English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia

Wu Xiao Juan
Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin

Abstract

This research discusses the English listening comprehension problems of university international students from China. The research used a qualitative method to collect data from three Chinese students taking English Listening Comprehension (ELC) in University Sains Malaysian (USM). This study is a research report related to the problems encountered by China's students in ELC learning. The interview was conducted to investigate students' perspective through the main question concerning the problems of the Chinese students in their ELC self-learning process, in three steps, which include the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. Findings from this study indicate that the main problem faced by the Chinese students is the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary, and this inhibits their understanding in the listening process. Moreover, the differences in the accent of the native speakers prohibit the proper understanding of the listening content, the short span of concentration, and the learning habits of Chinese students were discussed as the problems of the ELC learning. This enhances the data availability and the interpretative analysis.

In order to validate the data and the analysis, experiences and documents analyses were conducted. This research laid a good foundation for further research; it provided useful information concerning the effective strategies to enhance students' listening skills and will improve the instruction of English listening class to achieve the win-win situation.

Keywords: English listening strategies, English listening problems, Listening habit, vocabulary

1. Introduction

The study of English in China has been and still is an important subject for worldwide communication. And approximately 90% of published academic articles are written in English (Crystal, 1997). The situation in China is that language traditionally is treated as an

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia
367

academic subject, and China's student have been required to study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) beginning from secondary school. But the problem has persisted over the decades because the aim of English teaching in China has been primarily to train students to pass various kinds of examinations: entrance examinations for high schools and colleges have been especially emphasized (Lee, 1991).The traditional grammar-translation instructional methods have been widely adopted in both junior and senior high schools (Chen, 2003). Thus, a kind of examination-guided EFL instruction with heavy focus on lecturing from selected textbook materials has caused most students to fail the learning of real-life communicative English (Wang, 2008). The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information for devising and conducting more effective English as a Second Language (ESL) listening comprehension at the language center in USM.

1.1   Background of Study

Listening is an essential part of the language learning process, but listening is difficult for Chinese students, even if they are using English as the second language in Malaysia. On the one hand, listening is the weakest skill in English learning due to the Examination Education System (EES), the ELC learning is focussed on the examination-oriented strategy; it is called "dumb English" by some English educator in China, such as Wang (2009), a young language researcher in China. With the aforementioned introduction, the researcher had summarized two scenarios faced by a Chinese student in ELC as below:

1. English listening skills are not sufficiently acquired by the students. This is because English listening skills are very much dependent on sufficient acquisition of grammatical knowledge and adequate vocabulary skills which many Chinese students do not possess.
2. The small and limited English speaking environment has severely restricted the Chinese students to speak English confidently. That is to say, an immersive environment for English speaking is not there. Even in the English classes, the Chinese students are afraid of being jeered at and ridiculed by the teacher or the other students when they attempt to speak English.

On the other hand, ELC is very important in English learning. Listening is widely acknowledged as a neglected skill due to the insufficient pedagogical development and perhaps even teachers' training (Mendelsohn, 1998; Takahashi, 1999). In other language

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   368

skills, such as writing, reading and speaking, listening competency receives significantly less attention in the Malaysian classroom (Mathai, 2005). For the Chinese student, listening is perhaps the most important communication skill needed for success and for graduation. In this context, this study explores the listening problems and strategies faced by the Chinese students with the major aim of improving their listening skills in general.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

As the enrolment of Chinese students increase every year in the higher education institutions in Malaysia, the researcher felt the need to survey Chinese students' level of ELC listening comprehension and speaking proficiency. In pursuit of this objective, it is crucial that self-learning approach is emphasized as an important skill in language learning. Over the years, English communicative competence has always been inadequate for the Chinese students. This is especially true when students did not improve significantly in their ELC proficiency. Therefore, research needs to be conducted for the search of a more effective English instruction; in this regard, one of the research methods is to investigate students' perceptions regarding their ELC proficiency.

1.3   Research Questions

Specifically, the following research questions guided the study:

1) What are the ELC problems faced by the students from China in Malaysia?

2) Why are these ELC problems not solved, in practice until now?

3) How do these problems affect students on their listening strategies and pace of listening?

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1   A Brief History of the Listening Skill in Language Learning in China

According to Cheng (2012), the English listening class had been introduced into China with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in the 1970s. ELC was first added to the lists of subjects of college entrance examination in Guangdong Province since 1999. The College English Curriculum Requirements (for trial implementation) reported in January 2004, students' abilities of independent learning should be developed and enhanced, especially for speaking and listening. In 2006, ELC was added into the postgraduate entrance

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   369

uniform examination, and with the deepening of the innovation of college English teaching and learning, the proportion of ELC subject in College English Test (CET) has reached 35%. Therefore, the students' listening comprehension ability was made valuable gradually in the English teaching of Chinese higher education; nevertheless, exam-orientated education and ELC teaching are still in one set.

2.2   The Condition of ELC Learning in Malaysia

When English becomes more and more important, a lot of students choose the different learning environments which use English as first or second language. Malaysia is a multilingual country with various ethnic groups. The Main ethnic groups are Malay 50.3%, Chinese 24.2%, and Indian 7.1%. And the national language is Malay, but English is widely used as second language. Under British colonial rule for almost a century, English education was zealously pushed by the British colonial authority, and the English language dominated the leading role in political, economical and legal fields. Malaysians adopted the Roman Script to write the Bahasa Malayu after 1957 as official language. English and Bahasa Malayu share some fairly similar language writing conventions. After that, the government, the administration of commerce and education also adopted general English, due to English environment and the British Commonwealth system. Many people can communicate in English in Malaysia; basically the local people can speak in English besides the national language. But there are some discernible differences between Malaysian English and British English.

2.3   Problems in Listening and in Pedagogy

Although the previous section discussed what is involved in the skill of listening, the specific problems that teaching listening brings are not self-evident. And although research on the skill is limited, some valuable sources offer valid comments on the problems involved in teaching listening. Lund (1991) points out some of the unique characteristics of listening that differentiate it from the other receptive skill. In other words, listeners are forced to comprehend in real time, rather than having a text to peruse and review. An example Lund (1991) uses to illustrate this point is that of cognates, which could scaffold comprehension with written text, yet might not work with listening comprehension because of phonetic variations which could render them unidentifiable.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   370

Anderson and Lynch (2003) also address problems posed by listeners' background knowledge and schemata. Language is the means used by a community to express facts, ideas, beliefs, rules, and so on - in short, to express its culture. Although an English language learner might know the meaning of the words "paper" and "plastic," he or she might not understand that in American supermarkets, patrons are often asked to choose the type of bag for their purchases. Thus, the listener may be confused at the meanings of these words in this context, if this were not an element of shopping procedures in his or her culture of origin.

In addition to pointing out this affective, cultural aspect of problems with the skill, Anderson and Lynch (2003) also discuss prerequisite skills for listening that may pose problems for listeners deficient in these areas. The first of the three prerequisite skills which they describe is "the ability to recognize the topic of conversation from the native speaker's initial remarks". This is a top-down, cognitive process that involves reviewing, comprehension, and memory, which according to Bacon (1992), is an ingredient of monitoring, the most prevalent met by cognitive listening strategy. The second of the important skills that Anderson and Lynch (2003) mention is the listener's ability to make predictions about likely developments of the topic to which he will have to respond. This further illustrates the simultaneous, intertwined nature of the use of all these skills, and how they are likely to occur at any point during the listening process. The third skill of prime importance is the ability to recognize and signal when he has not understood enough of the input to make a prediction or a response. These explicit signals are crucial, as they usually elicit a repetition or reformulation by the native speaker, and so give the listener another chance to make a relevant response.

