EFFECTS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION, ORAL PROFICIENCY, AND METACOGNITION ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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EFFECTS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION, ORAL PROFICIENCY, AND METACOGNITION ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Ana C. Zobler

B.A., Universidad de Chile, 1976
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A Dissertation
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EFFECTS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION, ORAL PROFICIENCY, AND METACOGNITION ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Ana C. Zobler

Western Connecticut State University

ABSTRACT

Second language programs in the 21st century need to provide students with the linguistic and cultural skills they need to communicate proficiently in a global community. Therefore, curriculum and instruction must focus on developing all four skills needed for language acquisition: listening, reading, speaking and writing. However, the skill of listening has often been overlooked in the second language classroom; teachers have assumed that language learners know how to listen effectively and little attention has been paid to teaching the skill. A strategy-based approach could give second language instructors the tools necessary to provide learners with the knowledge, support and practice they need to enhance their language gains.

Based on this premise, this study examined the potential benefits of explicit instruction on listening strategies in the Spanish classroom, using authentic materials for a period of 8-weeks. It measured students’ comprehension of aural input, oral proficiency, and metacognition. The explicit instruction of listening skills involved five steps: (a) training Spanish teachers on listening strategies, (b) selecting authentic materials, (c) assessing students’ listening comprehension, oral proficiency level, and metacognitive listening strategies use, (d) implementing strategy instruction, and (e) post-evaluation of student listening comprehension,
oral proficiency, and metacognitive strategy use. Using a sample of convenience in which \( n = 97 \) students, at two different school sites and belonging to two different District Reference Groups (DRGs), this study assessed the impact of listening strategies in six classes among heterogeneously grouped students in freshman levels II and III Spanish classes.

This study had a Quasi-Experimental Control-Group Pretest-Posttest Design and used the following instruments to determine the impact of listening strategies instruction: the Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessment (MLPA)'s *Contextualized Listening Assessment* (CoLA) to assess listening comprehension, the *Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview* (SOPI) in Spanish to measure oral proficiency, and the *Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire* (MALQ) to determine the use of metacognitive strategies.

Findings from one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) using the listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness pretests as covariates, showed statistically significant differences between the experimental and the comparison groups on the oral proficiency variable. Thus, students who were exposed to the explicit instruction of listening strategies were impacted by the program. Finally, this study provides teachers with guidelines and materials on how to implement a strategy-based program in a second language classroom.

**RESUMEN**

Los programas de segundo idioma en el siglo XXI deben proveer a los estudiantes las habilidades lingüísticas y culturales que necesitan para comunicarse con destreza en la comunidad global. Por lo tanto, el plan de estudios y la enseñanza deben enfocarse en el desarrollo de las cuatro habilidades que se necesitan para adquirir un idioma: leer, escuchar, escribir, y hablar. Sin embargo, la habilidad de escuchar ha escapado la atención de los
maestros; éstos han creído que los estudiantes de lenguas ya saben escuchar con eficacia y por lo tanto han puesto poca atención a enseñar cómo escuchar. Un enfoque pedagógico basado en la enseñanza de estrategias puede dar a los maestros las herramientas necesarias para dar a los estudiantes el conocimiento, el apoyo y la práctica que necesitan para mejorar su adquisición lingüística.

Basándose en esta premisa, este estudio examinó los beneficios potenciales de la enseñanza explícita de estrategias para escuchar in la clase de español, usando materiales auténticos, por un período de 8 semanas. Midió el nivel de comprensión oral, la habilidad de expresión oral y la meta cognición. La enseñanza explícita de las estrategias para escuchar consistió en cinco etapas: (a) el entrenamiento de los maestros en estrategias para escuchar; (b) la selección de materiales auténticos; (c) la evaluación de la comprensión oral, la habilidad de expresión oral y el uso de estrategias meta cognitivas para escuchar; (d) la implementación de la enseñanza de estrategias; y (e) la post evaluación después del tratamiento de la comprensión oral, la habilidad de expresión oral y el uso de estrategias meta cognitivas para escuchar. Usando una muestra de conveniencia de $n = 97$ estudiantes de dos escuelas secundarias diferentes, y que pertenecen a dos Grupos de Referencia por Distrito (DRGs), este estudio evaluó el impacto de estrategias para escuchar en seis clases agrupadas heterogéneamente, y que pertenecían al primer año de enseñanza de español al nivel de escuela secundaria, designadas como niveles II y III de la lengua.

Este estudio tuvo un diseño cuasi-experimental de grupo comparación, usando pre-test and post-test y usó los siguientes instrumentos para medir el impacto de la instrucción de estrategias para escuchar: el *Contextualized Listening Assessment* (CoLA) que es parte del Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessment (MLPA) para medir la comprensión oral, la
Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) en español para medir la destreza de expresión oral, y el Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) para determinar el impacto en el uso de estrategias meta cognitivas.

Los resultados del análisis de la varianza (ANOVA) y del análisis de covarianza (ANCOVA), usando los resultados del pre-test de comprensión oral y de metacognición como covarianzas, mostraron diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre los grupos experimental y de comparación en la variable expresión oral. Por esto, se puede decir que aquellos estudiantes que recibieron instrucción explícita de estrategias para escuchar fueron impactados por dicho programa. Finalmente, este estudio ofrece a los maestros pautas y materiales auténticos para implementar un programa de estrategias para escuchar en la enseñanza de una segunda lengua.
EFFECTS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION, ORAL PROFICIENCY, AND METACOGNITION ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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And finally, my gratitude to my readers, Dr. Alba Skar who so kindly agreed to be a reader of this dissertation and whose comments were greatly appreciated and to Dr. Michael R. Sinatra for his continuing positive support throughout the preparation of this document.
DEDICATION

Esta disertación está dedicada a mi mamá, Raquel Ríos Olivares, de quien he aprendido que la profesión docente exige amor por el trabajo, dedicación a los alumnos y conocimiento de la materia. Y quien también me ha enseñado que el educar es un privilegio que exige un constante mejoramiento del maestro. Sus palabras "te va a ir estupendo" me han acompañado a menudo en este viaje de aprendizaje y crecimiento profesional.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my darling husband, best friend, and number one cheerleader, Neil Zobler. His love, encouragement, unconditional support, cheerfulness gave me the strength and confidence often needed to see this project through.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Preparing students for the challenges they will face in the 21st century has become a topic of urgent attention. In order to meet this need, school districts and federal and state governments are beginning to drop the “elective” tag that has characterized world language courses. Learning a second language is no longer an option, but rather a necessity, if educators assume the responsibility of preparing today’s students to become tomorrow’s leaders, able to communicate with a business partner or negotiate a contract in a global economy. A recent plan presented by the Connecticut Ad Hoc Committee for Secondary School Redesign strongly recommended to the State Board of Education that districts begin formal world language study as early as possible in grades K-5 and that formal instruction begin no later than 6th grade (CSED, 2008).

World language teachers are asked to do more to promote the use of the second language for meaningful and purposeful interactions to enhance student proficiency in a second language (Met, 1995). Students must be made aware of the skills they need in order to make gains in language learning, while teachers need to provide them with the strategies to develop those skills. New learning calls for a new pedagogical approach as well as revisions of current instructional practices, which in turn can benefit from educational research. Studies that explore and test constructs and theories that are accessible to practitioners can have tangible applications in the classroom and support world language teachers in becoming better 21st-century educators. In turn, teachers will be better equipped in preparing students to find, analyze, interpret, and communicate information in multiple forms and assist them in solving problems creatively.

Rationale

The study of world languages in the United States has gained much impetus in the last several decades. According to the Modern Language Association (2004), more university
students were studying world languages in 2002 than ever before, totaling about 1.4 million student learners in the 15 leading languages. Just over half were taking Spanish, which saw a 13.7 percent increase since 1998. This increase has been coupled with higher expectations for student learning and levels of proficiency. As such, The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in the introduction to the National Standards, suggested that American students will have the need “to communicate competently in at least one language other than English” (ACTFL, 2005, p. 39) considering the demands of the global, interdependent world of the 21st century.

As a result, during the last few decades, there has been a shift in the approaches to second language teaching. Practitioners in the field have been challenged to move from the discrete teaching of rules, patterns, and vocabulary to focus on “teaching our students to communicate genuinely, spontaneously, and meaningfully in the second language” (Brown, 2007, p.18). This paradigm shift, termed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), advocates the teaching of more authentic uses of the second language which need to be grounded on communicative, task-based, and learner-strategy approaches (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Therefore, language teachers must provide students with the knowledge, strategies, and practice opportunities to use the second language (L2) to communicate in a wide range of relevant real life activities. Furthermore, Chamot, Barrueta, Barnhardt, & Küpper (1990) confirm, “language is learned best when used to understand ideas and functions that are meaningful to students” (p. 11).

To help learners attain communicative competence in a second language, the teacher aims at integrating the four key language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) and fostering knowledge of the culture of the countries where the target language is spoken. Each
one of the skills needs to be given separate attention and opportunities for practice in order to develop (Rubin, 1995).

However, of the four skills needed to meet communicative competence, the one that has received the least attention has been the skill of listening in terms of both the amount of research that has been done on the topic and the neglect it has suffered in most world language programs (Call, 1985; Dunkel, 1991; Mendelsohn, 1995; Morley, 1983). Nonetheless, the importance of the receptive skill of listening in the communicative continuum of listening and speaking is paramount. According to the Natural Approach proposed by Krashen & Terrel (1983), in language learning there has to be comprehension before language production can take place. They stated that “the starting point in language instruction is to help acquirers understand what is being said to them” (p. 20).

Many schools have begun offering second language instruction at the elementary level, thus increasing the number of years students have contact with the language. The expectation is that students will become increasingly proficient in the language studied. Hence, the topics to be researched will be the value of instruction in listening strategies; its use and practice; and its effect on listening comprehension and oral proficiency in Spanish. L2 students may enhance their learning by becoming more knowledgeable and aware of specific listening strategies after being taught how to listen more effectively which could lead to improved listening and speaking competence.

**Statement of the Problem**

The skill of listening plays a significant role in language learning and communication. According to Rubin (1994), “listening, quite possibly, is the most important of language skills since people spend approximately 60% of their time listening” (p. 85). Listening is the
foundation of formal education as well as language acquisition. Children complete the process of the first language acquisition “within our first five years, depending almost exclusively on listening” (Feyten, 1991, p.173).

While students might be well equipped to handle listening tasks in their first language (L1), the acquisition of L2 places greater demands on the learner. Compared to reading comprehension, listening is considered more difficult for the L2 learners. The listener is faced with several variables out of his or her control such as the rate of speech of the speaker, the accent of the speaker, and the cultural context (Chang & Read, 2007). “Listening has emerged as an important component in the process of second language acquisition” (Vandergrift, 2003, p.426). Yet listening is the skill in which students have the least amount of instruction (Janusik, 2003).

There is little evidence that many teachers instruct students in listening strategies in order to help them master listening in the second language classroom. One reason for this lapse is the fact that teachers feel unprepared to teach such skills (Mendelsohn, 1995). Textbook publishing companies have not provided enough support in teaching listening strategies; nor have they changed their stance in regard to listening activities, which remain “traditional in approach, content and organization” (Vandergrift, 2003, p. 426). In other words, these activities typically require students to respond to multiple choice or true or false questions after a listening task rather than defining the activity instructional goal and type of response expected from the student. Even though they expose learners to the spoken language, they do little to improve learners’ listening comprehension. Listening has not been viewed as a skill, “but as an activity to be used in the foreign language instruction” (Feyten, 1990, p. 175). Mendelsohn (1995) identifies three reasons why the teaching of listening in second language programs “remains
somewhat neglected and poorly taught” (p. 132): (a) the lack of suitable materials, which lack authenticity and relevancy, (b) the common belief among teachers that students will pick up the skill of listening by the mere exposure to the input, and (c) teachers have not felt confident on how to teach the skill of listening. Learners in today’s classrooms are commonly exposed to traditional tests based on reading passages, and they are expected to demonstrate their listening competence in multiple choice tests, writing summaries, or using words from the listening segment to complete phrases or paragraphs (Gogh, 2008). Commonly, students are assessed on listening comprehension without the required instruction and support needed to become successful at the task of processing authentic aural input.

These current practices contradict the more authentic listening tasks, which require the listener to become an active participant in decoding verbal and non-verbal aspects of the language in order to focus on the meaning of the message used for communicative purposes (Feyten, 1991). Furthermore, there is no evidence that students are making significant gains in L2 competence using these traditional methods. Results from the Spanish Advanced Placement Exam from 1997 through 2001 show an increased number of test takers while the scores remain fairly constant (College Board, 2001). Until the new format was introduced in 2007, these standardized tests were based on reading passages or fictional dialogues, and listening comprehension was assessed with multiple choice questions. Traditionally, students were assessed on listening comprehension without the required instruction and support needed to become successful at the task of processing authentic aural input. Therefore, there appears to be a void between what is in practice and what remains to be done in developing an instructional methodology more in tune with the CLT theory. One approach to this task is teaching second language listening by addressing the needs and developing the skills of the L2 learner. This
requires an explicit strategy-based approach that aims at providing more metacognitive knowledge by raising learners’ consciousness of listening processes (Vandergrift, 2003).

As such, while the use of the communicative model of instruction has been in place for a couple of decades, which emphasizes the need to teach listening for effective oral communication, these standardized tests have not met the assessment criteria that this teaching model demands.

**Potential Benefits**

The potential results of this research will help determine if instruction in listening strategies using authentic sources can provide an enhanced approach to second language instructional practices. This study aims to explore if the explicit instruction of listening strategies helps L2 students become more efficient learners. Consequently, it will determine if L2 students are better able to access and retrieve information from authentic aural sources through a process of selection and use of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies. Chamot et al., (1990) conducted studies among high school and college students of Russian, French, and Spanish, and the researchers concluded that “effective language learners have a range of learning strategies which they use often and which they tailor to the demands of the task” (p. 10).

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions apply to this study:

1. *Listening* is defined as an active process in which listeners choose and interpret information which comes from aural, or aural and visual clues in order to define what is occurring in the process and what the speaker’s message is trying to convey (Rubin, 1995).
This complex cognitive and behavioral process requires a dynamic engagement of the listener.

2. *Listening comprehension* is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirements (O’Malley, Chamot & Küpper, 1989). This process includes three components: (a) perceptual processing or paying attention to the aural input, (b) parsing or encoding the information to develop a meaningful representation that is stored in short-term memory, and (c) utilizing or accessing prior knowledge to improve comprehension or to place the new information into long-term memory.

3. *Learning strategies* are the thoughts and behaviors that learners utilize to assist them in the learning process. Within the context of second language acquisition, O’Malley et al., (1989) define learning strategies as "conscious processes that are activated in order to understand new information that is ambiguous or to learn or retain new information” (p. 422). Furthermore, strategic modes of processing can be trained. Based on prior research they conducted, learning strategies are classified into three categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. The present study did not include social/affective strategies for reasons that are less often reported by L2 learners (OMalley et al., 1989), and their applicability relates to face to face interactions, which were not part of the observations and were out of the scope of this study.

4. *Metacognitive strategies* are defined as decision-making processes related to the directed management of learning that include strategies used to plan for a task, monitor a task in
progress, and evaluate the success of a task in order to facilitate comprehension or production. These strategies are generally considered applicable across a variety of tasks (O’Malley et al., 1989). When learners use metacognitive strategies, they are mentally active and in control of their learning.

5. **Cognitive strategies** are those used during the process of listening in order to facilitate comprehension or production. They are more customized to specific learning activities and require listeners to directly analyze and synthesize information in order to process it (Mendelsohn, 1995). They include rehearsal, organization or grouping information, and elaboration.

6. **Authentic material** is defined as realistic texts for communicative purposes. In relation to teaching listening, it is the exposure to natural, native-like speech and is promoted for both cognitive purposes (to connect form to meaning) and affective purposes (to increase motivation and to connect with the cultural aspect of the target language) (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990). An expanded definition, proposed by Rogers & Medley (1988), refers to “a naturalness of form and appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers” (p. 468). In the proficiency-oriented classroom these sources will be made readily available to the learners. Their use is promoted for cognitive and affective reasons, where form and meaning are grounded to overcome cultural barriers that may impede language learning (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990). Exposure to authentic input has a positive perceived effect on comprehension and satisfaction and a negative perceived effect on frustration (Bacon & Finneman, 1990). Therefore, any aural source that has originated in the second language and is presented to the learner without any modification is considered authentic.
For example, radio and television programs, public address announcements, telephone customer service recordings, etc. are authentic materials. Listening material in a textbook cannot be considered authentic since it “is written language that has been recorded in unnaturally enunciated ‘teacherese’ language” (Mendelsohn, 1995, p. 133). Listening proficiency can only be attained by listening frequently to realistic texts for communicative purposes (Shang, 2008).

7. Second language oral proficiency refers to the ability to communicate functionally and accurately in the target language. A high degree of oral proficiency implies having the ability to apply linguistic knowledge to new situations encountered by the learner (Omaggio, 1986). An oral proficiency test “measures a candidate’s performance against what a native speaker might reasonably be expected to do in a given communicative situation” (Higgs, 2001, p. 284). Oral proficiency is commonly measured by the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines - Speaking (1999). Trained professionals in ACTFL oral proficiency testing, commonly known as the Oral Proficiency Interview, or OPI, use these guidelines as a metric to measure learners’ functional competency. It was conceived to be used primarily at the college and university levels. However, there are currently few standardized tests that determine L2 proficiency level at the secondary level. Most studies use teacher judgment, course level, or performance on a non-standardized test as a gauge of oral proficiency in the secondary classroom (Rubin, 2006).

8. Explicit strategy instruction refers to defining the strategy for students, explaining in detail how it would assist them in comprehending aural information, and having the
teacher model the strategy by “doing a think-aloud while listening to an oral text” (Carrier, 2003, p. 387).

**Related Literature**

The concept of input is perhaps the most important component in L2 acquisition as asserted by Gass (1997). It is also at the core of this research study. In order to understand the L2 acquisition process, the roles of the learner and the instructor, as well as examining opportunities for enhancing the learning process, need to be addressed. Hence, this research study was grounded in four overarching constructs: (a) cognitive theory as it relates to learning strategies, (b) communicative method for language teaching and learning, (c) theory of instruction as it relates to strategy instruction, and (d) input hypothesis as it relates to language acquisition.

*Cognitive Theory as it relates to learning strategies.

In the last few decades, the research of second language learning and teaching has focused on the learner. Among the many characteristics studied, those concerning how the learner approaches the task of learning have gained growing interest (Brown, 2007, Macaro, 2001; Rubin, 1987). The study of cognition gained impetus with the advent of computer use after World War II, which ultimately gave American psychologists a metaphor for the conceptualization of cognition. In other words, it provided a concrete way of thinking about learning and set forth a consistent framework for interpreting memory, perception, and learning (Driscoll, 2000). In this context, the learner is considered a processor of information. Even further, a cognitive approach to foreign language learning “is predicated upon the assumption that language learners should be mentally active, purposeful, strategic, and conscious of their own learning process” (Chamot et al., 1990, p. 13).
Cognitive psychologists who adhere to the cognitive processing information (CPI) theory have explained the acquisition of new knowledge by trying to understand “how people acquire new information, how they store new information and recall it from memory, and how what they already know guides and determines what and how they will learn” (Snowman, 2000, p. 251). Information processing suggests different instructional implications, among them developing metacognitive skills in learners. These skills are based on individual differences, type of task, and selection of strategy, and that these processes assist learners in realizing when and why such behavior will be useful, thus making them better equipped to perform as independent, self-regulated learners (Driscoll, 2000).

The field of second language acquisition distinguishes between two types of strategies: learning and communication strategies. This research study focused on learning strategies since they “relate to input – to processing, storage, and retrieval, that is, to taking in messages from others” (Brown, 2007, p. 132). In other words, they typically involve receptive skills.

Learning strategies, within the scope of this study, are procedures undertaken by the learner in order to make their own language learning as effective as possible by focusing on selected features of the new information and examining and monitoring the information as it is processed and stored (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). The output of such processes translates into learned capability. Therefore, learning can be summarized as a type of cognitive processing.

**The Communicative Method for language teaching and learning.**

This approach to language teaching is a “unified but broadly based theoretical position about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching” (Brown, 2007, p. 241). This method originated in the 1960s from the condemnation of the audio-lingual method that equated humans with apes by having them perform “memorized language tricks” (Macaro, 2001, p. 2).
This approach has the following characteristics: (a) attention is given to all components of the communicative competence, (b) the learner is immersed in practical, meaningful and authentic tasks, (c) communication supersedes fluency and accuracy, and (d) emphasis is placed on language production (Brown, 2007).

**Theory of Instruction as it relates to strategy instruction.**

Robert M. Gagné (1977) proposed the Theory of Instruction. His conceptualization of learning focuses primarily on determining what knowledge and skills are required of an individual to effectively perform a specific task. He identified five outcomes of learning or learned capabilities: (a) intellectual skills, (b) cognitive strategies, (c) verbal information, (d) motor skills, and (e) attitudes; each one of them leading to a different type of human performance. These capabilities, and the processes that trigger them into action, are constantly in use since humans are engaged in learning during much of their waking hours. However, a specific learning outcome requires a specific sequence of events. As Gagné states, “when one is concerned with instruction, one deals with the deliberate arrangement of events in the learner’s environment for the purpose of making learning happen, but also to make it effective” (p. 244).

