Unveiling Linguistic Awareness: A Narrative Inquiry Into A Teacher's Experiences In EFL Classrooms

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Abstract.

Language is used in our daily interactions to fulfil many different goals such as communicating information, ideas, beliefs, emotions and attitudes to one another orally or writtenly. To ensure the language is perceived appropriately, language learners should know about a language, how it is learned, how it is used, in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problems in communication. Applied linguistics in language teaching will help learners to deal with solving or at least ameliorating social or communicative problems involving language. This study aimed to explore the awareness of incorporating linguistics knowledge in EFL classrooms. The central issues of this study are challenges and strategies employed by the teacher to deal linguistics errors which appeared upon teaching listening in the classroom The study applied a narrative inquiry. The findings revealed that linguistics knowledge incorporated by teachers during the classroom learning were desperately needed to help students in understanding the tasks given and to facilitate students in communicating their ideas orally or writtenly.

Keywords: Linguistic Awareness and EFL Narrative Inquiry .

I.   INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is one of the most important components of oral speech communication which provides the basis for development of other speech aspects and cognitive development. Listening comprehension is a prerequisite for language acquisition. Listening comprehension is the first kind of speech activity a child acquires and it takes the most time to acquire it. If you have difficulties in understanding what another person is saying in a foreign language you cannot say you have a good command of a foreign language and you cannot use it as a means of communication. Listening in the right way is a crucial skill (Masalimova et. al , 2014). In terms of teaching strategies he points out that one of the most important aims of teaching listening comprehension is to develop such key components of foreign language communicative competence as speech competence, linguistic competence, socio-cultural competence, discourse competence, educational and cognitive competence, and adaptive competence. As a teacher I am expected to apply best strategies in order to build effective interactions. In doing so, the author narrated her experience during her Linguistics course she was joining from February to June 2023. The lecturer of the university where the author was based encouraged all the students to engage in the course by completing the weekly reports to monitor their self-reflections during the course. Concerning this, I was expected to reflect on my linguistics understanding, practice and make appropriate adjustments to be utilized as a tool to identify best classroom strategies adapted in my teaching practices.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW
Background to the teaching of listening

Listening, along with reading, is a receptive skill. That is, it requires a person to receive and understand incoming information (input). Because listening is receptive, we can listen to and understand things at a higher level than we can produce. For this reason, people sometimes think of it as a passive skill. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Listening is very active. As people listen, they process not only what they hear but also connect it to other information they already know. Since listeners combine what they hear with their own ideas and experiences, in a very real sense they are "creating the meaning" in their own minds (Nunan, 2003). He referred to Buck (1995) who points out, the assumption that listeners simply decode

messages is mistaken, " (M)eaning is not in the text (text = whatever is being listened to)—but is something that is constructed by listeners based on a number of different knowledge sources." Among those sources are knowledge of language, of what has already been said, of context, and general background knowledge. Listening is meaning based. When we listen, we are normally doing so for a purpose. You might even say we don't listen to words, we listen to the meaning behind the words. 'Listening' usually happens in real time. That is, people listen and have to comprehend what they hear immediately. There is no time to go back and review, look up unknown words, etc. Secondly, although listening is receptive, it very often happens in the midst of a conversation— something which requires productive, spoken responses. To understand how listening works and how to teach it more effectively, start by thinking about your own listening.

Principles for teaching listening

Nunan (2003) in his book further explains that to understand how people make sense of the stream of sound we all hear, it is helpful to think about how we process the input. A useful metaphor often used to explain reading but equally applicable to listening is "bottom-up vs. top-down processing," proposed by Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) and expanded upon by Chaudron and Richards (1986), Richards (1990), and others. The distinction is based on the way learners attempt to understand what they read or hear. With bottom-up processing, students start with the component parts: words, grammar, and the like. Top-down processing is the opposite. Learners start from their background knowledge, either content schema (general information based on previous learning and life experience) or textual schema (awareness of the kinds of information used in a given situation) (See Long, 1989).

