

RESEARCH ON APPROACHES TO TEACHING LISTENING TO ENGLISH AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS AND CURRENT PRACTICE IN THE  
CHINESE EFL CONTEXT

Approved: Daniel E. Leitch

Date: April 18, 2011

RESEARCH ON APPROACHES TO TEACHING LISTENING TO ENGLISH AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS AND CURRENT PRACTICE IN THE  
CHINESE EFL CONTEXT

---

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

---

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

English Education

---

By

Tao Xiaorong (Grace)

2011

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge Tom Lo Guidice, PhD for his constant encouragement, personal guidance, valuable advice, and kindness during the writing of this seminar paper draft. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Dan Leitch for his instructive advice and continuous encouragement. Although Dr Leitch is currently very busy with his teaching in the country of Ukraine, he has still spent large amount of time reading and editing my paper. Also, I am very grateful to Dr Kory Wein for his firm direction for technical writing. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, for his support on this paper. Without his taking care of our little daughter and doing housework, the paper would not be possible to complete.

## Abstract

# RESEARCH ON APPROACHES TO TEACHING LISTENING TO ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS AND CURRENT PRACTICE IN THE CHINESE EFL CONTEXT

Tao Xiaorong (Grace)

Under the Supervision of Prof. Dan Leitch, PhD

This paper reviews studies on dominant approaches to teaching listening to EFL learners. A large number of studies reviewed in this paper show that current perspectives on effective instruction of teaching listening focus on the following areas: the combined use of both bottom-up and schema-based top-down processing models, listening strategy instruction, teaching listening integrated with other skills, and authentic listening database. This paper also examines how research supported approaches match with current practice in the Chinese context. Results of this study identify that although Chinese teachers adopt a variety of approaches to teaching listening, many of them fail to adequately develop students' listening strategies.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
APPROVAL PAGE.....	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	
Statement of the Problem	
Definitions of Terms	
Delimitations	
Method of Approach	
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	5
Top-down processing and bottom-up processing	
Listening strategy instruction	
Integration with other language skills	
Listening database	
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS.....	15
Methodology	
Results	
Table 1	
Table 2	
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
REFERENCES.....	26
APPENDIX.....	31

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the approaches to the teaching of EFL listening and the focus of listening instruction have experienced great changes. In the 1960s, because of the traditional view of bottom-up processing of information in language learning, listening instruction was focused on the decoding of sounds including phonemes, word stress, sentence-level intonation, as well as other areas (Nunan, 1999). With the dominance of communicative language teaching in the 1970s, top-down processing and schema-based view have been applied in the listening teaching practice where communicative purposes and authentic recordings are emphasized (Hinkel, 2006). Owing to the developments in linguistics and cognitive psychology, from the early 1990s to today, research on listening strategy instruction has been widely conducted for the purpose of enhancing learners' listening comprehension ability (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari, 2006), with cognitive, meta-cognitive and social / affective strategies incorporated into instruction (Cross, 2009) and authentic sources being further emphasized (Nunan, 1999). Apart from these, current perspectives also emphasize the integration of teaching listening with other L2 skills, such as speaking, grammar, vocabulary, cultural and discourse schemata (Hinkel, 2006).

Therefore, this paper is a report on studies of dominant EFL listening pedagogy over the last few decades, including views of bottom-up processing and top-down processing, listening strategy instruction and integration of listening with other skills.

In addition, the use of listening databases, i.e., whether or not authentic materials should be adopted into EFL listening teaching, is discussed. Finally, a detailed examination is undertaken into the recent development and current practice of teaching listening in the Chinese EFL context.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Listening as effective pedagogy in EFL is an important concern. There are several ways to question the pedagogy. Among the questions addressed in this research report are the following:

What is effective EFL listening pedagogy? What are various approaches to teaching listening in an EFL context? How do research supported approaches match with current practice in the Chinese context?

### **Definition of Terms**

Top-down processing: A process that suggests that the listener actively constructs (or, more accurately, reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sounds as clues (Nunan, 1999, p. 201)

Bottom-up processing: A process of decoding the sounds that one hears in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful units (or phonemes) to complete texts (Nunan, 1999, p. 200)

Listening strategy: The mental and communicative procedures that learners consciously select to develop L2 listening skills including cognitive strategies, meta-cognitive strategies and social / affective strategies (Cohen, 2000; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)

Listening databases: Resources for teaching listening (Nunan, 1999)

EFL: Abbreviation for the term of English as a Foreign Language

L2 skills: Second language skills that help develop students' second language abilities such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, sociopragmatics, etc. (Hinkel, 2006)

### **Delimitations of the Research**

The research was conducted through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over sixty (60) days. Primary searches were conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC, SAGE pub, Academic Search Elite and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics included “listening pedagogy”, “listening strategy”, “listening database”, and “EFL”. Investigation on the current practice of teaching listening in China was conducted among language teachers who teach non-English major students at Wuhan University of Science and Technology (WUST).

