# English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students and Certain Self-Learning Strategies in Myanmar

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## Abstract

This research discusses the English listening comprehension problems of university students in Myanmar. For taking English Listening Comprehension (ELC) at selected Universities, the research used a qualitative method to collect data from students. This research description is related to the problems encountered by students in ELC learning. Interviews were conducted to investigate students' perspectives through the main question concerning the problems of the students in their ELC self-learning process. Findings from this study indicate that the main problem faced by the students was the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary which impede their understanding of the listening process. Moreover, the differences in the ascent of the native speakers also prohibit the proper

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understanding of the listening content. Length and speed of listening were discussed as the problems of ELC learning. This research laid a good foundation for further research which provided useful information concerning the effective strategies to enhance students' listening skills and will improve the instruction of English listening classes to achieve a win-win situation.

## Introduction

The study of English in Myanmar has been and still is an important subject for worldwide communication. The situation in Myanmar is that the English language traditionally is treated as an academic subject, and Myanmar students have been required to study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) beginning in primary school. However, the problem has persevered over the decades because the aim of English teaching in Myanmar has been primarily to train students to pass various kinds of examinations in high schools and universities that have been especially emphasized.

## Literature Review

Listening is a crucial part of the language learning process but it is a struggle for students even if they are using English as a foreign language. On the one hand, listening is a weak skill in English language learning due to the examination system in Myanmar.

### 1. Background of the Study

English listening skills had not been sufficiently conquered by the Myanmar students. This is because English listening skills are very much dependent on sufficient acquisition of grammatical knowledge and adequate vocabulary skills which many Myanmar students do not possess. The thing that is severely restricted to speaking English confidently for Myanmar students is the small and limited English speaking environment. That is to

say, an immersive environment for English speaking is not there. Even in the English classes, the Myanmar students are afraid of being taunted and mocked by the teacher or other students when they attempt to speak English. On the other hand, ELC is very important in English language learning. According to Mendelsohn, 1995, listening is widely acknowledged as a neglected skill due to insufficient pedagogical development and perhaps even teachers' training. In other language skills, such as writing, reading speaking, and listening competency receive significantly less attention in the classroom. This study explores the listening problems and strategies faced by the Myanmar students, in this context, in order to improve their listening skills in general.

## 2. Problems in Listening

Although research on the skill is limited, some valuable sources offer valid comments on the problems involved in teaching listening. Anderson and Lynch address problems posed by listeners' background knowledge and schemata. Language is the means used by a community to express facts, ideas, beliefs, rules, and so on-in short, to express its culture.

## 2.1. Accent

In sociolinguistics, an accent is a manner of pronunciation weird to a particular individual, location, or nation. Too many accented speeches can lead to an important reduction in incomprehension. According to Goh (2002), learners mentioned a speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. Serious problems found in listening comprehension are unfamiliar accents both native and non-native and familiarity with an accent helps learners' listening comprehension.

## 2.2 Unfamiliar Vocabulary

When listening to texts that contain known words would be very easy for students. If students know the meaning of words, this can arouse their interest and motivation and can have a positive impact on the students' listening comprehension ability. If the vocabulary is unfamiliar to students, they will not listen actively to identify specific words. This is because the

students will use their prior knowledge and the context to work out the meaning of these words.

## 2.3 Length and Speed of Listening

The level of students can have a significant role when they listen to long parts and keep all information in their mind. It is very problematic for lower-level students to listen more than three minutes long and complete the listening tasks. Short listening passages make easy listening comprehension for learners and reduce their weariness. According to Underwood (1989), speed can make listening passages difficult.

## 2.4 Students' Background Knowledge

Students' background knowledge can have an important role in their listening comprehension. There are two facts that can facilitate listening processes such as a general understanding of the country's culture and its history. The lack of the necessary background knowledge acquired by the students from Myanmar forms another factor of the problem. The different backgrounds of society, culture, and history, especially those countries using English as their mother tongue compared to Myanmar outline great social and cultural differences between the East and the West. This conveys along with the differences in language priority, living habits, thinking style, and so on.

