

USING LISTENING PORTFOLIOS TO PROMOTE AGENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Martin Andrew
Victoria University, Melbourne

Abstract

The multi-item listening portfolio is an effective instrument for formatively and summatively assessing adult learners' independent acts of extensive listening over time. Framed by studies of strategic English as an Additional Language (EAL) learning via portfolio, this paper uses a qualitative descriptive analysis of ten students' reflective portfolios to evaluate a situated pedagogical approach to the learning and assessment of extensive real-world listening in an EAL degree program at a tertiary institute in Auckland. The study supports the use of a pedagogy that demonstrates and practices key strategies via a flexible listening portfolio that students develop over the duration of a programme. The students emerged with what one participant calls "memorable and meaningful tools" for his future life. The study suggests the innovation of the listening portfolio may open the possibility for students to develop future identities as agential participants in communities (Toohey & Norton, 2003), not merely students instrumentally completing listening competency tests.

I developed self-awareness of listening strategies when I expose a variety of listening and spoken language outside the classroom... In the past, my main purpose was to understand the content without analysing. Today I equip myself with these strategies in my everyday life. They are memorable and meaningful tools for me (Mora, Somalia)

Introduction: The problem with listening

This paper reports on a project involving implementing a relatively innovative teaching and learning tool, the multi-item listening portfolio, into a first-year tertiary unit in English as an Additional Language (EAL) at a tertiary institute in Auckland. The unit *Spoken English in Practice (SEIP)* needed curricular renewal to increase adult learners' confidence in extensive listening and to apply their strategy-based learning to real-life interactions in the domains Benson and Reinders (2011) label 'beyond the classroom'.

The problem facing curriculum designers was motivated by learners' complaint that learning listening through conventional classroom-based materials such as International

English Language Testing System (IELTS) testing products and the semi-authentic materials available in self-access centres did not help them to engage in authentic, communicative transactions beyond the classroom. Moreover, even if they could find opportunities, they reported being ‘lost’ in face-to-face or telephonic transactions with local people because of such factors as the speed of speech, the challenge of following word-by-word, and the use of colloquialisms. This suggested the need to incorporate the paralinguistic and suprasegmental features of speech, opening the possibility of using such semi-authentic CALL resources as *Connected Speech* (2005) and *Pronunciation Power* (2004). It also suggested the need to find opportunities for learners to document and reflect on their listening events beyond the classroom.

More specifically, the challenge was to create an authentic learning and assessment tool where learners produced an “album of literacy performances” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p.322) and reflected on a real-world element (Power, 2010). Drawing on recent insights into the learning value of writing portfolios (Romova & Andrew, 2011), the *SEIP* team created the listening portfolio as a learning and assessment task that enabled students to reflect on listening strategies rehearsed in class and practiced beyond the classroom. Portfolios have other affordances: to evaluate their real-world listening transactions, and to charter their engagement with CALL programmes and their increasing awareness of such features as connected speech, elision and changing pitch. The area of pedagogical innovation in extensive listening in authentic L2 contexts has been acknowledged as under-researched (Boonkit, 2013; Renandya & Farrell, 2007; Vandergrift & Goh, 2011) while empirical studies of listening strategies for comprehension are well represented (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Richards, 1997). This paper describes and evaluates students’ experiences of applying and learning from strategies used in extensive listening across a variety of authentic, face-to-face and CALL-mediated contexts beyond the classroom. Such an investigation requires a movement from the strategic into the metacognitive, where students gain awareness of how they learn through the application of strategies.

In addition to the challenge of renewing the listening curriculum, what research questions give this study its focus? As well as considering the broader evaluative question of the benefits of listening portfolios as pedagogical and assessment tools, I ask how learners’ experiences of learning via listening portfolios impact their agency. Agency is conceived as a co-negotiated relationship between the educative context and the world beyond the classroom that engages students’ learning, changing identities, and ability to act with initiative in the social world (Gao & Lamb, 2011; Hunter & Cooke, 2007; Kohonen, 2000; Manosuthikit, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2003).

The importance of agency as a goal for EAL programmes targeting migrants, refugees and international students is one of four key frames discussed in the literature review. In

addition to considering fostering agency, I discuss research into listening portfolios, survey key studies linking teaching and learning via a strategic approach to metacognition and discuss research highlighting the centrality of reflectivity for alerting students to their progress and to *how* they see themselves as learning.