### **Method of Approach**

A brief review of literature on the studies of approaches to teaching listening to EFL learners was conducted. Current practices of teaching listening in China were investigated using a questionnaire. The findings have been summarized and recommendations made.

The questionnaire was created by the researcher herself, based on the listening teaching approaches reviewed in the paper. The purpose was to find out whether research supported approaches match with current practices of teaching listening in

the Chinese EFL context. The subjects were EFL teachers of listening who teach non-English majors at Wuhan University of Science and Technology. The survey was conducted in Feb 2011. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by the researcher. Finally, the data collected were analyzed quantitatively. However, the questionnaire was initially tested on the author's peers enrolled in the SCUN-UWP English program before it was used in the eventual formal study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Influenced by developments in second/foreign language teaching and learning, the listening skill, although it has been less emphasized than the other three skills, i.e., speaking, reading, and writing, has gained increasing attention from both researchers and practitioners over the past few decades. In EFL listening pedagogy, a number of approaches have been analyzed theoretically and applied to the teaching practice. The following literature review explores a range of studies on the approaches to teaching listening to EFL learners and examines recent research on the Chinese practice of teaching EFL listening.

#### **Bottom-up and top-down processing**

Up to, and including the 1960s, teaching language meant enabling learners to master language structures because language was regarded as a system of rules (Nunan, 1999). These traditional concepts have certainly influenced the method of language teaching in practice, including teaching listening to EFL learners. According to James (1986), the MLA (Modern Language Association) Tests had a great impact on classroom teachers, including those teaching listening in the 1960s. Owing to the domination of audio-lingualism, structural linguistics, and behavioral psychology in methodologies, the MLA Tests regard a learner's ability to identify the sounds of L2 as a prerequisite to interpret meaningful utterance (MLA, 1962, 1964, cf, James, 1986), which results in the breaking down of language into small segments in

listening teaching practice. James (1986) calls this period “the era of discretion”, i.e., emphasizing “minimal pairs, recognition of individual words and phrases and memorization of language patterns” (p. 11). This may be the reason why bottom-up processing has dominated language pedagogy for a long time since then. To define bottom-up linguistic processing, Nunan (1999) sees it as “a process of decoding the sounds that one hears in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful units (or phonemes) to complete texts” (p. 200). And in the 1970s, the bottom-up processing model, focusing on discrete sounds and the linguistic aspects of comprehension, was largely emphasized in listening pedagogy (Hinkel, 2006). However, its obvious inadequacy has interfered with further development in practice on its own (Nunan, 1999).

In the late 1970s, communicative language teaching began to emerge and has gained in prominence since then (Nunan, 1999; Widdowson, 1996). Hence, in contrast to bottom-up processing, listening pedagogy turned its focus on the activation of learners’ schema-based top-down knowledge in the 1980s (Hinkel, 2006). Nunan (1999) illustrates that the top-down view “suggests that the listener actively constructs (or, more accurately, reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sounds as clues.” (p. 201). The researcher further stresses the importance of schema theory in listening comprehension, i.e., past experiences help interpret new experiences. The author also takes an example from a course book ATLAS to illustrate the effect of “stereotypical, cultural knowledge, local knowledge of participants, events and persons” (p. 202) on new experiences. Spada (2000) makes

the same point that when doing listening activities, students with schema-building tasks outperform those not being prepared for listening.

Of these two views of listening pedagogy, some researchers believe that neither approach works successfully in the listening teaching practice (e.g., Vandergrift, 2004). Many others, however, suggest that a combination of both bottom-up and top-down processing skills be taught in the classroom as they are interdependent (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 1999). Additionally, although some scholars recommend strongly the adoption of a bottom-up approach to teaching listening, particularly to learners who are weak at lexical segmentation and word recognition skills (Field, 2003, cf, Goh, 2008), Goh (2008) warns that this type of practice runs the risk that learning may become decontextualized and teachers may return to the pedagogy of sound discrimination drilling. She therefore proposes an integration of bottom-up processing skills with comprehension tasks. To be specific, learners may revisit the text to focus on phonemes and phonemic distinctions in context after completing a communication task in a listening activity (Goh, 2008). Therefore, at present, as Hinkel states, “curricula and instruction strive to achieve a balance between the linguistic and the schematic aspects of learner language development” (2006, p.111). Obviously, as these findings suggest, the parallel use of these two processing models contributes to successful listening comprehension.