In this framework, Gagné views learning as a set of internal processes that leads the individual to transform external stimuli into information that is ultimately stored in long-term memory for later retrieval. These internal processes of the learner are externally supported by the nine events of instruction where the teacher follows a prescribed set of steps to ensure that learning is achieved.

This planned instructional sequence, leading to learning, supports the need to make instruction of listening strategies explicit and deliberate (Mendelsohn, 1995). It provides the instructor with a set of pre-established techniques aimed at facilitating the explicit instruction of
strategies that are at the core of the treatment of this research study. According to Driscoll (2000), Gagne’s model of teaching that aims at cognitive strategies as a learning outcome needs to meet critical external conditions to be effective. Hence, the instructor should (a) describe or demonstrate the strategy, (b) provide a variety of occasions for practice using the strategy, and (c) provide informative feedback as to creativity or originality of the strategy outcome (p. 358).

**The Input Hypothesis as it Relates to Language Acquisition**

The input hypothesis, as it relates to language acquisition, was formulated by Krashen (1985). He hypothesized that there is a natural order of language acquisition and that the way the second language learner acquires language rules is predictable or “natural”. In understanding the Natural Approach, an essential concept is that in language acquisition “comprehension precedes production” (p. 20). The acquisition process is made possible through understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input. These features define the essence of the input hypothesis under the condition that this type of language input (i.e., oral or reading text) has to be slightly ahead of the current competency level of the learner (Krashen, 1983). Within this framework, the language that learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current state so that “they can understand most of it but still be challenged to make progress” (Brown, 295).

Krashen recommended not to teach language structures directly or very early in the classroom, since language production would “emerge” on its own as a result of building competence with comprehensible input. Therefore, the role of the teacher was to ensure that students receive spoken language that was understandable to the learner.

In conclusion, this review of the literature provides the theoretical foundation for understanding L2 learning and the syncretism that needs to occur to make learning effective. The cognitive theory supports the active role of the learner and the relevance of strategies in the
management and retention of new information. The communicative model provides the understanding of the objectives of the L2 curriculum in terms of language proficiency. Krashen underscores the importance of input or aural text before production of the language could begin, and Gagné highlights a systematic model of instruction. Therefore, in examining the effects of explicit listening instruction, these theories provide the constructs for understanding the role of the learner, the content and delivery of the instruction, and the job of the instructor in facilitating learning.

**Methodology**

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were examined in this study:

1. Is there a significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

2. Is there a significant difference in oral proficiency scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

3. Is there a significant difference in the use of metacognitive awareness between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

**Participants**

Participants in the study were a sample of convenience of 97 students, ages 14 to 17, from two high schools in Connecticut. They were ninth to twelfth grade Spanish students enrolled in the first year of the language at the secondary level. This sample was heterogeneous in terms of ability level, gender make up, and ethnicity. The intact classes were selected based
on the availability of teachers and their comparable years of experience and language proficiency levels. The two participating teachers agreed to follow the researcher’s guidelines and to adhere to the treatment implementation for a period of eight weeks, from March to June 2009.

**Instrumentation**

This research study used the following instruments:

**The Contextualized Listening Assessment (CoLA).** The CoLA is part of the Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA), which is a battery of instruments developed for certifying the language proficiency of secondary and post-secondary students (Center for Advanced Research on Language, 2008). The CoLA is a timed assessment in which test takers listen to 35 mini dialogues and respond to multiple-choice questions. The characters contextualize the story by engaging in a variety of real-life interactions which are appropriate for assessing proficiency at the Low and Intermediate-High levels, in accordance with the ACTFL’s Proficiency Guidelines. Test-takers are evaluated based on the number of correct answers among 35 items. This quantitative assessment was reported to have been extensively field tested and the reliability coefficient for the listening test was reported to be .86 to .87. This test was accessed online on a secure server and its administration took approximately 50 minutes.

**The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI).** The SOPI is a tape-mediated test of speaking proficiency developed by the Center of Applied Linguistics (2008). It collects a cross section of speech samples which are rated on the ACTFL scale ranging from Intermediate-Low to Superior. Its format consists of seven sections and test-takers accomplish different language tasks such as asking questions, describing events, responding to prompt and developing topics. Validation of the SOPI has been established in several studies that have, by comparing scores given by SOPI and OPI raters, demonstrated adequate validity and reliability coefficients.
shorter version of the SOPI was administered in this study which required the completion of five tasks. Administration time for the test was 30 minutes. Two certified raters evaluated the pre- and post-audio samples and assigned a numeric value to the attained proficiency levels.

**The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ).** The MALQ is a 21-item instrument created by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari (2006). It was designed to assess second language metacognitive awareness and perceived use of strategies in L2 listeners who listened to oral texts. According to the authors, researchers can use this instrument as a pretest or posttest to chart the impact of listening strategy instruction and to assess learners’ growing awareness on the processes underlying successful L2 listening. Validity of this instrument was established with a sample of 115 English and 226 French learners and its internal reliability was reported to be between .68 and .79. This researcher secured permission from the author to use the instrument. The completion of this instrument takes approximately 10 minutes.

**Procedures**

The researcher followed these steps in the two school sites prior to the implementation of the study: a) met with administrators in order to explain the purpose of the study and secure their permission to conduct the research at their schools, b) introduced the research study to the faculty of both schools World Language departments and identified cooperating teachers, c) trained the cooperating teachers on the strategies teaching process and modeled instruction, d) introduced the study to participating classes and distributed consent and assent forms, and e) coordinated the initiation of the treatment.
Treatment

The treatment consisted of instructing students on the content and applicability of 16 cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies. The cooperating teachers were trained on how to introduce the strategies to students and were given a manual with details of their use (Appendix A). In order for students to apply the new knowledge, they could access a web site created by this researcher: http://listeningstrategies.com (Appendix B). Each listening strategy was matched with two websites that offered a variety of authentic audio samples. Teachers explicitly taught two strategies per week for a period of eight weeks. The treatment was embedded in the curriculum implemented at that level.

Research Design and Analysis

This quantitative research design met the criteria of a Quasi-Experimental Control-Group Pretest-Posttest Design (Isaac & Michael, 1995). The dependent variables in the study were the assessment of listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive strategies of Spanish students enrolled in the first year of language study in two secondary schools. The independent variable was the explicit instruction of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies using authentic sources during a period of eight weeks. Differences of the treatment and comparison groups were analyzed with descriptive statistics and univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and univariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness pretest scores were used as covariates to determine whether the two groups were initially equivalent. In addition, because two raters were used to assess the SOPI, the researcher conducted a Pearson’s product-moment correlation to obtain an index of interrater reliability, which was found to be Kappa = .49 (p. = 0.001), demonstrating a statistically significant and moderate agreement. The above mentioned analyses were conducted using the

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several threats to external and internal validity in this research study. The extent to which the generalizability of the findings is possible, the likely impact of extraneous variables on the treatment, and the strategies employed by the researcher to compensate for these threats, are discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation to the research questions investigated in this study:

1. Is there a significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?
2. Is there a significant difference in oral proficiency scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?
3. Is there a significant difference in the use of metacognitive strategies between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

The Theory of Cognition provides the framework for understanding the learning process and the construct of Second Language (L2) acquisition (Omaggio, 1993). Of the four skills involved in language learning, listening, reading, speaking, and writing, the importance of the skill of listening gained some impetus in the 1970s with the Communicative Language Teaching trend. This methodology emphasizes “the need to teach listening for effective oral communication” (Goh, 2008, p. 188). In other words, instruction in the L2 should aim at constructing meaning and facilitating communicative proficiency. Thus, this approach gave a new dimension to the importance of receptive skills in communication.

However, in second language acquisition research, receptive skills and strategies in listening in particular have been given little attention. Furthermore, as Vandergrift (1997) states, “reception strategies are the Cinderella of communication strategies” (p. 494), emphasizing the lack of consideration or postponement these strategies have received. Therefore, underscoring
their relevance by incorporating and understanding strategies-based instruction in the L2 classroom appears to be of much value in facilitating acquisition. The Information Processing model explained by Gagné and the systematic instructional steps he offers also contribute to facilitating L2 learning because they recognize cognitive strategies as a type of learning outcome that has to be met with specific instructional practices. Additionally, there is a strong connection between language acquisition and language fluency. Horwitz (1986) claimed that acquisition is “the primary or more important process” (p. 685) in developing language proficiency. If the aim of L2 classrooms is to prepare students for real-world interactions with native speakers and therefore engage learners in a variety of authentic, personally meaningful, and spontaneous language tasks (Horwitz, 2000, p. 258), L2 instruction needs to find new ways to make this goal possible.

Finally, there have been few research studies at the secondary level that have investigated the impact of listening strategies instruction and oral proficiency, and fewer that have measured the achievement of proficiency. This chapter explores some of their limited findings.

This study was based on the empirical need to investigate the effects of strategies for language learning that link the receptive skill of listening with the productive skill of speaking. Thus, the inquiry of this study focused on the effect of deliberate and explicit instruction of listening strategies as a vehicle that effectively and efficiently connects input and output in L2 acquisition. As a result, this study intended to contribute to the body of research as well as to guide future pedagogical practices that could help L2 learners to communicate in foreign languages.
Need to Improve L2 Proficiency

The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. *Statement of Philosophy, Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 2006)

Over the last several decades there have been many public statements that supported the study of foreign languages. In 1983, the document *A Nation at Risk* endorsed the study of two years of instruction in foreign language as a graduation requirement (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1994). *Goals 2000*, Section 102, under the heading Student Achievement and Citizenship stated: “By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography …” (1994).

Most recently, the report, *Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of the U. S. Higher Education*, prepared by the Commission appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling, recommended the need to produce “a globally literate citizenry” (United States Department of Education, 2006). And in so doing, it encouraged that greater emphasis be given to international education, including foreign language and study abroad programs, in order to “dramatically increase the number of Americans learning critically needed foreign languages from K-16” (2006).

Pioneering at the state level, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education (2008) developed the Academic Standards and Assessments for World Languages. They address the ability of
students to communicate in a language other than English, including the ability to understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics and to develop knowledge and understanding of other cultures. According to the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSL, 2009), there are currently 19 states with new or proposed state legislation affecting world language study or international education. In the State of Connecticut, where this study was conducted, schools are required to offer world language instruction, but world language study is not a graduation requirement.

These efforts intended to expose students to a second language while creating opportunities for developing language skills. Today’s world language classroom aims at developing the ability of the L2 learner to communicate in a meaningful and appropriate way with users of other languages. Researchers in this field note that “the nation especially needs more professionals with greater levels of proficiency in more languages other than English” (Robinson, Rivers & Brecht, 2006, p. 457).

Conversely, recent world events have triggered several Congressional initiatives that underscore the importance of foreign languages to the security and economic advantage of the United States. The National Security Language Initiative (Committee for Economic Development, 2006) aims to help Americans develop advanced proficiency in critical languages by starting languages in elementary school. Furthermore, the need for proficiency has been re-defined in clear terms as “the need for skilled speakers of hundreds of languages, both commonly and rarely taught, to facilitate trade, diplomacy, and collective security” (Robinson et al., 2006, p.457). Most recently, a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives under the title Foreign Language Education Partnership Program with the purpose of providing incentives for maintaining and developing language programs from kindergarten to grade 12 aiming at
graduating students with an advance level of proficiency in at least one foreign language (United States House of Representatives, 2009).

The expectation that proficiency must be the goal of a second language program has been part of the evolution toward what constitutes learning a L2. Therefore, attention must be paid to the processes that are triggered in the learners’ minds when they encounter information in L2 and to the way teachers can facilitate learning by addressing and supporting those processes.

Theoretical Constructs

Cognitive Learning

Second language theories have evolved over time, borrowing insights from a diversity of disciplines including linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and educational psychology, with a primary focus on the study of first language (L1) acquisition. At one end, Empiricism claims that language learning is the result of the learner’s experiences; therefore, language learning is understood only through observable behaviors (Omaggio, 1993). Behaviorist theory evolved from this framework and offered views on how human learning as a response to stimuli and that behavior happens in connective actions by conditioning and reinforcement (Omaggio, 1993).

At the opposite end of the continuum, Rationalism holds the position that humans possess an innate capacity for the development of language learning and that we are “genetically programmed to develop our linguistic systems” (p. 44). In this context, the Cognitive Theory emerged, explaining language acquisition as an interaction of external and internal factors with a skewed emphasis on the latter. Learning is believed to result from internal mental activity that emphasizes the importance of the learner who acts, constructs, and plans rather than simply receives stimuli from the environment. From this stance, the Cognitive Theory approaches L2
learning as a complex cognitive skill. Omaggio (1993) summarized the theoretical underpinnings of language learning as follows: (a) learning results from internal mental activity, (b) sub-skills involved in the task of learning must be practiced until they become automatized and made part of an evolving rule system, (c) learning is subjected to a specific process that requires attention to the task and the different strategies employed by the learner in order to enhance learning, and (d) meaningful learning is emphasized using meaningful material.

Opposing the Behaviorist approach, the cognitive framework favors the learning component of the language acquisition process and the individual learner's ability in dealing with the linguistic information from the L2.

In the last few decades, based on these new paradigms, L2 teachers moved away from other methodologies, such as the grammar-translation approach, the direct method, and the audio-lingual practice, and moved towards a new way of approaching language acquisition and language learning. This conceptualization became known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This approach to L2 competence underscores “notional-functional concepts and communicative competence, rather than grammatical structures” (Omaggio, 1993, p.104). It takes into consideration two common elements: it focuses on the development of communicative abilities in students rather than on teaching about the language and puts forward a view of the learner as a creative participant in the learning process (Losiewicz, 1988). Consequently, this approach promotes classrooms that “aim to prepare students for real-world interactions with native speakers and therefore engage learners in a variety of authentic, personally meaningful, and spontaneous language tasks” (Horwitz, 2000, p. 258). Therefore, it is purported that second language acquisition is grounded on the following principles: (a) there is an unconscious process that accounts for fluency in L2, (b) the efficiency of the acquisition process depends on the
learner’s involvement with the listening and reading tasks he or she encounters, (c) speaking improves by speaking the L2, (d) making errors is part of the developmental process of learning a L2 and, (e) students can only consciously correct some of their errors.

**Learning as a Mental Activity**

This study was guided through the information processing model of second language learning based on the cognitive assumption that humans are logical beings who make choices that make the most sense to them. Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) compared the human mind to a computer and defined human memory as a system consisting of two dimensions. On one side, there exists a physical system with its unchanging built-in processes such as coding procedures, rehearsal operations, and search strategies. On the other hand, there are control processes that are “selected, constructed, and used at the option of the subject and may vary dramatically from one task to another” (p. 91); for example, this involves chunking and repetition. The individual selects the process based on instructions, the meaningfulness of the material, and the individual’s schemata.

According to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), the physical dimension consists of three structural components: the sensory register, the short-term store, and the long-term store. The Information Processing model starts with an initial input into the sensory register and continues with a scan on the information in the register before it is transferred into the short-term memory. This working memory receives selected input from the sensory register (and from the long-term memory) and holds the information for a period of 30 seconds before it decays or is lost. Transfer of information to the long-term memory takes place throughout the period that information resides in the short-term memory, a process that is highly controlled by the individual. During this process, the individual encodes the information provided that is
meaningful and makes connections with related knowledge already in long-term memory (Driscoll, 2000). Long term memory is a “fairly permanent repository for information” (p. 91).

Figure 1 depicts the information progression from the initial stimuli to how it is processed and later stored by the learner. In terms of listening input, this model helps explain the role of the individual in manipulating and controlling the information received and the processes available to maximize the experience.

![Multi-Store Model Diagram](image)

*Figure 1. The Multi-Store Model (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968)*

Based on this model, memory is described in terms of information flowing through a system. In addition to the role of the individual, it provides opportunities for instruction. According to Driscoll (2000), there are three possible implications for instruction derived from the Information Processing model: a) provides organized instruction, b) arranges extensive and variable practice, and c) enhances self control of the information processing.

**Organized Instruction and the Learning Task**

A proponent of the conceptual approach to optimal learning conditions, Gagné (1985) emphasizes the activation of short-term and long-term memory and their roles in the learning
process. The concept of activation, coupled with the information-processing approach he adopted, helps the learner understand his or her role as an active participant in the cognitive process. In other words, the learner is made aware that the stimuli received (i.e., heard, seen or sensed events) are transformed or processed in the brain, thus defining learning as a process apt to be manipulated and changed. The conditions for learning are comprised of three elements: (a) taxonomy of learning outcomes, (b) conditions necessary to achieve the desired learning outcomes, which include internal events such as previously encoded information and external events like methods to facilitate encoding, and (c) the steps designed to guide the teacher through the process of designing and implementing the learning structure.

Of the five types of possible outcomes established in this model, the following objectives are the most relevant to language acquisition:

1. Verbal information or the accumulated body of information that the learner has organized in themes or schemata provides the platform for acquiring new learning.
2. Intellectual skills or procedural knowledge refers to the skill of how to do something.
3. Cognitive strategies, defined as the executive control functions of information processing, are “the numerous ways by which learners guide their own learning, thinking, acting and feeling” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 354).

Once the learning objectives are established, they need to be communicated explicitly to the learner so that they are made aware that the prescribed outcomes can assist in his or her learning process (Driscoll, 2000). For each one of these desired learning outcomes, the instructor must ensure optimal conditions for learning, which should provide the appropriate context such as prior knowledge, skills, and relevance of the new information (Gagné, 1985). Finally, this theory facilitates learning by providing the instructor with very specific teaching
steps that Gagné described as the nine events of instruction, which help guide the teacher and learner toward meeting the desired learning outcomes. Table 1 provides this sequence of events.

Table 1

*Gagne’s Events of Instruction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gaining attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informing learner of the lesson objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stimulating recall or prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Presenting stimuli with distinctive features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Guiding learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eliciting performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Providing informative feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Assessing performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Enhancing retention and learning transfer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Extensive Language Practice**

As the proficiency movement gained ground, the goal of developing language skills for communicative purposes has become more sophisticated. In addition to personalizing learning and engaging students by providing opportunities for authentic exchanges of information, the teachers should also instruct students on how to communicate their ideas. Furthermore, in classrooms that integrate content and language learning, students “use language as a tool for accessing and processing new information” (Met, 1995, p. 89).

There are many domains of inquiry on the L2 acquisition process. For the purpose of the study, interest is focused on the input component and on the receptive skill of listening in particular. Among the communicative approaches, Krashen (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) proposed
what he called the Natural Approach. It consists of a set of five tenets or hypotheses that attempt to explain how individuals acquire a L2. The Krashen model makes a distinction between L2 language learning and language acquisition. While the first is a conscious process, the second is not. Learning involves many skills; for example, it leads to the memorization of vocabulary, grammar, and the understanding of structures. Acquisition, on the other hand, occurs when the learner encounters comprehensible listening or reading input data. The Input Hypothesis indicates that comprehensible input is the only true cause of second language acquisition; therefore, learners acquire a new language by hearing it in context where the meaning is made plain to them.

Acquisition may be best understood as a byproduct of listening and reading, and it is this process which ultimately leads to fluency (Horwitz, 1986). As a result, it is recommended that much class time “should be devoted to the development of listening and reading abilities” (p. 685) and that teachers should give students “specific and reassuring instructions on how to listen and how to read” (p. 686). Thus, helping students develop concrete skills for decoding foreign language materials.

Krashen & Terrell (1983) suggested that, for learners to make progress in the acquisition of the language, thus moving from their current stage or i, it was necessary to challenge them by including oral or written message structures that are a bit beyond their current level of comprehension. They referred to these structures as those provided by communicative and comprehended input which “will automatically provide the "next" structure, or i + 1" (p. 72). To exemplify this model further, Chamot, Barrueta, Barnhardt, & Küpper (1990) gave the recommendation that the material to be used in learning strategy instruction: “should stretch students, not rehearse what they already know or be totally beyond them” (p. 19). If the material
is too simple, students will not need to access strategies to understand it. These researchers also alluded to the attitudes of the learner and their effect in L2 acquisition. Motivation, self-image, and anxiety play an important role in acquisition where “performers with optimal attitudes have a lower affective filter” (p. 38). A low filter means that the learner is more “open” to the input; it will encourage him or her to try to get more input, to interact with speakers of the L2, and to be more receptive to the input they receive.

For the comprehensible input to stimulate language acquisition, it needs to meet the following criteria: a) transmit relevant and “intrinsically interesting or meaningful” (p. 97) information so that the students’ attention is focused on the content of the utterance instead of its form, and b) provide the means for aiding comprehension such as extra-linguistic support, visuals, and regulation of the amount of input.

In summary, the Natural Approach contributes to proficiency in communication skills by allowing for a period of listening before speech appears and de-emphasizing grammar. (Horwitz, 1986). In Krashen’s words, “a good language learner is an acquirer who first of all is able to obtain sufficient intake in the second language, and second, has a low affective filter to enable him to utilize this input for language acquisition” (1981, p. 37).

