

Mediating Listening Strategy Instruction: Teacher Roles and Pedagogical Challenges in Moroccan CPGE Classrooms

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 27 Sep 2025; Received in revised form: 25 Oct 2025; Accepted: 28 Oct 2025; Available online: 31 Oct 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – <i>explicit listening strategy instruction, teacher mediation, metacognitive scaffolding, affective support, Moroccan CPGE</i></p>	<p><i>This article investigates teachers' mediating role in implementing Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction (ELSI) within Morocco's Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles (CPGE). Despite a growing body of research affirming the benefits of strategy-based listening instruction, classroom realization often depends on how teachers bridge theory and practice. Grounded in cognitive, metacognitive, sociocultural, and constructivist frameworks, this qualitative, interpretivist study explored how two CPGE English teachers enacted, adapted, and sustained ELSI under high-stakes, exam-driven conditions. Data were collected through classroom observations, reflective teacher accounts, and student feedback, and analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model. Findings revealed three core mediational roles – strategic modelling, metacognitive scaffolding, and affective mediation – that collectively transformed listening from a test-oriented to a reflective learning process. Nonetheless, teachers faced persistent contextual constraints: limited instructional time, curriculum rigidity, strategy-proficiency mismatches, and learner anxiety. The study concludes that effective listening pedagogy in such contexts depends on empowering teachers as reflective mediators capable of balancing explicitness, adaptability, and emotional support. It advocates sustained professional development, curriculum reform recognizing listening as a teachable skill, and institutional support for reflective practice.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

For years, listening comprehension has been considered an essential but daunting skill in second and foreign language teaching and learning (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Despite its importance, both communicatively or academically, it has received less explicit instructional attention in comparison to other language skills (Field, 2008; Graham, 2011). Traditional approaches to

listening are characteristically limited to testing comprehension rather than developing the listening process. This situation deprives learners from developing strategic awareness and autonomous control over the listening enterprise (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Berne, 2004).

Over the last thirty years or so, things have started to shift towards more focus on strategy-based listening instruction based on theoretically-grounded

cognitive and metacognitive models with a view to assist learners in managing spoken language processing (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Vandergrift, 2003; Goh, 2018). However, to successfully implement such frameworks rests more, not on theory nor on strategy taxonomies, but on teacher mediation of strategy-based theory and taxonomies within the classroom contexts. Teachers do play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. The success of strategy instruction doesn't just depend on what strategies are taught, but on how teachers mediate them.

Teacher mediation forms the backbone of strategy instruction. Drawing on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, teachers do not just deliver information, but they mediate cognitive growth through scaffolding learners as they evolve from other-regulation to self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000). In teaching listening, this translates as orchestrating explicit modelling of strategies, probing metacognitive awareness and engaging reflective discourse to raise learners' awareness of listening as an active, controllable process. In this sense, teachers assume the role of architects who bridge abstract theoretical constructs with the concrete, lived experiences of learners. However, such task is not straightforward but requires striking a balance between instructing strategies explicitly and dealing with spontaneous, volatile, real-time listening. In this respect, they need to scaffold without being overly prescriptive and maintain motivation in a skill that is notoriously anxiety-inducing and overwhelming to students (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).

It is often stated in the literature that teachers find strategy-based listening instruction theoretically appealing, but frustratingly challenging in practice (Goh, 2010; Cross, 2015; Macaro, 2010). Several inhibitions stand in the way such as time constraints, rigid curricula, exam pressures, and teacher uncertainty about how to model and evaluate strategy use. These often combine to erode all the pedagogical promise of the instructional approach (Chamot, 2005; Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Teachers' own beliefs about listening are also decisive in this situation. While those who view it as a skill that develops naturally through more exposure are less likely to invest time explicit strategy instruction, others conceive of it as a trainable

cognitive process requiring systematic instruction (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011; Field, 2019). These beliefs shape teachers' pedagogical decisions and classroom practices. So, while the theoretical case for explicit listening strategy instruction (ELSI) is well founded, its actual in-class implementation remains inconsistent, context-bound, and heavily shaped by teacher cognition and mediation practices.