In addition to these two principal listening processing models, Buck (2001) also argues that understanding context of communication also improves learners’ listening comprehension. Thus, a third type of knowledge, context, or listening support, is

discussed by some researchers (e.g., Chang & Read, 2007). Chang and Read believe that teaching a mixture of all these three types of knowledge, i.e., bottom-up skills, top-down skills, and context, will enable learners to listen the most effectively. They compare a number of forms of listening support in their study, which provide contexts for listeners, such as written texts, pre-listening activities mainly in the forms of teaching relevant vocabulary and giving information about the topic, and visual material in the form of still pictures or full-motion videos. Their study demonstrates that “listening support has a moderate effect on comprehension, with different types producing varying results.” (p. 390). Also, James (1986) reviews a number of studies on the effect of visual aids on listening comprehension. Although the studies report that learners with beginning levels are more dependent upon visual support than those with high English levels who may thus be distracted by visual aids in the listening process, James still argues that the aid of visual materials is necessary, whether in the form of pictures or charts or written texts. However, despite multiple studies on the effect of listening support on listening comprehension, the use of listening support has never been widely accepted as the main listening pedagogy like bottom-up and top-down processing.

### **Listening strategy instruction**

With the developments in linguistics and cognitive psychology, a number of researchers have shifted their attention to language learning strategy research, such as Cohen (2000), O’Malley & Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990). Language learning strategies refer to the mental and communicative procedures that learners consciously

select to develop L2 skills (Cohen, 2000; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Chamot et al (1993) review some research on the classification of learner strategies and state that the classification system is based on the distinction in cognitive psychology between metacognitive, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies, which is initially developed with ESL students and later verified with EFL students. According to Cohen (2000) and Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are often conscious and can be taught. And explicit instruction of learning strategies can improve learners' learning skills as well as language skills (Cohen, 2000). Also, it is strongly recommended that strategies be integrated into language lessons instead of being presented separately (Nunan, 1999). In terms of listening strategies, the widely applied ones are cognitive strategies including prediction, transfer, visualization, detection, elaboration, and note-taking; metacognitive strategies consisting of directed attention, selective attention, self-monitoring, planning, self-evaluation, etc.; and social/affective strategies such as cooperation, question for clarification and self-motivation (Cross, 2009).

With respect to teaching listening, numerous studies have examined the effects of strategy instruction on listening comprehension. In their study on the feasibility of integrating learning strategy instruction into EFL teaching, including the teaching of listening, Chamot et al. (1993) find that instruction of cognitive strategies such as prediction, transfer, and visualization, and metacognitive strategies such as directed attention and selective attention, is very necessary and useful in facilitating listening comprehension.

Cross (2009) conducted a study among advanced-level adult Japanese EFL learners on the impact of listening strategy instruction on the comprehension of BBC news videotexts. Results indicate that after 12 hours of listening instruction of four selected metacognitive, seven cognitive and three social-affective strategies, the experiment group displays a significant improvement. Likewise, Teng and Chan (2008) investigate some metacognitive strategies used by Chinese EFL listeners, finding that certain metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation, partially enhance listeners' comprehension, as well as suggesting that including metacognitive listening strategies in EFL listening instruction is urgently needed. The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire developed and validated by Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006) provides a tool not only for students to raise their awareness of the process of listening, but more important also for the instructors to assess the degree of students' self-regulated use of listening strategies and thus instruct strategies accordingly. Apart from these, Goh (2008) expands the metacognitive approach to teaching listening and proposes "metacognitive instruction" (p.192) based on the definition of metacognition which combines metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. Hinkel (2006) also supports that effective instruction of metacognitive strategies contributes to the development of L2 aural abilities. All the studies listed above demonstrate the importance of applying metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies in listening instruction. Clearly, there exists a positive relationship between strategy instruction and listening comprehension success. In addition, a great number of

studies reveal that adequate listening strategy instruction will not only help students become better listeners, but also become more effective language learners (e.g., Nunan, 1999; Vandergrift et al., 2006).

