JOURNAL OF ELT AND EDUCATION
ISSN: 2618-1290 (Print), 2663-1482 (Online), Volume 4, Issue 2, June 2021, Page: 43-49
Published by, Hello-Teen Society & Center for Academic Research and Development (CARD)

Received: 11/05/2021 Accepted: 17/06/2021 Published: 18/06/2021

Metalinguistic Feedback and Metacognitive Scaffolding among Undergraduate Students to Improve Active Listening Skills

Research Paper

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[**Citation:** Uddin, M. K. (2021). Metalinguistic Feedback and Metacognitive Scaffolding among Undergraduate Students to Improve Active Listening Skills. *Journal of ELT and Education*, 4(2): 43-49.]

Abstract

This paper examines the need for Active Listening Skills (ALS) and applying Metalinguistic Feedback (MF) and Metacognitive Scaffolding (MS) for the English department students of Bangladesh. Even after using the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the teachers cannot improve the students' ALS and enhance communication skills significantly. Consequently, despite studying English as a major subject for four years, the students of Bangladesh fail to obtain the ability to connect the people across the world properly. Hence, it is imperative to foster ALS of the Bangladeshi students immediately. However, MF focuses on the learners' language use errors and supports them in an inductive approach. Besides, it equips with appropriate assessment tasks to detect the learning progress. Alternatively, MS provides the teacher with different classroom activities and assessment tasks. Therefore, the current study aims to prepare a lesson plan by infusing MF and MS in English department classrooms to improve ALS. The research is qualitative in design and collected secondary data from online sources. The researcher explored literature and found that MF and MS have immense potential to boost English department students' ALS.

Keywords: ALS, MF, MS, communication skills, assessment tasks

1. Introduction

Active Listening Skills (ALS) in English is a technique for communicating with foreigners effectively. It stresses the importance of verbal and nonverbal behaviors in demonstrating concentration, understanding, responsiveness, and empathy and facilitating constant interrelation of thoughts and feelings and assisting in preserving relationships (Bodie, Vickery, Cannava & Jones, 2015). ALS is significant for students, predominantly undergraduate college students, to compete in the global job market. To strengthen ALS, the researcher reviewed enough literature and found consistent strategies with MF and MS to help the English department students improve their ALS.

Nevertheless, listening skills are the most undervalued skills in Bangladesh, out of the four language skills (Rabbi, Zakaria & Tonmoy, 2018). Furthermore, even though most universities require students to take mandatory courses in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, Akter (2019) discovered that the teachers do not focus on the students' listening skills properly at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Therefore, the teachers should emphasize improving their students' listening skills, more importantly ALS. Due to the failure of teacher-centred learning or some other reasons, the students droop meeting the global communication. Similarly, whether for incompetence or

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inexperience, most Bangladeshi EFL teachers are not concerned about making the learners qualified to compete with the other world (Rahman & Moslehuddin, 2021) by increasing the students' ALS in English. Reasonably, the researcher finds interest to explore different theories for understanding sufficient insight regarding MF and MS to develop the students' ALS. He has achieved some similar comprehensions between MF and MS that can simultaneously benefit him in applying them in the ALS classroom.

Therefore, MF and MS have an essential place in the paper. MF is a means of removing the students' errors and showing them a path of self-correction. On the other hand, MS instructs the students with different temporary tasks to accelerate the learning activities. Consequently, the literature review mainly introduces MF and MS in detail for designing the lesson plan to boost ALS of the English department students.

2. Objectives

The general objective of the current study is to introduce MF and MS teaching strategies for implementing them in the undergraduate level English department of Bangladeshi colleges. By introducing the procedure, the teacher and the students will develop a better pedagogical environment where both the instructor and the students will remain active in learning activities. However, the paper also sets specific objectives to change the conventional teaching methods to improve students' ALS in English and justify the outcome by following proper assessment tasks while applying MF and MS in the lesson plan.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Metalinguistic Feedback (MF)

MF is a kind of Corrective Feedback, an idea of cognitivist learning theory. It helps the students develop their language skills through a variety of exercises that the teacher assigns. Besides, it stresses a target language's pronunciation, grammar, and communication. This type of feedback offers observations or brief analyses of a student's "incorrect utterance of a language without explicitly presenting the correct form" (Fu & Nassaji, 2016). According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), MF involves remarks, details, or questions about the well-formedness of the student's utterance without specifying the kind. Thus, it provides implicit clarity in methods for resolving problems without deliberately addressing the proper errors. Al-Alwan, Asassfeh, and Al-Shboul (2013) listed three staged strategies of MF for improving students' listening skills:

Planning Stage: Identifying students' perspectives on active listening in English from a YouTube video/audio/visual picture. That is, the students can hear and remember a list of terms used in everyday communication.