In order to promote language acquisition, Krashen proposed that the language instructor follow these subsequent steps: introduce new vocabulary, provide the comprehensible input the student will utilize for acquisition, create opportunities for oral production, and instill a sense of belonging which will help lower affective filters. In conclusion, “speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause” (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 165). Furthermore, L2 acquisition is the most important process in the development of L2 fluency (Horwitz, 1986).
Enhancing Self Control of the Information Processing

Cognitive theory recognizes the active role that the learner plays in the process of language acquisition. Therefore, the learner–centered language teaching in today’s classroom underscores the importance of three interrelated concepts concerning the learner: autonomy, awareness, and action. (Brown, 2007). Autonomy means to encourage learners to take charge of their own learning while they develop a path for success in language learning. Awareness relates to the expectation of learning of a second language demands active participation by the learner. In other instances, awareness refers to what learners know about the strategies they use and also what learners know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use (Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

Within this framework of awareness, there are two other distinctions that need to be made: learning strategies and communication strategies. Communication strategies “pertain to the employment of verbal and non verbal learners need to become aware of their own processes of learning by identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, styles and predispositions” (Brown, 2007, p.131). Finally, learners need to take action by accessing a “plethora of strategies that are available to them” (p. 131).

Second language learning makes a distinction between learning strategies and communication strategies, even though both aim at facilitating learning. Communicative strategies are used in order to overcome a specific communicative problem (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). The term learner strategies may refer to those language learning behaviors learners actually engage in to learn and regulate mechanisms for the productive communication of information” (Brown, 2007, p.137). Learning strategies, on the other hand, relate to the
receptive domain of intake, memory, storage, and recall. They can be classified into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and social or affective strategies.

O’Malley and Chamot (1990) argued that the relevance of applying cognitive theory to language acquisition is based on the following premises:

1. Learning is an active and dynamic process where the learner actively uses strategies to process information.
2. Language is set of complex skills and traits that facilitates the storing and learning of information.
3. Learning a L2 requires activating awareness and encouraging action in order to attain automaticity.
4. Learning strategies are similar to cognitive processes and have "the potential to influence language learning in a positive manner" (p. 217).

Meaningful Learning Using Meaningful Material

The last tenet of Cognitive Theory addresses the need to use meaningful material in order to enhance meaningful learning. This has taken ground in today’s classroom and the “inclusion of authentic aural and written text is becoming increasingly popular in the foreign language (FL) curriculum” (Bacon, 1992, p.160). Bacon offers a definition for authentic input as that “which is created by and for a native speaker on the language in which it is produced” (p. 174).

Authentic input is promoted for both cognitive and affective reasons. In terms of cognitive processes, authentic material provides the context needed for connecting form and meaning, while it also supports the affective component as a way “to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning” (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990, p. 73).
Task-based exercises in the L2 often neglect the educational value of the context that can be used in language teaching. Frequently, the information presented to L2 learners in the classroom deals with imaginary towns or even treasure islands. According to Cook (2001), “research shows that the more important information is to the listener, the more likely it is to be retained” (p. 98). Furthermore, authentic speech tries to encourage top-down listening (meaning to form) by getting the student to visualize an overall context for the speech before he or she hears it, thereby engaging the learner actively and meaningfully in the listening task.

The disposition to authentic aural and written input in relationship to attitudes, motives, and strategies was explored by Bacon & Finnemann (1990) in a study of novice Spanish students at two universities in the Midwest (n = 938), using self-reported data obtained with a 109-item questionnaire. This instrument had been developed over a period of eight months; it was piloted twice, a factor analysis was conducted, and each factor was tested for internal reliability. Analysis of data confirmed a total of 11 factors, seven factors dealing with language learning in general and five dealing with authentic text. The latter ones, which are of interest to this research study, were classified as factors dealing specifically with authentic input. They were classified as: Comprehension/Satisfaction, Negative Affect/Frustration, Decoding/Analytic, Unwillingness to Participate, and Global/Synthetic Strategies. One factor emerged that was both cognitively and affectively oriented, Comprehension and Satisfaction, showing positive aspects of both (M = 3.6, α = .88), included 11 items such as: feel satisfied that I understand some, feel satisfied that I can communicate, get the gist of what is being said to me. Another factor that focused on anticipated or actual response to authentic input and was purely affective was Negative Affect/Frustration (M = 2.7, α = .84), which became negative during factor analysis, "a low score means disagreement with a negative statement" (p. 464).
Researchers expressed that whatever strategies a student elected to use when dealing with authentic input, the most important obstacle to a sense of comprehension or satisfaction was an unwillingness to confront the input. And since exposure to authentic input has a positive perceived effect on comprehension and satisfaction and a negative perceived effect on frustration, “students seem to profit from its inclusion” (p. 469).

The Skill of Listening

Cognitive Theory and Listening Skill

The cognitive learning theory explains the active role of the individual in the learning process, and specifically in the area of listening. This theory disregards the common assumption that second language acquisition occurs through implicit, unconscious processes activated when the learner encounters appropriate input. This belief is what Mendelsohn (1995) calls the “osmosis” approach or learning through the mere opportunity to hear the language. It should not be assumed that listening will automatically lead to the acquisition of language and that no active involvement by the learner is necessary (Macaro, 2001). Consequently, it is imperative that teachers encourage and assist learners to participate actively in their own listening development (Goh & Talib, 2006). When learners become aware of the nature and demands of listening to another language, they will be in a better position to evaluate and manage their own L2 learning.

Instructing, practicing, and reviewing listening strategies were the focus of a research study conducted by Cross (2009) on learners’ comprehension of authentic news videotexts. The study investigated whether listening strategy instruction improved learner’s ability to comprehend news videotexts. Participants of the study were fifteen adult Japanese, advanced-level English as a second language learners, enrolled as paying customers of the institution where the study took place. This quasi experimental, classroom-based study, consisted of an
experimental group \((n = 7)\) and a comparison group \((n = 8)\). The experimental group received a total of 12 hours of strategy instruction (presentation, practice, and review) and used material drawn from the BBC's internet news website. The comparison group did not receive the instruction, but used the same pre and post-listening activities and materials as the experimental group. To measure listening comprehension gains, a pre and posttest were administered to both groups using open-ended written comments on the topic of the news videotext. In order to determine if any differences in performance were significant across the study, a dependent and an independent \(t\)-test were conducted. Results for the dependent \(t\)-test show statistical differences between pre and posttest for the comparison group \((t = -4.135, df = 7, p = .004)\) and also for the experimental group \((t = -4.436, df = 6, p = .004)\). The independent \(t\)-test that measured differences between the groups was not statistically significant. The researcher acknowledges several limitations to the study including the "subjective nature of the scoring system" (p. 163) as well as the short duration of the treatment.

In order to support students during the listening process, instructors need to have knowledge of the mental processes that could assist in the instruction of cognitive strategies specifically designed to manage listening tasks in L2 learning. First, instruction needs to assess two models of the listening process: top down and bottom up. The first uses context as its main component and requires the listener to use background knowledge and semantics in order to interpret the aural input (Field, 2004). In this model, the listener accesses his or her schema by applying contextual knowledge to utterance interpretation and uses pre-established patterns of knowledge and discourse structure stored in memory. On the other hand, the bottom-up model resorts to acoustic features, stress rhythm, and syntax in order to build understanding. Listeners start constructing meaning with the smallest units of the acoustic message, individual sounds or
phonemes, then combining them into words which, in turn, develop into phrases, clauses, and sentences (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). To illustrate this concept, observations of expert readers’ use of the strategy of elaboration that lead to top-down processing when compared to novice readers who assign meaning to individual words or bottom-up, led O’Malley & Chamot (1990) to suggest that the strategy of elaboration could assist language learners in transferring prior knowledge originally acquired in the first language to comprehend new information presented in the L2.

Also, instruction needs to consider the stages identified in the process of listening. According to Macaro (2001), in the first stage, the language is perceived and stored in the working memory; there the process of breaking down the information or making a contextual connection begins. In the second stage or parsing, the learner matches words or sentences with information already stored in the long-term memory where it is reorganized into meaningful units. In the final stage, the listener uses or elaborates the decoded text by “relating it to his or her conscious knowledge which the working memory retrieves from the long term memory” (p. 100).

Finally, instructors need to assess the strategies used by the learner in order to design a suitable approach to teaching listening strategies that are conducive to learning. They also need to keep in mind that, in communicative language use, the emphasis is not on the form but rather on the content of the communication (Mendelsohn, 1995).

**Instruction and the Skill of Listening**

A recent interest in listening comprehension research has been “the realization and accumulating evidence that input plays a critical role in second language acquisition” (Dunkel, 1991, p. 435). It is in this context that researchers and teachers have become more aware of the
role that listening plays in language learning and communication as well as the importance of listening strategy instruction in the second language classroom (Rubin, 1994). Research has found that those who have developed a near-native proficiency in a second language are the learners who had undergone an intensive listening experience or both listening and reading experiences. Feyten (1991) examined whether more attention needed to be paid to listening in preparing second language learners and whether listening skills are good predictors of language proficiency. Using a sample of French ($n = 36$) and Spanish ($n = 54$) students participating in an intensive summer program, who responded to their respective foreign language tests, correlation coefficients were computed to determine whether there were statistically significant relationships between listening ability and foreign language variables: overall foreign language proficiency, proficiency in listening, and proficiency in speaking. Results of the research study showed significant correlations for each group between listening ability and overall proficiency (French: $r = .41$, Spanish: $r = .39$, $p < .05$), as well as between listening ability and foreign language speaking skills (French: $r = .37$, Spanish: $r = .29$, $p < .05$).

Abdelhafez (2006) conducted a pre-post control group design study among English as a Second Language (ESL) university students ($n = 80$). The study gap consisted of an experimental group ($n = 40$) and a comparison group ($n = 40$) and examined the effects of some metacognitive language learning strategies on developing listening and reading comprehension. The researcher concluded that the training helped develop learners' listening and reading skills and raised their language proficiency levels. The study showed that the experimental group surpassed the comparison group on all three variables after conducting strategy instruction. The resulting $t$ tests were significant and were reported as follows: listening comprehension ($t = 8.38$, $p < .01$), reading comprehension ($t = 6.57$, $p < .01$), and English proficiency ($t = 5.88$, $p <
Such results support the tenet that less competent learners should be able to improve their skills in a second language through training on listening and reading strategies. The researcher suggested that listening and reading comprehension could be developed by systematic instruction in metacognitive language learning strategies (p. 26).

Second language proficiency is a byproduct of listening and reading comprehension (Horowitz, 1986); therefore, as learners are exposed to more opportunities to experiment with aural and written text, their speaking fluency should also be expected to increase (Cubillos, Chieffo, & Fan, 2008). According to Feyten (1990), data collected from her previously mentioned research study, listening ability represented a “factor contributing to the second language acquisition process not previously identified” (p. 179). This finding reinforces the important relationship between listening and language proficiency and the fact that “listening is the foundation of formal education” (p. 176).

**Strategy Instruction and Material**

**Metacognitive Instruction**

Metacognitive instruction, or teaching that explicitly elicits and develops learners’ knowledge about the listening process, helps them to become more efficient and effective learners and therefore able to regulate their own learning. In a descriptive study conducted by O’Malley, Chamot, Manzanares, Russo & Küpper (1985) in 1983, the researchers taught three groups of ESL secondary students ($n = 75$), all at the intermediate level of English proficiency, at three suburban high schools. The students were randomly assigned to three groups: the metacognitive group received training on one metacognitive strategy, two cognitive strategies and one socio-affective strategy; the cognitive group received instruction only on the cognitive and socio-affective strategies; and the third group was asked to work on language tasks without any specific instruction. The size of instruction groups within each school averaged eight to ten
students. The treatment included instruction for 50 minutes a day for eight days. The effect of strategy instruction on listening and speaking tasks was measured. Statistical analyses comparing the treatment groups on the listening and speaking posttest were conducted using an analysis of covariance with the pretest as covariate. Results analysis on the speaking test indicated that differences among the three groups were statistically significant on the posttest ($R^2 = .20, p < .01$). When adjusted mean scores were converted to the scoring system used by the Foreign Service Institute rating system for speaking, the metacognitive group scored close to 2+ and the comparison group just below 2. This amount of difference represents a considerable increase in language skills over the comparison group. Analyses of the scores of the posttest on listening approached, but failed to reach, significance even though "scores fell in the predicted direction" (p. 574). The researchers reported that, for listening and speaking, learning strategies were shown to be effective in enhancing initial learning in a classroom environment and “can be seen as a potential extension of the Natural Approach” (p. 577). For the vocabulary test, the effect of training was not statistically significant.

**Listening Strategies Instruction**

O’Malley et al., (1989) conducted a descriptive research study that focused on the mental processes used by second language learners in listening comprehension and the types of strategies they selected to use. The participants of the study were ESL high school students (N=11) from two suburban high schools who had limited proficiency in understanding and speaking English. The questions researched asked if the strategies the students used paralleled the three theoretically derived phases of the comprehension process (perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization) and if there were differences in the strategies reported by effective and ineffective listeners. Data collection was done through interviews in a training session and a
reporting session using a think-aloud method. In the first session, participants were expected to relate what they were thinking while listening to a task. The second task involved reporting as much as they could say about their thoughts while listening for comprehension. Statistical analysis of strategy use utilized a Mann-Whitney U test ($p < .05$). This result showed that there were significant differences between effective and ineffective listeners on self-monitoring, elaboration, and inferencing. Qualitative analyses revealed the use of specific strategies depending on the phase of the listening in the listening process. Table 2 summarizes the mental processes and strategies used by language learners in listening comprehension identifies in the qualitative study conducted by O’Malley et al., (1989).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental processes</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual processing</td>
<td>Selective attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsing</td>
<td>Grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferencing from context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization</td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another research study conducted by Thompson & Rubin (1996) addressed the effect of strategy instruction on listening comprehension in a classroom-based longitudinal study. Participants were university students enrolled in a required third-year Russian course. Researchers tested the hypothesis that “systematic instruction in the use of a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies will result in improvement of listening comprehension” (p. 333). The experiment lasted for two years with a total number of participants ($n = 36$). In the first
year, 26 participated in two groups; the experimental group \((n = 14)\) and the comparison group \((n = 12)\). The second year enrollment had fallen to \(n = 10\), which researchers decided to use as another experimental group. The study consisted of two sections: the experimental group that received the strategy instruction and the comparison group that did not get the training. Participants were randomly assigned to either group in the first year of the study. To ensure fidelity to the treatment, the experimental group was taught by an instructor who had extensive experience in strategy-based language instruction, while the comparison group was taught by an instructor with no familiarity with this type of instruction. Students were pretested on listening comprehension using a video test and an audio test. The same tests were used as a posttest at the end of the experiment. The scope of the instruction implemented in this study is shown in Table 3. The researchers stated that the selection of strategies was based on previous research findings on the need for instruction in both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, the type of strategies reported by successful learners, and the relationship between strategy use and the type of text.
Table 3

Selected metacognitive and cognitive strategies selected for video and aural input

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening to the known</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening for redundancies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening to tone of voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resourcing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thompson & Rubin (1996)

Data were collected using 29 open-ended and guided recall questions for video comprehension and a portion of the standardized Comprehensive Russian Proficiency Test, created by the Educational Testing Service, consisting of 22 multiple-choice questions for the listening part. Researchers concluded that systematic instruction in the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies resulted in improved listening comprehension. The experimental group that received instruction improved significantly ($X^2 = 5.5, p < 0.05$) as compared with the control group on the video test; at least twice as many students in the experimental group showed at least ten percent improvement. On the audio test, a comparison of the two groups failed to reach significance ($X^2 = 3.35, p = 0.067$). To avoid making a Type II error (failing to reject the null
hypothesis when it is actually false) due to the small size of the sample, the researcher conducted a \( t \)-test to determine the effect size of group differences between pretest and posttest on video comprehension. Results demonstrated that the difference was 0.44, a medium-size effect, which confirmed that strategy instruction resulted in improved performance on the video test.

There have been few research studies conducted among high school students in the United States, and, of those, most have addressed L2 acquisition among English as a second language (ESL) learners. Among them, Carrier (2003) conducted a study in an effort to connect the need of listening skills to the improvement of academic achievement. The researcher focused the inquiry on the performance of ESL students after being taught explicit listening strategies in order to improve listeners’ comprehension of aural and video input. The treatment was conducted by the researcher and consisted of 15 listening strategy training sessions over a period of six weeks. The material used was taken from listening instruction books and was selected based on the possible interest of students. Participants were given opportunities for bottom-up and top-down processing, depending on the type of strategy they were learning. Bottom-up processing relates to the ability to discriminate sounds, syllable number, syllable stress, contractions and reductions, word stress, sentences meaning, and thought group (p. 388). On the other hand, top-down processing elicits the use of semantic, prior knowledge, and experiences of the listener in order to access new information, understand or to expand their existing knowledge base.

Participants from a small sample (\( n = 7 \)) of ESL high school students were the only group in this pre-posttest design study. They completed two pretests. The first involved a discrete or bottom-up listening ability test intended to measure students’ ability to discriminate between, for example, \( I \) live in a beautiful town \( \) and \( I \) lived in a beautiful town. The second test
intended to measure students’ video-listening or top down listening skills, for which they were given an advance organizer with instructions to listen to specific information such as *what are the important facts about this particular scientist* and *what did he discover?* Following the training sessions, participants took the posttest using the same instruments but accessing different information. The instruments used were the *Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English* and an open-ended questionnaire related to the video.

Data collected were analyzed by the researcher and a research assistant. Interrater reliability was reported to be 94 and 92 percent for the pre and post discrete listening test respectively, and 96 and 92 percent for the video-listening pre and post tests. To examine data for significance and due to the small size of the sample, the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used. Results indicated a statistically significant difference, in a positive direction, in discrete listening and video listening. Results for discrete listening of pretest and posttest data were statistically significant following strategy instruction, $T = 1$, “which is less that the critical $T$ of 2 for a small sample of $n = 7$ ($p = .025$, one-tailed)” (p. 393). The test statistic computed for video listening was 0, equal to the critical $T$ of 0 ($p = .01$, one-tailed). Based on the results of the study, Carrier suggested “a promising direction for research on the potential for explicit listening strategy instruction to help students improve their academic listening ability” (p. 395). The researcher emphasized the importance of explicit instructions in the classroom and acknowledged the limitations of the study that used a small sample of volunteers who could have been more motivated to do well.

Another small scale study ($n = 41$) was of French university students enrolled in the second semester of language study. Conducted by Vandergrift (2003), this 13-week, qualitative
study explored the effect of two tasks designed to teach students strategies on how to listen and also to determine the effectiveness of these strategies in facilitating listening comprehension and in raising awareness of the process of L2. The first listening tasks consisted of having students listen every week to a different authentic text that related to the unit of study of their life experiences as university students. The second was a researcher-created task that helped students understand an aural text that would have been difficult to grasp without some written support. At the end of the experiment, students were asked to reflect in their journals about different aspects of their learning and the progress they had experienced. The qualitative analysis of results compared comments for each one of the tasks and the specific metacognitive process students reported using. Vandergrift concluded that “systematic consciousness-raising did lead these students to become more sensitive to the process of listening and to develop metacognitive knowledge about L2 listening” (p. 438). Furthermore, Vandergrift determined that the development of student awareness of the process of listening encouraged students to take responsibility in the listening process and motivate students to feel positive about themselves and their abilities. In other words, results underscored the positive impact metacognition had on students’ motivation. However, the effect of strategies instruction on listening achievement needed to be empirically investigated.

Another recent study, conducted by Graham & Macaro (2008), researched the impact of strategy instruction, scaffolding, and the impact of learners' self-efficacy beliefs on listening comprehension. This quasi-experimental design, pretest-posttest, had two experimental groups, high scaffolding (n = 29) and low scaffolding (n = 39), and a comparison group (n = 39). The sample was reduced to n = 59 at the time of the follow-up period. The project lasted from October to April with a partial follow-up six months later. Participants were French students in
year 12, the first year of post-compulsory education in England. Students completed a listening proficiency pretest, posttest, and a second posttest at the follow-up period using three different recordings on the same topic. They also completed a self-efficacy questionnaire. The intervention consisted of a strategy list that students could use as a reference when participating in listening activities and a series of specific strategies to raise awareness of bottom-up processes, speech pattern segmenting, inferencing, prediction, monitoring, and self-evaluation. Collected answers were scored by two raters independently and interrater reliability was reported to be .95 for the pretest and .96 for the posttest. The internal consistency for the self-efficacy questionnaire measured by Cronbach's alpha was .86. The alpha level for data analyses was set at $p < .05$.

