DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION THROUGH LISTENING STRATEGIES

A case study with 9- to 11-year-old students

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Abstract

This case study addresses the underexplored area of exposure to listening strategies in first-language (L1) education by investigating the impact of explicit strategy instruction on the listening comprehension of 9- to 11-year-old students. Two groups were compared: one receiving strategy instruction (n = 14) and one without (n = 15). Results revealed significant improvements in comprehension for the strategies group, particularly among struggling students, who also demonstrated greater engagement and task organization. These findings underscore the importance of explicit, structured exposure to listening strategies to foster cognitive and metacognitive skills, emphasizing the value of applying similar approaches in diverse educational contexts. Unlike large-scale experimental research, this study follows a case study approach, focusing on an in-depth analysis of a specific pedagogical intervention in a well-defined classroom context. The aim is not to achieve statistical generalization but rather to provide analytical insights into the mechanisms underlying listening strategy instruction.

Keywords: Listening comprehension, listening strategies, explicit teaching, primary education, metacognition

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1. INTRODUCTION

Oral communication skills are essential for individuals' development, in both their social and their academic life (e.g., Damhuis & de Blauw, 2008; Kaldahl, 2019; Stordeur et al., 2023). They have two fundamental dimensions, speaking and listening, which constantly interact in the communication process (Alrabadi, 2011; Hubert et al., 2018). Listening, in particular, is a central receptive skill, enabling oral messages to be decoded and interpreted.

Although listening is widely recognised as an essential skill, its explicit instruction remains rare in first-language (L1) education. In many curricula, listening is considered a natural ability rather than a teachable skill, and it is often overlooked in classroom practice (Alexander, 2013; Dolz & Schneuwly, 1998). Teachers tend to see listening as a passive process or a prerequisite to learning rather than as a learning goal in itself (Dumais & Lafontaine, 2015).

Yet, listening requires complex cognitive, linguistic and metacognitive processing—such as discriminating sounds, segmenting discourse, interpreting the speaker's intentions and constructing meaning (Gagnon et al., 2021; Nonnon, 2004). Recent studies concerning listening in L1 contexts have demonstrated the benefits of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support comprehension, regulate attention and promote reflective listening (Colognesi, 2023; Gagnon et al., 2021).

By contrast, the teaching of listening strategies has been extensively studied in second-language (L2) learning, where numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of explicit instruction for improving comprehension (e.g., Berne, 2004; Decorte et al., 2024; Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Xu et al., 2021). These findings have informed pedagogical principles that may inspire research in L1 settings. However, much less attention has been paid to strategy instruction in L1 education, particularly at the primary level, where listening is still frequently considered an innate ability. Yet, listening does not develop equally in all learners. Students from language-poor environments may benefit especially from explicit instruction in listening (Hart & Risley, 1995). Listening education is therefore also a matter of equity. Recent international frameworks, such as the Council of Europe's CEFR Companion Volume (2018), have emphasised the importance of explicitly teaching listening skills in L1 education to support language competence and reduce disparities. Emerging studies in diverse L1 contexts have pointed to the potential of strategy-based listening instruction for developing metacognitive awareness in learners (Kaldahl, 2019).

In the context of L1 primary education, listening therefore remains under-exploited and rarely approached as a specific learning objective (Alexander, 2013; Dolz & Schneuwly, 1998). In some school curricula, as in our context of French-speaking Belgium (FWB, 2022), it is expected that speaking (and therefore listening) should be taught in the same way as writing. However, classroom practices often reduce listening instruction to the presentation of audio texts followed by comprehension questions (Colognesi & Deschepper, 2019). Teachers frequently

report a lack of the confidence, tools and training needed to teach listening explicitly (Bergeron et al., 2015; Moncarey et al., 2025).

Our study seeks to address this gap in both research and practice by exploring the impact of explicit listening strategy instruction on the L1 listening comprehension of 9- to 11-year-old students. Building on previous findings (Colognesi, 2023), we investigate how pupils engage in listening tasks with and without exposure to strategies. The study also considers the diversity of learner profiles and how these affect students' engagement in the listening process.

To achieve these objectives, this study adopts a case study approach (Yin, 2018), allowing for an in-depth analysis of how students engage with listening strategies in a real classroom setting. Given the exploratory nature of this research, we used a mixed-methods design to assess both the impact of strategy instruction on listening comprehension and the way students interacted with the learning activities.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Listening: A complex, multi-dimensional skill

While theoretical frameworks for teaching listening are well developed in L2 education (e.g., Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), there is still a limited theoretical foundation for listening as a teachable skill in L1 contexts, especially at the primary level. Some studies in various L1 systems, including the Netherlands, Germany and Norway, have begun to explore how listening can be taught explicitly and effectively (Damhuis & de Blauw, 2008; Kaldahl, 2019; Weirich et al., 2019). These contributions have supported the idea that listening can and should be taught as a structured skill in L1 education.

Nonnon (2004) described listening as a complex skill with three closely related dimensions: social, cognitive and linguistic. These three dimensions are mutually reinforcing and contribute to a more complete understanding of listening and its role in learning.

First, the social and interpersonal dimension of listening (Nonnon, 2004) enables students to become integrated into a group while asserting their individuality. In the classroom, this dimension involves processes of socialisation, interaction and negotiation. By listening to others, students learn to adjust socially and interact appropriately within the educational community. This active listening encourages their participation in the life of the group and helps them to find their place in the class environment.

Second, the cognitive dimension (Nonnon, 2004) highlights the importance of active and reflective listening skills. Contrary to the idea that listening is a passive act, it actually requires significant cognitive involvement. Students must not only receive information, but also process, analyse and integrate it in order to make sense of it. This dimension underlines the need to teach listening strategies, which enable

students to regulate their attention, check their understanding and adjust their listening behaviour to suit learning situations.

