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TEACHING AND LEARNING SECOND LANGUAGE LISTENING: METACOGNITION IN ACTION

A BOOK REVIEW

*Višnja Pavičić Takač**

Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku

Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action.
Larry Vandergrift and Christine C. M. Goh. London: Routledge, 2012., 315 p.,
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The volume's title *Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action* reflects its content and purpose: it sets out to explain the cognitive processes that underlie second language listening with the view to boost both learners' listening skills and teachers' teaching skills. For listening to be effective, learners must do more than just think about learning, they must act – hence the subtitle of the book.

The book is divided into three parts. As the individual titles of its four chapters reveal, Part I *Learning to Listen* deals with challenges and opportunities in listening instruction, definition of listening competence, a model of listening comprehension, and factors that influence listening success. This part outlines the development of the concept of listening comprehension as well as the theoretical perspective, which serves as the foundation for the approach to teaching and learning listening presented in the subsequent parts of the book.

Part II is devoted to a metacognitive approach to listening. It contains five chapters (5-10) that present a number of useful and efficient pedagogical strategies that teachers can apply to help their learners

* Višnja Pavičić Takač, Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku, vpavicic@ffos.hr

increase their awareness about the listening process and improve listening skills in various contexts. Metacognition, defined as “listener awareness of the cognitive processes involved in comprehension, and the capacity to regulate, oversee, regulate and direct these processes” (p. 23), is viewed as the key factor in developing listening skills. Subsequently, ways of training learners’ metacognitive strategies are presented. These descriptions include ready-made, practical and versatile tools, such as self-evaluation questionnaires, that can be used, for example, in awareness raising activities. Suggestions are made as to how to coherently integrate these elements into lessons based on prescribed materials.

Part III has two chapters. The first (chapter 11) considers listening in multimedia environments, in which the potential of a visual component in enhancing listening comprehension is discussed. The second (chapter 12) discusses the main issues involved in assessing listening within the framework of metacognition. It stresses the value of formative assessment as a learning tool for listening.

The chapters are structured similarly. Each chapter opens with a description of a classroom scenario. This is followed by a prereading reflection on key issues. The chapters close with a summary, a list of discussion questions and tasks, and suggestions for additional reading inviting the readers to further explore the main issues.

An epilogue in which issues raised in the prologue are readdressed rounds up the text.

Appendices include a list of strategies for listening with explanations and examples, the metacognitive awareness of listening questionnaire (MALQ), and a list of useful online resources for listening practice.

The view put forward is that the focus of listening activities should shift from the text and listening outcome to the learners, i.e. their listening strategies and processes. The authors advocate a metacognitive instruction for second language listening which “explicitly elicits and enhances learner knowledge about learning to listen, as well as teaching effective strategies for managing comprehension and overall listening development” (p.13).

On the whole, this book offers a fascinating insight into the listening process and the role of metacognition. If this volume were to be described in a few words, firmly grounded in theory and research,

reader-friendly, innovative, and a clear and strong correlation between theoretical perspectives, research findings, principled pedagogical implementation and the learner would sum it up well.

Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action is a great resource primarily intended for use by teachers and teacher educators at different levels. The numerous practical classroom tasks and activities to develop listening metacognition, and the model of a listening lesson focusing on how to train learners to control their cognitive processes involved in listening make this book especially appealing. But all those interested in exploring metacognition, listening and learning strategy training in more detail will also find this book a valuable starting point and reference tool. All this, to my mind, proves that this book's contribution to the field is immense.

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