Challenges as these become even more pronounced in Moroccan *Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles* (CPGE). This elite academic context prepares typically high-achieving, academically disciplined, and pressure-enduring students for highly competitive entrance exams to engineering and business schools. The workloads are intense, and the stakes are high especially in science streams where English is not the main subject. Listening instruction in CPGE classrooms is often overshadowed by reading and writing activities aligning with exam requirements, while listening is often approached as an evaluative rather than a developmental skill. Despite official circulars from the Moroccan Ministry of Education emphasizing the promotion of communicative competence and learner autonomy, reality in most CPGE classrooms is still dominated by teacher-centred pedagogies and content-heavy syllabi. Introducing ELSI into such context constitutes both an innovation and a pedagogical challenge. This demands significant shifts in teacher cognition, classroom discourse, and time management.

The Moroccan CPGE context provides a useful window into the broader question of how teachers mediate strategic instruction under institutional and cultural constraints. CPGE teachers typically receive no formal training in metacognitive pedagogy and are often expected to integrate strategy instruction without any curricular support. Success almost entirely depends on individual adaptive expertise, capacity for reflection, and ability to create an environment for self-regulation despite systemic pressures. In addition, because ELSI involves explicit explanation, guided practice, and reflective evaluation of strategies, teachers continually face concerns about the dilemma of either teaching for immediate listening comprehension or for long-term strategic development. These tensions are pedagogically fertile but cognitively demanding inasmuch as they require balancing the urgency of

comprehending a particular audio text with the longer-term development of strategic competence.

Against this backdrop, this paper discusses the teacher's role as a mediator in applying ELSI in Moroccan CPGE classrooms. The paper aims to explain both the pedagogical functions teachers assume and the contextual deterrents they face in mediating strategy-based listening instruction. Drawing on insights from an intervention-based study (Ouhejjou, under review) and follow-up teacher reflections, the article theorizes teacher mediation as involving three interrelated dimensions: (a) strategic modelling (overt demonstration and explanation of listening strategies); (b) metacognitive scaffolding (regular prompting of students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening in real time); and (c) affective mediation (management of anxiety, motivation, and confidence through supportive discourse and feedback). The study also outlines how institutional constraints, strategy and student proficiency mismatches, and learner resistance connect with these mediating practices, affecting teachers' capacities to sustain ELSI in CPGE settings.

Finally, this article argues that teacher mediation represents the pedagogical core of ELSI, attempting to map theoretical strategy frameworks into classroom practices. By foregrounding the teacher's voice, it seeks to complement existing learner-centred research thus far and work towards a more context-sensitive understanding of listening pedagogy in high-stakes EFL settings. From this perspective, ELSI is no longer merely a methodological approach but a dialogic process in which teachers and learners jointly construct strategic awareness. This reframing emphasizes the necessity to support teachers as reflective practitioners who are able to align explicit instruction with their students' cognitive, affective, and contextual realities.

Research Questions

To guide this inquiry, the study addresses the following questions:

1. *How do teachers mediate explicit listening strategy instruction in Moroccan CPGE classrooms?*
2. *What pedagogical and contextual challenges do teachers encounter when implementing ELSI?*

3. *In what ways can teacher mediation practices enhance learners' metacognitive engagement in listening tasks?*

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The teaching and learning of listening comprehension have evolved from being viewed as a passive process of decoding linguistic input to being understood as an active, multidimensional process involving cognitive, metacognitive, and social mediation mechanisms (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Within this paradigm, Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction (ELSI) operates as both a cognitive and pedagogical innovation: it aims to make learners aware of the mental operations underlying comprehension and to equip them with strategies to manage these processes independently (Chamot, 2005; Goh, 2018). However, the success of ELSI depends crucially on how teachers translate these theoretical principles into classroom practice – how they mediate, model, and scaffold strategic engagement during listening tasks. To conceptualize this mediating role, this section draws on four interrelated theoretical perspectives: Cognitive Learning Theory, Metacognitive Theory, Sociocultural Theory, and Constructivism. Together, they form a multidimensional framework that situates teacher mediation at the intersection of cognitive activation, metacognitive regulation, and social co-construction.

