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臺灣國中生英語聽力困難與英語聽力能力、英語聽力自我效能關係

English Listening Difficulty in Relation to English Listening Proficiency and English Listening Self-Efficacy of Junior High School Students in Taiwan

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摘要

本論文旨在探討臺灣國中生英語聽力自我效能、英語聽力能力與英語聽力困難的關係，期能作為臺灣英語教育者教學與研究參考。

本研究採問卷、測驗與訪談方式，共回收 109 份有效問卷，訪談 20 位台北市某國中 8 年級學生。受試學生須填寫英語聽力自我效能量表，進行全民英檢初級聽力測驗，於測驗後完成英語聽力困難問卷。研究者並訪談英語聽力自我效能與聽力能力均偏高或偏低之學生，探討其面對英語聽力困難之因應策略。

研究結果顯示：此群國中生英語聽力自我效能高，英語聽力能力與英語聽力困難皆低。英語聽力自我效能高之學生的聽力困難顯著低於自我效能低之學生，且英語聽力能力高之學生的聽力困難亦顯著低於聽力能力低之學生。音量大小為唯一無法區分英語自我效能高低學生的聽力困難；而音量大小與 CD 品質或噪音則無法區分英語聽力能力高低學生。英語聽力能力較低者英語聽力困難顯著高於英語聽力能力較高者。無法抓到重要細節、忽略語句的關聯性、因為前面聽到的訊息無法理解或來不及處理影響後續的理解、說話者速度過快、在腦海中把英語翻成中文而來不及聽後面的內容、一字多義的單字、不認識的單字、困難文法結構、未能善用重複訊息或停頓、連音或省略音、內容主題不熟悉、聽力內容沒有興趣、沒有信心等為英語聽力能力較低學生之明顯困難。

受訪學生提出重播 CD、跟著唸、查字典、聽重要概念或關鍵字、作筆記、聽上下文猜、把聽到的英文翻成中文、放輕鬆、問說話者或其他人、請對方說慢一些、請老師提高 CD 音量等策略。測驗時，學生先看題目、選聽到的單字、劃掉不會的、作筆記、對不會的試題做記號、在題目播放間隔時寫答案、小心別劃錯卡。學生也聆聽英文節目、與外國人聊天、背單字訓練聽力。

盼本研究結果能提醒臺灣英語教師重視學生英語聽力困難、提升學生英語聽力能力與英語聽力自我效能，以幫助學生英語聽力學習。

關鍵字：聽力自我效能、聽力困難、聽力、聽力策略

ABSTRACT

The study aims at exploring the relationship of English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty. It is hoped that English language educators could probe more into students' English listening difficulty and English listening self-efficacy.

The study employs questionnaires, tests, and interviews. The subjects of the study filled out the English listening self-efficacy scale, did the elementary-level GEPT listening test, and finally answered the English listening difficulty questionnaire. The researcher gathered 109 valid questionnaires and interviewed 20 students who were either both high or both low in English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency for their strategies when encountering English listening difficulty.

The result shows that these junior high schools students are high in English listening self-efficacy and low in English listening proficiency and English listening difficulty. High English listening self-efficacy (HS) students report significantly lower listening difficulty than low English listening self-efficacy (LS) students; students with high listening proficiency (HL) also demonstrate significantly lesser degrees of English listening difficulty than students of lower listening proficiency (LL). The volume of the input is the only difficulty that fails to distinguish HS and LS students. The volume of the input as well as the quality of CDs and existence of noise are the listening difficulty that do not differentiate the HL and LL students. The LL students encounter significantly more English listening difficulty than the HL students. Inability to catch important details, ignorance of sentence connections, incomprehension or no time to process the previous parts that lead to difficulty of latter comprehension, fast speech, words with multiple meanings, too many unknown words, difficult grammatical structures, failure to use repeated message or pauses, linking or omission, unfamiliar

topics, and no confidence are particular difficulty of the LL students.

Students interviewed point out the replaying of CDs, repeating the heard inputs, looking up new words, listening to main ideas or key words, taking notes, guessing through contexts, translating the English inputs into Chinese, relaxing, asking the speaker or others, asking the speaker to speak slower, and asking teachers to turn up the volume as strategies. During English listening tests, they read the test items before listening, choose heard words, cross out unknown words, take notes, mark difficult items, write answers during pauses, and be careful not to draw on the wrong blank. The students also listen to English programs, talk to foreigners, and memorize vocabulary to help improve their English listening ability.

It is hoped that the study could remind teachers of students' English listening difficulty and boost students' English listening proficiency and English self-efficacy to facilitate students' English listening.

Key words: listening self-efficacy, listening proficiency, listening difficulty, listening strategy

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The present study aims at exploring students' English listening difficulty in relation with students' English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency. In addition, the researcher is also interested in strategies that students use to cope with listening difficulty.

The chapter is composed of the background of the study, purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. The researcher first talks about the teaching and learning of English listening in Taiwan and English listening difficulty encountered by Taiwanese students recorded in the previous literature, which in many cases differentiate difficulty of students with different levels of proficiency. The concept of self-efficacy and its connection with learning is then presented and discussed. The researcher finally presents the research questions of the present study and talks about possible contribution of the study.

Background of the Study

Listening comprehension skills are crucial in language learning. Listening comprehension enables learners to absorb information of the target language through bidirectional social interaction (Winitz, 1981) while talking with native/nonnative speakers as well as unidirectional information transfer such as listening to radio broadcasts or lectures (Graham, 2006). Research has shown that listening comprehension contributes to nearly 50% of adult communication, followed by speaking, approximating to 30%, and reading, which is about 16 % (Rivers, 1986).

Not only is listening an endeavor of its own, it is also a precursor for fundamental acquisition of other skills for language learners (Kim & Phillips, 2014). Compared with speaking, listening comprehension does not enforce learners to express themselves in a cognitively-overloaded fashion, which allows for the processing of meanings in people's short-term memory. Waiving demanding language production tasks, listening comprehension spares learners from embarrassment of false language outputs and builds confidence with early successful experiences (Vandergrift, 1999).

While the distinction of receptive and productive skills designates listening comprehension as passive reception of the information, recent study has confirmed that listeners do not idly accept what is forced into their ears. Instead, while receiving listening inputs, listeners have to actively reconstruct information in their brains so as to comprehend and make appropriate responses (Rost, 2011).

Auditory models suggest that listeners simultaneously engage in top-down and bottom-up processing of the input (Rumelhart, 1977), which already render it as a complicated process for native listeners. The task is even daunting for nonnative listeners, as they often lack the necessary background knowledge of the target culture and the required linguistic competence for the target language (Kelly, 1991).

Krashen (1981) argues that listening, as a major source of language input, should be comprehensible for learners in order to acquire the content and language at the same time. Educators are advised to illustrate pertinent listening comprehension strategies, comprehensible listening inputs, and proper listening supports for language learners (Bacon, 1992; Chang & Read, 2006). Nonetheless, the reality of language classrooms prevents some students from being fully devoted to effective listening (Ridgway, 2000), and the aftermath of inefficient listening comprehension frustrate language learners.

Listening comprehension tests have been a staple in entrance exams in many English as a foreign language (EFL) countries. In the context of Taiwan, English listening comprehension tests are introduced into the Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students (CAP) (Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, 2015). Under the guidelines of basic language competences mandated by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, the English test of the CAP employs multiple topics which are aimed to be casual, practical and interesting. Daily communication, social interaction and classroom English are carefully designed into the test, and the English listening comprehension part attempts to test students' language competence in the above situations.

While the first CAP in 2014 allocated English listening comprehension section at the beginning of the test, a modification of the new CAP in 2015 separates the reading part and the listening part into different time slots. After finishing the English reading section of the English test in CAP, students are given a thirty-minute break, followed by the delayed and isolated twenty-five-minute English listening comprehension section. For the English listening section, test-takers are given twenty to thirty test items. There are 3-10 test items for recognition of sentence meanings, 7-10 test items for basic questions and answers, and 10-15 test items for discourse comprehension. For recognition of sentence meanings, students choose among pictures or graphs based on the short sentences they hear. Then, on the basic questions and answers part, dialogues are broadcasted to the students, which require them to choose the most applicable responses. Discourse comprehension, the last part of the listening comprehension test, has students listen to short dialogues plus the target questions. They then select the most plausible answers according to the dialogues and questions.

Though the score on the listening part of the English test in CAP was not counted in 2014, starting from 2015, it is to be a component of the total score for the English test, signaling its stake in students' future. According to the MOE, the introduction of English listening comprehension section into the CAP is to conform to the curriculum guidelines and elevate the validity of English test by incorporating both English reading and listening assessment (Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, 2015). And it is hoped that positive washback effect can be brought by the CAP into English teaching classrooms in Taiwan (Bailey, 1996).

In addition to the emphasis of English listening in the high-stake CAP, a growing number of test-takers for General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) also shows the transformation of English language learning in the junior high school stage. With the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing, GEPT seems to call for a more communicative orientation of language learning (Wu, 2014). Approximately 49,000 people had signed up on the fall test of the elementary level GEPT in 2014. And some of the students were challenged for longer listening materials, possibly due to students' incapacity to grasp minute details. Most of the elementary GEPT test-takers, amounting to 72% of the total number, are junior high school students, with the average age of 15.1 (The Language Training and Testing Center, 2014). If GEPT is a test of junior high school students' endeavor, listening comprehension, as part of its components, should by all means be a focus of students' language learning.

As listening comprehension is one of the fundamental language skills in second language acquisition, information transfer and authentic communication, researchers have delved into listening comprehension research. A growing literature on listening comprehension research has been focused on barriers which hinder successful listening comprehension. Rubin (1994) reviews factors associated with listening comprehension

and summarizes variations of these characteristics, calling for more comprehensive understanding of bottom-up/top-down processing, strategy use and comprehensible input in the instruction of listening comprehension.

In an English as a second language (EFL) environment, students in Taiwan face challenges trying to catch the transient flow of listening inputs due to lacks of authentic inputs (Kouraogo, 1993; Yang, 2011). Frustration on listening has been confirmed to correlate with students' early give-ups (Chen, 2005; You, 2008). And general listening comprehension, as opposed to lecture comprehension, is suggested as difficult for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners (Ferris & Tagg, 1996). Preemptive prevention is demanded based on theories and research-grounded understandings of students' English listening difficulty.

Several scholars in Taiwan have been devoted to the study of students' listening difficulty with various results. Focusing on junior high school students in Taiwan, Ku (2012) and Chuang (2009) find that students' listening difficulty are mostly from the text factor, followed by the listener factor. But Chuang's (2011) students point out the listener factor as the foremost and the text factor as the secondary one. And when it comes to students of different proficiency, effective listeners in Chuang's (2011) study regard unrepeated material as the biggest challenge and ineffective learners blame on their own weak grammar. However, high-achieving listeners in Chuang's (2009) research report speakers' fast rate of speaking as the main obstacle, mid-achieving listeners add unknown words in texts as problems, and low-achieving listeners express poor grammar and small vocabulary size as challenges. Hsiung (2002), after assessing junior high school students' listening comprehension with a test including Bloom's (1984) six cognitive levels, suggests that different cognitive domains pose different

levels of difficulties, and they require different competence. Maybe the instruments used by different authors might affect their conclusions.

Senior high school students in Taiwan seem to exhibit other results. Cheng's (2004) students indicate limited vocabulary, unknown words, tasks that demand oral summary, perception problems and speech rate as main obstacles in listening comprehension. Yuan (2009), on the contrary, reports that students have pinpointed EFL proficiency, speed of delivery, memory, text length and ability of concentration as hampering their listening comprehension.

Study done on the college level is centered on English majors. Chien's (2007) high-proficiency learners have difficulty on unknown words, while mid- and low-proficiency learners mention unrepeated material. On the other hand, Wu (2007) record texts in specialized fields, unattractive content, distraction, male speakers, and connecting the learned and heard material as difficulties for high-proficiency listeners. And unable to recognize linking sounds, little practice in listening, inability to catch up with the speed or to remember the content, nervous, think about previous part and unable to concentrate, quickly forget what is heard, dictation, and categorize contents are problems of low-proficiency students. Lin (2011) specially investigates on student interpreters and finds that these students face unfamiliar contents, lack of practice, insufficient background knowledge, way of delivery, and perception problems.

Some of the study in Taiwan explores the use of listening strategy. Lin (2009) and Ho (2012) find that junior high school students utilize metacognitive strategies the most frequently. Specific strategies such as monitoring, selective attention, advance organizers, self-management, bottom-up, top-down, and inferencing are particularly used by these students. While Ho (2012) finds no difference between the strategy use of high and low achievers, Lin's (2009) effective students employ more self-

management, directed attention, advance organizers, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, bottom-up, top-down, inferencing, translation and elaboration. A similar but not exactly same result is found in Chang (2008), in which more skillful listeners suggest more effective use of top-down and bottom-up strategies while direct translation is relied by less skillful listeners. Taken question types into consideration, students employ summarization when encountering long listening text and bottom-up strategy to tackle with more difficult listening materials (Ho, 2012). And it is emphasized that learners need assistance by adult surrogates and significant others to gain guidance, assurance, sense of security, and emotional control for self-regulated learning (Chang, 2008).

While every version of study on listening difficulty is undergirded by countless hours of research, an overgeneralization of the study result and complete imitation of categorization models is dangerous. Inspection of listening comprehension difficulties on any particular student groups should be conducted with cautious modification of previous sorting patterns.

It is acknowledged that study of listening comprehension requires incorporation of different fields of study. Language learning research should contain intellectual, social and affective aspects since students are not only cognitive or metacognitive machines but whole persons (Wong, 2005). Not only is knowledge of languages necessary for the investigation, researchers also borrow theories from other domains in hope of seeing broader pictures. Among them, insights from psychology are often consulted. For instance, Anderson's (1980) cognitive psychology is taken for a model of language comprehension (Goh, 2000), and Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory is used to explain students' demotivation in learning listening (Graham, 2011).

Albert Bandura (1977), after scrutinizing previous psychological theories on human behaviors, proposes social learning theory as an explanation for the complex conducts

of the society. Social learning theory maintains that the practice of people are formed through reciprocal interaction among behavioral, personal, and environmental factors, as demonstrated in figure 1.

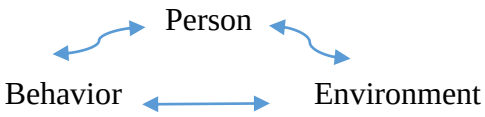


Figure 1. Determinants of human behaviors (Bandura, 1986, p.24.)

When Bandura's (1986) social learning theory is adopted to the study of academic learning, self-regulated learning, which incorporates self-generated actions and influenced by environmental and personal events, comes into stage (Zimmerman, 1989). Study of self-regulated learning acknowledges the triadic relation among the above determinants. It comprises controlling and monitoring of one's own learning process, and is regarded as a unique human capability (Bandura, 1986). To increase self-regulation, strategies that control personal, behavioral and environmental factors are necessary (Zimmerman, 1989).

To regulate oneself, change of certain behaviors is sometimes unavoidable. A four-phase behavioral change process is hypothesized for effective behavioral change. The first phase contains initial responses to the attainment of desirable behaviors, and is followed by continued responses that might involve tension with one's motivation and current ability. Maintenance, as the third phase of behavioral change, involves the firmness of determination to keep on. The ultimate habit formation in the last phase comes naturally when people no longer need meticulous self-monitoring and reasoning of intended behaviors (Rothman, Baldwin & Hertel, 2004).

Self-efficacy, defined as one's conviction to successfully accomplish a given task, comes in for behavioral change (Rothman, Baldwin & Hertel, 2004). It is believed that one's self-efficacy influences and predicts one's actual performance (Bandura, 1977), and it also leads to self-set goals and ultimate achievements (Ajzen, 2002; Philips & Gully, 1991). High self-efficacy is expected in the initiation of behavior change, and to continue the process, sustained self-efficacy should be available when people grapple with challenges (Rothman, Baldwin & Hertel, 2004). People with higher self-efficacy exert more effort and display persistence while people with lower self-efficacy cease their endeavor when facing difficulties (Bandura, 1982).

As the measurement of self-efficacy is task-based (Bandura, 1977), language teaching classrooms are believed to be promising milieu for the study of self-efficacy (Schallert, 2008). The trial and error process in the journey of language learning teem with the loss of face and embarrassments from risk-taking (Horwitz, 1990), which are strong elements that might offset degrees of one's learning self-efficacy.

Study of English-related self-efficacy in Taiwan have looked on students' self-efficacy levels. Chou (2014) finds excellent English self-efficacy among elementary students in Taipei City and New Taipei City. Wang (2011), Liao (2011) and Chang (2013) all get medium self-efficacy level from their junior high school students. Chou's (2007) senior high school subjects have good English self-efficacy while Liao (2009) finds higher English learning self-efficacy on vocational high school students than on technological vocational high school students.

Factors that have been found to influence students' self-efficacy level include students' family-social capital (Chou, 2014), whether students go to cram schools (Liao, 2013), and previous English learning experiences (Chou, 2007; Liao, 2013). English self-efficacy have been found to be connected with English learning anxiety (Chou,

2007; Chang, 2013), strategy use (Chou, 2007; Su, 2011), achievement (Chou, 2007), and student autonomy (Chang, 2011). As for its predictive power, Liao (2011) finds that self-regulation and perseverance positively predicts self-efficacy, and self-efficacy positively predicts English learning satisfaction. Compared with English learning anxiety, English learning strategies, and years of learning English, Chou (2007) and Niu (2009) both prove that English self-efficacy is a better predictor for students' English learning achievement.

Certain teaching methods could promote students' self-efficacy. Students in Taiwan who have undergone an English learning motivation regulating training group (Lin, 2002), cooperative learning instruction (Lee, 2007), English learning strategies teaching (Chang, 2004), natural approach method (Tseng, 2007), task-based language teaching (Chen, 2008), and goal setting (Chuang, 2004; Wang, 2004) display increasing self-efficacy.

Purpose of the Study

Previous self-efficacy study in Taiwan has paved the road for the present study. When putting students' listening comprehension into the social learning model, the progress that students have to make is a behavioral change that is dappled with difficulties. And a person's self-efficacy in listening comprehension is decisive for the inception and sustenance of the endeavor.

To regulate oneself, problem-directed action or planning to avoid problems in the future are suggested for affect regulation (Larsen & Prizmic, 2004). Planning and actual coping with difficulties are associated with improved moods (Larsen, 1993). Even the avoidance of unpleasant pain requires effortful preparation. When the unpalatable

situation is irreversible, avoidance of future enigma dovetails one's energy (Larsen & Prizmic, 2004).

Not only is difficulty crucial in the frame of self-regulation, it is also one of the factors for self-efficacy (Wang & Papa, 2007). Perceived difficulty of a given task, whether from past experiences, vicarious modeling, or simply physiological reactions, is the prime antecedent for self-efficacy belief and the consequential success or failure (Bandura, 1986). As specific self-efficacy, rather than generalized self-efficacy, is desired for targeted study, it is encouraged that specific self-efficacy be used for research (Schunk, 1989). A peeping of difficulties and self-efficacy, therefore, naturally necessitates better with specific self-efficacy beliefs and difficulties of the domain.

If performance of listening comprehension could be changed through manipulation of personal, environmental and behavioral factors, it can be put under Bandura's (1986) social learning model. Awareness and solution of listening difficulty could be applied to the process of self-regulated learning. Difficulties are also one of the begetters for self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is regarded as a main force in the behavioral changes for self-regulatory individuals. Review of the literature indicates the study of listening comprehension and self-efficacy (Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006), listening comprehension and listening self-efficacy (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009), and listening difficulty per se (e.g. Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Nonetheless, the investigation between listening difficulty and listening self-efficacy calls for further research.

Though researchers in Taiwan have identified listening comprehension difficulties among students of various age and English language proficiency (Chien, 2007; Lin, 2011; Wu, 2007; Yen, 1987; Yuan, 2009), they have yet not connected English listening difficulty with English listening self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is probed for the explanation of students' learning outcomes (Chang, 2004; Wang, 2011), but study on

its connection with English listening is still meager in Taiwan. In addition, except for Ho (2002), who investigates the strategy choice in accordance with question types, previous study seems to be more interested in students' general listening strategy use than coping strategies when encountering listening difficulty (Chang, 2008; Lin, 2009). The present study, based on the contribution of previous researchers, therefore aims at exploring the relationship between junior high school students' listening difficulty and the corresponding English listening self-efficacy.

Under the plethora of listening comprehension difficulties, it is surmised that degrees of listening self-efficacy would correlate with disparate types and severity of listening difficulty. The research questions of the study are:

1. Are there any relations, in types and degrees, between English listening difficulty and English listening self-efficacy for junior high school students in Taiwan?
2. Are there any relations, in types and degrees, between English listening difficulty and English listening proficiency for junior high school students in Taiwan?
3. What are coping strategies used by junior high school students in Taiwan when encountering English listening difficulty?

