INTEGRATING A METACOGNITIVE APPROACH INTO THE TEACHING OF LISTENING IN THE FL CLASSROOM: A THREE-SESSION TEACHING PROPOSAL

Borja Manzano Vázquez

University of Granada (Spain)

Borja Manzano Vázquez is a PhD student working at the Department of English and German Philology at the University of Granada (Spain). His research interests are in the field of the teaching and learning of English as a FL: learner and teacher autonomy in modern language education, bilingual education, and FL teacher education.

Abstract: The present paper offers a three-session teaching proposal aimed at developing learners' listening skills in the FL classroom by means of a video from the well-known American sitcom Friends. The theoretical background underpinning the design of our proposal stems from Lund's (1990) taxonomy for listening instruction and Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) metacognitive approach to listening. The proposal presented is intended for students of English as a FL in their post-compulsory secondary education.

Resumen: El presente artículo ofrece una propuesta docente de tres sesiones que tiene como objetivo desarrollar las destrezas auditivas de los alumnos en el aula de lengua extranjera por medio de un video tomado de la serie Friends. El marco teórico que subyace el diseño de nuestra propuesta se basa en la taxonomía para la instrucción auditiva de Lund (1990) y el enfoque metacognitivo de Vandergrift and Goh (2012). La propuesta que aquí se presenta está dirigida a alumnos de inglés como lengua extranjera en Bachillerato.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching, listening skill, listening strategies, metacognitive approach, learning to learn.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de lengua extranjera, destreza auditiva, estrategias para la comprensión auditiva, enfoque metacognitivo, aprender a aprender.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is widely acknowledged as one of the most important language skills in foreign language (FL) learning since it enables learners to receive and interact with a large amount of language input, thus contributing significantly to the development of their FL competence. Despite its importance, listening is often overlooked in the classroom, becoming a Cinderella skill in FL teaching (Nunan, 2002); and when it is practised, this tends to be done without any kind of reflection on the listening process and any explicit focus on listening strategy use. The result is that learners hardly have the opportunity to fully develop their listening skills in the FL. The aim of the present paper is to offer a three-session teaching proposal which addresses this situation in the FL classroom. This proposal is based on various listening activities about a video taken from the American sitcom *Friends*. It further follows the taxonomy for listening instruction proposed by Lund (1990) and Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) metacognitive approach to listening. The paper begins by discussing the two theoretical backgrounds underpinning the design of our proposal. Next, it deals with the teaching proposal.

LUND'S (1990) TAXONOMY FOR TEACHING LISTENING

Theorists have proposed various approaches to the design of listening tasks. The teaching proposal in this paper is based in part on applying Lund's (1990) taxonomy to the teaching of listening in the FL classroom. One of the strengths of this taxonomy is its focus on designing listening tasks which address two key elements of the listening process: listener function (LF) and listener response (LR). LF is defined as "the aspects of the message the listener attempts to process" (p. 107). In other words, it refers to what the listener is listening for and how he/she approaches the listening task. Six different LFs are identified in Lund's taxonomy (pp. 107-109):

1. Identification: the listener focuses on aspects of the linguistic code rather than the content of the speech (e.g. recognising vocabulary, identifying word categories, discriminating between minimal pairs or intonation patterns, etc.). This function places emphasis on form rather than content.
2. Orientation: it involves identifying certain features of the listening which are external to the content of the speech. These features can include the setting, the speakers, the type of speech (e.g. debate, complaint, gossip, etc.), the emotional tone or attitude (e.g. anger, irony, etc.), and the speaker's function (e.g. persuading, etc.).
3. Main idea comprehension: it involves understanding the main idea of the speech (e.g. understanding a debate to summarise its main points).
4. Detail comprehension: the listener focuses on understanding or identifying specific information.
5. Full comprehension: this function is a combination of the two previous ones. The listener focuses on understanding the whole speech (i.e. specific information and global meaning).
6. Replication: the aim of the listener is to reproduce the speech accurately. Examples of replication are dictations, oral repetition, and transcribing.