2.1 Cognitive and Metacognitive Foundations of ELSI

At the core of ELSI lies Cognitive Learning Theory, which views learning as the internal processing of information through attention, perception, memory, and retrieval (Anderson, 1983, 1995). Anderson's Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) model and information-processing framework distinguish between three stages of skill acquisition – declarative, procedural, and automatic – each relevant to how learners internalize listening strategies. During listening comprehension, learners must decode linguistic forms (bottom-up processes), integrate them with contextual expectations (top-down processes), and transform these operations into automated comprehension routines (Anderson, 2005; Field, 2008).

Teachers play a pivotal role in this transformation by guiding learners from declarative awareness (“knowing that” a strategy exists) to procedural control (“knowing how” to use it effectively). This progression requires teachers to provide explicit instruction, model strategy use, and create opportunities for practice and reflection. As Chamot (2005) emphasizes, explicitness does not merely involve naming strategies but demonstrating their cognitive purpose and application within authentic listening tasks. Through such modelling, the teacher functions as a cognitive scaffold, helping learners build conceptual bridges between linguistic input and strategic processing.

Complementing the cognitive dimension is Metacognitive Theory, introduced by Flavell (1979), which defines metacognition as one’s awareness and regulation of cognitive processes. In the context of listening, metacognition involves the ability to plan how to approach a listening task, monitor comprehension in real time, and evaluate success afterward (Vandergrift, 2003). Metacognitive knowledge (awareness of task demands, strategy repertoire, and self-efficacy) and metacognitive regulation (control over planning, monitoring, and evaluation) are thus integral to successful listening. Teachers mediate these functions by externalizing metacognitive processes—verbalizing their thinking, prompting learners to anticipate difficulties, and guiding post-task reflection (Goh, 2018; Cross, 2015).

Through this guided reflection, learners begin to internalize regulatory patterns that transform them from reactive listeners to self-directed, strategic ones. In this sense, ELSI becomes a process of metacognitive apprenticeship in which teachers model not only the “how” of listening but the “how to think about” listening. The teacher’s discourse—questioning, prompting, and feedback—thus serves as a metacognitive mirror that enables learners to observe and eventually regulate their own comprehension behaviour (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Graham, 2017).

2.2 Sociocultural Mediation and the Teacher’s Role

While cognitive and metacognitive theories explain the internal mechanisms of learning, Sociocultural Theory (SCT) foregrounds the social origins of these mechanisms. Drawing on Vygotsky’s

(1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), SCT posits that higher-order cognitive processes emerge first on the social plane, through interaction with a more knowledgeable other, before becoming internalized as self-regulation. Within this framework, the teacher assumes the role of a mediator who provides scaffolded assistance that enables learners to perform beyond their current level of independent competence.

In ELSI, this mediation occurs through the joint construction of meaning, where teachers guide learners’ attentional focus, regulate task complexity, and offer feedback that bridges comprehension gaps. The teacher’s language becomes a psychological tool that shapes learners’ cognitive activity, facilitating the transition from other-regulation to self-regulation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Mediation, in this sense, is not mere instruction but dialogic support—a dynamic interaction in which the teacher continually adjusts scaffolding to the learner’s evolving competence.

As Oxford (2017) argues in her Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model, learning strategies are most effective when socially mediated and emotionally supported. Teachers thus mediate not only cognitive and metacognitive strategy use but also the affective climate that sustains learner motivation and reduces listening anxiety. This socio-affective dimension is especially critical in contexts such as Moroccan CPGE classrooms, where high performance expectations and time pressures may heighten students’ apprehension during listening tasks. Through empathetic mediation, teachers help learners reframe listening difficulty as a normal part of the learning process, thereby cultivating resilience and confidence.

From this perspective, teacher mediation in ELSI extends beyond procedural guidance to encompass affective attunement and dialogic negotiation. The teacher’s role is not simply to transmit strategies but to co-construct the conditions under which these strategies become meaningful and usable. The sociocultural perspective thus situates ELSI within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where learners appropriate strategies through socially mediated interaction rather than passive absorption.