In order to analyze the effect of a program of listening instruction in the improvement of listening comprehension between the experimental groups and the comparison groups, an ANCOVA was used. The pretest results served as a covariate with the purpose of controlling for differences in scores. Results were statistically significant ($F(1,04) = 24.66, p = .001$). A small effect size of .19 was reported. Long-term effects were assessed six months later, and the results also indicated a higher mean score of the intervention group over the comparison group ($F(1, 56) = 13.18, p = .001$). Analysis of the results of the level of scaffolding on listening comprehension scores determined that all groups made gains between pre and posttests, especially for the group with high scaffolding. This was confirmed with the results from ANCOVA that used pretest scores as covariates and “condition” as a between-groups factor. The results were reported as follows: $F(2, 103) = 16.96; p = .001$. In terms of self-efficacy for listening, data analyses confirmed that both experimental groups (high and low scaffolding) outperformed the control group. However, there was no significant difference between the two intervention groups.
Graham & Macaro argued that the strategy intervention program had a positive impact on listening performance and that students who underwent the instruction outperformed those who did not, and furthermore, it "demonstrated that they themselves recognized this improvement" (p. 770). They concluded that the present study provided strong evidence "that strategy instruction in listening is beneficial" (p. 774).

**Strategy Instruction on Speaking Skills**

There have been few studies that investigated formal strategies-based instruction and its impact on speaking skills. Cohen, Weaver & Tuan-Li (1995) conducted a 10-week term research inquiry of students of French and Norwegian (n = 55), divided into one experimental group (n = 32) and one comparison group (n = 23) at the University of Minnesota. The mixed method study focused on the impact of explicit instruction in language learning and use and its impact on speaking proficiency, the relationship between reported strategy use and task performance, and how students characterized their rationale for strategy use while performing speaking tasks. The treatment consisted of learning strategies-based instruction embedded into the regular classroom activities. The qualitative portion of the treatment consisted of the evaluation of introspective accounts and interviews that helped with the interpretation of the correlations between speaking tasks and strategy use. Three instruments were used: a Strategy Checklist, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), and a battery of speaking tasks. This last instrument consisted of a self description, a story retelling, and a city description; these tasks elicited a range of learning strategies, including grammar and vocabulary retrieval strategies. Participants completed the same tasks in the pre and posttest. The researchers reported that an analysis of covariance showed that the experimental group outperformed the comparison group (p < .05) on the third of three speaking tasks (city description). Frequencies of the Strategy Checklist and selected items
of the SILL correlated with task performances with mixed results. An increase in the use of certain strategies was linked to an improvement in the task performance of the experimental group, in some other instances to the comparison group, and in some cases for both groups. The researchers suggest that it would appear beneficial to engage students in discussions of speaking strategies, review some possible strategies to be used, and "practice those strategies in class" (p. 34).

**Authentic Material**

A predominant teaching method in L2, Communicative Language Teaching, claims, as a fundamental principle, the need of the learner to engage in meaningful communication to attain communicative fluency and thus be able to carry out authentic communication in English as a second language and L2 settings (Hinkel, 2005). One of its features is the inclusion of authentic aural and written text which “is becoming increasingly popular in the foreign language (FL) curriculum” (Bacon, 1992, p.160). A common definition of authentic materials are “those not produced for second language learners” (Peacock, 1997). Examples of authentic material may include news programs, radio shows, public announcements. Artificial or non-authentic materials are exercises and supplementary texts found in L2 textbooks which are preambled with fictional characters and situations, such as: “*Hui Chun, el presidente del Club Internacional está haciendo planes para una fiesta internacional y escribe ...*” (Hui Chung, the president of the International Club, is making plans for an international party and writes...) or “*tú eres columnista y consejero de una revista para jóvenes; dale consejos a tus lectores sobre lo que ellos deben hacer...*” (you are a columnist and advisor to a magazine for young people; give advice to your readers about what they should do...). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, authentic input
is that “which is created by and for a native speaker of the language in which it is produced” (Bacon, 1992, p. 174).

Authentic input is promoted for both cognitive and affective reasons. In terms of cognitive processes, authentic material provides the context needed for connecting form and meaning; it also supports the affective component as a way “to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning” (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990, p. 73).

The use of authentic material and its effect on students was investigated by Peacock (1997) in a study of young adults (N= 31) in two beginner-level English as a Foreign Language classes. One class had 16 learners and the other 15. There was no comparison group. The researcher tested the hypothesis that, when authentic materials were used, levels of on-task behavior, observed motivation, and self-reported motivation would increase (or decrease) significantly. Data were collected while learners worked in pairs or groups of three, over a seven-week period, 20 times in each class on 20 different days. Both classes used non-authentic material one day and authentic material the next. Authentic materials consisted of newspapers, poems, some television listings, two short articles, an advice column from a local English-language newspaper, an American pop song, and some English-language magazine advertisements. Interrater reliability of the three instruments used was reported as follows: the learners’ on-task behavior sheet \( r = 0.91, p = 0.03 \), the overall class motivation sheet \( r = 0.80, p = 0.009 \), and the self-reported motivation questionnaire \( r = 0.91, p < 0.001 \). Data from observations sheets and questionnaire were analyzed separately using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance to investigate whether type of material (authentic or non-authentic) had greater effect on motivation than class, day, or activity. Results indicate that learners were on task 86 percent of the time when using authentic material and 78 percent of the
time when using non-authentic material. The mean difference by type of material was significant at the $p < 0.001$. Overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners in the study used authentic material. Mean scores over both classes were 29 out of a possible 40 when using authentic material and 23 when using non-authentic material. Difference in mean total scores was significant at $p < 0.001$. Results from the learner questionnaire indicate that there were not significant differences in self-reported learner motivation when authentic materials were used.

Since natural, spoken language is the most important source of acquisition of the first language, it has “become a pedagogical doctrine” (Maun, 2006, p. 112) that the learner of a foreign language should be exposed to authentic language. In addition, the more an instructor makes the authentic input interesting and meaningful to the learner, “the more likely it is to be retained” (Cook, 2001, p. 98). Finally, authentic speech tries to encourage top-down listening by getting the student to visualize an overall context for the speech before hearing it. A recent interest in listening comprehension research has been “the realization and accumulating evidence that input plays a critical role in second language acquisition” (Dunkel, 1991, p. 435).

In conclusion, the studies mentioned provided evidence that both listening strategy training and the use of listening strategies are valuable in helping L2 learners. Students who received cognitive and metacognitive strategy and explicit instruction on listening strategies outperformed those who did not on several variables. Strategy instruction becomes even more relevant in a secondary school language class because the ability to monitor and evaluate one’s thinking and act strategically is one of several important developmental advances during middle childhood and adolescence (Goh & Taib, 2006). Furthermore, metacognition is part of cognitive development and is both a product and producer of the latter. It enables the learners to
participate actively in regulating and managing their own learning, provides a personal perspective on individual learning styles and abilities, and is amenable to classroom instruction (Vandergrift, 2003).

**Summary**

Results from the previous studies confirm the definition of listening as a cognitive process in which the listener participates actively and consciously in constructing meaning by using prior knowledge, contextual information, and accessing appropriate strategies. The results also confirmed that instruction of listening strategies assists L2 learners in becoming more efficient and more effective in strategy selection. Previous research has shown that learners who are more successful can access and make use of strategies more frequently than those who do not. Furthermore, these research efforts on the skill of listening have emerged in response to an increased awareness that listening is “needed for constructing and communicating meaning” (Goh, 2008, p. 188), thus supporting overall language proficiency.

However, research has been lacking in providing answers about the possible effects of instruction of listening strategies or in explaining the extent to which pedagogical support could assist L2 learners at the secondary school level in becoming more proficient as well as more fluent language users. Therefore, this study was based on the empirical need to investigate the effects of language learning strategies that link the receptive skill of listening with the productive skill of speaking. Thus the inquiry of this study focused on the effect of deliberate and explicit instruction of listening strategies as a vehicle that effectively and efficiently connects input and output in L2 acquisition. As a result, this study intended to contribute to the body of research as well as to guide future pedagogical practices that could help L2 learners communicate in foreign
languages and well as assisting L2 teachers in addressing the demands of improving their students’ proficiency in second language learning.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the steps taken in conducting this research study and includes the following information: (a) description of the setting, subjects, and sampling procedures, (b) research questions, (c) description of the treatment, (d) description of the research design and research and analysis, (f) data collection procedures and timeline, (g) limitations, and (h) ethics statement.

Description of the Setting and Participants

The participants of this study were a group of students in ninth to twelve grade enrolled in two distinct high schools in Connecticut, School A and School B. These high schools are in two different District Reference Groups (DRGs). This classificatory term is used by the Connecticut Department of Education to group school districts for the purpose of comparison. DRGs are based on socio-economic status and need (State Department of Education, 2006). To determine placement in the DRG, the state compares median family incomes, percentages of families below the poverty level, percentages of single-parent families, percentage of families with a non-English home language, percentages of families in which one or both parents have a bachelor’s degree, and percentages of families in white collar or managerial occupations. According to the nine-tier classification, School A is in DRG A at the highest tier with, for example, a median home income of $173,900. School B is in DRG C and has a median home income of $77,126. School A has an enrollment of 1,259 students in grades 9 through 12, and School B has an enrollment of 423 students in grades 9 through 11.

District A and District B are immersed in communities with long histories, having been settled in the 18th century as agricultural enclaves. Today, they are considered small towns and are known as affluent suburban communities that serve as bedroom towns for commuters.
traveling to nearby large urban areas. District A has a population of 17,633 and occupies an area of 26.8 square miles, while District B’s population is 10,794 and has an area of 33 square miles. The main occupations of District A’s residents are executive, managerial and/or professional specialty jobs. District B’s residents are employed in construction, mining, and services industries. According to their school profiles, the percentage of the population with a high school diploma reaches 93.8% in District A and 90.8 % in District B. Other indicators that highlight their differences are the total enrollment of their school population: District A has 4,362 students attending five schools, while District B has an enrollment of 1,850 students attending four schools. The percentage of students receiving free lunches is 0.6 in District A and 6.5 in District B. District A shows a minority enrollment of 8.5 percent, while District B’s minority population is reported to be 6.6 percent. The number of teachers in District A amounts to 319, while the number in District B is 95; of which 79.9 percent hold master degrees or above in District A compared to 81.7 percent in District B.

Both schools participating in the study have racially homogeneous student bodies. According to the State of Connecticut’s Strategic School Profiles, District A's high school was attended by 93% White students, 2% Hispanic students, 1.5% Black students, and 4% Asian American students. District B's high school was attended by 94% White students, 3% Hispanic students, 0.5% Black students, and 2% Asian American students.

While both high schools are similar in terms of their student profiles, they do differ in size and years of operation. The first school in District A dates back to 1725 when the first religious minister was the first school master, until nine schools were established in the 1800s in the surrounding area. The school system in District B had 15 schools by 1837, which were consolidated in 1948. The secondary school in District B has been in operation since 2007.
Participants in the study were a sample of convenience (n = 97 students). They were students enrolled in the first year of Spanish language in high school. Table 4 depicts the demographic information of the sample.

Table 4

*Demographic Information of the Sample of Spanish Language Students in District A and District B*

**District A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**District B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants had previously studied the language. Students in District A had studied the language for five years in the middle school, with an exploratory format rather than with the
rigor of a high school course. Students in District B had studied the language for two years in similar grades and with a similar approach. This accessible population across both schools consisted of 54 students in School A and 43 students in School B in six intact Spanish classes. The target sample at each site was representative of the school population in terms of ability level, gender make up, and ethnicity, since all classes were heterogeneously grouped. In District A, three classes were selected among seven Spanish III language level; and in District B, the sample consisted of all three classes offered at the Spanish II language level. Both course offerings were labeled Spanish first-year at the high school level. In both districts, the researcher deferred the selection of the experimental and comparison classes to the cooperating teachers based on convenience of scheduling and not due to any cognitive or achievement criteria. District A and District B cooperating teachers selected the classes to receive the treatment. Their decision was based primarily on the school schedule (either morning or afternoon schedule rotation) and the availability of technology to implement the treatment (access to language or computer labs). The introduction of the study and the recruitment of the students were done by the researcher who visited each participating class and explained to the students the purpose of the study and the potential benefits to the L2 teachers and students. At that time, letters of consent, to be signed by the parents, and letters of assent, to be signed by the students, were distributed. A total of 126 letters were sent home; the response rate was 98, which included one student who declined to participate. Data collected from students without parental or guardianship permissions were not considered in the study.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:
1. Is there a statistically significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference in oral proficiency between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

3. Is there a statistically significant difference in metacognitive strategies between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

**Description of the Treatment**

The content of the treatment consisted of training L2 students how to listen through the instruction of listening strategies. Students did not receive grades for their participation in the activities. This avoided potential anxiety among them when the focus of listening tasks is limited to comprehension and when they are under pressure to give the correct answer (Vanderdrift, 2003). The treatment supported the existing curriculum rather than teaching additional content. Therefore, teachers were not asked to teach additional content, but rather teach differently by incorporating instruction that developed and supported listening skills.

Based on the strategies classification of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) that included metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies, first two classifications were considered for this study. According to O’Malley, Chamot & Küpper (1989), metacognitive and cognitive learning strategies are the two types of learning strategies that second language learners report using regularly. Metacognitive strategies refer to knowing about the learning process and controlling such a process through planning, monitoring, and evaluating the listening task. In
listening comprehension, planning refers to the manner the listener plans to go about the task, monitoring is defined as the act of “maintaining awareness of the task demands and information content” (p. 422), and evaluation is the thoughtful evaluation of one's performance. The effective incorporation of this process is what separates good listeners from poor ones.

Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are those closely related to the task at hand and consist of the manipulation of the listening activity through: a) inferencing or ability to make logical and intelligent guesses or predictions, b) organization or elaboration by using what one already knows in order to make connections between parts, and c) summarization or ability to extrapolate the main ideas. The third classification presented by O'Malley & Chamot (1990) referred to the social-affective strategies. This strategies were not part of the treatment of this study. Social-affective strategies refer to those strategies that require the presence of another person in the listening process. They did not suit the scope of this research because listening activities were implemented as an interaction between the aural input and the learner through the exposure to audio stimuli and not as a face-to-face interaction with another speaker.

Under the premise that cognition is fundamental in L2 learning, a current approach to second language “is predicated upon the assumption that language learners should be mentally active, purposeful, strategic, and conscious of their own learning process” (Chamot, Barrueta, Barnhardt, & Küpper, 1990. p. 13). Therefore, cognitive and metacognitive strategies were embedded in this experimental design as a connected and interacting set of thoughts and behaviors that were taught to participants for their later retrieval and use (see Figure 2). In general terms, cognitive strategies focused on instructing participants in how to deal with the task at-hand and operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 44). Metacognitive strategies are higher order executive
skills that assist students in focusing on the listening. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction of these two types of learning strategies. Tables 5 and 6 list the specific listening strategies that were part of the treatment.

![Figure 2. Representation of the interaction of types of metacognitive and cognitive listening strategies that were implemented in this study](image-url)
Table 5

Metacognitive Strategies Focusing on the Listening Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Directed attention</td>
<td>Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective attention</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advance organization</td>
<td>Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Comprehension monitoring</td>
<td>Checking one’s understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auditory understanding</td>
<td>Right or wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Performance evaluation</td>
<td>Self assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem identification</td>
<td>Difficulties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Flowerdew & Miller, 2005
Table 6

*Cognitive Strategies Focusing on the Listening Task*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferencing</td>
<td>Linguistic inferencing</td>
<td>Guessing meaning of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paralinguistic inferencing</td>
<td>Visual features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferencing between parts</td>
<td>Unrelated words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>Personal elaboration</td>
<td>Personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning elaboration</td>
<td>Known and unknown about the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Mental picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarization</td>
<td>Summarization</td>
<td>Mental summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>From L1 to L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Becoming familiar with sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on Flowerdew & Miller, 2005

**Data Collection and Timeline**

This researcher met with administrators at both school sites in order to explain the purpose of the study and secure their permission to conduct the research at their schools. Letters of agreement to confirm their participation were signed by the respective superintendents and principals. The next step involved the introduction of the research study to the faculty of both World Language departments in an effort to enlist the support of the chairpersons and cooperating teachers.

The success of listening strategies instruction depends on the teacher’s familiarity with the approach. Furthermore, he or she has to be “convinced of its value and comfortable with using it” (Mendelsohn, 1995, p.136). Therefore, the researcher concluded that the most effective
model for implementation would begin by enlisting the cooperation of teachers who were willing to incorporate strategies into their regular L2 course. After the researcher introduced the study to the World Language departments of the two school sites, two teachers expressed interest in becoming cooperating teachers and both volunteered to take part in the study. Both teachers were instructors of the first level of Spanish offered at the secondary level and had equivalent years of teaching experience and advanced degrees. They also were comparable in their language proficiency level: the teacher from District A was a native speaker, and the teacher from District B had a near native level of linguistic competence. They both used comparable textbooks from the same publisher, one a newer version than the other one. Both taught three classes of the first year of Spanish at the secondary level. The teachers determined which classes were to be experimental and which were to be the comparison group based on scheduling and accessibility to technology. In District A, two classes were the experimental group (one met in the morning and the other in the afternoon) and one the control, while in District B the opposite occurred: two classes became the comparison group and one the experimental group, providing an even distribution of students in both groups.

In terms of teacher training, this researcher used O’Malley & Chamot’s propositions (1990): (a) to develop in teachers an understanding for delivering effective strategies instruction; and (b) to adapt the instructional material as a supplement of the textbook.

The researcher of this study had piloted the implementation of listening strategy instruction during the previous year while conducting a professional development initiative at her educational institution. While facilitating the study group, the researcher implemented the guidelines proposed by Chamot et al., (1990) in their resource guide “Learning strategy instruction in the foreign language classroom: listening.” Based on this experience and further
research on the implementation of explicit strategies instruction, the researcher created a
teaching sequence for the systematic introduction and practice of cognitive and metacognitive
strategies instruction. The material was used to train the two cooperating teachers at their
schools. The researcher met with the teachers individually three times, for a period of two hours
for each session, prior to the implementation of the study. During these meetings, emphasis was
placed on the importance of listening strategies instruction for their students and on raising their
level of confidence in implementing the treatment. This researcher modeled strategies
instruction in their classrooms and outlined best practices for its implementation. In addition,
cooperating teachers were given a manual (Appendix A) written by this researcher that described
in detail the treatment and the listening strategies to be taught. Furthermore, the manual
provided instructional guidelines for teachers and students and defined expectations for students.
The manual could also be accessed at the website: http://listeningstrategies.com (Appendix B).

During the course of the treatment, the researcher observed the implementation of
strategies instruction three times in each classroom to ensure the fidelity of the treatment. The
first visits were made in week one and three, and the last during week six of the treatment.
Debriefing conferences were held immediately after observations to evaluate the effectiveness of
the treatment and discuss areas of concern. Generally, the teachers were comfortable with the
use of the manual in guiding their instruction. The researcher maintained regular communication
with both teachers via e-mail and in person. During these meetings, the researcher reiterated to
the cooperating teachers the importance of avoiding strategies instruction to students in the
comparison group. Instead, they were encouraged to continue teaching in the same manner they
had done in the past, using the techniques and material suggested by the textbook in use. Before
starting the treatment, the researcher visited each participating classroom and explained to the
students the importance of the research and potential benefits to L2 teachers and students. Letters of consent and assent were distributed at that time.

After letters of consent and assent to participate in the study were collected from the students, the experimental and comparison groups completed pretests in March of 2009, prior to the implementation of the strategies model. In the first session of the experiment, students in the treatment group were made aware of the importance of the listening skill and were asked to reflect on differences between listening in L1 and L2. They were then encouraged to discuss current practices and challenges in the L2 classroom before and after listening to an aural sample. Following the pre-treatment discussions, teachers began formal instruction of 16 strategies, eight cognitive and eight metacognitive, for a period of eight weeks, introducing two new strategies each week. They followed the instructional guidelines described in the listening manual as they related to the specific internet listening tasks denoted in the study's website.

Teachers were free to select which strategies to teach based on the curricular needs at the time of instruction. Immediately after instruction, students accessed the website mentioned above, which is linked to the sites assigned to the particular strategy, where they practiced the newly acquired skill. After a period of independent practice, the teachers discussed the learning experience and offered additional suggestions for their use, making specific connections to the content of the curriculum. In addition, cooperating teachers reinforced particular strategies during other listening activities that took place during class. The teachers decided the best time and place to implement the treatment. Both teachers had the appropriate technology to access the Internet from their classroom and from computer labs. In the classroom, the website was accessed from a teacher PC and projected to students with the aid of an LCD; therefore, students listened
collectively to the tasks. In the computer lab, participants were provided with a headset to facilitate listening to the tasks individually.

Teachers were asked to exclude the comparison group from having any interaction with the treatment during the extension of the study in order to minimize confounding effects on the dependent variable. All the material developed for this research was made available to both World Language departments for their use with their students after the completion of the study.