On the other hand, LR makes reference to "what the listener does to demonstrate successful listening [and comprehension of the message]" (p. 109). Lund (pp. 110-111) identifies nine categories of response:

1. Doing: it requires a physical response rather than a spoken one; for instance, the listener responds physically to a command, imitates, or follows a direction.
2. Choosing: the listener chooses from various alternatives. Examples of choosing activities are matching and ticking off items.
3. Transferring: the listener receives the information in one form and transfers it into another one (e.g. tracing a route on a map or drawing a picture based on what is said).
4. Answering: the listener answers questions about the listening.
5. Condensing: the listener reduces the content of the listening, for example, by outlining, summarising, or taking notes about the speech.
6. Extending: the listener provides additional information to finish an incomplete message; for instance, he/she gives the ending to the story heard.
7. Duplicating: the listener reproduces the message of the listening in the same or another modality (e.g. taking a dictation, repeating it orally, or transcribing it).
8. Modelling: the listener takes the speech of the listening as a model to imitate it in a similar situation, for instance, for ordering a meal or booking a room in a hotel.
9. Conversing: the listener engages in a conversation.

In our teaching proposal, the listening activities will be designed taking into consideration both LF and LR, that is, how the listener (i.e. the learner) will process the message in the listening

task and how he/she will show successful comprehension.

VANDERGRIFT AND GOH'S (2012) METACOGNITIVE APPROACH TO LISTENING

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) advocate the need for a metacognitive approach to listening instruction. The term metacognition was originally defined by Flavell (1979: 906) as "thinking about thinking" and it refers to a person's understanding and knowledge of his/her own learning. Educational research has concluded that the development of metacognition is one of the most reliable predictors of successful learning as it helps learners better plan, monitor and assess their understanding and performance in any subject matter, including FL listening (see, for example, Graham and Macaro, 2008; Cross, 2009; Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010).

As far as their listening skills are concerned, learners are often left to figure out how to learn to listen on their own. Work on listening in the classroom is simply reduced to listening to a tape and checking the answers to the listening activities proposed. A metacognitive approach to listening, however, aims to teach learners explicitly how to improve their listening skills. To this end, this approach encompasses a series of:

> pedagogical procedures that enable learners to increase awareness of the listening process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as listeners, the nature and demands of listening, and strategies for listening. At the same time, learners also learn to plan, monitor, and evaluate their comprehension efforts and the progress of their overall listening development (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012: 97).

The objective of a metacognitive approach to listening is to develop learners who are able to cope with the challenges of listening in a FL; self-direct and monitor their own progress in listening; and use listening strategies appropriately in and beyond formal learning contexts. Based on Flavell's (1979) original dimensions of metacognitive knowledge, Vandergrift and Goh (2012: 99) argue that there are three specific areas of knowledge that learners need to develop in FL listening:

- Person knowledge: it includes knowledge about oneself as a FL listener and the factors that facilitate one's own listening development.
- Task knowledge: it refers to knowledge about the nature and the demands of learning to listen.
- Strategy knowledge: it includes knowledge about effective strategies for listening and how best to approach listening tasks.

Our teaching proposal will include the following pedagogical actions for promoting a metacognitive approach to listening: individual/collective reflection, metacognitive awareness raising, and explicit listening strategy instruction. Learners will reflect on their own listening ability in English at the end of each session and will develop metacognitive awareness regarding person, task, and strategy knowledge in FL listening. Moreover, there will be an explicit focus on listening strategies in which learners are taught the why, the how, and the when of strategy use. Having discussed the theoretical backgrounds underlying the design of our proposal, we shall proceed to present it in the next section.

TEACHING PROPOSAL

The following teaching proposal is intended for students of English as a FL in *Bachillerato* (1st and 2nd year of post-compulsory secondary education, age 16-18). To practise listening in the classroom, we will use a short video[1] taken from one episode of the sitcom *Friends*: 'The

One with Ross' Grant' (season 10, episode 6). The video deals with the part of the plot in this episode focused on Gladys, a painting of a half-bald mannequin which brings about a number of amusing situations among the characters.

