Enhancing English Listening Skills in Senior High School: The Role of Pragmatic Inference Strategies

Yaqian Zheng

Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila, Philippines.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7180-3220

Abstract

This study explores the impact of pragmatic inference strategies on enhancing English listening skills among senior high school students. It examines students' awareness, usage, and perceptions of these strategies, and investigates the relationship between their perceived effectiveness and actual listening proficiency. Utilizing a descriptive survey design, the study engaged purposively selected senior high school students. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire assessing demographic profiles, current listening competencies, and familiarity with pragmatic inference techniques. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate, statistically significant relationship (r = 0.48, p < 0.001) between the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies and students' listening skill levels. Results indicate that students who found the strategies effective demonstrated stronger listening comprehension and greater confidence in interpreting implied meanings. The findings affirm that pragmatic inference strategies not only improve understanding but also foster learner engagement and autonomy. The study recommends the integration of these strategies into English curricula through explicit instruction, continuous practice, and varied listening materials. Moreover, teacher training and the promotion of collaborative and independent learning are essential to maximizing instructional impact.

Keywords: *Pragmatic Inference Strategies, English Listening Skills, Senior High School Students, Listening Comprehension, Language Education.*

INTRODUCTION

English listening skills are a cornerstone of comprehensive language proficiency, particularly in today's globalized society where English functions as a lingua franca (Field, 2018). For senior high school students, the ability to comprehend spoken English is essential for academic achievement and future professional success. Listening comprehension facilitates the understanding and retention of information and enables students to participate in meaningful interactions (Vandergrift & Goh, 2018). Despite its recognized importance, listening is often the most neglected of the four core language skills, overshadowed by greater emphasis on reading and writing in traditional curricula (Renandya & Widodo, 2016).

Pragmatic inference strategies refer to the use of contextual clues and prior knowledge to infer meaning from spoken discourse (Yuan & Jiang, 2021). These strategies are vital for interpreting implied meanings, understanding speech acts, and navigating conversational implicatures (Taguchi, 2019). Pragmatic competence, therefore, plays a pivotal role in both listening comprehension and effective communication.

However, many learners—particularly at the secondary level—struggle to grasp the subtleties and implied nuances in spoken English (Rost, 2020). Integrating pragmatic inference strategies into instruction offers a promising approach to bridge this gap and enhance students' listening comprehension.

Although the theoretical benefits of these strategies are well-documented, empirical research on their application in senior high school settings remains scarce. Existing studies primarily focus on adult learners or those in higher education, leaving a gap in understanding how pragmatic inference strategies function in younger, secondary-level populations (Jeon, 2020). Furthermore, research has largely concentrated on conceptual frameworks rather than practical classroom implementation (Li & Zhang, 2021).

This study seeks to address these gaps by empirically examining the role of pragmatic inference strategies in improving English listening skills among senior high school students. By providing both evidence and actionable insights, the research aims to inform pedagogical practices and contribute meaningfully to the field of language education.

Background of the Study

In contemporary education, English proficiency has become indispensable, particularly at the senior high school level where students prepare for university and future careers. Among the four foundational language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—listening is especially critical as it underpins effective communication and supports broader academic learning (Field, 2018). Proficient listening enables students to comprehend lectures, engage in discussions, and interact with digital and multimedia resources, thereby enhancing academic outcomes (Vandergrift & Goh, 2018).

Yet, listening instruction remains underemphasized in many English language programs. The prevailing focus on reading and writing often results in insufficient development of students' auditory comprehension abilities (Renandya & Widodo, 2016). Additionally, conventional listening pedagogy frequently emphasizes bottom-up processes—such as vocabulary recognition and syntactic parsing—at the expense of top-down strategies, including inference-making and contextual interpretation (Rost, 2020).

Pragmatic inference strategies, which rely on interpreting unstated meanings through context and background knowledge, represent a highly effective method for improving listening comprehension. These strategies empower learners to understand speaker intent, implied meanings, and cultural nuances (Taguchi, 2019). Cultivating pragmatic competence allows students to more accurately interpret spoken English and respond appropriately in diverse communicative contexts.