## 3. Listening Strategies

Cohen (2007) also stated that language learning strategies are classified into several categories; strategies for learning and use, strategies according to skill area, strategies based on function. It means that language learners need to know what sorts of learning strategies are required in their learning process, what particular strategies are required in learning different skills, and what the function of using the strategies is. Then, Graham and Vanderplank (2011) described the characteristics of the strategies, as follow; (a) meta-cognitive strategies consist of directed attention, selective attention, planning, monitoring, and evaluation; (b) cognitive strategies include listening for gist and detail, inference, prediction, visualization,

summarizing, and note-taking; (c) Social/affective strategies, such as cooperation. It is metacognitive strategies that refer to ways to make students understand the way they learn. The strategies are planning, monitoring, and evaluation. On the other hand, cognitive strategies instruction develops the thinking skills that will make students strategic, flexible learners. This strategy is commonly done by many people, such as taking a note to remember information. For some students, the strategies need to be explicitly taught, so they will be able to consciously think. Besides that, they also need to have the opportunity or training to practice the strategies. So, the strategies can be a powerful tool to enhance their success in learning. Moreover, effective strategies are learning strategies concerned with managing emotions, both negative and positive. According to Liu (2006), this type of strategy involves interaction with another person in a conversation or taking control of one's emotions. Liu (2006) also stated that skilled learners show better emotional control and have good skills in using strategies, compared to poor-skilled listeners who pretend to show their anxiety when facing problems in communication.

## 4. Statement of the Problem

While the number of Myanmar students is increasing yearly in the higher education institution in Myanmar, it is needed to survey Myanmar students' level of ELC listening comprehension and speaking proficiency. In pursuit of this objective, it is crucial that the self-learning approach was emphasized as an important skill in language learning. Over the years, Myanmar students are not always had sufficient English communicative competence. This is particularly true when students did not improve significantly in their ELC proficiency. Therefore, the study needs to be conducted in search of more effective English instruction in this regard, and one of the research methods is to investigate students' perceptions regarding their ELC proficiency.

## Research Objectives

According to university English curriculum requirements, students' abilities of independent learning should be developed and enhanced, especially for speaking and listening. ELC should be added with the developing of the

development of English teaching and learning. Therefore, the students' listening comprehension ability should be made valued gradually in the English teaching of higher education; nevertheless, exam orientated education and ELC teaching are still in one set. Specifically, the following research objectives guided the study:

1. To explore the English Listening Comprehension (ELC) problems faced by the students in Myanmar
2. To investigate the ELC strategies used by the students in Myanmar

## Methodology

In order to carry out the research and collect data, the participants are invited to take the questionnaire and interview time. The initial preparation has been done within two weeks. The main methods in data collection are questionnaires and interview surveys. All the trivial notes, audio, and video recording have been transferred for analysis, interpretation, and presentation.

### 1. Population and Samples

For this study, 127 students from selected Myanmar universities who have different ELC learning experiences and English grades participated.

### 2. Instrument(s) and Procedures

A questionnaire was distributed to the students with two main objectives; find out the students' familiarity with the strategies, and what strategies are frequently applied by the students to investigate the students' listening strategies. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews have been also used as information-gathering techniques. The semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions, and all conversation is guided by research questions to explore in-depth. The interview can be either scheduled or unscheduled and could be carried out in a formal or informal setting.

*3. Data Collection*

Since the research focuses on the English Listening Comprehension (ELC) problems faced by the Myanmar students and self-learning strategies, the location of data collection is selected outside of the classroom. Therefore, this study will around the two key research questions, what are the ELC problems faced by the students? and what are the ELC strategies used by the students from Myanmar?

*4. Data Analysis*

The purpose of data analysis is to reduce the large quantities of data to manageable, intelligible units and differentiate relationships among these units. After the data collection procedure has been done, all the information will be transcribed, typed, and translated for further explanation and analysis. For the description and interpretation of the singularity, data reduction is necessary for this research.

## Results

The data based on the four themes of English Listening Comprehension (ELC): accent, unfamiliar vocabulary and length and speed of listening, and students' cultural background knowledge are addressed in turn with participants. The listening problems based on the interviewee information are identified. It will then be explained as follows.

*1. Problems in Listening*

There are some factors that increase learners' listening comprehension problems such as accent, restricted vocabulary, length and speed of listening, and students' cultural background knowledge. Some barriers to the effective listening comprehension process have been analyzed in the following table.

