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The Effects of Reading-While-Listening and Strategy Instruction on L2 Listening

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L2

A
RWL   B
1   B   1   2   15
30
4   1

1   d = 0.72

Two groups of Japanese university students' L2 English listening self-efficacy progress was tracked throughout one academic year. All students engaged in listening strategy instruction and dictogloss practice in class. Additionally, they completed dictation and reading-while-listening (RWL) homework in opposite orders--students in Group A completed dictation in the first semester, followed by LWR in the second semester; Group B students completed the homework in the opposite order. Results from a Rasch-validated questionnaire of perceived listening self-efficacy indicated that students in both groups developed their listening self-efficacy from Time 1 (Lesson 1 or 2) to Time 2 (Lesson 15) of the questionnaire's administration, and from Time 2 to Time 3 (lesson 30), regardless of task order or students' initial language proficiency/motivation. This has resulted in four national presentations and one manuscript, in preparation.

Second language listening

listening self-efficacy longitudinal development listening strategies extensive listening bottom-up listening

This study explored two relatively under-researched topics in second language acquisition: (a) longitudinal changes in domain-specific (L2 listening) self-efficacy, and (b) contrasting effects of listening strategy instruction to reading-while-listening (RWL) practice and dictation practice. L2 listening self-efficacy—the degree to which learners believe that they can accomplish L2 listening tasks—has received little attention in EFL literature. However, because learners with higher self-efficacy generally display lower learning anxiety and more willingness to engage in domain-related learning activities (Bandura, 1997), it is important to understand the degree to which learners display L2 listening self-efficacy, and how (and why) listening self-efficacy is developed over time. Second, studies of longitudinal listening development (e.g., Yeldham & Gruba, 2014) have suggested that certain sequences of listening skill instruction (e.g., bottom-up before strategy instruction) might be more beneficial for learners of lower second language (L2) proficiency, but this suggestion warrants further empirical investigation.

The initial objectives of the study were to evaluate the effects of in-class listening strategy instruction and extensive reading-while-listening, via the Xreading website, on Japanese university students' L2 English listening proficiency and self-efficacy. Due to unavoidable circumstances, namely the COVID pandemic and my changing workplaces, it became impossible to track extensive reading-while-listening amounts through Xreading, as originally planned. Thorough piloting of listening proficiency instruments also became difficult, although fortunately I had created, piloted, and Rasch-validated an L2 English listening self-efficacy instrument before the start of this research project (Martin, 2021). The revised objectives were to evaluate trends in Japanese university students' L2 English listening self-efficacy growth throughout one academic year. A second goal was to evaluate how the trends were mediated by students' initial proficiency/motivation and the order of out-of-class listening tasks (out-of-class reading-while-listening and dictation activities).

The research was conducted at a small private university in Western Japan. Participants were 52 students of various majors who chose to take an Oral English course, that I led, among other options in order to fulfill a required L2 English course credit. Students' initial proficiency was not measured; however, students chose to participate in classes designated as for "beginner" or "intermediate" students. This selection was taken as an indication of the students' initial proficiency and/or motivation. In total, four classes were involved in this study, two "beginner" classes and two "intermediate" classes. Listening activities for the "beginner" courses were taken from the *Communication Spotlight 3rd Edition: High Beginner* textbook, and activities for the "intermediate" courses were taken from *Communication Spotlight 3rd Edition: Pre-Intermediate*.

Based on previous research (e.g., Flowerdew & Miller, 2010) and my own values as an instructor, all students engaged in both bottom-up listening activities (group dictogloss of model speaking conversations) ten times per semester and listening strategy instruction from each unit of the 14 *Communication Spotlight* textbook units. Additionally, in the first semester one "beginner" and "intermediate" class (Group A) completed at-home dictation, in which they listened to one minute of each unit conversation from the *Communication Spotlight* textbooks and attempted to dictate them completely, before checking their answers and correcting them with a red pen. In the second semester, students in these classes were provided a list of websites with leveled English listening material (e.g., *News in Levels*, www.newsinlevels.com), and were asked to read-and-listen to approximately 30 minutes per week, and to complete weekly journals detailing their summaries, experience, and goals for future listening. The students then shared their journals in weekly group discussions, after which I collected them and provided brief feedback on their achievements and goals for the next week. The other two "beginner" and "intermediate" classes of students (Group B) completed the same tasks, but in contrasting order (i.e., completed RWL during the first semester, and at-home dictation during the second semester).

The research instrument (the listening self-efficacy questionnaire) was administered during the first week of the first semester, the first week of the second semester (Week 16) and the final week of the second semester (Week 30). Additionally, on Week 30 students were administered a questionnaire which asked them to rate their perceived utility of the activities. Listening self-efficacy data was analyzed through a repeated-measures ANOVA, with a Bonferroni adjustment applied to the P-value, with the alpha level set at .01.

All assumptions for an RM-ANOVA were checked and the data passed the criteria for parametric testing. The results of the RM-ANOVA showed that differences between Time 1 and Time 3 were statistically significant, $p = <.001$, with a mid-to-high effect size ($d = .72$). Differences between Time 1 and 2 did not meet the .01 threshold of the adjusted Bonferroni method but met the T-test criteria of 0.05 ($p = .03$), with a small effect size ($d = .30$). Mean differences between Times 2 and 3 were significant ($p = .007$), also with a small effect size ($d = .40$). These results suggest that notable gains in listening self-efficacy appear across a year, with slightly larger gains appearing during the second half of the year. This suggests that students' growth in English listening self-efficacy does not plateau but continues to grow steadily while learning throughout a year. This is a new finding to the literature, and warrants further investigation (e.g., a more granular look at listening self-efficacy growth throughout a year through more administrations of the instrument, such as conducted by Leeming (2017) in his investigation of speaking self-efficacy, as well as an investigation of listening self-efficacy beyond one academic year).

Additionally, I investigated whether interaction effects appeared between the (a) times of the questionnaire administration, (b) the order of homework task administration, and (c) students' self-reported proficiency/motivation. There was no significant interaction effect between test administrations and order of homework tasks. This suggests that the order in which the students conducted the homework did not impact their perceived listening self-efficacy. This finding is of interest, as it is possible that learners might benefit from an increased development of one form of listening ability (e.g., bottom-up listening) before seeing additional gains from another form (e.g., top-down listening). The RM-ANOVA also did not suggest a significant interaction effect between the students' initial proficiency/motivation, as judged by their choice of English class level, and their listening self-efficacy growth. The lower proficiency learners initially reported lower levels of self-efficacy than the higher proficiency learners and continued to report lower levels of self-efficacy than the higher proficiency learners during Times 2 and 3, self-efficacy grew at a similar rate in both groups. This finding should be taken with caution, however, as no actual measures of initial proficiency or motivation were administered.

Finally, during Week 30 (the final lesson), the students also ranked the four activities (in-class dictogloss, in-class strategy practice, out-of-class dictation, and out-of-class reading-while-listening) based on the perceived utility of each activity. Students endorsed higher utility ratings for the two in-class activities, in-class dictogloss (36.2%) and in-class strategy practice (26.9%), followed by out-of-class dictation (20%) and reading-while-listening (17%).

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