Significance of the Study

The present study aims to examine the relationship among English listening comprehension difficulties, English listening comprehension proficiency, and English listening comprehension self-efficacy. The result of the study could offer insights regarding English listening comprehension to educators and further researchers. The author of the study has conscientiously compiled an English listening difficulty

questionnaire with a thorough combing of the literature and some careful modification for the use of junior high school students in Taiwan. Junior high school English teachers could utilize the questionnaire and administer it to their students. It is of value for teachers to spot students' listening difficulty and then target those problems with certain treatments. The possible discrepancy between students' English listening proficiency and their English listening difficulty could also serve as reminders for teachers to detect potential problems faced by students of different proficiency level.

As the present study also probes into students' listening self-efficacy, it urges teachers' attention to students' psychological preparedness in learning a language. The possible connection between English listening self-efficacy and English listening difficulty suggests teachers of one way to boost students' learning by taking account to students' self-efficacy and their corresponding learning difficulties.

By building an appropriate listening difficulty questionnaire for junior high school students in Taiwan, the study could provide a useful research tool for future researchers. As previous research has yielded contrasting results regarding students' listening difficulty, the study could contribute as another stepping stone in the pursuit of students' listening difficulty. Though the present study does not seek to testify the prediction power of listening self-efficacy, its research on its relation with students' listening difficulty could provide a springboard for other researchers who are interested in asserting the prediction of listening self-efficacy with other cognitive or psychological variables.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study aims at exploring the interrelationship among English listening proficiency, English listening difficulty and English listening self-efficacy of junior high school students in Taiwan. Before taking students' learning experiences and language proficiency into consideration, an overview of elements composing listening comprehension is displayed in the following chapter. The significant role played by listening comprehension proficiency in students' acquisition of listening comprehension is introduced later, and difficulties of listening comprehension is discussed in relation to learners' diverse backgrounds.

The second half of the literature review explores self-efficacy through the view of the social learning theory. Bandura's (1977) groundbreaking social learning theory, used for explaining human behaviors, is used as the base for the efficacy discussion. Studies of self-efficacy beliefs and the diverse applications of the theory are then compared. The ultimate goal of the chapter strives to incorporate the research of listening comprehension and self-efficacy with the combing of the literature.

Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is one of the most prominent human activities in daily lives. Instead of seeing listening comprehension as a passive receptive language skill, scholars now believe that listening comprehension involves active encoding and decoding of language inputs with one's preexistent knowledge (Zarei & Mahmudi,

2012). While native speakers engage in listening comprehension from an early age, foreign language learners strive to comprehend the spoken inputs of the target language, which is sometimes a daunting task (Hadley, 2000). When visiting a foreign country, inability to comprehend listening inputs might be more devastating than a lack of speaking ability. As listening contributes to forty to forty-five percent time of human communication (Rivers, 1984), it is also regarded as prerequisites for the learning of other language skills (Kim & Phillips, 2014).

Listening Comprehension Inputs

Comprehension of the language inputs requires listeners to discriminate linguistic as well as paralinguistic messages. The discernment of sound sequences, stress, intonations are just parts of the requirements for listening comprehension. Pitch, volume, pauses, breathing, and selected emphasis are all conveyed information expressed by the speakers. Foreign language learners, being unfamiliar with the sound sequence of the target language, especially need practices on listening comprehension (Rivers, 1984). Listeners, however, are not always desperate in distinguishing individual sounds. Contexts in which the words appear often eliminate the interpretation of confusing words. It is observed that speakers stress the main information-carrying syllables and have unstressed syllables rapidly pronounced. They tend to repeat important words and indicate topics with tone changes (Underwood, 1989). Listeners could benefit from the emphases of speech for better comprehension.

Apart from sound features, spoken languages, compared with written forms, favor syntactically simple sentences. Fewer subordinate clauses are used and linking conjunctions are employed in spoken English. Instead of giving clues for the relationship of ideas, speakers seem to expect listeners to fill the connection themselves.

Incomplete sentences and less specific vocabulary like “somebody” are often uttered by speakers. In English conversation, long silences are considered awkward, and fillers are used to avoid the embarrassment. The density of the information is less packed in spoken forms than in written discourse (Underwood, 1989). The difference of syntax and vocabulary choice in spoken languages underscores the value of listening comprehension practices.

Listening Comprehension Process

Listening comprehension occurs in three major memory storage. Sounds are said to first enter a sensory store called “echoic memory.” The remaining of the sounds in echoic memory is pretty short, which is often confused with newly arrived information. The second place for the processing of listening comprehension is the short-term memory. Words are checked and meanings are extracted from the interaction of the short- and long-term memory. And if the chunking of the message is not fast enough, the listeners would leave no energy to process more inputs. The listening inputs finally rests in the long-term memory for later use. At this stage, listeners recode the message and store the gist but not the individual word sequence (Underwood, 1989).

But listening comprehension involves more than deconstructing linguistic inputs and the storage of the incoming information. For comprehension, listeners bring their knowledge of the world to the process, and one’s linguistic knowledge and world knowledge interact to achieve successful comprehension. A bottom-up or lower level processing builds up small linguistic units for comprehension while a top-down or higher level processing congregates the context and their prior knowledge upon processing (Field, 2004). Comprehension depends on the interaction of inputs, linguistic knowledge and world knowledge (Jensen & Hansen, 1995). Contextual,

visual or paralinguistic information, world knowledge, culture, and common sense could all contribute to the comprehension. The choice of comprehension directions varies according to purposes for listening, language proficiency, and contexts of the listening events (Vandergrift, 2007).

As abundant as listening activities are, an exhaustive listing of listening activities is not practical. Instead, generalizations of real-life listening are proposed as reference for the understanding of listening comprehension. According to Ur (1984), most listening behaviors are initiated with purpose and expectation, and listeners are required to make appropriate responses to the listening material. To comprehend the language inputs, listeners often rely on visual cues of the speakers, such as facial expression and gestures. Other environmental cues like pictures and videos facilitate the transfer of information, which often provide information about the situational context and atmosphere. Auditory characteristics such as pace, volume, pitch and stressing also differ among the forms and styles of listening materials. Features of informal and formal speech vary in degrees of redundancy, noise, and the use of colloquial wordings. And it is unsurprising that the formality of a discourse dangle between the two extremes in certain situations. Change of topics, social settings, relative ages and status between the speaker and the listener are all deciding elements for the extent of formality (Underwood, 1989).

Listening Comprehension in a Second Language

Byrnes (1984) looks at first language listening comprehension from both diachronic and synchronic axes. To explain the amazing ability of infants in comprehending listening inputs, instead of hypothesizing an innate language ability, it is suggested that babies develop capacity for symbolic activities through sensorimotor

interactions with others (Morehead & Morehead, 1977). Native speaking children receive extra-linguistic supports such as gestures to help them combine language forms and meaning in contexts. In addition, children seem to possess the nerve system that respond to segmentations of phones. They are tuned to physical aspects of the acoustic waves in words, and the intonation contours provide them with clues for the demarcation of language units (Gleitman & Wanner, 1982). As children in the world acquire languages in a similar fashion, for instance, most children learn that languages sometimes contain intended meanings, Slobin (1973) posits that prototypical events are universal for children to acquire initial conceptual frameworks. Also, there seems to be an interplay among phonological, lexical, structural and semantic knowledge (Marslen-Wilson & Tylor, 1980). For example, knowledge of semantic and syntactic constraints could speed listeners' response time in word recognition as well as sentence level-processing.

While native language speakers are exposed to the language inputs from an early age, foreign language students, on the other hand, experience developmental stages in acquiring listening comprehension. First contacts of foreign language speeches for foreign language learners are like a stream of undifferentiated noises. Gradually, the listeners grasp the voice pattern of the target language such as the rising voice and breathing. Distinction of the phonic and syntactic patterns follow as the listeners discern recurring elements that segment speech parts. With further exposure and acquisition of the target language, foreign language listeners begin recognizing familiar elements in the speech streams but fail to connect the interrelationships of the sound chunks. Foreign language learners, however, do not experience full comprehension of listening at this stage. At a more advanced learning level, foreign language listeners recognize essentials of the message but not the remembrance of the whole part. As comprehension

requires the retaining of information, listeners need to enhance their language proficiency in order to store the incoming speech streams to pass the short-term memory. Information is stored and processed once the learners are able to circulate it and select important information for the long-term memory. A stage when students can understand everything they hear but cannot remember it is considered an inevitable learning process. Only after overcoming the threshold can the listeners enjoy complete listening comprehension (Rivers, 1986).

Strategies are introduced in the teaching of listening comprehension classrooms for foreign language learners. Oxford's (2011) strategic self-regulation model categorizes strategies into cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive dimensions. Cognitive theories point out the importance of knowledge retrieval, reasoning and conceptualization of the inputs. Affective strategies relate to the activation and maintenance of supportive emotions, beliefs and attitudes. Sociocultural-interactive strategies emphasize the interaction feature of communication and see sociocultural contexts of the communication as unique. The instruction of listening comprehension strategies facilitate foreign language learners to overcome difficulties they face in listening comprehension.

Listening Difficulty

Measures investigating listening difficulty include individual/group interviews (Juan & Abidin, 2013), open-ended/fixed-form questionnaires (Yousif, 2006), self-reflection diaries (Yang, 2011), and think-aloud protocols (Mohamed & Ghoneim, 2013). As qualitative exploratory research builds the foundation for theories, quantitative study analyzes the gathered statistics of different groups (Firestone, 1987).

Study of listening comprehension difficulties record students' response and present processed results for educators as reference for listening comprehension instruction.

Scholars categorize listening comprehension difficulties based on different models. Some of these models are derived from listening research or cognitive psychology. Rubin's (1994) factorial taxonomy is adopted for ramification of listening difficulty, with listener, speaker, text, task, and listening process factors identified as sources of difficulties (Wu, 2007). Anderson's (1980) groundbreaking proposition on language comprehension divides the acceptance of inputs into three stages: perception, parsing, and utilization. The model is then applied to inquiries of listening comprehension phases as well as difficulties (Sun, 2008).

When it comes to the study of listening comprehension, Anderson's (1985) model for language comprehension is frequently used to categorize the process of language comprehension. According to Anderson (1985), comprehension can be divided into three stages: perception, parsing, and utilization. And learners might have difficulties processing language inputs at any of these stages or the combination of them.

Perception of language inputs refer to the encoding of acoustic or written message from one's sensory memory. The sensory memory for listening comprehension is called "echoic memory", which can store the input information for a short period of time. If the comprehension process is not yet automatized, attention is needed in selecting the input information for further processing. Some people face the problem of phoneme segmentation or phoneme identification at this stage.

Parsing of language inputs relies on the use of both syntactic and semantic cues. One parses the incoming messages by chunking them into phrases or constituents. Sometimes ambiguity occurs when one parses sentences with more than one interpretation. Transient ambiguity can be resolved within a sentence while permanent

ambiguity remains until the end of the sentence. As people tend to assign a single meaning at a time for each constituent, a backward reinterpretation is required in ambiguous sentences. People who are misled in initial interpretation are said to experience the garden-path theory of ambiguity.

The third stage of comprehension, utilization, is to prepare the response to the input information. One utilizes the message by relating it with the preexisted knowledge in one's mind. Most sentences contain both new and old information. The old information is named supposition, which is the part that the speaker supposes that the listener already knows. The new information is called assumption, which is what the speaker intends to convey to the listener based on his/her supposed knowledge. Comprehension problems appear when the listener does not know the supposition assumed by the speaker, as speakers tend to stress asserted assumption but not the supposition. Certain sense of the world knowledge as well as problem solving and reasoning abilities are required for the utilization of language inputs. One can be fluent in one language but fail to be involved in particular topics when one lacks the necessary background knowledge. As sentences are structured in contexts, the utilization of the inputs also encompasses the analysis of hierarchical text structures. It is plausible that listeners might have trouble in any of these comprehension process.

Categorizations of Listening Difficulty

Though Anderson (1985) does not directly relate listening comprehension difficulties to the discussion of comprehension stage, the three-phase comprehension model, namely, perception, parsing and utilization, is often borrowed by scholars for the categorization of listening comprehension difficulties. One of the pioneers who utilizes Anderson's (1985) model in the investigation of listening comprehension

difficulties is Christine Goh (2000). As part of her dissertation project, she conscientiously gathers students' weekly diaries from 40 Chinese college students who study English in Singapore. Among the 40 students, seventeen of them are invited for small group interviews and twenty-three of them participate in an immediate retrospective verbalization procedure as means to probe into students' listening comprehension problems. The results of the problems are categorized under perception, parsing and utilization.

In the same vein, Sun and Li (2008) recruit twenty-two English majors from a university in China. They first have the students learn to think aloud. Then, the students have to take an English listening comprehension test with two articles of about five minutes long. The listening test material is predesigned with proper pauses so that the students are able to orally report the difficulties they encounter while listening. The result of the students' think-aloud protocol is then analyzed with Anderson's (1985) three-stage comprehension model.

Wang (2008) again employs Anderson's (1985) cognitive comprehension frame for the categorization of listening comprehension difficulties. One hundred twenty-one freshman and sophomore English majors participate in his study through the English listening comprehension course. Questionnaires and interviews are utilized for the date collection. For the questionnaire part, one open-ended questionnaire is given to the students to ask them to list any comprehension difficulties they face while listening. The result of the open-ended questionnaire is then gathered and categorized according to Anderson's (1985) three-phase comprehension model. Then, a closed questionnaire based on the question items from students' open-ended answers are contrived and given to students. Some of the students are also invited for interviews to further probe their listening comprehension difficulties.

A group of researchers, also from China, follow the similar model. Chang, Lu, Chang and Ting (2012) compare three groups of students, who are English majors, clinical medicine undergraduates and master students of medicine. Students in the study have to take an English test taken from Part III of the fourth level national English listening test and then answer a questionnaire of listening difficulty. The listening difficulty questionnaire, again, is based on Anderson's (1985) model.

The diversity among the categorization of listening difficulty in the four study might be due to the difference in the methodology and subjects. The categorization of the listening difficulty in the study is not set a priori. Rather, it is gleaned and later arranged in order with various instruments such as open-ended questionnaires (Wang, 2008), listening diaries (Goh, 2000), self-reports (Goh, 2000), think-aloud protocols (Sun and Li, 2008), and interviews (Goh, 2000; Wang, 2008). Even though the student participants are all college students, they vary in majors and English proficiency. It is plausible that the resulting listening difficulty taken from different groups of students could differ in certain parts and degrees. And the different categorization of some listening difficulty might result from authors' interpretation of Anderson's (1985) model. Nonetheless, Anderson's (1985) three-phase comprehension model still provides later researchers with a referential framework in the categorization of listening comprehension.

Not every scholar stick to Anderson's (1985) three-phase comprehension model as the base for categorizing listening comprehension. Chang Wu, and Pang (2013) do a thorough analysis on listening comprehension difficulties and propose a thirty-one item questionnaire with six factors. Through tedious examinations of factor analysis and fit indices, a twenty-three-item questionnaires is contrived. The six factors that categorize listening comprehension difficulties are text, input channel and surroundings, relevance,

listener, speaker, and task. Unknown vocabulary, hard grammatical structures, unfamiliar topics, abstract concepts and long sentences are defined under text factors. The clearance and loudness of linguistic inputs are considered in input channel and surroundings. Under the relevance factor, it is agreed that listeners find it difficult to concentrate or understand the listening material when the content is irrelevant or of no interests to them. For listener factors, the authors put nervousness, which pertains to situations when listeners forget what they know or cannot follow the aural input, as sources of problems. Sometimes, the presence of an evaluator also increases listeners' nervousness. As for speaker factors, speakers' speech rate, loudness, pronunciation, and accents are reported by students to be sources of listening difficulty. Task characteristics refer to types of tasks or tests that the listeners respond to while listening. Whether the test is a multiple-choice test, with or without visual aids could contribute to listening comprehension difficulties.

A similar but not identical categorization is done by Yang (2011) in Taiwan. By scrutinizing students' listening diaries, she identifies five factors, which are text, listener, listening process, speaker and task factors. Unknown words, fast delivery, difficult grammar, unrepeated material, linking sounds, lengthy sentences, incomprehensible accents, and unfamiliar topics are considered text factors in this study. Listener factors contain limited vocabulary knowledge, little practice in English listening, weak grammar, no concentration, laziness, lack of patience, nervousness, weak memory and inability to read English words. One encounters difficulties in the listening process when one misses next parts because of thinking about previous meanings or its L1 translation. One could also forget what is heard quickly, being distracted at the beginning or unable to discriminate familiar words. For speaker factors, the author puts speech rate, speaker accents and possibility of a native speaker as some sources of

listening comprehension difficulties. Dictation, note-taking and choosing items are thought to be task factors of listening comprehension difficulties.

Yousif (2006), on the other hand, provides an index of linguistic and conceptual, discourse, acoustic, environmental, and psychological variables as categorizations of listening comprehension difficulties. By distributing questionnaires and interviewing fifty first-year English majors in Arabia, it is assumed that vocabulary, sentence length, recognition of referential systems such as pronouns are linguistic factors and organization and explanation of concepts could be part of conceptual variables. Discourse variables relate to students' limited exposure to lengthy speech. Not being able to control the flow of dense information or stop for repetition also annoy them. Acoustic variables could be the noise from the corridor or other classmates. Environmental variables concern the climate and insulation of the classroom. Some psychological variables like boredom and frustration also might hinder students' listening comprehension.

On developing a listening comprehension problem scale, Zhang and Zhang (2011) arranged a four-factor scale, with meaning, attention and memory, words, and sounds as the four main categories of listening comprehension problems. For problems related to meanings, students sometimes cannot understand the intended message of some parts or even the whole text. Sometimes, key ideas of the whole text is also hard to comprehend. Students also cannot understand the next part if they have some earlier problems. Long sentences or words with more than one meaning are put under the meaning category as well. On the attention and memory part, it is said that students tend to forget sentences quickly. They are also inclined to neglect the next part while thinking about previous parts. And they sometimes cannot chunk streams of speech. The third factor, words, is associated with situations when students cannot recognize words they

have learned due to their own incorrect pronunciations. Or, they might simply cannot respond to the words quickly enough. The fourth factor, sounds, happens when one cannot discriminate sounds because of speakers' linking, assimilation, omission, fast speech, accent or intonation.

Hamouda (2012) studies 60 English in India. He divides listening difficulty into "listening materials," "linguistic features," "failure to concentrate," "listener," "speaker," and "physical settings." Under the "listening materials" category, it is found that students have difficulty pertaining to limited English vocabulary, poor grammar, length of a spoken text, fatigue due to listening to long passage, trying to understand every word, unfamiliar topics, background knowledge, and the difficulty of the material per se. For the "linguistic features," students find it difficult to listen to colloquial and slang expressions, signal words, unknown words, long and complex sentences as well as engage in inferential process. Students also point out their inability to concentrate when the text is too long for "failure to concentrate." As for "listener" factor, students are unable to get a general understanding of the spoken text, predict, recognize words they know, whether because they themselves pronounce the words differently or they know the written form but not the aural representation of the words, answer questions, or listen without transcripts. For the "speaker" factor, unclear pronunciation, accents, speed of delivery, lack of visual support and inability to get things repeated are pointed out by the subjects. The "physical setting" category chronicles students' problems with noise and poor-quality tapes or discs.

Another study of students' listening problems is recorded in Hasan (2000). By distributing questionnaires to 81 Arabic English for Special Purposes (ESP) students, Mr. Hasan gleans listening problems with "learner strategies," "listening text," "speaker," and "listener attitudes." For "learner strategies," listen to every detail

exacerbates listening. Under the "listening text," unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, and length of spoken texts are obstacles for students. Prediction, interactive listening, and summary are "listening tasks" that pose trouble on students. Problems related to natural speech, unclear pronunciation, accents, and the disappearance of the speaker are categorized under "speaker." "Listener attitudes" involves the lack of interest, demand for answers, and the message on audio-tapes.

Some of the problem categories are not clear cut. Zhang and Zhang (2011) point out that problems in their "meaning" factor could be attributed to different categories in Anderson's (1985) model. According to Zhang and Zhang (2011), when one cannot understand the intended messages or key ideas of the inputs, he/she suffers factor one, meaning problems. This is put under the utilization phase in Anderson's (1985) model. But when one cannot understand long sentences, words with more than one meaning or next parts because of earlier problems, he/she is said to be attacked by parsing problems in Anderson's (1985) model, though these problems are all also categorized under the meaning factor in Zhang and Zhang (2011). To make the matter more complicated, lengthy sentences is regarded as one of the "discourse" variables in Yousif (2006) and one of the "text" factors in Yang (20011), Chang, Wu and Pang (2013), and Hasan (2000). But it is in the "meaning" factor in Zhang and Zhang (2011), and "listening materials" in Hamouda (2012). As Anderson (1985) himself has pointed out, the three-phase comprehension process is interrelated and recursive, which means that the three phases of comprehension might happen concurrently, even in a single listening comprehension event.

From the research of listening comprehension difficulties that do not follow Anderson's (1985) model, it can be found that some of the difficulties or difficulty categories are not discussed in Anderson's (1985) comprehension process model at all.