Despite their potential, pragmatic inference strategies have not been widely explored in the context of high school English instruction. Most related research has focused on tertiary education or adult language learners, creating a significant gap in knowledge regarding their applicability to adolescent students (Jeon, 2020). While studies on adult learners suggest positive outcomes from pragmatic instruction, equivalent evidence for high school contexts remains limited (Yuan & Jiang, 2021).

Moreover, existing studies often remain theoretical in nature, lacking concrete examples or detailed pedagogical guidance. This absence of practical orientation restricts teachers' ability to apply research findings effectively (Li & Zhang, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent need for applied research that not only assesses the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies but also provides practical recommendations for integrating them into high school English curricula.

This study addresses these needs by investigating how pragmatic inference strategies can enhance English listening comprehension among senior high school students. Using empirical methods, it aims to offer a robust evidence base and actionable insights to support more effective, context-sensitive listening instruction.

Identification of the Research Gap

The current body of literature reveals two key gaps concerning the use of pragmatic inference strategies in high school English listening instruction. First, there is a notable lack of empirical research specifically targeting senior high school learners. The majority of studies to date have concentrated on adult or university-level populations (Jeon, 2020; Li & Zhang, 2021), thereby neglecting younger learners whose developmental stages and classroom needs differ significantly.

Second, while theoretical discussions on pragmatic inference strategies abound, there is limited classroom-based research offering practical implementation guidelines for educators (Taguchi, 2019). This lack of applied studies creates a disconnect between academic theory and teaching practice, making it difficult for teachers to adopt these strategies effectively within the constraints of real-world classrooms.

This study responds to both gaps by providing empirical data on the implementation and effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies in a high school context. It aims to produce actionable recommendations for English language educators and contribute to the broader discourse on effective listening instruction in secondary education.

Research Questions

This study aims to enhance the English Listening Skills in Senior High School:

The Role of Pragmatic Inference Strategies. The following research questions guide this investigation:

1. What are the profiles of the respondents, including age, gender, academic performance in English, and previous exposure to English listening activities?

2. What is the current level of English listening skills among senior high school students?

3. What is the level of effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies when implemented in English listening lessons for senior high school students?

4. What is the relationship between the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies implemented and the current level of English listening skills?

5. How do senior high school students perceive the use of pragmatic inference strategies in their English listening lessons?

6. What recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies?

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies and the current level of English listening skills among senior high school students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Importance of English Listening Skills in Senior High School

English listening skills are fundamental to academic

achievement and effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world. Listening comprehension facilitates the processing of spoken information and supports active participation in classroom discussions and multimedia engagement (Field, 2018). According to Vandergrift and Goh (2018), listening is not only a core component of overall language proficiency but also one of the most complex and challenging skills for language learners to master.

Pragmatic Inference Strategies in Language Learning

Pragmatic inference strategies involve drawing on contextual clues and prior knowledge to interpret meaning that is not explicitly stated. These strategies are crucial for grasping implied meanings, speaker intent, and culturally nuanced expressions (Taguchi, 2019). Yuan and Jiang (2021) emphasize that pragmatic competence enhances learners' inferencing abilities, which are essential for successful listening comprehension. Jeon (2020) further asserts that the integration of pragmatic inference strategies into language instruction leads to measurable improvements in learners' interpretive capabilities.

Current Level of English Listening Skills Among High School Students

Research has shown that high school students often exhibit deficiencies in English listening comprehension, particularly in tasks requiring inference and interpretation. Li and Zhang (2021) found that many students struggle to comprehend implied meanings, a challenge attributed to the limited attention given to listening instruction in traditional curricula. This underscores the necessity of innovative and contextually responsive approaches to teaching listening skills.

Effectiveness of Pragmatic Inference Strategies

While most empirical studies on pragmatic inference strategies have focused on adult learners or tertiary education contexts, emerging research indicates positive outcomes at the high school level as well. Rost (2020) reported that high school students who received instruction in pragmatic inference strategies demonstrated significantly better listening comprehension than those taught using conventional methods. This suggests that these strategies are adaptable and effective for adolescent learners, not just adults.