Background: Listening portfolios in *SEIP*

In this section I introduce the curriculum of *SEIP* and describe the elements of the listening portfolio, considering the role of reflection and exemplifying strategies.

Curriculum

SEIP, a year-one, degree-level unit focusing on applied speaking and speech, runs for three hours weekly for 12 weeks and applies methods to increase confidence in extensive listening contexts and strategies for listening to one-way and interactive spoken texts and events.

One hour per week occurs in the language lab, where a directed sub-curriculum utilizing such applications as *Connected Speech* and *Pronunciation Power* trains students to identify and emulate paralinguistic (gestures, facial expressions, tone and pitch) and prosodic or suprasegmental features of speech (stress, tone, word juncture). These features, to summarize Flowerdew and Miller (2005), encompass phonological contractions and assimilations; hesitations, false starts, filled pauses; sentence fragments; structures according to tone units rather than clauses and occurrence of discourse markers at beginnings or endings. All of these are covered in the curriculum. Class activities and tasks include student reviews of useful websites/digital listening resources via group presentations, and dictation and dictogloss training to focus on key words, stress-timing, pitch and intonation using both embodied and recorded voices. Students are encouraged to self-access the lab outside class and to incorporate their learning as possible entries in their portfolios.

The other two hours are dedicated to applying listening strategies (weeks 1 to 8) and creating a listening portfolio beyond the classroom; and to performing a semi-authentic information-sharing group task (a webquest) that culminates in group presentations (weeks 9-12).

Elements of the portfolio

Students are told to complete an average of one portfolio item per day for eight weeks and complete a portfolio grid such as that in Figure 1. Students name their text or event, identify target strategies, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy in context and reflect on how they might employ the strategy differently in the future. Borrowing from

Flowerdew and Miller (2005), the design of the portfolio allows learners to incorporate the eight dimensions of L2 listening. Their choices of listening texts and events should be *individualized, cross-cultural, social, contextualized, affective, strategic, intertextual and critical*. Learners are told to select texts and events that interest and challenge them across many genres and enable them, firstly, to apply strategies, which they can nominate in advance according to their perception of their needs, and/or secondly, to interact communicatively in a definable social context.

Item No.	Source/Resource Used	Strategies Used	Effectiveness of Strategy (and Reasons)	Reflections for Improvement
1	Listening to NZ <i>Unit 1B</i> <i>Lecture</i>	1 Listen extensively to the lecture. Pay attention to the discourse markers, eg: <i>firstly, the second thing is, later, first of all, let's turn to</i> , etc. 2 Take notes. Do the exercises after listening.	1 Discourse markers help me grasp the key points/ sentences. 2 Note-taking is really helpful to record key points and main idea.	1 Re-examine logical meanings of discourse markers 2 Write down new words to remember. Use English – English dictionary. 3. Check with transcript
2	Face to face Communication with NS <i>Be interviewed with the manager of CAB for 15 minutes</i>	1 Prepare introducing myself, the answer to the relevant questions, and what questions I would like to ask. 2 Repeating to make sure what the interviewer exactly asked.	1 I was confident because I'd prepared well in advance. 2. I predicted the questions. 3 I've now had an NZ interview experience.	1 Listen carefully to key words (The manager was speaking very fast.) 2 Try to bear in mind what NS said about NZ common words expressions and idioms.
3	Telephone – live <i>Seeking information from IRD</i>	1 Predict content and vocabulary 2 Ask caller politely to repeat in case of not understanding, and repeat to check understanding of information	1 I felt confident on hearing target words 2 When the caller didn't understand me, I tried to restate or paraphrase	1 Concentrate and listen carefully because we can't use body language. 2 Practise phone manner with the book "Telephoning in English".
4	Face to Face Communication <i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	1 Use as unexpected chance to practice clarification and paraphrasing skills	1 I was confident to ask for clarification about words and concepts, but they spoke too slowly. 2. I practised paraphrasing with "So you're saying ..."	1 Realise that I might need listening strategies and speaking gambits at any time. 2 Seek natural ways of using NS to practice listening.