Problems related to "acoustic" variables in Yousif (2006) are talked under "input and surroundings" in Chang, Wu, and Pang (2013), "physical settings" by Hamouda (2012), and "listener attitudes" for Hasan (2000). Psychological variables are considered as "listener" factors in Chang, Wu and Peng (2011), Yousif (2006), Yang (2011), and as parts of "listener attitudes" in Hasan (2000). Task factors are mentioned in Yang (2011), Chang, Wu, and Peng (2011) and Hasan (2000). Chang, Wu and Peng (2011) are unique in proposing the relevance and interests of the input material and Yousif (2006) specially deals with environmental variables for some of the listening comprehension difficulties. All in all, the above categories are not associated with Anderson's (1985) model.

Though the adoption of Anderson's (1985) situate listening comprehension difficulties in a cognitive framework, it seems to pre-exclude some of the possible listening comprehension difficulties. By following Anderson's (1985) model, the investigation of listening comprehension is restricted to the processing of language inputs. The construction of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews limit the direction of students' response on listening comprehension difficulties. Students' psychological reactions toward listening comprehension is then ignored. The focus on listening comprehension process also exempts the consideration of acoustic factors. When researchers construct questionnaires of listening comprehension difficulties according to Anderson's (1985) model, they might overlook aspects that do not directly link to comprehension processes.

Another possible reason for the discrepancy of listening comprehension difficulties between those that resort to Anderson's (1985) model and those that don't is the scope of situations for listening comprehension. Though Goh (2000) have students record their listening comprehension problems in diaries, the listening events

her students encounter seem to be restricted to tests. On the contrary, Yang's (2011) students listen to at least one learning program in English each week and write a listening journal, which broadens the possibilities of diverse listening inputs and environments. It is no surprising that task factors show up in her research. Yousif (2006) probes students' listening comprehension difficulties when listening to English lectures and thus brings the issue of environmental variable to the discussion.

Some exploratory study do not categorize listening comprehension difficulties at all, but they still contribute to the understanding of listening comprehension difficulties. The following are listening difficulty found in other study that are not discussed in previous paragraphs. Whooley's (1991) college students report that the professors are not captivating and other students are distracting as sources of listening comprehension difficulties in class. A similar result is found in McDevitt, Sheehan and Cooney's (1994) college subjects, who also have students having no difficulties with listening. Boyle (1983) reminds that students' general intelligence, background knowledge and learning experience could affect their listening comprehension, and so do speakers' personality and language proficiency as well as supports provided, such as gestures or visuals.

Ghoneim's (2013) students have difficulties identifying proper names or places, understanding numbers and seem to hear words that could not be connected to the topic. Tinkler (1987) maintains that lack of exposure to natural English and lack of prediction could result to listening comprehension difficulties. Juan and Abidin's (2013) Chinese students tend to translate the English inputs into Chinese and confound themselves while listening. They also lack patience and perseverance in listening to English.

Zhong (2011) probes the lag factors of students' English listening comprehension in ethnic regions and finds that students have difficulties identifying the contexts of the speech, guessing words and thinking in English. Solak and Altay's (2014) Turkish

students worry about not being able to check their understanding, find out the main purpose of the listening task, make a mental summary of information, relate latter parts with previous parts, make meaning personal associations with the information, evaluate overall accuracy of comprehension, use strategies, answer wh-questions or fill a grid while listening, make generalization, and reduce anxiety.

Listening Difficulty and Listening Proficiency

To examine students' listening comprehension difficulties, one of the factors that could not be ignored is student proficiency. Listening comprehension proficiency as well as overall language proficiency might contribute to students' problems in listening comprehension. Language learning ability, similar to other human ability, might vary among individuals (Hewson, 1982).

In fact, a major difference among those listening difficulty study with Anderson's (1985) model occurs in the relation of students' listening proficiency and their listening difficulty. Wang (2008) groups students as freshman and sophomore English majors. These students encounter most of their listening comprehension difficulties in the perception stage, followed by the parsing stage. They face fewest difficulties in the utilization stage. There is no significant difference in the stages of listening difficulty between freshman and sophomore students. Similarly, even though English majors possess better listening abilities than two groups of medical students in Chang, Lu, Chang and Ting's (2012) study, they all face most of their listening comprehension difficulties in the parsing stage, regardless of their listening comprehension proficiency. There is a slight trend that students with lower listening comprehension proficiency might have more problems in the perception stage, but the difference is not significant.

On the contrary, Goh's (2000) and Sun and Li's (2008) study both detect the discrepancy in the stages of listening comprehension difficulties among students of different listening comprehension proficiency. The low ability students in Goh's (2000) study report more problems in perception and parsing stages while students of higher ability show listening difficulty in all three stages of the comprehension process. The low level students in Sun and Li's (2008) study indicate problems in perception and parsing stages more frequently than high level students. Only in the utilization stage do high level students show more difficulties than their low level counterparts.

The conflicting results might be related to the subjects' actual language proficiency. If, according to Anderson (1985), the first stage for comprehension lies in perception, it might be possible that students of lower listening comprehension proficiency are hindered at this stage, as do the subjects in Wang's (2008) study. Seldom do these students go to the second stage of comprehension, not to mention the third phase. Therefore, these students exhibit more difficulties in the perception stages.

Students in Chang, Lu, Chang and Ting's (2012) research might be a little better than those in Wang's (2008). They mostly face problems in the parsing stage. They are already able to discriminate sounds and perceive the listening inputs properly but are not yet able to construct the meaning of the material in the parsing stage. Higher-level students in Sun and Li's (2008) study report using strategies such as concentration, selective attention and self-evaluation to solve listening problems of all three stages. Compared with low-level students, high-level students adjust their attention at the perception stage and use selective attention to grasp main ideas in the parsing stage. They also try to ask expanding questions to connect new and old information. Perhaps that's why they face fewer problems in the first two stages than the low-level students.

In Goh's (2000) study, both groups of students have problem recognizing words. This is plausible since these students are both in the journey of learning the English language and their perception skills are not fully automatized. High and low ability students also tend to forget what is heard quickly. The parsing problem might result from the excessive demands enforcing on their limited processing capacity. The chunking and mental representation of new inputs are often displaced before they could be properly used. High level students in Goh's (2000) research express that they sometimes understand the words but not the intended message of the listening input. This might be because of their limited schemata and the insufficient contextual information given in the material. Low-level students have difficulty in paying attention, for they seldom use metacognitive strategy to redirect their attention. They are also obstructed by the lack of vocabulary. It could be surmised that the differences in the occurrence of listening difficulty might lie in the difference among students' overall listening comprehension proficiency and the strategies they use to solve them.

Apart from comparing students' listening proficiency for discussion of Anderson's (1985) model, some scholars have devoted solely to the relation of listening difficulty and proficiency. Ghoneim (2013) invites intermediate and advanced college seniors in Egypt to think aloud their listening comprehension problems. It is found that the two groups of learners declare the same problems but in different percentage. Specifically, the percentage of occurrence for different problems in intermediate students are nearly double than in advanced students.

A different conclusion displayed in Zhang, Lu and Tan's (2010) study, which resort to Anderson's (1985) model but is not discussed earlier because of the conflicting results. The researchers of the study group students by two measures: one by students' overall English proficiency and the other by students' English listening comprehension

proficiency. Neither the grouping of overall English proficiency nor English listening comprehension proficiency show significant differences among groups in students' listening comprehension difficulties. However, when one digs into categories of listening difficulty, students of lower English proficiency face more problems on perception stage, while those of higher English proficiency report more problems on parsing and utilization stage. Most of the students, regardless of their English listening comprehension proficiency, report most difficulties on parsing stage. It is suggested that wherever learners' proficiency are, there's certain distance between the learners and the listening material. The level of one's listening proficiency could not change the quality of listening difficulty.

Listening Difficulty and Other Factors

In addition to students' listening comprehension proficiency, which so far gathers no concluding evidence from the literature, previous study has also delved into other individual differences that affect listening comprehension and listening difficulty. Gonium (2013) records how college students utilize listening comprehension strategies by going through comprehension-gathering, linguistic and connecting process to help coping with their listening problems. Bacon (1992) also finds that students summarize the heard passages, make connections of the listening material and their world knowledge, set plans and monitor their own listening. It is suggested that more text-based/bottom-up strategies are used when listening to materials of a more difficult level.

Age is another issue that might influence listening comprehension. As Lehto and Anttila (2010), after studying primary graders, point out, as far as narrative passages are concerned, listening comprehension could mature between the second and the fourth grade. They suggest that the developmental change might be partly due to the

abandonment of inefficient strategies and adoption or appropriate listening comprehension strategies.

Not only does maturity issue affects listening comprehension, aging, as it does in other abilities, influences one's language learning ability (Hewson, 1982). Age-related listening comprehension difficulties may be attributed to changes in higher-level cognitive processes and lower-level sensory and perceptual processes. And it is demonstrated that auditory declines are the biggest contributors to age-related changes in speech comprehension (Schneider, Daneman & Pichora-Fuller, 2002).

Not only are cognitive variables pivotal in language acquisition, affective variables such as motivation, attitudes and anxiety also contribute to students' language learning experience. In Gardner and MacIntyre's (1992; 1993) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), students' motivation is assessed by the desire to learn the language, motivational intensity and attitudes toward learning the language. Instrumental or integrative orientation for learning the language as well as one's attitudes toward the learning situation could influence one's learning outcome. Put in a socio-cultural milieu, cognitive and affective variables are mutually influencing. And students' learning environments, be it formal or informal, together with individual differences, could produce discrepant results.

Listening Strategies

To counter listening comprehension difficulties, listening strategies are employed and taught in language classrooms. More proficient listeners are found to use strategies more often and with wider ranges while less-proficient listeners tend to be negatively affected by linguistic and attentional constraints (Berne, 2004). As listening to a foreign

language can sometimes be difficult and demands full attention, application of listening strategies require certain level of language proficiency (Ridgway, 2000).

Forty English majors in Egypt participated in Ghoneim's (2013) study of strategy use. It is found that students with different levels of proficiency encounter similar problems but utilize strategies with different level of frequency. Top-down strategies, especially the use of background knowledge, are particularly prevalently used among advanced students. And intermediate students rely more on word by word meaning and choose to move on even if comprehension is affected.

O'malley, Chamot and Küpper (1989) find that students' listening strategy use parallel with listening process, with attention being a fundamental factor. The think-aloud protocol reveals that listeners monitor their listening, elaborate the contents with personal and world knowledge, and make inference, sometimes in the form of self-questioning. Effective listeners use both top-down and bottom-up processing strategies while ineffective listeners are often restricted in individual words.

Bacon (1992) compares students' strategy use in the face of different levels of listening inputs. It is suggested that listeners employ more text-based strategies on more difficult inputs. And more monitoring strategies are found for easier inputs. People who make personal connection with the inputs could comprehend more successfully, which also indicates the importance of background knowledge use.

Some scholars try to see beyond strategy use and other factors. Salahshour, Sharifi, and Nedasalahshour (2012) conduct research on Iranian high school students to see the relationship between listening strategy use, listening proficiency, and student gender. With students' self-report and their English listening test, it is found that students show medium frequency of strategy use, with meta-cognitive strategies being used the most

frequently and cognitive strategies used the least. More strategy use is found among students of higher proficiency and of female gender.

In a longitudinal study, Graham, Santos, and Vanderplank (2008) investigates two lower-intermediate learners of French for six months. While listening, one of the students predicts words, writes visual prompts and selects attention on particular words. The other student double checks his interpretation with given information, vocalizes the heard words, and seems to automatize his strategy use. The stable use of strategies over time is found in two students, with the pre-existing difference of proficiency still persisting after six months. The authors suggest that strategy use is highly individualized and strategy instruction be taught with allowance for students' own selection and evaluation.

Strategy use is also related to students' self-efficacy, which is the main focus of the literature review in the next section. In this part, some study of listening strategies and self-efficacy will be discussed briefly. For instance, preservice language teachers with higher self-efficacy are found to listen to English songs, watch English movies or news more frequently than teachers of lower self-efficacy. They also guess meaning in the context and are active in checking words on dictionaries or with friends (Wong, 2005).

In another study done by Adnan and Mohamad (2011), students first hear specific information, refer to reference material, and check for their prediction. It is confirmed that students' listening self-efficacy is significantly correlated with reading, listening, speaking, and vocabulary strategy use. And in fact, self-efficacy is correlated with all language learning strategies.

On investigating strategy use, self-efficacy, and proficiency, Yilmaz (2010) concludes that students with good and fair levels of self-efficacy exhibit significantly

more cognitive strategy use compared with those of poor self-efficacy students. The same situation goes for compensation strategies. But for metacognitive strategies, there is a significant difference between good and poor self-efficacy students but not between good and fair or fair and poor comparison. The emerging pattern suggests that students with higher self-efficacy use more cognitive, compensation, and metacognitive strategies.

When proficiency and age issues are brought to the study of language learning strategies and self-efficacy beliefs, Magogwe and Oliver (2007) find that their Boswana students' strategy use increases with proficiency but the preference of their strategy use varies. Primary kids tend to use social, metacognitive and cognitive strategies more. Secondary school students utilize metacognitive and social strategies the most. And the ranking of strategies for tertiary level students is metacognitive, cognitive, social, affective, memory, and compensation strategies. The result of their self-efficacy also shows that these participants demonstrate positive and significant correlation of self-efficacy beliefs and strategy use.

Even when self-efficacy study is coped with reading and writing strategy use, similar results emerge. Singaporean school children with higher self-efficacy are found to command more strategies in both reading and writing. Students with high self-efficacy perform more goal-setting and planning, comprehension enhancement, attention management, and monitoring and evaluation while reading. For writing, higher self-efficacy students tend to use activate prior knowledge, plan, monitor, draft, control quality and use good vocabulary more than those with lower self-efficacy (Gong, Zhang, Zhang, Kiss & Ang-Tay, 2011).

Self-efficacy

Aside from listening comprehension proficiency in the cognitive domain, one issue from the psychological realm that is the main focus of the study is students' listening comprehension self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to one's conviction that one can successfully execute a certain behavior (Bandura, 1977). It is situated in Bandura's social learning theory model and relates to self-regulation, which is one of the crucial elements for human behaviors.

Social Learning Theory and Self-Regulation

According to social learning theory, behaviors, personal factors and environmental factors operate as interlocking determinants among one another (see figure 1). The power of these three determinants are not equal or static at all time. Instead, their potency fluctuate according to situations. There are times when a certain factor plays a significant role, such as when the environmental factor overrides one's behavior regardless of one' personal capacity. But for most instances, these three sets of interacting factors are highly interdependent. And even within each factor, reciprocal processes abound during different time or situational frame. The interactional effects taken by these factors are not always simultaneous but require time (Bandura, 1986).

Though triadic forces shape human behaviors, people possess self-regulatory capabilities to control their actions. Self-regulation is started from self-observation, monitoring different aspects according to the engaged activities. Regular inspection and proximity of time help people accurately observe these actions. The second step for self-regulation involves judgmental processes in which people develop internal standards for themselves, whether by self-set or by observing significant others. They give values to the judged activities and attribute their performance into personal or

external locus for self-reaction, the final phase of self-regulation. Human behaviors thus, in certain degrees, are continually self-regulated, despite of enormous outside forces (Bandura, 1977; 1986).

Self-Efficacy

It is on the premise of self-regulatory power that self-efficacy comes into play. Self-efficacy concerns with people's judgments of their capabilities to attain desired performance. It mediates from person to behavior, determining people's convictions on whether they will even try to cope with difficult situations. Self-efficacy also controls cognitive, motivational, affective, and selective processes. The cognitive process includes goal setting, prediction, perseverance and effort expenditure. For the motivational process, self-efficacy governs one's causal attributions, outcome expectancies and cognized goals.

In affective processes, self-efficacy affects how much stress or anxiety people might endure during difficult situations. The stronger the self-efficacy, the braver people are in taking on possibly daunting challenges and transform them into manageable tasks. When people choose or avoid impending tasks, they do so according to their perceived difficulties. But self-efficacy does not only involve the chosen of tasks. For selection, people are able to adopt amiable environments and cultivate social networks based on their perceived efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

Self-efficacy generates from performance accomplishments/enactive attainments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal/physiological state. It is believed that performance accomplishments, also called enactive attainments, provide the most influential source for self-efficacy because they are based on one's own personal experience. Past successful experiences foster people's self-efficacy while

repeated failures diminish it, especially when mishaps happen pretty early. Nonetheless, people do not build their self-efficacy simply based on their own trial and error. Observing others successfully or unsuccessfully performing similar tasks could alter one's self-efficacy toward the intended mission. This is especially true when several modeling exist or when the observed others are thought to possess similar capabilities as the individual.

Verbal persuasion is used to elevate one's conviction that they can successfully accomplish a certain task. However, compared with other sources for self-efficacy, orally cheering up without authentic experiences demonstrate weak power in uplifting one's self-efficacy. As discussed above, self-efficacy determines the amount of anxiety or stress one believes one could bear. But the emotional arousal, or physiological states manifested on human body when coping with problems also give information to one's judge of self-efficacy. People read their fatigue, aches, and pains as indicators of the situation. High arousals of emotion such as fear, shaking and agitation debilitate performance (Bandura, 1977; 1982).

Self-Efficacy in the Academic Arena

Applications of self-efficacy theory straddle across areas ranging from health rehabilitation to social movements (Bandura, 1982), and the accumulating research has devoted to the instrumentation of self-efficacy beliefs in academic arenas (Pajares, 1996). Academic studies on self-efficacy peek through every member of schools, ranging from students, teachers to administrative staff. (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996). Students' self-efficacy in assorted subject areas such as math, science and literature are investigated, and in language classes, self-efficacy in four language skills as well as the overall L2 learning self-efficacy are inspected respectively (Wang, 2011; Mills, Pajares

& Herron, 2006). A general consensus affirms Bandura's (1986) proposal that self-efficacy predicts learning outcomes (Graham, 2006), and the more specific the task, the more accurate its prediction is (Schunk, 1989).

Research of self-efficacy seeks to apply the concept to different fields of study. It could, for instance, be analyzed under family structures, career developments, and health-promotion. Across diverse areas, one's self-efficacy varies in level, generality, and strength. When self-efficacy is put in the academic arena, it involves students' judgments of their capability in performing the required activities.

Self-efficacy is multidimensional, differing from subject to subject, and so is its measurement. Students evaluate themselves depending on a mastery criterion rather than normative comparison with others. And it is generally measured before the real tasks, as prior weighing of self-efficacy proves to have no influence on students' consequential performance (Zimmerman, 1995; Bandura, 2006).

Study has proved that self-efficacy affects students' effort, persistence and choice of activities. Guided instruction with frequent feedback helps sustain and intensify students' self-efficacy. When students are led to set their own proximal goals, their self-efficacy would increase. Students' self-efficacy also predicts their ultimate achievement as well as anxiety level. In fact, it is shown that self-efficacy contributes to 14 % variance for performance, and its predictive power is greater than instruction (Zimmerman, 1995).

Schunk (1985) proposes a model of motivated learning and situates self-efficacy as both instrumental expectancies and cues (see figure 2).

Based on the social cognitive view of the triadic relation among personal, behavioral and environmental influences, a self-regulated academic learning model is proposed as an optimal learning process. Zimmerman (1989) positions self-observation,

self-judgment, and self-reaction as paramount in learning. Systemic monitoring of students' own performance by either verbal reporting or written recording is influenced by self-efficacy, goal-setting, metacognitive planning and behavioral influences. When students compare and judge their performance with their goals, they rely on their self-efficacy and knowledge of standards. Students' self-reactions involve responses to their own performance. These again could be related to students' self-efficacy, goal setting, and behavioral outcomes. As students utilize self-efficacy in goal setting and strategy use, outcomes of the events tweak their later estimation of self-efficacy. The reciprocal nature of self-efficacy among other factors demonstrates its importance through the process.

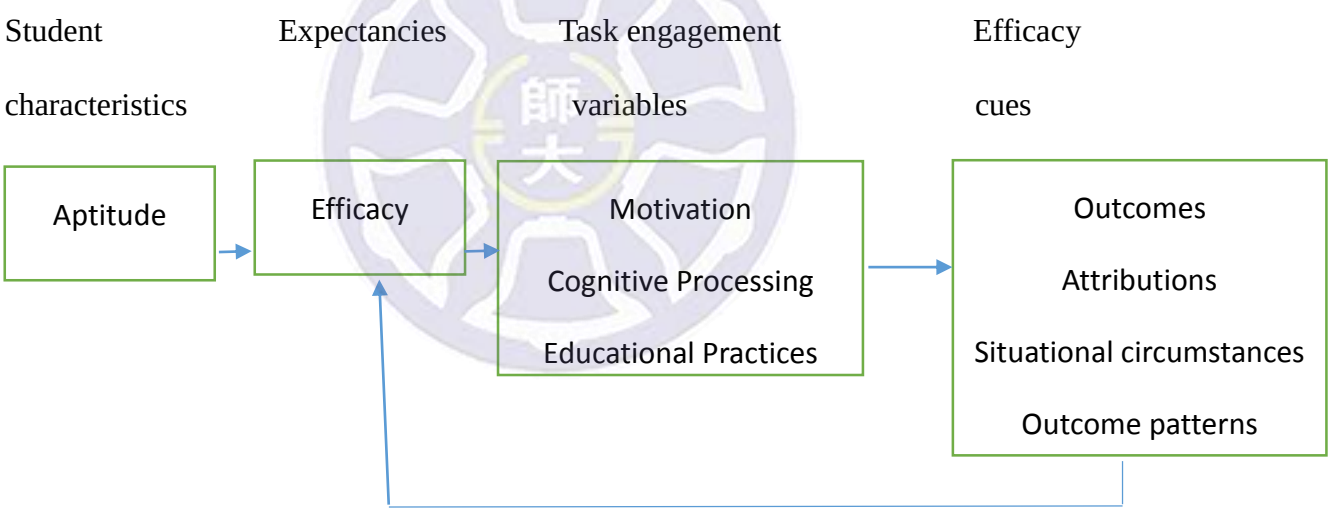


Figure 2. A model of motivated classroom learning of cognitive skills (Schunk, 1985).