Table 1

*Participants' Responses on the Three Themes of English Listening Comprehension (ELC): Accent, Unfamiliar Vocabulary and Length and Speed of Listening (n=127)*

| SN | Themes of ELC | | Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Accent | Interviewee 1 | The speaker's accent is one of the most significant factors that affect listener comprehension. Regional accents can impact the spoken message that is understood by the listeners and familiar accents are easier to understand than unfamiliar accents. |
| | | Interviewee 2 | Unfamiliar accents both native and non-native can cause serious problems in listening comprehension and familiarity with an accent helps learners' listening comprehension. |
| | | Interviewee 3 | Regional accents can impact the spoken message that is understood by the listeners and familiar accents are easier to understand than unfamiliar accents. |
| | | Interviewee 4 | When listeners hear an unfamiliar accent such as Indian English for the first time after studying only American English will encounter critical difficulties in listening. This will certainly interrupt the whole listening comprehension process and at the same time, an unfamiliar accent makes comprehension impossible for the listeners. |
| | | Interviewee 5 | Accent is one of the most difficult skills to master as a language learner. Even if you can pronounce most words correctly in your target language, it's still not easy to sound natural or 'native-like' when you speak. . |

Table 1 (Continued)

| SN | Themes of ELC | | Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Unfamiliar Vocabulary | Interviewee 1 | A lot of words have more than one meaning and if they are not used appropriately in their appropriate contexts with which students will get confused. |
| | | Interviewee 2 | Some listeners do not have high vocabulary knowledge. They may face an unfamiliar word that can stop them and thinking about the meaning of that word for a while and missing the next part of the speech. |
| | | Interviewee 3 | I think the main reason is vocabulary and experience, sometimes the experience compensates for the inadequate of vocabulary. |
| | | Interviewee 4 | Some words cannot be understood such as political, science, and new technology terms. |
| | | Interviewee 5 | I have memorized a lot of vocabulary but forgot as time pass as not using or practicing it. |
| 3 | Length and Speed of Listening | Interviewee 1 | If the speakers speak too fast students may have serious problems understanding L2 words. |
| | | Interviewee 2 | The biggest problem with listening comprehension is that listeners are not able to control how quickly speakers talk. They cannot control the speed of speech. Listeners cannot have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them. |
| | | Interviewee 3 | Unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, and the length of the spoken passages are the most important factors that cause problems for learners' listening comprehension. |

Table 1 (Continued)

| SN | Themes of ELC | | Responses |
|----|---------------|--|-----------|
| | | Interviewee 4 | Teachers decide what and when to repeat listening texts and it is very difficult for teachers to know whether or not their learners understood what they have heard. |
| | | Interviewee 5 | When I started listening at a faster speed, I observed that my brain had to catch up. I had to pause and rewind if I was multi-tasking only to realize the speed listening is no longer helping. For fiction or fun listening, it's fine to do multi-tasking, but when I was consuming educational content, multitasking wasn't possible. |
| 4 | Students' cultural background knowledge | Interviewee 1 | Sometimes I cannot understand the meaning of the content, even if l known every vocabulary in the listening material. |
| | | Interviewee 2 | As you teach content areas to ELLs of diverse backgrounds, you may find that they struggle to grasp the content, and that they approach the content from very different perspectives. Drawing on your students' background knowledge and experiences, can be an effective way to bridge those gaps and to make the content more accessible. |
| | | Interviewee 3 | Students need to connect with literature on three basic levels: text to text, text to self, and self to the world. All students bring something to the classroom. Becoming familiar with the backgrounds and/or prior knowledge of ELL students allows a teacher to engage students in literacy experiences that connect with their diverse backgrounds, thereby building on this knowledge. |

Table 1 (Continued)

| SN | Themes of ELC | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| | Interviewee 4 | Listeners need to attempt to make sense of information at the same time they are internalizing that information. There is little time for listeners to reflect upon the information and have opportunities to ask for repetition. Listeners can sometimes comprehend the surface meaning of a passage but they can have substantial problems in understanding the whole meaning of a passage unless they are familiar with it. |
| | Interviewee 5 | Before jumping into strategies, you can use to access students' existing background knowledge, it's important to look at the big picture. Background knowledge is the foundation on which learning happens. In some cases, you may need to build the background knowledge that enables ELLs to comprehend and access grade-level content. |

