THE TEACHING OF EFL LISTENING
IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT:
THE STATE OF THE ART

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Abstract: The status of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia necessitates the use of English native speakers' utterances as models of pronunciation and as standard of understanding messages in various contexts, be they academic or social. As recently English has developed as an international language that can be used as a means of communication between people from non-English speaking countries, the role of listening activities in the teaching of English cannot be neglected. This article highlights the importance of listening and reviews some of the issues in the research and teaching of EFL listening. It firstly presents a paradigm of the listening process, followed by a theoretical framework for teaching listening, especially in the broader context of English language teaching. It then discusses the teaching of and research on EFL listening in Indonesia. Finally, this article outlines some recommendations for more effective teaching of listening in EFL classrooms.

Key words: the teaching of EFL listening, discrete listening, integrated listening

Out of the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – listening is naturally considered as the primary skill in the acquisition of the native (first) language. A new-born baby will first listen to the voices and sounds in his/her environment in order to internalize linguistic input, before he/she speaks and learns to read and write. In the context of the teaching of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL), the determination of which language skills should be given priority usually depends on the purpose of the ESL/EFL instruction. In Indonesia, long before the establishment of the 2004 English

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curriculum, the primary goal of the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) was to equip students with abilities in reading English texts (Agustien, Anugerahwati, & Wachidah, 2004). With the introduction of the 2004 English Curriculum as well as the establishment of the Standard of Content (Depdiknas, 2006), EFL instruction is expected to meet the demand to master all the four language skills, and these four skills need to be taught in an integrated way.

In the broader context of ESL/EFL teaching, there seems to be a shift in regarding reading and listening in the field of language teaching, from viewing them as 'passive' skills to acknowledging that they are indeed complex processes. In reference to listening in particular, an emerging notion is that listening comprehension "may be the key fundamental skill that has not been adequately understood" (Morley, 1991: 81).

Previously, the development of techniques and materials for teaching the listening skill seemed to be neglected in language teaching methodology. So little was information concerning the importance of developing this skill in its own right. Generally, instructional language programs put forward the pragmatic skills – focusing on the development of reading, writing, and speaking competences. Such negligence might have been caused by the notion that listening is a passive skill and thus should not be taught (Call, 1985), it was also often assumed that listening skills could be acquired through exposure, but not really taught.

With the expansion of instructional frameworks featuring functional language and communicative approaches, listening began to be given special attention. Currently, listening seems unavoidable in ESL/EFL learning since learners often do listening more than speaking in the classroom. It is a necessary skill because it can essentially facilitate the development of learners' English proficiency. Skills in listening can facilitate learners to participate well in oral communication. This is because communication cannot take place successfully if the message is not understood.

This article reviews the practice of teaching listening in the Indonesian context as well as studies that have been reported in regard to teaching listening. Prior to the review, this article stretches theoretical understanding of listening process, followed by historical development of listening instruction.

LISTENING PROCESS

To have a better understanding of listening, we consider that it is impor-
tant to examine the listening process from the psychological theory. According
to Brown (2008), various listening inputs from outside world that go through
the human ears will be caught by the sensory memory. This information is
given attention and sent to short-term memory or the working memory. The
information in the short-term memory will be forgotten if it is not rehearsed.
Through rehearsal that can be done either through elaborative practice or
memorization, information can be sent through long-term memory in order to
be retained longer. The information-processing model of memory as explained
by Brown is called the "Three-Box Model of Memory." This model of memory
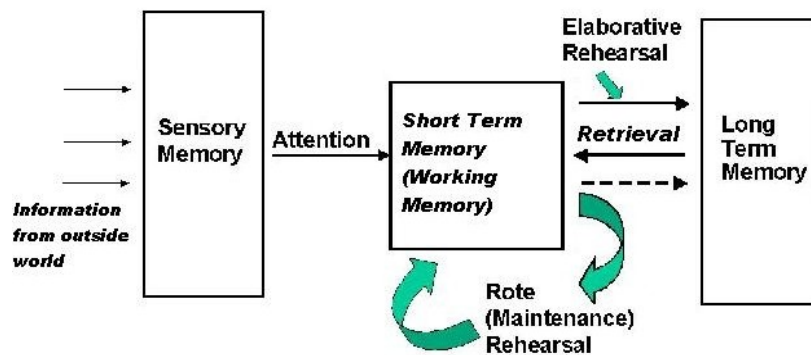is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Three-Box Model of Memory (Brown, 2008)