Research suggests that the metacognitive skills of self-monitoring and self-evaluation are crucial to learning the listening effectively, and a necessary additional instructional focus in the language classroom. Brindley and Slatyer's (2002) similar research identified still other problems. Among these are:

The nature of input: speech rate, length of passage, syntactic complexity, vocabulary, discourse, noise level, accent, register, propositional density, amount of redundancy, etc. The nature of the assessment task: amount of context provided, clarity of instructions, response

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 371

format, availability of question preview, etc.; and the individual listener factors: memory, interest, background knowledge, motivation, etc.

Whereas many of these factors overlap with the previously quoted research, these lists are not exhaustive, and these factors are multi-faceted. Holly (2008) points out that if listeners cannot use top-down processing effectively and successfully, speakers' utterances or messages cannot be understood. The reverse is also true. Without bottom-up ability, listeners cannot make good use of top-down processing. In short, for fluent listening, top-down and bottom-up processing are needed.

Likewise, a listener's effective combining of these skills for the ultimate purpose of comprehension involves a combining of systemic knowledge and schematic information (Anderson & Lynch, 2003). Schematic knowledge includes background knowledge and procedural knowledge. Listeners combine this with systemic knowledge regarding the language system, that is, including semantic, syntactic, and phonological knowledge, and the knowledge of the context of the situation, which is affected by setting and participants, and by knowledge of what has been said as well as the ability to make predictions (Anderson & Lyuch, 2003). Under a modern model of listening, in which the ultimate goal is comprehension as opposed to memorization, these are some of the realistic factors that a student of second language confronts, before he can start listening effectively.

2.4   Assessing Listening Skills

Furthermore, Brindley and Slatyer (2002) point out some practical implications regarding reliable assessment task design for the listening comprehension skill. They assert that reliable assessment of the listening skill is difficult to achieve, due to issues with construct validity, pointing out that the test-developer is placed in the position of having to describe the listening skills that contribute to test performance and then design a task that elicits these. However, a number of research studies have cast doubt on the extent to which separate skills can either be identified or matched to particular listening items, since the interactive processing involved in listening may include the simultaneous exercise of a range of skills.

 Another important point the analysis suggests is that particular combinations of item characteristics appear either to accentuate or attenuate the effect on difficulty by Brindley and

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   372

Slatyer (2002). The test developer describes listening skills that contribute to test performance, and then suggests designing a task that elicits these. However, there is a question as to whether these skills can be identified or matched to listening items. Brindley and Slatyer's (2002) assertions seem to mirror those of Janusik's (2002) from the previous discussion regarding model difficulties inherent in the listening skill. Both point to the admittedly complex nature of the listening process, citing difficulties with the ability to isolate particular skills used in the listening process, as well as the tendency to "focus on different aspects of the process" (Janusik, 2002).

Richards (1982), who formulated the aforementioned taxonomy of listening skills, complains that many listening activities focus on retrieval of information from long-term memory rather than on the processing activities themselves, and lists for example, an exercise involving listening to a passage and responding to true or false questions about the content of it, typically focuses on memory rather on comprehension. Further, Richards (1982) asserts that in teaching listening we can manipulate two variables, both of which serve to develop ability in particular skill areas. We can either manipulate the input, that is, the language which the learner hears, controlling for selected features such as grammatical complexity, topic, and rate of delivery, or we can manipulate the tasks we set for the learner. Manipulation of either is directed toward developing particular micro-skills.

Such insight is necessary when dealing with the listening skill, so as not to assess memory or previous knowledge, for example. Insight such as Richard's (1982) provides more specific sets of skills, criteria, and micro-skills that deserve attention if language professionals are to properly and fairly assess listening with due attention to its underlying and integral processes.

2.5 Models of Listening

Although the distinction that Morley points out here was asserted in the early seventies, even more recent sources harbour the same complaint, suggesting little historical improvement in the issue. According to Janusik (2002), "Historically, more time has been spent on teaching speaking than listening, even though listening is the communication activity in which we spend most of our time".

One of the problems teachers face is the lack of a single definition of model of listening. Mendelsohn (1998) argues that other scholars agree that there is no accepted definition of the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 373

construct of listening. Janusik (2002) also points out listening as the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and nonverbal messages. In addition to a lack of a single definition, two types of models have been used to explain listening. The dual models may cause confusion unless one states the perspective of listening under study. One model focuses upon a listener's internal processing that occurs while he or she is listening. Therefore, as Janusik (2002) pointed out that the lack of a single definition and model is two of the difficulties in teaching listening.

Janusik (2002) also describes the first model as cognitive, as it focuses only on factors inside the listener and the second model as a behavioural one, since it involves factors outside the listener. Janusik (2002) uses these descriptors to point to the nature of listening as a complex process involving both behavioural and cognitive functions and also to point out the tendency of scholars to focus on different aspects of the process. This distinction makes a huge difference in how the skill is approached and studied, since the listening skill encompasses so much. A complete picture of listening might involve at least an integration of these models discussed and others, in order to move toward a more complete model of the listening skill in ESL learning.

Recent models of listening tend to regard the skill as more active than models in the past have, due to changes in pedagogical thought and teaching trends. According to Anderson and Lynch (2003), one listening textbook states that the tape-recorder view of listening [is]… an inappropriate and inadequate view of the listening process." This "tape-recorder" view ignores the fleeting nature of listening input, which prevents immediate verbatim reproduction of, but not necessarily internalization of, the input. In other words, much of the listening process occurs internally, such as quickly extracting main ideas and forming hypotheses about unfamiliar words. The "tape-recorder" view of listening does not provide for accurate assessment of many important listening skills, such as determining the speaker's attitude. In contrast, Anderson and Lynch (2003) recommended the listener as active model builder, which requires the message to be coherent and an interpretation, thus giving a definition of listening as an active skill. This goal of listening is memorization of meaningful comprehension, with the listener and the environment each playing active roles, shaping the process. This is important because if language learning embraces the basic goal of the students' functioning in the target culture, then tools like rote memorization are not sufficient to help execute the demanding process of listening to a second language. As opposed to

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   374

reading and writing, the skill of listening is so closely involved with conditional factors such as environment and the speaker's accent that it must be approached carefully.

