

# Listening Strategies Utilized by Thai EFL Students for Comprehending ASEAN Englishes-Accented Conversations

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**Abstract**—Listening is widely regarded as an essential language skill for achieving proficiency in both educational and professional contexts. Despite its significance, listening comprehension remains one of the most challenging tasks for language learners, especially in the context of non-native English accents. According to numerous scholars, the ability to select and apply appropriate listening strategies is crucial for successful listening comprehension. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how Thai EFL students, categorized as high-ability and low-ability listeners, utilize cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies to comprehend Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Englishes-accented conversations. In this regard, 300 participants were required to report their perceived use of listening strategies through a questionnaire adapted from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), followed by verbally explaining their use of these strategies in detail through a think-aloud task. The findings indicate that the high-ability listeners significantly employ overall listening strategies more frequently than the low-ability listeners. More importantly, the high-ability listeners demonstrate a greater awareness of which strategies to use and how to apply these strategies in a systematic way to successfully achieve comprehension of ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. Based on these findings, Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) is recommended as an instructional approach to help low-ability listeners effectively and appropriately utilize practical listening strategies to improve their comprehension of conversations involving non-native English accents.

**Index Terms**—listening strategies, listening comprehension, ASEAN Englishes, non-native accented conversations

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to many scholars (e.g., Janusik & Wolvin, 2009; Wolvin, 2010), learners are typically overwhelmed with a large amount of listening input every day from both academic contexts and daily routines. These scholars further explained that learners generally spend more than 20 percent of their learning hours doing school-related activities that involve an element of listening. Based on this percentage, learners technically gain a large portion of the knowledge they need in their studies from aural input. Apart from being a pathway to receiving knowledge, listening skills are regarded as one of the key indicators determining whether learners can achieve adequate and competent language performance (Wolvin, 2010). The significance of listening skills, however, is neither restricted only to classrooms nor to learning environments. Wolvin (2010) also recognized the importance of listening skills in professional contexts by concluding that listening skills are crucial for career growth and should be considered a required skill for communicating in organizations at every level. He furthermore explained that most job-related problems experienced by company staff at all levels are related to poor listening skills (Wolvin, 2010). Accordingly, listening comprehension is recognized as one of the essential skills required for being a successful communicator in every context, covering a personal life, academic life, and professional life.

However, despite its importance, listening comprehension is believed to be one of the most challenging language skills for learners to master, especially among English as a foreign language (EFL) learner (Piamsai, 2005). According to Hamouda (2013), EFL learners encounter several difficulties and must overcome many challenges to comprehend spoken messages in listening comprehension activities. These listening comprehension barriers might include (i) the quality of recorded materials, (ii) length and speed of listening, (iii) unfamiliar vocabulary, (iv) lack of background knowledge, and (v) cultural differences (Tran & Duong, 2020). Apart from these five barriers, another significant factor leading to a reduction in listening comprehension is speakers' accents. According to Goh (1999), more than 60% of language learners reported that a speaker's accent is considered one of the most crucial factors affecting their listening comprehension. Munro and Derwing (1999) further confirmed that too many accented speeches can hinder language learners from comprehending auditory input. Buck (2001) also supported that unfamiliar accents may cause some difficulties in listening comprehension because such unfamiliar accents might interrupt the whole listening comprehension process. Based on these related studies, it can be concluded that unfamiliar accents, both native and non-native, might cause major problems in listening comprehension.

Although unfamiliar accents might lead to some challenges in listening comprehension, it is undeniable that in recent years, English has been regarded as a lingua franca used as a medium of communication among speakers whose first languages are different to facilitate their mutual understanding (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011). With the prevalent use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), the number of non-native English speakers has continuously increased. Following this phenomenon, some non-native varieties of English are recognized as variants of English, which have enhanced the development of new varieties of English accents worldwide (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011; Sharifian, 2010). In Thailand, the phenomenon of ELF has also exerted a significant impact on Thai communities in many aspects due to the advent of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) where English was officially declared as a lingua franca among the ten state members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Thailand is a member (Choomthong, 2014; Natiladdanon & Thanavisuth, 2014; Trakulkasemsuk, 2012). This declaration signifies the important role of English in ASEAN, and English may have a great impact on the citizens of ASEAN member states. In addition, for Thai communities, the emergence of ELF in ASEAN is also influencing Thai educational contexts; consequently, it is inevitable that learners will have to navigate ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations in both academic contexts and daily lives. However, most English language learners in Thai educational contexts are technically exposed to only two major varieties of English usage, British English and American English (Weerachairattana et al., 2019). Nevertheless, in real ELF contexts, like in ASEAN where there are many non-native varieties of English spoken, Thai learners may encounter some difficulties in comprehending such non-native accents and may form certain negative attitudes toward speakers having non-native English accents (Yaemtui, 2018). Moreover, these difficulties and attitudes might lead to communication failures and even demotivate learners from participating in conversations in such multicultural contexts (Abeywickrama, 2013; Yaemtui, 2018).