Procedure for the teaching proposal

The teaching proposal will be implemented in three different sessions:

Session 0: Work on listening will begin in an introductory session. At the end of this session (last 20 minutes), the teacher will ask learners to complete the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire by Vandergrift and Goh (2012: 286-287). This is a 21-item questionnaire on a six-point, Likert-type scale (from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') covering five factors related to FL listening comprehension success: 1) problem-solving; 2) planning and evaluation; 3) mental translation; 4) person knowledge; and 5) directed attention. Some examples of the items are (p. 287):

1. Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen.
8. I feel that listening comprehension in English is a challenge for me.

This tool will be used as a warm-up for the next two listening sessions, raising learners' awareness of the listening process, of themselves as FL listeners, and of their perceived use of listening strategies. As part of the activity, the teacher will initiate a discussion by encouraging learners to share and justify their responses. The reflection promoted here will combine with the two reflective activities included in Session 1 and 2.

Session 1 and Session 2: These two different sessions will be devoted to the listening task on *Friends* in which learners will complete the different activities designed. The video for the listening practice is divided into five scenes so the teacher will deal with them one at a time, playing each scene three times (the only exception will be the fourth scene as we will see below). The first time will enable learners to become familiar with the context of the scene, the language, the topic, and the number of speakers in it. Then, the teacher will play the same scene twice so that learners can complete the activities and, after that, they will check the answers.
At the beginning of each listening activity, the teacher will also make the listening strategy (or strategies) promoted in the activity explicit to learners. He/she will help them understand its significance, effectiveness, and applicability, that is, what the listening strategy is useful for and when it is appropriate to use it. In Activity 3, for example, learners will focus on listening to guess the meaning of new vocabulary from the context of the conversation. In this case, the teacher will make them realise that this particular strategy is useful for them to cope with unknown words or expressions in listening. Thus, when confronted with incomplete knowledge about vocabulary, they can manage to work out its meaning by making guesses based on the whole context of the conversation. Making the strategies explicit before each listening activity provides the opportunity for learners to experience their value when completing the activity.

Activities for Session 1 and Session 2

In what follows, we shall present the various activities for Session 1 and Session 2 which have been designed about the video from *Friends* (see Appendix). We will discuss a) the type of activity and its implementation in the classroom; b) the main objective of each listening activity in terms of the LF, LR, and listening strategy (LS) promoted; and c) the time the teacher could devote to each activity.

[1] Two clips are used during the listening practice. The first one (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohFBCDfyzgU) is used to work on the first two scenes. The second one (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FABSINosfvs) is used for the rest of the scenes since it has no subtitles.

SESSION 1

Activity 1	
Activity and procedure	A short reading activity. Learners will read some basic information about the sitcom and the four characters that will appear in the video. In this case, one picture from each character is included so that learners can become familiar with their faces and recognise them when they speak. Moreover, the teacher will give learners some relevant details of what is going to happen in the video to facilitate their comprehension of the content: "Phoebe is moving in with her boyfriend, Mike. She's a little bit eccentric and has things in her apartment that Mike dislikes. Before moving in, Mike wants Phoebe to get rid of them. One of these things is a painting called Gladys. Let's watch the video to see what is wrong with this painting".
Objective	The activity has two main objectives: 1) to provide learners with some relevant information about the context of the video (i.e. what this is about and who the speakers are) and 2) to arouse their interest in the video so that they feel motivated to do the different listening activities which have been designed for the session.
Time	7 minutes

Activity 2 (SCENE 1)	
Activity and procedure	Answering questions and a short discussion. The second activity consists of different questions that learners will have to answer by watching the first scene of the video. In the first part of the activity, they will answer the various questions focused on analysing Monica's attitude towards Gladys. Before watching the scene, the teacher will need to make sure that learners understand the difference between being ironic, sarcastic, and sincere. After checking the answers to the questions, the teacher will encourage learners to discuss in pairs the question suggested in the second part of the activity: "If you were offered to take Gladys, what would you do?". Here a short discussion can be promoted in which learners can interact and suggest different ideas about what they would do in that situation.
Objective	LF: Orientation (Identifying the speaker's emotional tone and attitude)/ LR: Answering (Answering questions) + Conversing (Engaging in a conversation) LS: Learners work on two listening strategies: 1) interpreting the use of intonation to show a specific attitude and 2) inferring implicit meanings. They will have to analyse Monica's attitude towards the painting by focusing on the intonation she uses when she says "what a tragic loss!" or "I'd take her in a minute" so as to find out that although she claims that she would take Gladys, she is in fact being ironic since she does not want to keep it. By means of this activity, the teacher makes learners realise the significance of focusing on intonation when they want to infer the speaker's attitudes and intentions.
Time	17 minutes