Perceptions of Students Toward Pragmatic Inference Strategies

Student perceptions play a vital role in shaping the effectiveness of instructional approaches. Several studies have documented generally positive attitudes toward pragmatic inference strategies. Taguchi (2019) noted that students find these strategies helpful in understanding complex listening tasks. Similarly, Yuan and Jiang (2021) observed that students appreciated the practical benefits of applying these strategies to real-world English communication scenarios, reinforcing their perceived value in classroom instruction.

Recommendations for Improving Pragmatic Inference Strategy Implementation

The literature offers several pedagogical recommendations to improve the integration of pragmatic inference strategies into English listening instruction. These include incorporating interactive, context-rich listening activities; explicitly teaching inference-making techniques; and exposing students to a range of spoken English varieties through diverse multimedia materials (Vandergrift & Goh, 2018; Li & Zhang, 2021). Additionally, professional development for teachers is critical to ensure they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective implementation (Jeon, 2020).

Synthesis of the Review of Related Literature

The reviewed literature reveals consistent recognition of the importance of listening skills and pragmatic inference strategies in language education. Field (2018) and Vandergrift and Goh (2018) highlight the foundational role of listening in overall language competence, while Renandya and Widodo (2016) criticize the imbalance in instructional focus that disadvantages listening development.

Taguchi (2019) and Yuan and Jiang (2021) provide complementary insights into the role of pragmatic inference strategies—Taguchi offering theoretical grounding, and Yuan and Jiang presenting empirical validation. Both agree that developing pragmatic competence significantly enhances listening comprehension.

Li and Zhang (2021) and Rost (2020) identify a persistent gap in students' ability to make inferences while listening, attributed to traditional instruction methods. Their findings collectively call for pedagogical innovation. Rost (2020) and Jeon (2020) further demonstrate that pragmatic inference strategies can substantially improve listening performance, even among high school learners. However, Jeon emphasizes the need for more research tailored specifically to this age group.

Positive student perceptions are well-documented by Taguchi (2019) and Yuan and Jiang (2021), reinforcing the strategies' instructional viability. Recommendations by Vandergrift and Goh (2018) and Li and Zhang (2021) underscore the importance of teacher training, varied materials, and explicit strategy instruction, forming a coherent blueprint for practical implementation.

Identification of the Research Gap and Justification for the Current Study

Despite growing evidence of the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies, research on their implementation in high school settings remains limited. Most studies to date have targeted adult learners or university students (Jeon, 2020; Li & Zhang, 2021), neglecting the developmental

needs and classroom realities of adolescent learners. This represents a critical void in the literature.

Moreover, while the theoretical benefits of these strategies are well-articulated, there is a lack of classroom-based research that translates theory into actionable teaching practices (Taguchi, 2019). Without practical guidelines, teachers may struggle to incorporate these strategies effectively.

This study aims to address these gaps by empirically investigating how pragmatic inference strategies can be adapted and implemented to enhance English listening skills among senior high school students. In doing so, it seeks to contribute practical, evidence-based insights that inform both curriculum design and instructional practice, ultimately bridging the gap between pedagogical theory and classroom application.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey design to investigate the role of pragmatic inference strategies in enhancing English listening skills among senior high school students. This approach enabled the systematic collection of data related to students' profiles, listening skills, awareness and use of pragmatic inference strategies, and their perceptions of these strategies' effectiveness. The design was appropriate for capturing and analyzing patterns in student responses across a well-defined population, providing empirical evidence on both usage and impact.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved 200 senior high school students, selected through purposive sampling. This non-random sampling method was chosen to ensure that participants met specific inclusion criteria aligned with the research objectives:

a) Currently enrolled in senior high school (Grades 11 or 12);

b) Actively participating in English language courses;

c) Willing to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent.

This targeted approach ensured that the sample was composed of individuals with relevant exposure to the instructional context being studied.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to assess the following dimensions:

a) Demographic Profile – including age, gender, academic performance in English, and previous exposure to English listening activities.

b) Current Listening Skills – using self-assessment items that allowed students to rate their own listening comprehension abilities.

c) Awareness and Usage of Pragmatic Inference Strategies – focusing on students' familiarity with and reported use of strategies to infer meaning from context.

d) Perceived Effectiveness – evaluating how students rated the contribution of these strategies to their listening skill development.

e) Student Perceptions – using a Likert scale to measure attitudes and beliefs about the usefulness and relevance of pragmatic inference strategies in classroom listening activities.

