Tertiary Level Learners' Listening Self Knowledge in an "Input Poor" EFL Context of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Metacognitive knowledge can influence L2 learning and listening; however, little is known about learners' listening self knowledge, particularly in the EFL context of Bangladesh. The current study is a part of the author's PhD project (Aktar, 2017) that aimed to understand tertiary level EFL listeners' listening self knowledge in Bangladesh. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants on their metacognitive knowledge. There were 15 less successful listeners (LSMs) and 15 more successful listeners (MSLs). The thematic analysis of their listening self knowledge revealed students' awareness of six aspects of listening self knowledge. Although their overall awareness in terms of frequency of mentions showed no considerable differences between the groups, variances have been observed in particular areas. The LSLs frequently mentioned listening problems and obstacles whereas the MSLs were more aware of the cognitive processes and showed greater motivation and exposure. A huge difference was revealed in self-concept: the LSLs' negative self-concept differed from the positive self-concept of their counterparts. Insight into listeners' listening self knowledge has several pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Metacognitive knowledge; person knowledge; listening self knowledge; listening self-concept; listening problems and obstacles; EFL listening; two listening ability groups

Introduction

Research highlighted the critical role that listening plays in language acquisition (Færch & Kasper, 1986; Feyten, 1991; Rost, 2001). However, listening is still under-valued in language classroom (Clement, 2007; Field, 2008). It has been overlooked, for a long time, in language pedagogy and research (Rost, 2001). Hence, Nunan (2002) rightly called listening skill the Cinderella of language skills. However, listening seems to gain an important place in Communicative approach when Hymes' communicative competence offers a paradigmatic perspective on the 'rules of use' in social context (Hymes, 1972). Even n CLT, listeners face challenges (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) because listening is "the sleeping partner in the business of oral communication" (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 8). On the other hand, listening is a complex cognitive skill and involves numerous processes (Field, 2008; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). L2 listeners face numerous problems while processing text. The process of listening entails the necessity of automatic processing (Buck, 2001; Field, 2004) and real time processing makes L2 listeners feel frustrated and least comfortable with listening (Graham, 2006; Graham, 2011). However, metacognitive awareness of the processes involved in listening, problems during listening comprehension, knowledge about listeners themselves can help employ strategies and set the listening goals towards better listening experience. Not many studies have investigated listeners' awareness of listening self knowledge and very little is known about L2 listening in an "input poor" (see Zhang, 2001) EFL context of Bangladesh.

EFL learners in Bangladesh have significantly less exposure to listening to English outside the classroom and on screen. This makes the EFL context in Bangladesh a very "input-poor" (see Zhang, 2001) context unlike the EFL contexts in China, Japan, and Taiwan in Asia. Due to Bangladesh's history of language movement in 1952 and the strong sentiment to Bangla, other languages including English receive little practice (Banu & Sussex, 2001). English as a foreign language (EFL) is now learnt and taught for 12 years, from grade 1 to grade 12, from primary to secondary stages, as a compulsory subject in the educational system of Bangladesh (Brunfaut & Green, 2017; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Rahman, 2012). At present, primary and secondary students at state run schools, unlike English-medium schools, take four national examinations for their certificates: the PSC, JSC, SSC, and HSC but none of these certificate examinations assesses EFL learners' proficiency in terms of the four skills; they assess only reading and writing.

EFL teaching and learning has gone through many changes within the short span of the country's independence, for example from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). Communicative English was introduced into secondary level education by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board in 1996 to promote communicative competence, as students lacked the expected communication skills needed for real life communication, due to long-existing, traditional GTM (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). However, Bangladeshi EFL learners' performance in EFL is 'far from satisfactory' (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Roshid, 2009), particularly in listening and speaking. One obvious reason is not implementing CLT principles in the classrooms, although teachers are supposed to do so (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Rahman, 2012; Roshid, 2009; Yasmin 2009). A factor behind not implementing CLT principles in the classrooms is the on-going assessment system of English (Brunfaut & Green, 2017; Podder, 2010). Therefore, very little evidence is seen in the practice and assessment of listening and speaking skills (English in Action, 2009; Brunfaut & Green, 2017). This situation accounts for poor listening proficiency among EFL learners in Bangladesh.

Recently, Brunfaut and Green (2017) reported on a baseline research investigating the current practices and perceptions on English listening and speaking assessment in Higher Secondary Schools. The study suggested that the majority of English language teachers are not ready yet to implement a system of continuous assessment of their students' English listening and speaking skills. The study, thus,

reported that several educational, linguistic, pedagogic, practical, professional, and technical factors currently inhibit the implementation of effective assessment of listening and speaking in English. As such, the on-going situation is not very optimistic about introducing assessment of the listening skill in pre-higher education level.

Many of the universities are now paying attention to listening and are offering listening component in the EAP curriculum (see Chaudhury, 2011). Tertiary level education now often offers an English language module which introduces listening as a component like a "sleeping partner of speaking" (see Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). It is mainly from tertiary level that the students are explicitly exposed to the teaching of listening and some form of assessment of the skill. However, with limited exposure and practice of teaching in pre-higher education, these students face numerous problems while listening to teachers' lectures, seminars and talks; they also face problems while communicating in the classroom, understanding instructions, and carrying out tasks (Alam & Sinha, 2009; Chaudhury, 2011; Hedge, 2001). The average English language skill level of university students in terms of communicative function is equivalent to that which is set by the Government for students in grade seven (Imam, 2005) and compared to other skills, the listening level of the students is very poor (Alam & Sinha, 2009; Imam, 2005).