2.6 Listening Process

According to Anderson and Lynch (2003), listening involves the reciprocal and multiple skills; one would do well to explore some of the complex elements inherent in the active process that it involves. Then, skills can be isolated, focused upon, and improved, providing the attention necessary to be cognizant of, to integrate together, and to put the skills to more effective use. Anderson and Lynch (2003) also give an outline of the listening process and its various elements in the context of face to face interaction. Each point in this "simple, step-by step" (Anderson & Lynch, 2003) list requires a variety of cognitive functions in order for it to be executed. The first of these steps is that the spoken signals have to be identified from the midst of surrounding sounds. This could entail tasks such as separating discourse markers from morphemes that is linguistic units of meaning, such as a prefix or a root word. That is, when listening to a second language, one initially only hears a string of unorganized, continuous sounds which emerge as sentences and words even as the language becomes more comprehensible. In the second step, "the continuous stream of speech has to be segmented into units, which have to be recognized as known words" (Anderson & Lynch, 2003). This involves the prerequisite of some lexical knowledge of the language, as well as the ability to apply this knowledge during discourse. Especially for novices, this usually involves the unavoidable "skill-getting" tasks, such as memorizing lexical and grammatical content; this could include memorizing vocabulary terms or verb conjugation rules. The third step is, "the syntax of the utterance has to be grasped and the speaker's intended meaning has to be understood" (Anderson & Lynch, 2003). The two tasks in this third step offer room for extensive speculation as to what and how many stages occur during this process, and regarding the specifics of how they function. For example, step three can occur through a process of the listener's mentally translating the utterance into the first language in order for comprehension to occur, or of relating the heard utterances to known words in the target language. This stage is a challenging part of the listening process, largely because strategies can work to the learner's detriment as well as to the benefit. For example, hearing of an "action," and having heard it used previously as a verb, a student might be able to guess that the noun "auction" involves selling. A similar strategy may prove beneficial in regard to

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia
375

compound words, as students may piece together true meaning from separate parts. However, language learners can be significantly disadvantaged when applying the same strategy to understand, for example, false cognates, or for idiomatic expressions such as "give me a break," and compound words, such as "eyesore."

The final steps as described by Anderson and Lynch (2003) argue that the learners also have to apply the linguistic knowledge of formulating a correct and appropriate response to what has been said. This step involves interpersonal skills and some knowledge of the target culture's conversational norms as well as a myriad of tasks associated with knowledge of the language. Having described the process step-by-step, Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that there is evidence that these listening skills are deployed not as separate steps but simultaneously which makes listening an even more formidable achievement. Therefore, it can be concluded that although this process is listed here as steps, it likely involves an overlapping and meshing of all these varieties of tasks discussed.

Although once labelled as a 'passive' process, listening is very much an 'active' process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual clues. Research does tell us that there are a number of events that constitute 'listening.' The listening: determines a reason for listening; takes the raw speech and deposits an image of it in short-term memory; attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event; sometimes predicts information expected to be included in the message; recalls background information to interpret the message; assigns a meaning to the message; checks if the message has been understood; transfers the original message into long-term memory; and deletes the original information from short-term memory. Although we do not know in what order or how this occurs - indeed the listener is seldom even aware of performing these steps. it is a guide for the teacher of the steps that take place when a message is perceived. While Holly's (2008) perspective is largely in agreement with Anderson and Lynch's (2003), neither accounts for the importance of other environmental factors, namely that of situational context. According to Richard's taxonomy of listening micro-skills, these skills are employed according to the context of the listening situation. Appendix E offers his detailed list of "conversational" versus "academic" listening micro-skills. Although each list contains similarly worded micro-skills, the author's focus on listening as dependent on context deserves attention, as it empowers students and instructors with more specific and perhaps more effective skills as applied to the appropriate listening context.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 376

In addition to the listening skill's meshing of so many different skills, stimuli, and processes, there is a multitude of additional factors which further convolute and complicate the study of it. For example, students may progress through the stages of listening at different rates, dictated by, among many factors, their proficiency levels, their awareness and utilization of listening skills, their ages, and the students' previous, or lack of, experience with learning to listen to a new language. Students at lower proficiency levels may need more mental energy and time to determine a purpose for listening, whereas higher-proficiency students might be able to leave this step of the process completed rather quickly. Lower-proficiency students may have to re-utilize various skills this way, doubling back on the process, progressing seemingly backwards as well as forward through the continuum of the many listening skills as their comprehension of a listening situation evolves. Younger students, who have used language-learning skills to learn their first language more recently than older ESL students have, may use their listening skills more intuitively and automatically, and so may require less focus on specifically learning those discrete listening skills. Additionally, students with experience in having previously learned a second or third language may have internalized more listening skills than monolinguals.

The target culture in question offers additional factors. A lower-ability student who has more experience in the target culture may require less attention to and revision of background knowledge during the course of the listening event than would a student with, for example, a large memorized lexicon but less time spent in the target culture. Due to the ephemeral nature of listening and to the eclectic nature of language learners, listening skill is perhaps necessarily a highly individualized, complicated matter.

Of course, other factors such as the teacher's ability in both the students' first and target language can influence students' listening processes as well. For example, an instructor may lack vocabulary in students' language that would be necessary to explain mental listening strategies to novice-level students who likewise lack English vocabulary yet, to name such concepts.

Natural variations in individual students' learning abilities and styles can also complicate the process of listening to a second language, creating the need for more individualized and time-consuming instruction in order for listening skills to be maximized. For example, a particular student may rely more on visual or kinaesthetic stimuli rather than possessing traits of an

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 377

auditory learner, who in turn may have more advantages in listening simply due to a different style of apprehending input. Even among auditory learners, some may be more attuned to tonal-and pitch-related auditory learning, as is beneficial for the study of music, whereas perhaps a natural ease with an auditory skill such as separating speech from discourse markers, may prove more beneficial in the area of language acquisition.

Anderson and Lynch (2003) concluded that three main skills emerge from the discourse analysis studies as being of prime importance for the L2 listener:

1. The ability to recognize the topic of conversation from the native speaker's initial remarks
2. The ability to make predictions about likely developments of the topic to which he will have to respond
3. The ability to recognize and signal when he has not understood enough of the input to make a prediction or a response. These explicit signals are crucial, as they usually elicit a repetition or reformulation by the native speaker, and so give the listener another chance to make a relevant response.

In order to execute these skills, listeners must have other necessary skills at their disposal. For example, background knowledge and social skills are of key importance in order for students to even approach these tasks.

2.7   Cognition and Metacognition in the Listening Skill

An article by Goh (2000) reports on how self-regulation strategies affect the listener's perception of the listening situation. Goh (2000) concludes the definition of metacognitive strategies is applicable in listening situations if appropriately adapted. Participants consistently reported more comprehensive understanding, deeper level of processing, more reflective assessment of the new material, facilitated integration of new information into existing knowledge structures, and improved processing characteristics. From these results, some important conclusions may be drawn for the teaching of listening skills and strategies, Goh (2000) reported that a learner in the area of listening needs to be provided with opportunities to explore a variety of different listening strategies and the specific forms they can take. Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) agree that although it is assumed that learners react similarly to listening, as learners do to reading, it must be recognized that reading and listening are not entirely parallel skills. This is because of various differences between the reading and listening skills, including but not limited to the ephemeral nature of listening

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   378

versus the concrete nature of tangible reading material. Goh (2000) asserts that more specific research on the listening skill is necessary in order to systematically account for the demands of a listening situation, some of which are specified below:

The transitory character of speech, the problem of following the speaker's rate of information production, and demands on selective and sustained attention, all may influence the mental workload and the availability of attention capacity during listening. It is, therefore, by no means self-evident that meta-cognitive strategies are equally applicable in reading and in listening.