As the academic area offers contexts for standards, personal goals, and self-efficacy to take effect mutually, a cyclic model of self-regulated learning is promoted (see figure 3). In this model, students are encouraged to detect and evaluate their self-efficacy and then set specific learning goals by breaking tasks into smaller components.

The application of strategies is accompanied with constant self-monitoring to cope with intervening events. The final rating of self-efficacy following outcomes is vital in increasing future self-monitoring. When outcomes are compared with students' estimation of self-efficacy, more realistic self-monitoring and self-efficacy evaluation arise (Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 1996).

In Schunk's (1985) motivated learning model, it is assumed that student characteristics, such as aptitudes toward the targeted subject or its prior learning experiences, would contribute to students' expectations. Students' self-efficacy as well as outcome expectancy, which is students' beliefs concerning results of their actions, further influences students' motivation. Self-efficacy conveys a sense of personal control during the cognitive processing. While engaging in tasks, educational practices provide salient cues for students to appraise their self-efficacy. Successful performance strengthens students' self-efficacy while unsuccessful experiences reduce it. Students attribute their outcome to ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck, and these attributions affect efficacy appraisals. Situational circumstances contain situations when students attempt tasks with or without helps from others as well as students' conditions such as fatigue, distractions, and physical illnesses. The pattern of success or failure could promote or demote students' self-efficacy. When students see successful models and believe in those credible persuaders, their self-efficacy improves.

In social learning theory, self-regulation takes effect when students have firm believes about their capability to persist in the face of difficulties, stressors, or competing attractions. The higher their self-efficacy on regulating one's own motivation and learning activities, the more their efficacy to master the targeted subjects. High academic efficacy increases ultimate achievements and positive academic results strengthens self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

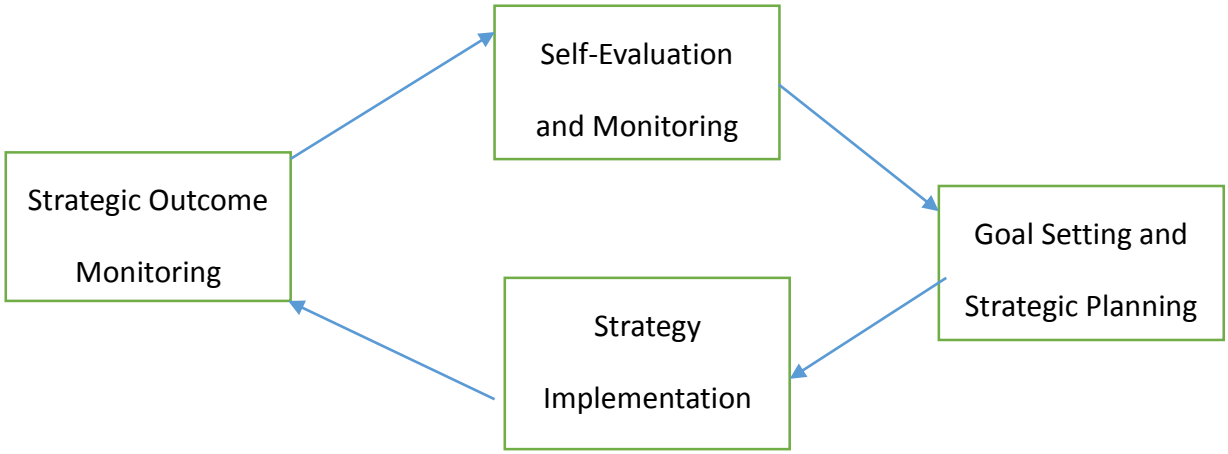


Figure 3. A cyclic model of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 1996. p.11).

Self-Efficacy in Language Classrooms

As self-efficacy is task-specific and differs from subject to subject, it is better to inspect self-efficacy in specific areas than adopting general self-efficacy as the measurement. When academic self-efficacy is brought to language classrooms, it is observed that self-efficacy predicts success in language learning with even better prediction power than actual abilities or aptitudes (Raoofi, Tan & Chan, 2012).

Some study of self-efficacy makes inquiries to students' anxiety. Mills, Pajares and Herron (2006), for instance, takes into consideration of students' self-efficacy, anxiety and their proficiency in reading and listening. The reading self-efficacy of their college French learning subjects is positively related to listening self-efficacy and negatively correlated with reading and listening anxiety. The same goes for listening self-efficacy, which positively correlates with reading self-efficacy and negatively correlates with listening and reading anxiety.

Zhang and Yuan (2004) also probe into students' self-efficacy and anxiety in China. Students are divided into the pass and fail group according to their college English test 4 (CET4) scores. And students who pass the CET4 display higher self-efficacy and lower anxiety than students who fail it. Female students also attain higher CET4 scores and self-efficacy. It is concluded that foreign language anxiety is negatively correlated with English scores and self-efficacy when self-efficacy and English scores are positively correlated.

Despite the logical correlation between self-efficacy and anxiety in the above mentioned study, Çubukcu's (2008) study finds no relation among gender, foreign language learning anxiety and self-efficacy. The author suspects the discrepancy is due to the Turkish educational setting, where the study is located. His students are shy and unable to voice their opinions, lacking chances to speak in classes. It might be that those students would prefer speaking with native speakers outside of the classroom and when the study target is put on the self-efficacy and anxiety of real-life language use, the result would differ.

One of the most recurring topics related to self-efficacy in language classrooms is students' strategy use. As language learning strategies are used to help students deal with comprehension or production difficulties, study of self-efficacy and language learning strategies provides valuable insights to the study of language learning difficulties, such as the present research.

Yilmaz (2010) recruits 140 participants from a university in Turkey to study the relationship of language learning strategies with gender, proficiency and self-efficacy. It is observed that learners' self-efficacy is related to certain types of language learning strategies. Among students with different levels of self-efficacy, students with good and fair self-efficacy use more cognitive strategies than students of poor self-efficacy. The

same pattern goes for the use of compensation strategies. Results from a Tukey test also suggests that good self-efficacy students use more metacognitive strategies than poor self-efficacy students. The overall pattern indicates that students with higher self-efficacy employ more language learning strategies.

Similar results are found in Wong's (2005) and Adnan and Mohamad's (2001) study, both done in Malaysia. Pre-service teachers of English demonstrate a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and strategy use. Compared with pre-service teachers of lower self-efficacy, pre-service teachers with higher self-efficacy mention greater use of language learning strategies by speaking, reading and writing more in English. They also are more focused while listening and more active in learning new words. Through group interviews, these high self-efficacy pre-service teachers are found to be more confident in reading and listening and more diligent in mastering English, while those low self-efficacy pre-service teachers show less confidence and less passion in learning the language.

Also based in Malaysia, Adnan and Mohamad (2011) study students of Arabic and try to learn the relationship between their language learning strategies and self-efficacy beliefs. By correlating self-efficacy believes of different language skills, it is proved that all self-efficacy discussed in the study, referring to reading, speaking, listening, and vocabulary self-efficacy, are interrelated. In addition, all variables of language learning strategies are positively related with all the self-efficacy measured. It is claimed that self-efficacy would be the best predictor for students' language learning strategies.

While the above study investigates the relationship of language learning strategies with other factors, including self-efficacy and proficiency, they do not directly measure the relationship between self-efficacy and proficiency. Magogwe and Oliver

(2007), on the other hand, probe into the relation among self-efficacy beliefs, language learning strategies, and proficiency. Four hundred eighty Students from primary schools, secondary schools and a tertiary institution in Botswana are invited to their study. The result of their questionnaire analysis again shows positive correlation between self-efficacy and language learning strategy use, with moderate relation for primary and secondary students but weak relation for tertiary students. The relation becomes complex when self-efficacy, proficiency, and strategy use are combined together. For primary school students, the relation between self-efficacy and strategy use is not significant for good proficiency students. But for fair proficiency students, the relation is moderate, positive and significant. And for poor proficiency students, the relation of their self-efficacy and strategy use is even stronger, positive, and significant. The results of secondary school students repeat that of the primary students. But at the tertiary level, not only is there no relationship between self-efficacy and strategy use for good proficiency students, students of fair and poor proficiency also display no correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and strategy use. The emerging pattern implies that as proficiency and school of education increases, the correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and strategy use decreases.

A similar study done in China produces slightly different results. Chu and Chou (2010) study college English majors' self-efficacy, listening comprehension strategies and listening comprehension scores. Their English major subjects show high listening comprehension self-efficacy and the relation between self-efficacy and strategy use is significant. On comparing the relationship of listening comprehension scores between self-efficacy and strategy use, it is found that the relation between listening 11comprehension self-efficacy and listening comprehension scores is higher than the relation between strategy use and listening comprehension scores.

Implications from psychological constructs with self-efficacy not only involves anxiety but attribution and locus of control. Hsieh and Schallert (2008) find that student achievements are associated with both attribution and self-efficacy, with self-efficacy as the best predictor for students' learning outcome, whether immediate or delayed. For unsuccessful learners, those who attribute the lack of ability to their failure report lower self-efficacy. And those who do not take lack of efforts as reasons for their failure also get lower self-efficacy.

When self-efficacy and locus of control study is put in Iran, Naseri and Ghabanchi (2014) gather the same result. Significant relationship is found between English reading achievement and reading self-efficacy among Iranian college English majors. Self-efficacy is also correlated with internal locus of control.

Hsieh and Kang (2010) cooperate and repeat the study in Korea. Their results show that ninth grade students' English achievement is significantly correlated with self-efficacy scores and internal and personal control attributions. Learners with higher self-efficacy are inclined to attribute test outcomes to factors of internal and personal control. Unsuccessful learners with higher self-efficacy assume greater personal control over their learning and those with lower self-efficacy often believe that they have no control over their failure. That is, higher self-efficacy learners take responsibility for their failures, which is one asset that educators would encourage students to possess.

Study in language classrooms has proved that self-efficacy is negatively related to students' anxiety and positively related to internal locus of control, strategy use, proficiency and achievement. As one of the aims for strategy use is to solve students' learning difficulties, it is assumed that self-efficacy would be related to students' learning difficulties. Further, as students' level of self-efficacy is connected to their perceived control of success or failure, it is interesting to delve into students' self-

efficacy and their corresponding learning difficulties. With the prominent role of English listening comprehension, a study of students' listening comprehension difficulties and their listening comprehension might be a plausible topic.

In sum, the majority of the previous researches agree that listening difficulty is associated with students' listening proficiency, and students with different levels of listening proficiency prefer distinct listening strategies. The existed literature has recorded listening strategy use of language learners, and these strategies do not necessarily respond to listening difficulty. On the other hand, self-efficacy is proved to be a fundamental factor that influences students' listening performance. But the connection between English listening difficulty and English listening self-efficacy has yet to be probed. The present study, therefore, seeks the opportunity to investigate the relation between English listening difficulty and English listening self-efficacy as well as some possible coping strategies for English listening difficulty. It is hoped that the results of the study can provide insights to the literature of English listening.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an attempt to understand the subtle relations among English listening difficulty, English listening proficiency, and English listening self-efficacy of junior high school students in Taiwan. The main instruments utilized include a listening self-efficacy scale adopted from Rahimi and Abedini (2009), the listening part of an elementary level General English Proficiency Test, and a listening difficulty questionnaire adapted from several scholars, whose work is discussed in the following chapter.

Participants

The study was held in a municipal junior high school in Taipei City, Taiwan. The school was at the west side of Taipei City and was close to Sanchong District of New Taipei City. Most of the students in this school were from Taipei City, and others mostly came from Sanchong District.

There were twenty-four ordinary classes in this school, with eight classes in each grade. Suffering from the low birth rate in recent years, students of the school had decreased from about thirty-five students in each class to about only twenty-seven students. There was one resource class for English, math and Chinese, and the students in the resource class participated in the special course while other students took the regular class. As the present research is interested in students' English listening comprehension, students except those in the resource class were recruited in the study.

It was assumed that students in the resource class might find English too hard and render no effects for meaningful reference.

Though there were eight classes at grade eight, the present study only involved four classes. The concern was surrounded on the evermore emphasized issue of students' personal information, as students' test scores are not allowed to be viewed by outsiders. Since the design of the study implicated the use of students' English listening test scores in an elementary-level GEPT listening test, scores of those students who were not taught by the researcher were not possible or even ethical to be approached. As a consequence, only classes taught by the researcher, who was an English teacher in the school, were chosen for the study.

The school had eighth graders watch *ABC interactive English* video program every Wednesday morning for about twenty-seven minutes. The students did so except for weeks of and before school monthly tests. *ABC Interactive English* was one series of English learning magazines under the publisher LIVE ABC. It was targeted at the beginning level. The students of the study were required to purchase issues of ABC Interactive English every other month. The content of the magazines were taught during the eighth class, which was an after school program held by the school that students join voluntarily. To ensure that students learn from the magazine materials, the content of the magazines was tested on the school monthly tests. The broadcast of the video teaching programs every Wednesday morning was accompanied with mandatory note-taking with spot checks from the office of academic affairs. It was believed that these measures prompt students to watch *ABC Interactive English* teaching programs attentively.

In addition to the weekly viewing of *ABC Interactive English* programs in the morning study session, the students got English listening comprehension practices in

their English courses. The English subject textbook version of the students was Nani Bookstore, and the design of the textbooks involved one page of listening comprehension practices in each lesson. The workbooks accompanying the textbooks also provided one independent English listening comprehension test for every lesson. The items of these English listening practices were diverse and aimed at helping students relate the reading materials to their audio form. As the subjects of the study were all students of the researcher, who maintained the importance of English listening comprehension, they were all exposed to the above listening materials since the beginning of their English course.

To test whether the English proficiency of the students vary among four classes, the scores of students' third English monthly test were checked through one-way ANOVA with SPSS Statistics 22.0. The result is as presented in Table 1.

There were approximately thirty to thirty-three students in each class. And their means of the English monthly test scores were from around 61 to 70. The calculation of one-way ANOVA was used to test the significance of the differences between the means of a number of different populations (Ferguson & Takane, 1989; Lin, 1987). It was found that there was no significant difference among the scores of the four classes, as the result of the analysis was $F(3,122) = 0.73$, $p = 0.54$. So it is proved that the four classes of students did not differ significantly in their English proficiency, which was an ideal situation for the research.

Table 1. Student Scores of the Third English Monthly Test.

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D
Number	32	30	33	31
Mean	62.82	64.67	61.06	70.16
S.D.	26.34	25.67	22.58	24.51

Instruments

For the present study, participants filled in the English listening self-efficacy scale first, then took an English listening comprehension part of elementary level GEPT test, and finally filled out the English listening comprehension difficulty questionnaire. Self-efficacy, by its own definition, is people's belief about their ability to accomplish a certain task. As a result, the self-efficacy scale was put at the beginning of the study. An English listening comprehension test of elementary GEPT was used to both assess subjects' English listening comprehension proficiency and to act as a reminder or reference experience for students. After finishing the listening comprehension test of the elementary GEPT, they could have more ideas in completing the English listening comprehension difficulty questionnaire.

English Listening Self-Efficacy Scale

Compared with the relatively abundant literature on general self-efficacy scales, self-efficacy scales for listening comprehension were harder to find. The English listening self-efficacy scale of the study was mainly adapted from Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) "questionnaire on EFL learners' self-efficacy about listening skill." The scale was also adopted by some other scholars (Kassem, 2015; Nasarollahi & Barjasteh, 2013), which proved the validity and acceptance of the scale for the present study. The researcher first translated the questionnaire from English to Chinese and modified some of the items to suit junior high school students' understanding of terminology. The results of the final scale is put in the Appendix A.

Some items in Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) scale were omitted. Item #7 of Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) scale, which related to the inability to understand English films

without subtitles, was deleted on the assumption that junior high school students in Taiwan generally cannot understand English films even with English subtitles but rely primarily on Chinese subtitles. Similarly, item #17, which was about meeting tourists was taken away because junior high school students in Taiwan did not often get chances to meet foreigners and talk to them, and even if they did, they often failed to comprehend.

Item #8 of Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) study said "No one cares if I do well in listening," item #9 mentioned "my English teacher thinks I am smart," item #10 stated "my classmates usually get better grades than I do," and item #15 was "I am one of the best students in English course." These items were all discarded because the self-efficacy concept was centered on a person's belief on his or her own mastery, not the comparison of the person's achievement with others. Judgements from other people were not in the construct of self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995).

Item #12 concerns the stressful condition while listening. It was crossed out based on the premise that self-efficacy is people's perceived capability, that is, what people "can do." Negative indicators were precluded because a judgment of complete incapability had no lower gradations and did not make sense (Bandura, 2005). Item #20 was left out because it talked about women being more proficient than men in listening skills, which had nothing to do with the self-efficacy concept.

Besides the above omission, some modification was made. Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) sixth item related to understanding "tapes", and it was changed into understanding "CDs" in the present study to suit the situation in Taiwan. And again, there was no comparison with other students. Their fourteenth item listening with "a proficient partner" was changed to listening with "classmates and teachers." And item #19, "raising hands to teachers' questions", was adjusted to only "answer teachers'

questions". And the statement that students answered teachers' questions even when they did not know the answer was crossed out because it was assumed inappropriate. A particular item is obtained from Chang (2004), who had junior high school students filling out an English self-efficacy scale. One of her items "I can understand the sentences read by teachers in class" was borrowed, for it related to the listening part of students' self-efficacy.

Totally the listening self-efficacy scale of the present study involved thirteen items, twelve of them were from Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) study, and the other one item was adapted from Chang (2004). These items were phrased in a five-scale Likert test format. It was hoped that the instruments of the study could be applied appropriately to the context of the study.

English Listening Test

The present study utilized the listening part of an elementary level General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). GEPT is recognized as one of the prevalently-taken tests in Taiwan, with over six million test-takers having participated in the test since its first administration in 2000. It has won international recognition by about 80 universities abroad and served as an admission reference or criteria for over 600 university departments in Taiwan. With its relatively cheaper registration fee, it is believed to be a cheaper alternative for students to demonstrate their English language proficiency (Wu, 2014).

Founded by the Ministry of Education, GEPT is the brainchild of the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC). By dividing the test into differentiated levels, the GEPT seeks to promote lifelong learning and bring positive influences to English classrooms (Wu, 2014). The reliability of the test is claimed to be as high as to the 0.8

range (Roever & Pan, 2008). The five levels of tests under the GEPT test battery are elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, advanced and superior, with the superior level test administered only through requirements. These levels of tests are anchored with Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) to establish its comparability with other language tests. Four language skills are evaluated in each level, and standards are set for pass/fail boundaries (The Language Training and Testing Center, 2014).

The listening comprehension test used in the present study was the listening part of the elementary level GEPT. People who pass the elementary level GEPT are believed to possess English proficiency of a junior high school graduate. They are expected to be able to understand simple daily conversations such as price, time, and places. It is advised that general administrative assistants, repairing technicians, taxi drivers, and people who work in department stores, hotels, restaurants, or tourists spots to have the command of English at this level (The Language Training and Testing Center, 2014).

The English listening test lasted about twenty minutes with thirty test items. The test used in the present study belonged to an older version of the test, which consisted of three parts. The current version GEPT listening test differs from the one used in the study. The chosen of the older version was based on the premise that the GEPT test was established as valid and reliable and versions used in the past were the ones that the students would not have chances to have practiced.

There were three parts of test items in the present study. The first part had students look at the pictures and recognize meanings. Test-takers first listened to the questions and the possible answer items broadcasted in the CD and then chose the correct one based on the pictures they saw on their test sheet. There were ten test items in this form.

The questions and pictures were not always one on one. Some questions shared the same pictures as the information provider.

The second part for the listening test was the question and answer part. The students would listen to the questions from the CD and chose a possible written response from their test sheet. Questions in the first and the second part of the listening test were broadcasted only once.

The third part of the listening test related to short dialogues and each listening material was broadcasted twice. For each test item, the students would listen to a short dialogue between a man and a woman. After the dialogue, there would be a question for them. The students listened to the dialogue and the question and then chose an answer from their test sheet.

There were many mock GEPT tests available on the market. And LTTC now also publishes their real used GEPT tests. The listening comprehension test of the present study was chosen from the one that had really been used by the LTTC. It was hoped that the use of the real GEPT test would prompt students to be focused on the test and be a suitable instrument to assess students' listening comprehension proficiency for the present study.

English Listening Difficulty Questionnaire

One of the main purposes in the study is to probe into listening difficulty of junior high school students in Taiwan. A listening comprehension questionnaire was constructed by the researcher for this specific purpose. With careful review of the literature, the researcher first came up with a 118-item list of listening comprehension difficulties and then categorized the items into eleven categories. With several rounds of close examination, the list was reduced to five categories, with only thirty items.