As ASEAN Englishes accents might significantly impact Thai EFL learners' listening comprehension, it is believed that Thai EFL learners should be equipped with the knowledge of how to effectively utilize appropriate and practical listening strategies for comprehending such non-native English accents. Although several studies have examined the listening strategies applied by EFL learners, these related studies have emphasized the strategies used for comprehending native English accents. Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, the studies investigating the strategies utilized by EFL learners to comprehend conversations with non-native English accents are understudied. Consequently, to bridge the gaps in previous studies and to shed light on this perspective, this study was conceptualized based on the following research objectives:

1. To investigate how Thai EFL students, classified as high-ability listeners and low-ability listeners, utilize listening strategies (i.e., cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies) to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations.
2. To compare the similarities and differences between listening strategies (i.e., cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies) utilized by low-ability listeners and high-ability listeners to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations.

The findings of this study might be of great significance to English language teaching, particularly in teaching listening skills, by providing an applicable reference for helping teachers design appropriate teaching methods and learning environments where learners are trained to effectively utilize appropriate listening strategies for comprehending conversations with non-native English accents.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Classification of Listening Strategies

Listening strategies are commonly defined as deliberate techniques and plans utilized by learners to facilitate their listening comprehension process as well as to enhance their listening comprehension in a target language. Generally, listening strategies are believed to be interrelated with learning strategies by many scholars and educators (e.g., Azmi et al., 2014; Nadig, 2013). In other words, learning strategies can be applied to listening comprehension in foreign language learning. Oxford (1990) classified the learning strategies in accordance with the information-processing model and proposed a complete language learning strategy classification system where learning strategies are divided into two major groups (i.e., direct strategies and indirect strategies) as illustrated in Figure 1. Direct learning strategies are those learning techniques that deal with a new language by incorporating memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect learning strategies emphasize the management of learning through the application of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

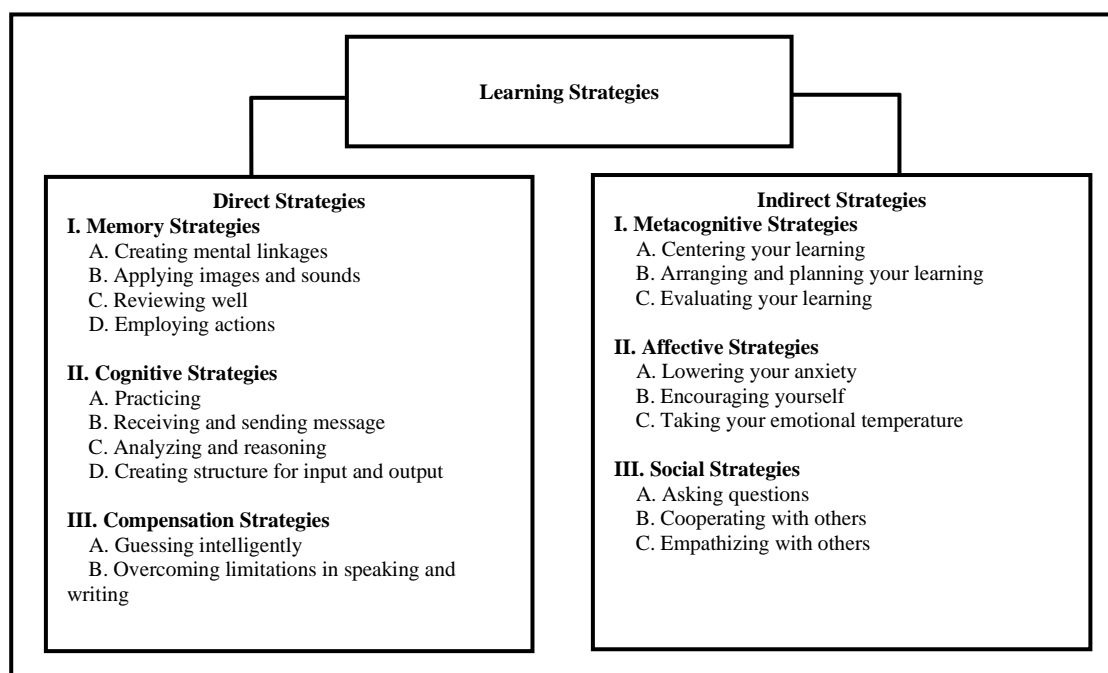


Figure 1. Classification of Learning Strategies (Oxford, 1990)

Based on the learning strategy inventory proposed by Oxford (1990), several scholars (e.g., Azmi et al., 2014; Nadig, 2013) have suggested that three main categories (i.e., cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies) should be applied to enhance listening comprehension, and these strategies may be utilized differently based on learners' preferences and proficiencies.

(a). *Cognitive Strategies*

Cognitive strategies refer to the problem-solving methods that learners apply to deal with learning activities and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge (Abdalhamid, 2012). The problem-solving methods in cognitive strategies involve directly analyzing, transforming, or synthesizing learning materials. Goh (1999) expressed that learners utilize cognitive strategies to facilitate processing, keeping, and remembering new information. For listening comprehension, cognitive strategies can be categorized into two major groups: bottom-up and top-down. The bottom-up strategies involve word-for-word translation, arranging the rate of speech, repeating the oral text, and concentrating on the prosodic characteristics of the text. The top-down strategies, on the other hand, involve forecasting, guessing, explaining, and visualizing.