Monitoring Stage: The teachers will rely on remarks, questions, and explanations to provide details. However, they will encourage students to work in pairs or groups instead of individual work. Examples:

a) *Remarks*: Proving comment to remove errors.
   Student: Oh, what a nice bird!
   Teacher: Better to show your feelings.
   Student: Oh! What a NICE Bird!
b) *Questions*: Asking something to correct the proper words/ grammar.
   Student: Tagore was a famous bird.
   Teacher: What is the difference between a bard and a bird?
   Student: Oh, sorry. Bard.
c) *Explanation*: Explaining the situation to help the students find errors and solve them.
   Student: Hello, 'can you come with me?
   Teacher: 'Can' refers to ability while 'could' refers to polite request to help.
   Student: Could you come..?

Assessment Stage: Using questions to estimate the progress of ALS in English as a method of formative assessment. The questions, however, will determine Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

Moreover, the assessment task largely depends on the question patterns. According to new research (Writing Successful Exam and Quiz Questions, 2016), three guiding principles/ stages of writing effective examination question are 'memorization', utilization, and application. '*Memorization*' asks for basic information while '*Utilization*' justifies the learners' comparison-contrast or identifying ability, and finally '*Application*' measures their understanding innovating aptitude.

Furthermore, Active Listening Rubric (n.d.) configured a 'Rubric' for assessment tasks explaining the six categories with four scales. It mentioned '*Body Position/Eyes, Hands, summarize what the speaker is saying, Make Connections/Ask Questions, Assignment information and Outcome*' categories and divided the scale as '*Novice, Nearing Proficiency, Proficient and Advanced*.' However, for the formative classroom assessment, the researcher summarized the rubric as below:

Table: 1.1 Active Listening Rubric

Category	Novice (0-1)	Nearing Proficiency 2	Proficient 3	Advanced 4
Listening abilities	Remembering but no understanding, or evaluating or application and creating	Remembering and understanding but no evaluating or applying or creating	Remembering, understanding evaluating, applying but no creating	Remembering, understanding evaluating, applying, and creating
Use of Non-verbal signs	No eye and body movement/ gesture	Eye movement but no gesture	No eye movement but gesture of body	Eye movement, and body movement/gesture
Use of Verbal Sign	No exclamation, integration, clarification, and re-enforcing	exclamation, integration but no clarification and re-enforcing	exclamation, integration, clarification but no re-enforcing	exclamation, integration, clarification, and re-enforcing

3.2. Metacognitive Scaffolding (MS)

MS is a kind of scaffolding, an idea taken from constructivist learning theory. MS aids problem solving by supporting metacognitive tasks (An & Cao, 2014). Lijuan (2015) defined metacognitive scaffolding as a process of scaffolding students' metacognition, which entails combining students' procedural expertise with a set of preparing, tracking, and assessing learning strategies. However, Flavell (1987) distinguished two types of MS: metacognitive experience and metacognitive regulation. He provided sufficient knowledge, which I believe will allow me to devise strategies for achieving my objectives.

Metacognitive Knowledge: It refers to the students' ideas, thoughts, and intuitions about their own learning and thinking. Flavell explained three kinds of metacognitive knowledge:

a) *Awareness of knowledge*: Knowing what someone already knows, what he/she does not know, and what he/she would like to learn. It may also imply being aware of what other people know about a topic. To put it another way, it can evaluate a student's previous knowledge of ALS in English.
b) *Awareness of thinking*: Comprehending cognitive tasks and the conditions that lead to complete them. Information awareness determines what tasks and strategies the teacher should use to achieve learning objectives by allowing individual task for individual work, pair work, and group work for ALS practice in English.
c) *Awareness of thinking strategies*: Trying to figure out how to guide learning. It means that if one of the students makes a mistake, the teacher would assist them in correcting error. Types of errors will indicate different learning guidelines in an ALS classroom.