Bloomfield et al. (2010) expressed that one of the serious problems of listening comprehension is related to the pronunciation of words that is different from the way they appear in imitation. Due to the fact that the spoken language differs from the form of the written language, the recognition of words that make the oral speech can create some difficulties for students. One of the participants in the interview told that regional accents can impact the spoken message that is understood by the listeners and familiar accents are easier to understand than unfamiliar accents. The other mentioned a lot of problems in listening activities like unknown vocabularies, unfamiliar topics, fast speech rate, and unfamiliar accents. Prosodic features of the spoken language like where the stress falls, weak forms and strong forms of words, and intonation also impact the comprehension of oral text. Second, participants do not have high

vocabulary knowledge. Speakers may select words that listeners do not know them. Listeners may face an unfamiliar word which can stop them and thinking about the meaning of that word for a while and missing the next part of the speech. In this situation, participants are not able to control the speed of speakers and this can create critical problems with listening comprehension. Third, listeners cannot control the speed of speech. Listeners cannot have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them. For students, they cannot replay a recording section. Finally, listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Mutual knowledge and familiar texts can make communication easier for listeners. They can sometimes comprehend the surface meaning of a passage but they can have substantial problems in understanding the whole meaning of a passage unless they are familiar with it. It is not very easy for listeners to concentrate on the listening text. The shortest break in attention sometimes can prevent comprehension. If the listening passage is interesting for listeners, concentration will be easy for them.

## 2. Listening Strategies

To investigate the students' listening strategies, a questionnaire was distributed to the students with two main objectives; find out the students' familiarity with the strategies, and what strategies are frequently applied by the students. The following information presents about three listening strategies applied by the students in their listening activities:

Table 2a

*Listening Strategies Applied by the Students in their Listening Activities (n=127)*

| SN | Type of Strategy | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|------------------|--------------------|------|-----|------|
| | | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 1 | Meta-cognitive | Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen. | 1.92 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 2 | Cognitive | I translate in my head as I listen. | 2.36 | 0.73 | Frequent |

Table 2a (Continued)

| SN | Type of Strategy | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 1 | Meta-cognitive | Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen. | 1.92 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 2 | Cognitive | I translate in my head as I listen. | 2.36 | 0.73 | Frequent |
| 3 | Cognitive | Before listening, I make predictions about the listening material based on the title. | 1.71 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 4 | Meta-cognitive | I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding. | 2.04 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 5 | Cognitive | I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I do not understand. | 2.04 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 6 | Meta-cognitive | When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away. | 2.11 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 7 | Cognitive | As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic. | 1.65 | 0.74 | Never |
| 8 | Social/affective | As I listen, I encourage myself through positive self-talk. | 1.58 | 0.78 | Never |
| 9 | Meta-cognitive | When there is something, I do not understand, I pursue trying to compensate for it. | 1.75 | 0.79 | Sometimes |

Table 2a (Continued)

| SN | Type of Strategy | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 10 | Cognitive | I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand. | 2.09 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 11 | Meta-cognitive | Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to. | 1.58 | 0.75 | Never |
| 12 | Cognitive | I use my knowledge of the text organization to understand the text. | 1.90 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 13 | Meta-cognitive | I try to get back on track when I lose concentration. | 1.77 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 14 | Cognitive | Before listening, I try to predict the words I am likely to hear based on the title. | 1.61 | 0.73 | Never |
| 15 | Cognitive | As listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that is not correct. | 1.71 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 16 | Meta-cognitive | I identify my problems in listening and work on solving them. | 1.35 | 0.67 | Never |
| 17 | Meta-cognitive | After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time. | 1.58 | 0.76 | Never |
| 18 | Cognitive | After listening, I make a mental summary of what I have listened to. | 1.90 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 19 | Meta-cognitive | When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening. | 1.22 | 0.52 | Never |

Table 2a (Continued)

| SN | Type of Strategy | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|------------------|--------------------|------|-----|-------|
| | | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 20 | Cognitive | I use the main idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I do not understand. | 1.71 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 21 | Meta-cognitive | I skip over words that I do not understand so that I do not miss what is said next. | 1.94 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 22 | Cognitive | As I listen, I try to think in English without having to translate into my own language. | 1.48 | 0.70 | Never |
| 23 | Cognitive | When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have. | 1.61 | 0.71 | Never |
| 24 | Meta-cognitive | As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension. | 1.93 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 25 | Meta-cognitive | After listening, I reflect on the listening task with my classmates. | 1.69 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| 26 | Cognitive | I use pronunciation aspects like stress and intonation to enhance my understanding. | 1.37 | 0.67 | Never |
| 27 | Meta-cognitive | Before listening, I concentrate my mind on the listening task and keep away things that distract attention. | 1.52 | 0.71 | Never |