Though the subjects of the study could understand simple English, it was deemed that the English questionnaire was too difficult for them. To avoid unwanted misinterpretation, the researcher translated the questionnaire into Chinese. The English and Chinese version of the questionnaire are presented in Appendix B.

The English listening difficulty questionnaire consisted of five categories, which were “listening process”, “text”, “input quality”, “task” and “psychological”. The choice of five categories was based on the review of literature and the parsimony of the instrument. As listening difficulty categorizations ranged from three to three to five categories (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Goh, 2000; Yousif, 2006; Yang, 2001; Zhang & Zhang, 2011), it was reasonable to stick to a five-category taxonomy. There were twelve items under the category “listening process,” and many of them were borrowed from Anderson’s (1985) three-phase comprehension model. But since there was much discrepancy among scholars in suiting different comprehension problems into the three stage, which were perception, processing and utilization, it was resolved that an overall “listening process” category was more encompassing.

The first item “I cannot guess word meanings” incorporated situations when students could not recognize words they knew (Al-Busaidi, 2012; Goh, 2000; Hu, 2009; Renandya, 2012; Sun & Li, 2008; Yang, 2011; Yousif, 2006; Zhang & Zhang, 2011), hear one word and think it is another word (Sun & Li, 2008), or just could not respond to words quickly enough (Hu, 2009: Zhang & Zhang, 2001). The processing of words was considered as in the perception part of Anderson’s (1985) model, and was sometimes categorized in names such as “linguistics” (Yousif, 2006), “words” (Zhang & Zhang, 2011) or “feelings” (Hu, 2009).

Not only was getting word meanings vital in listening comprehension, students also needed to be able to form correct mental representations of the words (Kempson,

1988). Thus, forming mental representations was one item listed (Goh, 2000; Sun & Li, 2008), which was considered in the parsing phase in Anderson's (1985) model. In the present questionnaire, the concept of "mental representations" was transformed into "images of words in one's mind" and an example of "mental representation" was added to facilitate students' understanding. Specifically, a pictorial icon "🍎" was put on the questionnaire to illustrate the situation when one hears the word "apple," one has an image of "🍎" in his/her mind.

The item "I cannot chunk streams of speech" evaluated whether students had the ability to cut ongoing listening inputs into meaningful units, which was one step further than just recognizing words. It was put under "text" in Zhang, Wu and Pang (2013) and "attention and memory" in Zhang and Zhang (2011).

Connecting mental representations was one thing that students might encounter. This item was added by the advisor of the researcher for the comprehensive view of the listening comprehension process. Following the above apple example, an image of eat  was put next to an image of apple 🍎 to express a situation when people hear the phrase "eat an apple." The pictorial illustrations were aimed to help students understand the questionnaire items without necessarily resorting to the term "mental representation."

Understanding word meanings and constituents, however, was not enough for complete comprehension. The item "I cannot catch important details" (Zhong, 2011) sought to investigate students' ability to grasp crucial elements. Another item "miss the connection of the speech" (Sun & Li, 2008) testified students' skills in linking ideas together. They were both relegated to the perception stage of Anderson's (1985) model.

Sometimes, students "ignore the context or characteristics of the speakers" (Juan & Abidin, 2013; Zhong, 2011). Juan and Abidin (2013) put it as a post-listening

problem, but it seemed to make more sense to consider the understanding of contexts and speaker characteristics as tasks done during listening comprehension process.

Some fine-tunes seemed to be necessary when presenting "I cannot make top-down or bottom-up processing" (Rubin, 1994) as one of the items. The notions of "top-down processing" and "bottom-up processing" might be foreign to junior high school students. Therefore, a simple explanation of "top-down processing" as "using background knowledge" and "bottom-up processing" as "using linguistic knowledge" was replaced for students' better understanding (Field, 2004). The discussion of top-down and bottom-up processing appeared in Rubin's (1994) paper, and was put under the category of "process."

Many scholars pointed out that students "do not understand subsequent parts of input because of earlier problems" (Goh, 2000; Sun & Li, 2008; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). This might be because the students were still processing previous inputs when ensuing listening material kept coming without time or energy for processing. The situation was related to the "parsing" stage of Anderson's (1985) model and "meaning" by Zhang and Zhang (2011). A discussion with the writer's advisor generated another possible situation, in which students might have problems processing previous inputs, such as misunderstanding of the information, and results to incomprehension of the latter inputs. The resulting consequence of having problems processing previous inputs was then phrased as "I fail or don't have enough time to process previous inputs, which affects the comprehension of subsequent contents" in the ninth item of the scale.

Sometimes, students' listening comprehension process was just not fast enough. So "the pace of the speakers is too fast, I don't have enough time to comprehend" was listed to include conditions when students perceived the listening inputs to be too fast and when they blamed the speakers to be speaking too fast (Al-Busidi, 2012; Chang,

Wu & Pang, 2013; Flowerdew, 2012; Hu, 2009; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Rubin, 1994; Sun & Li, 2008; Yang, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). The existed research often categorized "cannot recognize fast speech" as in the "perception" phase of Anderson's (1985) model, and saw it as a "text" (Rubin, 1994; Yang, 2011) or "sounds" (Zhang & Zhang, 2011) problem. People who attributed to speakers speaking too fast would categorize it as in the "speaker" factor (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yang, 2011) and "while-listening" problem (Juan & Abidin, 2013). The present study resolved the situation into "listening process" on the assumption that it was the listeners that could not follow the speed of the inputs in their listening comprehension process.

The last two items under the "listening process" category were associated with "I translate the input into L1" (Juan & Abidin, 2013; Yang, 2011). This might result to students thinking about the first language translation and miss the following inputs or just confuse themselves with L1 and the target language during comprehension. The researcher decided to categorize the above two situations as a consequence of translation into two items, discriminating "no time to listen to following inputs" and "confuse oneself." Juan and Abidin (2013) took translation issue as a "while-listening" problem, which could be reasonably put under "listening process" category. Yang (2011) considered it to be a "listening process" problem, similar to the researcher of the present study.

There were ten items in the category of "text." These items dealt with text difficulties inherent in the listening material that might hinder students' successful comprehension. The first one was "phoneme discrimination" (Tinkler, 1987). Though the subjects of the study had learned phonics as well as KK phonetic symbols in their English class, the concept of phonemes was usually not clear to them. Therefore, the item was expressed as "I cannot discriminate similar sounds in words," and a simple

indication of phoneme discrimination was displayed as "e.g. discriminate /i/ vs. /ɪ/," which made the phoneme discrimination notion easier to understand.

Apart from sounds, it was assumed that students sometimes "cannot decide word meanings when a word has multiple meanings" (Sun & Li, 2008; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). It was originally presented in the "parsing" stage of Anderson's (1985) model and in the "meaning" category of Zhang and Zhang's (2011) paper. Since the meaning of words posed difficulty on the texts, it was regarded as under the "text" category in this study. Even if words in the listening material had only one meaning, there might appear "too many unknown words" (Renandya, 2012; Yang, 2011), which was another item added into the "text" factor of the present questionnaire. Yang (2011) had this item similarly put under "text" category and Renandya (2012) did not put a specific label on it.

"Difficult grammatical structures" in the listening input might affect students' listening comprehension (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Flowerdew and Miller, 1992; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Liu & Huang, 2011; Yang, 2011; Zhong, 2011). The item contained situations when students saw themselves as weak in grammar (Flowerdew and Miller, 1992; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Liu& Huang, 2011; Yang, 2011; Zhong, 2011) or when students attributed the grammar of the listening text as too difficult (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013). Researchers who put grammar as students' own deficiency categorized this item as a "listener" problem (Yang, 2011) or a "pre-listening" problem (Juan & Abidin, 2013). The present study followed those who took grammatical difficulty as a "text" factor (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013).

Yousif (2006) and Rubin (1994) respectively put referential systems under the "linguistics" category and took discourse markers as one of the "discourse" factors. Again, linguistic jargons were replaced with laymen terms and examples. For

referential systems, it was believed that the difficulties for comprehension lay on the identification of referents. Examples of pronouns "then, it, he" were put in the parentheses and the item was expressed as "I don't know what/who the pronouns (e.g. this, it, he etc.) in the listening inputs are referred to." The term "discourse markers" was changed into "words that connect sentences or structures." Some examples of discourse markers, e.g. however, first, second; then, were added for further understanding. To state this item clearly, it was written as "I cannot use words that connect sentences or structures to help me understand (e.g. however; first, second; then, etc.)" to avoid any confusion for students.

Spoken features such as redundancy, hesitation or pause in the text could aid comprehension. If certain texts lacked these spoken features and students could not use them to assist comprehension, it would present one of the text problems (Rubin, 1994; Yang, 2011; Yousif, 2006). These features were put as a "text" problem in Rubin's (1994) and Yang's (2011) study and a "discourse" problem in Yousif's (2006) research.

Listeners might click "I cannot understand the input due to linking or omission" if they were not familiar with this kind of speaking (Hu, 2009; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Renandya, 2012; Yang, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Different labels were marked for this item. Zhang and Zhang (2011) called it "sounds," Juan and Abidin (2013) put it under the "while-listening" problem, and some regarded it as a "perception" stage difficulty. The researcher of the present study followed suit of Yang (2011) and made it a "text" factor difficulty. Examples of linking sounds "not at all [natæ tɔl]" and omissions "tell me what to [whatu] say" were supplemented in the questionnaire.

In addition to linking and omissions, the text might have "special accents" (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Hu, 2009; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Tinkler, 1987; Yang, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2011) or be in "unfamiliar topics" (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu&

Pang, 2013; Yang, 2011; Yousif, 2006). These two items were put under miscellaneous categories by various scholars. For incomprehensible accents, one took it as a "while-listening" problem (Juan & Abidin, 2013), one saw it as a "sounds" difficulty (Zhang & Zhang, 2011) and some regarded it as a "speaker" factor (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yang, 2011). The author decided to go after Yang (2011) and made it a text-factor difficulty. For unfamiliar topics, Boyle (1984) grouped it under "listener," Yousif (2006) thought it to be a "conceptual" problem, and most researchers categorized it as a "text" problem (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yang, 2011), which was followed by the author as well.

In addition to "listening process" and "text," there were three smaller groups of listening difficulty. One of them related to "input quality." This included "the volume of the input" (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yousif, 2006) and the "clarity of CDs or the existence of noise" (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Flowerdew and Miller, 1992; Juan & Abidin, 2013; McDevitt, Sheehan & McMenamin, 1991; Yousif, 2006). Chang, Wu and Pang (2013) saw the volume of the input as one of the items in "input channel and surrounding," Yousif (2006) put it as "acoustic" and Boyle (1984) tokk it as a "speaker" difficulty. Juan and Abidin (2013) viewed the clarity of inputs as a "while-listening" problem while Chang, Wu and Pang (2013) classified it into "input channel and surrounding." Noise was discussed in "acoustic" by Yousif (2006) and "material and medium" by Boyle (1984). To make a neat questionnaire categorization, the above items were arranged as "input quality."

Another small group was "task." Early research ran extensively in this category to include many sorts of listening comprehension questions such as multiple-choice questions (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013) and note-taking exercise (Yang, 2011). But it was decided that what was pivotal was the time allocated for answering questions. Item #26

"unable to finish reading the questions because the pause time between questions are too short" and item #27 "unable to listen and construct answers at the same time because the time allotted is too short" were both selected from Chang, Wu and Pang (2013), in which these scholars put them under "task," and the categorization was followed by the author of the present study.

The last listening comprehension difficulty type talked about in the questionnaire was related to "psychological" problems. The level of interests to the listening material was the first issue. "The material is not of interests to me" is labeled under "relevance" by Chang, Wu and Pang (2013) and "psychological" by Bolye (1984).

Two items in the "psychological" category related to students' nervousness. Previous researchers assumed several situations to the nervous psychological state, including "getting nervous and forget things heard" (Chang, Wu and Pang, 2013), and simply being "nervous" (Yang, 2013). Both "I feel nervous when I don't understand the aural input" and "I get nervous when people evaluate my listening" were taken from Chang, Wu and Pang (2013), which the writer and her advisor regarded as more essential.

The last item in the questionnaire was students' lack of "confidence," which appeared in Juan and Abidin's (2013) paper but was under the "while-listening" problem. It was decided that "I don't have confidence" should be more inclined to the category of psychological problems in this study.

Procedure

The procedure of the study involved the combing of literature, construction of instruments, and the real conduction of experiments as well as interviews. The

researcher completed the procedure with guidance of her advisor and advice taken from the committee members in her thesis hearing. The researcher was interested in the study of English listening with consideration of psychological factors. The exploration of the literature inspired the researcher for the research of students' English listening comprehension difficulty as well as their English listening self-efficacy. The advisor of the researcher suggested the additional factor of English listening proficiency as it was acknowledged in the literature for its central role in English listening.

After determining the research topic, the research hunted the previous literature for developments and adoption of instruments. With several rounds of discussion with her advisor, it was agreed that a self-structured listening difficulty questionnaire and an adopted version of English listening self-efficacy scale should be used. Embracing the opinions of the committee members, the researcher chose the elementary level of listening test in GEPT for the assessment of students' English listening proficiency. Additionally, she also fine-tuned the data collection with the addition of interviews to make it a more well-rounded mixed method research.

The real administration of the experiments were done in four classes in a municipal junior high school in Taipei City. The researcher was the English teacher of these four classes. Students of these four classes first filled out the English listening self-efficacy scale and then took the English listening test. After the completion of the English listening test, the students answered the English listening difficulty questionnaire. The researcher monitored all the process of the experiments by ensuring honest answers from the students and maintaining the fairness of the test.

The results of the experiment were gathered and analyzed through SPSS 22.0. Students' choice on the scale and questionnaire were counted. And the performance of their English test were scored and processed. The researcher calculated the mean score

and standard deviation of the results from each instrument. She then divided students' performance into high and low achieving groups and conducts t-test to see whether they differed significantly. The process was repeated for the comparison of students' answers on each instrument on the paired comparison of two instruments each time. She also attended to t-tests of each item to spot distinctive differences in every item. The results of the statistical analysis were rendered for discussion, which the researcher analyzed discusses with her advisor.

The researcher then conducted one-on-one interviews with some of the selected students based on their performance. Students who were high or low in both English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency were selected. Under the upper and lower quarter twenty-seven-student criteria, there were twenty-four students that conformed to the group of students having both high English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency. Students who were both low in English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency amounted to twenty-three. The researcher then randomly invited ten students from each group for individual interviews. The open-ended interview had students freely express their methods for solving English listening difficulty. Interviews ranged from around one to six minutes and were conducted during students' recession time. The researcher took notes of students' mentioned listening strategies.

With the quantitative data from the experiment and the qualitative data from the interviews, the researcher triangulated students' responses and composed the paper of the present research. As the procedure of the study was simple except the analysis of data, details for data analysis is discussed in the following chapter.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the researcher analyzed the result of the study. The first procedure for the analysis of data results was to extract subjects of higher and lower English listening self-efficacy (HS vs. LS). Students who belonged to the higher and lower quarter in scores of the English listening self-efficacy scale were separated. Their scores were tested with the t-test to check if the two groups' scores differed significantly. And since the results of the t-test showed significant difference between the HS and LS groups, HS's and LS's scores on the English listening difficulty questionnaire was compared. A t-test was used to see whether these two groups differ in their degrees on English listening difficulty. And distinct t-tests were conducted on each item to check particularly which of the difficulties did these students of different listening self-efficacy differ to significant levels.

In a similar vein, students' scores on the English listening comprehension test was divided into two groups, with scores of the higher quarter and the lower quarter (HL vs. LL). The scores of these two groups was then tested through paired t-tests to see whether they differed significantly, that was, the p value should be under 0.05. It was confirmed that the two groups of the students differed in their proficiency in English listening comprehension. Later, HL group's and LL group's scores on the English listening difficulty questionnaire were compared by t-tests again. The two groups differed significantly in their scores, and it was informed that students with higher and lower English listening proficiency also differed in degrees of English listening difficulty. To see specifically which difficulty these two groups of students perceived differently, scores of each item on the English listening difficulty questionnaire were

compared between the two groups. Item scores that showed the difference between the two groups were the ones HL and LL differed.

For the interviews, the researcher recorded students' responses for solutions of English listening difficulty. Following Oxford's (2011) taxonomy of language learning strategies, the researcher categorized students' answers into "cognitive", "affective", and "socio-interactional" language learning strategies. She also added "test-taking," and "English listening training" to supplement the original taxonomy. It was believed that in addition to cognitive, affective, and socio-interactional language learning strategies during English listening tests, students also trained themselves for English listening comprehension and displayed certain test-taking strategies, which were not specifically learning strategies. Totally, the researcher recorded twenty-two items of strategies in coping with English listening difficulty. And the valuable results are discussed in the results and discussion chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study involves the administration of an English listening test as well as the completion of an English listening self-efficacy scale and an English listening difficulty questionnaire. A series of interview is also done after the first stage of statistical analysis. The quantitative and qualitative data results will be discussed in this chapter.

Of the 126 participants in the study, only 109 students completed the full procedure of the self-efficacy scale, English listening test, and English listening difficulty questionnaire. These 109 students are in four different classes, with 29, 26, 24, and 30 students respectively. The missing numbers are due to students' attendance and students' incomplete responses. The 109 valid data yields the results of the study.

The first part of the chapter focuses on the individual results of each instrument, that is, the English listening self-efficacy scale, English listening test, and English listening difficulty questionnaire. Next, the researcher discusses the result of the t-test comparison of these instruments, which are the main solutions for the targeted research questions. Finally, insights gain from interviews of the students about their strategy use in solving listening difficulty are presented for teachers and students with listening difficulty to consider in their future listening activities.

Results of the Instruments

The following part of the chapter is the presentation of the first-stage analysis of

each instrument. The discussion is in sequence of the research procedure, with English listening self-efficacy firstly discussed, which is followed by the result of the English listening test, and ends with students' replies on English listening difficulty, which is the main focus of the research.

English Listening Self-Efficacy Scale

There are thirteen items in the English listening self-efficacy scale. Five choices from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", and "strongly agree" are given for students' options. Any answer with a "strongly disagree" is rendered one point while one with a "strongly agree" answer is granted five points. For answers in the spectrum between "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", points of two, three, and four are given respectively. In total, the thirteen-item scale could result in scores from 13 points to 65 points.

The average score on the English listening self-efficacy scale of the all 109 students is 44.52. With three points as the average on a five-point scale, we can say that anyone who scores higher than 39 points in the scale could be considered high in listening self-efficacy. With the average score of 44.52, it is assumed that these junior high school students in the study generally have high English listening self-efficacy.

The average score of each item on the English listening self-efficacy scale is exhibited in Table 2. Eleven out of thirteen items get average scores higher than three. Only items #11 and #13 get average scores lower than three.

Item #11 discusses students' preference to practice English listening comprehension with teachers or classmates and item #13 regards the challenging practices of English listening comprehension practices and students' interests. These two items are taken from Rahimi and Abedini's (2009) scale of English listening self-

efficacy, with only slight modification, changing from “I enjoy doing listening practice with a proficient partner” to “I enjoy doing listening practice with teachers and classmates” for item #11.

English listening practices for junior high school students are mostly unidirectional (Graham, 2006), with the listening material broadcasted to the students’ ears without opportunities for further clarification as in bidirectional listening. The lack of voicing their misunderstanding and negotiating with meanings might contribute to students’ lack of interests in practicing English listening with their peers or teachers. As English listening requires considerable attention, any interference from other students or even teachers might distract the individual and cause unsatisfied performance on students’ English listening practices. Some students might prefer practicing English listening alone instead of practicing with others.

Item #13 states that “the more difficult the listening practice is, the more challenging and enjoyable it is.” The low score of the item might be due to students’ learned helplessness, which refers to the perception of independent response and outcome, regardless of how much effort one pays and how much reward one gains (Butkowsky & Willows, 1980). If students experience too many failures from enigmatic English listening practices, they might lose hope and hate English listening practices (Zimmerman, 1989). Therefore, students would try hard to avoid listening practices that are beyond their capability. Krashen (1981) promotes “i+1” and proposes that teachers give students inputs that are manageable and a little above students’ present ability. As can be seen from the result of item #13, elevating the difficulty level of English listening practices would not simultaneously increase students’ interest in English listening. Teachers are advised to prepare comprehensible listening inputs for students so as to sustain their interests in English listening practices.