(b). *Metacognitive Strategies*

Metacognitive strategies refer to learners' management techniques to regulate and control their learning processes through planning, checking, assessing, and changing. The metacognitive strategies are believed to be a trait of successful learners who can manage and direct their learning to accomplish their goals (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Regarding the role of metacognitive strategies in listening comprehension, Holden (2004) explained that learners apply metacognitive strategies to comprehend aural input by being aware of their listening processes and comprehension. More specifically, learners have to learn how to deliberately and carefully plan, manage, monitor, and control their listening comprehension process as well as to consciously evaluate the accuracy of the received information from their listening. Abdalhamid (2012) and Vandergrift and Goh (2012) also emphasized that skilled listeners can achieve listening comprehension through the use of metacognitive strategies by:

- i) utilizing their background knowledge and predictions to create theories on the newly received information,
- ii) connecting new information with their continuing predictions,
- iii) making deductions to fill comprehension breaks,
- iv) assessing their prediction, and
- v) improving their theories.

Holden (2004) further supported the utilization of metacognitive strategies in language learning, especially for listening comprehension, by concluding that using metacognitive strategies in the listening process can increase learners' self-confidence, motivation, and capability to complete the learning activities.

(c). *Socio-Affective Strategies*

Socio-affective strategies refer to the techniques that learners apply to cooperate with others to check their comprehension and reduce their apprehension (Abdalhamid, 2012; Vandergrift, 2003). Wilson (2003) explained that

socio-affective strategies are related to learners' interaction with other speakers and their reactions toward learning. Socio-affective strategies are regarded as a crucial factor leading to comprehension because there are some close connections between learning situations and social-psychological factors. Utilizing socio-affective strategies is also believed to be effective strategies helping learners improve their listening performance by reducing their anxiety. Habte-Gabr (2006) further explained that socio-affective strategies can improve learners' listening comprehension because by applying socio-affective strategies, learners can decrease their anxiety, increase their confidence during listening activities, raise their motivation, and improve their listening skills.

Based on the aforementioned literature review, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies might be practical for facilitating listening comprehension process. However, the participants of the study were assigned to individually complete listening tasks, so cooperation and interaction with others might not be necessary for completing the listening tasks. Consequently, only cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies are emphasized in this study, whereas socio-affective strategies are not considered in the scope of this study.

### *B. Impacts of Listening Strategies on Enhancing Learners' Listening Comprehension*

Listening comprehension is generally defined as an interactive and interpretive process in which listeners deliberately and actively construct meaning from auditory input (Hamouda, 2013; Rost, 2002). The interactive and interpretive processes of listening comprehension are considered a complex process involving several steps for understanding spoken language. Like Rost (2002) and Hamouda (2013), Nadig (2013) further explained listening comprehension as an active process that includes knowing speech sounds, comprehending the meaning of individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences. In other words, the listening comprehension process concerns the ability to hear oral speeches, discriminate sounds, clarify sounds into lexical and syntactic units, and comprehend the messages. With reference to the listening comprehension process, participation, creativity, linguistic knowledge, world knowledge, and, most importantly, listening strategies are required to achieve listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015).

Several studies have confirmed the significant impacts of listening strategies on improving learners' listening comprehension. Rost (2002) ascertained that "The skills underlying listening have become more clearly defined" and "strategies contributing to effective listening are now better understood" (Rost, 2002, p. 12). Goh (2002) further supported that teaching listening strategies to learners can be highly significant and helpful in achieving listening comprehension successfully. Vandergrift (2003) also confirmed that strategy development is important for listening training because strategies are conscious means by which learners can guide and evaluate their comprehension and responses. According to a study by Vandergrift (2003), proficient listeners tend to apply more listening strategies to facilitate their listening comprehension. These listening strategies include paying attention to language patterns to analyze them, being willing to make mistakes, and trying to make accurate and reasonable predictions. The study also indicates that proficient listeners tend to apply a broader range and variety of types of listening strategies, and these learners can select the most appropriate choices of strategies. Griffiths (2003) further explained that high-proficiency listeners use listening strategies more frequently and appropriately than low-proficiency listeners, which is reflected in their improved listening comprehension. Piamsai (2005) supported the claim made by Griffiths (2003) and Vandergrift (2003) by concluding that proficient listeners employ cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies when listening more frequently than listeners in low-proficiency groups do. Based on these scholars, it can be concluded that an appropriate choice of listening strategies can facilitate learners' listening process and enhance learners' listening comprehension.

### *C. ASEAN Englishes and Their Impacts on Listening Comprehension*

As English is commonly used as a lingua franca (ELF) among speakers whose first language is not English, these non-native English speakers prefer keeping their unique accents and integrate their cultures into their English speeches to maintain their national identities (Jenkins, 2007). More importantly, some pragmatic strategies for intercultural communication have been developed by these non-native English speakers. Kortmann et al. (2004) further explained that several non-standard features are common when English functions as a lingua franca and non-standard forms of English can be observed in almost all varieties of English, including a selection of Asian English.

Undoubtedly, as English is used as a lingua franca in ASEAN countries, non-standard forms of English are regularly used in ASEAN Englishes. According to many studies, several non-standard linguistic features of ASEAN Englishes are distinctive to these ASEAN Englishes, but they also share some common features like phonology, lexicon, and syntax (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Keuk, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2010). According to Kirkpatrick (2010), there are common phonological features shared by ASEAN speakers of English such as (i) deducting consonant clusters, (ii) pronouncing dental fricative /θ/ as /t/, (iii) merging of long and short vowel sounds, (iv) reducing initial aspiration, (v) lacking reduced vowels, and so on.