Table 2a (Continued)

| SN | Type of Strategy | List of Statements | Responses | | Scale |
|----|------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| | | | Mean | SD | |
| 28 | Meta-cognitive | I listen to what is said without paying much attention to every new word. | 1.75 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 29 | Cognitive | As I listen, I try to predict incoming content using the information being delivered. | 1.67 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| 30 | Meta-cognitive | As I listen, I repeat important words mentally. | 1.55 | 0.71 | Never |
| 31 | Cognitive | I picture the setting of the conversation to understand what the speakers are talking about. | 1.81 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 32 | Social/affective | I talk to my teacher and classmates about how to be a better listener of English. | 1.27 | 0.56 | Never |
| | Average | | 1.72 | 0.79 | Sometimes |

*Note*. 1.00-1.66= Never, 1.67-2.32= Sometimes, 2.33-3.00= Frequent.

Table 2a illustrates the strategies used by the learners. Most of them applied the strategies accounted to "sometimes" and "never".

Graham and Vanderplank (2011) described the characteristics of the strategies. According to them, cognitive strategies include listening for gist and detail, inference, prediction, visualization, summarizing, and note-taking. Cognitive strategies applied by the students in their listening activities have been investigated in the following table.

Table 2b

*Cognitive Strategies Applied by the Students in their Listening Activities (n=127)*

| SN | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 1 | I translate in my head as I listen. | 2.36 | 0.73 | Frequent |
| 2 | Before listening, I make predictions about the listening material based on the title. | 1.71 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 3 | I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I do not understand. | 2.04 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 4 | As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic. | 1.65 | 0.74 | Never |
| 5 | I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand. | 2.09 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 6 | I use my knowledge of the text organization to understand the text. | 1.90 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 7 | Before listening, I try to predict the words I am likely to hear based on the title. | 1.61 | 0.73 | Never |
| 8 | As listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that is not correct. | 1.71 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 9 | After listening, I make a mental summary of what I have listened to. | 1.90 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 10 | I use the main idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I do not understand. | 1.71 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 11 | As I listen, I try to think in English without having to translate it into my own language. | 1.48 | 0.70 | Never |
| 12 | When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have. | 1.61 | 0.71 | Never |

Table 2b (Continued)

| SN | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|--------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 13 | I use pronunciation aspects like stress and intonation to enhance my understanding. | 1.37 | 0.67 | Never |
| 14 | As I listen, I try to predict incoming content using the information being delivered. | 1.67 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| 15 | I picture the setting of the conversation to understand what the speakers are talking about. | 1.81 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| | Average | 1.77 | 0.79 | Sometimes |

*Note*. 1.00-1.66= Never, 1.67-2.32= Sometimes, 2.33-3.00= Frequent.

According to Table 2b, student participants used cognitive strategies sometimes that include listening for gist and detail, inference, prediction, visualization, summarizing, and note-taking (Mean=1.77). On the other hand, cognitive strategies instruction develops the thinking skills that will make students strategic, flexible learners. This strategy is commonly done in taking a note to remember information. If the strategies need to be explicitly taught for some students, they will be able to consciously think. Besides that, they also need to have opportunities or training to practice the strategies. Thus, the strategies can be a powerful tool to enhance their success in learning.

Table 2c states the use of meta-cognitive strategies applied by the students which consist of directed attention, selective attention, planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Table 2c

*Meta-Cognitive Strategies Applied by the Students in their Listening Activities (n=127)*

| SN | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 1 | Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen. | 1.92 | 0.80 | Sometimes |
| 2 | I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding. | 2.04 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 3 | When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away. | 2.11 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 4 | When there is something, I do not understand, I pursue trying to compensate for it. | 1.75 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 5 | Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to. | 1.58 | 0.75 | Never |
| 6 | I try to get back on track when I lose concentration. | 1.77 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 7 | I identify my problems in listening and work on solving them. | 1.35 | 0.67 | Never |
| 8 | I identify my problems in listening and work on solving them. | 1.35 | 0.67 | Never |
| 9 | After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time. | 1.58 | 0.76 | Never |
| 10 | When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening. | 1.22 | 0.52 | Never |
| 11 | I skip over words that I do not understand so that I do not miss what is said next. | 1.94 | 0.77 | Sometimes |
| 12 | As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension. | 1.93 | 0.78 | Sometimes |