The model proposed by Weirich et al. (2019), building on Imhof's (2016) theoretical framework, describes listening comprehension as a four-stage cognitive process: (1) perception of acoustic input, (2) organisation of information through linguistic and world knowledge, (3) integration into a coherent mental representation and (4) interpretation and evaluation of meaning. This model distinguishes between lower-level processes, such as verbatim recall or recognition of explicit information, and higher-level processes, such as inference-making and the construction of mental models. It offers a structured way to conceptualise the range of cognitive operations involved in listening and can support the development of instructional approaches or assessments that reflect the layered complexity of listening comprehension.

Finally, the linguistic dimension of listening (Nonnon, 2004) goes beyond the simple perception of spoken words. It involves a more detailed understanding of the discourse through the reconstruction of referential elements, communicative intentions and points of view expressed. The student must decode the linguistic indicators provided by the speaker, such as choice of words, tone and pauses, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their interlocutor's intentions. This process of interpretation requires close attention to linguistic indicators and leads to a global yet precise understanding of the discourse heard.

Thus, according to Nonnon (2004), these three dimensions of listening enrich each other and contribute to effective listening.

2.2 Teaching listening skills

It has been shown that students often arrive at primary school with insufficient mastery of listening skills to meet school requirements (Dumais, 2016). A central aim of primary education is therefore to help students improve their listening skills, in particular by preparing them to listen to complex discourse (Gaussel, 2017; Péroz, 2010). To do this, work on listening strategies is useful and even necessary.

Listening strategies, as defined by Allen et al. (2016) and Gagnon et al. (2021), are the methods deliberately used by individuals to improve their listening comprehension. These methods enable them to actively reflect on their listening process in relation to the situation encountered. Gagnon et al (2021) identified two main types of strategy: cognitive and metacognitive.

Cognitive strategies aim to help students process the information received by constructing a mental representation of the discourse heard. This includes activating prior knowledge, identifying the main content of the text, understanding the mental states of the people involved, if any, and constructing an overall mental representation of the discourse. These processes help students to structure information and facilitate comprehension by drawing on linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal cues.

Metacognitive strategies involve conscious reflection on the listening process. They enable students to regulate their attention during listening, adjust their comprehension and check their ability to achieve the defined listening objectives. Gagnon et al (2021) identified three metacognitive strategies: preparation for the listening activity (anticipation of content), regulation of comprehension during listening (adjustment of attention and formulation of hypotheses) and monitoring of comprehension after listening (verification and reformulation). These strategies enable students to adopt a more proactive and reflective approach to listening, optimising their understanding of the discourse heard. Research by Goh and Taib (2006) confirmed that primary school pupils can engage meaningfully with metacognitive listening strategies, showing improvements in both performance and awareness.

In practice, the teaching of these strategies relies in particular on two guidelines to be taken into account: the variety of audio materials used and the organisation of listening lessons into several phases.

The first guideline is to vary the types of audio material, as emphasised by Dolz and Silva-Hardmeyer (2020). Exposing students to a diverse range of audio documents familiarises them with different accents, speech rhythms and communication styles. This develops their ability to adapt to a variety of listening situations, while improving their overall comprehension (Gaussel 2017). It is also important to adapt these materials to the students' level of mastery. Berdal-Masuy and Briet (2010) distinguished three levels of mastery: the 'discovery level', where students are exposed to simple sentences and short dialogues; the 'survival level', where they begin to deal with more complex authentic documents; and finally, the 'threshold level', where they are invited to deepen their understanding by combining written documents with oral material.

The second guideline concerns the organisation of listening lessons. There should be three phases, which can be linked with the metacognitive strategies presented above: pre-listening, listening and post-listening. According to Lafontaine (2007), this structured organisation, known as the 'listening project', enables students to develop their skills gradually. The *pre-listening phase* involves preparing students to listen to an audio text by activating their prior knowledge and setting expectations about the content to come. This preparation encourages anticipation of the content and immersion in the context of the text heard (Allen et al., 2016; Dumais & Lafontaine, 2015). Next, the *listening phase* takes place in two stages: an initial global listening, without any specific objective, so that the students become familiar with the general content, followed by a more detailed analytical listening, focused on understanding the key elements of the discourse (Dumais & Lafontaine, 2015; Lafontaine, 2007). Finally, the *post-listening phase* allows students to recapitulate what they heard through practical activities such as comprehension questions, summaries or group discussions. This encourages students to reflect on the content heard and consolidate their understanding (Dumais & Lafontaine, 2015). These activities can also include written products or class debates, aimed at reinforcing

comprehension and developing students' recapitulation skills (Dolz & Mabillard, 2017). In addition, reformulations or feedback on hypotheses formulated during pre-listening can be used to refine comprehension and enrich vocabulary.

Finally, the role of the teacher in modelling and supporting effective listening behaviour should not be overlooked. As shown by Damhuis and de Blauw (2008), teachers play a key role in shaping the quality of oral interactions in the classroom. Their ability to scaffold listening, guide reflection and structure varied oral situations is essential for the development of students' listening competence.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a case study research design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), which is particularly suited to in-depth investigations of educational interventions in a specific setting. This approach allows for a detailed and contextualized examination of listening strategy instruction within a single classroom environment. Unlike large-scale experimental studies, case studies focus on analytical generalization rather than statistical inference, aiming to understand mechanisms at play rather than produce broadly generalizable results (Stake, 1995).

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to analyse and understand the effects of exposure to listening strategies on the L1 listening comprehension skills of 9- to 11-year-old students, using an equal-status sequential QUAN → QUAL design (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The quantitative phase first collected data to assess student performance (RQ 1). The qualitative phase then explored how the students functioned during the listening lessons (RQ 2). By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study ensures a more comprehensive understanding of how students engage with listening strategies.