The instrument was reviewed by language education experts for content validity. It was also pilot-tested with a small group of students to assess clarity and comprehensibility. Based on the feedback, necessary revisions were made to enhance item relevance and precision. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was verified using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring acceptable levels of reliability for each scale.

Procedure

The finalized questionnaire was administered during regular English classes. Students completed the survey on-site, under the supervision of their teacher and the researcher. This facilitated a high response rate and ensured that the data collection environment was standardized and minimally disruptive to students' normal academic schedules.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods:

a) Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize participant demographics, listening skills, and perceptions.

b) Pearson correlation analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the perceived effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies and students' current level of English listening proficiency.

In addition, qualitative insights derived from open-ended items and Likert-scale responses were subjected to thematic analysis, providing deeper understanding of students' perspectives on the strategies' impact.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to participation, all respondents provided informed consent after receiving detailed information about the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty or effect on their academic standing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

	f
a. Age:	
15-16 years old	67
17-18 years old	64
19-20 years old	69
Gender:	
Male	73
Female	127
Academic performance in English:	
Below 70% (Failing)	9
70-79% (Satisfactory)	59
80-89% (Good)	90
90-100% (Excellent)	42
Previous exposure to English listening activities (e.g., listening to English audio materials, attending English listening classes):	
None	
Minimal	94
Moderate	68
Extensive	38
How often do you engage in English listening activities outside of school?	
Never	
Rarely	13
Sometimes	123
Often	64

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 200 senior high school students who participated in the study. The age distribution is relatively balanced, with representation across three brackets: 15–16 years (67 students), 17–18 years (64 students), and 19–20 years (69 students). This variation provides a broad developmental context for analyzing differences in listening proficiency and strategy use.

In terms of gender, the sample includes more female students (127) than male students (73), reflecting common trends in language-focused academic studies. Research suggests that female learners often outperform their male counterparts in language-related tasks, which may influence the outcomes of listening-related interventions (Nikolov & Csapó, 2018).

Students' self-reported academic performance in English reveals a generally high proficiency level. The majority fall within the "Good" (80–89%) and "Satisfactory" (70–79%) categories, with a notable proportion (42 students) achieving "Excellent" scores (90–100%). This distribution suggests that the sample possesses sufficient foundational competence for applying more advanced listening strategies, including pragmatic inference (Zhang &Seepho, 2019).

Regarding exposure to English listening activities, a significant portion of students reported minimal (94) or moderate (68)

experience, while 38 students indicated extensive exposure. Notably, no respondents reported no exposure, indicating a baseline familiarity with listening activities across the sample—an important factor for assessing the integration and effectiveness of inference strategies (Renandya & Widodo, 2018).

Finally, students' reported frequency of engaging in listening activities outside of school shows that most students engage occasionally (123 "sometimes", 64 "often"), while only 13 rarely do so. This moderate engagement suggests potential for further development through strategic instruction and extended practice (Vandergrift & Goh, 2018).

The profile data provide essential context for evaluating the role of pragmatic inference strategies in English listening instruction. The students' relatively high English proficiency and regular engagement with listening activities make them well-suited for strategy-based interventions. The gender composition aligns with trends in second language acquisition literature, where female learners are often more linguistically attuned and academically responsive to instruction (Nikolov & Csapó, 2018).

The reported gaps in previous exposure underscore the importance of structured classroom support. As Renandya and Widodo (2018) note, consistent and meaningful listening

practice is critical for developing comprehension. The finding that many students already engage with English listening activities outside of school further supports the feasibility of enhancing these experiences through the integration of pragmatic inference strategies into formal instruction.

In sum, the demographic data reinforce the relevance and potential impact of the current study. The sample characteristics suggest a readiness for more sophisticated listening interventions, and the findings align well with established insights from language education research.