### **Listening integrated with other language skills**

To develop EFL/ESL learners' listening abilities, current perspectives also shed light on the integration of teaching listening with other linguistic skills. According to Hinkel (2006), the conjunction of teaching listening with skills such as speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary contributes to effective learning and develops more relevant and realistic EFL/ESL listening abilities. Nunan also elaborates on the development of learners' listening skill by providing extension tasks to personalize listening content (1999). To improve learners' listening abilities, teachers can incorporate various activities, including speaking, reading and writing, into the process of listening through three stages, i.e., pre-listening, listening task, and post-listening activity (Van Duzer, 1997). In addition, Richards (2006) points out that, although listening comprehension is regarded as the focus of the traditional listening teaching approach, the changing theoretical perspectives on the nature of listening have drawn attention to the role of listening in promoting language acquisition. In other words, listening comprehension is not the purpose of the listening process whereas listening comprehension plus acquisition is the goal of listening. Therefore, Richards suggests that a combination of comprehension phase and acquisition phase be applied in teaching listening. The comprehension phase would emphasize extracting meaning from the input while the acquisition phase would require

productive use, such as oral or written tasks, of language features obtained through listening comprehension (Richards, 2006). Clearly, the application of integrated skills in teaching listening will enable learners to become aware of the listening context because it creates a real world communicating environment. Just as Thompson et al. put it, effective listening is not only hearing but also involves “commitment, understanding and practice” (2004, p. 239).

### **Listening database**

In terms of linguistic data, there always has been substantial debate on whether specially written classroom texts or authentic materials should be used in the classroom. The same argument arises with the use of listening database. Some researchers believe that the use of authentic materials in EFL listening teaching is beneficial to listening comprehension. For instance, Nunan (1999) argues that learners should be exposed to as much authentic data as possible because authentic materials provide learners with genuine communicative situations and some features contained in authentic communication, such as repetition, requests for classification, etc., facilitate comprehension. Similarly, Joiner (1984) suggests that introducing authentic texts into EFL listening teaching as early as possible helps learners cope with actual situations dramatically. Furthermore, both Stoller (1988) and Stempleski (1987) discuss the use of authentic video in the EFL instruction, concluding that such materials are variable and flexible, so they are intrinsically motivating to students and are effective tools for developing listening skills. Nunan even encourages his learners to bring in their own authentic samples from “a wide variety of contexts, including

TV and radio broadcasts, conversations, discussions and meetings of all kinds, talks, and announcements” because these authentic sources are more interesting and diverse (1999, p. 80).

Other researchers, however, question the value of using authentic listening materials in the EFL classroom. For example, Hinkel (2006) states that, due to some constraints such as “the fast pace of speech, specific characteristics of spoken grammar and lexicon, cultural references and schemata, and dialectal colloquial expressions..., employing authentic language in listening instruction can be of limited benefit.” (p. 117) Richards (2006) also finds that authentic materials are inappropriate particularly for beginners, and additionally, authentic listening materials such as overheard conversations, announcements, radio broadcast etc. are often unusable because of either logistical problems or copyright and ethical issues.

Still others, such as Guariento and Morley (2001), argue that the notion of authenticity not only lies in the genuineness of teaching sources but also applies to pedagogic tasks. Richards (2006) also echoes here, pointing out that the learning process being authentic is more important than authenticity of classroom materials.

Overall, despite some controversies, there is a general consensus in the case of adopting authentic materials in teaching listening. It is widely acceptable that some modifications should be made to remove low frequency vocabulary, obscure grammatical structures and redundancy etc., so that the materials are more feasible for building listening comprehension skills (e.g., Nunan, 1999; Richards, 2006).