These strategies are inherent in any learning process and can be more effective when explicitly taught. A simple definition of these terms reads as follows: "cognitive strategies involve solving learning problems by considering how to store and retrieve information. Meta-cognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension" (Rubin, 1994). Another basic definition reads, "meta-cognitive strategies, or self-management strategies, oversee, regulate, or direct the listening process. Cognitive strategies are the actual mental steps listeners use to understand what they hear" (Vandergrift, 2003). Examples of cognitive strategies include repeating to memorize, summarizing, and piecing together details. An article which "presents findings from research into listening strategies and tactics of ESL learners" (Goh, 1998) offers another definition: cognitive strategies are more directly related to a learning task and involve direct manipulation or transformation of the learning material (O'Malley, 1990). Meta-cognitive strategies include the three fundamental executive processes of planning, monitoring and evaluating. Meta-cognitive strategies, therefore, involve thinking about the way information is processed and stored, and taking appropriate steps to manage and regulate these cognitive processes. Metacognitive strategies are just as important, if not more important, than cognitive strategies (Goh, 1998).

As previously mentioned, some researchers designate a third group of strategies as social or affective strategies. However, for the purpose of a smaller scope for this study, the focus will cover meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies in three different contexts. Meta-cognitive strategies include focusing attention, self-management, and self-evaluation, monitoring comprehension, and being aware of loss of attention (Bacon, 1996). They also include prediction, planning, selective attention, problem-solving, and evaluating (Vandergrift, 2003).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 379

Cognitive strategies include bottom-up processing such as repeating a word, relating a word to known words, using intonation and pauses to distinguish words and phrases, piecing together the details, and listening to sound instead of meaning (Bacon, 1992). Top-down cognitive processing includes listening for the topic before the details, forming expectations, using schemata, inferring from the context, summarizing, and elaborating (Bacon, 1992).

Individual listeners use these skills in different ways, and some, more effectively than others. Research has shed some light on variables affecting student success in this area. Many studies have drawn a correlation between direct strategy instruction and improvement of listening comprehension skills. Such studies offer notable conclusions, such as one which "highlights the benefit of predictions, the usefulness of discussion with a partner, and the motivational effect of focusing attention on the process as well as the product of listening" (Vandergrift, 2003). The same study also asserts a popular point: "research shows that skilled listeners use more meta-cognitive strategies than their less-skilled counterparts" (Vandergrift, 2003). Another researcher noted in her study that "the high-ability listeners were notably different from (the weaker ones) in the frequency and the quality of tactics used to put these strategies into action" (Goh, 1998). A review of research cites that "Murphy… found that 'more proficient' listeners placed greater emphasis on 'personalizing' (on elaborating from their own knowledge) and also inferred, drew conclusions, self-described, and anticipated more often than less proficient listeners" (Rubin, 1994).

Bacon (1992) provides a fairly complete breakdown of many of the most popular listening strategies. The survey for this study was formulated in part by her list, which organizes listening comprehension strategies into meta-cognitive, cognitive, pre-listening, during-listening, and post-listening activities, as well as outlines showing which of the cognitive strategies are respectively bottom-up and top-down.

Research seems to point not only to the general effectiveness of using metap-cognitive strategies to enhance the listening skill but also highlights some other variables to keep in mind. These variables, such as Goh's (1998) attention to the quality of the approach, Vandergrift's observation of the importance of the process of listening, and Richard's focus on micro-skills, give good ideas of what to expect and where to start in studying strategies and the listening skill.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 380

3.   Methodology

3.1 Participants

Compbell and Cleland (1999) state that the qualitative research is conducted among the minority populations, and sampling size is small; and the qualitative research is focused on the intermediate process between reason and result. We need to understand many details in this process.

For this study, the researcher found three students from China learning ELC in USM. These three participants have different ELC learning experiences and English grades. According to Vandergrift (1999), ELC is a separate and important component of language learning. It is needed, so that the learners master a certain number of vocabulary and grammar. So the researcher chose the Chinese students from the highest level four in the Language Center of USM.

3.2 Data Collection

The research is focused on the self-study problems and self-learning strategies, so the location of data collection is selected from outside of classroom. Therefore, this study considers the two key research questions: what are the ELC problems faced by the students from China in the tUSM? And what are the ELC strategies used by the students from China in the USM?

This research method uses in-depth interviews and collects data on individuals' personal experiences and perspectives. There are three steps to collect data. In stage one, the researcher gathered information on exposure in general, such as materials read and problems from conversation in normal study. Due to the fact that participants lived in different places, the researcher mostly used interview techniques. The data revealed that the students had ELC problems and they worked out their own strategy. Thus, in step two, research techniques such as semi-structured interviews with research questions and observations have been used. Step two reviewed the data of exposure from participants on ELC learning and research questions as stated earlier. In the third step a much focused in-depth study has been conducted. The final step is to transfer field notes and data gathered for analysis, interpretation and presentation. The result of this analysis shall be reported later on.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   381

3.3 Sampling Procedure

As mentioned earlier, the research sample consists of three students in USM. These three participants were randomly selected in level four class of Language Centre; all participants are students from China. And the researcher is using the labels PTC1, PTC2 and PTC 3 to replace the names of the three participants. PTC 1 and PTC 3 are learning English level four in the School of Languages of USM, and they have come to Malaysia only for six months. Both of them are 18 years old; PTC 2 had passed English level four and stayed in Malaysia for eight months and the age of this participant is 19 years old. All of them are high school graduate students from China. In order to satisfy the degree entrance requirement of the USM, they must get at least 5.5 points from IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or get B from English level four class in the language centre of USM. Therefore, these three participants pay good attention to English learning, especially in ELC.

3.4 The Instrument

According to Silverman (1993) interviews in qualitative research are useful for gathering facts, assessing beliefs about facts, identifying feelings and motives, commenting on the standard of action, present or previous behaviour, and eliciting reasons and explanation. The interview effect may influence the research findings as the subjects may well articulate what they think the researcher may want to hear. Furthermore, in order to open dialogues, interview used only Chinese language. The researcher as the translator will translate the interview content in English. Therefore, the researcher believes that using Chinese language will get more detailed information from participants, and may truly affect the research result.

In this research, the semi-structured interviews have been used as the information gathering techniques. The semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions, and all conversation is guided by research questions that the researcher would like to explore in-depth. The interview can be either scheduled or unscheduled, and could be carried out in a formal or informal setting.

In this section, there are some examples of semi-structured interview questions that the researcher used in this research:

1. Do you have any comprehension problems in English listening practice?
2. Did you overcome these problems?

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 382

3. How do you overcome these problems?

4. What kind of method are you still using in English listening comprehension practice?

5. Do you think that method can effectively improve your listening comprehension? Why?

During interview, if the participants' answer is not clear and detailed, or the participants' talking is far from the main topic, some probing questions will be used. This is also recommended by Grove, Fraser, & Dunne (2002) in qualitative research. The probing questions will help participants think more deeply about the issue at hand, and the good probing questions should be general, brief and widely useful, and would help move thinking from far to near main questions, but avoid yes or no responses. Also Daielson's work called these probing questions as similar to the meditational questions. These probing questions are designed to follow the main research questions if the participants digressed. The following questions will be asked:

1. Why do you think this is the case?

2. What would have to change in order to improve your ELC ability?

3. I noticed that you were still having the same reason, what were you thinking about that?

4. How did you determine to use this method?

5. Do you remember anything else?

The probing questions will be connected to the main questions during interview, and will help the researcher to piece together various kinds of data and ponder over the problems of the participants. So, just as Grove, Fraser, & Dunne (2002) report, the probing question is very helpful in interview process.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

In order to carry out the research and collect data, the researcher needs to find the participants and request for the interview time. The initial preparation is very important, as it is very crucial to have a smooth rapport between the researcher, the participants and the setting. It would also act as an introduction and background (which will be presented in Chapter one) to the research as well as framing a befitting role for the researcher and the subject. The initial preparation has been done in two weeks. Data collection process or stage two is the data collection process which was done for one month. Data analysis has been carried out currently with the data collection process. Interview is the main method in data collection.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   383

Follow-up and oversight of any of the points have been done fairly to cover and double-check everything. The final stage is the checking of the data and predicting which will be much more focused on the data analysis and will continue to further research. All short notes, and audio and video recording have been transferred for analysis, interpretation and presentation. The data collected will be discussed in Chapter four and five of this research.