Figure 1:

Authentic sample page from Listening Portfolio of participant 'Jean'

Students were explicitly instructed as to what 'reflection' entails. Kathpalia and Heah (2008) argue that providing clear definitions of reflection is essential if students are to understand the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of their learning. Students used Boude, Keogh and Walker's (1985) conception of reflection as "a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations" (p. 19). Reflectivity is crucial, Kathpalia and Heah (2008) maintain, to any pedagogy, unpacking the intersections of process and product, and vital, Gao (2013) argues, for distinguishing the sociocognitive concept of autonomy from the sociocultural and liberatory concept of

agency. In another study I have shown how reflectivity enables students to visualize their progress in applying strategic learning to their lives (Romova & Andrew, 2011).

Anderson (2005) defined learning strategies as “conscious actions that learners take to improve their language learning“ (p.757) and Wenden (1997) linked them explicitly to autonomy. As examples of strategies, learners might notice voice emphasis, repetition and such verbal cues as ‘signpost’ words signaling stages and functions, or listen for lexis, particularly field-specific and regional lexis. They might listen to fast speech for gist, applying listening strategies to televisual or media experiences. Learners might use other media or resources in advance (reading a newspaper story before listening to the news that day) or following an activity (writing a summary of the story and then checking the newspaper again).

Literature Review: Framing the study

Listening Portfolios

Three studies consider listening journals or portfolios (Chen, 2007; Ducker, 2012; Boonkit, 2013) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, in Taiwan, Japan and Thailand respectively. All three studies are born of the observation that students need more extensive listening practice for communicative participation in a globalized world. In each case, the use of reflective journaling established a habit of listening that was motivating. Ducker (2012) found evidence of autonomy but not investment in his study of listening portfolios as a vehicle for Japanese learners practicing extensive listening for university matriculation purposes. Chen’s (2007) study provides an instance of Taiwanese students willing to take responsibility for part of the assessment of their listening learning. In a Thai study, Boonkit (2013) demonstrated that the listening portfolio enables learners to work semi-directedly but independently in their own time and space, selecting texts that appeal and motivate them.

Two further studies, in Finland and Turkey, also made clear the innovative nature of the listening portfolio. In the context of the European language portfolio (ELP) in Finland, a study by Kohonen (2000) concluded the portfolio makes visible links between learners’ autonomous learning and pedagogical ways of fostering it. In a constructivist study of the use of portfolios, including listening portfolios, in secondary classes in Turkey, Yurdabakan and Ergogan (2009) wrote: “portfolio assessment in foreign language teaching can contribute to the students’ taking responsibility towards their own learning, discovering suitable learning strategies and contexts, and identifying goals for their future learning” (p.528).

Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) emphasised that listening portfolios need to record students’ adventures with *authentic* interactive contexts involving real-world listening and

attending to the features of speech. Power (2010) asserted that *authentic* assessment, involving reflecting on a real world element and including a service-learning component, prepares learners for authentic living and strengthens community belonging. Rost (2002) argued that, to be effective, attending to or ‘noticing’ a new feature must occur in an authentic

context because the listener’s instinct is to build meaning. The theory is that when a listener hears a word encountered in a classroom or educative context in the real world, spoken by real people, the consolidation of lexical learning occurs.

In addition to authenticity, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) identified nine other characteristics of portfolios that inform the design of *SEIP*’s curricular innovation: *collection* involves all texts being in one place; *selection* emphasizes learners’ choosing entries for inclusion; *communication* is the component that allows the development of social identities; *range* refers to evidencing an authentic variety of texts; *context richness* means having a pedagogically and ideologically clear context; *delayed evaluation* enables a retrospective, holistic evaluation of the portfolio as the dynamic product of a work in progress; *[listener]-centred control* means the student is responsible for how the portfolio represents their progress; *evolution over time* is the longitudinal element that accommodates multiple performance circumstances; *measured progress* means there are clear guidelines to ensure learners understand the task expectations; *reflection* enables iterative learning in action and on action, and, finally, *evaluation* refers to listeners’ self-appraisals of performances.