### **Recent research on teaching EFL listening in China**

In EFL/ESL, probably because reading and writing had dominated researchers' and practitioners' energies, listening teaching was focused on the phonological level and not much attention was given to listening comprehension research until the early 1980s (Pearson & Fielding, 1983). Since the late 1970s, with communicative language teaching becoming a dominant force, listening has been taught for the purpose of developing learners' effective oral communication (Goh, 2008). Due to the influence of the developments in linguistics and cognitive psychology, the 1990s up to the present has seen a large amount of research on listening strategy instruction (Goh, 2008). All of these major trends have been reflected in the research on teaching listening in the Chinese EFL context. Over the last decade, an increasing number of EFL listening course books produced in China have moved the focus away from building learners' bottom-up skills to developing their schema-based knowledge (e.g., S. T. Zheng, 2003). Also, approaches to enhancing learners' listening comprehension have been widely explored (e.g., Li, 2000; Wang, 2006; Xu, 2004; M. Zheng, 2000). In addition, a range of listening strategies have been incorporated into the instruction and the effectiveness examined (e.g., Huang, 2005; Zhao & Chang, 2006). In practice, nevertheless, very little research has been done to explore what approaches are currently applied by Chinese teachers in teaching EFL listening, and how the research supported approaches match with current teaching practice in China. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to find out the practical use of listening teaching approaches in the Chinese EFL context.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

The purpose of the study was to report on the current practice of research supported approaches to teaching listening among English teachers who teach non-English majors at Wuhan University of Science and Technology (WUST) in China by looking at the dominant approaches reviewed in this paper, i.e., the bottom-up linguistic processing model, the top-down linguistic processing model, listening strategy instruction, integration with other language skills, and listening database.

#### **Methodology**

##### **Participants**

There are more than 100 English teachers who teach non-English majors at WUST, among whom 61 teachers have been teaching listening for at least five years with the remaining teachers focusing on reading and writing skills only. The current study involved the 61 teachers of listening. A University of Wisconsin-Platteville Institutional Review Board Teaching Form was submitted to the Director of the School of Education prior to carrying out the research.

##### **Instrument**

A self-report indicating to what extent these 61 teachers apply listening approaches in their teaching practice through a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was adopted in the study. The questionnaire was carefully designed based on the dominant listening teaching approaches and consisted of three parts. The first part is about the objective of the questionnaire and the personal background of the

respondents. The second part explains the five-point Likert scale for each item: A = Never or almost never true of me; B = Usually no true of me; C = Somewhat true of me; D = Usually true of me; E = Completely or almost completely true of me. And also, this part includes the dominant listening teaching approaches with nine items. The third part looks at what specific listening strategies these teachers incorporate into tasks in order to encourage students to use them to develop their listening strategies. And respondents were made to list the three most frequently used strategies in their teaching instruction.

### **Data collection and analysis**

All data were collected from the questionnaires returned by 58 respondents out of the original 61. All the raw data were calculated using Microsoft Excel. The study was exploratory in nature and results were presented as percentages. There is no plan for statistical findings and inferences to the larger population. Any reference to the larger population is exploratory. The need for future empirical studies is recognized. The result shows a large number of respondents adopt a wide range of approaches to teaching listening with only a couple of approaches receiving less attention. It also identifies that the majority of the respondents only utilize some particular areas of listening strategies in their instruction.

### **Results and Discussion**

Results identified from part two of the questionnaire are displayed in Table 1. Overall, table 1 reveals that a great number of respondents incorporate different approaches to teaching listening. For the bottom-up processing model, although more

than 60% of the respondents draw their attention to discrete sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation, there are still approximately 30% of them who seldom or never focus on these areas. In contrast, over 95% of the respondents have, to some extent, adopted the top-down processing model, i.e., activating students' knowledge-based schemata, to enhance their listening comprehension, with only less than 4% taking negative position towards this approach. Clearly, more teachers responding prefer a top-down model to a bottom-up model, but the data also show that most of the respondents use a combination of these two linguistic processing models in teaching listening. As for visual support, although some research reviewed in the paper argues that pictures or videos may distract students in their listening process, there are still more than 90% of the respondents who provide visual aids in class to facilitate listening comprehension.

Listening strategy instruction has gained increasing attention from both researchers and practitioners over the last two decades, and this is also true in the Chinese EFL context. This study shows that all the respondents except one have consciously developed students' listening strategies in their instruction, which indicates that respondents attach great importance to the development of students' listening strategies. In terms of teaching listening in conjunction with other language skills, an overwhelming majority of respondents display the significance of this perspective, with over 96% of them teaching listening integrated with speaking, reading and writing, and nearly 95% of them with grammar, vocabulary, cultural and discourse schemata. Although controversy still exists over the effectiveness of using authentic data in teaching listening in some research, data collected in this study see a quarter of

respondents adopt authentic materials in teaching listening. Also, more than 90% of respondents report that they adapt course materials to meet different teaching needs.