Table 2. Current English Listening Skills

	wm
1. I can understand the main ideas of spoken English in my lessons.	3.46
2. I find it easy to follow conversations in English.	3.19
3. I can understand details and specific information in English audio.	3.44
4. I feel confident in my English listening skills.	3.31
5. I can recognize different accents and dialects in English.	3.22

Legend:

Point	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99-2.00	Agree
2	1.99- 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree

Table 2 presents the self-assessed English listening skills of the participants using a 4-point Likert scale. All items yielded weighted means above 3.00, indicating that, on average, students either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with positive statements regarding their listening proficiency.

The highest-rated item, "I can understand the main ideas of spoken English in my lessons" (WM = 3.46), suggests that students are confident in grasping central concepts during instruction. This is a foundational listening skill that supports comprehension across diverse contexts and is consistent with Vandergrift and Goh's (2018) assertion that identifying main ideas is a key aspect of effective listening.

Closely following, the ability to "understand details and specific information in English audio" (WM = 3.44) reflects the students' competence in processing nuanced content. As Rost (2020) emphasizes, detailed comprehension is crucial for performing academic tasks and navigating real-life listening situations effectively.

Confidence in listening, measured by the item "I feel confident in my English listening skills" (WM = 3.31), also scored positively. Confidence is a strong predictor of learner persistence and engagement. According to Zhang and Seepho (2019), learners who feel confident are more likely to seek out listening opportunities and perform better on comprehension assessments.

The ability to "follow conversations in English" (WM = 3.19) suggests general comfort with spoken discourse but also highlights an area for further development. Comprehending spoken interactions involves decoding speaker intent, contextual references, and turn-taking cues—skills that pragmatic inference strategies are particularly suited to support (Taguchi, 2019).

Similarly, the ability to "recognize different accents and dialects" (WM = 3.22) indicates moderate capability. In today's multilingual and multicultural contexts, exposure to diverse English varieties is increasingly essential. As Yuan and Jiang (2021) note, this ability enhances learners' adaptability and effectiveness in global communication environments.

Overall, the data suggest that senior high school students possess well-developed English listening skills, particularly in understanding main ideas and extracting specific information. However, the slightly lower ratings for following conversations and recognizing varied accents indicate areas where listening instruction can be further strengthened. These findings support the strategic integration of pragmatic inference strategies into listening pedagogy to address these skill gaps and foster more holistic comprehension (Renandya & Widodo, 2018).

Table 3. Pragmatic inference strategies in English listening lessons

	wm
1. I am aware of strategies to infer meanings from context in English.	3.56
2. I regularly use contextual clues to understand spoken English.	3.18
3. I find pragmatic inference strategies helpful in my listening lessons.	3.23
4. I have been taught how to use inference strategies in English class.	3.51
5. I can guess the meaning of unknown words using context.	3.42

Legend:

Point	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99-2.00	Agree
2	1.99- 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents data on students' awareness, instructional exposure, and self-reported use of pragmatic inference strategies in English listening lessons. All items received weighted means above 3.00, indicating a generally high level of agreement across participants.

The highest-rated item, "I am aware of strategies to infer meanings from context in English" (WM = 3.56), suggests that students are well-informed about inference strategies. This reflects successful awareness-building within the curriculum and aligns with Taguchi's (2019) findings on the role of explicit strategy instruction in developing pragmatic competence.

Similarly, the item "I have been taught how to use inference strategies in English class" (WM = 3.51) confirms that many students have received formal instruction on pragmatic inferencing. This supports Renandya and Widodo's (2018) recommendation that these strategies should be systematically embedded in language teaching to improve learners' interpretive abilities.

The ability to apply such strategies is also evident in the statement "I can guess the meaning of unknown words using context" (WM = 3.42), highlighting that students are confident in employing inferencing techniques when confronted with unfamiliar vocabulary. This skill is particularly critical in listening contexts, as noted by Yuan and Jiang (2021), who emphasize the role of contextual clues in successful spoken language comprehension.

While students generally perceive these strategies as helpful—evident in the item "I find pragmatic inference strategies helpful in my listening lessons" (WM = 3.23)—their self-reported frequency of application is slightly lower. The item "I regularly use contextual clues to understand spoken English" received a weighted mean of 3.18, suggesting some variability in how consistently students integrate these strategies into their listening practices.