2.3 Constructivism and the Co-Construction of Strategic Awareness

Aligned with sociocultural principles, Constructivist Theory emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through engagement with tasks, peers, and instructors (Piaget, 1972; Bruner, 1990). In listening pedagogy, constructivism reframes comprehension as an interpretive act rather than a mechanical decoding process. Teachers become facilitators who design experiences that allow learners to discover the utility of strategies through guided problem-solving and reflection.

Constructivist listening classrooms encourage learners to hypothesize, test, and revise comprehension strategies in response to authentic input, promoting strategic personalization. Teachers mediate this process by scaffolding learners' sense-making rather than prescribing fixed routines. As Goh (2018) observes, effective strategy instruction involves creating reflective spaces where learners articulate what worked, why it worked, and how it can be adapted to future tasks. In this dialogic environment, learners internalize not only strategies but the metacognitive habits of inquiry that underlie self-regulated learning.

Moreover, constructivism underscores the contextual dimension of teacher mediation. Teachers must continuously interpret the situational variables—task complexity, learner proficiency, classroom time, and affective state—that influence strategy use. This interpretive flexibility constitutes what Shulman (1987) calls pedagogical content knowledge: the ability to transform disciplinary understanding into teachable, context-sensitive forms. Thus, constructivist mediation in ELSI entails both structured guidance and adaptive responsiveness—a balance between explicitness and learner autonomy.

2.4 Conceptual Anchors in Teacher Mediation

Integrating the above theories yields a set of conceptual anchors that underpin the analysis of teacher roles in ELSI:

1. **Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** – highlights the teacher's mediating function as scaffolding learners' progression from dependence to autonomy.
2. **Anderson's Information Processing Model (1983, 1995)** – elucidates how teachers support learners' transition from declarative

to procedural knowledge of listening strategies.

3. **Flavell's Metacognition Framework (1979)** – provides the foundation for understanding how teachers cultivate awareness and control over listening processes.
4. **Chamot (2005) and Goh (2018)** – operationalize these theories pedagogically, demonstrating how teacher modelling, guided practice, and reflection foster metacognitive growth.
5. **Oxford's Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model (2017)** – situates teacher mediation within an affective and social system of self-regulation.
6. **Graham and Macaro (2008)** – clarify the distinction between explicit and implicit strategy instruction, reinforcing the need for deliberate teacher intervention in awareness building.

Together, these conceptual anchors position the teacher as both a cognitive guide and a sociocultural mediator, responsible for orchestrating the interplay between explicit instruction, learner autonomy, and emotional engagement. In the context of Moroccan CPGE classrooms, this integrated theoretical lens allows for a nuanced understanding of how teachers operationalize ELSI under systemic and affective constraints.

2.5 Synthesis

In synthesis, ELSI is best conceptualized as a multilayered pedagogical process that intertwines cognitive activation, metacognitive regulation, and social mediation. The teacher's role is central to this process, functioning simultaneously as an explicit instructor, a reflective guide, and a motivational mediator. Cognitive and metacognitive theories explain what strategies are and how they can be learned; sociocultural and constructivist theories explain how these strategies are internalized through social interaction and experiential engagement.

Understanding teacher mediation through this composite framework not only clarifies the theoretical underpinnings of ELSI but also provides an interpretive basis for analysing the pedagogical realities and challenges encountered in the Moroccan CPGE context. It is within this intersection—between

theory and practice, cognition and context—that the following sections examine how teachers enact, adapt, and sustain explicit listening strategy instruction.

III. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

3.1 Research Context

The present study was situated within the Moroccan Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles (CPGE), an elite preparatory education system designed to prepare high-achieving students for national and international engineering and business schools. English, while a non-specialist subject, constitutes an essential component of the curriculum and is evaluated through competitive examinations that emphasize reading and writing. Listening instruction, by contrast, often receives limited classroom attention and remains underdeveloped in both pedagogical design and assessment. Within this academically demanding environment, English teachers face dual pressures: adhering to a rigid, exam-driven syllabus while simultaneously responding to recent curricular calls for communicative competence and learner autonomy.

Against this backdrop, the implementation of ELSI represented an innovation that challenged prevailing pedagogical norms. The study formed part of a larger quasi-experimental intervention investigating the effects of explicit strategy instruction on students' listening comprehension and strategic awareness. Within that broader framework, the current paper focuses on the teacher's mediating role—how ELSI was enacted, negotiated, and sustained within authentic classroom conditions. This focus recognizes teachers as key agents of pedagogical transformation whose cognition, discourse, and interactional choices shape learners' strategic engagement.