Activity 3 (SCENE 2)	
Activity and procedure	Defining new vocabulary. This activity encourages learners to work on the meaning of two new idioms: 1) to pick your battles and 2) to win fair and square. Before watching the scene, the teacher will pay attention to the pronunciation of the idioms so that learners can identify them when they are pronounced in the speech; and he/she will encourage learners to predict what their possible meaning is. In this way, they can activate some background knowledge that helps them interpret what is heard.

Objective	LF: Main idea comprehension (Understanding the main idea of the speech) LS: Learners focus on listening to guess the meaning of new vocabulary from context. They will have to understand the context of the conversation in order to work out the meaning of the idioms. For example, the idiom 'to pick your battles' is mentioned by Phoebe when she makes reference to the fact that between Gladys and a box of human hair she decided to keep the latter. In this case, the aim is to make learners realise that when they do not know a word or idiom they can work out its meaning by making guesses based on the whole context of the conversation.
Time	16 minutes

Activity 4	
Activity and procedure	Reflective activity and whole-group discussion. Learners will first answer the questions included in the activity. Next, the teacher will ask them to comment on their reflections and discuss their personal experience during the English listening practice. He/she can include other questions in the discussion such as "what can you do to improve your FL listening ability in the future?".
Objective	It aims to raise learners' metacognitive awareness of their FL listening ability. By means of the guiding questions provided, they will reflect individually (and later collectively) on their own personal experience during the listening practice, looking into the person, task, and strategy knowledge acquired.
Time	20 minutes

SESSION 2

The teacher will begin the session by asking learners to summarise briefly what happened in the two scenes they dealt with in the previous session. In this way, he/she will activate their background knowledge about the topic of the video, the characters, and the context. Before beginning to do the activities, learners will watch scene 3 (6 minutes).

Activity 5 (SCENE 4)	
Activity and procedure	Activity and procedure Answering a question. Learners will focus on the fourth scene of the video in which Rachel lures Joey into believing that Gladys is haunted and tries to give it back to Monica who rejects keeping it. The activity is based on the technique of silent viewing. The teacher will play the video but without the audio so learners will have to guess what is going on by observing just what the speakers do (e.g. they will see that Rachel is telling Joey something while making various gestures with her hands and body, Joey gets scared because of the expression on his face and runs away, etc.). Before watching the scene, the teacher will discuss with learners how they can make their own guesses about what is happening in the video ("what clues can you use to guess what is going on?") and, then, he/she will draw their attention to their need for focusing on paralinguistic features (i.e. the speakers' gestures, body language, and facial expressions) to help them complete the activity. After watching the scene, the teacher will encourage learners to discuss their answers to the activity. Finally, they will watch the scene again (but this time with the audio) to check if the meaning they have attached to those features matches the real topic of the conversation.

Objective	LF: Orientation (Identifying the significance of paralinguistic features) + Main idea comprehension (Understanding the main idea of the speech)/ LR: Answering (Answering a question) LS: Although at the beginning of the activity there is no listening practice since this is done without the audio, its aim is to make learners work on the non-verbal part of communication, that is, understanding and interpreting the significance of paralinguistic features in adding meaning to what is said in the speech. In this way, learners become aware that in communication meaning is not only conveyed by means of words.
Time	13 minutes

Activity 6 (SCENE 4)	
Activity and procedure	Paraphrasing. Learners will listen to the conversation between Rachel and Joey to summarise it later using their own words. In this case, the teacher will only play the part of the scene in which these two characters talk about Gladys.
Objective	LF: Main idea comprehension (Understanding the main idea of the speech)/ LR: Condensing (Reducing the content of the listening by summarising it) LS: Because there are real-life situations in which we listen for the main idea(s) (e.g. a lecture, the news, etc.), the listening strategy promoted by this activity is identifying the gist. Learners will need to listen to key words in the speech to get a general idea of what Rachel says about the painting.
Time	11 minutes