Kirkpatrick (2010), however, expressed that the use of distinctive phonological features among ASEAN Englishes might be a cause of misunderstanding. He concluded that "the ASEAN ELF data shows remarkably few occasions where communication was affected by the use of distinctive phonological features" (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p. 81). Kirkpatrick (2010) further explained that the possible causes of misunderstood communication among ASEAN English speakers are (i) mishearing, (ii) misunderstanding the speaker's realization of a vowel sound, and (c) using a wrong lexical item by a speaker. Consequently, the phonological features of ASEAN Englishes might hinder listeners in

comprehension of ASEAN-Englishes accented conversations as well as possibly lead to listeners' certain attitudes towards ASEAN-Englishes accents (Yaemtui, 2018).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design and Research Instruments

The research design of this study involved a sequential explanatory mixed methods using a questionnaire to elicit quantitative data and a think-aloud task to obtain qualitative data regarding the listening comprehension strategies utilized by Thai EFL students to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: (i) participants' demographic information, (ii) questions about listening strategies, and (iii) additional comments. The closed-ended questions in the second part were developed with reference to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL version 7.0 for ESL/EFL learners) initially proposed by Oxford (1990). The questionnaire was also constructed under the learning strategies framework (Oxford, 1990), and only questions related to cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies were included in the questionnaire. To complete the second part of the questionnaire, the participants were required to select only one scale on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (Always) to 1 (Never) that mostly corresponds with their perceived use of listening strategies described in each question. Before its actual use, the content validity of the questionnaire was validated by three experts in ELT through the IOC (Index of Item-Objective Congruence) procedures. Additionally, the questionnaire was piloted to evaluate its reliability and practicality before actual use, and Cronbach's alpha was indicated as 0.83 for the total scale reliability, meaning that the questionnaire was appropriate for use with good internal consistency of the items. In addition to the questionnaire, the think-aloud task using listening exercises to stimulate the participants' use of listening strategies was utilized to collect qualitative data regarding the perceived use of listening strategies by the selected participants.

#### B. Participants

The 300 participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique from students taking foundation English courses provided by the Language and Academic Services Center at a Thai university. Additionally, the primary inclusion criteria were that the participants' first language must be Thai, and they must have at least 12 years of experience learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Based on their scores in the listening part of an English proficiency test, the participants were equally divided into 150 participants in a low-ability listener group and 150 participants in a high-ability listener group. These participants were informed about the purposes of the study, and the ethical approval for research involving human participants was granted by the research ethics committees of Strategic Wisdom and Research Institute of a Thai university.

#### C. Data Collection

Data collection procedures mainly involved collecting quantitative data through the questionnaire and qualitative data using the think-aloud task. Before distributing the questionnaires, the participants were required to familiarize themselves with ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations by completing ten listening exercises presented with audio recordings of conversations spoken by ASEAN Englishes speakers representing ten countries of ASEAN members. These ten paper-based listening exercises were administered to the participants by the researcher in the classrooms for ten weeks. After completing listening exercises, the participants were requested to report their use of listening strategies by answering the questionnaire. Following the questionnaire, ten participants (i.e., five participants from the high-ability group and another five participants from the low-ability group) were purposively selected to participate in the think-aloud task where they were assigned to complete two listening exercises and verbally report their use of listening strategies and thinking process while completing the exercises.

#### D. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ). Additionally, an independent  $t$ -test was administered to compare the listening strategies utilized by the low-ability listeners and the high-ability listeners. In terms of the analysis of qualitative data, the data elicited from the think-aloud task were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Moreover, the triangulation between think-aloud data and questionnaire data was conducted for an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of how Thai ELF students utilize listening strategies to comprehend conversations with ASEAN Englishes accents.

### IV. FINDINGS

The findings regarding the listening strategies utilized by Thai EFL students categorized into low-ability listeners and high-ability listeners to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations are divided into two main parts: the quantitative results from the questionnaires and the qualitative results from the think-aloud task. These findings are organized and presented according to the research objectives.

#### A. The Listening Strategies Most Frequently Utilized by Thai EFL Students Categorized Into Low-Ability Listeners and High-Ability Listeners to Comprehend ASEAN Englishes-Accented Conversations

The findings presented in Table 1 to Table 4 are classified according to two main types of listening strategies which are cognitive strategies (COG) and metacognitive strategies (MET) utilized by the low-ability listeners and the high-ability listeners. The means and standard deviations calculated from the questionnaire data are interpreted and reported based on the top five frequently used listening strategies. The triangulation between the questionnaire data and the think-aloud data is also illustrated for a comprehensive analysis of the use of listening strategies.

TABLE 1  
TOP FIVE COGNITIVE STRATEGIES MOST FREQUENTLY UTILIZED BY LOW-ABILITY LISTENERS

Rank	Cognitive Strategies	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Frequency of Use)
	Statement			
1	I try to translate English into my language in my mind as I listen to conversations.	4.47	0.92	Usually
2	I try to listen for each word or detail while listening to conversations.	4.24	0.95	Usually
3	While listening to conversations, I try to repeat the sounds of the words in my mind.	3.95	0.82	Usually
4	While listening to conversations, I use pronunciation aspects, like stress and intonation, to enhance my understanding.	3.88	0.82	Usually
5	While listening to conversations, I memorize the key points and organize the concepts in my mind.	3.87	0.86	Usually

According to Table 1, the low-ability listeners reported using *‘translating English into first language in mind’* as the most frequently utilized cognitive strategy to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. The cognitive strategy *‘listening for each word or detail’* was ranked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place with *‘repeating the sounds of the words in mind’* ranked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The cognitive strategy *‘using pronunciation aspects such as stress and intonation to enhance understanding’* and *‘memorizing key points and organizing concepts in mind’* were ranked in the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> place of the most frequently utilized cognitive strategies respectively. Although the aforementioned cognitive strategies were ranked in different orders (from the 1<sup>st</sup> place to the 5<sup>th</sup> place), they were all reported to have the same frequency of use, which was *‘Usually’*.