Strategy-focused instruction and metacognition

The primary purpose of strategic instruction is “to raise learners’ awareness of strategies and then allow each to select appropriate strategies to accomplish their learning goals” (Anderson, 2005, p.763). Chamot (2004) wrote that explicit strategy instruction involves, firstly, developing students’ awareness of appropriate strategies and, secondly, pedagogical demonstrations of the strategies applied to authentic texts followed by practicing with similar applications and evaluating their use of various strategies. The fifth stage, where students transfer learning to new contexts, is where metacognition is important. Being aware of strategy use and monitoring and evaluating it is part of the process of implementing and enacting strategies in sociocultural contexts (Rost, 2002).

Research identifies the potential link between strategy instruction and metacognition that the listening portfolio captures. Flowerdew and Miller (2005) emphasized the learning dimension of any L2 model of listening needs to identify specific listening strategies beneficial to acquisition. Hsiao and Oxford (2002) classified L2 learning strategies as *cognitive*, *metacognitive*, *mnemonic*, *compensatory*, *affective* and *self-motivating*, and *social*. Anderson (2005) argued that learners free up cognitive capacity as they move

from the thinking stage to the use stage. In considering why some students have more success than others, he maintained: “the difference is in how the strategies are executed and orchestrated” (p.762). The listening portfolio potentially allows learners to reflect and try again; a function of metacognition.

Metacognition promotes agency as it empowers learners to think about their learning analytically, reflectively. Anderson (2005) wrote: “metacognition results in critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of your thinking and may result in making specific changes in how you learn” (p.767). Vandergrift (2002) concurred, arguing that metacognitive strategies crucially oversee, regulate, or direct language learning tasks. This activation of strategies, he argued, involves learners thinking about the learning process, activating metacognition. As in listening portfolios, metacognition is tied to learners’ exercise of agency in moments when they report taking charge of learning. This study also establishes that explicit strategic learning operationalizes metacognition or learning about learning.

Agency

This study argues that listening portfolios are a pedagogical and assessment tool enabling learners to monitor their application of listening strategies beyond the classroom and reflect on their success, building pen-portraits of themselves moving towards agency. In their Turkish study, Yurdabakan and Ergogan (2009) also linked portfolios to learners recording incidences of agency. Gao and Lamb (2011) described “agency” as a concept allowing the convergence of identity, motivation and autonomy in applying real-world skills to future communities. Gao and Lamb’s (2011) notion of agency moved beyond conceptualizations of agency as personal initiative and intellectual engagement. They argued it encompasses the building of metacognitive awareness by acquiring skills to help learners (listeners) monitor their own learning and co-construct it with those in their social worlds. Anderson (2005) conceptualised these metacognitive skills as *planning* (advanced organization, directed attention, selective attention and self-management), *monitoring* (comprehension monitoring, auditory monitoring and double-check monitoring) and *evaluation* (performance evaluation and problem identification). These processes of metacognitive progress are mirrored in the structure of the listening portfolio.

Gao and Lamb (2011) reference what Norton and Toohey (2003, p.58) called “autonomy as agency” in sociocultural settings. Agency, they write, involves interaction with the social world and using its practices. Learners can develop it; teachers can foster it (Hunter & Cooke, 2007) and structure opportunities for it (Norton & Toohey, 2003). Manosuthikit (2008) wrote that agency entails the ability to assign relevance and significance to things and events, and the listening portfolio incorporates space for

learners to demonstrate this process. Hunter and Cooke (2007) view agency as a co-negotiated relationship that engages students' learning, changing identities, and ability to act with initiative. The portfolio can be seen as a map of learner progress from initial tentativeness to potential agency.

Reflectivity

Anderson (2005) reported reflective diaries and inventory-portfolios are rich sources of reflective data for researchers and useful methods to enable learners to gain metacognitive insights into their cognition and affect. Reflective diaries are places where learners record their stories of their emergent identities (Nunan & Choi, 2010). Reflectivity occurs when students evaluate their progress in applying 'target' strategies to their lived experience (Romova & Andrew, 2011). Importantly, students' reflections need to feed back into teaching and learning (Lam & Lee, 2009). By incorporating reflectivity into the portfolio, both as a regular activity and as a separate retrospective task at the end of the assessment period, both lecturers and students can see evidence of the application of targeted strategies and, importantly, students' records of their developing confidence in listening beyond the classroom.