3.6 Data Analysis

In qualitative research, raw data is gathered from the transcripts of interviews or notes from archival material (Vierra, et al. 1998). Data analysis on the other hand is a process of categorization, description and synthesis. The researcher will begin data analysis soon after data collection commences. The purpose of data analysis is to reduce the large quantities of data to manageable, intelligible units and discern relationship among these units. After data collection procedure has been done, all the information will be transcribed, typed and translated for further explanation and analysis. Data reduction is necessary for the description and interpretation of the phenomenon in this research. So in the three stages, namely, data preparation, data collection process and data's checking and predicting, the data analysis needs to follow these questions:

- What needs to be done for collecting these data?
- How to process and analyse these data?

3.6.1   Data Preparation

According to Strauss (1987), in the preliminary stage of categorization process, each listening protocol and observed listening behaviour will be analysed using the method of constant comparison. In the first stage is research preparation, all of data is the basic information of interview participant and the place of data collection. The research will engage the students in free conversation in the USM. The researcher will record in paper the interview direction and generation of ideas. The researcher will gather the students' responses and English teachers' suggestions. English learners from China in the language center of the USM will be grouped under three categories based on ELC ability, English class setting in language center and short talking. Also based on Strauss' study (1987), literature reviewed in this study will be revisited to compare emerging categories with those of previous study of listening in

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   384

second language learning. The purpose of this stage is to find suitable participants and get the first hand information of ELC learning experiences and problems.

3.6.2   Data Collection Process

The data has been analyzed after all the necessary data has been gathered through interviews. In this second stage the main job of this research is interviewing three participants from China. In the second stage, data is presented as the main findings in Chapter 4. The field analysis and normal data analysis are used during and after interview.

The field analysis is the tendency to process the data during the data collection process. Researcher will analyse the responses from participants during interview, in order to control the interview time and help participants answer deeper and clearer. The aim is to get useful data. These probing questions were set in 3.4 that deals with research instrument.

Normal data analysis will be done after interview. "A rule of thumb is that analyzing qualitative data can require as much time as collecting the data" Vierra et al (1998). As the table 3.2, data sorting and translation are almost done after per-interview; first, complete typing and transcribe. Based on the researcher questions, all of the data has been put into the two categories which are ELC problems and ELC strategies, but the data gathering techniques is using field analysis and document analysis.

3.6.3   Data Checking and Predicting

This is the last stage in data collection process, it is included as data analysis in section 4, and the data is again checked. This is followed by the two research questions. The collected data need to be checked again; if there are some points or answers that are not clear, the researcher may interview again.

4 Results

4.1   Introduction

In the previous section, a detailed account of the methodology has been described. In this chapter, the findings of these studies will be presented. The two main research questions are:

1.   What are the English Learning Comprehension (ELC) problems faced by the students from China in the USM?

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   385

2.	What are the ELC strategies used by the students from China in the USM?

As in most qualitative research, the research questions are usually meant as a guide for the researcher to start and develop the research. These initial research questions are overtaken by more important, relevant and pertinent questions as the researcher learns more about the research. Nonetheless, for the sake of continuity and consistency in report, the initial research question will still be used as an attempt to entice the flow of more relevant enquiries. These questions form part of the answer to the initial research questions. These questions shape the findings of this study.

## 4.2	ELC Problem Findings

This section was initiated by research question 1- what kind of problem do they have in the ELC's learning? And by research question 2 - what are the ELC strategies used by the students from China in the USM? These questions were posed because the learning of listening comprehension is the main concern of this study. Thus, the data analysis is planned to identify the major cause of the listening problem and thereafter attain a good solution for the problem to help the learners.

The researcher will diagnose the listening problems based on the interviewee information. It will then be explained in three steps which are pre-listening, during listening and post-listening.

4.3 Pre-listening Problems

The data collection procedure will begin with the pre-listening comprehension. The pre-listening stage was set up to gather background information about students' problems as regards their listening experiences. Participants' experience will be explored by using a set of pre-listening questions. The responses from the students were gathered and categorized into different factors which are as follows:

### 4.3.1	Lack of vocabulary

PTC1: "I think the main reason is vocabulary and experience, sometimes the experience compensates the inadequate of vocabulary…"

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia	386

PTC2: "some words cannot be understood such as political, science and new technology terms."

PTC3: "I have memorized a lot of vocabularies, but forgot as time pass as not using or practicing it."

From the participants' answer, it was identified that the main problem is vocabulary. Even though students from China start learning English from primary school, their English is still not adequate for listening comprehension. Thus, even students who learned English for more than nine years from primary school until high school were reluctant to use it in their daily routine. They may read and understand it, but their responses in listening comprehension are much slower than reading comprehension. Another cause is that the participants were not equipped with the new terminology English, especially in the field of politics, science, and new technology. Meanwhile, the pronunciation part will be discussed in the second section, which is during ELC.

4.3.2 Lack of Background Knowledge

The lack of the necessary background knowledge acquired by the students from China forms another facet of the problem. The different background of society, culture and history, especially those countries using English as their mother tongue compared to China outline great social and cultural differences between the East and the West. This brings along the differences in language priority, living habit, thinking style and so on. Related to this problem, three participants have the same answer as depicted by the first participant;

PTC 1: *"Sometimes I cannot understand the meaning of the content, even if l known every vocabulary in the listening material…"*

As there is the lack of background knowledge in ELC, researchers and educators from China suggested English listening teaching to be reformed in 2008. The researcher realized that the lack of background knowledge is a pervasive problem of Chinese students. Some Chinese students who study English in the USM, found difficulty in understanding the learning context even though they know the meaning of every single word.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 387

4.4 While-listening Problems

Students experience much difficulty in listening due to the great differences between Chinese and English, which are two-cognate languages. In the ELC practice, if students want to comprehend a message, they must memorize some words or the key words from the listening material; this is short term memory. After that, they will go through these words and translate it into Chinese in their working memory. Based on the short term memory of the participant, students' memorizing problems was found in this study. In searching for the solutions for the listening problems, the following questions guided this study:

1.   Could you understand the listening content if the speakers were American or British? Why?
2.   Which one do you prefer, the lengthy listening article and short listening article? Why?
3.   Do you have problem in taking notes during ELC's practice?

These three questions attempt to solve specific problems faced by the students in ELC. From these questions, the researcher found the strategy as the solution to the problems.

4.4.1   Problem of Different Accent

PTC 1:   "...the pronunciation is a problem during the listening comprehension, especially the   speed of reading and weakening voice… *"*

PTC 2:   "...listening practice was carried out in the class or at home, all of the pronunciation is standard English, but sometime when hearing the France or foreigners speaking English through radio or listening materials, cannot understand at once ..."