Based on the qualitative data obtained from the think-aloud task, the cognitive strategies used mainly by the low-ability listeners were a word-for-word translation and focusing on understanding ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations in detail. During the think-aloud task, five participants (100%) in the low-ability groups reported the use of a word-for-word translation to facilitate their listening comprehension — *“I have to think about the meaning of each word in Thai so that I can understand what the speakers are saying.”* (L1’s think-aloud). Another cognitive strategy that was frequently reported by four low-ability listeners (80%) was focusing on understanding the conversation in detail rather than the overall meaning of the conversation— *“I think I cannot answer this question unless I understand every detail of the whole conversation.”* (L3’s think-aloud).

TABLE 2  
TOP FIVE COGNITIVE STRATEGIES MOST FREQUENTLY UTILIZED BY HIGH-ABILITY LISTENERS

Rank	Cognitive Strategies	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Frequency of Use)
	Statement			
1	While listening to conversations, I use the setting and the relationship between speakers to enhance my understanding.	4.26	0.76	Usually
2	While listening to conversations, I use my experience and background knowledge to help me understand.	4.25	0.87	Usually
3	While listening to conversations, I try to listen for a purpose, theme, or main idea of the conversation.	4.21	0.96	Usually
4	While listening to conversations, I picture the setting of the conversation to understand what the speakers are talking about.	4.19	0.96	Usually
5	While listening to conversations, I listen for some specific aspects of information like familiar keywords and repeated words to enhance my overall understanding.	4.12	0.94	Usually

Table 2 reveals that *‘using the setting and the relationship between speakers to enhance listening comprehension’* was the most frequently utilized cognitive strategy by the high-ability listeners to comprehend ASEAN-accented conversations. The high ability listeners ranked *‘using experience and background knowledge to enhance listening comprehension’* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place of the frequently used cognitive strategy, and *‘listening for a purpose, theme, or main idea’* was ranked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The cognitive strategy *‘visualizing the setting of the conversation to understand what the speakers are talking about’* was ranked in the 4<sup>th</sup> place followed by *‘listening for some specific aspects of information like familiar keywords and repeated words to enhance listening comprehension’* which was ranked in the 5<sup>th</sup> place of the most frequently utilized cognitive strategy by the high-ability listeners. Despite being ranked in different orders (from the 1<sup>st</sup> place to the 5<sup>th</sup> place), these cognitive strategies were all reported to have the same frequency of use, which was *‘Usually’*.

The qualitative data from the think-aloud task performed by the high-ability listeners is aligned with the questionnaire data. In the think-aloud task, five high-ability listeners (100%) reported that they visualized the setting of the conversations and interpreted the relationship between speakers to help them understand ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations— *“Before listening to the conversations, I think about the setting of the conversation and the relationship between speakers to facilitate my listening comprehension.”* (H2’s think-aloud). All of these high-ability listeners (100%) also mentioned the use of their experience and background knowledge to help them understand the

information in the conversations— “I can compare the situation that the speakers are talking to my own experiences, and this helps me understand more about the messages of the conversations.” (H4’s think-aloud). Moreover, most of the high-ability listeners (80%) prefer listening for a purpose, theme, or main idea to listening for details — “I can understand the conversation better when I focus on capturing its main idea rather than all details.” (H3’s think-aloud).

TABLE 3  
TOP FIVE METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES MOST FREQUENTLY UTILIZED BY LOW-ABILITY LISTENERS

Rank	Metacognitive Strategies	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Frequency of Use)
	Statement			
1	I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension, while listening to conversations.	4.24	0.91	Usually
2	I focus harder on listening to the conversations when I have trouble understanding the content while listening to conversations.	4.19	0.85	Usually
3	While listening to conversations, I concentrate on identifying my problems in listening and work on solving them.	4.16	0.84	Usually
4	If my mind wanders while I am listening to conversations, I recover my concentration right away.	4.13	0.72	Usually
5	While listening to conversations, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize it is incorrect.	4.06	0.96	Usually

As shown in Table 3, the low-ability listeners reported using ‘*periodically checking the satisfaction of comprehension level*’ as the most frequently utilized metacognitive strategy to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. The metacognitive strategy ‘*focusing harder on listening when having trouble understanding the content*’ was ranked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place, followed by ‘*concentrating on identifying problems in listening and working on solving them*’ ranked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The metacognitive strategies ‘*recovering concentration right away when losing it*’ and ‘*quickly adjusting the interpretation when realizing that it is incorrect*’ were ranked in the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> place of the most frequently used metacognitive strategies by the low-ability listeners respectively. Although the aforementioned metacognitive strategies were ranked in different orders (from 1<sup>st</sup> place to 5<sup>th</sup> place), they were all reported to have the same frequency of use, which was ‘*Usually*’.