As Figure 1 shows, the listening process goes through five stages: sensory
memory, attention, short-term (working) memory, rehearsal, and long-term
memory. This five-stage model of listening seems similar to model proposed
by Klatzky (1980). According to Klatzky, listening process happens through
the stages of information registration, pattern recognition, information
registration, rehearsal, and information preservation. The two models of
listening process suggest the importance of attention (pattern recognition) and
rehearsal. This implies that in the teaching of listening students need to be

involved in the listening activities that require their undivided attention. More-over, opportunities should be given to students to listen to the listening mate-rials repeatedly so that they could recognize both the sounds of the spoken English and the message conveyed in the listening materials.

Based on the cognitive model of language processing, there are two views of listening: bottom-up and top-down (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Brown, 2006). In Anderson and Lynch's (1988) terms, bottom-up view sees "listeners as tape recorders", whereas top-down view considers "listeners as model buil-ders". The former suggests that listeners take in and store oral messages in much the same way as a tape-recorder, whereas the latter acknowledges the more active role that listeners play as they construct an interpretation of oral messages. As also indicated by Nunan (1991), the bottom-up view refers to the idea that listeners segment "the stream of speech into its constituent sounds, link this together to form words, chain the words together to form clauses and sentences, and so on" (p. 17). This processing model assumes that listening is a process of decoding the sounds in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaning-ful units to complex texts (Nunan, 2002). Comprehending speech in this view thus refers to the part of the process in which the understanding of incoming language goes through the sequential steps from sounds, into words, into grammatical relationship and lexical meaning, and so on (Morley, 1991: 87). As the process is linear, meaning is derived as the last step in the process.

In contrast, the top-down view allows listeners to bring knowledge from outside the text to the task of interpreting and comprehending the text itself. This view implies an important point that "meaning does not reside exclusively within the words" on the oral messages (Nunan, 1991: 18). The knowledge inside the head of listeners contributes to understanding. In other words, the processing of language information comes through an internal source, retrieved from a bank of prior knowledge and global expectations, that is, expectations about language as well as expectations about the "world" (Morley, 1991: 87). Therefore, as Brown (2006: 2) suggests, "One very important idea for teaching listening is that listening courses must make use of students' prior knowledge in order to improve listening comprehension". In other words, listening is an active process of constructing (or reconstructing) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sound as clues (Nunan, 2002).

Research, however, suggests that the way listening works is not exclu-sively bottom-up, nor is it to be merely top-down. Successful listeners seem to be those who can utilize both bottom-up and top-down knowledge, combining

the knowledge "outside the head" with that "inside the head". Under this view, listeners are considered as active players in constructing the oral text, employing various strategies in reconstructing messages. In other words, successful listening involves the integration of information encoded in the message itself with broader knowledge of the world (Nunan, 1991: 25). Chang and Read (2007) indicate that in the process of listening, listeners use two sources of information; one is systematic or linguistic information, and the other is schematic or non-linguistic information. Systemic knowledge involves phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, whereas schematic knowledge consists of relevant knowledge of the topic, memory, and individual experience.

In short, according to the theories of listening process, listening will be effective if attention is given to the information that is heard. In order to be remembered longer, the information needs to be rehearsed by any possible means (e.g., memorization and instruction). In so doing, both prior knowledge and the texts to be decoded play an important role in helping the listeners understand the information heard. One of the ways to provide rehearsal in listening is through instruction, an issue that will be discussed in the next session.

LISTENING INSTRUCTION

The above theoretical views of listening process have pedagogical implications for listening instruction. According to Morley (1991: 83), instructional procedures for listening comprehension can be divided into at least three different types: *listening as the primary focus*, *listening to repeat*, and *listening to understand.* Listening as the primary focus in the comprehension approach features two things: early attention to listening comprehension and a delay in oral production. This type of listening instruction, developed by researchers and teachers in the mid 1960s into the 1990s, puts emphasis on the extension of listening comprehension while delaying instruction or experience in speaking, reading, and writing.