Metacognitive Regulation: Managing the learning process. It entails solving problems systematically, planning, setting priorities, organizing proposals, and deciding what is known and

unknown. It also involves the ability to teach others and articulate one's thought process. However, Brown et al. (1983) expanded the metacognitive regulation of Falvell into three ways to guide the learning tasks:

a) *Planning approaches to tasks*: Approaches to projects preparation. It is a tool for identifying the problem, deciding on solutions, organizing our thoughts, and predicting outcomes. As a result, preparations would help the students recognize their ALS issues, choose activities, and develop their English ALS.
b) *Monitoring activities during learning*: It observes and checks the learning events that takes place. It is the method of evaluating, revising, and evaluating the effectiveness of our strategies. Therefore, a teacher can observe the students' activities, assess their performance, and, if necessary, adjust any ALS task.
c) *Checking outcomes:* Evaluating the teaching method's outcome. It is a way of comparing performance to specific quality and effectiveness of benchmarks. However, the researcher has used a rubric to evaluate the students' ALS progress.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted by using a qualitative design and secondary data. For collecting data, the researcher gathered sufficient information on cognitivism and constructivism learning theories. Then, from the two theories, he selected two ideas, namely corrective feedback, and scaffolding. Finally, he chose MF and MS from corrective feedback and scaffolding, respectively. However, the researcher avoided explaining cognitivism, constructivism, corrective feedback, and scaffolding, considering that it will unnecessarily increase the paper's length. On the other hand, he has provided the readers with sufficient information about MF and MS as those are the critical points of the theories in which the researcher found interest.

On the other hand, the researcher explored ALS principles and tried to design a lesson plan based on MF and MS. He followed Blooms Taxonomy for Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the lesson plan. Besides, he used Formative assessment tasks by applying Jed Sparks' questioning (Writing Successful Exam and Quiz Questions, 2016) to evaluate the progress of the ALS improvement. Finally, the researcher provided a theoretical analysis of the lesson plan in terms of the assessment tasks as a part of the discussion.

5. Findings and Discussion

Based on the above scholarly information, the researcher prepared a lesson plan to apply MF and MS to improve ALS. Different stages of the lesson plan include other principles of MF and MF by following Bloom's Taxonomy (2001). However, the section also discusses the findings in terms of assessment tasks and evaluate their significance.

5.1 The Lesson Plan Based on MF and MS

The researcher prepared the lesson plan as an example to apply MF and MS. However, the topic is derived from the 3rd Year (Hons) course of English under National University of Bangladesh. Based on the theoretical ideas, the researcher designed the following lesson plan for ALS.

Table: 1.2 Lesson Plan

Lesson Outline		
Subject: English (3rd Year, Hons)	**Topic**: Active Listening Skills in English **Duration of the Class**: 45 Minutes	**Course/ Class**: *Approaches and Methods of Language Teaching*
Learning Objective: At the end of the lesson, the students will be able to: ➢ identify what they know about active listening. ➢ separate verbal and non-verbal signs of active listening skills. ➢ create a conversation by using verbal and non-verbal signs.		

Lesson Steps		
Beginning: **(5 Minutes)**	**Stage one**: Hi! Today, I am going to teach you active listening skills along with verbal and non-verbal signs of ALS.	
Development **(37 Minutes)**	**Stage two:** I will play Heartlines's (2020) video clip of conversation between two persons in English for active listening English. Video URL: https://youtu.be/0nmJW_zExk0 Now, have an achievement test. **Stage three**: Now I will ask the students practice some active listening conversation in pair. Student 1: Hello, why are you shouting? (He does not show any anger/ boredom on face) Student 2: I am sorry. (Ashamed – eyes and head down) Myself: Show your tone/ feeling Student 1: Why are you shouting? (Eyebrows lowered and pulled closer together, head up) Now, justify yourself through self-assessment test. **Stage Four:** The students will enjoy the video for the second time and discuss what people do with hands, eyes, face and hands when they show different emotions. Group presentation 1: We've won the match. Hurrah! Our English department! Group 2: *(After listening-open arms, raised eyebrows, smiling face)* Really! What a good news! Let's dance. Ok, dear students. Now have some time and get ready for group-presentation assessment task.	**Formative assessment** *Achievement test:* individual work **Question:** *What do you know about active listening skills?* *Self-assessment test:* individual work **Question:** *What are the different positions of eyes to anger and shame?* *Group-presentation assessment task*: group work: **Question**: *Make a conversation on the death of a friend and respond with verbal and non-verbal signs.*
Ending **(3 Minutes)**	Before ending the class, I will review the assessment. Finally, I will end the class with thanks.	*Assessment result in Rubrics*