Brown (1995) talks about "cognitive load" and describes six factors that increase or decrease the ease of understanding:

- The number of individuals or objects in a text (e.g., More voices increase difficulty.)
- How clearly the individuals or objects are distinct from one another (e.g., A recording with a male voice and a female voice is easier than one with two similar male voices or two similar female voices.)
- Simple, specific spatial relationships are easier to understand than complex ones, (e.g., In a recording giving directions, information like turn right at the bank is easier to understand than go a little way on that street)
- • The order of events (e.g., It is easier when the information given follows the order it happened in, as opposed to a story that includes a flashback about events that happened earlier.)
- The number of inferences needed (e.g., Fewer are easier than more.)
- The information is consistent with what the listener already knows (e.g., Hearing someone talk about a film you have seen is easier to understand than hearing the same type of conversation about one you haven't seen.)

Teach listening strategies

Concerning the listening strategies, Rost (2002, p. 155) identifies as strategies that are used by successful listeners.

- Predicting: Effective listeners think about what they will hear. This fits into the ideas about pre listening mentioned earlier.
- Inferring: It is useful for learners to "listen between the lines."
- Monitoring: Good listeners notice what they do and don't understand.
- Clarifying: Efficient learners ask questions (What does____mean ? You mean___ ?) and give feedback [I don't understand yet) to the speaker.
- Responding: Learners react to what they hear.
- Evaluating: They check on how well they have understood.

Practice self-reflection

I started my study by doing observations using a reflective reports in my Linguistics class. The reports portrayed each situation from my first course when I reviewed my Linguistics knowledge to a real teaching practice in my classroom. In an attempt to get deeper understanding on my own experiences I adapted a framework suggested by Farell (2019) to encourage thinking about myself and my teaching that

includes activation of my feelings and emotions, or a more holistic approach to reflection, so that they can also develop my inner resources to meet future challenges in the profession. Within English language teaching, Farrell (2015) has recently developed such a holistic approach to reflective practice that recognizes the inner lives of teachers or the spiritual, moral and emotional aspects of reflective practice. Implementing such a holistic approach to teacher reflection results in more integrated teachers; teachers who are more self-aware so that they can interpret, shape and reshape their practice, and thus provide more opportunities for their students to learn. Farrell (2015) calls this holistic approach to reflective practice *the framework for reflecting on practice.*

III.   METHODS
Design
Narrative inquiry According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 2000), narrative inquiry is the study of people in relationship with people, places and things by researchers who themselves are in relationship with people, places, and things. It confounds people because it follows no pre-set design. He stated that arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. … Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study. (Connelly and Clandinin 2006, 477). The primary data collecting technique was the author's reflective reports during the period of February to June in the process of her study in Linguistics in English Language Education course.

Instruments
The data from the author was written in weekly reports (a reflective-instrument provided by the lecturer). The author wrote her reflective reports about the knowledge of linguistics aspects, observation classroom practices on videos and her experiences upon teaching in her classroom.

Framework for reflecting on practice
The framework for reflecting on practice has five different stages (or levels) of reflection: philosophy; principles; theory; practice; and beyond practice. They are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Farrell's Reflection Practice Framework

No	Stage	Explanation
1	Philosophy	explores the 'teacher-as-person'; because the teacher is at the center of the act of teaching; it matters 'who' the teacher is, and a teacher's self-understanding is crucial to understanding the scholarship of teaching. Teachers can capture knowledge about the 'who' of the teacher through the lens of autobiographical sketches or by telling their story. By telling their stories teachers can make better sense of seemingly random experiences because they hold the insider knowledge, especially personal intuitive knowledge, expertise and experience that has shaped their identity
2	Principles	include reflections on teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Teacher beliefs, defined as 'unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught'. When teachers are given a chance to articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning, and reflect on the source of these beliefs, they can then begin to (re)evaluate their appropriateness related to their particular context
3	Theory	explores and examines the different choices a teacher makes about particular skills taught (or they think should be taught) or, in other words, how to put their theories into practice.
4	Practice	Encourage teachers to reflect on their actual classroom practices. Of course, these classroom practices are not performed in isolation and many of the decisions a teacher makes during a lesson and the actions he or she performs or what the teacher gets his or her students to do in a lesson are informed and influenced by his or her philosophy, principles and theory (previous stages) before he or she enters the room or as a result of a previous lesson. When teachers engage in reflection-in-action they attempt to consciously stand back while they are teaching as they monitor and adjust to various

5	Beyond practice	circumstances that are happening within the lesson.
		Teachers take a critical stance to their practices beyond the classroom as they explore and examine the moral, political and social issues related to their work.