Based on the qualitative data elicited from the think-aloud task, five participants in the low-ability group (100%) confirmed that they periodically recheck their understanding while listening ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations — “I keep questioning myself about whether I am understanding the conversations well.” (L2’s think-aloud). These low-ability listeners (100%) also reported that they must try to identify their problems in listening and work on solving them— “I think I am having some difficulties in understanding this conversation because I do not know the meaning of some words, so I must focus harder on listening to the conversations next time.” (L2’s think-aloud).

TABLE 4  
TOP FIVE METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES MOST FREQUENTLY UTILIZED BY HIGH-ABILITY LISTENERS

Rank	Metacognitive Strategies	Mean	SD	Interpretation (Frequency of Use)
	Statement			
1	While listening to a conversation, when I think I understand some information, I check if it fits in with the context of the conversation.	4.57	0.87	Always
2	Before listening, I first make predictions about the content of conversations based on their topics.	4.55	0.84	Always
3	Before listening, I have a plan in my mind for how I am going to listen.	4.46	0.73	Usually
4	While listening to conversations, when I think I understand some information in the conversation, I compare it with my background knowledge.	4.43	0.95	Usually
5	Before listening, I think of similar conversation topics that I may have listened to.	4.26	0.96	Usually

According to Table 4, the high-ability listeners reported their use of ‘*checking understanding with the contexts of conversations*’ as the most frequently utilized metacognitive strategy to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. The metacognitive strategy ‘*making predictions about the content of conversations based on topics before listening*’ was ranked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place of the most frequently used metacognitive strategy. In spite of being ranked in different orders (1<sup>st</sup> place and 2<sup>nd</sup> place), these two metacognitive strategies were reported with the same usage frequency, which was ‘*Always*’. The metacognitive strategy ranked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place was ‘*having a plan in mind for how to listen*’, and ‘*checking understanding of some information by comparing it with background knowledge*’ was ranked in the 4<sup>th</sup> place. The metacognitive strategy ‘*thinking of similar conversation topics before listening*’ was ranked in the 5<sup>th</sup> place of the most frequently utilized metacognitive strategy by the high-ability listeners. Although these three metacognitive strategies were ranked in difference orders (from the 3<sup>rd</sup> place to the 5<sup>th</sup> place), they were reported to have the same frequency of use, which was ‘*Usually*’.

In terms of the qualitative data from the think-aloud task, the metacognitive strategies frequently utilized by the high-ability listeners were using conversation contexts and background knowledge to check their comprehension as well as using topics of conversations to predict the content of conversations in advance. During the think-aloud task, five high-ability listeners (100%) informed that while listening to ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations, they always rechecked their understanding based on the contexts of the conversations— “I think the speaker is asking for the ticket price, not the room price because he is now at the bus terminal and he wants to travel to Osaka.” (H1’s think-aloud).

Apart from the contexts of conversation, all high-ability listeners (100%) reported that they rechecked their understanding with their background knowledge— “*I can compare the spoken messages with my background knowledge and experience to ensure my understanding.*” (H3’s think-aloud). Four high-ability listeners (80%) also reported the use of predicting the content of conversations according to the topics before listening— “*Before listening, I have to read the instructions and questions to come up with the topic of the conversation. After knowing what the topic of the conversation is, I can make predictions about the content of conversations.*” (H2’s think-aloud).

#### B. The Similarities and Differences Between Listening Strategies Utilized by Low-Ability Listeners and High-Ability Listeners to Comprehend ASEAN Englishes-Accented Conversations

The independent *t*-test was administered to compare between the mean score of each type of listening strategies (i.e., COG and MET) utilized by the low-ability listeners and the high-ability listeners. The comparison between the mean score of listening strategies (i.e., including COG and MET) was also conducted. The comparison results are illustrated in Table 5 to Table 7.

TABLE 5  
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OVERALL LISTENING STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY LOW-ABILITY LISTENERS AND HIGH-ABILITY LISTENERS

Ability Group	Overall Utilization of Listening Strategies (COG & MET)				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
High-ability listeners	150	3.74	0.60	2.246	0.026*
Low-ability listeners	150	3.59	0.70		

\*sig at *p-value* < 0.05

According to Table 5, the comparison between overall listening strategies (covering COG and MET) utilized by the high-ability listeners and the low-ability listeners demonstrated a significant difference. The result of the *t*-test computed on the mean score of the overall listening strategies used by the high-ability listeners ( $M = 3.74$  and  $SD = 0.60$ ) and the mean score of the low-ability listeners ( $M = 3.59$  and  $SD = 0.70$ ) showed a *p-value* of 0.026, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This comparison indicates that the high-ability listeners significantly utilize overall listening strategies to comprehend ASEAN-Englishes accented conversations more frequently than the low-ability listeners.

TABLE 6  
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN COGNITIVE STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY LOW-ABILITY LISTENERS AND HIGH-ABILITY LISTENERS

Ability Group	Utilization of Cognitive Strategies				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
High-ability listeners	150	3.77	0.53	2.270	0.024*
Low-ability listeners	150	3.57	0.67		

\*sig at *p-value* < 0.05

Based on Table 6, the comparison between cognitive strategies utilized by the high-ability listeners and the low-ability listeners indicated a significant difference. The result of the *t*-test run on the mean score of the use of cognitive strategies by the high-ability listeners ( $M = 3.77$  and  $SD = 0.53$ ) and the mean score of the low-ability listeners ( $M = 3.57$  and  $SD = 0.67$ ) showed a *p-value* of 0.024, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significance. This comparison indicates that the high-ability listeners significantly utilize cognitive strategies for comprehending ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations more frequently than the low-ability listeners.