The study is structured around two associated research questions:

- RQ 1: How does exposure to listening strategies impact the L1 listening comprehension skills of students?
- RQ 2: How do 9- to 11-year-old students with varied profiles behave in lessons dedicated to listening, with or without working on strategies?

To enhance the validity of findings, this study relied on data triangulation (Miles et al., 2014), integrating multiple sources of evidence. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods ensured a comprehensive and reliable understanding of students' engagement with listening strategies, beyond what a single data source could provide. Given the relatively small sample size, triangulation was particularly valuable in strengthening the credibility of the results and reducing potential biases.

3.1 Participants and context

The sample was made up of 29 students aged between 9 and 11, from two Primary Four classes in the same school located in a socio-economically disadvantaged area, with a very low socio-economic index. The majority of the students were from

immigrant families, which added an intercultural dimension to the class dynamics. While French was the language of instruction (L1), many of these students spoke other languages at home.

Although small, this sample size is consistent with qualitative case study research, where the focus is on in-depth analysis rather than statistical generalization (Miles et al., 2014). The selection of participants aimed to ensure diversity in student profiles, allowing for an exploration of varied learning experiences rather than broad representativity.

To analyse the impact of exposure to listening strategies, the two classes were assigned to separate conditions: one with listening strategies taught ('Strategies' class: 14 students, eight girls and six boys, average age 10.87 years) and the other without ('Non-strategies' class: 15 students, nine girls and six boys, average age 10.63 years).

A listening comprehension pre-test was administered before the intervention to ensure that the levels of the two classes were equivalent. Although the results showed a relatively similar level between the two groups, the class with a slightly lower average on the pre-test was assigned to the Strategies condition.

For the qualitative part, purposeful sampling was used to select three students per class with contrasting learning profiles (Colognesi & Gouin, 2022), in collaboration with the class teacher. The three profiles were: presenting difficulties in engaging with L1 tasks; presenting no major difficulties in L1, generally meeting expectations for the assigned tasks; and performing very well in L1, finishing quickly and generally not experiencing any difficulties.

To simplify presentation of the results, each of these students was identified by a pseudonym and a label corresponding to their assigned condition. Thus, students with difficulties were Daphné from the Strategies class (S) and Dina from the Non-strategies class (NS). The medium performers were two boys, Maxime (S) and Martin (NS). Finally, the high-performing students were Pauline (S) and Pierre (NS).

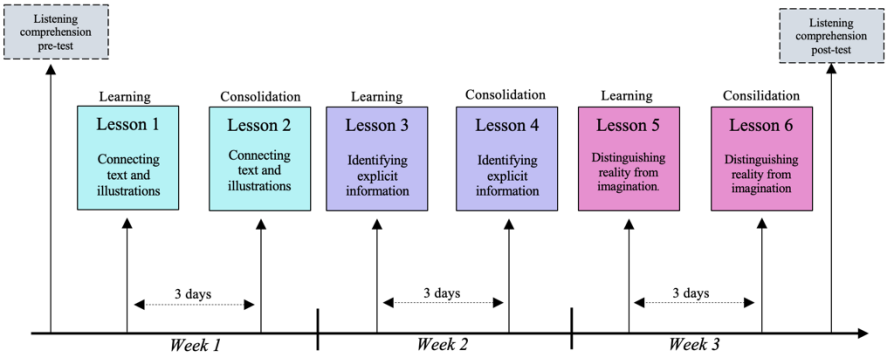
Before starting the study, ethical considerations were taken into account, following the recommendations of Bélanger and Richard (2017). We obtained informed consent from parents or legal guardians and from the students themselves for participation in activities and the recording of videos as part of this research.

3.2 Teaching programme

Both groups followed the same listening comprehension teaching programme, with the exception of the exposure of listening strategies in one class and not in the other. To ensure fidelity of implementation of the intervention (Resnicow et al., 1998) and standardisation across groups, one of the researchers, who was also a teacher at the school and writing his master's thesis on the subject, provided the teaching in both classes, delivering all 12 lessons. The classroom teacher was present during the lessons and observed the group without intervening.

The teaching programme (see Figure 1), spread over 3 weeks, consisted of six lessons, each lasting approximately 1 hour. Three specific sub-skills in listening comprehension were chosen from the official programme of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB, 2022). The sub-skills worked on were: relating the text heard to illustrations, extracting explicit information and distinguishing between the real and the imaginary. Each sub-skill was addressed through two lessons that followed the same structure (as in Colognesi, 2023) and involved the same types of tasks but used different listening texts and materials. The second lesson thus provided an opportunity to revisit what was learned in the first.

Figure 1. The teaching programme



Each lesson was structured in four phases, built upon the three phases of Lafontaine's (2007) 'Listening Project': pre-listening, listening and post-listening. In the pre-listening phase, the objective and theme of the lesson were presented. The instructions were then explained and, if necessary, clarifications were made. During the listening phase, students were simultaneously listening and working on their tasks. The listening phase began with listening to the audio material with no specific objective. This allowed the students to familiarise themselves with the overall content. This was followed by an analytical listening phase, with occasional pauses to allow the students to concentrate on specific parts of the task, such as spotting sound clues or transcribing information onto their sheet of paper. A third listening phase, also analytical, was carried out to allow the students to go deeper into the task. Students listened to only one text during the one-hour period but heard it three times. Students could complete their worksheet while listening, and they had some time after each listening. The specific tasks for each lesson are presented in Table 1.

The post-listening phase consisted of collective correction of their work. The tasks and audio materials for these lessons were taken from the 'Ça s'écoute' manuals (Colognesi & Gillet, 2014). These phases were the same for both conditions.