At tertiary level, proficiency in listening is important because students are required to listen to teachers' lectures and comprehend them and interact with teachers and peers in English. Therefore, training second language learners in listening to English is particularly important at the tertiary level for comprehending the language of classrooms and for learning language through comprehensible input (Alam & Sinha, 2009; Hedge, 2001) since listening is an integrative skill. Therefore, to equip learners with necessary listening proficiency in order to cope with the higher education system, effective teaching of listening and research on listening is imperative. Given the ongoing situation of listening practice and demotivation and frustration with the skill, the learning and teaching of listening should be done in a way that will ease and motivate the learning and teaching of it, eventually making the teaching-learning effective (Alam & Sinha, 2009). However, a better teaching-learning experience requires learners' and teachers' awareness of a myriad of processes involved in listening, aspects within the listeners themselves, their problems and needs. Metacognitive awareness of the listening self can be one of the first steps of learning to listen.

Literature Review

Processes involved in listening

Listening comprehension is an active process and the cognitive concepts and processing skills involved in listening comprehension make listening a complex cognitive skill (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Following cognitive theory, O'Malley et al. (1989) defined listening comprehension as "an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfil the task requirements" (p. 434). Morley (1991) defined comprehension as the outcome of the interaction between linguistic knowledge and background knowledge. Within the process approach, Field (2008) posits that listening is made up of two major operations: decoding and meaning building. The major influential cognitive processes involved in listening comprehension are: (a) interactive top-down and bottom-up processes (see Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Howard, 1985; Lynch, 2002); (b) perception, parsing, and utilization (Anderson, 2010); and (c) metacognition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). These processes describe what listeners do during the act of listening, how they can do this efficiently, and how they regulate these processes (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

According to Field (2008), decoding is closely associated with input and linguistic knowledge whereas meaning building is especially reliant on context and co-text. Therefore, listening requires both bottom up and top down processing. This interactive top-down and bottom up processing is important for successful listening comprehension (O'Malley et al., 1989). In Anderson's (2010) cognitive framework of information processing, comprehension can happen in three interrelated processes: perceptual processing (where attention is focused on the encoding of oral text and stored in short term memory), parsing (words in the message are transformed into a mental representation of the combined meaning of the words), and utilization (making meaning of the mental representation of the words by relating it to existing knowledge stored in the long-term memory and in schemata) (p. 358). In reality, these processes are however recursive and overlap with each other. A metacognitive approach to L2 listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) suggests a holistic approach to L2 listening comprehension: being aware of all these cognitive processes involved in listening, knowledge of the listening self, listening task, the strategies required, and the use of strategies to successfully perform the task. Therefore, metacognition is both knowledge of listening and an understating of the action required to listen effectively. Figure 1 below shows the interaction of these kinds of processing (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 17).
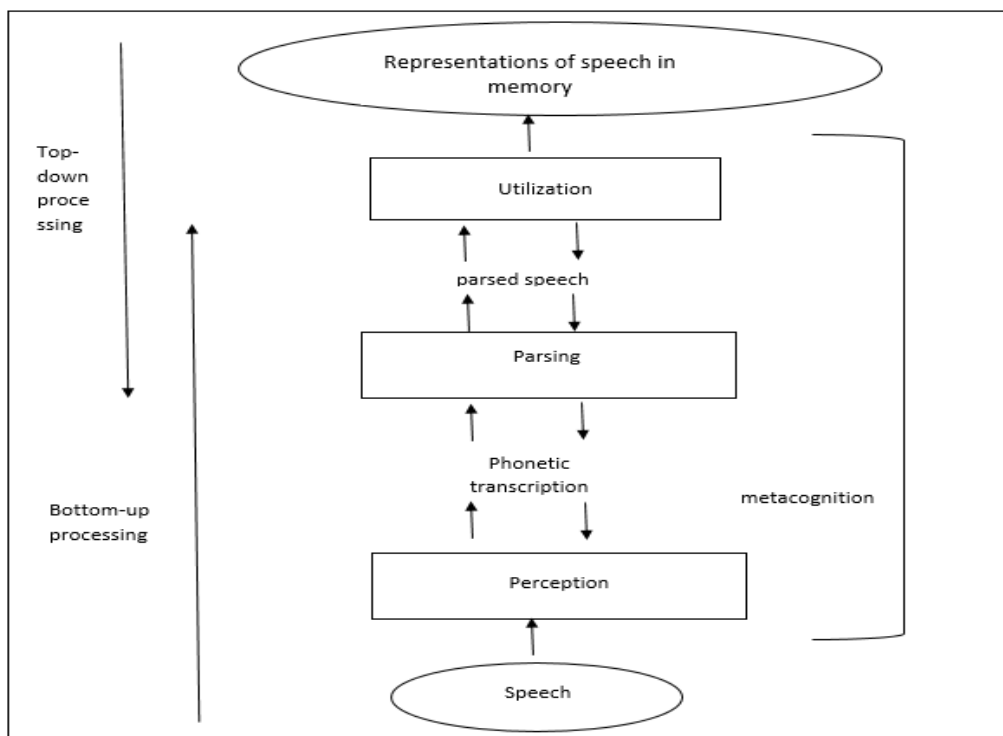
Figure 1. Cognitive processes in L2 listening and their interrelationships (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012)