Participants

Thirty-five students of *SEIP*, adults aged 22 to 60, participated in the project. They identified as migrants, international students, and refugees. In this study, I focus on ten students purposively sampled from the larger group. All participants described their imagined future in their reflective memos and signed consents. In the table below, the ten participants in the current study are represented by pseudonyms.

Table 2:

The participants

Pseudonym	Age range	Nation of origin/ status	Desired future
Cara	20s	China (International)	'Commerce degree'
Eric	20s	Taiwan (Migrant)	'Study psychology'
Fraser	60s	China (Migrant)	'Become Kiwi'
Hera	20s	Ethiopia (Refugee)	'Work with kids'
Javed	50s	Pakistan (Migrant)	'Be useful'
Jean	30s	China (Migrant)	'Get a job'
Mary	30s	South Korea (Migrant)	'Work'
Mira	30s	Japan (Migrant)	'Study, then work'
Mohammed	40s	Eritrea (Refugee)	'Learn local culture'
Mora	30s	Somalia (Refugee)	'Work in schools'

Data collection

The participants submitted portfolios recording their views on the effectiveness of strategies used in authentic listening events, either in-person or using digital texts and learning technologies. These covered an eight-week period. They also wrote, in week 9, reflective memos commenting globally on notable areas of improvement and evaluating the usefulness of strategies for their learning.

Data analysis

This paper uses qualitative descriptive methodology (Sandelowski, 2000) to produce narratives incorporating thematic analysis of both the listening portfolios and the memoranda. For data presentation, I present these reshaped thematic storylines, including moments of surprise, critical moments or what Sandelowski (2000, p.337) called “moments of experience”.

This naturalistic data analysis method uses theoretical sensitivity (the constant comparison method to ‘know’ the data in different ways and perceive convergences) and content analysis techniques that allow the target phenomena to present themselves naturally (Polkinghorne, 1995). My application of “evolved” constructivist thematic analysis uncovered three major themes while actively repositioning the researcher as the author of a reconstruction of experience and meaning (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). My own experiences as curriculum designer/lecturer/researcher permeate the narratives, adding an autoethnographic strain that is a virtue, not a limitation. By way of findings, three interconnected narratives based on three dominant themes are presented: *the future value of strategy-based learning*; *enhancement of ‘confidence’*, and *‘moments of experience’*.

Narrative 1: The future value of strategy-based learning

The majority of students claimed not to have encountered a strategic approach to practicing listening before. Mira assumed her listening would simply improve over time; the existence of strategies surprised her. Jean saw strategies as the “missing link” in her learning journey towards “progress”. Hera wrote that before taking this course she “was not really clear in [her] mind about what listening strategies were”. She added, “I was always interested in the message what was being said rather than how it’s being said”, and credits the strategy-based approach for her perceived improvement: “As the result of listening strategies I can say that my listening and speaking are getting better”. Mora made a similar comment: “In the past, I was not able to figure out my language weakness and my main purpose was to understand the content of the topic without analyzing the language”.

A strategic approach brings the students closer to being able to notice the detail of stretches of speech in the real world. Cara was amazed at the closeness of the learning she attained through employing the techniques of dictation and transcription, quantifying her learning lexically: “through dictation, I have learned new words like *dodgy*, *prompt*, *rancour*, *wreckage* and *hypothermia*, etc.” Mora’s enhanced awareness was more phonological: applying strategies regularly “gives me the opportunity to analyze spoken language and also identifying the linking words, pitch, intonation and rhythm”. Cara spoke of her first time “to notice and hear linking clearly used by native speakers” and called it “a very natural way”, not a strategy. Now, she evaluated, her deductive ability has increased. The metacognitive act of “noticing” both lexis and suprasegmentals led to learning. Fraser described his learning to be a process of “grasping” and then “using” strategies:

I thought I had got enough listening methods before [teacher’s] demonstrations of intonation, pitch change, linking and the stress make me realise that I had not built up knowledge to truly grasp these strategies, let alone use them. Through learning these rules, I found myself making a big jump in listening.

Similarly, the strategy-based approach impacted Javed: “I used to listen to the radio and TV but never understood as better as now, and this all happened after adopting different extensive and intensive strategies”. Here we see the listener monitoring and evaluating himself by applying a process of noticing.