Table 2c (Continued)

| SN | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|--------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
|    |                    | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 13 | After listening, I reflect on the listening task with my classmates. | 1.69 | 0.74 | Sometimes |
| 14 | Before listening, I concentrate my mind on the listening task and keep away things that distract attention. | 1.52 | 0.71 | Never |
| 15 | I listen to what is said without paying much attention to every new word. | 1.75 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 16 | As I listen, I repeat important words mentally. | 1.55 | 0.71 | Never |
|    | Average | 1.71 | 0.78 | Sometimes |

*Note*. 1.00-1.66= Never, 1.67-2.32= Sometimes, 2.33-3.00= Frequent.

Metacognitive strategies refer to ways to make students understand the way they learn. The strategies can positively impact the students by guiding them to develop an appropriate way of learning. The strategies consist of planning, monitoring, and evaluation. According to Table 2c, student participants sometimes used Meta-cognitive strategies (Mean=1.71). This strategy can positively impact the students by guiding them to develop an appropriate way of learning.

Social/affective strategies applied by the students have been mentioned in Table 2d. According to Liu (2006), this type of strategy involves interaction with another person in a conversation or taking control of one's emotions.

Table 2d

*Social/Affective Strategies Applied by the Students in their Listening Activities (n=127)*

| SN | List of Statements | Responses | | |
|----|--------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
|    |                    | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 8 | As I listen, I encourage myself through positive self-talk. | 1.58 | 0.78 | Never |
| 32 | I talk to my teacher and classmates about how to be a better listener of English. | 1.27 | 0.56 | Never |
|    | Average | 1.43 | 0.70 | Never |

*Note*. 1.00-1.66= Never, 1.67-2.32= Sometimes, 2.33-3.00= Frequent.

According to Table 2d, student participants never used Social/affective strategies (Mean=1.43). Affective strategies are learning strategies concerned with managing emotions, both negative and positive.

Liu (2008) stated that skilled learners show better control and have good skill in using strategies, compared to poor-skilled listeners who pretend to show their apprehension when facing problems in communication. Listening strategies applied by the student participants in their listening activities were shown in Table 2e.

Table 2e

*Listening Strategies Applied by the Student Participants in their Listening Activities (n=127)*

| SN | Type of Strategy | Responses | | |
|----|------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
|    |                  | Mean | SD | Scale |
| 1 | Cognitive | 1.77 | 0.79 | Sometimes |
| 2 | Meta-cognitive | 1.71 | 0.78 | Sometimes |
| 3 | Social/affective | 1.43 | 0.70 | Never |

*Note*. 1.00-1.66=Never, 1.67-2.32=Sometimes, 2.33-3.00=Frequent.

According to Table 2e, student participants used cognitive strategies that include listening for gist and detail, inference, prediction, visualization, summarizing, and note-taking (Mean=1.77). On the other hand, cognitive strategies instruction develops the thinking skills that will make students strategic, flexible learners. The strategy like taking a note to remember information is commonly done by many people. Besides that, they also need to have opportunities or training to practice the strategies. So the strategies can be powerful tools to enhance their success in learning. They also applied meta-cognitive strategies which consist of directed attention, selective attention, planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Mean=1.71). By using metacognitive strategies, students understand the way they learn. However, students never use social/affective strategies, such as cooperation (Mean=1.43). Social/affective strategies are learning strategies concerned with managing emotions, both negative and positive. According to Liu (2006), this type of strategy involves interaction with another person in a conversation or taking control of one's emotions.