Table 1. Tasks assigned to students

Relating the text heard to illustrations	Lesson 1	Here are ten photographs of dogs and a list of names. You will hear the description of eight of them. Match each name from the list to one of the photos. Justify your choices by writing at least two clues for each match
	Lesson 2	Here are ten photographs of pastries and a list of names. You will hear the description of eight of them. Match each name from the list to one of the photos. Justify your choices by writing at least three clues for each match
Extracting explicit information	Lesson 3	Complete the document by identifying information from the interview with Adrien Devyver
	Lesson 4	List the advice given by the professional on how to be a good journalist.
Distinguishing between the real and the imaginary	Lesson 5	Maxime, a 10-year-old student, visited the Prehistory Museum. He took notes on part of the day but made some mistakes. You will hear what the guide actually said. Correct Maxime's text.
	Lesson 6	Nicolas, a 10-year-old student, visited a medieval castle. He took notes on part of the day but made some mistakes. You will hear what the guide actually said. Correct Nicolas's text

In the Strategies classroom, students had roadmaps inviting them to formulate hypotheses, describe strategies, to answer metacognitive questions (see Colognesi et al., 2020), or reflect on their process. What students wrote was shared throughout the lesson. Before pre-listening, the pupils were invited to formulate hypotheses about the content to come, based, for example, on the title of the piece. After the first analytical listening phase, the students shared their strategies orally. These strategies were written on the board. During the correction, students had to justify their answers and explain how they found them. After that, there was an opportunity to discuss the strategies used and to deepen the students' thinking about the listening process. We asked open-ended questions such as: 'How did you manage to match the elements of the text to the illustrations? or 'How did you spot the essential clues?' The instructor also suggested complementary strategies to add to the list.

In the Non-strategies class, after completing the task, the students were given a transcript of the audio track. They were asked to identify the correct answers in the text and then correct or complete their worksheet. Strategies were not discussed. This approach made it possible to cover a similar amount of time for each lesson in the two groups, while respecting the methodological differences inherent in the two conditions.

3.3 Data collection and triangulation

To ensure the robustness of findings, this study employed a multi-source data collection strategy. Triangulation (Miles et al., 2014) was used to cross-validate results and strengthen reliability. Data were collected through:

- Pre- and post-tests, measuring students' listening comprehension progress.
- Video recordings, capturing students' engagement and behaviours during lessons.
- Live observations, documented by the class teacher using structured grids.
- Students' written responses, including worksheets and metacognitive reflection notes.

By combining multiple perspectives, this methodological approach mitigates biases inherent to small-scale studies and allows for a more nuanced understanding of student learning processes. The triangulation of these data sources ensured that the findings were not solely dependent on one type of measurement but reflected a comprehensive and cross-validated analysis of listening strategy instruction.

3.4 Measures and analyses for the quantitative part (RQ 1)

In order to measure the impact of exposure to listening strategies on students' listening comprehension, a listening comprehension pre-test and post-test were administered. The pre-test took place before the instructional programme. The post-test was administered 3 weeks later, after the programme ended to allow for consolidation and retention of the strategies (Dancey & Reidy, 2013). These two assessments made it possible to detect changes in students' listening comprehension skills, focusing on three specific skills: 'relating text to illustrations', 'extracting explicit information' and 'distinguishing the real from the imaginary, the plausible from the implausible'.

The listening comprehension tests used in this study were adapted from the official external evaluations administered by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. These large-scale evaluations were developed by expert panels and validated at the institutional level to align with curriculum standards for primary education. As such, they ensure content validity, since the tasks correspond directly with the listening skills targeted by national learning standards.

In selecting items for the pre- and post-tests, care was taken to ensure alignment with the three focal skills of the intervention: identifying explicit information, matching information with visual representations and distinguishing between real and imaginary content. The tasks used in the study therefore draw on institutionally validated materials, reinforcing the construct validity of the measurements employed. We used questions from the 2021 external evaluation for the pre-test and the 2015 external evaluation for the post-test, making sure that they were similar and that the skills were assessed in the same way. The tests followed the same structure and item types but were based on two different audio reports: the pre-test report focused on an animal park, while the post-test report dealt with rural life in the past.

Each skill was tested through specific questions. The tests were scored out of a total of 15 points, with five possible points for each skill:

- Skill 1 (Relating text to illustrations):

  - Item 1: matching names to illustrations (3 points)
  - Item 2: writing the text heard corresponding to an image (2 points)
- Skill 2 (Extracting explicit information):
  - Item 3: completing a sentence heard (1 point)
  - Item 4: writing key words from the text (2 points)
  - Item 5: writing key information (2 points)
- Skill 3 (Distinguishing real and imaginary content):
  - Item 6: multiple choice, ticking true statements (1.5 points)
  - Item 7: multiple choice, ticking true statements (1.5 points)
  - Item 8: correcting transcriptions of parts of the text (2 points)

Examples of tasks and their scoring are provided in Appendix X to illustrate the structure of the pre- and post-tests.

Initially, a comparison of means using a *t*-test was envisaged for the analyses. However, the prerequisites for this test, in particular, the normality of the distribution, were not met. As a result, we opted for a gain analysis using the Mann-Whitney *U* test, which compares the ranks of the data. This method is better suited to small sample sizes and non-normal distributions (McKnight & Najab, 2010). We calculated a gain score for each student, defined as the difference between the post-test score and the pre-test score (absolute gain). This crude measure makes it possible to quantify the improvement following an intervention (Williams & Zimmerman, 1996). However, to compensate for ceiling effects that could bias the results, we also calculated relative gains. The latter, expressing the proportional improvement relative to the initial score, offer a more nuanced measure, making it possible to compare changes in performance without being influenced by high starting scores (Boumazguida et al., 2017).

3.5 Data and analysis for the qualitative part (RQ 2)

To understand how the selected students behaved across the six lessons, we collected a variety of qualitative data, including video recordings, live observations and students' working documents.