Table 2. Average Scores of the English Listening Self-Efficacy Scale

Items	mean	s.d.
1. I have abilities to continue improving my English listening comprehension skills.	3.68	1.23
2. I believe that my ability in English listening comprehension will improve.	3.70	1.23
3. I can concentrate on the English listening content.	3.58	1.31
4. If I practice English listening comprehension more, I will improve my English listening comprehension.	3.72	1.18
5. I can remember contents of the English listening comprehension practices.	3.27	1.21
6. I can understand English listening comprehension materials in class.	4.12	5.08
7. When my teachers read English sentences in class, I can understand them.	3.53	1.30
8. When practicing English listening comprehension, I can answer my teachers' questions.	3.80	5.04
9. Even if the listening practice in the class is difficult, I can find a strategy to answer most of the related questions.	3.30	1.33
10. I enjoy doing English listening practices.	3.05	1.34
11. I enjoy doing English listening practices with my teachers and classmates.	2.85	1.29
12. When I am doing a listening practice by myself, I can repeat listening.	3.05	1.29
13. The more difficult the listening practice is, the more challenging and enjoyable it is.	2.89	1.39

Chou (2014) and Chou (2007) report high self-efficacy among six graders and senior high school students, respectively. It was suggested that students' family-social capital and their high English self-efficacy directly affects students' attitudes to learning English (Chou, 2014). Senior high school students who have undergone more childhood English learning and those with higher basic competence test for junior high school students (BCT) scores exhibit higher English self-efficacy (Chou, 2007).

On the other hand, both Wang (2011) and Chang (2013) report medium English self-efficacy among junior high school students in Taiwan. And junior high school students without any English learning experiences tend to show the lowest English self-efficacy while students study in urban schools maintain the highest English self-efficacy

(Chang, 2013).

According to the surveys of family income and expenditure in 2013, households in Taipei City averagely get NT$1,659,231 annually while families in the whole island of Taiwan receive NT$9,793,646 each year (Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, Taiwan, R.O.C., 2015; Department of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Taipei City Government, 2015). Students in Wang (2011) are from New Taipei City and those of Chang (2013) are from Taitung County. Compared with the present study, which is done in Taipei City, it is presumable that the relatively higher family-social capital of junior high students in Taipei City might yield higher English self-efficacy than students of other counties or cities. And since the school under investigation in the present study is considered an urban school, the students are understandably higher in English self-efficacy.

In addition to students' relatively higher family income in Taipei City, the subjects of the present study have learned English ever since they entered elementary schools. The policy of the Taipei City government ensures elementary school students to learn English starting from the first grade while the ministry of education have elementary school students of the whole island learn English from year three (Department of Education, Taipei City Government, 2015; Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community,2015). Chou (2014) has proved that childhood English learning experiences could be associated with students' higher English self-efficacy. It is plausible that this group of junior high school students in Taipei City, who has learned English since the first grade, would have higher English self-efficacy than students of other areas in Taiwan, who are not exposed to English learning until the third grade.

Past studies in Taiwan mainly explore students' general English self-efficacy. As the present study focuses on students' English listening self-efficacy, it is also probable

that English listening self-efficacy could differ from general English self-efficacy. Since there are few researches done in Taiwan for students' English listening self-efficacy, the present study could contribute an insight in the perspective.

Overall, the subjects are high in their English listening self-efficacy, which might be related to these students' family-social capital, the well-fare resource of the school site, and students' early English exposure. The facts that students would reject practicing listening or accepting difficult listening inputs should be factors that teachers consider when administrating English listening comprehension practices. Preferences for individual listening practices might indicate a call for language classrooms with isolated booths and the rejection of difficult listening inputs would test teachers' capability in choosing proper listening materials.

English Listening Test

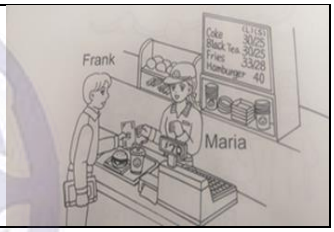
The English test scores of the 109 participants vary greatly. There are 30 test items in the English listening test, and a correct answer is awarded four points, making the full score 120 points. The average score in this study is 78.13, which means that generally, students get about 19.53 items right out of the thirty items. The correction rate is about 65 %, which might indicate a relatively satisfactory passing performance.

As the English listening test in this study is taken from the elementary listening test of GEPT, a comparison of students' score average and the published score on the administered GETP can be made. The third elementary-level GEPT in 2014 showed an average of 83.49 points among approximately 48,000 test-takers. About 80% of those who took the test are junior high school students, and their average score on the test was 84.44. It seems that the students under the present study did not perform as well as those who really took the GETP test.

With four points awarded to each correct answers, test items with a lower average than two points are considered tougher for students. That is, any test item which receives average points under two is answered wrong by most students. Among them, items #9, #17, #18, #30 are the ones that receive average points below two.

Item #9 belongs to the first part of the English listening test, which requires students to listen to the questions and possible options from the listening input and choose answers based on the pictures they see on their test paper. The picture for item #9 is shown below. During the test, the students heard the question and three options from the CD. They looked at the picture and tried to answer the question.

Q: What will Maria most probably do next?
(A) Give Frank his change.
(B) Ask Frank to pay for his lunch.
(C) Prepare the food for Frank.



Many of the students later reported that they couldn't understand the picture right after the broadcasting of the question item input. Common complaints are "Zhe sha xiao? (這啥小? What is it?)" or "Wo kan bu dong ta men zai gan ma. (我看不懂他們在幹嘛。I don't know what they're doing.)." It is possible that the picture does not provide clear hints due to possible reasons of printing or complex picture composition so that students fail to recognize that Frank in the picture is already paying his lunch in a restaurant and Maria has already given him his food.

Items #17 and #18 are short questions and answers. The listening material of item #17 is "We've met before, haven't we?" And the possible options listed on students' test paper are "(A) Yes, we have to. (B) Yes, in high school. (C) Yes, even earlier than

that.” A considerable number of students are tempted to choose (A) because they were confused the usages of “haven’t we” and “have to.” And some students might only catch the word “before” from the input and chose (C) based on the key word “earlier.” Since tag questions and the present perfect tense are parts of grammar for ninth graders, these eighth graders could not be blamed for choosing the wrong answer.

For item #18, students hear “When will the next train to Kaohsiung leave?” The three options for item #18 on the test sheet are “(A) Sorry, the last train to Kaohsiung has already left. (B) The next train goes to Taichung, not Kaohsiung. (C) This train will arrive in Kaohsiung at three.” The correct answer (A) requires students to sense a situation when a person inquires the departure time of the next train to Kaohsiung when the train has already departed. Again, though eighth graders have learned the future tense, they have yet to acquire present perfect tense. And answer (B) could be chosen if students do not consider the above situation and literally accept “the next train to Kaohsiung” as the key words for answers. Answer (C) uses future tense and contains key words “train,” “Kaohsiung,” and even “three,” which might reply to the key word “when” in the input.

Item #30, the last test item, has students listen to a dialogue between a man and a woman. The listening message is as follows: “Man (M): Do I check in here for Far Eastern Flight 786 to Taipei? Woman (W): Yes. May I see your ticket, please? M: Sure. Here you are. Could I have a window seat, please? W: Sure. Question: What is the man going to do?” The answer options listed on the test sheet are “(A) Get on a plane. (B) Return his ticket. (C) Clean the window.” To correctly answer this requires students to be able to grasp the whole idea of a conversation between a man who is going to board a train and a woman who is checking his plane ticket. Key words such as “flight,” “ticket,” and “window seat” should be absorbed for correct answers. Students who lack

the vocabulary of “flight” or experiences of taking a plane might fail in choosing the right answer and instead opt for (B) or (C) based on key words “ticket” and “window” they hear from the input.

Though students’ performance in the present test is beyond that of real GEPT test-takers, the score of a simple test should be explained with caution. The English listening test is conducted in an ordinary class, with no stakes on their English assessment. Many of the students, regardless of the teacher’s inspection and persuasion, did not pay complete attention to the test. This could be observed when some of the students start doodling, snooping, or doing other individual work after about half of the English listening test. Perhaps the students view the test as not important and did not want to pay much effort. The resulting averaging score is thus not ideal.

Another explanation for the low score of the English listening test lies on the fact that these subjects are only eighth graders. Since the target of the elementary-level GEPT is the general adults and people possess the English proficiency of junior high school graduates, the eighth-grader subjects might understandably perform below average because they haven’t finished the study of junior high school. Common errors made due to the unfamiliarity of present perfect tense and tag questions could be the proofs. Besides the students’ age and language learning experiences, the real GEPT test-takers are believed to be of higher English learning motivation and would sign up for the test when they conceive themselves as capable of passing the test. In the contrast, students of the present study do not show the motivation and are miscellaneous in proficiency. The low score of their English relatively to real GEPT test-takers should not be blamed.

English Listening Difficulty Questionnaire

The English listening difficulty questionnaire is composed of 30 items, with each item given five options: never, seldom, sometimes, usually, and always. The students read the description and choose the situation that suits their condition. One point is given to any "never" answer, two for "seldom," and so on. The lowest points possible for the total thirty-item questionnaire is thirty, and the highest score would be 150 points, with every item checked for "always" and given five points each. As the English listening difficulty questionnaire aims to gain access to junior high school students' English listening difficulty, students with lower scores actually demonstrate fewer or less severe listening difficulty while students with higher scores in the questionnaire indeed encounter more number or higher degrees of listening difficulty.

Students of the study report listening difficulty with individual severity, ranging from 30 to 150 points. The average total score of the whole listening difficulty questionnaire by all 109 students is 77.68. As the questionnaire follows a five-point Likert scale, any score under 90, which is the half point, could indicate that the student being studied show mild listening difficulty. This might signal that this group of junior high school students do not find listening experiences too daunting.

The average scores of each difficulty item in the listening difficulty questionnaire are shown in table 3. As can be seen from the table, the average scores of every item in the questionnaire do not exceed three points, and there is no category of listening difficulty with extraordinary result, which means that students generally do not face high degrees of listening difficulty based on the questionnaire.

Table 3. Average Scores of the Listening Difficulty Questionnaire

While listening to English, what I feel more bothered are…	mean	s.d.
Listening Process	**2.59**	**1.18**
1. I cannot guess the meaning of unknown words.	2.61	1.10
2. I cannot form a correct image of the word heard in my mind (e.g. when I hear the word "apple",  appears in my mind).	2.35	1.04
3. I cannot chunk streams of speech into meaningful pieces.	2.45	1.14
4. I cannot connect images in my mind (e.g. When I hear "eat an apple," I connect  and  in my mind).	2.37	1.17
5. I cannot catch important details.	2.55	1.21
6. I miss the connection of the speech.	2.66	1.16
7. I ignore the context and characteristics of the speakers.	2.61	1.15
8. I cannot use personal background knowledge or linguistic knowledge to process the heard message.	2.50	1.14
9. I fail or don't have enough time to process previous inputs, which affects the comprehension of subsequent contents.	2.81	1.13
10. The pace of the speakers is too fast, I don't have enough time to comprehend.	2.89	1.23
11. I translate English into Chinese in my mind and don't have time to listen to following inputs.	2.71	1.31
12. I translate English into Chinese in my mind and confuse myself.	2.55	1.32
Text	**2.60**	**1.23**
13. I cannot discriminate similar sounds in words (e.g. discriminate /i/ vs. /ɪ/).	2.58	1.21
14. I cannot decide the precise word meaning when a word has multiple meanings.	2.71	1.19
15. The text has too many unknown words.	2.65	1.30
16. Difficult grammatical structures in the content affect my comprehension.	2.71	1.28
17. I don't know what/who the pronouns (e.g. this, it, he etc.) in the listening inputs are referred to.	2.18	1.16
18. I cannot use words that connect sentences or structures to help me understand (e.g. however; first, second; then, etc.).	2.58	1.20
19. I do not use features such as repeated messages or pauses in speech to help me understand.	2.64	1.21
20. I do not understand the inputs due to linkings (e.g. not at all [natæ tɔl]) or omissions (e.g. tell me what to [whatu] say).	2.71	1.31
21. I don't understand the inputs because the speakers have special accents.	2.64	1.22
22. The texts have unfamiliar topics.	2.62	1.23
Input Quality	2.60	1.23
23. The volume of the input affects my comprehension.	2.51	1.21
24. The clarity of CDs or the existence of noise affect my comprehension.	2.69	1.24
Task	**2.50**	**1.28**
25. I don't have enough time to listen to the inputs and write down my answers because there is not enough time for answering the questions.	2.50	1.30

26. I cannot finish reading the questions because the pause time allotted between each test item is too short.	2.50	1.26
Psychological	2.60	1.30
27. The material is not of interests to me	2.72	1.30
28. I feel nervous when I don't understand the aural input.	2.61	1.33
29. I get nervous when people evaluate my listening.	2.45	1.24
30. I don't have confidence.	2.62	1.36

Previous study on junior high school students' English listening difficulties find that students of different proficiency report different types of listening difficulties. For instance, unable to repeat the listening materials are the biggest obstacles for effective listeners in Chuang's (2009) and fast delivery of speech annoys high-achieving students in Chuang's (2011) research. Low-achieving students, comparatively, exhibit significantly more difficulties in all factors discussed: process, listener, speaker, text, and tasks (Chuang, 2011; Ku, 2012). And many of the low-achievers are troubled by their deficiency in grammar and vocabulary knowledge (Chuang, 2009; Chuang, 2011). Compared with the present study, it is plausible that students of lower proficiency would encounter more significant levels of listening difficulties.

Results of T-tests

With 109 students, the researcher divides students' scores on the English listening self-efficacy into high self-efficacy (HS) and low self-efficacy (LS) groups, with each group consists of 27 students, which represents the upper and lower quarter of the students. The scores of these two groups of students are compared by t-test.

The difference between the high and low self-efficacy group is significant, with p value below 0.05. The low self-efficacy group only gets 23.89 points in average, which means they are truly low in listening self-efficacy. The high self-efficacy result of the whole group might be due to the elevation of scores of the HS group, with the high

average point of 61.07. The division of the two groups indicates that students differ in levels of English listening self-efficacy.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the somewhat low score of English listening test, a comparison of students' high and low scores presents significant difference. Of the 109 students, the English listening test score of the upper quarter (HL) and the lower quarter listening (LL) students are taken out for further investigation, with 27 students in each group. The average score of the better students is 109.48 and that of the worse students is 47.70. The paired t-test proves that the two groups differ significantly in English listening test scores.

Though the overall average points of the English listening test is not impressive, the HL group does show a high level of English listening proficiency, with an average point of 109.48 out of 120 points. It is the low score of the LL group, with only 47.70 points in average that diminishes the performance of the entire student group. The HL and LL students differ significantly in English listening test results, with the p value of 0.00, under the 0.05 standard.

Remember that the students generally demonstrate not much difficulty in English listening. But a comparison of students answering the listening difficulty questionnaire can differentiate students who are high (HD) from low (LD) in listening difficulty.

The HD and the LD group contrasts significantly different in their degrees of listening difficulty, with the HD group showing 117.93 points of listening difficulty out of the 150 points. The LD group, in contrast, only reports an average of 42.70 points in listening difficulty. Since there are 30 items in the English listening difficulty questionnaire, the HD group actually replies 3.93 points in average for every item of difficulties while the LD group only admits 1.42 points. That means the HD group sometimes or nearly usually encounter listening difficulty and the LD almost never

meets English listening difficulty.

English Listening Difficulty of High and Low English listening Self-Efficacy Students

The aim of the present study is to investigate whether students of different levels of English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency would differ in their levels or types of English listening difficulty. The result of the t-test shows that students of high (HS) and low (LS) listening self-efficacy differ significantly in their levels of English listening difficulty ($p = 0.00$). Students with different levels of listening self-efficacy encounter different levels of listening difficulty. Difficulty is one of the judging factors for self-efficacy evaluation (Wang & Papa, 2008) and the decrease of self-efficacy would drive individuals from endeavoring in tasks with difficulties. It is not surprising that students with different levels of listening self-efficacy would display differences in listening difficulty.

To further explore types of listening difficulty that might differ between students of higher and lower listening self-efficacy, t-tests of average scores on each listening difficulty between the HS and LS groups are administered. The result of the t-test of each listening difficulty items is displayed on table 4.

Students of high and low level of listening self-efficacy differ significantly in most items of listening difficulty inspected, with students of higher listening self-efficacy holding lesser degrees of listening difficulty than those of the low self-efficacy group.

Table 4. T-test Results of English Listening Difficulty by English Listening Self-efficacy.

item	group	mean	S.D.	T	p
1	HS	1.93	0.92	-6.02	0.00
	LS	3.44	1.34		
2	HS	1.70	0.78	-5.12	0.00
	LS	3.07	1.33		
3	HS	1.59	0.64	-5.95	0.00
	LS	3.30	1.41		
4	HS	1.48	0.70	-6.59	0.00
	LS	3.33	1.39		
5	HS	1.70	0.82	-5.92	0.00
	LS	3.52	1.40		
6	HS	1.93	0.83	-5.29	0.00
	LS	3.48	1.37		
7	HS	1.78	0.85	-5.77	0.00
	LS	3.56	1.31		
8	HS	1.59	0.74	-6.07	0.00
	LS	3.44	1.25		
9	HS	2.07	0.92	-5.65	0.00
	LS	3.59	1.31		
10	HS	2.07	1.11	-4.17	0.00
	LS	3.56	1.40		
11	HS	1.85	1.10	-5.50	0.00
	LS	3.74	1.38		
12	HS	1.74	1.10	-5.71	0.00
	LS	3.74	1.35		
13	HS	1.81	1.00	-4.59	0.00
	LS	3.33	1.41		
14	HS	1.85	0.99	-6.38	0.00
	LS	3.52	1.37		
15	HS	1.78	0.85	-6.32	0.00
	LS	3.67	1.49		
16	HS	1.85	0.91	-5.66	0.00
	LS	3.67	1.41		
17	HS	1.37	0.79	-6.02	0.00
	LS	3.30	1.27		
18	HS	1.67	0.79	-5.98	0.00
	LS	3.52	1.40		
19	HS	1.85	1.03	-5.00	0.00
	LS	3.56	1.40		
20	HS	1.59	0.97	-5.43	0.00
	LS	3.48	1.45		
21	HS	2.04	1.29	-3.29	0.00
	LS	3.26	1.43		
22	HS	1.70	0.95	-5.68	0.00
	LS	3.48	1.42		
23	HS	2.22	1.37	-1.38	0.18
	LS	2.74	1.43		
24	HS	2.26	1.40	-2.18	0.03
	LS	3.11	1.45		

25	HS	1.81	1.24	-4.37	0.00
	LS	3.33	1.44		
26	HS	1.85	1.35	-4.11	0.00
	LS	3.30	1.32		
27	HS	1.74	0.98	-6.96	0.00
	LS	3.67	1.47		
28	HS	1.78	0.97	-4.64	0.00
	LS	3.11	1.53		
29	HS	1.67	1.44	-4.58	0.00
	LS	2.93	1.41		
30	HS	1.59	1.01	-6.01	0.00
	LS	3.41	1.50		

Item #23, however, is the only item that fails to differentiate the HS and LS group. Students of higher self-efficacy groups get a mean of 2.22 points while those of the lower self-efficacy yield 2.74 points in average. The volume of the listening input is discussed in previous literature (Boyle's, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yousif, 2006). Half of the students in Chang, Wu and Pang's (2013) study require loud and clear input and Yousif's (2006) college interviewees moan over experiences when the "lecturer does not speak loudly." The fact that students of diverse self-efficacy do not view the volume of listening inputs as sources of difficulties might arise from the context of the present study. Yousif (2006) has college students report their listening difficulty in the comprehension of academic lectures in English, and this kind of listening scenario does not appear in junior high school students' daily life.

For junior high school students of the present study, their main sources of English listening are from their English teacher and their English listening practices on CDs. The volume of the CDs and even the English teacher can be adjusted according to students' requirement. As students of the present study finish the English listening difficulty questionnaire right after their English listening test, it might be plausible that students would relate to the current test experience. The researcher, who is the English teacher of the participants in this study, does encounter circumstances when students request louder volume from the CD player. In fact, right at the beginning of the English

listening test of the present study, the students of all four classes require the adjustment of the volume. As high-stake listening tests for junior high school students, such as school monthly tests or even the comprehensive assessment programs for junior high school students (CAP) do not provide opportunity for students to adjust the input volume, the administration of listening tests should ensure the volume of the material at the first place.

English Listening Difficulty of High and Low English Listening Proficiency Students

A similar procedure is done on students of high (HL) and low (LL) performance on listening test results. The answers of the HL and LL groups in the English listening difficulty questionnaire are analyzed through t-tests, and the result of the t-test is discussed in the following.

The t-test result between students of high and low English listening proficiency, based on their scores on the English listening test, shows a significant difference. The p value of the t-test comparison is 0.00, under the 0.05 criteria. The mean of English listening difficulty for the HL group is only 61.22, but the LL group gets 101.07 points. With each item score from one to five points and thirty items in the English listening difficulty questionnaire, it is testified that the HL group only gets 2.24 points (seldom) averagely in each listening difficulty item while the LL group gets 3.37 points (usually). The t-test shows that students with higher listening proficiency demonstrate significantly lower levels of listening difficulty than students of lower listening proficiency.

Again, in order to have a deeper view of the difficulty types that differentiate students of high and low listening proficiency, t-tests are administered on each difficulty

item between the HL and LL group. The result of the individual item t-test is listed in table 5.