3.2 Research Orientation

The investigation adopted a qualitative interpretivist orientation to explore the lived pedagogical realities of ELSI implementation. Rather than measuring teacher performance quantitatively, the study sought to interpret how teachers conceptualized and enacted mediation in response to contextual constraints. This perspective aligns with Creswell's (2013) interpretive paradigm, which privileges understanding over prediction and seeks to

capture meaning as constructed through action and reflection.

Teacher mediation was examined through two complementary lenses:

1. Process-oriented observation—to document teacher modelling, scaffolding, and classroom discourse; and
2. Reflective accounts—to capture teachers' perceptions, challenges, and adaptive strategies in implementing ELSI.

Together, these sources allowed for a triangulated understanding of mediation as both a dynamic instructional practice and a reflective cognitive process.

3.3 Participants and Contextual Role

The focal participants were two English teachers from CPGE, Kénitra, each with over ten years of professional experience and advanced proficiency in English. Both teachers participated voluntarily in the ELSI training and implementation phase. They received an orientation session outlining the theoretical principles of strategy-based listening instruction and the intervention's pedagogical sequence. Importantly, while the ELSI model provided a structured framework, teachers were encouraged to contextualize the strategies according to their students' proficiency level, course objectives, and classroom constraints.

This semi-structured autonomy enabled the study to observe naturally occurring adaptations—how teachers modified instruction, adjusted scaffolding intensity, and balanced explicit explanation with time management. The teacher perspective was therefore central to capturing the pedagogical tensions inherent in ELSI implementation within the CPGE environment.

3.4 Data Sources and Collection

Three principal qualitative sources informed the analysis:

1. Classroom Observation Notes: During the ELSI intervention, classroom sessions were systematically observed to record teacher practices of strategy modelling, verbal scaffolding, questioning techniques, and feedback patterns. Observation focused particularly on how teachers facilitated the

stages of planning, monitoring, and evaluating listening comprehension.

2. **Teacher Reflective Accounts:** At the end of each instructional phase, participating teachers provided written reflections describing their instructional experiences, perceived learner responses, and difficulties encountered. These accounts served as metacognitive narratives that revealed teachers' evolving understanding of ELSI and their professional reasoning behind pedagogical choices.
3. **Supplementary Student Feedback:** Student comments collected through end-of-session reflections were used as supporting evidence to illuminate how teacher mediation was perceived by learners. This triangulation reinforced interpretive validity and allowed cross-verification of emergent themes.

All participants provided informed consent; institutional permission was obtained. All data were anonymized and coded using pseudonyms (e.g., T1, T2) to ensure confidentiality and ethical integrity.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analysed following the thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), which allows for systematic identification and interpretation of recurrent patterns. The analysis proceeded through six iterative stages: familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, definition, and final synthesis. Coding was both deductive—guided by the theoretical constructs of cognitive, metacognitive, and sociocultural mediation—and inductive, allowing new themes to emerge organically from teacher discourse and observation notes.

Through this dual process, the analysis yielded two overarching thematic clusters:

1. **Teacher Roles in ELSI Mediation,** encompassing modelling, scaffolding, and affective support; and
2. **Pedagogical and Contextual Challenges,** including curricular rigidity, time constraints, and learner resistance.

These themes provided the analytical foundation for the discussion that follows, illustrating

how teacher mediation operates at the intersection of theoretical ideals and practical realities.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Researcher Reflexivity

To ensure analytical rigor, multiple strategies were employed: prolonged engagement in the field, cross-validation between observation and reflection data, and iterative peer debriefing with fellow researchers. Credibility was further enhanced through member checking, whereby teachers reviewed and confirmed thematic interpretations of their reflections.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the process, acknowledging the dual role of the researcher as both intervention facilitator and observer. This position offered valuable insight into classroom dynamics but required conscious self-monitoring to minimize interpretive bias. Following Dörnyei (2007), the researcher approached the data as a “critical insider”—engaged in the pedagogical process yet committed to analytic objectivity.