The video recordings made it possible to document all the lessons, capturing the students' behaviour and interactions in detail (Veillard, 2013). Two cameras were placed in each classroom: one filming the whole class and the other focusing on the area of the three selected students. A total of 24 recordings were thus obtained.

Observations were made live by the classroom teacher, since a researcher was leading the lessons. For each lesson, the teacher observed the three selected students and filled in an observation grid specifically designed to record their actions, reactions and attitudes to the tasks. A separate grid was used for each student and for each skill, totalling 36 observation grids for the two classes. We discussed the grid items with each teacher beforehand to make sure they understood them. We also talked to them after each observation, to make sure we could understand their notes on the grid.

Students' written work was also collected throughout the lessons. This included, firstly, the worksheets on which students completed tasks. Additionally, for the group in the Strategies condition, the roadmaps on which students noted their reflections throughout the lesson. Furthermore, in the pre- and post-tests each question included a free space allowing students to comment freely on how they arrived at their provided answer.

To analyse these data, we adopted a three-stage approach enabling data triangulation (Miles et al., 2014). Initially, summary tables were developed for each selected student, following the recommendations of Dolz et al. (2018). This made it possible to produce a detailed synopsis of the behaviours and attitudes observed. This approach makes the analyses comparable and facilitates the identification of recurring or specific behaviours for each profile. Secondly, the selected students' written notes were analysed. We followed a content analysis approach. We read all the data. Then, for the same student, we identified the interesting elements in each piece of written material. We looked to see if there was any progress from one lesson to the next. Finally, we compared the data collected from students with the same profile in the two conditions. In the third stage, the data from all the sources were combined to produce a cross-sectional analysis of students' behaviours and strategies. This integration of data, recommended by Miles et al. (2014) as part of an in-depth qualitative analysis, enabled back and forth comparison between the different sources to validate hypotheses and enrich the interpretation of results.

4. RESULTS

Results should be interpreted within the framework of this study as a case study focused on an in-depth examination of student engagement with listening strategies (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The aim is not to achieve statistical generalization but rather to explore learning processes in a real classroom context. Given the relatively small sample size, results should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive, providing insights into how strategy instruction influences student behaviour and comprehension. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data strengthens the validity of the findings through methodological triangulation (Miles et al., 2014).

To provide a comprehensive perspective, the results are structured around the two research questions, integrating quantitative performance measures and qualitative observations from multiple data sources.

4.1 RQ 1: Influence of exposure to listening strategies on students' listening comprehension skills

Table 2 shows the students' listening comprehension results in the pre- and post-tests and the calculated gains.

Table 2. Student results and gains for listening comprehension

	Listening Comprehension Results Mean (SD)			
	Pre-test (/15)	Post-test (/15)	Gain score	Relative gain
Strategies condition (*n* = 14)	9.4 (2.80)	11.0 (2.74)	1.64 (2.14)	32.1% (0.35)
No strategies condition (*n* = 15)	9.9 (1.89)	9.6 (3.12)	-0.3 (2.48)	4.4% (0.34)

Note. The gain score corresponds to the difference between post-test and pre-test results (absolute gain). The relative gain corresponds to the absolute gain divided by the remaining possible gain, i.e., (post-test score − pre-test score) / (maximum score − pre-test score). Relative gain values are expressed as percentages. The reported mean and standard deviation refer to these percentage values.

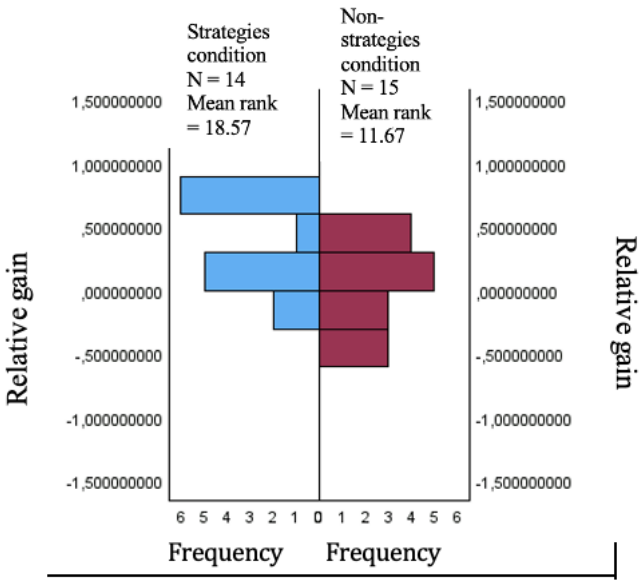
Similar initial performance between the two groups was observed: the average pre-test score for the group in the Strategies condition (*n* = 14) was 9.4 (*SD* = 2.80) out of 15, while that in the Non-strategies condition (*n* = 15) was slightly higher, at 9.9 (*SD* = 1.89). As previously mentioned, students were assigned to these groups in this manner. After the intervention, the group mean in the Strategies condition increased to 11 (*SD* = 2.74), while that in the Non-strategies condition fell to 9.6 (*SD* = 3.12), indicating a positive effect of the intervention in the first group, and negative/no effect of the listening programme without the strategy instruction.

The absolute gains showed an average improvement of 1.64 (*SD* = 2.14) points for the Strategies group, compared with a 0.3 (*SD* = 2.48) decrease for the Non-strategies group. Relative gains showed a proportional increase of 32.1% in the Strategies class, compared with a modest gain of 4.4% in the other group, reinforcing the observation of absolute gains.

It should also be noted that our analyses showed that, with regard to the dispersion indices for the mean score, the standard deviations indicate higher variability in the Strategies group at the pre-test (*SD* = 2.80) than in the other group (*SD* = 1.89). At post-test, the standard deviation for the Strategies group decreased to 2.74, while it increased for the other group, reaching 3.12.