PTC 3:   "sometimes the sounds of the listening materials are not clear, such as the accent or dialect used."

These interviews help students identify their weakness in listening comprehension. For the students, they cannot apprehend properly due to the pronunciation of the speakers with

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   388

different accents such as American, British, Australian, Indian or Malaysian English.

4.4.2 The Problem of Understanding - Method

It is easy to understand the second language after it has been translated to the mother tongue language of the users. Due to this reason, students translated every word and lost some important information when they fail to follow the speed of the speaker during the ELC listening.

PTC 1: "...It is very difficult to understand all of the English words during listening... I try to translate every word in order to improve the listening efficiency."

PTC 2: "...cannot translate the unknown vocabulary even if that is the key words... cannot correctly find the key words as soon as possible during listening."

PTC3: "I miss one or two sentences when translating the key word, because the translation speed is slower than the speaking speed."

Translation is a necessary method for ESL learners during their listening process because it assists in their understanding. The problem is they are slow in translation and fail to identify the key words in the listening materials. Thus, it becomes a problem for them when the translations hampers their learning.

4.4.2   The Problem of the Learning Habits

The students have some learning habits problem in ELC. When they were far behind the listening information, they still try to work out the previous information.

PTC 1: "I try to translate or guess the previous word, when I am listening the present sentence... "

PTC 2: "...the information l listen mix with Chinese and English in my mind, it confused me and hard to understand it"

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   389

PTC 3: "...cannot listen and translate at the same time, easily lost some sentences when I think the meaning of the last words or sentences."

This situation happens when the learners listening to the present sentence, are still trying to figure out the meaning of the previous sentences. Thus, they missed the meaning of the present sentence. Therefore, the learning habits of the students become an obstacle for them to comprehend the content of the ELC materials adequately as they tend to translate every word during listening to the materials.

4.4.4   The Problem Caused by the Lack of Patience and Prseverance

This is the problem for students especially for those living in a foreign country. Students try to practice ELC several times but it turns out fruitless, they lose their passion to continue and thus it affects their leaning outcome.

PTC 1: "...the long listening materials are difficult for me...cannot memory all and cannot pay attention in the listening practice... " .

PTC 2: "...when I listened the difficult sentence or words, there is no confidence to go on...the longest time of listening comprehension is fifteen to thirty minutes...sometimes the interference come from health condition or background noise and so on."

PTC 3:"I cannot pay attention to ELC practice after fifteen minutes because of my tiredness..."

The learning of ECL needs patience and perseverance for continuous practice and understanding. Students felt the overloading if the listening materials took more than fifteen minutes and they ignored it or easily give up. They lose their patience and endurance in studying ELC and this becomes a great problem for them to comprehend ELC.

4.5   The Post-listening Problems

This is the final step in the ELC process. There are some factors that had been neglected in the listening content. The inertia in the mind is the major problem in ELC practice. The

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   390

students try to translate every sentence or key words during ELC practice, and then practice the exercise which was given. But the learners ignored the context and characteristic of the speakers.

PTC 1: "…a little bit information after listened… actually I am not pay attention to the speakers' voice or characters and speaking context."

The characteristic of the speakers and the unique identity of their voice have been neglected throughout the process. And the listening context also neglected by the students when they tried to translate the content into Chinese.

5. Discussion

5.1 Pre-listening Problems and Strategies

All of the participants reported the same pre-listening problems during the process of ELC, which is the lack of adequate background knowledge and vocabulary. This finding is consistent with Wu (2004) who reported that in China's Education System, the students were provided with vocabulary and background knowledge merely from textbook and the knowledge of the English language was very limited. As a result, students without the background knowledge of the learning content fail to comprehend the meaning of the listening materials. Therefore, this study found that for the pre-listening for ESL course, students from China need to acquire some basic knowledge of the learning materials and enrich their English vocabulary as an important factor to foster their understanding in ESL.

Furthermore, this study found that there are two helpful pre-listening learning strategies that the respondents found helpful. These two strategies are story and pictures as the 'warming-up' exercises. According the Zhang (2000), these 'warming up' materials should be interesting and able to arouse students' curiosity and attention to follow the lesson; it generates students' morale to study the lesson effectively. From the interview, the researcher found that the best solution to motivate the students to learn is story-telling and pictorial information as the introduction to the lesson. Michael Berman (2003) stated that strategy to use photo, maps, and charts in the learning process able to involve active participation from the learners seeking questions and answers. Pictures could be the materials to enhance students' understanding towards the learning materials as the students actively ask questions to get more information from the learning materials.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 391

5.2 During-listening Problems and Strategies

There are four problems in the step of during-listening, which are the problem of different accent, understanding method problems, learning habits problems and the listening stamina problems. First, the accent of the speakers in the listening materials become the barrier for the students from China as they could not understand and found it difficult to follow the lesson due to the different accent in English speaking.

Moreover, the students from China tend to translate every single word or sentence during the listening practice. This situation is worse when the students lost their direction to follow the lesson but they are trying to do the translation. Based on the responses from the interview, the students cannot find the key words accurately and their attempting to do the translation for better understanding was effortless.

Nevertheless, the researcher found that the learning habit of the students from China was the big problem. In this case, students insist on doing the translation during listening even though it is effortless until it develops in themselves a kind of learning habit which is difficult to change. In the end, the ESL become more like a translation course for them and inhibited their listening process.

The fourth problem is the problem in lack of patience and perseverance. If the listening content is very difficult, students will lose their interested and patience in the listening comprehension.

The findings of this research also showed that there are three strategies used by the learners during the listening process. The first strategy is identifying the main idea during listening. The three participants in this study have good experience in identifying the main idea from the guided sentence or concluding sentence. The second strategy is finding key words from some words or sentences that are repeated many times in the listening content. The third strategy is the speed of the speech; the important information usually spoken slowly and clearly by the speaker.

In order to keep the short-term memory during ELC, notes-taking was practiced by the students. Based on Majid (2009) findings, the note-takers' scores is obviously higher than the non-note-takers in listening comprehension. Students normally use English in their note-taking which is easier for them to comprehend and refer to in doing the exercise after the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia
392

listening. It was found that students used shorthand in their note-taking which is faster and saves time.

Another finding of this study was students from China were put in effort to understand the listening materials and they tend to predict the meaning of the words which are unfamiliar for them during the listening process. This has becomes another strategy for them to follow the lesson.

5.3   Post-listening Problems and Strategies

In the post-listening section, the main problem is comprehension. Based on the problem in the section of pre-listening and during-listening, it was found that students ignored some useful information that can actually help them to deeply understand the content, such as the context and characteristic of the speakers.

The post-listening was the evaluation level through exercises or listening practices several times. Exercises are the important step to improve the listening comprehension skills.

5.4   Implications

This research has some implications for the English learners and English teachers. The implications of this study were as follow:

1.   The importance of improving ELC skill.
2.   The importance of teacher's instruction in the ELC class.
3.   The importance of further research in ELC listening skill.

5.4.1   The importance of improving ELC skill

This research provided insight for students from China in their ELC's learning. Through this in depth investigation which included two aspects of ELC problems and strategies, it allowed the students to see clearly the problems they faced in the ELC learning. According to the respond of the five students, at least seven ELC strategies was mentioned and suggested to enhance students' comprehension in ELC. Thus, the appropriate use of the learning strategies has the potential for significantly improving students from China in ELC lesson.