Table 5. T-test Results of English Listening Difficulty by English Listening Proficiency

item	group	mean	S.D.	T	p
1	HL	2.11	0.80	-3.81	0.00
	LL	3.30	1.17		
2	HL	1.85	0.72	-3.57	0.00
	LL	2.81	1.18		
3	HL	1.89	0.85	-4.46	0.00
	LL	3.26	1.32		
4	HL	1.74	0.86	-4.72	0.00
	LL	3.15	1.32		
5	HL	1.96	0.90	-5.69	0.00
	LL	3.60	1.31		
6	HL	2.15	0.91	-4.44	0.00
	LL	3.56	1.25		
7	HL	2.00	0.78	-4.43	0.00
	LL	3.44	1.28		
8	HL	1.78	0.75	-5.16	0.00
	LL	3.23	1.17		
9	HL	2.37	0.88	-3.65	0.00
	LL	3.50	1.25		
10	HL	2.37	1.00	-4.31	0.00
	LL	3.67	1.27		
11	HL	2.15	1.03	-5.70	0.00
	LL	3.81	1.24		
12	HL	2.04	1.02	-4.51	0.00
	LL	3.44	1.34		
13	HL	2.04	0.98	-3.82	0.00
	LL	3.41	1.34		
14	HL	2.11	0.93	-4.60	0.00
	LL	3.59	1.22		
15	HL	2.00	0.88	-4.71	0.00
	LL	3.67	1.47		
16	HL	2.00	0.78	-5.80	0.00
	LL	3.74	1.26		
17	HL	1.67	0.78	-490	0.00
	LL	3.00	1.21		
18	HL	196	0.81	-4.78	0.00
	LL	3.48	1.28		
19	HL	2.00	0.92	-4.37	0.00
	LL	3.52	1.37		
20	HL	2.11	1.12	-4.24	0.00
	LL	3.67	1.30		
21	HL	2.22	1.12	-2.88	0.00
	LL	3.30	1.35		
22	HL	1.96	0.94	-5.01	0.00
	LL	3.59	1.28		

23	HL	2.22	1.09	-1.32	0.19
	LL	2.63	1.36		
24	HL	2.41	1.15	-1.71	0.10
	LL	3.00	1.41		
25	HL	1.93	1.07	-3.66	0.00
	LL	3.19	1.55		
26	HL	1.93	1.04	-3.60	0.00
	LL	3.11	1.37		
27	HL	1.96	0.85	-4.54	0.00
	LL	3.56	1.42		
28	HL	2.22	1.05	-2.80	0.00
	LL	3.19	1.42		
29	HL	2.11	1.15	-2.39	0.00
	LL	2.96	1.37		
30	HL	1.96	1.02	-4.42	0.00
	LL	3.63	1.36		

The analysis of t-tests among every item of English listening difficulty for HL and LL groups is shown on table 5. It is found that most of the listening difficulty items significantly distinguish students of high and low listening proficiency, with ($p < 0.5$). Two items, however, stand out for deeper inspection. Both item #23 and item #24 fail to distinguish the HL and LL group.

Item #23 is discussed in the previous part for that explanation that students with high or low listening self-efficacy do not differ significantly. And through table 5, the HL and LL groups again shows no significant difference in the response of item #23. It is proposed that circumstances when students do not have much control over the volume of the inputs are not prevalent for junior high school students of the present study. Students in the study do not often grumble over the volume of the inputs because they are imbued with rights to turn up or turn down the volume. Yousif's (2006) students complain that "we are wanting loud speaker," which is not the case in the present study. When the subjects of the study receive English listening inputs from their teacher, the teacher always uses a microphone of which the volume could be adjusted according to students' needs. And the listening inputs from the volume of the recorded CDs could always be fine-tuned by the instructor, who is the researcher of the study.

For item #24, students are asked to rate the effects of CD quality or noise for their listening comprehension. The t-test on this item does not find significant difference between the HL and the LL group, which might suppose that no matter how high or low the students' listening proficiency is, the effect of the CD or noise do not affect their listening comprehension. But a closer look at the mean of the HL and the LL group implies that the HL checks 2.41 and the LL scores 3.00 points in average in this source of listening difficulty. As LL group's 3.00 mean indicates the "sometimes" situation that might hinder students' comprehension, a possible explanation might be that students do face some disturbance originated from the quality of the CD or noise, but the effect does not significantly differentiate students of high and low listening proficiency. A number of previous research has delved into input clarity or noise existence (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Flowerdew & Miller, 1992; Juan & Abidin, 2013; McDevitt, Sheehan & McMenamin, 1991; Yousif, 2006). Chang, Wu, and Pang's (2013) students prefer listening through headphones to avoid distraction and Yousif's (2006) and Flowerdew and Miller's (1992) students complain that "some of the students are always talking/chatting during the lecture," or "the voices of the students talking in corridors and other classes distract me." On the other hand, some of the research in the literature probe into students' listening comprehension during ordinary English-delivered college classes (Flowerdue & Miller, 1992; Yousif, 2006), but the subjects of the study mainly encounter listening comprehension during well-controlled test environment. Another explanation for the lack of differentiation for the clarity of CDs or appearance of noise might be that the students of the study simply do not meet these problems. In fact, CDs used for English listening practices are often well-recorded, and as far as the researcher is concerned, there has not been any incidence when a CD produces unwanted noise or is not clear enough. The lack of

difficulty differentiation for input clarity and noise might be due to the nonexistence of this situation. It is up to the teacher to try every mean to decrease the influence of noise in the class as to take care of both students of high and low listening proficiency.

One thing worth mention is that item # 23 and #24 are the only two items under the listening difficulty category "input quality." With the volume of the inputs and the clarity of the CDs or the existence of noise failing to differentiate students of high and low listening proficiency, the input quality, might be the easiest factor that teachers could handle to ease students' listening (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013), perhaps by following the suggestion "the speakers need to be large enough to fill the whole listening space comfortably above the level of background noise, and without sound distortion" offered by Buck (2001).

English Listening Difficulty of Low English Listening Proficiency Students

As the main focus of the present study is on students' English listening difficulty and an overall average of student answers yields only a low level of English listening difficulty. It makes sense to further explore difficulties of students with lower listening proficiency. Looking at Table 5 again, one can find the mean scores on listening difficulty from the HL and LL group. As answers for most of the difficulty items vary between the HL and LL group, only items #23 and #24 show similar degrees of listening difficulty. The rest of the difficulty items, which distinguish between the HL and LL group, makes it perfect for further exploration of difficulties faced by students of lower listening proficiency.

The means of each item for the LL group is displayed in Table 5, and a glance of the means indicates that except items #23 and #24, other difficulty items all obtain over 3 points in average. In fact, the LL group scores all the items from three to four points

except item #23. Since three to four is the common range score for the LL group, then 3.5 points could be a reasonable cut point to differentiate items that are worth investigating. If we take 3.5 points as a standard, then items #5, #6, #9, #10, #11, #14, #15, #16, #19, #20, #22, #27, and #30 stand out for close inspection.

For item #5, it is found that students of lower listening proficiency have difficulty in catching important details from listening inputs. Zhong (2011) describes this problem being prevalent among students of in China. But it is proved here that this problem also causes trouble to Taiwanese junior high school students with lower listening proficiency. Zhong (2011) suggests that message such as people's names, place names, and numbers are important details that students need to learn to discern. Students' inability in this aspect would call for more practices.

Students point out their trouble in the connection of speech in item #6. This should occur when students listen to dialogues or short passages. Sun and Li (2008) propose that students have to use the relations among sentences to conjecture the meanings of the inputs for later utilization. Some of their college students encounter trouble in the connection of sentences. The lower listening proficiency students in the present study also show the tendency to fail in this process. As the ability to connect sentence meanings is required when listening to dialogues or passages, these kinds of language inputs should be practiced and be assisted.

Item #9 "I fail or don't have enough time to process previous inputs, which affects the comprehension of subsequent contents" gets 2.81 points. The item is not gleaned from the existing literature but from the brainchild of the researcher and her advisor. Goh (2000), Sun and Li (2008), and Zhang and Zhang (2011) point out that students sometimes have difficulty processing incoming inputs "because of earlier problems" without mentioning particular "earlier problems." It is conceived that the students might

just fail to comprehend the listening material or do not have time to catch up with the input, and the situations consequently influence the comprehension of the incoming inputs. The average score of item #9 proves the prevalence of this listening difficulty among Taiwanese junior high school students.

Item #10 acquires the highest point average among the 30-item questionnaire. The difficulty is related to the pace of the speakers, which disables students' comprehension. The item occurs constantly in the previous literature (Al-Busidi, 2012; Chang, Wu& Pang, 2013; Flowerdew, 2012; Huang, 2005; Hu, 2009; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Lotfi, 2012; Rubin, 1994; Sun & Li, 2008; Yang, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Problems with speed could include circumstances when students perceive the listening inputs to be too fast or when they blame the speakers to be speaking too fast. Juan and Abidin (2013) investigates Chinese-origin university students in Malaysia and confirms that when students listen to "foreigners speaking English through radio or listening materials," they "cannot understand at once." Huang (2005) has English majors in China report listening difficulty and again finds that students consider the listening materials, in her case VOA and BBC programs, as too fast to process. Even for learners of Arabic in Al-Busaidi's (2012) study, the speed of delivery poses difficulties for listeners. Subjects of the present study, who are students of the researcher, practice English listening in class with the recorded CD provided by the textbook publisher. Sometimes, students indeed would fail to catch up with the speed of the listening input and ask the researcher to read the scripts again in a slower manner. While the aforementioned study inspect college students, it is not surprising that the present study proves that the speed of the incoming material would hinder the comprehension of junior high school students in Taiwan as well.

The eleventh item deals with the mental translation of students and their

consequential inability to follow the ensuing inputs (Juan & Abidin, 2013; Yang, 2011). Juan and Abidin's (2013) students reply in the interview that "the translation speed is slower than the speaking speed." Juan and Abidin (2013) argue the "translation is a necessary method for ESL learners" because "it assists in their understanding." But when students are "slow in translation and fail to identify the key words," problems appear. In the interview with some of the subjects, students express the necessity of mental translation for their comprehension. "Of course I need to translate English into Chinese, or I could not understand. But sometimes I don't have time to listen to the incoming inputs because I am still translating the previous part." The translation method for English listening comprehension seems to help student comprehension to a certain degree but at the same time block comprehension when the translation is not done fast enough.

Students sometimes "cannot decide word meanings when a word has multiple meanings," as the average point of item #14 exemplifies. Earlier study with this difficulty item is done for the development of listening difficulty questionnaires (Sun & Li, 2008; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). And the present study shows these low-level students face difficulties in choosing appropriate meanings in the context when hearing a word with multiple meanings. Though the Comprehensive Assessment Programs for Junior High School Students (CAP) in Taiwan follows Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines and only tests the common 2000 vocabulary, with 1200 words as the basic and the rest as recognized words, CAP tests might test students' use of certain words with multiple meanings (Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, 2014; Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community, 2008). Students' ability in discerning proper meanings of the words in context should be emphasized.

Sometimes, students are simply bombarded with too many unknown words from

the listening inputs, as demonstrated in item #15. Yang (2011) records students' diaries and quotes "It was very difficult for me to understand the meaning of the whole text when there were many new words in the text." Renandya (2012) reminds teachers that unknown words in the inputs should be kept as low as possible, with 5 % unknown words as an upper limit. Not only do words with multiple meanings affect comprehension, excessive unknown words in the listening inputs depress students.

"Difficult grammatical structures" are sources of listening difficulty in item #16. Students report problems in comprehending listening inputs due to the complex grammar of the material (Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013) or their personal weakness in grammar (Flowerdew & Miller, 1992; Juan & Abidin, 2013; Liu & Huang, 2011; Huang, 2005; Yang, 2011; Zhong, 2011). Junior high school students are mostly asked to comprehend short dialogues or even one-straight sentences. The grammar used in the listening material does not go beyond the basic language structures published by the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, 2014; Taiwan Elementary and Secondary Educator Community, 2008). And compared with reading materials, the vocabulary or grammar of listening materials are relatively easy. The fact that these low-level subjects would attribute grammatical structures, even though they are already selectively as easy, as origins of their listening difficulty is something that teachers have to take care of.

Themes of the English listening material for junior high school students in Taiwan revolves around daily conversation. Features of spoken languages such as redundancy, hesitation, or pause could provide students with time or hints for effective comprehension. Scholars point out that much of the listening materials lack repetition, which is one of the crucial elements in real-life listening that assists comprehension (Rubin, 1994; Yang, 2011; Yousif, 2006). Sometimes, it's not that students do not make

good use of repeated messages or pauses, it's that the inputs do not provide these.

The issues of linking sounds or sound omissions get 3.67 points in average. Problems with linking or omission are discussed in the literature (Hu, 2009; Juan & Abindin, 2013; Renandya, 2012; Yang, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Linking and omissions of word sounds are typical in spoken English and are features of authentic language pronunciation that students are encouraged to acquire (Dauer & Brown, 1992). It is a pity that students find linking and omission of sounds troublesome. Not only is authentic English filled with linking sounds, students' inability to chunk word sounds also might result to students' perception of linking problems. Renandya (2012) mentions that for many second language learners, "words tend to blend with the surrounding words, thus making it difficult to clearly perceive the boundary between words." Hulstijn (2003) describes this situation as spoken languages sounding like "a wave of sounds without borderlines". Students' headache in sound linking and omission should not be ignored.

Students of lower English listening proficiency express concern in listening to materials of unfamiliar topics. The difficulties are also discussed in the previous literature (Boyle, 1984; Chang, Wu & Pang, 2013; Yang, 2011; Yousif, 2006). Though topics of listening tests for junior high school students mostly cover themes of daily life, it is found that some of the students still do not find those topics as familiar, perhaps by the lacking of similar experiences. When students listen to materials of unfamiliar topics, they lack the necessary background knowledge to assist proper interpretation, which makes the listening activity demanding (Long, 1989).

Interests toward English listening materials seem to determine students' acceptance or performance of the listening practices. As item #27 shows, 2.72 points in average are given for having no interests on the topic of listening inputs. Chang, Wu

and Pang (2013) and Bolye (1984) all talk about the psychological problem in their research. In particular, Bolye's (1984) teacher and student subjects ascribe interests of the subject to be a factor that influences listening comprehension. For participants of the present study, their training of English listening is guided by the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, with themes and genres carefully listed by the MOE (Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, 2014). Nonetheless, the present study conforms to the literature and verifies that junior high school students in Taiwan do not always necessarily love the themes of the listening materials.

Having no confidence in listening, the last item of the listening difficulty questionnaire, is also clicked highly by students of lower listening proficiency. One of Juan and Abidin' (2013) students mentions "when I listening the difficult sentence or words, there is no confidence to go on [sic]." Apparently, students of the present study are also afflicted by lacking of confidence, perhaps by the unsuccessful prior learning experiences. It is to the teachers to select materials of proper difficulty level to help foster students' confidence.

Of all the items worthy of attention in the listening difficulty questionnaire, based on the 3.5 points in average standard, five of them are taken from the category of "listening process." These items include items #5, #6, #9, #10, and #11, which are related to an inability to catch important details, ignorance of sentence connections, unable to comprehend the following material due to incomprehension or unsuccessful processing of the previous inputs, fast speed, and translation of the material that leads to the behind-time comprehension of the latter parts. Another six items are "text" problems, which are difficulties generated from words with multiple meanings (#14), too many unknown words (#15), difficult grammatical structures (#16), failure in taking advantage of repeated message or pauses for comprehension (#19), linking or omission

of sounds (#20) and unfamiliar topics (#22). Difficulties inherent in the text as well as students' personal processing of language inputs seem to molest these junior high school students. Item #27, with its interest in the listening material, and item #30, having no confidence, are the only two items under the categorization of "psychological" problem. And there are no items that gather higher points in the category of "input quality" and "task" difficulties. The special phenomenon regarding "input quality" has been discussed above, for difficulties related to input quality are the ones that specifically do not differentiate students of high or low listening proficiency and groups of high and low listening proficiency. Overall, the students seem to have fewer or less severe difficulties relating to "tasks" in listening comprehension.

Results of the Interview

Looking through students' listening difficulty and its relation to students' listening self-efficacy and listening proficiency is the main focus of the present study. But an understanding of students' listening difficulty would entail the necessity to identify methods to cope with these difficulty. The aim of the individual interview is to extract strategies that students employ to tackle with these difficulties.

To select representative interviewees, the researcher looked through the data of students' answers on the English listening self-efficacy scale and their performance on the English listening test. The upper quarter and the lower quarter of students who are high (HS) or low (LS) in listening self-efficacy are singled out at first. Then, the researcher compared their scores on the English listening test and found out that out of 27 students in the HS group, 24 of them also belonged to students of high English listening proficiency (HL). On the other hand, from the 27 students in the LS group,

one can also spot 23 students who are poor in listening (LL). The researcher decided to invite these students, who are either both high in listening self-efficacy and listening proficiency or both low in listening self-efficacy and listening proficiency, as targets for the interview.

To encourage free-thinking of the answers, the researcher kept the interviewing question simple and with the fewest reminders possible. The open ended question goes as “What do you do when you meet problems during English listening?” The students are encouraged to pronounce at least five ways that help them cope with listening difficulty, though some of them fail to attain the standard. The answers of the students are collected in Table 6, the numbers in the parenthesis after each strategy indicate how many students refer to that specific strategy.

Since some of the methods that students named have overlapped, there are only 27 methods relating to English listening listed in Table 6. By following Oxford (2011), the researcher identifies language learning strategies as cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive strategies. Oxford (2011) also has categorized meta-strategies, but those strategies do not appear in students’ answers and are not included here. The researcher also finds that some of the techniques used by students seem more to be test-taking strategies than problem-solving methods. In addition, some of the strategies enunciated by students are not ways to cope with listening difficulty but rather some training to improve English listening abilities.

The first twelve strategies in Table 6 conform to the categorization of language learning strategies in Oxford’s (2011) taxonomy. And they are divided into cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive strategies. Strategies that are used to tackle with test-taking situations are discussed latter, and strategies that students use to train themselves for English listening are also displayed.

Table 6. Students' Strategies in Response to English Listening Difficulty

Language Learning Strategies 1. Cognitive strategy (1) Replay the CD and listen again. (3) (2) Repeat the listening material in one's mind. (3) (3) Look up the dictionary for unknown words. (1) (4) Listen to the main idea or key words. (3) (5) Write down key words. (2) (6) Guess word meanings through the context. (6) (7) Translate English into Chinese. (3) 2. Affective strategy (1) Take it easy. (1) 3. Sociocultural-interactive strategy (1) Ask the speaker. (2) (2) Ask others or the teacher. (4) (3) If the volume is not loud enough, I will ask the teacher to turn up the volume. (1) (4) If the speaker speaks too fast, I will ask him/her to slow down. (2)
Test-taking strategy 1. Look at the questions and options before listen to the inputs. (3) 2. Choose words that I have heard from the options. (1) 3. Cross out options with unknown words. (1) 4. Write down words and then think about them later. (2) 5. When listen for the first time, I will mark the questions that I don't understand and listen to them twice. (2) 6. Write the answers between each question instead of listening and writing at the same time. (2) 7. Be careful not to draw on the wrong columns of the answer sheet. (1)
Training English listening 1. Memorize vocabulary. (2) 2. Listen to English programs such as ICRT. (2) 3. Talk with foreigners. (1)

When encountering listening difficulty, some of the students choose to listen to the inputs again by replaying the CDs. Some students also repeat the heard material in their mind. Subvocal repetitions are processed in the working memory and are believed to assist second language learners' acquisition (De Guerrero, 2004). A student mentions that she would look up unfamiliar words on the dictionary. This is possible when the listening practice is not in a test situation. In fact, the researcher, who is an EFL learner herself, also often checks new words on the dictionary when hearing unknown vocabulary.

Some students try to listen to the main idea or key words from the inputs. A related strategy is to write down some key words. As listening is a transient activity, note-taking is advised to remind listeners of crucial contents (Oxford, 2011). Sometimes,

when students do not know the meanings of the words, they tend to guess the meaning from the context. The top-down conjecture of meanings is encouraged (Rumelhart, 1977). A common listening strategy adopted by these students is the translation method, which is also reported as prevalent among Chinese learners of English (Goh, 2002). Remember the result of the listening difficulty questionnaire manifests that low-level listeners are intended to translate English listening inputs into Chinese in their mind and then fail to catch on the ensuing inputs. The translation strategy should be used with caution.

The only affective strategy elicited from the subjects is to take it easy. As one student points out, "When listening to English, I feel nervous and my heart beats faster.)" When students get nervous during listening tasks, they have to calm down in order to concentrate. Since many of the listening activities for junior high school students are accompanied with assessments, it unavoidably adds pressure on the students. Rather than evaluating the performance of English listening practices, language teachers are advised to provide low-stake listening tasks and encourage relaxing listening contexts.

When students do not fully understand the inputs, they sometimes employ socio-interactive strategies by directly asking the speakers or by asking other people of better language proficiency. One of the students mentions that she would ask the teacher why one of the options is not accepted if there are two options that she has straddled about. If given chances to talk with the speaker face to face, the students would also please speakers to slow down the pace if they fail to catch up with the speed. Two of the interviewees happened to join an international communication program by treating British teenagers to travel around Taipei. When asked about their listening difficulty, they both firstly referred themselves as understanding everything. But when the researcher probed their experiences of talking with the English peers, they admitted that

they did not fully understand them due to their speed and accents. And in those cases, they would inquire them to speak slower. Chances for negotiation and clarification of meanings are only possible in bidirectional listening (Graham, 2006), and the students seem to make good use of the opportunities. The other socio-interactional strategy that students often use is to have their teacher turn up the volume of the CD for clearer listening inputs. Maybe that's why the volume and clearance of listening inputs do not differentiate HS/LS or HL/LL students, for no matter how high or low their listening self-efficacy or proficiency is, they can always ask the teacher to adjust input volume for them.