Listening to repeat, also termed as imitating and memorizing, appears to be the predominant model of listening instruction in audio-lingual methodology. Listening is parallel to sound recognition/discrimination, patterning of spoken language as involved in memorization and habit formation, or pronunciation work. Learners are generally asked to listen, in order to hear a model, and in order to reproduce it. As a result, learners might have excellent pronun-

ciation, be able to repeat model dialogs, and be able to use memorized conversation patterns, but they might fail to participate in normal conversations with native speakers.

Listening instruction, which aims at developing listening to understand, refers to helping learners understand the meaning of spoken language in various situations. This means that listening is viewed as a skill in its own right, comprehending meaning as a communicative language function (Morley, 1991: 84).

The success of listening instruction is determined by a number of factors, one of which is the types of materials. Harmer (2007) classifies listening materials into two types: extensive and intensive listening materials. Extensive listening is carried out outside the classroom. Therefore, any material available outside the classroom (e.g., radio, TV, personal computer, the Internet) can be used for extensive listening. Some of the advantages of extensive listening materials are that students can use them based on their preference and they can use the materials as many times they want (Harmer, 2007: 303). Intensive listening materials (e.g., those stored in tapes, CD, or hard disk) are already available in the classroom or language laboratory. This type of materials can contain various types of texts (e.g., stories, news, and academic texts) and modes of presentation (e.g., unscripted or natural discourses and scripted or prepared materials). In intensive listening, the students usually listen to the materials at the same time and, if the students do not wear headsets, the voice quality might not be the same for all of the students.

Another factor which contributes to the success of listening instruction is the media used to present the listening materials. Language laboratory, for instance, can be used to provide language learners with various models of utterances spoken by native speakers and a means to record their own voices in order to be able to compare them with native speakers' voices (Brown, 2001). However, language laboratory, which has been used in language classrooms since 1950s, is gradually being replaced by language media center with its multimedia applications. In this center, language learners can use multimedia CD-ROMs and laser discs, access foreign language documents on the Internet, and communicate with their teachers or fellow classmates, using live chat programs (Kern & Warschauer, 2000: 1). One of the Internet resources which is getting more popular for listening practice is *podcast* (Ducate, 2009; Yienling, 2009). *Podcast*, composed from the words "iPod" and "broadcast," is a pro-gram for recording and operating listening materials from the Internet such

as music, news, TV broadcasts. The audio or video files for *podcast*s can be downloaded for free from various Internet sources (e.g. www.cnn.com and www.invisiblechildren.com). Students may be given a task to listen to some *podcast*s and asked to make listening journals regarding the cultural content or language used in the *podcast*s (Ducate, 2009). With guidance from the teacher, students can also produce their own materials to be broadcast, like a radio program over the Internet (Yien-ling, 2009).

With the abundant materials for listening instruction (either the extensive or intensive listening materials) and with the various types of media for learning to listen to messages in the target language (varying from language laboratory to the Internet materials), teachers have a lot of options to plan listening activities for their students. However, referring to Morley's (1991) types of instructional procedures for listening comprehension, teachers should gear the students toward communicative listening activities where they can listen to understand the messages and use the messages for academic as well as for communicative purposes.

LISTENING INSTRUCTION IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

In Indonesia, the teaching of EFL listening can be seen from various aspects. The first is how EFL listening is included as part of the curriculum of educational institutions. This, in particular, refers to the teaching of EFL listening either as a discrete or integrated language skill. The second is how listening activities are designed to improve students' listening ability. This concerns the development of various teaching and listening techniques that have been applied in English classrooms or in English language laboratories. The third is what types of language teaching media are used to teach EFL listening. The types of media may vary from the use of tape or CD players in the classroom to the use of multi-media language laboratory. This section is devoted to the discussion of these issues.

EFL Listening in the Curriculum

In terms of its status as a curricular component, EFL listening can be taught discretely as a particular course, especially, in English departments of universities and it has certain course names such as *Listening* or *Listening Comprehension*. Listening is provided as discrete courses due to the students' needs to listen to various types of English discourses intensively as part of their

curricular activities. At the English Department of State University of Malang *(Universitas Negeri Malang),* for example, listening skills are developed particularly through these listening courses: Literal Listening, Interpretive Listening, and Critical Listening (*Katalog Jurusan Sastra Inggris,* 2009). Each of the listening courses has 2 credits and 2 semester hours and is a required course, meaning that all of the students have to take these courses. In order to take Literal Listening, students have to pass the English Intensive Course, a twelve-credit course given in the first semester of their academic study. The Literal Listening course is a prerequisite of the Interpretive Listening course and The Interpretive Listening course is a prerequisite of the Critical Listening course.

