulty levels were appropriate, so they were really good. (Hiroki)

③ Listening is very difficult (Tomoaki)

④ Listening is difficult but listening to President's speech might be interesting (Takuma)

⑤ I sometimes feel sleepy while listening. (Yuuma)

⑥ I wanted to listen more in the classroom. (Rin)

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

First, as this is action research, as Nunun (1992) mentions, extreme caution needs to be exercised in making strong claims about from research outcomes. Despite these problems, I still believe that the investigation was worth carrying out and reporting, particularly as it is the sort of investigation which can be replicated rather easily by other teachers. Second, since the number of participants is small (i.e. 15 students), it is difficult to generalize the results of this study. Third, the data collection period was very short. Next time, I would like to collect data longitudinally, in order to see the changes in the students through time. Also the participants are the students from the faculty of history in a metropolitan university. I would like to collect data next time from students whose major is English, because I imagine that the result of the self- assessment checklist might be different from this study, especially with regard to inferring word meaning and understanding meaning as listening. Lastly, it would be of interest to compare the difference between the two groups and to explore the similarities and differences in the nature of their motivation in listening.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

First, in this study, being aware of the features of the input and task as potential sources of listening difficulties, the researcher could present learners with a gradual increase in difficulty, which is likely to raise learners' motivation in learning. As theories by Anderson and Lynch (1988) and Peterson (1991) show, the findings in this study could also contribute to the effectiveness of distributing the listening strategies in the future.

Second, it is noteworthy that the pedagogical implication of the effective lessons in listening by Hedge (2000) and effective EFL listening comprehension strategies by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) is of paramount importance. It suggests that the potential application of various teachers' strategies to implement the listening strategies in the classroom could trigger learners' stronger motivation, self-confidence and willingness to communicate in L2 listening.

Third, I suggest that practitioners who know how to develop more effective listening lessons could hold a workshop as a Faculty Development activity which aims to introduce the likely effectiveness of

distributing the self-assessment checklist and the listening strategies in the classroom. The implication of this study is that for researchers and practitioners, to connect the proximal objectives in the classroom to their distal objectives in the future seems to be an important aspect for the success of English as a lifelong learning endeavor.

Lastly, the effectiveness of conducting an action research is potentially of interest to practitioners who are looking for concrete ways in the classroom to enhance students' motivation, metacognitive awareness, and autonomy. Practitioners who are looking for ways to enhance learners' motivation might want to add some extra activities to make this treatment more powerful. For example, listening activities could be planned to help students to develop more detailed proximal classroom objectives and to raise their motivation in listening in and out of the classroom.

Discussions and Conclusions

Since I had conducted the listening activities as the literature review section suggests, the process of the listening activities went smoothly and well. First, the pictures in the textbook enabled the participants to more easily understand the content of the listening. Second, schema building activities in the pre-listening activity helped the participants to predict what they were going to listening to, and more easily answer the questions. Thirdly, as Table 1 shows, Q7: (60%) and Q8: (73.3%) were answered positively by the majority of the participants, which implies that they were trying to control their mental condition and keep their concentration while listening to tasks which were relatively difficult for them. On the other hands, as Table 1 shows, in Q 2 (20%): Q3 (33.3%): Q6 (26.7%), they were not good at the skills of inferring the meaning of words, understanding the meaning while listening, and listening as expecting with evolution, which implies that the participants who are lower proficiency levels, cannot guess unknown words and/or try to translate word-by-word while listening. Therefore, it should be suggested that schema building, such as vocabulary learning, are really important especially in the pre-listening phase, as Rost (2002) claims. Fourthly, in Q9 (60%), the participants did not know how to study so that they could increase listening proficiency, therefore, more detailed activity or instruction such as shadowing or dictation should be included in the future class activities. Fifthly and lastly, Sato (2010) claims that in the self-assessment checklist, Japanese tend to underestimate their own ability and critical about themselves, which might have produced the negative results. It has also been reported that Japanese tend to be modest and that higher proficiency L2 leaners assess their ability more critically (Matsuno, 2009).

As the results for the questionnaire in APPENDIX D, the most participants answered negatively toward the listening activities, as I had expected. Since they did not have enough vocabularies, grammatical knowledge, cultural background knowledge, I found that they need more bottom up knowledge building before conducting listening tasks. In spite of my negative expectation, many participants answered that it was really effective to know listening strategies when they try to solve the listening quizzes, which was really positive and promising. Therefore, it could be pointed out that even lower level learners should be provided sufficient knowledge on listening strategies, before solving listening tasks, in pre-listening phases, which should be the answers to Research Question 1 and 2.

As a conclusion, I would like to sum up the arguments that we researcher teachers should prepare for implementing listening strategies even for the lower level learners so that we could seek for an effective

listening lesson in a longitudinal landscape. Furthermore, not only by implementing listening skills and listening strategies, but also by conducting overall English teaching which aims to increase all four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing), it is important to connect this action research with more effective teachings which aim for more practical communicative proficiency in the future.

References

Anderson, A. & Lynch. T (1988). Graded development of listening skills. In *Listening*, 44-59, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, S. (2006). *Teaching listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1985). *Research methods in education*. London: Croom Helm.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1988). Introduction. In S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart (eds.). *The action research reader*. Deakin: Deakin University Press.

Matsuno, S. (2009). Self, peer and teacher-assessments in Japanese university EFL writing classrooms. *Language Testing*, 26, 75-100.

Nunun, D. (1992). *Research method in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Malley, J.M. & Chamot, A.U. (1990). Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peterson, P. W. (1991). A synthesis of methods for interactive listening. In Marianne Celce-Murcia (ed.). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. 106-122. New York: Newbury House.