Listening self (person) knowledge

Metacognitive knowledge, a component of metacognition (the term coined by Flavell, 1979), has the potential to enhance learning/listening (Flavell, 1979; Wenden, 1998; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Language learners have their beliefs and knowledge of how language is learned (Wenden, 1998), and their awareness of these beliefs and knowledge is termed metacognitive knowledge (Flavell, 1979; Goh, 1997). Flavell's model of metacognition provides a typology of metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategy knowledge. Flavell (1979) defined person knowledge as "the person category encompasses everything that you could come to believe about the nature of yourself and

other people as cognitive processors. It can be further subcategorized into beliefs about intra-individual differences, inter-individual differences, and universals of cognition" (p. 2). In the current study, the listening self knowledge is termed in relation to intra-individual difference aspect of person knowledge, since listening self knowledge and good listener knowledge (inter-individual difference) together is termed as person knowledge. This study looked into the listener's awareness of himself/herself as a listener—their self-concept and self-esteem, their listening problems and obstacles, needs and motivation alongside knowledge of cognitive processes in listening. Listening self knowledge and listening self-concept in this study roughly correspond to Goh's (1998) person knowledge and listening self respectively.

Studies on listening self (person) knowledge

Several studies have investigated learners' perceptions and awareness of different aspects of listening self (person) knowledge, such as learners' comprehension problems, their motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy and confidence. These studies suggest that learners are aware of what they do when listening, what problems they encounter when listening, even though they may not be sometimes able to act on that knowledge. A few of the studies investigated L2 listeners' perceptions of comprehension problems. Goh (2000) explored ESL listeners in Singapore and identified 10 comprehension problems while listening employing Anderson's three-phase model of comprehension: five in the perception phase, three in the parsing phase, and two in the utilization phase of listening. Goh also observed that both more and less proficient listeners experienced similar problems; however, there were differences in the degree of cognitive constraints experienced by each group. Moreover, less proficient listeners appeared to have more low-level processing problems than their counterparts. Graham (2006) explored French listeners' perceptions of their success or lack of it in the UK and found that students struggled with making out individual words in a stream of spoken French and making sense of any words that had been identified or understood. These are the problems in perception and utilization. A number of research deals with the comprehension problems faced by the students from different contexts (Berne, 2004).

Some studies (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Chen, 2007) revealed that listening proficiency was positively linked with self-efficacy and negatively with anxiety, and anxiety was linked to low self-efficacy. These studies opined that one's sense of efficacy can control or dismiss apprehensive emotions that account for anxiety. Boosting self-efficacy can help listeners minimize the frustration (Graham, 2011). This also inspired Vandergrift's (2005) study on motivation. Vandergrift (2005) found a positive correlation between metacognitive knowledge and motivation to learn to listen. Given the important role of self-efficacy, insights into self-concept and self-efficacy of listeners with different listening ability in the same EFL context may inform teaching.

Research on EFL listening in Bangladesh

Despite the importance of listening at the tertiary level for students majoring in English and the problems they face in the classroom, research on the EFL listening of Bangladeshi learners is scarce. A few studies (e.g. Alam & Sinha, 2009; Abedin, Majlish & Akter, 2009) conducted research on tertiary level listening; however, both were in private university context. The teaching-learning environment and students' experience as well as their educational and economic background might be private and public universities. To my knowledge, the only study done at a public university context is Chaudhury (2011) that investigated English needs of Humanities students at University of Dhaka.

Both the aforementioned studies at private universities have some limitations while the study in a public university context devoted partial attention to listening. Alam and Sinha (2009) is a descriptive study. Based on their own perceptions and observations they pointed out some listening problems of

tertiary students majoring in English. They also proposed a methodological framework to improve listening; however, the framework was based on the existing literature in other contexts. Abedin et al. (2009) reported the findings of a questionnaire designed to collect data on a few aspects of problems from both students and teachers from about 10 private universities. Little is known about listeners' internal aspects i.e. comprehension problems and listeners' self-concept. Apart from the lack of rigor, the study is not an in-depth research on listening. While investigating students' English needs, Chaudhury (2011) found that students' listening proficiency level is low. While more than 50% students had average listening ability, many of the students were weak in different listening sub-skills; 25% students were weak at carrying out instructions or directions; and 26.6% students were weak at understanding seminars and talks. Therefore, little is known about public-university EFL learners' perceptions of themselves as listeners. To address this gap, this study sought to explore tertiary EFL learners' listening self knowledge in the "input poor" EFL context of Bangladesh. The present research deals with the following two research questions:

Research Question 1: What do students' verbal reports tell us about their perceptions of themselves as listeners?
Research Question 2: Is there any differences between the less successful listeners and more successful listeners in their listening self knowledge?