The findings indicate that senior high school students are both aware of and positively disposed toward pragmatic inference strategies in English listening. Instructional support appears strong, and students feel equipped to use context to decode spoken meaning. However, the slightly lower frequency of reported usage implies that continued reinforcement and practice are needed to ensure consistent application. This echoes Vandergrift and Goh's (2018) emphasis on the importance of repeated exposure and sustained training to embed listening strategies into learners' skillsets.

The overall results are promising, suggesting that with further instructional scaffolding and guided application, pragmatic inference strategies can become an even more integral part of students' language learning toolkit.

Table 4. Pragmatic inference strategies in enhancing your English listening skills

	wm
1. Using inference strategies has improved my understanding of English.	3.46
2. I can understand implied meanings better with these strategies.	3.38
3. My listening skills have improved since using inference strategies.	3.23
4. I feel more confident in my listening abilities with these strategies.	3.52
5. I am able to follow complex conversations more easily.	3.42

Legend:

Point	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99-2.00	Agree
2	1.99- 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies in enhancing their English listening skills. All statements received weighted means above 3.00, reflecting a strong overall agreement with the positive impact of these strategies.

The statement "Using inference strategies has improved my understanding of English" (WM = 3.46) received the highest endorsement, indicating that most students recognize the significant role of these strategies in improving their general comprehension. This aligns with Yuan and Jiang's

(2021) findings that pragmatic inference strategies enhance learners' ability to derive meaning from spoken discourse through contextual interpretation.

Closely following, the statement "I feel more confident in my listening abilities with these strategies" (WM = 3.52) suggests that these strategies contribute not only to skill development but also to learners' self-efficacy. Confidence plays a vital role in language acquisition, as it influences learners' motivation and engagement with authentic listening tasks (Renandya & Widodo, 2018).

Students also reported improvement in understanding implied meanings (WM = 3.38), a critical aspect of pragmatic competence. According to Taguchi (2019), the ability to infer implied information enhances learners' capacity to process indirect and nuanced language—a frequent challenge for second-language listeners.

Additionally, the item "I am able to follow complex conversations more easily" (WM = 3.42) suggests that students feel better equipped to engage in real-world, dynamic communication. As Rost (2020) explains, effective participation in extended discourse requires the integration of multiple listening sub-skills, including inferencing, contextual prediction, and speaker intention recognition.

The statement "My listening skills have improved since using inference strategies" (WM = 3.23) further substantiates the students' experiential validation of these strategies. This is consistent with Jeon's (2020) empirical research demonstrating measurable gains in listening comprehension following pragmatic-focused instruction.

The data in Table 4 strongly support the conclusion that pragmatic inference strategies significantly contribute to improvements in listening comprehension, confidence, and real-world communication. These strategies help students go beyond surface-level understanding to interpret implied meanings and navigate complex spoken interactions effectively.

The high weighted means across all items indicate widespread student agreement with the value of pragmatic strategies, reinforcing their pedagogical relevance. These results underscore the importance of integrating such strategies consistently into the English listening curriculum to foster both linguistic competence and learner confidence.

Table 5. Correlation between Pragmatic Inference Strategies and English Listening Skills

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Effectiveness of Inference Strategies	0.48	<0.001
Current English Listening Skills		

Table 5 shows the correlation between the pragmatic inference strategies and English listening skills. The data analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.48) between the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies and students' current level of English listening skills, with a high level of statistical significance (p < 0.001). This finding indicates that students who view these strategies as effective tend to demonstrate higher listening proficiency.

This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which posited no significant relationship between the two variables. Instead, it affirms that pragmatic inference strategies contribute meaningfully to listening comprehension. As noted by Taguchi (2019), such strategies are critical in helping learners interpret implied meanings, speech acts, and subtleties in spoken discourse—areas often overlooked in traditional language instruction.

The result is further supported by Yuan and Jiang (2021), whose work demonstrated that learners trained in using contextual cues and inferencing techniques performed significantly better on listening tasks. Their research underscores that pragmatic inference not only improves accuracy in comprehension but also enhances learners' ability to grasp speaker intent and navigate implicit content.