**Treatment Implementation Sequence and Samples**

Once a week the cooperating teachers devoted much of a class period to the implementation of the treatment of this study. From observations and post observation discussions with cooperating teachers, some common elements surfaced. Students were told that it was going to be a "listening strategies day" in Spanish class. The teacher reiterated the importance of the skill of listening when learning a second language and the significance of the students' engagement in the task. Teachers also repeated to the students that listening to what is said and retaining all the information is impossible even when we listen in our first language (L1). Therefore, one has to set objectives for listening as well as equipping oneself with "power tools" called strategies. Students were also told that the more "tools" they learn to use, the more successful they will be in accomplishing those goals. During the instructional sequence, teachers presented listening strategies to their students by thinking aloud, modeling their use, and by following Gagné's events of instruction (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). Some examples of the strategies instruction used in the study are presented below. They exemplified the teachers' voices and guidance during the instructional process.
**Task One: Directed Attention**

Directed attention is a metacognitive strategy. It is identified by the learner during the planning stage and it focuses on the main points of a listening task.

*Think about the type of information one expects to hear when listening to specific programs, such as a newscast or a movie review. What sort of information will be presented? What are the main points the announcer will convey in these types of programs that might interest you?* Teacher elaborates on personal experience using directed attention.

*You are about to hear an interview with an Argentinean singer at a popular TV station. Let's brainstorm about some reasons why an artist might agree to be interviewed. Now let's view the segment and identify the ideas that Mariló presents.* (Segment duration: 1:59)

The teacher elicits reactions from the students by asking them how they did. The teacher facilitates students' learning by providing some key words: *familia, compositores, carrera, nuevo disco compacto,* and *maniquíes* (family, composers, career, new compact disk, and mannequins). After listening to the segment a second time, the teacher elicits performance a second time, now providing feedback on same key features of the listening: *padre y abuelo son compositores, abandonó la carrera, lanzó un nuevo disco compacto, el tema es un amante manipulador que controla a las mujeres, como si fueran maniquíes* (father and grandfather are composers, she abandoned her career, launched a new compact disk, the theme is a manipulative lover who controls the women, as if they were mannequins).
To enhance students' retention, the teacher asks students to summarize the key features of the strategy and to note when it would be appropriate to use it.

**Task Two: Comprehension Monitoring**

Comprehension monitoring is a metacognitive strategy. It is identified by the learner during the monitoring stage and it focuses on self-monitoring or thinking about what one does as one completes a listening task.

*Listening task can be divided into chunks of information. For example, one may listen to a sequence of events that leads to the comprehension of an entire presentation. One way of addressing such a task is by monitoring one's understanding in stages.*

You are about to listen to the literary segment "Platero y yo" written by Juan Ramón Jiménez. You may or may not be familiar with it. You will find that it has a beginning, middle, and an end to the story. Listen to the entire segment and attempt to differentiate these three stages, remembering that you are listening to a literary description. (Segment duration: 2:20)

Teacher elicits reactions from the students by asking them to provide words or ideas they might have recognized. Teacher facilitates learning by providing some key words: *ojos, hocico, huesos, trotecillo, acero y plata* (eyes, mouth, bones, trot, steel and silver).

Before listening a second time, the teacher assists students by providing some possible stages: *cómo es, qué le gusta comer, qué hace, y cómo reaccionan las personas que lo ven* (what is it like, what does it like to eat, what does he do, and how do people react when they see it). Students are asked to monitor the tasks stage by stage as they monitor their understanding.
In order to assess performance, the teacher asks students to re-create the image of Platero and identify what kind of animal is it. Students check their understanding by elaborating on the stages that constituted the listening segment. To conclude, students summarize out loud their understanding of the strategy and its key features.

**Instrumentation**

The research study used the following instruments: Contextualized Listening Assessment (CoLA), Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), and Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ).

Prior to their use in the study, all instruments were piloted to ensure their accessibility, appropriateness of the tasks, and time requirement for their administration. Four students learning Spanish who did not participate in the study agreed to complete the listening and speaking tests and the questionnaire. Based on their academic grades, these students had mixed language abilities and were not in the classes of those involved in the study. Upon completing each task, the four students were asked to comment on the amount of time that it took for them to complete it, as well as the language usage, and clarity of directions. Based on their comments, the researcher determined a realistic time-frame for task administration as well as the appropriateness of the instruments. The administration of the listening test took 50 minutes, the speaking test took 30 minutes, and the completion of the metacognitive questionnaire took 10 minutes.

*The Contextualized Listening Assessment (CoLA).* The CoLA is part of the Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA) created by the Center for the Advanced Research on Language (2008). This center is one of 14 National Language Centers nationwide that have been funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Title VI National Language Centers and overseen
by the International Postsecondary Education Program. The mission of this program is “to meet the national needs for expertise and competence in foreign languages and areas of study” (International Education Program, n.d.).

In 1994, the University of Minnesota staff worked in close collaboration with the university language faculty and K-16 language teachers involved in the statewide Minnesota Articulation Project. This initiative involved the active collaboration of over 50 world language professionals representing 23 public schools and post-secondary institutions (both public and private) working together to develop, field-test, revise, and produce the instruments. The MLPA is a battery of four instruments developed for certifying the proficiency of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) among secondary and post-secondary students (Center for Advanced Research on Language, 2008). The CoLA was developed for students who are likely to perform between the Intermediate-Low and Intermediate-High proficiency levels, as defined by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency Guidelines. This research study used the Intermediate-Low version which is intended to determine that students have attained minimal proficiency in a second language. Creators of the instrument determined that this proficiency level was a reasonable benchmark for students completing their secondary studies.

The CoLA is a timed, 35-item, computer-administered test in which test takers listen to mini-dialogues and respond to four multiple-choice questions. The time allocated for the entire test is 50 minutes. The scenes follow a story line that relates to topics relevant to high school students (i.e., family, pastimes, and relationships). The characters in the story engage in a variety of real-life interactions appropriate for assessing proficiency at the Low and Intermediate-High levels, in accordance with the ACTFL’s Proficiency Guidelines. In the
sequence of short scenarios, the level of content difficulty increases as the test progresses. In addition, there are several features in the test that provide information to the test taker: a tutorial that explains the steps and the mechanics of the test, and a column that highlights the number of the questions answered; and the time remaining for the completion of the test. Once the test begins, this computer-administered exam allows test takers to control when the recorded segment is played and offers the opportunity to listen to the segment a second time. This feature was incorporated in order to reduce anxiety for the test taker and avoid frustration among those who did not want to be forced to listen to the segment a second time. This sequence also allows the test taker the time needed to deploy listening strategies in anticipation of the questions and while they hear and read these questions. Test administrators needed to secure permission from CARLA’s technology coordinator to access the test online on a secure website.

Creators of the battery of assessments claim that they “were rigorously pilot-tested in the spring of 1997 with over 4200 students taking one or more tests” (University of Minnesota’s Center of Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, n.d.). The MLPA for listening was extensively tested with more than 3,000 secondary and post-secondary students at 30 sites in Minnesota. Content validity of the test was established with the cooperation of more than 50 college and secondary language teachers. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the MLPA battery were reported to be on average between .82 and .90, while the CoLA were between .86 and .87.

*The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI).* The SOPI is a type of tape-mediated test of speaking proficiency developed by the Center of Applied Linguistics (2008). It collects a cross section of speech samples which are rated on the ACTFL scale ranging from Novice-Mid to Superior. The test is administered using a master CD and a booklet, thus test takers use both
aural and visual stimuli to complete their tasks. It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. The SOPI contextualizes all tasks to ensure that they appear as authentic as possible. Instructions are given in English and written in the accompanying booklet.

Developed by the Center of Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington D.C., the prototypical SOPI format was chosen for this study. Its layout consists of several components and requires test takers to accomplish different activities with the language. Part one asks the test taker, in a personal conversation with a native speaker, several questions related to family, education, and hobbies. The next section demands that the examinee ask questions, elaborate on a familiar topic, give directions using a simple map, describe a place, and narrate a sequence of events based on the illustrations provided. Finally, the examinee has to speak about an assigned topic or communicate in a real-life situation in which a specified audience and task are given. These last tasks correspond to the expected performance at the Superior and Advanced levels, including apologizing, describing a process, supporting an opinion, and speaking persuasively. It was deemed that “because these tasks may include functions too complex for lower-level examinees, the test may be stopped midway” (Malone, 2000, p. 1).

The flexible format of the SOPI can be, and often is, tailored to the desired level of examinee's proficiency and for specific examinee age groups, backgrounds, and professions. Therefore, this instrument allows for a shorter version of the test that "can be created by administering only the first part" (Stansfield, 1997, p. 4). Based on the number of years of language instruction, this study used the shorter version of the SOPI, which is appropriate for speaking performances at the Novice High and Intermediate Low.

Several versions of the SOPI are currently in use by various institutions, including the Texas Oral Proficiency Test (TOPT) used in that state by those seeking certification in French,
Spanish, or bilingual education. Stanford University also currently uses a SOPI version for placement purposes and standard of proficiency assessment of students at the end of the third quarter of a language course (Malone, 2000).

Developers of the SOPI claim that the test offers psychometric advantages in terms of reliability and validity since it offers the same experience to all examinees who answer to the same questions, and it provides more consistent responses than those obtained in a live interview. In addition, the recording of the speech sample for later scoring of the answers ensures that examinees will be scored by the most reliable raters and thus "rated under controlled conditions" (Stansfield, 1989, p. 4). From a practical standpoint, the SOPI can be administered simultaneously to a group of examinees in a relatively short period of time.

There have been several validation studies of the SOPI where researchers have compared it to the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The OPI is a face-to-face or telephone interview used by government agencies belonging to the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to evaluate speaking proficiency in a second language. The OPI is used for the purpose of teaching certification in world languages in Connecticut. The reliability of the ACTFL’s Oral Proficiency Interview was reported in a study based on 795 interviews in ESL, French, German, Russian, and Spanish and rated by 174 ACTFL certified testers. Interrater consistency was established after correlations were found to be between .839 and .887, \( p < .0001 \). Cohen’s Kappa test was also computed and results were significant, ranging from .43 to .53, which, according to interpretation, indicate moderate agreement (Thompson, 1995).

Test results from comparing the SOPI to the OPI confirmed that the SOPI was a valid and reliable surrogate to the OPI. On a study developed by Stansfield et al., (1990) on the
development and validation of the Portuguese Speaking Test (PST), the authors reported on the creation of three forms of a SOPI in Portuguese which were developed by a team of experts and completed by 15 students at George Washington University. The preliminary information obtained was the base for the research study which included a sample of \( n = 80 \) university students and two highly trained raters of oral proficiency. The results obtained showed that different raters could score the test with a high degree of reliability. Interrater reliabilities (Pearson product-moment correlations) between the ratings assigned by Rater 1 and those assigned by Rater 2 were respectively .93, .98, and .96 for each of the tests.

In another correlation study conducted on the reliability of the Indonesian Speaking Test (IST), which represents a typical SOPI, interrater reliability between the ratings assigned by Rater 1 and Rater 2 was .99 and .96. In addition, a correlation that compared IST scores with those awarded for OPI or live interviews determined a coefficient of .95. The researcher concluded that these “results support the claim that the IST is a valid measure of oral language proficiency that can be substituted for a live interview” (Stansfield & Kenyon, 1992, p. 137).

In this research study, the SOPI was administered and scored with the assistance of the SOPI self–instructional training kit (Center of Applied Linguistics, 1995). Evaluations of the tests were done by two certified raters who completed the Multimedia Rater Training Program.

The *Multimedia Rater Training Program* (MRTP) is an interactive software program designed to teach professionals to rate oral language proficiency. This computer-assisted program begins with training in the use of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Speaking. These guidelines are widely used as a scale to assess L2 learners’ functional competency in the language. They were first formulated in 1896 and later revised in 1999. They represent four
levels of a proficiency scale: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior; the first three levels have three sub-levels: Low, Mid, and High.

These ratings were then converted to numerical values for the purpose of data analysis. This procedure was based on the postulation that “the numerical values assume that the ACTFL scale represents an interval scale with equal intervals between proficiency levels” (Hernandez, 2008, p. 14). The conversion was done as follows: Novice low = 1, Novice mid = 2, Novice high = 3, Intermediate low = 4, Intermediate mid = 5, Intermediate high = 6, Advance low = 7, Advance mid = 8, Advance high = 9, and Superior = 10.

During the training program, these proficiency guidelines are explained in detail and use authentic speech samples at each level of proficiency. The MRTP teaches users how to rate examinee performances on the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI). Program users listen to and rate more than 200 authentic examinee responses that have been pre-rated by certified SOPI and ACTFL raters. This extensive practice helps users develop the professional-level skills needed to rate consistently and reliably. The MRTP also provides an after training resource that allows access for users to all the pre-rated examinee responses used in the program. Raters can use these as models to apply their skills when evaluating new examinees. Once the training is completed, trainers can contact CAL to request the final calibration exercise. This process needed to be completed as part of this study in order for raters to receive a Certificate of Achievement Procedure, which contained a final calibration tape and scorer note sheets. The two raters completed the MRTP program as prescribed.

**Interrater reliability.**

The pretest of the shorter version of the SOPI was administered to participants at the beginning of the study during March and April. A total of 79 participants completed the pretest
and 75 the posttest. Students in school A completed the test in a digital lab and those in School B used a self-recording program. Posttests were conducted in June after eight weeks of listening to strategies instruction. On both occasions, participants were reminded that the outcome of the test was to have no impact on their grades and were encouraged to do their best. Sound files were saved for later evaluation. The rating of the SOPI samples was conducted by two certified raters. Before beginning scoring the audio samples, and in order to calibrate the rating scores, the two raters randomly selected samples, then compared and discussed their individual ratings. The scoring process by the two raters occurred simultaneously and without knowing the scores that the other rater had assigned.

One trained rater scored all SOPI tests. For the purposes of reliability checking, a second rater independently coded a sample of 65% \( (n = 65) \) of the tests. The interrater reliability (see Table 7) for the raters was found to be Kappa = 0.49 \( (p < 0.001) \), demonstrating a statistically significant, moderately substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symmetric Measures for Interrater Reliability on SOPI Pretest Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure of Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
</tr>
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</table>

\(^a\) Not assuming the null hypothesis.

\(^b\) Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). The MALQ is an instrument created by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006). It was designed to assess second language metacognitive awareness and perceived use of strategies in L2 listeners while listening to aural texts. Developers validated the instrument by a meticulous review of the literature, an examination of existing instruments, and by using expert judgment to evaluate the strategies to be included in the questionnaire. After exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to validate the items to be included in the final version of the questionnaire, internal consistency was later verified. Finally, the MALQ scores were correlated with listening comprehension in order to establish a relationship between strategy use and actual listening achievement. The correlation coefficient obtained was significant, $r = .36$, $p < .001$, "confirming the relationship between listening comprehension ability and the metacognitive awareness of the processes underlying successful listening" (Vandergrift et al., 2006, p. 449).

The questionnaire consists of 21 items and requires test takers to read statements and choose the number which best shows the level of agreement with the statement. It uses a six point scale (1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Slightly disagree, 4-Partly agree, 5-Agree, and 6-Strongly Agree). The MALQ has five subscales: planning/evaluation, directed attention, person knowledge, mental translation, and problem-solving.

The instrument validity was established with a relatively large sample of respondents ($n = 341$) comprised of 115 English learners in Iran and 226 French learners in Canada. Participants completed the MALQ and listening comprehension test to determine the reported listening behavior and the actual listening performance. Data analyses reported to yield Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .91 for the English version and .95 for the French version, both of which included listening to three texts and answering 25 multiple-choice questions. Internal reliability was
reported to be between .68 and .78. Based on these results, "researchers can use this instrument as a pretest/posttest to chart the impact of listening strategy instruction and to assess learners’ growing awareness on the processes underlying successful L2 listening" (Vandergrift et al., 2006, p. 453). (See Appendix C for a copy of the MALQ). This researcher secured permission from the author to use the instrument and to change the original "French" to “in Spanish” in language 3, 8 & 15. Appendix D contains a copy of the permission for use of the instrument and pertinent language change. In addition, developers of the test provided this researcher with a MALQ interpretation guide.

Research Design and Analysis of Data

This quantitative research design met the criteria of a Quasi-Experimental Control-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The dependent variables in the study were the assessment of listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive strategies used by students of Spanish enrolled in the first year of language study at the secondary level in two high schools. The independent variable was teaching strategy. The independent variable had two levels: an experimental group that received the explicit instruction of listening strategies and the comparison groups that did not. Comparison of pretest/posttest after treatment between the treatment and comparison groups were analyzed with descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) since there were differences between the groups at the beginning of the study. Pretests were utilized to determine if differences existed between groups (treatment and comparison) prior to the implementation of the treatment. When there were no statistical differences (p > .05) between groups, the ANOVA was used for analysis since it is more robust in maintaining more degrees of freedom (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). Therefore, an ANOVA was used to analyze results after treatment for
the oral proficiency test data. For the listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness scores, two ANCOVAs were performed since a difference between groups did exist prior to the implementation of the study.

The fact that potential initial differences between the groups existed, due to the inability of the researcher to randomly select the participants, dictated that covariates were used. The purpose of adjusting for initial differences between groups was to allow for a comparison of the within-groups and between-groups to be made. In addition to the independent variable with two levels, this research used this technique for controlling for the effects of supplementary independent variables, or covariates, which may have had an effect on the dependent variable.

The initial design plan included analysis with one Multiple Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) procedure and three dependant variables. A MANCOVA statistical test was suitable for this research because it allowed the researcher to determine whether groups differed on the three dependent variables (listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive strategies). Because of the inherent design flaws and challenges with educational research, there was inconsistent completion of all of the instruments (three pretests, three posttests) by the participants. In fact, only 20 subjects completed all pretests and posttests (11 in the comparison group and 9 in the treatment group). This sample was deemed too small to properly provide enough subjects per cell in the multivariate design. According to Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino (2006), “the number of cases per cell must exceed the number of dependent variables” (p. 375). Consequently, a univariate design was implemented instead, since cell sizes were considerably larger.

Since there were three related research questions and univariate analyses were conducted, a Bonferroni adjustment technique was used on the posttest analyses. It was determined that the
probability of making at least one Type I error in a set of tests “will be higher than indicated by the level of significance used in making the individual tests” (Huck, 2008, p. 250). Therefore, this correction technique changed the normal level of significance to a more rigorous level. In this study, the initial alpha value .05 was divided by the number of comparisons (.05/3), thus establishing an alpha level of .017.

**Limitations of the Study**

Threats to external and internal validity are present in this research study. Due to the small sample of convenience of \( n = 97 \) students, the target population from which the accessible population was obtained might be underrepresented. Therefore, results could only be generalized to secondary schools with similar characteristics. In addition, the impossibility of random assignment could also have had an effect on the validity of the results, a possibility which was partially addressed by having experimental and comparison groups in two school sites, as well as using a pretest covariate when appropriate.

External validity could have been compromised due to the short span of the treatment. Consequently, the participants’ familiarity with the instruments could have had an effect on the research results. To compensate for a possible Hawthorne effect or novelty of the treatment, participants were not given grades during their participation in the listening activities.

Threats to internal validity are present in this study since student improvement cannot be isolated only to the treatment as the classroom teacher, students’ maturation, parental support, and many other factors could have impacted student performance. In addition, the teachers’ adherence to the treatment fidelity also posed a threat to the validity of the study. In order to overcome this threat, the researcher conducted observations regularly throughout the duration of the treatment. Threats to internal validity were minimized by using students’ pre-treatment
scores as a covariate. However, there is still a possibility that the pretest does not accurately identify initial differences between the groups (Isaacs & Michaels, 1995). Frequent conferencing with teachers reinforced maintaining treatment confidentiality as much as possible within the confines of the teaching and learning environment.

Another limitation to this study was instrumentation, since the reliability of the SOPI could have been compromised because Spanish teachers were trained only prior to the evaluation of the speaking samples. Therefore, to compensate for this threat, reliability was increased by having two raters evaluate the oral proficiency component of the research. In addition, raters conducted periodic simultaneous checkpoints in order to calibrate the use of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking when evaluation oral samples

Statement of Ethics and Confidentiality

Permission to participate in this research was sought from the district superintendent, each school principal, and all the teacher participants (See Appendixes E, F and G). To assure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a confidential identification number. All data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home or office and were maintained there until the findings were published; these data were accessible only to other researchers for whom the data will prove useful in further comparative analyses and who are enrolled in Western Connecticut State University’s Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership Program. The researcher obtained permission to conduct research from the Western Connecticut State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which requires that all research projects involving human subjects to be reviewed and approved, or declared exempt, by the university's IRB before a project is initiated (See Appendix H).
CHAPTER FOUR:

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of explicit instruction of listening strategies using authentic materials on listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognition among high school students enrolled in the first year of Spanish study at the secondary level when measured up to a comparison group that did not participate in the treatment. This quasi-experimental research study addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

2. Is there a significant difference in oral proficiency scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

3. Is there a significant difference in metacognitive awareness between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

This chapter presents the results of this research study. It is divided in three sections: (a) instrumentation, (b) data screening process, (c) descriptive statistics, analysis of data including tables, and statistical analyses of the data collected for each one of the research questions that were at the core of this study.