3.7 Summary

In sum, this methodological design allowed for an in-depth exploration of how teachers mediate explicit listening strategy instruction within the constraints of the Moroccan CPGE system. By integrating observation, reflection, and interpretive analysis, the study captures the lived pedagogy of ELSI, revealing how theory translates into practice through the teacher's adaptive, reflective, and emotionally responsive mediation. The next section presents the findings and discussion, organized around the dual foci of teacher roles and pedagogical challenges.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis of classroom observations and teacher reflections revealed a dynamic, multifaceted picture of mediation within ELSI. Teachers' discourse and behaviour consistently pointed to three complementary roles: strategic modelling, metacognitive scaffolding, and affective mediation, that together constituted the pedagogical core of ELSI. At the same time, teachers reported and exhibited several contextual and pedagogical challenges that constrained sustained implementation, including limited instructional time,

a persistent mismatch between students' proficiency and strategy sophistication, and the overwhelming influence of the exam-driven curriculum. The discussion below presents these findings in two integrated parts.

4.1 Teacher Roles in Mediating ELSI

4.1.1 Modelling and Explicit Demonstration of Strategies

Both participating teachers viewed explicit modelling as the pedagogical entry point of ELSI. Their instructional routines began with verbalized demonstrations of how to approach listening tasks by clarifying purpose, predicting content, identifying key words, and evaluating understanding. Observation notes showed that modelling often occurred through think-alouds (*"I'm listening for the cause of the problem... now I check if my prediction was correct"*), thereby making normally invisible mental processes audibly accessible to learners.

This practice resonates with Chamot's (2005) notion of cognitive apprenticeship, in which expert performance is externalized so that novices can observe and gradually emulate it. Through explicit modelling, teachers converted abstract strategy terminology, such as inferencing or monitoring, into actionable classroom behaviour. Anderson's (1995) information-processing model helps explain this function: modelling acts as a bridge from declarative to procedural knowledge, allowing learners to rehearse strategy use consciously before it becomes automatic.

Teacher reflections confirmed the perceived value of this role. T1 noted that *"students seemed unaware of what actually happens while listening; the modelling made them see the steps clearly."* However, both teachers acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining consistent explicitness without reducing fluency. T2 observed: *"Explaining strategies takes time; sometimes I felt I was over-talking instead of letting them listen."* This tension between explanation and experience exemplifies what Graham and Macaro (2008) describe as the explicitness-overload dilemma. This asserts that over-explicit instruction can be overwhelming and counterproductive, while too little can lead to a lack of clarity and progress. Therefore, teachers must provide clarity without overwhelming learners with meta-language.

Nevertheless, modelling was instrumental in transforming listening from a product-testing activity to a process-learning one. Students' subsequent reflections frequently referenced teacher demonstrations as *"useful reminders of what to do first,"* suggesting that modelling facilitated not only comprehension but also awareness of procedural order. In the Moroccan CPGE context, where listening had rarely been treated as teachable, such modelling represented a pedagogical shift towards a strategic conception of the skill.

4.1.2 Scaffolding Metacognitive Regulation

Beyond initial modelling, teachers engaged in ongoing metacognitive scaffolding throughout listening tasks. Observation data revealed frequent prompting before, during, and after listening: *"What do you expect to hear?"*, *"Does this confirm your prediction?"*, *"How will you check your answer?"*. Such questioning operationalized Flavell's (1979) tripartite model of metacognition, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and exemplified the external regulation that precedes learner self-regulation.

This scaffolding aligns closely with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, in which the teacher's prompts and feedback function as mediational tools enabling learners to operate at a higher cognitive level. The teachers' discourse often exhibited graduated assistance: initial prompts were explicit (*"Underline the key transition words"*), but as learners gained confidence, prompts became open-ended (*"What helped you catch that detail?"*). Such fading of support corresponds to the gradual release of responsibility advocated in constructivist pedagogy (Bruner, 1990).