The three graded listening courses are aimed at helping students learn details of spoken English discourses at post-intermediate level, acquire the overall meaning of spoken English at a pre-advanced level, and use systematic and accurate listening skills to understand and evaluate original, spoken English at advanced level. The complete description of these listening courses in terms of course code, name, credit, hour, enrolment status, prerequisite, as well as general goal and content can be seen in Figure 2.

IGB402 *Literal Listening*, 2 credits, 2 hours, required.

Prerequisite: IGB401 English Intensive Course

This course is designed to enable students to obtain the details of spoken English discourses at post-intermediate level: comprehension of main ideas and details; literal comprehension of dialogues as well as narrative and descriptive English in the most efficient way in order to understand relatively simple connected discourses spoken natively at normal speed in ordinary communicative situations.

IGB403 *Interpretive Listening*, 2 credits, 2 hours, required.

Prerequisite: IGB402

This course is designed to enable students to acquire the overall meaning of spoken English at pre-advanced level: comprehension of main ideas and details; literal and inferential comprehension of dialogues, narrative, descriptive, and

expository types of texts in the most efficient way in order to understand connected discourses spoken natively at normal speed in ordinary communicative situations.

IGB404 *Interpretive Listening*, 2 credits, 2 hours, required.

Prerequisite: IGB403

This course is designed to enable students to employ systematic and accurate listening to take notes, to make outlines, and to evaluate original, spoken English at advanced level: comprehending main ideas and details of literal, inferential, critical, and evaluative dialogues as well as narrative, descriptive, expository, academic and argumentative discourses, and more advanced speech of various types, styles, and functions, in order to understand authentic English speech for refined communication.

Figure 2. Course Descriptions of Listening Courses Offered at English Department of State University of Malang (*Katalog Jurusan Sastra Inggris*, 2009: 33).

EFL Listening can also be taught in an integrated way along with other language skills, namely speaking, reading, and writing. The integrated way of teaching listening usually takes place in intensive courses, either in English departments or in specialized programs prepared by some private courses and in the secondary schools as demanded by the 2006 School-Based Curriculum. The 2004 English curriculum requires the teaching of language skills as integrated skills within two cycles: the oracy (listening and speaking) and literacy (reading and writing). Moreover, the 2006 Standard of Content shows that the four language skills are given equal emphasis in the teaching of English (Depdiknas, 2006). With this policy, listening is no longer neglected in the teaching of English in Indonesia. Regardless of the equal status, compared to materials for other language skills, listening materials are still limited, in the sense that there is no material that can be used readily to teach English based on the 2006 Standard of Content.

At the secondary level of education, the Standard of Content enables all stakeholders – such as teachers, principals, and material developers – to develop English teaching materials, should they wish to do so. At the tertiary level, there has been no standard that can be used to develop such materials. In his account on the establishment of standard for the teaching of listening, Sutrisno (2003) argues that each university should develop their own standards by accommodating two important factors: the language ability of the students and their needs for learning as demanded by the development in the era of globalization. With these considerations, Sutrisno states that listening materials should be able to help learners understand transactional and interactional types of texts as used by native speakers of English or presented through foreign electronic broadcasting media such as British Broadcasting Company (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), or Central News Network (CNN).

The Practice of Teaching Listening

This section presents the review on how teaching listening has been carried out and how listening skills have been developed in the Indonesian context. The review is based on research reports as well as papers by lecturers and teachers of various levels. Various topics and research focus suggest how listening has been the concern in teaching English in this country (e.g., Antoro & Pantow, 2005; Karana, 2005; Puspawati & Agustina, 2008; Agustina & Puspawati, 2008; Juniardi, 2008, Yumarnamto & Wibowo, 2008; Zaenuri, 2008; Cahyani & Cahyono, 2009; Nashruddin, 2009; and Saniati, 2009).