TABLE 7  
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY LOW-ABILITY LISTENERS AND HIGH-ABILITY LISTENERS

Ability Group	Utilization of Metacognitive Strategies				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
High-ability listeners	150	4.01	0.51	2.496	0.013*
Low-ability listeners	150	3.81	0.60		

\*sig at *p-value* < 0.05

According to Table 6, the comparison between metacognitive strategies utilized by the high-ability listeners and low-ability listeners demonstrated a significant difference. The result of the *t*-test run on the mean score of the use of metacognitive strategies by the high-ability listeners ( $M = 4.01$  and  $SD = 0.51$ ) and the score of the low-ability listeners ( $M = 3.81$  and  $SD = 0.60$ ) showed a *p-value* of 0.013, which was lower than the 0.05 level of significant difference. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that the high-ability listeners significantly utilize metacognitive strategies to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations more frequently than the low-ability listeners.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. High-Ability Listeners Utilize a Wider Range of Listening Strategies to Comprehend ASEAN Englishes-Accented Conversations More Frequently Than Low-Ability Listeners Do

According to the findings, Thai EFL students classified as low-ability listeners and high-ability listeners differently utilize listening strategies (i.e., cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies) to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. Based on the questionnaire results, the highest mean for the listening strategies utilized by the listeners in the high-ability group fell in the usage level of 'Always' (MET: '**checking understanding with the contexts of conversations**'). In addition, the high-ability listeners applied another MET: '**making predictions about the content of conversations based on topics before listening**' at the usage level of 'Always' as well. On the other hand, the highest mean for the listening strategies used by the low-ability listeners was only at the usage level of 'Usually' (COG: '**translating English into first language in mind**').

More importantly, the results regarding the different usage level are further confirmed with the statistical comparison of the overall listening strategies utilized by the low-ability listeners and the high-ability listeners. According to the statistical comparison of the overall listening strategies, the high-ability listeners significantly utilize overall listening strategies to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations more frequently than the low-ability listeners do. This finding corresponds with several studies (e.g., Griffiths, 2003; Vandergrift, 2003; Piamsai, 2005) investigating how low-ability listeners and high-ability listeners apply listening strategies for listening comprehension. These strategy-related studies concluded that high-listening ability learners apply overall listening strategies more frequently than those in the low-ability group. Vandergrift (2003) and Griffiths (2003) further summarized that high-ability listeners tend to apply a wider range and various types of listening strategies to successfully achieve listening comprehension.

Regarding the utilization of each category of listening strategies (i.e., COG and MET), the comparison also shows significant differences in the use of COG and MET between the high-ability group and the low-ability group. More specifically, the high-ability listeners significantly utilize COG and MET strategies to comprehend ASEAN-accented conversations more frequently than those in the low-ability group. These findings align with Piamsai (2005), who supported the claim made by Vandergrift (2003) and Griffiths (2003) by concluding that proficient listeners significantly employ COG and MET more frequently than listeners in low-proficiency groups do.

#### *B. Unlike Low-Ability Listeners, High-Ability Listeners Know How to Effectively Utilize Listening Strategies in a Systematic Way to Successfully Achieve the Listening Comprehension of ASEAN Englishes-Accented Conversations*

Apart from the significant differences regarding the frequency in the utilization of COG and MET, both quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and qualitative data collected from the think-aloud task clearly demonstrate the differences between the individual listening strategies utilized by the high-ability listeners and the low-ability listeners.

Regarding the utilization of COG, the high-ability listeners widely reported the utilization of the '**using the setting and the relationship between speakers to enhance listening comprehension**', which had the highest mean, followed by '**using experience and background knowledge to enhance listening comprehension**', '**listening for a purpose, theme, or main idea**', '**visualizing the setting of the conversation to understand what the speakers are talking about**', and '**listening for some specific aspects of information like familiar keywords and repeated words to enhance understanding**' respectively. In terms of the top five MET used by the high-ability listeners, the high-ability listeners reported they always used '**checking understanding with the contexts of conversations**' and '**making predictions about the content of conversations based on topics before listening**'. The other three MET strategies that high-ability listeners usually use while listening were '**having a plan in mind for how to listen**', '**checking understanding of some information by comparing it with background knowledge**', and '**thinking of similar conversation topics before listening**'.

With reference to the COG and MET strategies utilized mainly by the high-ability listeners to comprehend ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations, the listening strategies (i.e., monitoring comprehension, making reasonable predictions, focusing on the main idea, using context clues, associating with background knowledge about the topic, and visualizing what is being heard) correspond with the skills that language learners should master to perform well in a listening task (Abdalhamid, 2012; Holden, 2004; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The high-ability listeners also prefer capturing the main idea and keywords of the conversations instead of listening for every detail, which is believed to be a trait of successful learners who can manage and direct their learning to accomplish their goals (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Many researchers (e.g., Griffiths, 2003; Sadighi & Zare, 2006) have confirmed the positive results of utilizing these listening strategies by concluding that these strategies facilitate listening comprehension, especially having background knowledge concerning the context of the utterance. Sadighi and Zare (2006) also indicated that proficient listeners use background knowledge, predicting and selecting the relevant parts, and ignoring irrelevant parts are the most frequently used listening strategies. Griffiths (2003) also made claims about the advantages of the utilization of listening strategies like paying attention to the context, being willing to make mistakes, and trying to make accurate and reasonable predictions by proficient listeners to achieve listening comprehension. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) further proposed that familiarizing learners with the listening topics and encouraging them to form a mental picture of what they are going to listen to will benefit not only advanced language learners but also non-advanced ones.