The gain score distribution lacked normality, justifying the use of the Mann-Whitney U test. For absolute gains, the Mann-Whitney *U* test gave a mean rank of 18.32 for the group in the Strategies condition (*n* = 14) and 11.9 for the Non-strategies group (*n* = 15), with a *p*-value of 0.041. For relative gains, the Mann-Whitney *U* test confirmed this trend, with an average rank of 18.57 for the Strategies class, compared with 11.67 for the other group, with a *p*-value of 0.029. These differences were both statistically significant, allowing us to conclude that exposure to listening strategies improved students' listening comprehension performance overall. Figure 2 shows the mean ranks for the relative gains, visually highlighting that significant difference between the two groups.

Figure 2. Distribution relative gain rankings in the Strategies (blue) and Non-strategies (red) conditions. X-axis: frequency of students. Y-axis: relative gain score. (n=14, 15)



In summary, the results showed that exposure to listening strategies had a significant positive effect on students' listening comprehension, in terms of both absolute and relative gains.

4.2 RQ 2: Understanding how students with different profiles behave

This section presents the observations structured by profile and by skill worked on in the teaching programme, highlighting the similarities and differences observed in each condition. Illustrations, translated from French, are added to highlight throughout to support the information presented.

4.3 Profile 1: Daphné and Dina, students with difficulties

The students in this profile, Daphné (S) and Dina (NS), showed distinct changes over the six lessons. During the two lessons aimed at linking the information they heard with illustrations, they adopted some similar behaviours. They put their working documents opposite each other to follow the instructions and take notes during and after listening. While listening, they also followed the instructions on their worksheets. On the other hand, differences appeared during Lesson 2, the

consolidation lesson. Daphné (S) abandoned her scribbling behaviour observed during the first lesson. She took notes as she listened. She was able to formulate her way of doing things orally, which was a repetition of what other students had said during the first lesson. In the end, she completed the whole task, with fewer errors than the first time. Dina (NS), on the other hand, was scattered throughout the two lessons. She made more errors on the second task.

> *Illustration 1.* During the consolidation lesson, Daphné explained her strategy: 'First I listen, then I look at the clues, then I correct'.

For the skill of extracting explicit information, Daphné (S) and Dina (NS) continued to show marked differences. Daphné started the task more quickly and took notes on a few key clues from the first time she listened to the first task. This improved her ability to take notes during pauses when the audio recording was stopped. She corrected herself as she went along and improved further during the consolidation lesson. Dina, on the other hand, often gave incomplete answers. Although she seemed to be following the lesson, she did not correct her work correctly and was unable to adjust her answers.

> *Illustration 2.* On her strategy sheet, Daphné noted: 'I listen to every detail'. She says orally that she has to 'Listen and then write'.

Lastly, for the skill of distinguishing between what is real and what is imaginary, Daphné (S), although still having difficulty, showed an ability to connect contextual clues and adjust her responses accordingly. She raised her hand to share her strategies. Dina (NS) allowed herself to be distracted by colouring in her paper while listening and emptying her pencil box during the correction. During the consolidation lesson, she did not seem to know how to go about the task. She continued to confuse real and imaginary information without making a clear distinction.

> *Illustration 3.* Daphné expressed her approach by saying: 'I listen, I look at the text that needs to be corrected, I identify what is wrong, and I correct it'.

As for their test scores, Daphné (S) scored 3/15 in the pre-test and improved to 6/15 in the post-test. Dina (NS) started with a score of 6/15, but her performance dropped to 3/15 in the post-test. Neither student noted any additional information on their two test papers.

4.4 Profile 2: Maxime and Martin, students complying with tasks

For the skill of connecting text to illustrations, Maxime (S) and Martin (NS) took notes during and after listening, correcting themselves as they went. Maxime volunteered to explain his strategies whenever given the opportunity by the adult. From one lesson to the next, he adapted his notetaking, becoming more selective in his choice of information. He performed the activity with greater precision, making fewer errors. Martin, on the other hand, although engaged, appears to be struggling and made more errors.

Illustration 4. During the consolidation lesson, Maxime shared a strategy: 'When I hear important information, I wait for other information before writing.'

For the skill of extracting explicit information, the class discussion enabled Maxime (S) to add precise information on how to memorise or summarise information to his strategy sheet. Martin (NS), although attentive, did not show any noticeable progress in the organisation of his listening from one lesson to the next. His answers were brief and lacking in detail.

Illustration 5. In Task 1 for this skill, Maxime said in his strategy sheet: 'Follow the words and memorise.'

For the skill of distinguishing reality from fantasy, Maxime (S) stated his hypotheses before each task, reinforcing his understanding of the instructions and improving his ability to sort information. Martin (NS), on the other hand, did not show this level of proactivity and continued to listen passively.

Illustration 6. At the start of the lesson, Maxime hypothesized about the content, saying: 'It could be about castles and knights.'

Maxime (S) got a score of 8/15 on the pre-test, while his score rose to 14/15 after participation in the listening strategies instruction. He also left notes on the post-test in which he wrote strategies such as 'Listen and write down important information'. As for Martin (NS), his score remained stable, with 12/15 on both the pre-test and post-test. He made no particular notes on his test papers.

4.5 Profile 3: Pauline and Pierre, high performers

The students in this profile, Pauline (S) and Pierre (NS), had good comprehension skills from the outset. However, the use of strategies enabled Pauline to improve her listening more. With regard to the skill of linking the text to the illustrations, she relied on memorisation and recapitulation strategies, which she verbalised and used to reinforce her comprehension and avoid errors. Pierre, on the other hand, showed increasing signs of inattention: he looked at his classmates, scribbled on his papers, talked to his neighbour and waved at the camera he had spotted.

Illustration 7. Pauline wrote on her strategy sheet: 'Observe + listen'.