Instrumentation

The data analysis section of this dissertation used the scores obtained from three instruments that studied the effect of explicit instruction of listening strategies using authentic material on listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognition on students enrolled in the first year of Spanish language study at the secondary level.
The Contextualized Listening Assessment (CoLA) was used to gather data to assess the first research question: Is there a significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not? This instrument consists of a timed, 35-item questionnaire based on short dialogues that follow a story line. The CoLA was administered over the Internet in a secure site and allowed test-takers to manage their listening by accessing the aural input a second time if they had chosen to do so. Participants at both school sites completed the pretest in March – April and the posttest in June. The scores obtained represented the dependent variable used in this study for the first research question. The ANCOVA results obtained were \( F(1, 79) = 2.95, p > .017 \)

The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) collected data that addressed the second research question: Is there a significant difference in oral proficiency scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not? This instrument recorded participants’ responses following a number of prompts, which were later evaluated by two raters using the guidelines of the Multimedia Rater Training Program (MRTP). It intended to evaluate participants’ level of oral proficiency according to the ACTFL scale (see Appendix H).

Lastly, the Metacognitive Listening Awareness Questionnaire (MLAQ) collected data on participants’ self-reported listening behaviors, which were also accessed online. Results of the 21-item questionnaire were reported on a 6-point Likert scale. There are five factors that underlie this instrument: planning and evaluation, directed attention, person knowledge, mental translation, and problem solving. These factors represent metacognitive stages and strategies of the listening process.
Due to differences in the number of participants who completed the pretest and posttest for each of the instruments, the sample size varied depending on the tests. This unexpectedly reduced sample size could have been attributed to the challenges and restrictions inherent to working with students in authentic classroom settings. Such constrains resulted in the inconsistent completion of the different instruments in pre and posttests. Results indicated that only 20 participants completed all three instruments, both pre and post, 11 subjects in the comparison group and 9 in the experimental group. To correct for a potential Type I error, a Bonferroni adjustment technique was used on the posttest analyses changing the a priori alpha value from .05 to .017 by dividing .05 by the number of comparisons.

For the CoLA, data were collected from a total of 81 cases (the experimental group \( n = 46 \) and the comparison group \( n = 35 \)). For the SOPI there were 75 cases, the treatment group \( n = 37 \) and comparison group \( n = 38 \). And, for the Metacognitive Questionnaire there were 51 cases, the treatment group \( n = 24 \) and the comparison group \( n = 27 \).

Data Screening Process

Once the data collection process was completed using the Contextualized Listening Assessment (CoLA), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MLAQ), data for the pretest and posttest were examined for code and value cleaning. This process involved checking for “the appropriateness of numerical codes for the values of each variable under study” (Myers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006, p. 44). The purpose of coding determined the legitimacy of numerical codes and values and established whether the coding seemed reasonable. Coding in this study assigned the number 1 to the experimental group and 2 to the comparison group.
Due to the relatively small size sample, the first step in data cleaning involved a visual inspection of the data. Several cases of participants with missing values were removed from the sample. Among those, there were: (a) four cases when participants had only tested the system, such as teachers or lab technicians, (b) three participants who had had a false start due to technical difficulties on their first attempt at taking the test, and (c) two cases of students whose letters of consent could not be located. The next step in data cleaning involved the detection of univariate outliers. An assessment of outliers was performed in pre and posttests using SPSS for the experimental and comparison groups using all three dependant variables. According to Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003), in addition to illustrating the central tendency and dispersion of scores, a box plot can also be used to identify any unusual scores in the distribution that may warrant special consideration. Furthermore, “box plots are useful for comparing distributions of scores from different groups on the same variable” (p. 64). The obtained box plots for the pretest of all three variables are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5.
Figure 3. Listening Comprehension Box Plot Pretest Scores
Figure 4. Oral Proficiency Box Plot for Pretest Scores
Figure 5. Metacognitive Awareness Box Plot for Pretest Scores

These box plots indicated that there were three outliers in the set of data, which were considered to be extreme scores since their values were greater than 1.5 times the inter-quartile
range (Meyers et al., 2006). The researcher considered the deletion of these scores appropriate since they did not represent the majority of the scores.

Box plots for the posttest are shown in Figures 6, 7 and 8. They confirmed that there were two outliers, which were also considered extreme scores. Consequently, they were deleted since they did not represent the majority of the scores. As a result, the total number of subjects participating in the study was 97.
Figure 6. Listening Comprehension Box Plot Posttest Scores
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
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*Figure 7. Oral Proficiency Box Plot Posttest Scores*
Figure 8. Metacognitive Awareness Box Plot Posttest Scores

**Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics were used to test the assumption that data were normally distributed. They represent the descriptive data for the experimental and comparison research.
groups used for statistical analyses following the initial data-screening processes for the
Listening Comprehension, Oral Proficiency, and Metacognitive Awareness pre and posttests.
These procedures were used to: (a) detect code violations for both the pretest and posttest scores,
(b) assess if the means and standard deviations on these variables appeared similar between
groups and therefore could be deemed reasonable, and (c) examine skewness and kurtosis
coefficients to determine if the distribution of scores was normal. Skewness is not considered to
be too extreme if coefficients assume a value anywhere between -1.0 and +1.0, while kurtosis
coefficients indicate a platykurtic distribution if smaller than -1.0 or leptokurtic if larger than
2.00 (Huck, 2008). All skewness values (from -.83 to .05) and kurtosis values (from -.20 to .05)
in the data set were within the acceptable range, with the exception of the Listening
Comprehension pretest that showed kurtosis values for the treatment group (1.43) and the
comparison group (-1.22). However, since these values did not exceed the ±1.5 and ±3, the
threshold suggested by Meyers, et al., (2006), they were not considered extreme kurtosis scores
and the data set was used.

Data Analyses

The analyses of data comprised three steps: (a) testing for homogeneity of variance, (b)
testing for the equality of groups prior to the implementation of the treatment, and (c) statistical
analyses. An explanation of each step is presented followed by the results for each research
question.

Testing for Homogeneity of Variance

The first step taken by this researcher was to test the degree of variability relative to the
dependent variables. A Levene’s test was conducted to test the assumption that the variances of
the dependent variable should be the same for both levels of the independent variable.
Homogeneity of variance is attained when test results are not significant (p > .05). In other words the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

**Equality of Groups Prior to Treatment**

The second step in data analyses aimed at determining the effects of explicit instruction of listening strategies using quantitative statistical techniques. First, in order to verify that treatment and comparison groups were equivalent prior to the treatment, three separate one-way between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted. The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* 16.0 for Windows XP, Graduate Package (2005), was utilized to analyze the quantitative data obtained from the three instruments used in this research study; the CoLA, the SOPI, and the MLAQ. An alpha level of .05 was pre-established for all quantitative statistical analyses. However, since three individual tests were conducted, a Bonferroni correction alpha level of .017 was used on the posttest analyzes. This technique was utilized in order to avoid the increased probability of having at least one Type I error appear in the set of tests (Huck, 2008).

Three separate one-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted to determine differences between two levels of the independent variables, the experimental and comparison groups, in listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive awareness.

**Analyses of the Data**

The third step in data analyses related to inferential statistical techniques to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the experimental and the comparison groups on the three dependant variables: listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive awareness. An ANOVA was conducted for the oral proficiency variable, and
ANCOVAs were used for the listening comprehension and metacognition variables. Due to the difference in the number of participants who completed the pretest and posttest for each instrument, and in order to correct for a potential Type I error, a Bonferroni correction was used on the posttests. This technique adjusted the a priori alpha value from .05 to .017 by dividing .05 by the number of comparisons.

**Research Question One**

The first research question asked: Is there a significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not? In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics, assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance tests, and data analyses were conducted, first using the pretest data and second, using the posttest data.

**Comparison of pretest means**

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 8 indicate that there were no code violations for the pretest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they appeared similar between groups. Skewness coefficient showed that the distribution of scores was normal; kurtosis coefficients values did not exceed the ±1.5 and ±3 threshold suggested by Meyers et al., (2006); therefore, they were not considered extreme kurtosis scores.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Listening Comprehension Pretest*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
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The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 9. Results of the pretests of the dependant variable for listening comprehension indicated that the test was not significant where \( p \geq .05 \) indicates homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

Table 9

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance for Listening Comprehension Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( F )</th>
<th>( df1 )</th>
<th>( df2 )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>.18</td>
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</table>

Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine differences between the two levels of the independent variables, the experimental and comparison groups, in listening comprehension prior to the implementation of the treatment. Table 10 shows that the differences among the listening comprehension scores of the two groups, the experimental \( (M = 22.76, SD = 5.27) \) and the comparison \( (M = 17.97, SD = 6.66) \), were statistically significantly different, \( F (1, 85) = 13.93, \ p < .017 \), Partial Eta Squared = .14. Because the listening comprehension pretest
scores were statistically significantly different, a comparison of data was later performed using these total scores as a covariate to correct for differences between groups in the posttest analysis.
Table 10

Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Listening Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>496.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>496.40</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>3029.35</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>35.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>3525.75</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. R Squared = .141 (Adjusted R Squared = .131)

Comparison of posttest means

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 11 indicated that there were no code violations for the posttest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they appeared similar between groups. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients showed that the distribution of scores was normal since they did not exceed the -1.0 and +1.0 range.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Listening Comprehension Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>24.23</td>
<td>18.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.68</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 12. Results of the posttest of the dependant variable for listening comprehension indicated that the test was not significant where \( p \geq .05 \) indicates homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

Table 12

| Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance for Listening Comprehension Posttest |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                  | F      | df1    | df2    | \( p \) |
| Posttest         | 0.47   | 1      | 79     | .49    |

*Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.*

Once it was determined that there was a significant difference between groups (treatment, comparison) prior to the treatment, a one-way between-subjects ANCOVA was conducted to determine the effects of instruction of listening strategies on listening comprehension using the listening comprehension pretest scores as a covariate. The observed \( F \) value revealed that there was no significant statistical difference between the experimental and comparison groups \( F (1, 79) = 2.95, \ p = .09 \). The obtained \( p \) value was not equal to or more significant than the pre-established level of significance of \( p = .017 \). Results suggested that after instructing students in listening strategies in L2, students in the experimental group (\( M = 24.23, SD = 5.99 \)) did not evidence significantly higher listening comprehension scores compared to those who did not receive the treatment (\( M = 18.80, SD = 6.80 \)). Table 13 shows the results obtained from the statistics.
Table 13

*Analysis of Covariance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Listening Comprehension Posttest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Listening Covariate</td>
<td>1505.96</td>
<td>1505.96</td>
<td>69.59</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>63.80</td>
<td>63.80</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1688.02</td>
<td>21.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>3782.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .55 (Adjusted R Squared = .54)

**Research Question Two**

The second research question asked: Is there a significant difference in oral proficiency scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not? In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics, assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance tests, and data analyses were conducted, first, using the pretest data and second, using the posttest data.

**Comparison of pretest means.**

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 14 indicated that there were no code violations for the pretest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they appeared similar between groups. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients showed that the distribution of scores was between -1.0 and +1.0 and was therefore deemed normal.
Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Oral Proficiency Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>38.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 15. Results of the pretests for the dependant variable oral proficiency indicated that the test was not significant where p > .05 indicates homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

Table 15

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance for Oral Proficiency Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine differences between two levels of the independent variables, the experimental and comparison groups, in oral proficiency prior to the implementation of the treatment. Table 16 displays the differences for the
oral proficiency pretest scores between the treatment ($M = 2.78, SD = .88$) and the comparison group ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.02$). Results for the ANOVA ($F (1, 77) = .48, p = .49$) indicated that the observed $F$ value was not statistically significant since $p = .49$ is greater than the pre-established maximum for demonstration of significance ($p \leq .017$).

Table 16

*Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Oral Proficiency Pretest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>69.87</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>70.30</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = -.007)

**Comparison of posttest means.**

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 17 indicated that there were no code violations for the posttest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they appeared similar between groups. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients showed that the distribution of scores was normal.
Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Oral Proficiency Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>37.00</td>
<td>38.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 18. Results of the posttest of the dependant variable oral proficiency indicated that the test was not significant where p > .05 indicating homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

Table 18

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance for Oral Proficiency Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

In order to determine the effects of instruction of listening strategies on oral proficiency, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted. The observed F value showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups, F (1, 73) = 7.29, p = .009, Partial Eta Squared = .09 (p < .017). Results suggested that, after
instructing students in listening strategies in L2, students in the experimental group ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.78$) had significantly higher oral proficiency performance than those who did not receive the treatment ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.18$). Table 19 shows the statistical analysis results. An interpretation of the Partial Eta Squared, $\eta^2 = .09$, is understood as the percentage of the total variance explained by a given effect when two sample means are being compared. In other words, 9% of the variance of the dependant variable could be explained by the treatment (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). A commonly used criterion for estimating effect sizes is provided by Cohen who established that .01, .06, and .14 indicate small, medium, and large differences between two samples (Huck, 2008, p. 277). Therefore, an interpretation of the partial $\eta^2 = .09$ value indicates a medium effect.

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>71.24</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>78.35</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2 = .091$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .078$)

**Research Question Three**

The third research question asked: Is there a significant difference in metacognitive awareness scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not? In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics,
assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance tests, and data analyses were conducted, first, using the pretest data and second, using the posttest data.

**Comparison of pretest means.**

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 20 indicated that there were no code violations for the pretest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they appeared similar between groups. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients showed that the distribution of scores was between -1.0 and +1.0 and was therefore deemed normal.

Table 20

*Descriptive Statistics for Metacognitive Awareness Pretest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>83.26</td>
<td>78.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>8.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 21. Results of the pretests of the dependant variable metacognitive awareness indicated that the test was not significant, where p > .05 indicating homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups thus indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.
Table 21

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance for Metacognitive Awareness Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

Table 22 displays the differences for the metacognitive awareness scores. After comparing the experimental group ($M = 83.26, SD = 7.34$) and the comparison group ($M = 78.75, SD = 8.99$), the ANOVA produced the following results: ($F(1, 57) = 4.05, p = .049$). These values indicated that the observed $F$ value was not statistically significant since $.049$ was greater than the pre-established $p \leq .05$.

Table 22

Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Metacognitive Awareness Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>285.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>285.56</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>4015.19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>4300.75</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a R Squared = .091 (Adjusted R Squared = .078)

Comparison of posttest means.

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 23 indicated that there were no code violations for the posttest scores. Means and standard deviations could be deemed reasonable since they
appeared similar between groups. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients showed that the
distribution of scores was normal.

Table 23

*Descriptive Statistics for Metacognitive Awareness Posttest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>84.00</td>
<td>83.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>11.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test for homogeneity of variance is shown in Table 24. Results of the posttest of the
dependant variable metacognitive awareness indicated that the test was not significant, where p > .05 indicating homogeneity of variance. In other words, the error variance of the dependant variable was equal across groups indicating that conducting further inferential analyses was appropriate.

Table 24

*Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance for Metacognitive Awareness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
Considering that the difference between groups (treatment, comparison) approached significance prior to the treatment, a one way between-subjects ANCOVA was conducted to determine the effects of instruction of listening strategies on metacognitive awareness using the metacognitive awareness pretest scores as a covariate. The observed $F$ value showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental group ($M = 84.00, SD = 8.38$) and comparison group ($M = 83.62, SD = 11.77$). The ANCOVA results ($F (1, 49) = 4.93, p = .03$) indicated that the $F$ value was not statistically significant since $.03$ is greater than the pre-established $.017$. Based on this analysis, the effect of instructing L2 students on listening strategies in the experimental group did not evidence higher metacognitive awareness from those who did not receive the treatment. Table 25 shows the statistical analysis results.

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Meta Covariate</td>
<td>84.82</td>
<td>84.82</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>328.30</td>
<td>328.30</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1933.30</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>2426.97</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R Squared = .203 (Adjusted R Squared = -.148)

**Summary**

This chapter presented the analyses conducted in order to answer the three research questions posed in this study. Results showed that the explicit instruction of listening strategies using authentic materials had a significant improvement in oral proficiency performance among
those students who received the treatment compared to those who did not. Results from the
listening comprehension and metacognition tests did not show a significant effect from the
treatment. Table 26 displays a summary of the results. The implications of these findings will
be discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 26

*Summary of Data Analyses for Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Treatment Mean</th>
<th>Treatment SD</th>
<th>Comparison Mean</th>
<th>Comparison SD</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>CoLA</td>
<td>24.23</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>18.80</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>No significant difference; higher score for treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral proficiency</td>
<td>SOPI</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>Statistically significant; higher score for treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive awareness</td>
<td>MALQ</td>
<td>84.00</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>83.62</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This last chapter provides an overview of the research that investigated the possible effects of explicit instruction of listening strategies using authentic materials on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognitive awareness in second language (L2) learners at the secondary level. It will summarize the first four chapters and elaborate on the findings of the statistical analysis results, comparing these results with similar studies. A section about potential benefits for teachers will offer suggestions for instructional practices will be followed by a discussion of the limitations that have become apparent during the course of this research study and bound the generalizability of its findings. Finally, a section of suggestions for future studies aims at advancing research in the area of second language proficiency.

Summary of the Study

The need to foster language proficiency in second language learners was the driving force of this research study. While practitioners in the L2 classroom are expected to develop all four skills of a language (reading, listening writing and speaking) in order to foster interpersonal, interpretative and presentational modes of communication, teachres have often overlooked the importance of developing the skill of listening as a key component of the communicative model. Consequently, this skill has received the least amount of attention (Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Feyten, 1991; Mendelsohn, 1995) even though “listening comprehension should be the focal methodology in foreign/second language instruction, particularly at the initial stages of language study” (Dunkel, 1986, p. 99). Furthermore, teachers often resort to teaching sources that are non-authentic in content or context, underestimating their positive effect on L2 learning. However, Bacon & Finnemann (1990) explain that authentic materials provide the appropriate
context to connect form to meaning and “are regarded as motivators” (p. 459) in lowering cultural barriers that may interfere with language learning.

This research study endeavored to examine the potential benefits of teaching L2 students listening strategies using authentic sources and to measure their possible impact on listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognitive awareness. Empirically-based evidence of strategies could “greatly benefit teachers in their approaches to listening comprehension” (Macaro, 2005, p.161) and help those students who do use strategies to experiment with new ways of listening. However, in terms of integrating strategy-based instruction in the classroom, attempts remain at the level of isolated initiatives rather than being part of the recommendations and common practices in L2 (Manchon, 2008).

Consequently, this study intended to further research efforts by exploring potential benefits of teaching L2 students listening strategies using authentic sources and measure its possible impact on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognitive awareness. The treatment consisted of an explicit instructional sequence of a strategies-based model implemented over a period of eight weeks. The following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in listening comprehension scores between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference in oral proficiency between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in metacognitive awareness between students who are explicitly taught listening strategies using authentic materials and those who are not?

Participants in the study were students enrolled in the first year of Spanish language study at the secondary level. A total of 97 participants in six intact classes, at two suburban high schools in Western Connecticut were part of the study. The sample appeared to be representative of the school population since both schools have heterogeneous class groupings. Three of the classes were the experimental group and assigned to receive the treatment, and three were the comparison group, thus providing the two levels of the independent variable. Participants in this quasi-experimental study were a sample of convenience since they came from intact classes. Two cooperating teachers with similar years of experience and levels of language proficiency provided the instruction of listening strategies. Both instructors taught the experimental and control groups: in School A, the instructor taught two experimental and one comparison group and in School B, the cooperating teacher instructed one experimental group and two comparison groups. Both teachers were trained individually on strategy instruction prior to the initiation of the study.

Data were collected using three instruments: (a) *The Contextualized Listening Assessment* (CoLA), part of the Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA), Center for Advanced Research on Language, 2008, which is a battery of instruments developed for certifying the language proficiency of secondary and post-secondary students (Center for Advanced Research on Language, 2008); (b) *The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview* (SOPI), Center of Applied Linguistics, 2008). The SOPI is a type of tape-mediated test of speaking proficiency developed by the Center of Applied Linguistics (2008), and (c) *The Metacognitive
Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), an instrument created by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006). This quasi-experimental design, Pretest-Posttest Non-Equivalent Group, used quantitative procedures to investigate the three research questions: descriptive statistics were provided, one-way between subjects ANCOVAs, using the pretest listening and metacognition scores as covariates (research question one and three), and a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to investigate the results after treatment on the oral proficiency variable.

**Findings**

This quantitative inquiry was conducted to determine the possible effects of explicit instruction of listening strategies using authentic material on listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognition among L2 high school learners. The two levels of the independent variable were an experimental group and a comparison group.

Data collected from the three instruments were analyzed using univariate tests. This decision was based on the following assumptions: the dependant variables very normally distributed for both levels of the independent variables, the variances of the dependant variables were the same for all populations, and the observations within each treatment group were independent. Initially this researcher had considered using a multivariate test analysis since a Multiple Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was deemed suitable to determine whether groups differ in more than three dependent variables, which was the case in this study. However, due to inconsistent completion of the instruments in the pretests and posttests, the sample was too small for multivariate analyses. Therefore, a one-way-between-subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to examine whether the means on oral proficiency were too different to attribute to chance. Since there was a statistical difference between groups on
listening comprehension and the metacognitive test scores approached significance at the onset of the study, two Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used to evaluate the effect of the treatment on listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness, using the pre-test scores as covariates, which were utilized for the purpose of controlling the effect of confounding variables on the study.