Making the journey from the classroom to the real world is a resonant theme, exemplified by Cara: “I’m starting to realize that I’m actually using these strategies more and more when I communicate with native speakers”. The act of portfolio writing, incorporating repeated self-monitoring, led to metacognitive realization. Mary also demonstrated how an act of metacognition led to an understanding about preparing for communicative events:

Through this listening portfolio, I find these listening strategies, such as preparing for listening, are very useful. When I watch TV news or listen the radio report, I can write down the words based on similar sounds, then look up the dictionary or ask a native speaker to get the new vocabulary.

Utilising the metacognitive strategy of planning, she has been empowered with agency: she knows and uses techniques to apply in real world listening situations. This is also why Mora called the portfolio “an efficient way to improve my listening outside the classroom”. In his memo, Eric professed: “I think it is not the end of this portfolio, it is the beginning of our learning English”. He is planning forward for future applications of his strategic learning; he is headed towards agency.

Narrative 2: Enhancement of ‘confidence’

Narrative 1 indicates a future-orientation in the use of listening strategies, and this, notably Fraser’s “big jump”, implies enhanced confidence. Eric was outspoken:

All these methods indeed help me to increase confidence in two-way activities. However, sometimes my too much enthusiasm may give people an unpleasant impression. Anyway, I decided to be ready to risk everything in order to master English language. If English speaker can say it, so can I.

The word ‘confident’ is the most recurrent word in the data, signifying learning capital as something learners either gained or felt they had underestimated before. Javed offered a typical instance: “I have figured out my special problems and trying to do something about them. I have overcome my feelings of frustration and lack of confidence. In fact, I am really happy that these portfolio tasks provide me a chance to evaluate my listening skills”.

This discovery comes from interaction with real world texts, both one-way and two-way. Jean studied *TED*, *BBC* and *CNN* websites with transcripts: “As a result of it, I feel more comfortable about the announcers’ speed now”. In a face-to-face context, she invited Jehovah’s Witnesses in to talk, at first seeing them as a safe opportunity to practice strategies, but later seeing deeper learning potential:

I took part in a Bible study group. While I am talking with them, I focus on their colloquial expressions such as ‘take pot luck’, ‘it’s my shout’. I also focus on some technical words such as ‘apostate’ and ‘apocalypse’... I’ve learned a lot and am getting more confident.

The feeling of confidence comes in part from a feeling of increased belonging, but also comes from confidence that she can notice idioms and field-specific lexis to use in her community. Similarly, Hera, at daycare, used gambits in small talk with parents: “As a result, my self-confidence...increased in terms of making native speaker friends”. She also goes on to list some of her field-specific lexical learning. Below is one example, and her response:

Plenty more fish in the sea: means there are many more people to choose from. In this type of circumstance I go and ask a native speaker to translate them for me if I don’t know them.

Javed reported a similar phenomenon, and this serves as a suitable coda for this theme: “Before this course I never thought that I can be able to understand native speakers so much”.

Narrative 3: ‘Moments of experience’

The data are rich with descriptions where learners detail their application of strategies to real world texts and evaluate their impact:

I listened to the BBC news nearly every day and I started to use the strategies to improve my understanding. For example, I took notes while listening and compared my notes to the summary, and then went back to listen again. (Cara)

In order to improve my gaps in listening for stress and intonation, I can practice using our key resources. I think motivation is very important to every student. If no motivation, no practice. (Eric)

Similarly, Mora observed: “language without practice cannot be kept and sustained in our mind”. Such anecdotes evidence both students’ perceptions of progress and their application of metacognition about how correctly applying strategies enhances confidence.

Such minor epiphanies are moments of experience. Mary listened repeatedly to a news story. Confused at a term that sounded like *baby boomers*, she used contextual knowledge and repetition to deduce the idiom and work out its spelling. Asked at a job interview what her interests were, Mira told her (American) conversant that she liked to *go tramping*, and was placed in a situation of having to explain an ambiguous idiom to a native speaker. Eric spent his holidays watching movies, the first time without and the second time with subtitles, using contextual cues to guess meanings. “It really worked!” he reports.