Procedures

The step in conducting the research started from compiling the data from the author's weekly reports. The author rephrase them and then arrange them using Farell's framework.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stage 1: Philosophy

I understood the basics of linguistics and why I needed to learn it throughout the first week of class. I observed that there were a lot of theories of phonetics and phonology I should refresh. I found some difficulties to understand the theories, however, watching a few videos made it easy for me to put all the concepts into reality.

"The video shows the effective ways or approach to teach phonology. The main objective is to make the pronunciation not only a mental activity but more on the physical activity. The mentor said that the aim is to make the connection between the head and the musles. It is the approach which make the pronunciation physical or so called 'visible approach pronunciaion. This is not a habit-repetition, but try to make all the sounds alive in the muscle by practising them."

In the second week, I completed the morphology-related assignments. I summed up what I had read in the reference book:

"I read a lot of theories and this is quite hard for me to summarize them. From the class I got understanding about Morphology. I got the eaiest definition about it, 'the study of morph'. Knowing about words, Derivational--Class changing and class maintaining"

The following week, I explored the Semantics which resulted:

"I read some theories about words, the meaning and how to understand them in context. I got the understanding of semantics which is the study of meaning in language. I learned about several different ways of analyzing lexical meaning. Lexical meaning depends partly on relations among words, for instance as described by lexical fields, hyponymy, antonymy, synonymy, meronymy, and homonymy. Lexical meaning is partly determined by syntactic structures. Lexical meaning is also very likely influenced by cognitive structures and processes by which the mind interprets human experience. Lexical meaning depends partly on semantic processes that occur over time, such as specialization, generalization, amelioration, pejoration, and metaphorical extension.Lexical meaning is sometimes socially and culturally significant; at least, our understanding of what and how words mean influences our political and cultural conversations. From the video I learned how to understand words, sentence meaning from some aspects. I learned to draw simple tree diagram to more complicated ones, so that sentences are easy to define. It can help us to distinguish meaning and to solve ambiguity. It helps us to identify properties of each word in order to find each connection."

The fourth week the discussion was about discourse analysis. I reflected the process as follows:
I learned broader use of words, phrases and sentences in the form of discourse. I tried to understand some theories about discource but sometimes I got confused to find the differences between discourse and speech acts. I tried to reread the two terms and I tried to sum up both terms. When we talk about 'discourse' we also talk about speech acts theories. Discourse is anything beyond the sentence, language in use or in a particular situation, a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language. To analyze the discourse we need to do some approaches using speech act theories. A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication. Therefore by understanding those theories we will understand about the language from various point of views."

Stage 2: Principles

I observed some samples of video teaching on the four skills then tried to find specific approach used by the teacher/instructor. I noticed that linguistic aspects will also be taken into account when teaching the skills.From the video I observed, when the teacher found problems dealing 'linguistic aspects' he/she also

considered them. When she taught listening class, the teacher also focused the way phrases were applied, in terms of the formality of the conversation. How to use a particular sentence in 'formal' or 'informal' situations.In the second video about teaching speaking, the teacher also focused the linguistic aspects such as words production, pronunciation, and the grammar.In the third video on how to teach reading, the teacher should consider the use of connecting words (first, then, suddenly, meanwhile etc) since it connect the overall or larger texts.The last video on teaching writing, monitoring and self editing are important part in writing activities. A teacher competencies in linguistics will help his/her roles as an editor of the students' writing. The teacher should monitor how well the students write and then give feedback. This will make her teaching effective because the teacher helps students to improve their writing by giving necessary feedback.