Methodology

Participants

The population of this study is the first-year undergraduate students majoring in English at the public universities in Bangladesh. The participants comprised 30 students, a subsample from the larger group of participants (395) from seven universities in Phase I of the PhD work. The larger group of participants were divided into two groups—the less successful listeners (LSLs) and the more successful listeners (MSLs), based on their listening scores on the listening test in Phase I. Students scoring less than 9 (<9) were treated as LSLs and students scoring more than 9 (>9) were MSLs. From these two groups, 15 participants from each group were randomly selected for the interview in Phase II.

Instrument

For the listening test, Sections 3 and 4 from the internationally standardized academic IELTS practice test were chosen to create two listening ability groups. Out of 20 discrete marks, participants scored in a range of 0-16 and score 9 is considered as a cut-off point. Participants scoring <9 are LSLs and >9 are MSLs. Learner's perceptions of EFL listening were elicited through semi-structured interview which includes interview questions related to students' metacognitive knowledge i.e. person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategy knowledge. The interview schedule was designed using 10 thematic questions, along with probes and prompts for rich and in-depth data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and their perceptions of a 'good' listener. This study looked at verbal data on students' knowledge about themselves i.e. listening self knowledge only.

Data collection and analysis

Data on listening comprehension and listening self knowledge were collected and analyzed separately. Interviews were both audio and video recorded. Each interview was of 30 minutes on an average. Data on listeners' perceptions of themselves were analyzed using thematic analysis following six steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). Listening self knowledge data were coded following a number of categories of person knowledge in Goh (1997, 1998, 1999); some categories also emerged from the data

itself (see Appendix Inventory of Listening Self Knowledge). A frequency count of the mentions of the aspects was also made; an item mentioned at least 5 times was treated as frequently mentioned. Inter-coder reliability of thematic analysis was 79.59%.

Results and Discussion

This section presents findings on listening-self knowledge and discusses them in relation to existing theories and literature. Thematic analysis revealed students' extensive awareness of different aspects of the listening self knowledge, except cognitive processes in listening. The students' reports on the listening self generated six categories (see Table 1 below). The LSLs and the MSLs mentioned them in similar frequency; however, they differed in some of the aspects and qualitatively. Similar frequency of mentions corroborates Goh's (1998) negligible differences between the groups in their person knowledge. While presenting each category, findings of all participants in general have been followed by the differences between the two groups.

The six categories of listening self knowledge

Cognitive processes in listening. The students showed comparatively less awareness of cognitive processes in listening. Fewer reports on cognitive processes from the students indicate that Bangladeshi EFL learners are less aware of the cognitive processes in listening, as compared to Goh's (1997) Singaporean ESL students. Verbal data revealed students' awareness of three types of cognitive processes: global listening, think of words and spell them out mentally, and translate part or whole into the L1. While first two of them were mentioned by only the MSLs, the third one was mentioned by one LSL. This shows that the MSLs were more aware of the cognitive processes, while the LSL was concerned only with translating. Farah, a MSL, reported that she often felt confused with spelling, so she tried to memorise by noting it down. Global listening seemed to be an important top down listening skill for the MSLs. For example:

> Jebun (MSL): If unknown word, note it in head then consult it at the end or in break. Usually don't pause, only when that creates much problem to understand the thing.

Motivation, perseverance and exposure. The students reported on their motivation, perseverance and exposure to English language. Whereas 12 MSLs reported on their interest in and motivation to listen to and exposure to English listening from an early stage in life, only one LSL reported so. MSLs' greater awareness of motivation and experiences is also reported by Goh (1998). The MSLs were more exposed to target language and culture mostly virtually via English songs, movies and TV series on screen, even from childhood, which revealed their intrinsic motivation to learn to listen. In contrast, only one LSL thought he felt motivated to learn better English, and this was because he needed a good job abroad, which revealed his extrinsic motivation. As seen in the MSLs:

> Jebun (MSL): English movies, news, other programs, from childhood (encouraged by family).

> Simul (MSL): Linguistically same maybe, but they couldn't understand the sarcasm due to lack of attachment with English language (and culture).

Self-concept. Listening self-concept can influence one's ability to function as a listener, to use the listening skills they possess (Goh, 1998; Wolvin & Coakely, 1996). According to Graham (2011), instructors can strengthen self-efficacy by activities for developing sense of instrumentality i.e., the awareness that there is a relationship between what one does (e.g., strategies used) and learning outcomes. Therefore, insight into listeners' self-concept is important to intervene and tailor any instruction to make

change. The students, in this study, expressly commented on their self- concept in terms of self-assessment, perceived improvement, and self-confidence in future performance. Despite both groups' equal awareness of themselves as listeners, they possessed contrastive self-concept. Goh (1998) also found negative perception almost exclusively amongst low ability listeners.

Table 1: Six categories of students' listening self knowledge

No.	Listening Self Knowledge	Frequency of mentions
1	Cognitive processes in listening	7
2	Motivation, perseverance and exposure	23
3	Self-concept	62
4	Problems during listening	91
5	Obstacles to listening development	21
6	Learner needs	115

Self-assessment. All the 30 students assessed themselves on their present listening abilities. In their mind, all of them assessed their abilities as compared to a 'good' listener[1]. Against a mental representation of a 'good' listener, the students rated themselves within a range of 20% to 80% or from beginner level to fairly good/'good' listener level.