Both teachers regarded metacognitive prompting as transformative. T1 wrote: *"Students began to anticipate questions; they started to plan before I asked."* This observation indicates the internalization of regulatory routines, a key indicator of metacognitive development (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). However, sustaining this reflective dialogue required considerable time and attentional management. T2 reflected: *"When students struggled with vocabulary, I had to decide whether to pause and guide or let them continue. Sometimes I feared losing their focus."* This underscores the teacher's complex cognitive load

during ELSI: simultaneously monitoring learner comprehension, adjusting scaffolding, and maintaining lesson momentum.

Overall, metacognitive scaffolding enabled learners to move from passive reception toward active comprehension management. Through guided reflection and iterative questioning, teachers modelled the thinking process of effective listeners, making strategy use not only explicit but dialogic. In line with Goh (2018), this process transformed the classroom into a reflective space where listening was treated as a skill of inquiry rather than an act of decoding.

4.1.3 Affective and Motivational Mediation

A third dimension of teacher mediation concerned the affective climate of listening instruction. Both teachers consciously sought to counter learners' anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt which frequently impede listening performance (Arnold, 2011; Graham, 2017). Observation notes recorded instances where teachers normalized difficulty ("Even native speakers miss information; the goal is to notice, not to panic") and provided positive feedback emphasizing effort over accuracy.

This supportive discourse exemplifies Oxford's (2017) Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) model, which integrates emotional regulation into strategy instruction. In the Moroccan CPGE context, where students often equate success with perfection and fear failure, such mediation proved crucial. T1's reflection

captured this ethos: "I realized that motivating students to persist was as important as teaching the strategy itself." Affective mediation also took practical forms, such as lowering task difficulty or allowing group discussion before answer-checking, thus creating zones of psychological safety that encouraged experimentation.

From a sociocultural perspective, these affective interventions represent social mediation of emotion, a precondition for sustained cognitive engagement (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). By reframing error as information rather than failure, teachers fostered a classroom discourse conducive to metacognitive risk-taking. This aligns with Dörnyei's (2001) argument that emotional support is inseparable from self-regulation, since motivation operates as both a cause and consequence of successful strategy use.

In sum, the affective dimension of mediation functioned as the emotional infrastructure of ELSI. Without it, cognitive and metacognitive guidance would likely have faltered under the pressures of the exam-oriented environment. Through empathy, reassurance, and motivational scaffolding, teachers sustained the very engagement necessary for strategic learning to occur.

These three mediational roles and their corresponding pedagogical functions are summarized in **Table 1**, which links observed practices to their theoretical underpinnings.

Table 1: Summary of Teacher Mediational Roles and Functions

Mediational Role	Core Pedagogical Functions	Underlying Theoretical Basis	Illustrative Practices in CPGE Context
1. Strategic Modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating strategy use through think-alouds. • Making cognitive processes visible. • Clarifying purposes and sequencing of listening strategies. 	Cognitive Learning Theory (Anderson, 1983, 1995) Cognitive Apprenticeship (Chamot, 2005).	Teachers verbalized how to plan, predict, and verify during listening; used explicit modelling to connect abstract strategies with task performance.
2. Metacognitive Scaffolding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompting learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate comprehension. 	Metacognitive Theory (Flavell, 1979) Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978).	Teachers asked guiding questions before/during/after listening (e.g., "What do you expect to hear?"); shifted

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging self-questioning and reflective regulation. • Gradually releasing responsibility. 		from direct to open-ended prompts as learners gained autonomy.
3. Affective Mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing anxiety and perfectionism. • Sustaining motivation and engagement. • Creating emotionally safe learning environments. 	Oxford's (2017) S ² R Model; Sociocultural Mediation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).	Teachers normalized difficulty, praised effort, and allowed collaborative reflection to mitigate stress and encourage persistence.

Note. This table synthesizes observed teacher roles and functions identified in classroom data. It integrates theoretical anchors with context-specific pedagogical evidence.

4.2 Pedagogical and Contextual Challenges

Despite the pedagogical promise of ELSI, teachers encountered multiple constraints that complicated its enactment. These challenges, though specific to the Moroccan CPGE system, echo patterns reported internationally in research on strategy-based instruction (Cross, 2015; Goh, 2010). They highlight the tension between innovation and institutional inertia, where theoretically sound approaches must contend with entrenched curricular, temporal, and affective barriers.