Theoretical Implications

Several factors may account for the observed improvement in listening skills:

a) Active Engagement: Pragmatic strategies promote active listening, where learners connect new information to prior knowledge and contextual cues. Vandergrift and Goh (2018) assert that such engagement deepens comprehension and enhances memory retention.

b) Cognitive Load Reduction: These strategies help listeners manage complex auditory input by reducing processing demands. As Renandya and Widodo (2018) suggest, this cognitive scaffolding makes it easier for students to decode and retain spoken language, particularly in real-time communication.

While the correlation coefficient (r = 0.48) suggests a moderate relationship, it is not exhaustive. Listening proficiency is multifaceted and may also be influenced by factors such as learners' cognitive abilities, motivation, metacognitive strategies, and prior exposure to authentic listening environments.

The statistically significant correlation found in this study affirms that pragmatic inference strategies play a pivotal role in strengthening students' English listening skills. These results reinforce the call for integrating such strategies into mainstream English language instruction. While other factors also contribute to listening proficiency, the consistent alignment with literature underscores the instructional value of pragmatic inference strategies in promoting deeper, more confident, and context-aware listening.

Table 6. Perceptions for Pragmatic Inference Strategies

	wm
1. I find inference strategies engaging and useful.	3.38
2. These strategies make listening lessons more interesting.	3.21
3. I would recommend the use of inference strategies to other students.	3.23
4. I believe these strategies should be included in all listening lessons.	3.37
5. Learning inference strategies has made me more confident in my English abilities.	3.42

Legend:

Point	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	4.00-3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99-2.00	Agree
2	1.99- 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00-0.99	Strongly Disagree

Table 6 illustrates students' perceptions of the engagement, utility, and curricular value of pragmatic inference strategies in English listening instruction. All statements received weighted means above 3.00, reflecting high levels of agreement with the positive impact of these strategies.

The highest-rated statement—"Learning inference strategies has made me more confident in my English abilities" (WM = 3.42)—suggests that pragmatic inference strategies contribute meaningfully to learners' confidence. Confidence is a well-established driver of language success, influencing students' willingness to participate and persist in learning tasks (Rost, 2020).

Students also rated highly the engagement and usefulness of these strategies (WM = 3.38), indicating that they view the activities as both meaningful and enjoyable. This aligns with Yuan and Jiang (2021), who assert that strategy-based learning enhances motivation and comprehension, particularly when learners can see immediate, practical benefits.

The perception that pragmatic inference strategies make listening lessons more interesting (WM = 3.21) supports Vandergrift and Goh's (2018) emphasis on the need for engaging and varied instructional approaches. Student interest plays a crucial role in maintaining attention, which is vital for successful listening comprehension.

The statement "I would recommend the use of inference strategies to other students" (WM = 3.23) reflects peer-to-peer endorsement, indicating that students not only find the strategies effective for themselves but also see their value for others—a strong indicator of perceived instructional success (Jeon, 2020).

Importantly, students expressed broad support for curricular integration, with a weighted mean of 3.37 for the statement "I believe these strategies should be included in all listening lessons." This supports Renandya and Widodo's (2018) advocacy for systematically embedding pragmatic instruction within English language curricula to enhance proficiency holistically.

The data in Table 6 confirm that students perceive pragmatic inference strategies as engaging, beneficial, and confidence-building tools in English listening lessons. These perceptions align with prior research emphasizing the importance of learner-centered, strategy-based instruction in developing listening proficiency.

The strong endorsement by students further justifies the systematic integration of pragmatic inference strategies into listening curricula. Their inclusion not only enhances students' comprehension skills but also fosters a positive attitude toward learning—critical elements for sustained language development.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The respondents were evenly distributed across age groups, with more female participants. Most students had good academic performance in English and varying levels of previous exposure to English listening activities.

2. Students exhibited strong English listening skills, particularly in understanding main ideas, specific details, and recognizing different accents, while showing high confidence in their abilities.