The questions which I asked to my obeservation were: How to teach the four skills and consider the linguistic problems faced by the students without missing the 'four-skill objectives' as stated in the lesson plan. The next question is How to make corrections on the linguistic errors without distracting the lesson objectives?

Stage 3. Theory

The challenge is when I have to plan a teaching session for 20-30 minutes. I have to consider an effective lesson plan to conduct my teaching strategy so that all the target can be fullfilled. I am planning to teach in the real class with my students which means that all situations may take place during the process. -

I propose a simple topic and material that the students will learn effectively in 20-30 minutes.
I try to write the detailed procedures in my teaching plan, so that all the things are covered and completed in time.

Since the topics are not all familiar to students, I need to start by having vocabulary and sentence-patterns review. It hopefully helps students in understanding the ideas they hear in the listening section.

Stage 4. Practice

The next step was having a teaching practice in my classroom. Then I video recorded the class activities. I focused on teaching listening since it was considered hard for my students. My observation resulted as follows:

In the video the teacher (the author) asked the students to listen to a topic and fill in the gaps. The teacher focused on some dfficult or unfamiliar vocabulary. Before doing further activities, the teacher provided a purpose for listening with questions and activities. The teacher varied the types of questions she asked. She asked the main ideas, specific information, or specific grammar or vocabulary points. She provided opportunities for students to respond to what they heard. The teacher focused not only in the listening skills but also the language discourse. The way phrases were applied, for example the formality of the conversation, was also her concerns. In this case, the teacher' abilities in linguistics are necessary. In the first part, the activity focused on understanding the vocabulary, sentences that were applied in the listening task. The teacher then monitored how well the students were doing the tasks. When she found out that the students made errors concerning the linguistic aspects, she corrected them before discussing the rest of activities. Some disccusions concerning the linguistic aspects can be presented in the following example:

No	Linguistic aspect	Discussion	Ways to improve
1	Phonology	Identify errors in the pronunciation of the words: • temperature • service	Teacher's correction: She showed how to pronounce the words, then class followed after her
2	Morphology	Present some words using suffix 'ment': • employement: employ+<u>ment</u> • payment: pay+<u>ment</u> • assignment: assign + <u>ment</u>	The teacher ensured that the topic in the listening was understood by providing them pre-tasks which focused on the vocabulary building
3	Syntax and semantics	Change the affirmative sentences to interrogatives • The museum will close at 9	In order to understand the sentences provided in the listening topics, the teacher discussed the sentence order

		p.m. on Sunday When ....?	in interrogative forms focusing on the use of question words, and the auxiliary verbs

She also asked the main ideas, specific information, or specific grammar or vocabulary points the students probably found in the listening task. She provided opportunities for students to respond to what they heard before they got the completed listening script. To end up the session, as shown in the last activity, the teacher asked the students to listen to the announcements and then fill in the gaps. The teacher provided the completed listening script as their final check.

Stage 5. Beyond practice

The final step is evaluation. As a a teacher I evaluated that I am not the only model in the class. Therefore, I can assign students as the model for others in the group. By doing this approach, the students can remember how to pronounce well in enjoyment. The next strategy is when the teacher explains about the words' production and words'stress by demonstrating them with the students' model. The expected result is that the students can decriminate the stress patterns by hearing it not repeating it. This is preparing students to find connected speech and intonation, or the rythm. They then begin to uderstand intonation and then recall the words.

V.   CONCLUSION

This study narrates a teacher's experiences in teaching listening. The use of reflective reports helped her to get deeper understanding of the need of her students during classroom discussion. This study is the first step towards enhancing our understanding of reflective practice, teachers got the chance to reflect on and reassess their prior experiences of their philosophy, teaching principles and beliefs, teaching knowledge (theories), teaching practice, and beyond practice influential to their professional development. By doing the self-evaluation, she found out specific approach applicable or effectively used by the teacher/instructor. Errors in linguistics aspects during a teaching-learning interaction should not be ignored. In addition, I observed that in teaching listening, linguistic knowledge will also be taken into consideration to ensure the language is perceived appropriately. These findings suggest opportunities for future research in order to get learners' feedback in the effectiveness of incorporating the linguistics aspects in their classroom.

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