5.4.2 The Importance of Teacher's Instruction in the Listening Class

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia   393

The implications of research also provide insight for the instructors who are facing challenges to teach students from China. Prior to the ELC problems and strategies mentioned by the students in pre-, during- and post-listening offer some useful tips in teaching ELC. The findings of this study indicated that ELC learning through the use of the strategies provided by the students can promoted and enhance motivation in ELC learning.

5.4.3   The Importance of Further Research in ELC Listening Skill

In order to effectively develop ELC listening skill among the students from China, further research is needed to determine how students learn ELC listening skills. Use of the strategies as suggested by the students appears to motivate student, it has the potential to extend the capabilities of good instruction in ELC classroom. Further research in ELC listening skills should provide data that enable the students to study ELC in a deeper manner and also enable the instructors to use a variety of teaching strategies as to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.

5.5   Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for practice and further research.

5.5.1 Recommendations for Students' and Instructors' Practice

1. Students from China need to enrich and improve their English vocabulary knowledge by downloading useful and relevance listening materials from the website and practice frequently in order to facilitate their leaning in ELC.

2. Students from China should practice to communicate in English with the local students for fluently and at the same time, improve their listening skills.

3. Students from China are encouraged to discuss their listening problems with the instructors for further learning and also seek help from the local students who are their classmates.

4. The instructors need to understand that the students' basic linguistic ability is relatively low. In order to improve the students' ELC proficiency, the instructors should encourage the students to constantly improve their English linguistic ability. The students need to be advised that this is a long-term effort and eventually the outcome can be very promising.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia   394

5. The instructors need to encourage the students to develop their interest in the cultures of other parts of the world, especially the culture of target language (English). Students need to know the culture and usage of English language to foster their understanding in ELC.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

1.   The strategies of ELC learning should be extended for further research. This is based on the premise that for effective ELC learning instruction, the instructions has to be customized to cater the need of learners with different problem in study.

2. Further studies should be extended to cover the students with English majors since a considerable number of students from China in Malaysia's universities and college major in English. Differences can be identified between English and non-English majors regarding the problems and preferred strategies.

3. Further studies should be conducted by the survey questionnaires. The information from the responses can be used to compare with the same method using in different group. The method of qualitative cross-validation is necessary for more accurate research findings.

4. Further studies should be conducted to identify the differences between ELC strategies used by Chinese students and students in China. Larger sample are suggested to verify the problems in English learning.

5. Further studies should be designed using experimental research to investigate the relationship of English listening proficiency level and the emphasis in listening comprehension strategy. The methodology can be one-year (two semesters) longitudinal study by applying pre-test and post-test.

6. Conclusions

In light of above findings and discussions, the ELC problem and strategies are found in English learning as second language in USM. There is the need for further research not only on the issue of students' self learning but also other various problems and strategies. The need becomes even more compelling as English is not only taught in ELC classes but also as the medium skills for other linguistic subjects and cross-cultural communication. Based on this research, there are seven ELC problems in students' self-learning and five strategies of ELC learning. Further research need to expand the scope of this study, extend the research time in detecting the ELC strategies' practically. In short, this study had shown that Chinese students learning ELC faced pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening problems that

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   395

need to be addressed and also the have adopted certain self-learning strategies. Therefore this study will provide useful guidelines for instructors to assist these students so that the learning of ELC will be effective, efficient and enjoyable.

===

References

Abdul Rashid Mohamed (1999) The Dilemma in Reporting Qualitative Research. An article in Mera-Era Conference, Malacca.

Alene, M. (2006). Language contact and confidence in second language listening comprehension: a pilot study of advanced learners of German. *Foreign language annuals*. 39 (2), 255-275. Retrieved March 10, 2010, from
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/121507746/PDFSTART

Anderson, A & Lynch, T. (2003). *Listening* (11th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Babatunde, M. A. (2005). Growth in Nigeria: Evidence from the Johansen's Co-integration Approach. *Concluding summary*, 8, 18-22.

Bacon, S. (1992). The relationship between gender, comprehension, processing strategies, and cognitive and affective response in second-language listening. *Modern Language Journal*, 76, 160-178.

Bacon, S. (1996). Authentic listening in Spanish: How learners adjust their strategies to the difficulty of input. *Hispania*, 75, 29-43.

Berne, J. E. (2004). Listening comprehension strategies: A review of the literature. *Foreign Language Annals*, 37 (4), 521-533.

Bob, A & Paul, M (1997). The English Curriculum in the People's Republic of China. *Comparative Education Review*, 41, 3–26.

Brindley, G., & Slatyer, H. (2002). Exploring task difficulty in ESL listening assessment.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia 396

Language Testing, 19(4), 369-394.

Brown, H. D. (1991). *Breaking the language barrier: Creating your own pathway to success*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Chao, J. Y. (1997). The influence of strategy use on comprehensionand recall of authentic listening texts by Chinese EFLstudents in Taiwan. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, 1996). Dissertation Abstracts International, 57, 3366A.

Chen, P. C. (2003). EFL student learning style preference and attitudes toward technology-integrated instruction. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota.

Cheng, X.,(2012). *the influence of China's foreign language educational policy from linguistic's theory* Foreign language teaching and research (bimonthly), **44**: p. 10.

Chiang, C. & Dunkel, P. (1992). The effects of speech modification, prior knowledge, and listening proficiency on EFL lecture learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26(2), 345-374.

Chin-Chin, K. (2006). EFL listening comprehension strategies used by students at the southern Tai Wan University of Technology, introduction.

Chinese examination system: Crtation formats. (2008). Retrieved February February 7th, 2010, from http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-Chines-exa.html

Chiou, P.O. (2005). A comparison of English listening beliefs and strategy use of Taiwanese university students and teachers. Dissertation Abstracts International, 65, 2925A.

Chou, L.Y. (1999). English instructional innovation in Southern Taiwan's two-year Junior colleges of technological and vocational education system: A needs assessment. Dissertation Abstract International, A, 61(02). (UMI No. 9960560).

Cortazzi, M. & Jin, Lixian (1996). English teaching and learning in China. *Language Teaching*, 29, 61–80.

Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   397

Dai Ru-Wei. (1994) Thinking with imagery (intuitive) and pattern recognition by man machine cooperation. *Information and Control*, 23(2): 76-79.

Daniel, H. P. (2006). *A whole new mind: Why right-brainers will rule the future*. Riverhead Books, New York, USA.

Defilippis, D. A. (1980). A study of the listening strategies used by skillful and unskillful college French students in aural comprehension tasks. Dissertation Abstracts International, 41, 2481A.

Fujita, J. N. (1985) A preliminary inquiry into the successful and unsuccessful listening strategies of beginning college Japanese students. (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1984). Dissertation Abstracts International, 45, 2424A.

Gagné, R. M. (1985). *The conditions of learning*, (4th ed.). New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Goh, C. M. (1997). Metacognitive awareness and second language listeners. *ELT Journal*, 51(4), 361-369.

Goh, C. M. (1998). How ESL learners with different listening abilities use comprehension strategies and tactics. *Language Teaching Research*, 2(2), 124-147.

Goh, C. M. (1999). How much do learners know about the factors that influence their listening comprehension? *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 17-41.