As most junior high schools students engage in listening activities during English tests, they inescapably turn to test-taking strategies when being asked about their listening comprehension strategies. Some procedures for the students include reading multiple-choice questions and options beforehand, listening to the inputs and choosing options with words that one hears or knows while dropping options with unknown vocabulary. When in doubt, they would write down some key words or mark the questions and rethink them later. Some students try to write their answers during the pauses between questions, and they remind themselves not to circle the wrong answers on their answer sheets. Though these test-taking strategies do not guarantee excellent results, it offers insights for teachers and researchers to glance over students' listening behaviors.

Although the researcher interviewed students' strategies in solving listening comprehension problems, some of the students spontaneously expressed their tips for practicing listening comprehension. Quite a few of the students resort to vocabulary memorization as ways to improve their listening. Since the abundance of unknown words and words with multiple meanings are sources of difficulties for students of

lower listening proficiency, as exemplified by Table 5, the students might be convinced to memorize more words to help themselves. Two students in particular alluded to listening to English programs. But when the researcher dug into the programs they listen to, one of them admitted that she never listens to English programs and the other one named ICRT. The students also assume talking with foreigners as ways to help increase English listening ability, but they also confess that they do not meet too many foreigners and when they do, they are too afraid to speak up.

Meeting listening difficulty, some of the students could not but give up. So they might just guess or skip questions. Interestingly, students report ways to guess their answers, which are not listed in Table 6. One student uses dice and another student recites her answer to see whether the permutation and combination of ABCDs sound appealing. The researcher, as the English teacher of these students, was the most disappointed when getting these given-up answers.

The strategies gathered from the interview are to supply the statistical data with strategies to cope with listening difficulty. It is hoped that with insights from junior high school students, teachers and researchers interested in listening difficulty could help desperate students in improving their English listening comprehension.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is to investigate relationships among English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty. The researcher utilizes quantitative instruments by having students evaluate their listening self-efficacy beliefs and reflect on their listening difficulty. Students' English listening proficiency is also objectively assessed by an elementary-level GEPT listening test. The data gleaned from questionnaires and tests are analyzed through SPSS 22.0 to get the connection among three variables. The author also complements the quantitative statistics with interviews of students' English listening strategies. It is hoped that the study could provide insights for teachers and researchers interested in English listening.

Major findings from the study are summarized in the chapter, implications of the study, suggestions for future research as well as possible limitations of the study are also provided.

Summary of the Major Findings

The present study had 109 junior high school students in Taipei City fill out an English listening self-efficacy scale, take an elementary-level GEPT English listening test, and finally complete an English listening difficulty questionnaire. The author then selected 20 students, who represented the upper and lower level of English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency, for an interview of students' English listening strategies. The primary results of the statistical data and the interview findings are summarized again here.

The average score of the 13-item English listening self-efficacy scale is 44.52, indicating high English listening self-efficacy of the students. Only two items fail to reach 3 points in average, which are #11 “I enjoy doing English listening practices with my teachers and classmates,” and #13 “The more difficult the listening practice is, the more challenging and enjoyable it is.” The lower scores of these two items might result from students’ avoidance from difficult listening materials that are beyond their listening comprehension capacity and their preference for individual listening practices. As the participants of the study are students of the capital city in Taiwan, it is conjectured that the students receive better family-social capital and hence possess higher English listening self-efficacy.

For the English listening test, students get 78.13 points in average out of a full score of 120 points. Test items #9, #17, #18 and #30 are particularly low in average, with mean scores under 2 points. The low scores might be due to the incomprehensible nature of the pictures provided, inability to visualize situations of the dialogues, and lacks of grammatical conceptions, especially for the present perfect tense. The overall low score of the English listening test might also be attributed to students’ indifference to the research, with no offending to their scores in school life.

The researcher divides listening difficulty into five categories, which are “listening process”, “text,” “input quality,” “task,” and “psychological.” For the thirty-item listening difficulty questionnaire, students averagely reported 77.68 points out of a maximum of 150 points. It is assumed that the relatively low average of students’ listening difficulty might result from the balancing of students with few listening difficulty and therefore decrease the effects from those of more listening difficulty.

The high self-efficacy (HS) group gets 61.07 points while the low self-efficacy (LS) group only gets 23.89 points in the self-efficacy scale. As for listening proficiency,

the high listening proficiency (HL) group obtains 109.48 points in the English listening test while the low listening proficiency (LL) group only catches a meager 47.40 points in average. T-tests show that the differences between the HS and LS as well as the HL versus LL are significant.

To see the connection between listening self-efficacy and listening difficulty, answers by the high and low listening self-efficacy groups on the English listening difficulty questionnaire are compared. Averagely, the HS group only has 53.89 points of listening difficulty. But the LS group reports 102.15 points. The t-test between the scores on listening difficulty of the HS and LS group confirms that the two groups, with high and low English listening self-efficacy, respectively, differ significantly in English listening difficulty. A closer look of the HS and LS group involves item-by-item t-tests between the two groups' listening difficulty. Only item #23, which relates to the volume of listening inputs, does not differentiate between the HS and the LS group.

A similar comparison is done between the students of higher and lower listening proficiency on their responses of English listening difficulty. The difficulty score of the HL group is 61.22 while that of the LL group soars up to 101.07. The t-test proves that listening difficulty differentiate the HL and LL group. T-tests of individual difficulty items indicate significant difference in all but two items, which are #23 and #24. Item #23 is about the volume of the inputs and #24 is about the clarity of inputs and existence of noises. Both #23 and #24 are categorized under "input quality" on the categorization of difficulties. It is surmised that the subjects of the present study have the opportunity to adjust input volume and the recorded CDs for listening practices are of high quality. Therefore, the input quality does not differentiate significantly between students of high and low listening proficiency.

Difficulties that particularly torture students of lower listening proficiency are

items #5, #6, #9, #10, #11, #14, #15, #16, #19, #20, #22, #27, and #30. These difficulties include five "listening process difficulties", which are unable to catch important details (#5), ignoring connection of sentences (#6), incomprehension of previous parts or processing too slowly that leads to later problems (#9), fast speed of the speakers (#10), and in-brain translation with no time for the following inputs (#11). Another five of them are "text" difficulties, which are words with multiple meanings (#14), too many unknown words (#15), difficult grammatical structures (#16), unable to use repetition or pauses for comprehension (#19), and linking or omission of sounds (#20). Two difficulties relate to "task" are #22 unfamiliar topics and #27 no interests toward the content. The only "psychological" difficulty is #30, having no confidence. The above difficulties are those that teachers have to pay special effort to help their students.

The interview of students' listening strategies generate some cognitive, affective, sociocultural-interactive, test-taking, and training strategies. Students might replay CDs, repeat the inputs, look up unknown words, listen to main idea or key words, take notes, guess meaning through contexts, and translate inputs into the mother tongue. They might also tell themselves to relax while listening, ask others for help, ask questions of the speakers or require them to slow down, and have teachers turn up the volume of inputs. And while taking English listening tests, they look at the test descriptions before listening, choose heard words, cross out unknown words, take notes for later thoughts, mark problematic questions, write answers during pauses, and be careful not to mistakenly write wrong answers. To improve listening, some students listen to ICRT, talk with foreigners or memorize vocabulary to increase their English listening comprehension ability.

In sum, it is proved that junior high school students of the present study are high in English listening self-efficacy and low in English listening proficiency and English

listening difficulty. Students of higher self-efficacy and higher listening proficiency both exhibit lower level of listening difficulty to the significant level. Students also generate some listening strategies to cope with these difficulties.

Implications of the Study

Notwithstanding some inherent limitation of the research, the present study has pointed out junior high school students' level of English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty, which could contribute to the pedagogical consideration for teaching English listening in Taiwan and some suggestion for the administration of English listening tests.

With the significant relationship between English listening self-efficacy and English listening difficulty, teachers are reminded to be aware of students' self-efficacy. The level of one's self-efficacy determines the effort and persistence of an individual toward certain tasks. It even leverages on whether one would even try to engage in a given task in the first place. If students are beaten by too many failures or are yoked with tasks of too much difficulty, they might gradually lose their confidence and degenerate their self-efficacy. The loss of self-efficacy might result to students' unwillingness in initiating and sustaining learning. Since self-efficacy can be nurtured through past achieving and failing experiences, teachers should select appropriate tasks for students to secure proper self-efficacy.

The contrasting effect between students' English listening proficiency and English listening difficulty shows that students with lower listening proficiency encounter more or greater listening difficulty. Teachers should adopt amiable teaching styles and techniques that cater to students of lower proficiency, perhaps by selecting materials of

lower difficulties and training students with comprehension strategies to facilitate their listening. Remedial education could also be conducted in accompany with ordinary English classes to help late achievers.

Students of the present study between high and low English listening self-efficacy do not respond to the volume of the input differently. The same goes for students of high and low English listening self-efficacy or proficiency in the difficulty item related to the audio quality of the CD and existence of noise. As the subjects of the study are students of the researcher, they can always ask the researcher to modify the volume of the input and control the test environment by closing all the windows or even turn on the air conditioner. But the freedom in adjusting the volume of the listening inputs and the isolation of noise is not guaranteed in every test, especially in high-stake tests. Test administrators, when preparing listening materials for tests, therefore, are suggested to take account of the volume of the broadcast and reduce the noise of the classrooms.

One of the pictures in the English listening test of the present study brings confusion to students and affects their final answers. Learning from the experience, test designers should be aware of the picture formation and the printing quality on test sheets. The fabrication of pictures are advised to be clear and simple, and the printing of the pictures should reflect the ideal construction of the picture to ease students' comprehension. On the other hand, students seem to fail in certain test items due to the unfamiliarity of the topics. When selecting probable materials for listening tests, it is to the test designers' concern to choose topics of students' knowledge so that the students' performance would not be offset by their lack of background knowledge.

The study manifests that students, especially of lower listening proficiency, suffer from difficulties of listening process, texts, tasks, and psychological factors. It is up to the teachers to ameliorate these difficulties. Some possible ways might be training

students with efficient listening processing, providing students with necessary vocabulary and grammatical structures, enriching students' background knowledge, and boosting students' self-confidence and self-efficacy of English listening comprehension. As for test administration, the quality of the listening inputs should be tended at the first place. The isolation of external noise during listening tests and the quality of the listening material be assured. Pictures on the test sheets should be clear and the selection of test topics are advised to be centered around students' common knowledge.

Limitations of the Present Study

The present study, though done under the monitoring of the researcher and the guidance of her advisor, suffers from some limitations and should be taken into consideration for any interpretation and application of the study result.

First, the study is done in only one school location, which reflects the situation of the targeted students but might not represent the whole population of junior high school students in Taiwan. The students of the present study are all eighth graders. They cannot mirror students of all three grades in junior high school. The researcher is the English teacher of the subjects, and her teaching style, her double role as a teacher and a researcher, and her interrelationship with the students might all influence the result of the study.

Second, the study is a one-shot research, with no long-term follow-up collection of data. The one-phase study can only collect students' temporary state of English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty. Without long-term follow-ups, there is no way to peep into students' fluctuation in these

three aspects. And since the study is done only once, the result of the study is affected by the context of the experiment. As mentioned in the results and discussion part, some of the students do not pay attention during the day of the research. The study only catches the less than ideal incidence and does not record the averaging performance of students in a long period of time.

Finally, the instruments of the present study collected self-report data. With all self-report methodology, it is unavoidable that participants might voice answers that are supposed to conform to public expectations but not their true situation. Even though the researcher tries to triangulate the obtained data with individual interviews, it is mainly focused on the elicitation of English listening comprehension strategies rather than listening self-efficacy or listening difficulty per se.

Suggestions for Future Research

The present study provides relations of junior high school students' English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency and English listening difficulty. Researchers interested in the related domains can draw insights from the study. Some of the possible directions for future research are suggested here.

The subjects of the study are mainly junior high school students from Taipei City and New Taipei City. With their relatively high economic backgrounds, family support, and community resource, students in Taipei City and New Taipei City might exhibit better performance in English listening self-efficacy and English listening test while showing lesser degrees of trouble hampered by English listening difficulty. It might be worthy of research for future researchers to model the study in other areas.

Another possible application of the present study is the comparison of cross-

temporal study. As the present study does not involve a long-turn follow up of students' change of performance, a possible study direction might lead to the study of students' English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty over time. As students' exposure to English listening is expected to expand with further studying, their sense of efficacy might change in accompany with successful or frustrating experiences. And students' perceived difficulties might also change with the broadening listening experiences.

More than delving into students' English listening difficulty and its relation with English listening self-efficacy and English listening proficiency, other factors can be considered for future research design. Some worth-studying variables might be language aptitude, intelligence, motivation, attitudes, anxiety and learning styles (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992; 1993). Any study incorporating English listening difficulty, English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency and any of other factors would be rich in research scope and offer glimpse between the interactions of factors.

As the present study only resorts to the interview for elicitation of English listening strategies without digging deeper, future researchers could glean more information from the interview by asking students to retell their English listening learning experiences for source of English listening self-efficacy and formation of English listening strategies. It is believed that more structured interviews and more rooted phenomenon could be excavated.

The present research is an immature attempt to glimpse into junior high school students' English listening self-efficacy, English listening proficiency, and English listening difficulty. It is hoped that future researchers could find the present research meaningful as to contribute to the plethora literature of second language teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: English Listening Self-Efficacy Scale

Dear students,

Thanks for helping filing out this questionnaire. The questionnaire aims to explore English listening comprehension self-efficacy of junior high school students in Taiwan. There is no standard answer for this questionnaire. Please answer the questions according to your own situation. All of your answers will only be used for academic research and will not affect any of your school scores. Please feel relieved to answer the questionnaire. Thanks again for your kindly help.

Researcher: Pei-Chun Lin
Professor: Dr. Hsi-Nan Yeh

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I have abilities to continue improving my English listening comprehension skills.					
2. I believe that my ability in English listening comprehension will improve.					
3. I can concentrate on the English listening content.					
4. If I practice English listening comprehension more, I will improve my English listening comprehension.					
5. I can remember contents of the English listening comprehension practices.					
6. I can understand English listening comprehension materials in class.					
7. When my teachers read English sentences in class, I can understand them.					
8. When practicing English listening comprehension, I can answer my teachers' questions.					
9. Even if the listening practice in the class is difficult, I can find a strategy to answer most of the related questions.					
10. I enjoy doing English listening practices.					
11. I enjoy doing English listening practices with my teachers and classmates.					
12. When I am doing a listening practice by myself, I can repeat listening.					
13. The more difficult the listening practice is, the more challenging and enjoyable it is.					

英語聽力理解自我效能量表

親愛的同學：

感謝您協助填寫此問卷。本問卷主旨為探討台灣國中生英語聽力理解的自我效能。本問卷無標準答案，請依照您個人實際狀況作答。您的所有答案將僅供學術研究且不會影響您任何的在校成績，請安心作答。再次感謝您的幫忙，謝謝您。

研究生：林珮君

指導教授：葉錫南副教授

	完全不符	不符合	普通	符合	完全符合
1. 我有能力持續增進自己的英語聽力。					
2. 我相信我的英語聽力理解能力會進步。					
3. 我能專心聆聽英語。					
4. 如果我多練習英語聽力，我的英語聽力會進步。					
5. 我能記得英語聽力練習的內容。					
6. 我聽得懂課堂上的英語聽力練習。					
7. 老師上課時念英語句子，我聽得懂。					
8. 在練習英語聽力理解時，我可以回答老師的問題。					
9. 即使課堂上的英語聽力練習內容很難，我也可以找到方法回答問題。					
10. 我喜歡英語聽力理解練習。					
11. 我喜歡和老師或同學一起練習英語聽力理解。					
12. 我自己練習聽力理解時，我可以自己重複練習。					
13. 英語聽力理解練習越困難，對我來說越有趣、越有挑戰。					

Appendix B: English Listening Difficulty Questionnaire

Dear students,

Thanks for your help in filling out this questionnaire. This questionnaire is used for discovering listening comprehension difficulties of junior high school students in Taiwan. There is no standard answer for any item. Please answer the questions according to your true situation. Your answers will only be used for academic purposes and will not influence any of your scores in school. Thank you again for your assistance.

Researcher: Pei-Chun, Lin
Professor: Dr. Hsi-Nan, Yeh

1= never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always

While listening to English, what I feel more bothered are…	1	2	3	4	5
1. I cannot guess the meaning of unknown words.					
2. I cannot form a correct image of the word heard in my mind (e.g. when I hear the word "apple", 🍎 appears in my mind).					
3. I cannot chunk streams of speech into meaningful pieces.					
4. I cannot connect images in my mind (e.g. When I hear "eat an apple," I connect  and 🍎 in my mind).					
5. I cannot catch important details.					
6. I miss the connection of the speech.					
7. I ignore the context and characteristics of the speakers.					
8. I cannot use personal background knowledge or linguistic knowledge to process the heard message.					
9. I fail or don't have enough time to process previous inputs, which affects the comprehension of subsequent contents.					
10. The pace of the speakers is too fast, I don't have enough time to comprehend.					
11. I translate English into Chinese in my mind and don't have time to listen to following inputs.					
12. I translate English into Chinese in my mind and confuse myself.					
13. I cannot discriminate similar sounds in words (e.g. discriminate /i/ vs. /ɪ/).					
14. I cannot decide the precise word meaning when a word has multiple meanings.					
15. The text has too many unknown words.					
16. Difficult grammatical structures in the content affect my comprehension.					
17. I don't know what/who the pronouns (e.g. this, it, he etc.) in the listening inputs are referred to.					
18. I cannot use words that connect sentences or structures to help me understand (e.g. however; first, second; then, etc.).					

19.	I do not use features such as repeated messages or pauses in speech to help me understand.					
20.	I do not understand the inputs due to linkings (e.g. not at all [natæ tɔl]) or omissions (e.g. tell me what to [whatu] say).					
21.	I don't understand the inputs because the speakers have special accents.					
22.	The texts have unfamiliar topics.					
23.	The volume of the input affects my comprehension.					
24.	The clarity of CDs or the existence of noise affect my comprehension.					
25.	I don't have enough time to listen to the inputs and write down my answers because there is not enough time for answering the questions.					
26.	I cannot finish reading the questions because the pause time allotted between each test item is too short.					
27.	The material is not of interests to me.					
28.	I feel nervous when I don't understand the aural input.					
29.	I get nervous when people evaluate my listening.					
30.	I don't have confidence.					

英語聽力理解困難問卷

親愛的同學：

感謝您協助填寫此問卷。本問卷主旨為探討台灣國中生英語聽力理解困難。本問卷無標準答案，請依照您個人實際狀況回答。您的所有答案將僅供學術研究且不會影響您任何的在校成績，請安心做答。再次感謝您的幫忙。

研究生：林珮君

指導教授：葉錫南副教授

聽英語時，我比較困擾的是.....	從不	很少	偶爾	時常	總是
1. 我無法猜出單字意思。					
2. 我腦海中無法對單字形成正確的圖像(例如：聽到 apple 時，心裡頭浮現🍎)。					
3. 我無法切割一串語言成為有意義的片段。					
4. 我無法正確連結腦海中的圖像(例如：聽到 eat an apple 時，在腦海中連結 和🍎)。					
5. 我無法抓到重要細節。					
6. 我忽略語句的關聯性。					
7. 我忽略說話情境或說話者的特質。					
8. 我無法運用個人背景知識或語言知識處理聽到的訊息。					
9. 因為前面所聽到的訊息無法理解或來不及處理，以致影響後續內容的理解。					
10. 說話者速度過快，我來不及理解。					
11. 我在腦中把英語翻成中文，來不及聽後面的部分。					
12. 我在腦中把英語翻成中文，自己混淆了。					
13. 我無法分辨單字中相似的音 (如分辨/i/與/ɪ/)。					
14. 當單字為一字多義時，我無法決定單字的確切意思。					
15. 內容有太多不認識的單字。					
16. 內容中困難的文法結構影響我的理解。					
17. 我不懂聽到的代名詞(如 this、it、he)所指為何。					
18. 我無法利用句子或文章結構特性間連貫銜接的字詞(如 however; first、second；then 等)幫助我的理解。					
19. 未能善用重複出現的重要訊息或語句中的停頓等特質來協助自己理解。					
20. 因為連音(如 not at all [natɔtɔl])或省略音(如 tell me what to [whatu] say)而聽不懂。					

21. 說話者口音特別，聽不太懂。					
22. 內容主題不熟悉。					
23. 音量大小影響我的理解。					
24. CD 音質不佳或噪音影響我的理解。					
25. 作答時間不足，我沒有足夠的時間邊聽邊寫答案。					
26. 試題內容播放間隔太短，看不完題目。					
27. 我對聽力內容沒有興趣。					
28. 我聽不懂內容時很緊張。					
29. 有人評估我的聽力，我很緊張。					
30. 我沒有信心。					