In regard to what particular strategies are consciously instructed by the respondents, the results identified from part three of the questionnaire provide a detailed picture. Table 2 describes the number and percentage of respondents who regularly and consciously develop students' listening strategies as well as what specific strategies they place their teaching emphasis on. The respondents were made to list their three most frequently taught listening strategies. The data show that, compared with metacognitive strategies and social/affective strategies, cognitive strategies are the most preferred ones by the 58 respondents. A large number of teachers choose as many as nine frequently used cognitive strategies to develop students' listening strategies whereas a very small number of teachers focus on metacognitive and social/affective strategies.

To be specific, among cognitive strategies, about 74% of the teachers incline toward getting students to preview questions before listening to the recordings, and approximately 65% of them encourage students to use their task-related background knowledge to facilitate listening comprehension. The other commonly used cognitive strategies involve previewing new words, inferencing, elaboration, and note-taking, with about 27%, 22%, 34%, and 29% respectively. Respondents who use key words, visualization, and contextualization to develop students' listening strategies make up very small proportions, with about 13%, 3% and 3% respectively. In contrast, much fewer respondents pay attention to the development of students' metacognitive

strategies. As the data reveal, only approximately 17% of the respondents make students aware of the importance of selective attention whereas the proportions of respondents who raise students' consciousness of developing self-monitoring, self-management, and self-evaluation strategies are even less, with only 1.72% for each of the above. The same situation occurs in the development of social/affective strategies, with as low as 1.72% of the respondents drawing their attention to teaching students to cooperate with others or clarify questions in the listening process.

Clearly, although a large amount of research reviewed in this paper explains the significance of developing students' metacognitive and social/affective strategies, it is surprising to find that the respondents as a whole place too low a value on them.

Table 1.  
Number and percentage of respondents who adopt various listening teaching approaches

Listening teaching approaches		Never or almost never true of me		Usually no true of me		Somewhat true of me		Usually true of me		Completely or almost completely true of me	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Bottom-up processing model</b>	Segmental features focusing on discrete sounds	3	5.17%	18	31.03%	29	50.00%	6	10.34%	2	3.45%
	Suprasegmental features focusing on stress, rhythm, and intonation	2	3.45%	13	22.41%	29	50.00%	12	20.69%	2	3.45%
<b>Top-down processing model</b>	Activating students' knowledge-based schemata	0	0.00%	2	3.45%	14	24.14%	26	44.83%	16	27.59%
<b>Visual support</b>	Visual material provided to facilitate listening comprehension	0	0.00%	5	8.62%	8	13.79%	13	22.41%	32	55.17%
<b>Listening strategy instruction</b>	Students' listening strategies consciously developed	0	0.00%	1	1.72%	6	10.34%	17	29.31%	34	58.62%
<b>Integration with other language skills</b>	Teaching listening integrated with speaking, reading and writing	1	1.72%	1	1.72%	10	17.24%	39	67.24%	7	12.07%
	Teaching listening integrated with grammar, vocabulary, cultural and discourse schemata	0	0.00%	3	5.17%	14	24.14%	35	60.34%	6	10.34%
<b>Listening database</b>	Authentic data used in teaching listening	20	34.48%	23	39.66%	10	17.24%	5	8.62%	0	0.00%
	Course materials adapted to meet teaching needs	3	5.17%	2	3.45%	24	41.38%	16	27.59%	13	22.41%

Table 1 shows results from part 2 of the questionnaire.

Table 2.

Number and Percentage of Listening Strategies Frequently and Consciously  
Developed by the 58 Respondents

Specific strategies regularly used by the respondents		N	%
Cognitive strategies	Previewing new words	16	27.59%
	Inferencing	13	22.41%
	Visualization	2	3.45%
	Contextualization	2	3.45%
	Elaboration	20	34.48%
	Note-taking	17	29.31%
	Previewing questions	43	74.14%
	Key words	8	13.79%
	Background knowledge	38	65.52%
Metacognitive strategies	Selective attention	10	17.24%
	Self-monitoring	1	1.72%
	Self-management	1	1.72%
	Self-evaluation	1	1.72%
Social/affective strategies	Cooperation	1	1.72%
	Question for clarification	1	1.72%

Table 2 shows results from part three of the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

As the studies reviewed in this paper show, a range of approaches to teaching listening have been explored and applied to the EFL classroom over the past few decades. Overall, comparisons of multiple studies on dominant listening pedagogy including bottom-up linguistic processing and schema-based top-down processing reveal that a combination of these two processing models helps develop learners' listening comprehension effectively. Listening support, which mainly takes the form of written texts, pictures and videos, is also seen as a necessary tool to facilitate listening comprehension. Furthermore, ample evidence provided by a large number of studies demonstrates that it is of great importance to integrate learning strategies into listening instruction because there is a positive association between listening strategy instruction and successful listening comprehension. This paper also involves discussions on whether authentic recordings should be used in the listening classroom. And it is concluded that, despite much dispute, the use of adapted authentic listening materials is generally accepted because these materials promote listening comprehension and contribute to effective real world communication. Finally, the current practice of listening teaching approaches in the Chinese context is examined by analyzing data collected from the questionnaires.