With their experience in teaching students of Open University of Indonesia, Antoro and Pantow (2005) highlighted the use of telephone-conference for interactive tutorial. This means of communication provides a chance for students to interact with other students from different places and with the tutor who are in line. The advantage of this system of tutorial is that interaction can be conducted at the same time across different places, thus avoiding unnecessary expenses for transportation. However, the disadvantage is that the students have to pay the telephone bills, which is relatively expensive in Indonesia.

Karana (2005) suggests the use of "talk show", one like Ophrah Winfrey's show, for listening-speaking activity. In order to have a talk show, some steps should be followed. First, the teacher needs to explain about how the talk show will be conducted. Then, the teacher and the students will have a brainstorming activity to get interesting topics. Topics favored by the majority of the students

should be chosen. Following topic selection, the class is divided into parties for the pro, the con, and the neutral positions, each of which has representatives. Before the show begins, the students need to be reminded that they can ask questions or interrupt explanation at the Question and Answer session following the show. According to Karana, "talk show" can be used to provide an integration of listening and speaking activities in the classroom and train the students to interact socially in English.

Agustina and Puspawati (2008) applied some fun ways of teaching listening skills for adult kinaesthetic learners, or learners who learn better through physical movements. The listening activities were set up in three phases: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The pre-listening phase aims to introduce the listening materials and this is conducted by discussing difficult words. The while-listening phase is to provide students with listening through various activities. These activities include checking prediction, guessing meaning, filling out forms, making lists, writing down examples, using concept maps, and working on with photographs. The post listening phase helps students internalize what they have listened to. The activities include writing a letter, responding to a movie that the students have seen, and having discussion. All the activities in the three phases were performed with physical movements. Following completion of their study, Puspawati and Agustina emphasized the importance of making the students involved actively in listening activities through "receiving, constructing, and responding to the listening materials completely rather than just trying to listen to what the speakers in the material are talking about" (p. 242).

Agustina and Puspawati (2008) share their experience in using songs to involve the students physically in the teaching of listening. The song used as an example was Usher's *Separated* which contains examples of sentences using "If clause". The teaching activities were divided into three phases. In the pre-listening phase, the teacher explained to the students the concept of "if clause" and gave examples to activate the students' grammatical knowledge about the clause. The students were then divided into two big groups to perform a game in the use of the clause. In the while-listening phase, the song was played and the students were asked to complete some deleted words in the text distributed to them. In the post-listening phase, the students were asked to express their wishes dealing with situations in their life that they want to change. The last activity the students did was to have small group discussions to talk about their hope in future life. Briefly stated, Agustina and Puspawati would like to change

the idea that listening is a passive activity to be conducted in a language labora-tory as is usually the case. They would also like to introduce popular songs sung by world-class singer as a material that students can listen to not only in their MP3, CDs, or laptops, but also in their English classrooms.

Djiwandono (2006) reported the results of research study on cooperative listening technique. Based on the results of the study, he stated that cooperative listening was effective in promoting strategic listening comprehension. As a continuation of the study and triggered by the supportive findings of research on language learning strategies, Djiwandono and Noertjahyanto (2008) conducted research to answer a question whether intermediate EFL learners who were taught learning strategies perform better in listening comprehension than those who were taught with the conventional method. Two groups of students each consisting of 8-10 students were involved. The experimental group was given listening strategies that include metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies for 8 meetings. They found that there was no significant difference in the two groups of students' comprehension, meaning that the tea-ching of listening strategies was not effective. In response to the unexpected result, they addressed the failure to the students' listening habit and limited time span. To improve the students' listening skills, they suggest further resear-chers specify the listening strategies and apply them in a longer time period.

Radjuni (2008) conducted a study to find out whether multimedia can enhance the development of the students' listening skills. The study showes that the combination of text, sound and video in the multimedia support the students' attempt in comprehending listening materials. The students in the study agreed that the use of multimedia is effective in two ways: First, they were able to grasp the information faster and, second, they felt more confident in dealing with the lesson as they not only depend on their listening compre-hension but also their viewing comprehension.