Their self-assessment seemed to reveal a kind of true calibration. The LSLs rated themselves within a range of 20% to 45%; conversely, the MSLs rated themselves within a range of 50% to 80% usually. Most of the LSLs were not satisfied with their listening abilities. Some of them rated themselves at only 20%, which was true because they did not score anything in the listening tests. Some of the MSL students also made over or under estimations of their abilities. Two of the LSLs and one of the MSLs over-rated themselves. The excerpts below illustrate over-rating and under-rating respectively:

Piyal (LSL): Compared to a good listener, my ability is 65%.

Hasib (MSL): A class friend who is much better in listening though some other skills might be less than me, because he watches movies from childhood, compared to him if he is 90/95%, I am 75/80%.

Perceived improvement. Two thirds of the students perceived that their listening skills were better than before, and they articulated the probable reasons behind their improvement. More LSLs, almost 87%, perceived that their abilities had improved from before, because they were now exposed to listening to English at the undergraduate level but some of the LSLs found there was a slight improvement and they were not satisfied with their listening abilities and progress. The LSLs (e.g., Ashim, Naila, Sultana) thought they achieved some listening abilities now compared to almost nothing in the past; before it was just zero percent for some (e.g., Mahfuz, Ruhan). Mahin also made it clear that he had improved to some extent with pronunciation, from listening to teachers' lectures, and watching movies. Conversely, more than 50% of the MSLs perceived they had improved, and this was because of maturity, more exposure, and more effort. Some of the MSLs assessed their improvement by mentioning their limited use of subtitles for movies or for the lyrics of songs, and more practice in the classroom and peers.

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[1] A concept of a 'good' listener differs among the students: a native listener or a local listener, e.g., teachers, successful classmates.

Self-efficacy. Research suggests that students' self-efficacy is positively linked to their listening proficiency (Chen, 2007) and low self-efficacy is linked to anxiety (Bandura, 1997). About one third of the students believed they could do better in future. The LSLs were improving slowly from almost the lowest level of listening ability. In contrast, the MSLs had the confidence that they were improving and were now at a satisfactory or good level. To illustrate their perceptions:

> Mahbub (LSL): I don't lose heart; I can if I try well. If I listen while reading from book I can understand, thus became confident.

> Anny (MSL): After entering the department I found my English is getting better as I am mixing and discussing with other friends…before I needed subtitle to watch movie, now I can understand without subtitle.

Problems encountered during listening

The students' verbal data also revealed a number of problems students faced while listening; these were comprehension problems. The students reported 17 kinds of problems (13 in perceptual processing, 2 in parsing, and 2 in utilization phases), which were identified in three phases of listening comprehension as defined by Anderson (2010): the perceptual processing, the parsing and the utilization phases. Data showed that the students were much more aware of the problems related to perception. Perception problems mostly arising from decoding and attention and concentration problems, is also true for Goh (2000). However, same kinds of problems reported by the groups are not same in terms of the extent of difficulty of the problems, as also noticed by Goh (2000).

Unlike existing studies (e.g., Goh 2000), problems were frequently reported by the LSLs, which show that the LSLs frequently mentioned the problems, particularly in the perceptual processing phase. However, a greater number of problems were reported by the MSL group, four extra problems by the MSLs alone. Both groups frequently reported at least one problem in each phase of comprehension. Seven problems in the three comprehension phases were reported most frequently by the students, six of them were in the perception phase, one in the parsing phase, and one in the utilization phase. Table 2 exhibits them below. Figure 2 shows the groups' differences over the three phases.

Figure 2. Group differences in the three phases of listening comprehension
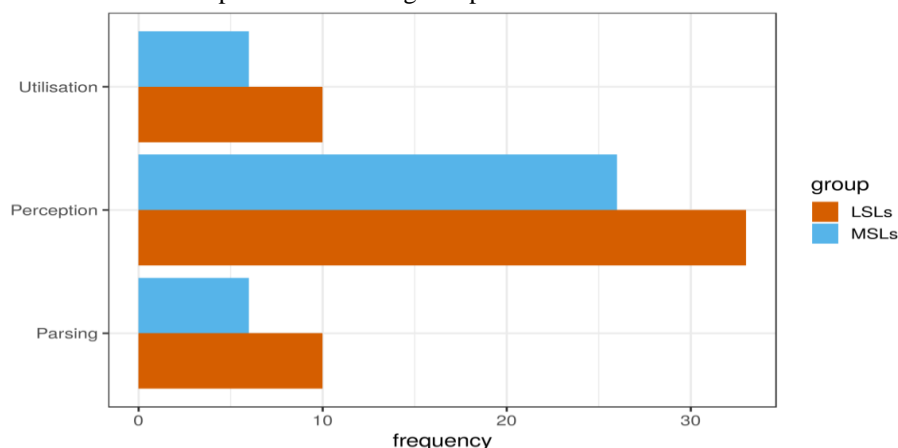
Perceptual processing phase. Students' most common problem during the perceptual processing phase was missing next part or losing track while stuck on the previous part. Data show that the LSL group had more perceptual problems, and this highlighted some unique characteristics of the LSLs. The LSLs often lost their concentration, maybe due to incomprehension or out of anxiety. This problem might be related

to their other two problems of not being able to concentrate on two or more things at a time and being anxious, and thus missing the start or other parts as well. The LSLs' problem of not recognizing the sound of words known already in written form might indicate a gap between their interaction with written English and spoken English, as these students seemed to be exposed to written English mostly. They hardly get the chance to create a map between the graphic representation of words and their pronunciation in spoken form, when many of the English words are notoriously different in written and oral forms (Maniruzzaman, 2006).