The findings of this study identify some features of the current practice of listening teaching approaches in the Chinese EFL context. First, most of research

supported listening approaches are widely employed by the majority of the teachers. These approaches involve the combined use of bottom-up and top-down linguistic processing skills, visual support, listening strategy instruction, and listening integrated with other language skills. The fact that a lower number of teachers use authentic listening materials in their teaching may be due to the lack of easy access to authentic recordings in the Chinese EFL context. Second, although as high as 98% of the teachers report that they frequently teach students listening strategies to facilitate their listening comprehension, further investigation reflects that a large number of teachers only place their emphasis on a set of particular strategies, i.e., cognitive strategies, with metacognitive and social/affective strategies undervalued. In this case, student awareness of listening strategies is not fully raised, nor is their self-regulated use of strategies effectively developed or administered. Their listening comprehension success is thus affected.

However, the results of this study fail to show the effectiveness of these listening teaching approaches. In other words, students' listening test scores are not taken into consideration to measure how successful the approaches are in the Chinese EFL context. Also, the findings are generally based on the data collected from questionnaires and they need to be further verified through other methods such as interviews and observation of listening classes. Finally, due to the limited number of respondents, the findings of this study do not reflect the overall situation of teaching EFL listening in China.

## **Recommendations**

The findings in this study are exploratory. The need for further empirical studies is recognized. With respect for this limitation there are many interesting possible conclusions.

The findings of this study suggest a number of useful implications for teachers who teach listening in the Chinese EFL context. First, although the data show that the majority of the teachers use a range of approaches to teaching listening, a small number of teachers still report that they do not fully adopt these approaches. Therefore, these teachers need to become aware of the importance of using various listening teaching approaches to develop students' listening skills. In this case, what is to be emphasized in listening classes will not be the correct answers to questions but the listening process. Second, as this study shows that students are not adequately exposed to a variety of authentic materials, they may not be accustomed to real world English environment. Thus, teachers can make full use of the internet where numerous authentic recordings are available for them to develop students listening ability. Finally, listening teachers also need to motivate students to increase their awareness of listening strategies and make them become self-regulating listeners, which will enable them to learn the language more effectively.

Given the limitations of the current study, the following recommendations are suggested for further research. First, the effectiveness of various approaches should be measured by monitoring student progress or by taking into account students' listening test scores. In addition, not only questionnaires, but also interviews with teachers, observation of their classes, and students' feedback, should be used in further

investigations concerning the practice of teaching EFL listening. Furthermore, a larger number of teachers in the Chinese EFL context should be involved in such future research for more reliable results.

## REFERENCES

- Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Chamot, A. U. et al. (1993, December). *Methods for teaching learning strategies in the foreign language classroom and assessment of language skills for instruction* (Final Report). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Department of Education. (ERIC No.ED365157)
- Chang, A. C., & Read, J. (2007). Support for foreign language listeners: its effectiveness and limitations. *RELC Journal*, 38, 375-395. Retrieved from <http://rel.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/cgi/reprint/38/3/375>
- Cohen, A. D. (2000). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Cross, J. (2009). Effects of listening strategy instruction on news videotext comprehension. *Language Teaching Research*, 13, 151-176. Retrieved from <http://ltr.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/cgi/reprint/13/2/151>
- Goh, C. (2008). Metacognitive instruction for second language listening development: theory, practice and research implications. *RELC Journal*, 39, 188-213.
- Guariento, W., & Morley, J. (2001). Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom. *English Language Teachers Journal*, 55, 347-353.
- Hinkel, E. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching the four skills. *TESOL*

*Quarterly*, 40, 109-131.

Huang, J. L. (2005). A study on listening strategies of non-English majors in an agricultural university. *Teaching English in China*, 28, 59-65.