Results from the test analyses that addressed research question one indicated that there was no statistical significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on oral listening comprehension $F(1, 79) = 2.95, \ p > .017$. The ANOVA results referring to research question two showed that there was a statistical significant difference between the treatment and comparison posttest scores on oral proficiency at the $p < .017, F(1, 73) = 7.29, \ p < .009$. The most commonly used alpha level was adjusted to a more rigorous level using the Bonferroni technique in order to compensate for multiple tests being conducted and the possibility of an inflated Type I error. A partial Eta squared effect size ($\eta^2 = .09$) was attained for these analyses, thus accounting for 9% for the implementation of listening strategies using authentic materials. ANCOVA results that addressed the third research questions showed no statistical significance, $F(1, 49) = 4.93, \ p = .03$. The importance of these findings is examined in this chapter's section on implications.

**Comparisons with Previous Studies**

The review of the literature grounded this research study within the tenets of Cognitive theory applied to L2 learning, predicated upon the assumption that “language learners should be mentally active, purposeful, strategic, and conscious of their own learning” (Chamot, 1990, p. 13). Within this construct, and considering the overarching need to improve oral proficiency in L2 learners, several propositions were set forth to guide this inquiry. Among them, the need to
devote attention to the skill of listening, the relevance of a strategy-based model of instruction that facilitates the listening process, and the importance of selecting authentic material to make listening meaningful and engaging to the learner.

The aim of L2 teaching is to develop all four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and also provide knowledge of the culture where the L2 is spoken. Of these L2 skills, listening has "proved to be a difficult skill" (Graham & Macaro, 2008, p.747) for the learners due to the complexity and speed of its processes. Moreover, the skill of listening has been given little attention in the L2 classroom and has been "somewhat neglected and poorly taught" (Mendelshon, 1995, p. 132), even though instructional practices today emphasize the need of developing listening "as a skill needed for constructing and communicating meaning" (Goh, 2008, p. 188). Teachers face the difficult tasks of facilitating the learners' listening process of attending and interpreting aural input (Thompson & Rubin, 1996). In addressing this need, there has been a growing interest in examining the role of strategy training to enhance listening comprehension, which was at the core of this study. Towards this end, four major factors that affect listening comprehension were embedded in this study: the listener, the process, the task, and the text.

When compared with the related studies presented in Chapter Two, the focus of this study shared similar characteristics with previous research conducted on instruction of listening strategies for the purpose of improving listening comprehension in L2, including English as a second language (ESL). Past research showed statistically significant results in Carrier’s study (2003) related to discrete listening and video listening in a small sample of ESL high school students. In a qualitative study conducted by Vandergrift (2003), the researcher concluded that teaching strategies to students made them more aware of the process of listening and resulted in
the development of their metacognitive knowledge about L2 listening. O’Malley, Chamot and Küpper (1989) reported their conclusion after conducting a descriptive study that focused on strategies used by ESL high school students during a listening comprehension activity and reported using think-aloud procedures. The researchers identified the kinds of strategy usage as reported by effective and ineffective listeners. They concluded that there were significant differences between these two types of listeners, depending on the phase of the listening comprehension process. Thompson and Rubin (1996) also confirmed the hypothesis that systematic instruction on cognitive and metacognitive strategies improved listening comprehension among university students enrolled in Russian language classes. When compared to the present study, the latter did not reach significance on listening comprehension, even though descriptive statistics showed that mean scores for the experimental group were higher on this dependent variable. Another common element between the present study and that of Thompson & Rubin’s study was the length of the strategies instruction. The present study lasted for 8 weeks, which is a short span for strategy use to become automatized. A similar limitation was reported by Thompson and Rubin (1996), who deemed 15 hours of instruction insufficient to facilitate improvement in listening comprehension scores.

There were several differences between the present research study and those previously mentioned. First, there was a time factor difference since the present research study was limited to an 8-week treatment, a shorter span than all others formerly mentioned. Second, the sample size of the present study ($n = 97$) was considerably larger than in the other studies. Another distinct characteristic of this research study was the large number of cognitive (eight) and metacognitive (eight) listening strategies used in the instructional model when compared with those previously considered in the reviewed research. Another difference between studies was
that the target population of high school Spanish students enrolled in the first year of the language at the secondary level was unique when compared to the other studies. The other two studies conducted at the high school level, O’Malley et al., (1989) and Carrier (2003), had populations that focused on ESL secondary students, immersed in the culture where English, the target language they were learning, was spoken.

Lastly, another feature of the present study that was distinctive when compared to others was the use of authentic sources for the introduction and practice of listening strategies, which were selected based on the age and possible interests of adolescents in the United States. The only other study that mentioned the use of an authentic source in its instructional model was conducted by Cross (2009) among Japanese ESL adults and its use was restricted to just one source, the BBC news videotexts.

**Implications of the Study**

The core of this research study was the investigation of the potential effects of explicit listening strategies instruction using authentic sources on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognitive awareness among students studying Spanish at the secondary school level. An interpretation of the data analyses and its implications are presented in this section.

Research Question One examined if differences existed after the treatment among the experimental and comparison groups on listening comprehension. The ANCOVA results obtained from the *Contextualized Listening Assessment* (CoLA) indicated that, when comparing the means on the posttest, there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups. In other words, the treatment of instructing students on listening strategies did not evidence an improvement of students' performance on listening
comprehension. However, further examination of the means after treatment between the experimental ($M = 24.23$, $SD = 5.99$) and the comparison group ($M = 18.80$, $SD = 6.80$) evidenced that the instruction of listening strategies resulted in higher scores for the treatment group. This outcome showed that the exposure to the treatment benefited the experimental students' listening comprehension. These results support the tenet of the communicative and proficiency oriented approaches to teaching L2 in the importance of developing the skill of listening, since language acquisition "is based on what we hear and understand" (Feyten, 1991, p. 175).

This study provided support in favor of the implementation of a strategy-based instructional model in the L2 classroom at the secondary level. Results from data analysis obtained from the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) indicated that there was a statistically significant effect on oral proficiency on Spanish students after receiving explicit instruction on listening strategies. Based on these findings, one could conclude that students who participate in instructional models in similar settings may increase their oral proficiency over time. These results supported the statement that "the key to achieving proficiency in speaking is developing proficiency in listening comprehension" (Dunkel, 1986, p.100). Furthermore, and in support of Krashen's Theory of Comprehensible Input (Krashen & Terrel, 1983), the best way, and perhaps the only way to teach speaking "is simply to provide comprehensible input" (p. 22).

Data analyses of the effects of strategy instruction on metacognitive awareness using the MALQ instrument showed no statistical differences between the treatment and comparison groups. In other words, instruction of listening strategies did not show evidence of increased metacognition on data collected from the self-reported questionnaire.
Potential Benefits for Teachers

The implementation of the treatment and the results obtained could provide WL practitioners with new approaches on how teach within the proficient and communicative framework. L2 teachers must pay attention to developing all language skills in a systematic and deliberate manner, and in particular, to the skill of listening. Learners who are taught what to do when faced a listening task and are guided on how to deal with the received aural input will be more likely to process it successfully. This study showed that teaching a repertoire of listening strategies to L2 students for a period of 8-weeks and exposing students to planned listening activities using authentic material resulted in differences in their oral proficiency scores. Therefore, students can benefit from such an instructional experience by increasing their ability to communicate in the target language.

These results are also encouraging in making the skill of listening and its instruction an essential component of the L2 curricula class. The results of this 8-week study also confirm previous research that alluded to the need of an extended period of strategies instruction, considering that "listening comprehension is a slow process" (Thompson & Rubin, 1996, p. 337). The researchers recommended that such instruction should take place for longer than a 15-hour span, which was the time frame in their study. Furthermore, they recommended that more listening should take place in and outside the classroom, and that teachers should focus on its process rather than just offering opportunities for listening or when assessing oral comprehension. The evaluation of listening should focus on task-based activities that engage L2 learners in more authentic, real-life situations, and meaningful activities.
In terms of metacognition, Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006) recommended that in an effective L2 program it is not enough to assess comprehension but rather that "listening assessment and listening instruction must be integrated" (p. 453). Additionally, they suggest that instructors could use the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) to chart the impact of listening strategies instruction and to assess "learners' growing awareness of the processes underlying successful L2 listening" (p. 453).

Other implications of implementing a strategy-based instructional model and its impact on student learning are the creation of awareness of the listening process among L2 learners as well as the students' role in managing their own learning. Such a model allows learners to become more motivated and engaged in the learning process (Vandergrift, 2003). Research that combined cognitive and metacognitive strategies in other subject matters has shown that learners "not only learn more but can also transfer strategies from task to task and continue to use strategies over time" (Thompson & Rubin, 1996, p.332). Consequently, providing students with strategies instruction could assist them since the use of strategies in L2 “is related to proficiency or achievement” (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002, p. 369). As a result, strategy acquisition and use may support learners in ensuring comprehensible input, which in turn may translate into an increase performance of L2. As previous studies have shown, students who are effective learners have a wider range of strategies at their disposal than students who are less effective (Thompson & Rubin, 1996). Another benefit of strategies instruction is that learners who are successful at using strategies to improve comprehension will also increase their motivation (Goh, 2008). According to Goh, metacognitive strategies instruction raises consciousness among learners and helps them to both identify problems and look for ways to solve them.
Results from this study may provide support of instructional changes and classroom practices that could have a tangible impact on students’ performance in the L2. While teachers might already incorporate strategies instruction in their pedagogy, it would appear that a more systematic and explicit instructional model could benefit L2 learners. Therefore, in translating research to classroom practices, teachers may wish to consider embedding strategy instruction in the curriculum, conducting explicit instruction, and allowing for ample practice and reinforcement of strategy use.

In the implementation of a listening strategies based program in the L2 classroom, teachers may consider embedding the following overarching ideas in the course work: (a) the skill of listening is an essential component in language acquisition, therefore, listening is given deliberate attention beyond "teacher talk", (b) strategies instruction is explicit, modeled by the teacher, and immediately applied to real foreign language tasks, and (c) the materials used for instruction are authentic, matching the students interests and providing a level of difficulty that challenges learners to access the strategies taught. Some instructional practices that support these steps could be: assigning names to each strategy, having students keep reflective journals on their strategy use after a listening activity, having discussions of strategy use after listening activity, and designating certain routines to signal a strategy instruction segment.

Another tangible potential benefit that resulted from this study is that bridges the gap between research and practitioners by presenting a strategy-based model ready to be replicated among any members of a Spanish classroom. This initiative could assist teachers in gaining confidence on how to teach listening comprehension rather than just providing exposure to listening (Mendelsohn, 1995). The treatment developed by this researcher and implemented during the study is a self-contained program, and is easily accessed online at
http://listeningstrategies.com. It provides the instructor with an overview of the relevance of strategy instruction in the Spanish classroom, a selection of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and suggestions on how to present these strategies to students. Furthermore, it allows students to review and practice on their own and at their own pace. The aural sources were carefully selected based on the possible interests of Spanish students at the secondary level and the age appropriateness of their content. Each strategy is accompanied by two authentic sources, which address a variety of topics and are representative of the diversity of speech patterns of people in the Spanish-speaking world. This teaching resource could be viewed as a complementary resource to any Spanish class curriculum and as a way of updating textbook audio samples with authentic materials. It is appropriate for any school setting.

The strategy-based instruction model implemented in this study also provided a wide range of listening strategies, clearly divided into cognitive and metacognitive, which were explicitly taught to L2 learners. The selection of strategies afforded flexibility; therefore instructors could choose those that were most appropriate for their instructional and curricular demands. The study also offered a theoretical approach to ensure optimal conditions for learning proposed by Gagné (1985), which had a practical application in the classroom through the nine events of instruction (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). In this instructional format, the teacher modeled the strategy, allowed time for practice, and gave feedback to students. Furthermore, students were offered a choice of two authentic sources to practice the strategy being introduced by accessing an online site created for the treatment of the study. Finally, teachers may encourage students to practice on their own outside the classroom time since the sources and definitions of the strategies were readily available to them over the Internet.
Limitations of the Study

Threats to external and internal validity were present in this research study. External validity refers to "the extent to which findings of an experiment can be applied to individuals and settings beyond those that were studied" (Gall, M., Gall, J., and Borg, W., 2003). Due to the size of the sample of convenience, \( n = 97 \) students, the target population from which the accessible population was obtained could have been underrepresented. Therefore, the results obtained could only be generalized to secondary schools with similar distinctiveness and to students with similar characteristics. In addition, the impossibility of random assignment could also have had an effect on the validity of the results, which was partially addressed by having experimental and comparison groups in two school sites as well as pretesting for the purpose of using a covariate, when appropriate. Another threat in the study was the presence of personological variables which may have interacted with the treatment, in particular, the participants' diversity in ages and grade levels.

External validity could also have been compromised due to the Hawthorne effect, or the improvement of performance due to the mere fact that participants' mere self awareness that they are taking part in the experiment, thus exhibiting behaviors that would be uncommon under non-experimental conditions. To compensate for this effect, the instruction of strategies was embedded in the curriculum and students were not given grades for the listening activities that were part of the treatment; they were asked however, to do their best and to fully participate during practice. The decision to withhold grades was based on the recommendation that strategies instruction is most successful when it is part of the set of language tasks that students are normally expected to accomplish in a classroom setting (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002).

The short span of the strategies instructional model allowed for a possible participants’ familiarity with the instruments, which could consequently have had an effect on the research
results, in other words, the threat of pretest sensitization existed. An experimenter effect was also present in the study due to the level effectiveness of the teachers in delivering the treatment. During class observations conducted by the researcher, there was some evidence that students may have reacted differently to the treatment based on the rapport with their teachers, and might have responded more or less favorably to the instructors' requests to fully participate during the instruction and practice periods. In order to minimize this risk, the researcher held regular conferences with both cooperating teachers and offered them strategies on how to maximize the students' engagement.

Another limitation to this study was the measurement of dependent variable oral proficiency. In other words, the reliability of the scores from the SOPI instrument could have been compromised because the two raters were trained just before the evaluation of the oral proficiency tests. In order to increase the reliability of the results, the researcher took the following steps: a) used interraters or having two raters evaluate the oral proficiency component of the research, b) conducted blind evaluations to hide rating results from the second rater, and c) carried out spot calibrations by selecting cases and evaluating them in order to further standardize the rating process.

Threats to internal validity existed in this study given that student improvement could not be isolated to the treatment since many factors could have impacted student achievement and affect, including the classroom teacher, students’ maturation, parental support, and many other variables. One extraneous variable that could have impacted the observed differences between groups was experimental mortality or the loss of participants due to missing pretesting or posttesting or participants' absence during testing. Attrition could have been minimized by
setting more stricter guidelines for the administration and timeline of the tests and by keeping updated account of the number of test-takers at any given time.

Treatment fidelity could have compromised the internal validity of the experiment due to the fact that the investigator and the people who administered the treatment and collected the data were different individuals. This threat was minimized by training the cooperating teachers, providing detailed written guidelines and providing easily accessed material to implement the treatment. Additionally, teachers were observed three times during the experimental process with a follow-up session to ensure that any questions or concerns were addressed, and the researcher and cooperating teachers maintained close contact through electronic communication.

In order to minimize threats to internal validity and due to the fact that there were an inconsistent number of participants who completed the pre and posttests, the researcher modified the original concept of implementing multivariate data analyses to using a univariate design, thus increasing the risk of making a Type I error. This risk was reduced by the use of a Bonferroni correction, applied to the selected probability level, raising the \( p \) value from .05 to .017. Finally, threats were also reduced by using students’ pre-treatment scores as a covariate. However, there was still a possibility that the pretest did not accurately identify initial differences between the groups (Isaacs & Michaels, 1995).

**Suggestions for Future Studies**

There is evidence from previous research that strategy-based instruction may support learners in acquiring and becoming proficient in L2. However, there is need to investigate what factors facilitate the acquisition and application of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to listening tasks among high school students learning of L2 other than English. Also,
research is needed to inquire the extent and manner of outcomes that would be produced if a treatment of this type was implemented for longer than 8-weeks.

Another area that merits investigation of strategy-based instruction on language acquisition and language proficiency is the identification of those sets of strategies that are most effective in the L2 class according to students’ level of proficiency, and which can be later taught to learners who lack the knowledge of strategy use.

Furthermore, using qualitative methodology, it would be valuable to investigate which factors may impede the implementation of a strategies-based instructional model from the perspective of the L2 students and teachers, expanding on introspective and retrospective accounts on the content and processes involved in a strategy-based model.

Finally, further investigating the selection process of authentic sources could assist in designing pedagogical criteria that meet the learning needs and the interests of students and instructors in the L2 classroom at the secondary level. One area that emerged in the design of this research study was the use of videotext as an alternative to the exclusive use of aural sources. With the more generalized use of technology, students in today’s classrooms are more likely to access this type of aural input. Further research is needed in investigating more systematically the types of strategies used according to the type of tasks L2 learners are required to perform in their classrooms.

Future studies may also consider researching differences in populations such as those who are novice in language learning and those who have taken a L2 for a greater number of years, and how those groups deal with listening tasks. Such understanding could help in the evaluation of current practices and identify areas of potential benefits related to strategic knowledge and deployment.
In terms of the use of authentic material, research is needed in investigating the impact that authentic sources have in overall language proficiency. While there is evidence that the use of authentic input had “a positive perceived effect on comprehension and satisfaction, and a negative perceived effect on frustration” (Bacon, 1990, p. 469), research is needed to determine to what extend these sources impact language acquisition beyond the affective domain among L2 learners.

**Conclusions**

The findings of this research study, which attempted to evaluate the effects of strategy based instruction of listening strategies on listening comprehension, oral proficiency, and metacognition, shed light on the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which is based on communicative language use. At the core of this investigation was the refutation of a traditional notion that has viewed listening "not as a skill, but as an activity to be used in foreign language instruction" (Feyten, 1991, p. 175). The importance of listening was supported by its essential role in language acquisition and in its purposefulness in L2 learning which underscores the need “to emphasize notional-functional concepts and communicative competence” (Omaggio, 1991, p. 104). Thus, addressing the development of the listening process and enhancing the effectiveness of the skill of listening in L2 learners could boost that objective. One way teachers could support the students' listening competence is through a systematic strategy instruction model, which in turn could offer an additional benefit: "the development of the independent language learner" (Graham & Macaro, 2008, p. 756). This study has contributed in a modest way to address the "apparent gap between L2 theory and practice [which] can be bridged through the design of specific classroom activities that focus on the process of listening" (Vandergrift, 2003, p.246). The present research added to
that effect by offering practitioners empirical tools and examples of free resources that can be incorporated in a Spanish class in order to make gains in oral proficiency.

Ultimately, the application of research findings rests with the practitioner, since research does not guarantee informed practice. If teachers are equipped with knowledge and understanding about how learning to listen can take place, it will also "help some to reappraise their role as teachers of listening" (Goh, 2008, p. 208). Ultimately, L2 teachers need to respond to the need to prepare students in becoming effective communicators in a global economy and in dealing with issues of national security and wellbeing. By instructing learners on how to become effective and efficient listeners in a second language could enhance this process.
References


www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf


Appendix A - Listening Strategies Training Manual

Listening Strategies Training Manual

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January 2009

Strategies need to be modeled by the teacher so that students can observe how an expert uses strategies. Because many strategies are mental rather than observable, the teacher needs to model them by thinking aloud.

Of the four skills in second language acquisition the one that has received the least attention in the classroom is the skill of listening, which has been referred to as the “Cinderella” skill. However, language teachers recognize its importance in the input-output continuum. One way to assist language teachers address this deficit is the implementation of a program of deliberate and consistent instruction of listening strategies.

Strategies can be taught and learned, while aptitudes are generally thought to be innate and unchangeable. Using strategies maintains students motivated and mentally active in their learning, and helps them understand and remember the material better. In addition, studies have shown that effective students have at their disposal a wide range of learning strategies which they use often and which are tailored to the demands of the language tasks.

This strategies instruction program includes a selection of metacognitive and cognitive listening strategies. Metacognitive strategies help the student to manage and regulate their learning by planning how to go about the task, check their progress while engaged in the task, or evaluating their performance. Cognitive strategies are those mental activities related to comprehending and storing input in working or long-term memory for later use. They involve working directly with the material we want to learn, and often help students accomplish the task.

Finally, this program is embedded in the actual curriculum of high school Spanish classes and uses authentic aural material. It was conceived under the premise that language is learned best when used to understand ideas and functions that are meaningful to students.

Introduction
Prior to the implementation of the program, the researcher introduces the program to the students and discusses with them which strategies they are currently using and reinforces the value of their prior knowledge about strategies.

Presentation
Strategies need to be modeled by the teacher so that students can observe how an expert uses strategies. Because many strategies are mental rather than observable, the teacher needs to model them by thinking aloud. Teacher first names and describes the strategy to be taught and provides a reason for their use. This needs to be direct and explicit.
Metacognitive

Planning

1. Directed attention
Directing one’s attention means deciding in advance to pay attention to the main points in a listening task in order to gain a general understanding of what is being said. This requires the listener to focus their attention and to maintain it for the duration of the task. It requires persistence and self-discipline.

Students need to be told that they cannot do something else while they listen and that they cannot allow themselves to be distracted. They must learn that attention is a force under learner control.