Goh, C. M. (2000). A cognitive perspective on language listening comprehension problems. *System*, 28(1), 55-75.

Goh, C. M. (2002). Exploring listening comprehension tactics and their interaction patterns. *System*, 30(2), 185-206.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia   398

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E. & Airasian, P. (1976). Education research. Qualitative data collection: definition and purpose. 365-366.

Grove,G.T., Fraser, E. & Dunne, F. (2002). Pocket guide to probing questions. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/PDFS/questions_2003.pdf

Holly, M. (2008), *Self-reported listening strategies by students in an intensive English language program*, in *Arts*, Arkansas State University: Jonesboro, USA. p. 91.

Hansan, A.S. (2000). Learners' perceptions of listening comprehension problems. *Language, Culture, and Curriculums*, 13(2), 137-153.

Hang, J. Y. (2004). Voices from Chinese students: professors' use of English affects academic listening. *College Student Journal*, 38, 212-223.

James, E.M. & Namgi Park (2003). Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: a handbook for students and faculty, 5, 13-20.

Janusik, L.A. (2002). Teaching listening: what do we do? What should we do? *International Journal of Listening*, 16, 5-39.

Khatijah Mohd. Tahi & Gurnam Kaur Sidhu (2004). Assessing the listening performance component in the MUTE in Ganakuman Subramaniam & Shah Mizan Ismail (Ed.). *Oracy in Focus* (pp. 64-75), Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd., Petaling Jaya.

Lee, C. A. (1991). Communicative language teaching and the construction of communicative tests. In Selected Papers from the Tenth Conference on English Teaching and Learning in ROC (PP. 222-232).

Lin Lin (2002). English education in present-day China. *New Standard in English Teaching,* 50, 8-9.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia   399

Lund, R., J. , *A comparison of second language listening and reading comprehension.* The modern language journal, 1991: p. 75.

Majid Hayati (2009), The impact of note-taking strategies on listening comprehension of EFL learners. *Organizational Journal*, 2(1), 1-11.

Mathai, E. & Nair, S. (2005). A survey of listening instruction in MUTE classrooms. Bureau of Research and consultancy. Universiti Teknologi MARA.

Mendelsohn, D. (1998). Teaching listening. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistic*, 18, 81-101.

Michael, B. (2003). Luminous lint for collectors and connoisseurs of fine photography. Retrieved January 17, 2010, from http://www.luminous-lint.com/app/photographer/Michael__Berman/B/

Morley, J. (1984). *Listening and language learning in ESL: developing self-study activities for listening comprehension*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Muhammad Azeem Qureshi & Pål I. Davidsen (2006). Estimation, prediction and policy design for population and Universal Primary Education in Pakistan. *Economic Journal*, 1-11. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from http://www.systemdynamics.org/conferences/2006/proceed/papers/QURES237.pdf

Murphy, J. M. (1985). *An investigation into the listening strategies of ESL college students*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED27875).

Murphy, J. M. (1986). An investigation into the listening strategies of ESL college students. (Doctoral dissertation, Teachers College of Columbia University, 1985). Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 2677A.

Murphy, J. M. (1987). The listening strategies of English as a second language college students. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 4(1), 27-46.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   400

Ning, Z. S. (2009). Understanding statistics and statistics education: a Chinese perspective. National proficiency examinations of competitions in statistics. *Statistics Education Journal* 17 (3), 1-111.

O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A.U., & Küpper, L. (1989). Listening comprehension strategies in second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 10(4), 418-437.

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

Pang, J., X. Zhou, & Z. Fu. (2002). 'English for international trade: China enters the WTO.' In *World English*, 21, 201–216.

Patton, M.Q (1990). *Qualitative Design and Evaluation Methods*, Newbury Park Ca, Sage.

Richards, T.R.a.J.C., *Mehod: Approach, Design, and Procedure*. Vol. 16. 1982, University of Hawaii. 153-168.

Robert, T. (2007). Qualitative research study design. *Why is qualitative research about sexuality, sexual and reproductive health important?* Sexual Health Geneva 2007.

Robert, V (2008, October 12th). Why learning English in China is no longer just import? Retrieved March 10, 2010, from http://www.teachabroadchina.com/why-learning-english-in-china-is-no-longer-just-important/

Rost, M., & Ross, S. (1991). Learner use of strategies in interaction: Typology and Teachability. *Language Learning*, 41 (2).

Rubin, J. (1994). A review of second language listening comprehension research. *Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 199-221.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   401

Schmidt – Rinehart, B. (1994). The effect of topic familiarity on second language listening comprehension. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 179-189.

Seliverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data*, London, Sage Publications.

Strauss, A. L. and Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theories, Procedures and Techniques*, Newbury Park, Sage.

Takahashi, M. (1999). Prospects for practical communicative competence. *English Teacher's Magazine*, 48(7), 14-16.

Todd, B. (2004). *English listening lab online*, Web site review 8 (3).

Vandergrift, Larry (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: acquiring successful strategies. *ELT Journal*, 53, 168-76.

Vandergrift, L. (2003). From prediction through reflection: Guiding students through the process of L2 listening. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59(3), 425-440.

Vandergift, L. (2003). Orchestrating strategy use: Towards a model of the skilled L2 listener. *Language Learning*, 53(3), 463-496.

Vierra, A., Pollock, J., & Golez, F. (1998). *Reading Educational Research* (3rd Ed.), New Jersey, Prentice Hall.

Vogely, A. J. (1995). Teaching listening. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18, 81-101.

Vogely, A. J. (1998). Listening comprehension anxiety: Students' reported sources and solutions. *Foreign Language Annuals*, 31(1), 67-80.

Wang, H., *The analysis of police in Chinese exam-oriented educational problem* Education research monthly, 2008. **2**.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia   402

Wang, G. (2009). *English by Wang Gang: A book Review*. Retrieved January 25, 2010, from http://www.farwestchina.com/2009/04/english-by-wang-gang-book-review.html

Wu, C. T. (2004). A comparison of English listening comprehension strategies used by Tainwanese EFL high school and college students. Dissertation Abstracts International, 64, 2355A.

Wu, Y. L. (2007). Language learning strategies used by students at different proficiency level. Research method. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4). Retrieved March 8, 2010, from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/December_08_ylw.php

Yang, J., Levesque, G. & S. Kim. (2005). 'How Asian are some Asian Englishes?' Paper presented as a poster at the 14th World Congress of Applied Linguistics. Madison, WI, USA.

Yang, Z. (1999). *Globalization and higher education reform in China*. Northeast Normal University press.

Yang, J. (2006). Learners and users of English in China. *English Today*, 86(22), 6-7.

Young, M.Y.C. (1997). A serial ordering of listening comprehension strategies used by advanced ESL learners in Hong Kong. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7, 35-53.

Zhang, Y. J. (2000). Warm-up exercises in listening classes. Warm-up exercises in Practice. *China: The Internet TESL journal*, VI (10). Retrieved March 25, 2010, from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Zhang-ListeningWarm-up.html

===

Wu Xiao Juan (Corresponding author)
School of Educational studies
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
PO box 11800
Penang

Malaysia
xiaojuanwu2005@yahoo.com.cn

Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
School of Educational Studies
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
PO Box 11800
Penang
Malaysia
Jafre@usm.my

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** 13:4 April 2013
Wu Xiao Juan and Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin
English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in
Malaysia   404