For the skill of identifying explicit information, Pauline (S) formulated hypotheses that she then verified during listening. In the consolidation lesson, she corrected herself proactively and suggested solutions orally for avoiding making mistakes. Pierre (NS), on the other hand, was less concentrated and made a few errors of interpretation, reflecting a less structured listening style.

Illustration 8. In her initial hypothesis, Pauline anticipated: 'It's going to be about the qualities of a journalist'. In the consolidation lesson, she shared a strategy: 'I memorise and reformulate the important information before writing it down on my sheet of paper'. On her strategy sheet, she noted: 'Find the important information, memorise it and summarise it'.

Lastly, for the skill of distinguishing reality from fantasy, Pauline (S) reacted quickly by applying verification strategies, making sure that the information she heard was true. She took full notes during the consolidation lesson. Pierre (NS), although effective, allowed himself to be distracted by his environment, which slowed down his progress.

> *Illustration 9.* Pauline wrote on her strategy sheet at the start of the activity: 'I listen and then I look to see if something is not correct, I change it.' This shows a clear intention to filter information to avoid mistakes.

On the pre-test, the two students each received a score of 12.5/15. After the six lessons, Pauline (S) received a post-test score of 13/15, a score also achieved by Pierre (NS). Thus, although Pauline benefited from the strategies, the two students ended up with similar post-test scores. However, in the spaces available for adding notes on these tests, Pierre wrote 'We're listening' everywhere on the pre-test and nothing else on the post-test. Pauline, on the other hand, justified her answers with elements from the text on the pre-test. And on the post-test, she made links with shared strategies. She noted, for example, 'I listen, then as soon as I find the answer, I write' or 'I spot the information I've heard'.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study should be interpreted within the framework of an in-depth case study approach (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), which focuses on exploring learning processes rather than aiming for broad statistical generalization. Beyond the quantitative results, the qualitative data provided key insights into how students engaged with listening strategies and how these shaped their learning trajectories. Together, these findings suggest that exposure to listening strategies may have a positive impact on students' listening skills, at least within the context examined in this study.

Students in the Strategies condition showed significant gains for listening comprehension, both in absolute and relative terms, compared with those in the Non-strategies condition. Students in the Strategies condition not only improved their post-test results, but some of them also demonstrated the use of strategies that helped them to better manage complex listening tasks, as observed in the qualitative analysis of three selected students. The finding that the results for the pupils in the Non-strategies condition were poorer in the post-test raises the question of whether repeating an activity several times without having time to reflect on it can reduce the effort one is willing to make.

These results confirm the importance of explicit instruction in listening strategies, even in a first language. This finding aligns with research suggesting that listening can be taught explicitly in L1 contexts through structured cognitive and metacognitive strategies (e.g., Colognesi, 2023; Damhuis & de Blauw, 2008; Goh & Taib, 2006; Kaldahl, 2019; Weirich et al., 2019). Our results contribute to this growing

body of work by providing exploratory empirical support for the impact of strategy-based instruction in primary L1 education.

Although listening is widely acknowledged as a key component of oral language competence, it has often been overlooked in L2 teaching (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and remains even less theoretically grounded or explicitly addressed in L1 education—particularly at the primary level (e.g., Colognesi & Deschepper, 2019; Kaldahl, 2019). Positive results were seen in the observations of the average and higher-performing selected students. These students improved their use of strategies, even though they required less initial structuring. However, the instruction in listening strategies was particularly beneficial for Daphné, the student with difficulties who was in the Strategies condition, unlike Diane, who did not receive strategy instruction and showed no such improvement. Daphné (S) improved not only her performance, but also her engagement and task-related organization. This aligns with the findings of Gagnon et al. (2021), who highlighted the importance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in structuring and regulating listening processes. Exposure to listening strategies gives struggling students concrete tools. These tools help them overcome challenges such as cognitive overload and lack of organization (Dumais, 2012; Gagnon et al., 2021; Rosenshine, 2012).

As the case of Daphné (S) shows, the adoption of strategies such as dividing tasks into stages ('listen, observe, then write') strengthened her performance of complex listening tasks. While this strategy could also be described as a task management or general learning strategy, in this study we consider it part of a listening-related strategy, as it was applied in the service of understanding oral texts. This type of multimodal sequencing—combining auditory, visual and written supports—illustrates how students with difficulties can develop personalised routines that help them process and make sense of spoken information. These observations are in line with the work of Dumais (2016), who pointed out that pupils with difficulties particularly benefit from the introduction of structured routines to regulate their attention and direct their cognitive effort. Furthermore, the interactive aspect of exposure to strategies played a decisive role. This could be seen from the fact that Daphné (S) adopted the strategies mentioned by her classmates. Thus, the moments of sharing in class, when Daphné (S) was able to listen to others and then express and refine her strategies, contributed to her progress. This process of making strategies explicit seems to be particularly beneficial for pupils with difficulties, as it promotes not only understanding of the strategies, but also their transfer to other contexts (Demorsy et al., 2025).

In addition, over and above the improvement in performance, exposure to strategies seems to have helped Daphné (S) to transform her attitude to the tasks, keeping her engaged and attentive. This was not the case for Dina (NS), who became increasingly scattered, possibly due to difficulties in understanding how to complete the tasks. This finding highlights the importance of providing structured support for struggling students, rather than relying solely on repeated exposure to listening tasks. It ties in with the conclusions of Dolz and Mabillard (2017), who highlighted

the importance of progressive teaching sequences for building listening skills in the most fragile students.

While the findings are encouraging, they are necessarily shaped by the particular features of the instructional setting and the student population. Replication in diverse educational contexts would be essential to further test the generalizability of the results.