Students often found they missed the next part(s) since they were stuck on some unfamiliar/unknown words/ideas or did not understand the previous text. However, it was the LSLs who often lost track, as they found it hard to redirect their attention and to track where the listening text had moved on to:

> Ruhan (LSL): … Then I miss many words, when I give attention to one word, a key word in the question. While giving attention for this key word, other words and sentences are gone, I cannot grasp them. At this point, a tension works in me if I can answer the following questions.
> Jebun (MSL): Of course, sometimes think, good listener never gets stuck, but she does. I think I need to practise more and do better not to get stuck if something I don't understand or misses.

Concentration problem and mismatch between spoken and written words was frequently reported by the LSLs:

> Naila (LSL): Often my concentration breaks, I cannot give concentration. Just thinking what they are saying…sometimes I get distracted by some other thoughts.
> Mahfuz (LSL): Again, sometimes maybe I know the word, but they pronounce it differently, not like mine, so it needs practice.

Doing more than one thing at a time e.g., write down answers, take notes, or use subtitles etc., interrupts listening, and missing the start due to anxiety or abrupt beginning were frequently mentioned by the LSLs:

> Simu (MSL): I can't answer while listening, it hampers listening… memorise and write down later in break or at the end.
> Imran (LSL): Sudden beginning, or starting after pause causes problem for me, I can't catch first few words.

Table 2. Frequently reported problems

Comprehension Phases	Comprehension Problems	LSLs	MSLs
Perceptual processing	Missing next part or losing track while stuck on the previous part	6	8
	Cannot keep concentrating	5	-
	Cannot recognise sounds of words known already in written form	5	-
	Writing down the answers, taking notes, using subtitles, which interrupts listening	7	-

	Missing the start due to anxiety or unpreparedness	5	-
Parsing	Forgetting what was heard already	8	5
Utilisation	Understanding individual words, but can't get overall meaning or intended message	7	5

Parsing and utilization phases. Although both groups frequently reported the same problems, the nature of the same problems differed for the two groups. Forgetting the words heard (parsing) was reported by more than 50% (8) of the LSLs and as the data revealed, they forgot just after hearing the words. In the case of understanding individual words but not getting the overall or intended meaning (utilisation), I coded them under overall or intended meaning. While the LSL group often failed to perceive even the overall meaning of the text, the MSLs struggled more with obtaining the intended meaning of the text, the latter is also shown in Graham (2006). Incongruent with Goh (2000), the LSLs' frequent mentions of parsing and utilization problems imply that the three phases in Anderson's model do not necessarily happen sequentially.

Students thought they could understand the words while listening, but only the next moment when they attended to the next part or they were about to answer or talk about it, they would forget what they had heard:

Naila (LSL): Again, sometimes I hear and understand some words but … when asked, sometimes I can remember 1/ 2 words, but cannot complete the whole sentence, I forget.
Nahid (MSL): …in unknown topic even if I hear I forget quickly and can't incorporate later.
    Regarding not getting the overall message or intended meaning, while Mahbub forgot since he could not translate or process the meaning, Nahid could understand almost all the words, however could not incorporate them later into use, since he could not parse them and transfer them from his short term memory to his long term memory and thus could not obtain the intended meaning of the text maybe due to lack of appropriate prior knowledge:

Mahbub (LSL): I think I understand almost all (words), but can't interpret or translate in mother tongue swiftly, can't process them quickly.
Nahid (MSL): in unknown topic even if I hear all I forget quickly and can't incorporate later.

The groups also differed in the amount of words they understood, as perceived by a number of the students; the MSLs could understand almost all the words, whereas the LSLs could understand at best 50% of the spoken words. The vocabulary size is an issue that might cause several problems and restrict the LSLs' automatic processing and even use of strategies (see Nation, 1993).

However, the problems reported by a few MSLs only were losing attention due to concentrating too hard (2), losing attention to details (2), attention fluctuating due to shifts in tone or themes (1), not identifying the unfamiliar words spoken (1). Some of the MSLs seemed to be aware of these problems. However, the LSLs' not reporting these problems does not also mean that they did not face these problems. Possibly, they might not be aware of facing these problems. Conversely, only two of the LSLs reported that incomprehension caused a break in comprehension for them. One of the utilization problems reported slightly more by the LSLs was that they were not able to use strategies they planned; this might be due to being occupied with word-level processing or anxiety.

Obstacles to listening development. This section presents the individual characteristics and the social issues that work as obstacles to listening development amongst the Bangladeshi EFL learners. As reported by the students, two types of obstacles to listening development were reported: one's own personality and the social environment.