Richards, J. (2014). *Interchange, 2, 4th edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rost, M. (2002). *Teaching and researching listening*. London: Longman.

Rubin, J. (1988). *Improving foreign language listening comprehension*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education.

Sato, T. (2010). Validation of the EIKEN Can-do statements measure using Rasch measurement. *The Japan Language Testing Association (JLTA) Journal, 13*, 1-20.

Uesugi, K. (2006). Listning no Koukateki Gakusyuuhouno Shidou. *Kanagawakenritsu Sogou Kyouiku Center Chouki Kensyuin Kensyuu Houkoku 4*, 97-100.

Vandergrift, L (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: acquiring successful strategies. *EFL Journal Volume 53*, 168-176.

APPENDIX A
A Handout for Learning Listening Strategies
(Adapted from Rost, 2002)

Teaching concept: Listening Strategies of Successful L2* Listeners

These strategies are often practiced by successful L2 listeners. By incorporating them into listening activities, the teacher gives all students an opportunity to practice them.

1. **Predicting**: Predicting information or ideas prior to listening.

2. **Inferencing**: Drawing inferences about complete information based on incomplete or inadequate information.

3. **Monitoring**: Monitoring one's own performance while listening, including assessing areas of uncertainty.

4. **Clarifying**: Formulating clarification questions about what information is needed to make a fuller interpretation.

5. **Responding**: Providing a personal, relevant response to the information or ideas presented.

6. **Evaluating**: Checking how well one has understood, and whether an initial problem posed has been solved.

＊L2 = second language

Appendix B
Listening Self-Assessment Check Sheet（Japanese Version）
（Adapted from Uesugi, 2006）

項目：AかBの当てはまるものに○をつけて下さい。

１．英語の音声の聞き取り

　　A　英語の音声を聞いて，知っている単語と結びつけることができる

　　B　文字で見れば理解できるが，音声になると聞き取れない

２．単語の意味を推測する

　　A　聞き取れない語句があっても，前後関係からある程度単語の意味を推測することができる

　　B　聞き取れない語句を推測することが苦手である。

３．意味のまとまりを認識し聞いた順番に理解する

　　A　意味のまとまりごとに，聞こえてきた順番に理解することができる

　　B　日本語に訳してから理解しようとしているので，耳に入ってくる順番に情報を処理することができない

４．話の要点（キーワードや重要な情報）理解する

　　A　キーワードを押さえる聞き方をしていて話の要点を理解することができる

　　B　重要な情報を聞き逃してしまい，話の要点が理解できない

５．話の概要（話題やテーマ）を推測する

　　A　分からない語彙や表現があっても，推測することで話の概要を理解することができる

　　B　分からない語彙や表現で行き詰まり，話の概要を推測できない

６．展開を予想しながら聞く

　　A　次に何が話されるのか展開を予想しながら聞くことができる

　　B　先を予測しながら聞くことが苦手である

７．精神的コントロール

　　A　不安を軽減したり自分を励ますなどして，リラックスして前向きに取り組むことができる

　　B　緊張してしまい聞き取れないことがある

８．集中力の継続

　　A　理解できないところがあっても，推測するなどしてあきらめずに聞き続けることができる

　　B　聞き取れないところがあると，そこでつまずいて集中力がとぎれてしまう

９．自己診断

　　A　弱点を発見し自分なりのリスニング学習法を考えることができる

　　B　リスニング学習法が分からない

APPENDIX C
Listening Self-Assessment Check Sheet (English Version)
(Adapted from Uesugi, 2006)

Instruction: Choose A or B.

1. Listening to English sounds
   A．I can connect the unknown words and known words after listening English.
   B．Although I can understand the meaning when I read them, I cannot understand the meaning when I listen to them.

2. Inferring the word meaning
   A．I can infer the word's meaning from the context even when I cannot listen to.
   B．I am not good at inferring the word's meaning when I cannot listen to.

3. Understanding meanings as listening
   A．I can understand the meaning as a chunk when I listen to English
   B．I cannot process the information as I try to translate English into Japanese.

4. Understanding the key words or the gist of the passage
   A．I can understand the key words or gist while listening.
   B．I cannot catch the gist because I always miss the important information.

5. Inferring the main idea of theme
   A．I can understand the main point by inferring even when I cannot understand everything.
   B．I cannot understand the main point because I get stuck with the unknown words.

6. Predicting what will come next when I am listening to English.
   A．I can listen to English as I expect the evolution.
   B．I cannot listen to English as I expect the evolution.

7. Mental control
   A．I can relax while listening to English as I can encourage or make myself positive.
   B．I cannot listen to English because I feel nervous.

8. Concentration
   A．I can keep my concentration and try to guess the meaning even when I cannot understand everything.
   B．I cannot keep my concentration when I get stuck with unknown words.

9. Self-Assessment
   A．I can understand how to learn listening by myself.
   B．I cannot understand how to learn listening.

APPENDIX D
A Questionnaire on Awareness for Listening Activity

1. Do you like listening activities? And why?

   リスニングは好きですか？　また何故ですか？

2. Did you think it is good to know the listening strategies when you solve listening quizzes?

   リスニングの問題を解くときにリスニングストラテジーを知っていることは良いと思いましたか？

3. Which listening strategies did you use and why ?

   どのリスニングストラテジーを使いましたか，またそれは何故ですか？

   ① predicting　② inferencing　③ monitoring　④ clarifying　⑤ responding　⑥ evaluating

4. Do you want to solve listening activities more? What kinds of listening activities do you want to solve?

   もっとリスニングの課題をやってみたいと思いますか？　どんな課題ですか？

5. If you have any comments on listening activities, please write here.

   リスニングの課題に関して何か感想があれば書いてください。

Thank you so much for your cooperation.
ご協力有難うございました。