5.2. Theoretical discussion on the assessment tasks applied in the Lesson Plan

The researcher used three types of formative assessment tasks for the lesson plan: achievement task, self-assessment task, and group-presentation assessment task. The three assessment tasks will make an ALS rubric result, which will inform the teacher and the students about the strength and weakness of the learning outcome.

5.2.1. Achievement Test Task

The achievement test task in the lesson plan is formative and are used to test students' recall and comprehension abilities, with an emphasis on LOTS. The researcher asks the students to recognize their level of knowledge (Flavell, 1987) used in everyday communication. Bloom's taxonomy supports the tests of remembering (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

In the lesson plan, the achievement test question "What do you know about active listening skills?" focuses on the students' comprehension abilities (Writing Successful Exam and Quiz Questions, 2016) and find the problems of the students (Bransford, et. al., 1983). On the other hand, achievement activities assist in selecting remarks, questions, and explanations (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) in the 'Planning stage' as MF aims at improving (Al-Alwan, et. al., 2013) ALS in English. In addition, the researcher has applied proper solutions and revisions (An & Cao, 2014) for individual, pair, and group works of MS's 'Awareness of skills' and 'Planning approaches to tasks' (Brown, et. al., 1983) to promote ALS activities while ensuring adequate practice.

5.2.2. Self-assessment Test Tasks

A self-assessment test is a method for students to measure their own learning. It's a technique for discovering more about themselves by gathering information on their work-related beliefs, habits,

personality style, and aptitudes ("self-assessment can help you choose a career," n.d.). The researcher created the challenge for the students to estimate and find the error to solutions on their own. It will lead them to apply and analyze their learning about ALS in English. In addition, the self-assessment task will determine the peak of LOTS and the beginning of HOTS.

However, in the lesson plan's query, "What are the different positions of eyes to anger and shame?" strengthens students' comparing and categorizing abilities (Writing Successful Exam and Quiz Questions, 2016). At this phase, MF's Monitoring Stage' is used to eliminate their errors (Fu & Nassaji, 2016). On the other hand, the teacher uses MS's activities for 'Awareness of thought' and 'Monitoring activities while learning' (Bransford, et. al., 1983). However, the combination of self-assessment tasks, MF and MS will increase the students' applying and analyzing ability to master ALS in English.

5.2.3. Group-presentation assessment tasks

Group presentation assessment tasks aim to prepare students in groups to give an oral presentation on the subject. In addition, students are encouraged to convey the grading scheme critically through group evaluations. Each of the group member assesses the team's dynamics (Assessing Group Work, n.d.). However, those tasks justify the students and construct their learning for HOTS.

In the lesson plan, the students in groups are asked a question '*Make a conversation on the death of a friend and respond with verbal and non-verbal signs*' to create a mind map based on their audio listening to moderate their ALS (Bransford, et. al., 1983; Al-Alwan, et. al., 2013). Finally, the researcher has asked the students' non-verbal signs of ALS and asked the groups to answer with verbal and non-verbal signals for expressing feelings and emotions (Bodie, et al., 2015) in the context of ALS in English.

6. Conclusion

For improving active listening skills, metalinguistic feedback and metacognitive scaffolding can replace traditional teaching methods. Simultaneously, choice of proper assessment procedure supports the teachers to select suitable classwork and accelerate the learning environment. MF determines a learner's prior language experience to support the instructor in determining development activities. MS, on the other hand, assists the teacher in implementing MF activities in the classroom. In addition, while the MF discerns students' strengths and weaknesses in ALS, MS helps to eliminate ALS errors by various remarks, queries, and explanations. This opportunity enhances students' problem-solving abilities and foster ALS improvement in English.

Furthermore, MS encourages students to reconsider their perspectives to test ALS and recognize their limitations for future activities. As a result, MF and MS will assist an instructor in lesson planning and selecting assessment tasks to improve ALS of his students. However, the researcher recommends for further study on applying student-centered learning for enhancing ALS in English for non-English department students in Bangladesh.

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