More than one quarter of the students commented on their listening experiences, which indirectly revealed that their own personalities hindered them in their listening development. Surprisingly, almost all of them were LSLs; they seemed to be much concerned with their own 'low' personality, often arising from negative self-concept, lack of motivation and frustration. They reported that they felt nervous and fearful when attending to listening; were not aware of different techniques; not improving their listening even after using some strategies. As reported by a LSL:

> Alim (LSL): I feel hesitant at the beginning of a listening and consequently become nervous… if I even know the techniques, I cannot use them.

The social environment. One third of the students commented that the social environment was a hindrance for them in developing their listening abilities. The EFL context in Bangladesh provided almost no scope for using English and for listening to others in English in other than an educational domain. A number of students perceived that there was less scope to practice listening and speaking in their earlier educational lives, for example at school and in college; only at the tertiary level did they have access to practising English and to listening to teachers and their peers in English in an academic environment. The socio-cultural environment in Bangladesh did not encourage practising English publicly and positively, therefore students felt shy about practising in public, even with peers. The lack of logistical and technical support was also reported by a few of the LSLs as a hindrance to their listening development. Two students revealed:

> Arif (MSL): Sometimes speak with friends in department, but outside department people don't take positively, as our mother tongue is Bangla.
> Naila (LSL): Teacher gave us 10 movies to watch at home as an assignment, but I stay in a mess and I don't have laptop.

Learners' needs regarding listening

Students explicitly commented on their needs (not the needs that emerged from their listening problems and obstacles); this aspect of listening-self knowledge emerged from the data itself. These needs are grouped into five categories: more exposure and practice, practice in specific areas of listening skills, practice in metacognition, purpose of listening, and logistical and environmental support. A needs analysis revealed that both the LSL and MSL groups were much aware of their needs and the awareness was considerably higher amongst the MSLs.

Frequently reported learner needs. Almost all the students thought they needed more practice and more exposure to the target language to enhance their listening competence in that language, irrespective of their previous listening experiences. Many of them commented on areas of listening skill- vocabulary, pronunciation and accent. Figure 3 shows the groups' differences in broad categories of learner needs.

Figure 3. Group differences in learner needs
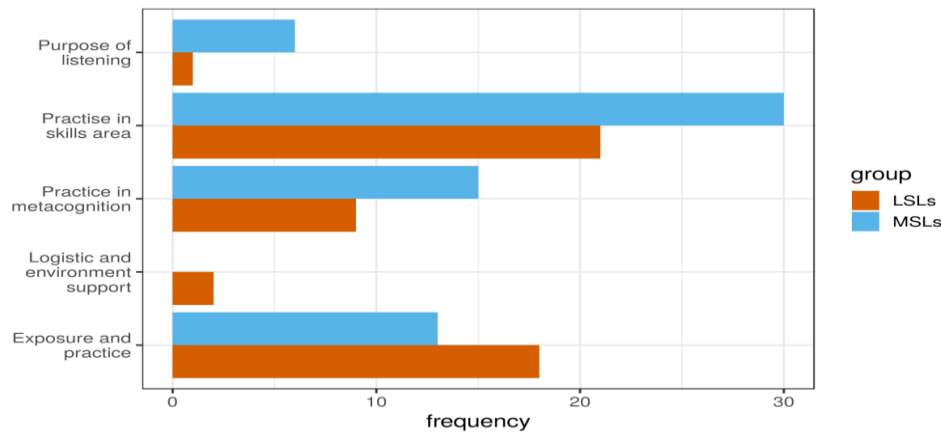
Some needs were frequently mentioned by the students (see Table 3 below). Frequently mentioned by the LSLs were: need more classroom practice, practice with listening exercises. In contrast, practice with different topics and input and to enhance strategic knowledge were frequently mentioned by the MSLs.

Table 3: Frequently reported learner needs

Frequently reported needs		LSLs	MSLs
More exposure and practice	Need more exposure and practice continuously and repeatedly	10	8
	Need more classroom practice	5	-
Practice in specific areas of listening skills	A good repertoire of vocabulary	7	10
	More practice with pronunciation and accent	8	10
	Practice with different types of topics and input	-	5
	Practice with listening exercises	5	-
Practice in metacognition	Practice with someone competent in English or a native speaker	5	6
	To enhance strategic knowledge	-	5

Students felt that their listening practice was not enough and needed more exposure, irrespective of their previous listening experience. The probable reason for the LSLs' emphasis on more classroom practice could be that they were more dependent on classroom practice and were not aware of how to practice on their own, unlike the autonomous MSL learners.

Practice in specific skills areas showed that practice with vocabulary, pronunciation and accent were frequently mentioned by the students. However, they differed in their level of vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Again, the MSLs felt the need to practice different accents like UK English, American English, and Australian English etc., whereas the LSLs needed to practice with listening exercises; first with the local accent and then with native English. By contrast, the MSLs seem to be aware of different types of listening input, like conversation, lectures, audio and video etc.

The students reported on the need for practice in metacognition. They felt the need to practice with somebody competent in English or a native speaker. The MSL group also frequently reported the need to enhance strategic knowledge:

Hasib (MSL): I think I need to be more strategic in listening mm…find out the ways to listen better

and for practicing listening.