## Discussion

This research provided awareness for students from Myanmar in their ELC learning. Through this in-depth investigation which included two aspects of ELC problems and strategies, it allowed the students to see clearly the problems they faced in the ELC learning. Based on the responses of the students, at least seven ELC strategies were mentioned and suggested to develop students' comprehension in ELC. Thus, it is clear that the appropriate use of the learning strategies has the potential for expressively improving students from Myanmar in ELC lessons. This is in line with the discussions of the research "Factors Affecting Learning Environment of English Language Learners at Universities". It highlights that the teachers should be friendly and supportive to students, teachers, and to university authorities. If the teachers are motivated and positive, they will have a beneficial impact on their students as well. It is important for the teachers to understand this cause and effect in order to understand how to organize their classroom to create a better learning environment. The teacher still needs to improve and develop learning strategies for students to learn better and more

effectively in the light of new discoveries in terms of teaching and learning English, both as a foreign and second language.

## 1. Problem of Different Accent

Firstly, the accent of the speakers in the listening materials become a barrier for the students from Myanmar as they could not understand and found it difficult to follow the lesson due to the different accents in English speaking. Moreover, the students from Myanmar tend to translate every single word or sentence during the listening practice. This situation is worse when the students lose their direction to follow the lesson but they are trying to do the translation. Based on the response from the interview, the students cannot find the keywords accurately and their attending to do the translation for better understanding was effortless. In comparison with the research "English Communication Problems in Speaking and Listening of Hotel Staffs in Buriram", it has been found that the staff at Amari Buriram United had listening problems at a moderate level. The most problems in listening were that the staffs did understand English sentences that foreign guests speak complicatedly, followed by the staffs can't understand the accents of foreign guests and the staffs cannot catch when foreign guests speak English too fast respectively. The result of the research was that because of the lacking of listening skills. This research also found that the learning habit of the students from Myanmar was the big problem. In this case, students were contended to do the translation during listening even though it is effortless until it develops in themselves, a kind of learning habit which is difficult to change.

## 2. Lack of Vocabulary

From the participants' answers, it was identified that the main problem is vocabulary. Even though student from Myanmar starts learning English from primary school, their English is still not passable for listening comprehension. Thus, even students learned English for more than ten years from primary school until high school; they were unwilling to use it in their daily living. They may read and understand it, but their response in listening comprehension is much slower than reading comprehension. Another cause

is that the participants were not prepared with the new terminology English, especially in the field of politics, science, and new technology.

## 3. Length and Speed of Listening

Participants are not able to control the speed of speakers and this can create critical problems with listening comprehension. The level of students can have a significant role when they listen to long parts and keep all information in their mind. It is very difficult for lower-level students to listen more than three minutes long and complete the listening tasks. In fact, short listening passages make easy listening comprehension for learners and reduce their weariness. Listeners cannot not only control the speed of speech but also have words repeated and this can cause critical difficulties for them.

## 4. Lack of Background Knowledge

As there is a lack of background knowledge in ELC, researchers, and educators from Myanmar suggested teaching English listening to be reformed in 2008. The researcher understood that the lack of background knowledge is a persistent problem for Myanmar students. For some Myanmar students who study English, they found difficulty in understanding the learning context even though they know the meaning of every single word. The lack of adequate background knowledge and vocabulary is the report of all of the participants during the process of ELC. In Myanmar Education System, the students were provided with vocabulary and background knowledge merely from the textbook and the knowledge of the English language was very limited. As a result, students without background knowledge of the learning content fail to comprehend the meaning of the listening materials. Therefore, this study found that students from Myanmar need to acquire some basic knowledge of the learning materials and enrich their English vocabulary as an important factor to adoptive their understanding of ESL. The similarity found in the research "A Review of Strategies for Teaching English Listening Comprehension: Vietnamese Context" by Oanh and Pinyonatthagarn (2020). Some students find it difficult to do some exercises and listening tasks. To overcome these difficulties, teachers should help their students to develop the necessary

skills of listening comprehension like listening for understanding particular information, listening for the main ideas, explanation, and inference, listening for intended meaning through providing different tasks and activities at different levels.

## Recommendations

In light of the above findings and discussions, the ELC problem and strategies are found in English learning as a foreign language. There is a need for further research not only on the issue of students' self-learning but also other various problems and strategies. Based on this research, there are ELC problems in students' self-learning and strategies of ELC learning. In short, this study had shown that Myanmar students learning ELC faced listening problems that need to be addressed, and also, they have adopted certain self-learning strategies. Therefore, this study will provide useful guidelines for instructors to assist these students so that the learning of ELC will be effective, efficient, and enjoyable. In order to effectively develop ELC listening skills among the students from Myanmar, further research is needed to determine how students learn ELC listening skills.

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