Believing that multimedia is useful to provide students with listening materials containing native speakers' voices as input, Juniardi (2008) con-ducted his study on the use of *podcast*s. This action research involved students who were assigned to listen to a series of *podcast*s of less one minute (Cycle 1), less than three minutes (Cycle 2), and less than five minutes (Cycle 3). The results of the study showed that the students' ability in listening skills could be improved, as the students' average scores increased from 64 to 87, 85, and 87, in the first, second, and third cycles, respectively. The results of the study suggest that when given opportunities to listen repetitively at the students'

pace, the students could understand the message and this improved their listening comprehension. Juniardi's study was supported by Yumarnamto and Wibowo (2008) who also found that *podcast*s (both audio and video materials) enhanced the students' listening comprehension. In their action research, the students' scores increased from the average of 64.3 to 71.78 through the use of *podcast*s. Both Juniardi's (2008) and Yumarnamto and Wibowo's (2008) studies showed that students found it interesting to have listening activities using *podcast*s.

The limited materials available in secondary schools encouraged the development of listening materials for a particular level of students. In his research and development study, Zaenuri (2008) developed materials for seventh-grade students of Islamic Junior High School. The materials, which belong to the intensive listening type (Harmer, 2007), are divided into 18 units which reflect the standard of competences in understanding meaning in short transactional and interpersonal dialogs, functional texts, as well as descriptive and procedure texts that can be used for interaction with learners' immediate environment. Zaenuri's listening materials are presented in the form of CD *Recorded Materials*, a *Listening Workbook*, and *Teacher's Guide*.

A standard procedure in the teaching of EFL listening is to expose students to listening materials and then to give them listening tasks that can be done by referring to the content or linguistic features of the listening materials. This is evident in the research study on language teachers and the use of technology in language classrooms. In their study, Cahyani and Cahyono (2009) asked questions about the types of technological facilities teachers use in the classroom, how they use them, and the reasons for using them. This study involved thirty-seven English teachers from various levels of education. Responding to a question on the procedure in using a particular type of technological facilities, one teacher wrote about how to use a tape recorder in the classroom. Explaining his/her teaching procedure, this teacher stated, "the students listen to the dialogue or communication from the tape and then they answer some questions" (p. 6).

Nashruddin (2009) offers some strategies for students to face listening comprehension tests, which he grouped into before-test strategies and while-test strategies. The former can be applied by teachers in teaching listening comprehension, including familiarization of test forms, extensive listening, segmentation, and reading the transcript. The latter includes using pictures, using multiple inputs, catching main ideas, paying attention to voice changes,

remembering specific information, interpreting, and finding hidden meanings. As Nashruddin suggests, the before-test and while-test strategies can be applied in training the students to listen to both simple spoken discourses and longer spoken discourses such as class discussion, academic talks, and lectures.

Saniati (2009) reported that she utilized English Contest in order to develop not only the listening skills but also the speaking skills of her students. In this activity, students might play different roles such as the committee of the contest, the host, the judges, or the participants, whereas teachers function as facilitators. In addition to being effective in improving listening as well as speaking skills, this activity reflects some of the principles of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach. For example, it encourages students to construct meaning as they carry out the contest themselves. Students may practice inquiring as they solve or answer the questions individually. In addition, learning community will become typical as students form groups for discussion.

CONCLUSION

This article has sketched how listening has been placed in the English curriculum in Indonesia in regard to various perspectives in viewing listening in the broader context of ESL/EFL teaching. In the EFL context, listening might become a complex activity for students. With regard to the place of listening skills in the curriculum, both the discrete and the integrated listening instructions have a sound basis. The discrete listening instruction illustrated in this article is aimed at providing English department students with graded competences, varying from literal to critical listening skills. This is justifiable as the students are majoring in English and some of them are prospective English teachers. The teaching of listening integrated with other English language skills has been the norm specified in the curriculum for secondary schools. This is conducted to make the students aware of the use of English for daily communicative purposes which are inseparable with speaking, listening, and writing skills.

This article has also dealt with various types of practices in the teaching of EFL listening. Regardless of the disperse techniques or strategies in the teaching of listening reviewed in this article, more research studies are needed to give more understanding of the teaching of listening. For practical reason in the teaching of listening, the three phase technique of teaching (i.e., through the

application of the pre-, while-, and post-teaching activities) is advisable as it is relevant to the principles of effective learning strategies. Accordingly, teachers are expected to help students comprehend what they hear through such ways as activating their prior knowledge, focusing on the words that are useful for listening tasks, and telling them the purpose of their listening prior to actual listening activities. The listening activities should also be followed by sufficient exercises and reinforcement activities to retain the messages that have been heard longer.

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