While lexical moments of surprise are dominant, there are others about strategic phonetic listening and the application of listening techniques. Hera overheard a co-worker say “I don't think he SHOULD get the job” and puzzled out the meaning with that sentence stress, noticing that a stress of ‘HE’ would change the meaning in a more personal way. Javad set himself the task of saying “I'd really like a cup of tea” in conversation with “*schwa* and linking”, and believes he was able to capture the stress-timed nature of English. Eric had difficulty conversing with his Japanese friend. He discovered that “if I used strong form and weak form strategy in my conversation, I could make my speaking faster and he would understand me”. Terrified of the local accent, Fraser dared to phone his internet provider. He brainstormed some technical and functional language in advance, and found himself able to predict the operator’s questions and deduce her meanings.

‘Moments of experience’ make their way into learners’ portfolios and reflective memoranda because for the students they are small-scale breakthrough moments. Portfolios, covering eight weeks, themselves narrate a story: Mohammad observed many features (question and statement pitch, noun stress) in interviews on familiar African

topics in week 1, and by week 8 was listening to features of New Zealand speaking in documentaries, and talkback radio, promising he would “try to listen and if I found chance to participate any argument to build a good understanding of English so I will try to ring Radio New Zealand”. His next entry described his appearance on talkback radio, opposing allowing women in the military. In his final entry, he did a telephone interview for an interpreter’s job with *Kiwi Ora*, introducing himself as bilingual. Such narratives suggest emergent agency.

Discussion

The key elements of strategic portfolio pedagogy for extensive listening are practice-based application of strategies and reflection on or evaluation of performance in action. In the findings, it is clear the listening portfolio creating opportunities for listening but necessarily requiring investment. In terms of curriculum management, linking it to assessment ensures *SEIP* lecturers do not face Ducker’s (2012) dilemma: students lacking motivation. A desire to move beyond an investment in assessment towards a social one involving communication in communities can be observed, as Mohammad’s trajectory illustrates.

The findings confirm the portfolio offers advantages such as those itemised by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005): it encourages the use of CALL, technology-mediated texts and language learning specialists, for instance, as real world resources. Further, it develops applied strategies and encourages the use of criticality in evaluating the usefulness of chosen resources, as Hera did. Other benefits are that it ensures learners select their own texts, as Mohammad did, and monitor what works for them. The narratives suggest this activates metacognition and that learning is individualized. The narratives demonstrate how the listening portfolio provides a record of learning in applied listening over time across a range of genre and media, and as such provides a valid record for assessment purposes.

In the narratives, students not only respond strategically to listening events, but plan for them, metacognitively processing the strategic effectiveness of their communications as Mary and Cara did. The data reports success stories and increased confidence is also reflected in the students’ work, exemplified by Mohammad’s trajectory. However, references to overcoming struggle are common, and the overriding master narrative is epitomized by Mora’s desire to “equip myself with these strategies in my everyday life. They are memorable and meaningful tools for me”. The strategies can be tested widely, and individuals can select individual tools that suit their learning styles, contexts and needs.

The moments of experience described above are articulations of Rost's (2002) theory of noticing. Encouraged to *notice* by the knowledge they would write portfolio entries, Mira and Jean had wondered why their listening was not improving automatically. Mora, Javed and Cara demonstrates moments where they became aware that they were in fact noticing; where they witnessed their own learning when they reflected on the effectiveness of their use of specific listening strategies. There are glimpses of agency where the students find themselves empowered by applying their learning in a meaningful way with ontological results: Jean's "confidence" and Fraser's "big jump" exemplify this phenomenon. We witness the kinds of autonomy Wenden (1997) identified in the learners' monitoring of their listening performances, but we also observe learners such as Jean acting with initiative in the social world. A listening portfolio allows students to discover strategies that work for them. The process of learning offers them the possibility of moving beyond autonomy to agency. Learners engage in communities where they can hold active identities not as learners, but as communicators.

Conclusion

This study argued that teaching and assessing extensive listening via a portfolio embeds autonomy as agency into strategy-based instruction, transcending the instrumental and impacting the personal. Language educators are urged to implement and evaluate such modes of authentic assessment as listening portfolios. They allow learners to monitor and evaluate their development, progress and performance in semi-authentic contexts, such as CALL programmes, and, moreover, in authentic contexts beyond the classroom. This study suggests teaching interventions that offer opportunities for learners to apply strategies in social contexts activates the socio-affective aspect of metacognition, leading to a realisation of real progress and an enhancement of confidence.