Activity 7 (SCENE 5)	
Activity and procedure	Discussion in pairs and answering questions. Before watching the last scene, the teacher will ask learners if they can predict what is going to happen next ("What will happen next? What do you think Rachel and Monica are going to do with the paintings?"). In pairs they will discuss the questions and later the teacher will involve all learners in sharing their ideas with the rest of the class. Then, learners will watch the scene and check whether or not they were right in their predictions.
Objective	LF: Main idea comprehension (Understanding the main idea of the speech)/ LR: Answering (Answering questions) LS: Learners focus on predicting and listening to check their predictions. The aim is to make learners aware that when engaging in listening, predicting the content of the speech and the vocabulary the speaker may use can facilitate listening comprehension.
Time	12 minutes

Activity 8	
Activity and procedure	Reflective activity and whole-group discussion. The procedure is similar to the one followed in Activity 4, with the only difference that at the end of this activity learners will be asked to compare their answers to both reflective activities (i.e. Activity 4 and 8) and assess if they can appreciate any progress in their FL listening ability.
Objective	It pursues the same objective that Activity 4 in the previous session.
Time	18 minutes

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The teaching of listening is not an easy task since it is not as observable or measurable as the other language skills. For this reason, there is the pressing need to make listening more explicit to learners by bringing their metacognitive knowledge of their own FL listening ability to a conscious level. This paper has presented one particular example of how individual/collective reflection, metacognitive awareness, and explicit strategy instruction can be integrated into the teaching of listening in the FL classroom, thus suggesting new paths for language teachers to explore in their classroom practice.

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APPENDIX: LISTENING ACTIVITIES: 'THE ONE WITH GLADYS'

SESSION 1

1. The clip we are going to watch belongs to Friends, a well-known American sitcom (1994-2004). Read some information about this sitcom and some of the characters as this may be helpful for you when watching the clip.

Friends is an American sitcom that deals with the lives of a group of friends in the borough of Manhattan, New York: Ross, Phoebe, Rachel, Joey, Monica, and Chandler. The characters that will appear in the video are:

Phoebe: An eccentric masseuse and musician who tends to live in her own world. She is dating Mike. Phoebe has long blonde hair.

Monica: A chef, known for her competitive nature and obsession with cleaning and organizing. She is dark-haired and thin. Monica is Chandler's girlfriend.

Rachel: A fashion enthusiast and Monica's best friend. She used to live with Monica but has just moved in with Joey. Rachel has brown hair with streaks.

Joey: A struggling actor and food lover who is Monica's neighbour and Rachel's flatmate. Sometimes, he behaves like a child. He has short spiky hair.

SCENE 1

2. Monica enters Phoebe's apartment and they talk about a painting (Gladys). What is Monica's attitude towards the painting? What do you think she means when she says "what a tragic loss!" or "I'd take her in a minute!"? Is she being sincere, ironic, or sarcastic? Justify your answer. If you were offered to take Gladys, what would you do?

SCENE 2

3. What does it mean? Explain the meaning of these two idioms using the context of the scene: a) "you got *to pick your battles*" (Phoebe) and b) "you *won fair and square*" (Rachel).
4. Answer these questions about your own personal experience in the listening practice:

1. How do you define your listening ability in English after this listening practice? And why?
2. What has made the listening task easy or difficult for you? And why?
3. What have you learned about learning to listen from this listening practice?
4. Do you think you can better approach a listening task now? Why?

SESSION 2

SCENE 4

5. Can you guess what is going on in this scene?
6. Once you have listened to Rachel and Joey's conversation, describe what Rachel tells Joey about the painting using your own words.

SCENE 5

7. What will happen next? What do you think Rachel and Monica are going to do with the paintings? Write down your predictions. What has actually happened?
8. Answer the questions in Activity 4 again according to your personal experience in today's listening practice.