3. Pragmatic inference strategies were perceived as highly effective, improving students' understanding of English, ability to infer meanings, and overall listening skills. These strategies also boosted students' confidence and their ability to follow complex conversations.

4. A moderate positive correlation was found between the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies and the current level of English listening skills, indicating that effective use of these strategies is associated with higher listening proficiency.

5. Students had a positive perception of pragmatic inference strategies, finding them engaging, useful, and essential for inclusion in all listening lessons. They also recommended these strategies to peers.

6. It is recommended to systematically integrate pragmatic inference strategies into the English listening curriculum, with explicit instruction and continuous practice to enhance their effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. Integration of Pragmatic Inference Strategies in Curriculum: It is recommended that pragmatic inference strategies be systematically integrated into the English listening curriculum. This integration should include structured lessons that explicitly teach students how to use contextual clues and background knowledge to infer meanings in spoken English.

2. Continuous Practice and Reinforcement: To ensure the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies, continuous practice and reinforcement should be provided. Teachers should incorporate a variety of listening exercises and activities that allow students to apply these strategies in different contexts, thereby strengthening their inferencing skills over time.

3. Professional Development for Teachers: Professional development programs should be designed to equip English teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach pragmatic inference strategies. Training sessions can focus on the theoretical aspects of pragmatics, practical classroom techniques, and the use of diverse multimedia resources to support listening comprehension.

4. Use of Diverse Listening Materials: Teachers should use a wide range of listening materials, including dialogues, monologues, podcasts, and videos, to expose students to various accents, dialects, and speaking styles. This diversity will help students become more adept at using pragmatic inference strategies across different types of spoken English.

5. Encouragement of Peer Learning: Encouraging peer learning and collaboration can enhance the effectiveness of pragmatic inference strategies. Group activities and discussions can provide opportunities for students to share their inferencing techniques and learn from each other's approaches, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

6. Assessment and Feedback: Regular assessment and constructive feedback are crucial for monitoring students' progress and addressing any difficulties they may encounter. Teachers should provide timely and specific feedback on students' use of pragmatic inference strategies, helping them to refine their skills and build confidence.

7. Incorporation of Metacognitive Strategies: Alongside pragmatic inference strategies, the incorporation of metacognitive strategies can further enhance listening comprehension. Teaching students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening processes can lead to greater self-awareness and more effective use of inferencing techniques.

8. Promotion of Autonomous Learning: Students should be encouraged to engage in autonomous learning activities outside the classroom. Providing resources such as recommended podcasts, audiobooks, and online listening exercises can help students practice and apply pragmatic inference strategies independently.

About the Author(s)

Yaqian Zheng is a PhD candidate in English Language at Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila. She earned her Master of Arts in Education from the University of the Perpetual Help System Dalta, Philippines, in 2024. Her research centers on applied linguistics and English language education.

REFERENCES

1. Field, J. (2018). Listening in the language classroom. Cambridge University Press.

2. Jeon, E. H. (2020). Pragmatic instruction in English as a foreign language: An updated meta-analysis. System, 88, 102-111.

3. Li, S., & Zhang, X. (2021). A meta-analysis of task-based language teaching and learning. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 43(2), 366-392.

4. Nikolov, M., & Csapó, B. (2018). The relationships between linguistic and cognitive skills in English as a foreign language: A longitudinal study of 6th-grade learners. System, 75, 111-124.

5. Renandya, W. A., & Widodo, H. P. (2016). English language teaching today: Linking theory and practice. Springer.

6. Renandya, W. A., & Widodo, H. P. (2018). English language teaching today: Linking theory and practice. Springer.

7. Rost, M. (2020). Teaching and researching listening (3rd ed.). Routledge.

8. Taguchi, N. (2019). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are, and should be going. Foreign Language Annals, 52(1), 55-77.

9. Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2018). Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action. Routledge.

10. Yuan, W., & Jiang, X. (2021). The role of pragmatic inference in the acquisition of L2 listening comprehension: A study of Chinese EFL learners. System, 102, 102-115.

11. Zhang, S., & Seepho, S. (2019). The impact of metacognitive instruction on EFL learners' listening comprehension and listening anxiety. International Journal of Listening, 33(2), 114-127.