Teacher: Asks students what type of information they would expect to hear. “You are listening to the news. What would you hear at the beginning of the news?”


2. Selective attention
This strategy requires narrowing the focus of attention to seek out only a small part of the context or details, as opposed to, intensive attention to the whole task.

Teacher: Before listeners listen a second time, ask students to listen a second time to identify specific information such as the name of two ingredients in a recipe, or use an advance organizer to point out what the focus of attention will be.

A. http://www.verter-taal.com/noticias_dejardefumar.htm
Pregunta: ¿Cuánto tiempo toma a un ex-fumador notar los efectos de dejar el cigarillo?

B. Muchos casos de cáncer son prevenibles. ¿Qué se debe hacer para prevenir el cáncer? http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/spanish/detail/151792.html

3. Advance organization
Decide what the objectives of a specific listening task are. Why is it important to pay attention to this message?

Teacher: Writes the topic of the aural segment on the board (e.g. train announcements) and asks learners why it would be important to listen to this type of announcement.

A. http://www.verter-taal.com/pub_agua.htm (see indefinite subject)
Monitoring

4. Comprehension monitoring

Self-monitoring takes place during the task execution and refers to thinking about what you do as you do it.

Teacher: sets up a task that requires listeners to understand one part of the task at a time. They monitor in stages so that the final part is easily understood.

A. La liebre y la tortuga (audio + text)

B. Platero y Yo
http://ia311338.us.archive.org/2/items/jrj-pyy001010/albalearning-jimenez_platero_001-138.mp3

5. Auditory understanding

Listener makes a decision about whether or not something “sounds right.”

Teacher: Asks students to use their perception or intuition to determine, for example, how a character feels.


B. Vístete de rojo en el día del corazón. ¿Cuáles son los beneficios de usar este color? http://www.univision.com/content/videoplayer.jhtml?cid=2268664

Evaluation

6. Performance evaluation

Checking one’s own performance against and internal measure of completeness and accuracy; checking one’s language repertoire strategy use, or the ability to perform the task at hand. It involves returning to the completed task, examining it for ways to improve it, to complete it, or to verify understanding or make corrections.

Teacher: Asks learners to evaluate their performance by raising their hand if they think they understood 100%, 75%, 50%.

B. Aventura hizo historia en Nueva York. ¿Cómo se sintió Aventura al cantar con otros artistas?
http://www.univision.com/content/videoplayer.jhtml?cid=2266275

7. Problem identification
Listeners identify which problems still exist that prevent them from completing the task successfully.

Teacher: Asks student what part of the text was difficult to comprehend.

A. La Cenicienta

B. La Torre de Babel. ¿Cuál es la razón por la que este segmento recibe este nombre?
http://www.ver-taal.com/noticias_20100119_lenguas.htm

Cognitive Strategies

Inferencing

8. Linguistic inferencing
In general, speakers seldom provide all the information necessary to understand the message, or they utter the obvious. The listener is often left to guess the meaning of words based on their perception and previous knowledge. This refers to guessing the meaning of words by linking them to known words.

Teacher: Writes some difficult words on the board drawing the students’ attention to them. As they listen, the teacher encourages them to guess the meaning from their understanding of the whole text.

A. ¿A qué se refiere “La dama boba”?
&titulo1=La+dama+boba%3A+relativamente+f%E1cil.+Entrevista+a+Jos%E9+Luis+Alonso+de+Santos&portal=0&ref=10882

B. Actor Will Smith colabora con el PMA en Haití. ¿Qué trabajo hace el PMA?
http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/spanish/detail/150438.html

9. Paralinguistic inferencing
Listener uses visual features to enhance his understanding. Body language, gestures, facial expressions could be of help to the listener. Also, other visual aids such as maps, diagrams, pictures or images in a video can help contextualize the listening input and provide clues.

Teacher: make students aware of the additional information available by paying attention to visuals that may accompany the task.
10. Inferencing between parts
Making use of certain words in the text that may not be related to the task in order to get more information about the task.

Teacher: Points out that the information at the beginning of the text will help the learner understand later sections of the text.

A. Japanese men express their love (En Japón los hombres son modestos y reservados…)

B. Precios de té se mantienen altos. Pero ¿por qué se espera una baja del precio?
http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/spanish/detail/149871.html

Elaboration
11. Personal elaboration
The listener makes use of prior personal experiences to comprehend the task.

Teacher: Asks the learners to talk about their experiences that they have had that relate to the topic of the aural source.

A. Reacciones a la visita de Madonna a la Argentina. ¿Has ido a algún concierto de música? O si fueras a uno ¿Cómo te imaginas que sería la experiencia?

B. Precios de té se mantienen altos. Pero ¿por qué se espera una baja del precio?
http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/spanish/detail/149871.html

12. Questioning elaboration
Learners question themselves about what they do and do not know about the topic.

Teacher: Sets up brainstorming sessions before, during or after a listening task for learners to question themselves about what they know about the situation

A. Los Reyes de España (tema la ropa)

B. Cosplayers (disfraces de personajes de video-juegos, en Ciudad de México
http://www.univision.com/content/videoplayer.jhtml?cid=1633719
13. Imagery

Students use mental imagery to create a picture of what is happening in the aural input.

Teacher: Asks the learner to keep their eyes closed while listening to a story and try to picture what is happening.

A. “Platero y yo”
   http://ia311338.us.archive.org/2/items/jrj-pyy001010/albalearning-jimenez_platero_001-138.mp3

B. El lenguaje del abanico. Mira las preguntas y luego las instrucciones.

**Summarization**

14. Summarization

Learners make a mental or written summary of what they hear.

Teacher: Asks learners to give an oral summary to each other, or to write one or two sentences to summarize what they have heard.

A. Héroes Latinos animados  Resumen del segmento

B. ¿Qué hizo posible el éxito para los Tigres del Norte?

15. Transfer

Learners use knowledge about their first language to facilitate listening to the second language.

Teacher: Could draw student’s attention to words in the L2 that are similar to words in the L1.

A. Los grafiteros y policías se reconcilian en México
   http://www.univision.com/content/videoplayer.jhtml?cid=1408259

B. La fotógrafa de Los Obamas
   http://www.univision.com/content/videoplayer.jhtml?cid=1814985
16. Repetition
Learners repeat word they listen to so that they become familiar with sounds. Silent repetition occurs when the learner silently practices in his/her own mind in order to remember, comprehend, visualize, or reproduce language.

Teacher: Allows listeners to look at the text while listening to the story. While listening, they read the story quietly to themselves.

A. “La lengua de las mariposas”. Students may complete missing words

http://www.ver-taal.com/trailer_lengua.htm

B. Combatir el calor (anuncio/mandatos)

http://www.ver-taal.com/pub_oladecalor.htm
Appendix B – Screen Capture of www.ListeningStrategies.com

In this web site you will find resources related to the research study “Listening Strategies Instruction.”

**STUDENTS** please click on the STUDENT button on the left to go to your instructional page.

**TEACHERS** please click on the TEACHERS button on the left for simple instructions.

Please complete the **SURVEY**.

Questions? [Email](mailto:info@listeningstrategies.com)
Appendix C - Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)

The statements below describe some strategies for listening comprehension, and how you feel about listening in the language you are learning. Do you agree with them?

This is not a test, so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. By responding to these statements, you can help yourself and your teacher understand your progress in learning to listen.

Please indicate your opinion after each statement. Circle the number which best shows your level of agreement with the statement. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Partly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like learning another language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please circle only ONE number for each statement

1. Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. I find that listening in Spanish is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in Spanish...  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. I translate in my head as I listen.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don’t understand.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

7. As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. I feel that listening comprehension in Spanish is a challenge for me.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

9. I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6

10. Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6

11. I translate key words as I listen.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6

12. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.  
    1 2 3 4 5 6
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I don’t feel nervous when I listen to Spanish.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I don’t understand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I translate word by word, as I listen.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I have a goal in mind as I listen.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attached you will find a copy of the questionnaire and a draft of an interpretation guide. Please do not distribute the latter; I am forwarding it to you for purposes of interpretation of scores. You should be able to use this with students of any language. You just need to change the name of the language in the questionnaire.

Let me know how your research progresses.

Best wishes,

Larry Vandergrift, Ph.D.
Professor/Professeur titulaire
Director/ Directeur
Le Centre canadien d'études et de recherche en bilinguisme et aménagement linguistique (CCERBAL)
Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute/Institut des langues officielles et du bilinguisme (ILOB)
Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa
600 King Edward, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5


11/29/2008
Appendix E - Informed Consent for Minors and/or person with legal guardian(s)

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a Spanish teacher at Wilton High School and am currently enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study. This study will occur during the spring of 2009.

The purpose of the study is to assess the potential benefits of explicit instruction of listening strategies on Spanish learners’ listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition. In order to assess the impact of strategies instruction, students will be given pre and posttests on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition using the Contextualized Listening Assessment (Cola), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). The study will be conducted from February to May and students will be instructed on listening strategies as a compliment to their curriculum.

A report of the findings will be made available to the district personnel but individual responses will be kept confidential. Furthermore, all student names will be removed from the instruments and codes will be used to insure their anonymity.

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. The results of this study may provide the educational community with data that help channel choices regarding how best to guide teachers regarding best instructional practices in second language classroom instruction.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw permission for your child’s participation at any time. If you have any questions, please contact me at anazobler@snet.net or phone at (203) 762-0381 x 6025.

Thank you for your cooperation and your contribution to this research. If you agree to participate, please sign this form and have your child return it to his or her Spanish language teacher as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Ana C. Zobler

I, ______________________________, the parent/legal guardian of the student minor below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child’s participation. I voluntarily consent to my child’s participation. I understand all information gathered during this study will be completely confidential.

Student/Minor’s Name: ______________________________

Signature of Parent or Guardian: ______________________________

Date: ______________
Appendix F - Student Assent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Student,

My name is Señora Ana Zobler and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU). The title of my research project is Effects of Listening Strategies Instruction on Listening Comprehension, Oral Proficiency and Metacognition. You are being asked to participate in this research study because the outcome of this study could potentially help students improve their performance in foreign languages.

If you consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to take a series of assessments which will help us in our evaluation. These assessments will be completely anonymous and will have no impact on your grades. All responses will be kept confidential and your identity will be coded to protect your privacy.

If you have any questions about this research, please call me at 203-762-0381, extension 6025 or email me at anazobler@snet.net. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the WCSU Institutional Review Board. If you have questions concerning the rights of the subjects involved in research studies, please call the WCSU Assurances Administrator at (203) 837-8281.

Thank you in advance for participating in this important study.

Sincerely,

Ana C. Zobler

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Student’s Name:__________________________________________________________

Signed: __________________________ Date: ________________
Appendix G - Permission from District Superintendent

Permission to Conduct Research in your District

Dear ________________.

I am a Spanish teacher at Wilton High School and am enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study which I would like to conduct in your district.

The purpose of the study is to assess the potential benefits of explicit instruction of listening strategies on Spanish learners’ listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition. In order to assess the impact of strategies instruction, students will be given pre and posttests on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition using the Contextualized Listening Assessment (Cola), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). The sample will consist of 120 students enrolled in freshman levels II and III Spanish classes. Two teachers will be trained in the instruction and implementation of the program. They will teach six classes, of which three will be assigned to receive the treatment of explicit instruction of listening strategies while the remaining three classes will act as the comparison. Students will be instructed on listening strategies as a complement to the regular curriculum. The study will be conducted from February to May 2009. Teacher training and instructional materials used during the study will be made available to all language teachers at the conclusion of the instructional program.

A report of the findings will be made available to the district personnel but individual responses will be kept confidential. Furthermore, all student names will be removed from the instruments and codes will be used to insure their anonymity.

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. The results of this study may provide the educational community with data that help channel choices regarding how best to guide teachers on instructional practices that support student achievement in the second language classroom.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at anazobler@snet.net or phone at (203) 762-0381 x 6025. I will greatly appreciate the participation of your district in this study, for which I will require written permission before I can proceed.

I, ______________________________, Superintendent of ________________________ acknowledge that Ms. Zobler has explained to me the purpose of this study. I consent to having the research study conducted in __________________________ School District.

Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix H - Permission from Principal to Conduct Research in a School

Principal
High School

Dear Mr.__________.

As you know, I am enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study which I would like to conduct at Oxford High School.

The purpose of the study is to assess the potential benefits of explicit instruction of listening strategies on Spanish learners’ listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition. In order to assess the impact of strategies instruction, students will be given pre and posttests on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition using the Contextualized Listening Assessment (Cola), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). The sample will consist of 120 students enrolled in freshman levels II and III Spanish classes. Two teachers will be trained in the instruction and implementation of the program. They will teach six classes, of which three will be assigned to receive the treatment of explicit instruction of listening strategies while the remaining three classes will act as the comparison. Students will be instructed on listening strategies as a complement to the regular curriculum. The study will be conducted from February to May 2009 at two sites. Teacher training and instructional materials used during the study will be made available to all language teachers at the conclusion of the instructional program.

A report of the findings will be made available to the district personnel but individual responses will be kept confidential. Furthermore, all student names will be removed from the instruments and codes will be used to insure their anonymity.

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. The results of this study may provide the educational community with data that help channel choices regarding how best to guide teachers on instructional practices that support student achievement in the second language classroom.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at anazobler@snet.net or phone at (203) 762-0381 x 6025. I will greatly appreciate the participation of your school in this study, for which I will require written permission before I can proceed.

Thank you in advance for your support to this research study.

Sincerely,

Ana C. Zobler

I, ______________________________, Principal at _________________________ acknowledge that Ms. Zobler has explained to me the purpose of this study. I consent to having the research study conducted at High School.

Signature

Date: ______________
Appendix I - Informed Consent for Participating Teachers

Dear Teacher,

I am a Spanish teacher at Wilton High School and am enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study. This study will occur during the spring of 2009.

The purpose of the study is to assess the potential benefits of explicit instruction of listening strategies on Spanish learners’ listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition. In order to assess the impact of strategies instruction, students will be given pre and posttests on listening comprehension, oral proficiency and metacognition using the Contextualized Listening Assessment (Cola), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)). The sample will consist of 120 students enrolled in freshman levels II and III Spanish classes. Two teachers will be trained in the instruction and implementation of the program. They will teach six classes, of which three will be assigned to receive the treatment of explicit instruction of listening strategies while the remaining three classes will act as the comparison. The study will be conducted from February to May and students will be instructed on listening strategies as a complement to their curriculum.

A report of the findings will be made available to the district personnel but individual responses will be kept confidential. Furthermore, all student names will be removed from the instruments and codes will be used to insure their anonymity.

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. The results of this study may provide the educational community with data that help channel choices regarding how best to guide teachers on instructional practices that support student achievement in the second language classroom.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions, please contact me at anazobler@snet.net or phone at (203) 762-0381 x 6025.

Thank you for your cooperation and your contribution to this research. If you agree to participate, please sign this form and return it to me. A copy for your records is provided.

Sincerely,

Ana C. Zobler

I, ______________________________, Teacher at _________________________ acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my students’ participation. I voluntarily consent to participate. I understand that all information gathered during this study will be completely confidential.

Signature __________________________________________

Date: _____________
Appendix J – ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Speaking

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES: SPEAKING
Revised 1999

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking (1986) have gained widespread application as a metric against which to measure learners' functional competency; that is, their ability to accomplish linguistic tasks representing a variety of levels. Based on years of experience with oral testing in governmental institutions and on the descriptions of language proficiency used by Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), the ACTFL Guidelines were an adaptation intended for use in academia (college and university levels particularly) in the United States. For this reason, the authors of the Provisional Guidelines (1982) conflated the top levels (ILR 3-5), expanded the descriptions of the lower levels (ILR 0-1), and defined sublevels of competency according to the experience of language instructors and researchers accustomed to beginning learners. Their efforts were further modified and refined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines published in 1986.

After additional years of oral testing and of interpretation of the Guidelines, as well as numerous research projects, scholarly articles, and debates, the time has come to reevaluate and refine the Guidelines, initially those for Speaking, followed by those for the other skills. The purposes of this revision of the Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking are to make the document more accessible to those who have not received recent training in ACTFL oral proficiency testing, to clarify the issues that have divided testers and teachers, and to provide a corrective to what the committee perceived to have been possible misinterpretations of the descriptions provided in earlier versions of the Guidelines.

An important example is the treatment of the Superior level. The ILR descriptions postulate a spectrum of proficiency abilities from 0 which signifies no functional competence, to 5 which is competence equivalent to that of a well-educated native speaker. Due to the language levels most often attained by adult learners, the ACTFL Guidelines do not include descriptions of the highest ILR levels. The ACTFL Superior level, roughly equivalent to the ILR 3 range, is thus to be seen as a baseline level; that is, it describes a particular set of functional abilities essential to that level, but not necessarily the whole range of linguistic activities that an educated speaker with years of experience in the target language and culture might attain. Keeping this distinction in mind reduces the tendency to expect the Superior speaker to demonstrate abilities defined at higher ILR levels.
For this reason, among others, the committee has broken with tradition by presenting this version of the Speaking Guidelines in descending rather than ascending order. This top-down approach has two advantages. First, it emphasizes that the High levels are more closely related to the level above than to the one below, and represents a considerable step towards accomplishing the functions at the level above, not just excellence in the functions of the level itself. Second, it allows for fewer negatives and less redundancy in the descriptions when they refer, as they must, to the inability of a speaker to function consistently at a higher level.

Another significant change to the 1986 version of the Guidelines is found in the division of the Advanced level into the High, Mid, and Low sublevels. This decision reflects the growing need in both the academic and commercial communities to more finely delineate a speaker’s progress through the Advanced level of proficiency. The new descriptors for Advanced Mid and Advanced Low are based on hundreds of Advanced-level language samples from OPI testing across a variety of languages.

The committee has also taken a slightly different approach to the presentation of these Guidelines from previous versions. The full prose descriptions of each level (and, when applicable, its sub-levels) are preceded by clearly delineated thumb-nail sketches that are intended to alert the reader to the major features of the levels and to serve as a quick reference, but not in any way to replace the full picture presented in the descriptions themselves. Indeed, at the lower levels they refer to the Mid rather than to the baseline proficiency, since they would otherwise describe a very limited profile and misrepresent the general expectations for the level.

This revision of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines CSpeaking is presented as an additional step toward more adequately describing speaking proficiency. Whereas this effort reflects a broad spectrum of experience in characterizing speaker abilities and includes a wide range of insights as a result of on-going discussions and research within the language teaching profession, the revision committee is aware that there remain a number of issues requiring further clarification and specification. It is the hope of the committee that this revision will enhance the Guidelines’ utility to the language teaching and testing community in the years to come.

Acknowledgments

ACTFL is indebted to the following individuals who contributed to the original ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Project of 1986: Heidi Byrnes, James Child, Nina Patrizio, Pardee Lowe, Jr., Seifichi Makino, Irene Thompson, and A. Ronald Walton. Their work was the foundation for this revision project.

We would also like to thank the following committee members and reviewers who generously gave of their time and expertise during the current revision process: Lucia Caycedo Garner, Helen Hamlyn, Judith Liskin-Gasparro, Arthur Mosher, Lizette Mujica Laughlin, Chantal Thompson, and Maureen Weissenrieder.

Finally, ACTFL wishes to acknowledge the work of the Guidelines’ editors, and authors of the Explanatory Notes that accompany the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines CSpeaking (Revised 1999). They are Karen E. Breiner-Sanders, Pardee Lowe, Jr., John Miles, Elvira Swender.
SUPERIOR
Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers own language patterns, rather than those of the target language.

Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH
Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID
Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.
ADVANCED LOW
Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grapple and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain “grammatical roughness.” The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature.

Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH
Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g., use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

INTERMEDIATE MID
Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.
INTERMEDIATE LOW
Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creasing with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH
Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID
Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW
Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.
Appendix K - Human Subjects Research Review Form

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Human Subjects Research Review Form

Principal Investigator: Ana C. Zobler
Department Doctoral Student – Instructional Leadership
Address signed form should be sent to:
E-mail: anazobler@snet.net
Phone number: ____________________________

New research project ___ X ___ Continuation ___ Modification ___ Teaching ___
____ Exempt Review
____ X ___ Expedited/Full Review

To complete this form, please follow the instructions in sections A and B.

The department chair and the principal investigator must sign this form. If the P.I. is a student, his/her faculty supervisor must also sign.

Assurance of continued compliance with regulations regarding the use of human subjects. I certify that the information provided for this project is accurate. If procedures for obtaining consent of subjects change, or if the risk of physical, psychological, or social injury increases, or if unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others should arise, I shall promptly report such changes to the Institutional Review Board. I shall report promptly unanticipated injury of a subject to my department chair and to the Institutional Review Board.

________________________________________________________
Principal Investigator’s Signature
Date

________________________________________________________
Faculty Supervisor’s Signature (if PI is a student)
Date

________________________________________________________
Department Chair’s signature
Date

===========================================================================
Committee Action:

____ Approved through exempt review ___ X ___ Approved by full committee review
____ Approved through expedited review _____ Not approved; clarification or modification required

________________________________________________________
IRB Chair’s Signature
Date

Approved on February 17, 2009