5.1 Study limitations

Several limitations deserve to be highlighted. First, as this study followed a case study design (Yin, 2018), the sample size was deliberately small to allow for an in-depth exploration of student learning processes. While this limits broad statistical generalization, the focus was on analytical generalization (Stake, 1995), meaning that findings provide valuable insights into how strategy instruction affects student engagement and comprehension. To ensure methodological rigor, statistical analyses were adapted to the sample size (Mann-Whitney U test) and qualitative data were triangulated across multiple sources (Miles et al., 2014).

Second, the study was conducted in a school located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area, with a majority of students from immigrant families. While this context enriched the analysis of specific difficulties faced by these students, it may limit the applicability of the findings to other educational settings. The socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics of the sample play an important role in student engagement and performance, suggesting the need to replicate this study in varied contexts.

Third, the listening strategies program was implemented over three weeks, with a total of six sessions. Although the results indicated short-term positive effects, it remains uncertain whether these gains would be sustained over the long term. A longitudinal study would be necessary to evaluate the durability of the acquired listening strategies and their transferability to other academic contexts.

Fourth, the sessions were conducted by a researcher rather than the students' regular teacher. While this approach ensured a standardised intervention, it may have influenced student behaviour, as they might have responded differently to their usual teacher. Moreover, since listening strategies instruction took place within a specific listening programme, its effects should be considered as part of the whole package. The direct involvement of the researcher in delivering the intervention may also limit the reproducibility of the study and introduce potential bias, as the desire to achieve positive outcomes could have unintentionally influenced the implementation or interpretation of the intervention. Although the same researcher taught both groups under identical conditions, and parental consent and school approval were obtained, the dual role of the researcher as teacher and investigator may have created implicit pressure for students to participate. This raises a potential ethical consideration for future studies. Future studies could explore how different components of such programmes—strategy instruction, listening materials and

teacher-led interventions—interact to influence student outcomes, and should aim to test the intervention when delivered by classroom teachers not involved in the research to strengthen external validity.

Finally, while the qualitative analysis provided in-depth insights into student behaviours, it focused on a limited sample (three students per class). Although this allowed for detailed analysis, it might not have captured the diversity of experiences among other students. A broader study involving a greater variety of profiles could enrich understandings of the effects of listening strategy instruction.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study provide several concrete avenues for improving pedagogical practices in the teaching of listening comprehension, particularly through the explicit integration of listening strategies. These implications are relevant for teachers, teacher educators and curriculum designers.

First, classroom interactions in which students share their strategies and learn from each other proved particularly beneficial, as demonstrated by the case of Daphné (S). Teachers could incorporate collective reflection sessions during which students articulate their methods, share their successes and receive feedback to enhance their practices. Such exchanges not only deepen the understanding of strategies but also foster metacognition and peer collaboration, making metacognition a feasible and practical approach in classroom settings (Colognesi et al., 2024).

Second, as teachers often report a lack of preparation for teaching listening (Colognesi & Deschepper, 2019), the results of this study suggest practical implementation approaches, such as progressive listening sequences in three phases (pre-listening, listening, post-listening), combined with moments of reflection on strategies. And not to do such progressive listening sequences without the moments of reflection/discussion about strategies, as that seems not effective or even to reduce students' engagement. This could form the basis of specific modules on teaching listening strategies within initial and ongoing teacher training programs.

Third, since students in difficulty, such as Daphné, can particularly benefit from exposure to strategies, teachers could focus attention on these students by providing concrete tools, such as roadmaps or strategy grids, to help them organize their efforts.

Fourth, the assessment of oral comprehension skills could include a metacognitive dimension by asking students to explain their strategies and processes. This would not only evaluate their performance but also highlight their efforts to develop thoughtful approaches to listening tasks.

Fifth, the study relied on pre- and post-tests adapted from official external evaluations aligned with national curriculum standards. While care was taken to ensure that both tests targeted the same sub-skills using comparable tasks, we recognise that no formal psychometric validation of the equivalence between the

pre- and post-tests was conducted. We explored internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and item-level analyses (IRT), but these were not conclusive due to the small number of items and limited response variability. Future studies could address this by designing or selecting tests that are specifically suited to psychometric validation.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes that explicit exposure to listening strategies is not only an effective pedagogical intervention, but also an essential practice for supporting students, particularly those having difficulty, in their learning.

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APPENDIX

Examples of listening tasks from the pre- and post-tests

- Skill 1 (Relating text to illustrations) - Item 1: Matching names to illustrations (3 points)

Pre-test (bears item)	Post-test (cereals item)
At the beginning of the report, Antoine introduces the "stars" of the park. MATCH each name to one of the photos.  Bari – Winnie – Nina	*At the beginning of the report, one of the brothers presents the use of certain cereals.*MATCH each cereal to the corresponding image.  rye – oats – spelt

- Skill 2 (Extracting explicit information) - Item 4: Writing key words from the text (2 points)

Pre-test (Park)	Post-test (Transport)
WRITE one example of something that is allowed in the park and one example of something that is forbidden. An example of what is allowed: ..... An example of what is forbidden:	WRITE one example of a means of transport that existed in the past and one means of transport that existed and that you still use today. An example of one that existed: ..... An example of one that existed and that you still use: .....

- Skill 3 (Distinguishing real and imaginary content) - Item 6: Multiple choice, ticking true statements (1.5 points)

Pre-test (Park)	Post-test (Transport)
TICK the information you heard. The report presents... ☐ the work of the bear in the park. ☐ the different animals in the park. ☐ the rules to follow in the park. ☐ an amusement park. ☐ the births in the park. ☐ the role of the park's keepers.	TICK the information you heard. The report presents... ☐ the production of the farm at that time. ☐ the means of transport of that time. ☐ the school of the past. ☐ the production of the factory of the past. ☐ the methods of food preservation of the past. ☐ the way they used to do their shopping.