Infrequently reported learner needs. Only a few students reported less frequently on different needs including two LSLs' need of access to logistical support and a congenial environment. The students reported that they had difficulties with speedy speech. Three MSLs also reported that they would practice to address this issue in order to cope with speed. Few students also reported that they needed opportunities to check their comprehension and enhance their listening, with three MSLs reporting that they needed to practice more not getting stuck. A few students from both groups reported that they needed something both educational and recreational. Three MSLs, yet to start their listening classes, added that they would do better if they had an academic activity to practice listening in a regular routine.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Verbal data revealed students' extensive awareness of the aspects of listening self knowledge. While LSLs' frequently mentioned their listening problems and obstacles, the MSLs showed more awareness of the cognitive processes, motivation and exposure in L2 listening. Self-concept revealed huge differences: LSLs' negative self-concept as opposed to positive self-concept among the MSLs.

Students' awareness of their listening self has pedagogical implications. An insight into their listening self can inform teaching among such cohort of EFL learners as well as two listening ability groups being mindful to the differences they reveal. This in-depth understanding of Bangladeshi EFL listeners can help the EFL teachers assess students' strengths and weaknesses, their needs and motivation so that they can intervene in any listening instruction accordingly and cater to their needs. Insight into comprehension problems can help seek the strategies to solve these problems (Goh, 1998). Students' self-concept can provide the teachers with positivity to nurture and negativity to alleviate. Learners with positive self-esteem and self-efficacy seem to have better control over and knowledge of learner strategies (Victori, 1999) and effective listening also depends on learners' self-efficacy, their confidence in their ability to comprehend the input (Graham, 2011).Teachers can address the anxiety, nervousness and low self-esteem of the LSLs. This personal knowledge helps the listeners to be aware of how long to continue and when to stop. The LSLs can benefit from the positivity of the MSLs e.g., motivation, exposure and perseverance in listening practice.

Among the limitations of the study is the small sample size of 30 representing 395 students the public universities in Bangladesh; therefore, future research can study a larger sample size or make a quantitative investigation with a large sample to corroborate findings with the qualitative study. The findings of the current study might not be generalisable with private universities; therefore, future studies may investigate the same with private universities. This study also calls for research on listening strategies addressing the listening comprehension problems.

Acknowledgements

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

Ethics Statement

I, hereby, state that I conducted the research and prepared the manuscript following the protocol of research and publications ethics. I am solely responsible if any deviation or mistake (in content and language) is identified in the manuscript.

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Appendix: Inventory of Listening Self Knowledge

Listening Self Knowledge	Categories	Subcategories	Items	Frequency of mentions by all participants	By the LSLs	By the MSLs
	Cognitive	Global Listening		5	0	5

		processes				
		Think of words and spell them out mentally		1	0	1
		Translate part or whole in L1		1	1	0
	Total			7	1	6
	Motivational factors	Motivated by family, surroundings, and self		8	1	7
		Perseverance		10	2	8
		Interest in and exposure to English language and culture		5	0	5
	Total			23	3	20
	Self-concept	Self-assessment		30	15	15
		Perceived improvement		22	13	9
		Self-efficacy		10	3	7
	Total			62	31	31
	Problems during listening	Perceptual processing	Missing next parts or losing track while stuck with previous part	14	6	8
			Cannot keep concentrating	8	5	3
			Cannot recognize sounds of words known already in written	6	5	1
			Writing down the answers, taking notes, using subtitle interrupts in listening	9	7	2
			Missing the starting due to anxiety or unpreparedness	6	5	1
			Being distracted due to thinking over outside things	3	1	2
			Cannot chunk streams of speech	3	1	2
			Losing attention due to concentrating too hard	2	0	2
			Lose attention to details	2	0	2
			Break in concentration due to incomprehension	2	2	0
			Attention fluctuating due to shifts in tones or themes	1	0	1
			Cannot identify the unfamiliar words pronounced	1	0	1
			Mistake one word for another similar-sounding one	2	1	1
		Total		59	33	26

		Parsing	Forget what is heard already	13	8	5
			Slow to recall meaning and interpret	3	2	1
		Total		16	10	6
		Utilization	Understand individual words, but can't get overall meaning or intended message	12	7	5
			Cannot employ all strategies prepared or known for the upcoming text due to eg. anxiety and nervousness	4	3	1
		Total		16	10	6
	Total			91	53	38
	Obstacles to listening development	Own personality		11	10	1
		Social environment		10	4	6
	Total			21	14	7
	Learners' Needs	More exposure and practice	Need more exposure and practice continuously and repeatedly	18	10	8
			Need more outside activities	6	3	3
			Need more classroom practice	7	5	2
		Total		31	18	13
		Practice in specific areas of listening skills	A good repertoire of vocabulary	17	7	10
			More outside practice on pronunciation and accent	18	8	10
			More practice with different topics and input	6	1	5
			Practice with listening exercises	7	5	2
			More practice with speedy speech	3	0	3
		Total		51	21	30
		Practice in metacognition	Practice with someone competent in English or native speaker	11	5	6
			Seeking opportunities to check comprehension and enhance listening	3	2	1
			Need to practice not to get stuck	3	0	3
			To enhance strategic	7	2	5

			knowledge			
		Total		24	9	15
		Purpose of listening	Need something educational and routine	3	0	3
			Need something both educational and recreational	4	1	3
		Total		7	1	6
		Access to logistic support and congenial environment		2	2	0
		Total		2	2	0
	Total			115	51	64
Total				319	153	166