The project demonstrated how listening portfolios, incorporating reflection, present an authentic and motivating mode of recording incidents of listening for learners, also offering formative and summative possibilities as an assessment tool for educators. Importantly, reflection enables learners to evaluate their use of listening strategies, enhancing their awareness of these 'memorable and meaningful tools'. Portfolios reveal new learner identities, ones that demonstrate an awareness of preparing and planning, identifying, monitoring, orchestrating and evaluating strategy use. In the narratives describing the learning value of portfolios, learners reported stories of developing autonomy as agency. They become social beings communicating with real initiative.

References

- Anderson, N.J. (2005). L2 learning strategies. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp.757-773). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Benson, P. & Reinders, H. (2011) (Eds.). *Beyond the language classroom*. New York,

NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Boonkit, K. (2013). Listening journals to activate integrated English skills in real world contexts. *Journal of Teaching and Education*, 2(2), 463-472.
- Boude, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- Chamot, A.U. (2004). Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching, *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), 14-26.
- Chen, J.C. (2007). Enhancing technology college students' English listening comprehension by listening journals. *Journal of Nanya Institute of Technology*, 27, 143-160.
- Connected Speech* (2005). Hurstbridge, Australia: Protea Textware.
- Ducker, N. (2013). Self-directed Internet-based extensive listening portfolios. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT 2012 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.
- Ferris, D. & Hedgcock, J. (2005). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process and practice* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Flowerdew, J. & Miller, L. (2005). *Second language listening: Theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gao, X. (2013). Reflexive and reflective thinking: a crucial link between agency and autonomy. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(3), 226-237.
- Gao, X. & Lamb, T. (2011). Exploring links between identity, motivation and autonomy. In Murray, G., **Gao, X.** & Lamb, T. (Eds.), *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language teaching* (pp.1-8). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Hsiao, T-Y., & Oxford, R.L. (2002). Comparing theories of language learning strategies: A confirmatory factor analysis. *Modern Language Journal*, 86(3), 368-383.
- Hunter, J., & Cooke, D. (2007). Through autonomy to agency: Giving power to language learners. *Prospect*, 22(2), 72-88.
- Kathpalia, S., & Heah, C. (2008). Reflective writing: Insights into what lies beneath. *RELC Journal*, 39(3), 300-317.
- Kohonen, V. (2000). Student reflection in portfolio assessment: making invisible language learning more visible. *Babylonia*, 1, 1-6.
- Lam, R., & Lee, I. (2009). Balancing the dual function of portfolio assessment. *ELT Journal*, 64(10), 54-64.
- Manosuthikit, A. (2008). Agency in second language acquisition and applied linguistics. *NIDA Language and Communication Journal*, 1, 1-29.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A. & Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 25-35.
- Norton, B. & Toohey, K. (2003). Learner autonomy as agency in sociocultural settings.

- In Palfreyman, D. & Smith, R.C. (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives* (pp.58-72). Basingstoke, Hants., UK: Palgrave.
- Nunan, D. & Choi, J. (Eds.) (2010). *Language and culture: reflective narratives and the emergence of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Power, A. (2010). Community engagement as authentic learning with reflection. *Issues in educational research*, 20(1), 57-63.
- Pronunciation Power* (2004). Edmonton, Canada: English Computerized Learning Inc.
- Renandya, W.A. & Farrell, T.S.C. (2010). "Teacher, the tape is too fast!" Extensive listening in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 65(1), 52-59
- Richards, J.C. (1997). *Developing tactics for listening*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Romova, Z. & Andrew, M. (2011). Teaching and assessing academic writing via the portfolio. *Assessing Writing*, 16(2), 111–122.
- Rost, M. (2002). *Teaching and researching listening*. London: Longman.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23, 334-340.
- Vandergrift, L. (2002). It was nice to see that our predictions were right: Developing metacognition in L2 listening comprehension. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58, 555-575.
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. (2011). Teaching and testing listening comprehension. In M. J. Long & C. J. Doughty, *The handbook of language teaching*, Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wenden, A.L. (1997). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. London: Prentice-Hall International.
- Yurdabakan, I. & Ergogan, T. (2009). The effects of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and writing skills of secondary school prep class students. *Journal of International Social Research*, 2(9), 526-538.

REVIEWS