James, C. H. (1986, May 11-13). *From principles to protocols: the contributions of John B. Carroll and Robert Lado to the testing of listening comprehension*.

Paper presented at the Language Testing Symposium. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED278217>

Joiner, E. G. (1984, May). *Authentic texts in the foreign language classroom: focus on listening and reading*. Paper presented at the Defense Language Institute

Foreign Language Center. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED274153>

Li, R. F. (2000). Factors affecting listening comprehension. In G. S. Hu & L. Cao (Eds.), *Proceedings of the '98 international conference on teaching English at tertiary level in the Chinese context* (pp. 170-181). Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle publishers.

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

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know*.

Boston: Newbury House.

Pearson, P. D., & Fielding, L. (1983, March). *Instructional implications of listening comprehension research* (Reading Education Report No. 39). Illinois University, Center for the Study of Reading. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED227464>

Richards, J. C. (2006). Materials development and research --- making the connection. *RELC Journal*, 37, 5-26. Retrieved from <http://rel.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/cgi/reprint/37/1/5>

Spada, N. (2000). Observing classroom behaviors and learning outcomes in different second language programs. In J. C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 293-310). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Stempleski, S. (1987, April 12-14). *Short takes: using authentic video in the English class*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED294453>

Stoller, F. (1988, March 8-13). *Films and videotapes in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/>

servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED299835

Teng, H. C., & Chan, C. Y. (2008, June 26-29). *An investigation of metacognitive strategies used by EFL listeners*. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED504568>

Thompson, K., Leintz, P., Nevers, B., & Witkowski, S. (2004). The integrative listening model: an approach to teaching and learning listening. *The Journal of General Education*, 53, 225-246.

Van Duzer, C. (1997). *Improving ESL learners' listening skills: at the workplace and beyond*. Project in Adult Immigrant Education. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED406855>

Vandergrift, L. (2004). Listening to learn or learning to listen? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 3-25.

Vandergrift, L., Goh, C. M., Mareschal, C. J., & Tafaghodtari, M. H. (2006). The metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire: development and validation. *Language Learning*, 56, 431-462. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uwplatt.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=11&sid=ea6ff985-74fa-4387-852f-c7b596d4c06f%40sessionmgr13>

Wang, L. (2006). The understanding of context value in relevance theory and

listening comprehension – thoughts on the new form of longer conversation  
in TEM 4. *Teaching English in China*, 29, 106-111.

Widdowson, H. G. (1996). *Teaching language as communication*. Shanghai:  
Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Xu, X. M. (2004). A new way of teaching listening – a combination of seeing,  
listening and speaking. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 1, 23-29.

Zhao, H. B., & Chang, L. (2006). Empirical study of fostering learning strategies in  
college English listening course. *Teaching English in China*, 29, 98-105.

Zheng, M. (2000). The realization of activating schema: pre-listening activities. In G.  
S. Hu & L. Cao (Eds.), *Proceedings of the '98 international conference on  
teaching English at tertiary level in the Chinese context* (pp. 192-202).  
Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

Zheng, S. T. (2003). *New horizon college English*. Beijing: Foreign Language  
Teaching and Research Press.

## Appendix

### Part 1.

#### Objective of the questionnaire:

This investigation aims to find out how research supported listening teaching approaches match with current practice in the Chinese EFL context.

#### Personal information:

Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Years of English teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 2.

For statements 1-9, please tick under the column which is true for you. Thank you for your time.

A = This statement is never or almost never true of me

B = This statement is usually no true of me

C = This statement is somewhat true of me

D = This statement is usually true of me

E = This statement is completely or almost completely true of me

No.	Statements	A	B	C	D	E
1	When I teach listening, I focus on sentence boundaries, contractions, individual sounds and sound combinations.					
2	When I teach listening, I focus on features of stress, rhythm and intonation.					
3	I encourage students to activate their knowledge-based schemata to assist listening comprehension.					
4	I provide visual material for students to facilitate their listening comprehension.					
5	I consciously develop students' listening strategies to enhance their listening comprehension ability.					
6	I integrate teaching of listening with other skills such as speaking, reading and writing.					
7	I integrate teaching of listening with grammar, vocabulary, cultural and discourse schemata.					
8	I use a range of authentic data in teaching listening.					
9	I adapt course materials to meet my teaching needs.					

### Part 3.

If you don't tick under the column A for statement 9 in part 2, then please list 3 techniques which you use the most regularly to develop students' listening strategies.