In contrast to the high-ability listeners, while listening to ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations, the low-ability listeners in this study relied heavily on the use of the translation strategy, which the high-listening ability group rarely used, especially word-for-word translation and concentrating on detail. According to the questionnaire and think-aloud results, the low-ability listeners reported using the COG strategy: '**translating English into first language in mind**'

with the highest mean score of all the listening strategies. This finding aligns with Vandergrift (2003), who reported the more frequent use of the translation strategy by non-proficient listeners than proficient ones. Vandergrift (2003) further emphasized that the translation strategy is not popular among advanced listeners, and they do not depend on using this strategy when listening to conversations. Piamsai (2005) supported Vandergrift (2003) by claiming that the utilization of the translation strategy may even negatively affect the listeners' performance because listening processes occur in a simultaneous and rapid manner, but applying translation, especially word-for-word, will slow the decoding process. Another listening strategy that was applied more frequently by the low-ability listeners when compared to the listeners in the high-ability group is listening for every word and detail (i.e., concentrating on detail). Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire and think-aloud, the low-ability listeners also ranged in their use of the COG strategy: '*listening for each word or detail*' in the high usage level. Instead of listening for keywords or capturing the main ideas, like the high-ability listeners do, the low-ability listeners prefer capturing and decoding every word spoken in the conversations in order to do a word-for-word translation for comprehending the ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. These strategies might not be effective and practical because they interrupt the flow of the listening process. Unlike the low-ability listeners, Piamsai (2005) and Vandergrift (2003) expressed that the high-ability listeners tend to focus on gaining insight into the main idea and purpose of the speech without paying full attention to all the words and details. They are regarded as a goal-oriented listener who concentrates on the purpose of the listening tasks and prefers capturing only the main ideas or keywords from the listening tracks. Therefore, most listeners in the high-ability group avoid doing word-by-word translations and paying attention to every word and all detail (Piamsai, 2005; Vandergrift, 2003).

#### VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Based on the findings of this study, teaching learners, especially those with a low listening ability, on how to select an appropriate choice of listening strategies and effectively utilize these strategies in a systematic way would be very helpful for them to successfully achieve listening comprehension (Carrier, 2003; Coskun, 2010; Goh, 2002; Vandergrift, 2003). As learners can better achieve listening comprehension when they have an awareness of the systematic ways of using effective and practical listening strategies, Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI), which is a teaching approach focusing on teaching strategies to learners to facilitate their learning process and improve their proficiency and knowledge (Cohen, 2000; Chamot, 2005; Oxford, 1990), should be applied as a teaching method to improve listening comprehension skills of low-proficiency listeners. In considering SBI for teaching listening comprehension based on the findings of this study, the listening strategies utilized by high-ability listeners are believed to be a trait of successful listeners who can manage and direct their listening process to achieve the comprehension of ASEAN Englishes-accented conversions, so low-ability listeners should be trained to utilize those listening strategies applied by the high-ability listeners. Particularly, the low-ability listeners should be informed about the disadvantages of applying the translation strategy, whereby focusing on detail and doing word-for-word translation can interrupt the flow of the listening process. Moreover, low-ability listeners should be equipped with appropriate listening strategies such as monitoring comprehension, capturing main ideas, using context clues, picturing mental images, and making logical predictions to improve their listening comprehension (either native-accented conversations or non-native-accented conversations). Furthermore, as background knowledge is considered one of the crucial factors leading to listening comprehension, low-ability learners should be provided with opportunities to experience a wide variety of listening topics to improve their listening comprehension. Consequently, low-ability listeners should be instructed on how to select appropriate listening strategies and given the opportunity to practice using these strategies in class to enhance their listening comprehension.

#### VII. CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate how Thai EFL students utilize two main categories of listening strategies (cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies) while listening to conversations with ASEAN Englishes accents. According to the findings of this study, the high-ability listeners significantly utilize cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies more frequently than the low-ability listeners. In addition to the greater frequency in the use of listening strategies, the findings also reflect that the high-ability listeners know how to appropriately select listening strategies and effectively utilize these strategies in a systematic way to achieve the listening comprehension of ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations. Generally, the high-ability listeners know, they need to make reasonable predictions before listening, capture the main ideas and keywords, use context clues, make intelligent guesses, and associate between their background knowledge and the listening topics. Therefore, the study indicates that high-ability listeners can select an appropriate choice of listening strategies and effectively utilize these strategies in a systematic way. On the other hand, low-ability listeners do not know how to select listening strategies appropriately, so they cannot process the listening input automatically. As a result, they try to listen for detail and depend heavily on the word-for-word translation strategy to help them comprehend conversations with ASEAN Englishes accents. These strategies are not considered adequate and practical for them to perform well in listening tasks, especially long ones, because the listening processes naturally occur in a simultaneous and rapid manner. Consequently, based on the study's findings, Strategies-Based

Instruction (SBI) should be applied to train learners to effectively utilize practical listening strategies to enhance their comprehension of ASEAN Englishes-accented conversations.

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