4.2.1 Time and Curriculum Constraints

Both teachers identified time scarcity as the foremost obstacle to implementing ELSI systematically. CPGE English classes typically allocate limited hours per week, with syllabi dominated by reading, critical thinking, and writing tasks geared toward entrance examinations. Integrating explicit strategy instruction, which demands additional explanation, reflection, and feedback, was therefore perceived as competing with examinable content.

As T2 noted: *“Strategy work needs repetition, but the program leaves little space for recycling; I often rushed through post-listening reflection.”* This constraint led to selective rather than comprehensive implementation. Consequently, teachers focused on a few high-yield strategies (e.g., predicting, inferencing) while omitting others. Such selectivity, while pragmatic, risked fragmenting learners’ understanding of strategy interdependence. The phenomenon parallels

Chamot’s (2005) observation that without curricular integration, strategy instruction remains episodic rather than developmental.

Moreover, the product-orientation of the CPGE curriculum reinforced a testing culture antithetical to reflective pedagogy. Teachers reported that students frequently demanded immediate results (*“Will this help in the exam?”*) rather than long-term strategic growth. This instrumental mindset limited engagement in metacognitive dialogue and underscored the need for systemic curriculum reform aligning assessment with process-based objectives.

4.2.2 Strategy–Proficiency Mismatch

A second recurrent challenge was the mismatch between students’ language proficiency and the cognitive demands of explicit strategy training. While CPGE students are intellectually capable, their listening proficiency often lags behind their reading or grammar competence. Teachers observed that weaker students struggled to verbalize strategies or articulate reflections in English, leading to superficial participation. T1 commented: *“Some learners understood the idea of monitoring but couldn’t express what they noticed.”*

This mismatch highlights a paradox in ELSI: strategies designed to compensate for limited proficiency may themselves require a threshold of linguistic ability for comprehension and discussion. Anderson’s (1995) model helps explain this tension: excessive cognitive load from decoding leaves little working-memory capacity for metacognitive monitoring. Consequently, teachers had to simplify

metacognitive metalanguage and provide bilingual explanations—a practical adaptation but one that risked diluting theoretical precision.

Furthermore, students' initial unfamiliarity with reflective learning created resistance. Accustomed to teacher-centred instruction, many perceived metacognitive questioning as peripheral to "real learning." T2 noted: *"At first, they saw reflection as extra work; it took weeks before they valued it."* This attitudinal inertia underscores the socio-cultural embeddedness of learning behaviours (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Teachers therefore acted not only as cognitive mediators but as cultural negotiators, gradually socializing learners into a new epistemology of learning grounded in self-regulation.

4.2.3 Learner Resistance, Anxiety, and Exam Pressures

The third challenge emerged from the affective climate of high-stakes competition intrinsic to CPGE education. Students' perfectionism and fear of failure often produced anxiety during listening tasks, especially when the tasks involved unfamiliar accents or topics. Teachers observed that anxiety led to premature disengagement; students stopped listening after missing a key word. As T1 recounted: *"They panicked easily; they thought one missed word meant total failure."*

While teachers attempted to mitigate this through reassurance and group reflection, systemic exam pressures undermined sustained affective balance. Learners tended to prioritize accuracy over strategy experimentation, viewing risk-taking as counterproductive. This mirrors Graham's (2011) findings in European secondary contexts, where exam orientation fosters a performance-avoidance mindset that inhibits metacognitive growth.

Teachers themselves felt constrained by this environment. T2 noted: *"Sometimes I reverted to giving answers quickly because students became restless; they wanted closure, not exploration."* Such episodes illustrate how institutional culture shapes pedagogy, reinforcing what Field (2008) calls testing-of-comprehension syndrome—an overemphasis on correct answers at the expense of process insight.

The result was a pedagogical paradox: the very context that most needs strategic listening instruction (because of its cognitive demands) is the

one that least accommodates its reflective temporality. This finding underscores the necessity of re-conceptualizing listening pedagogy in exam-oriented systems, integrating assessment practices that value strategy awareness alongside comprehension accuracy.

4.3 Integrative Discussion

Taken together, the findings suggest that teacher mediation in ELSI operates within a tension field between theory and context. On the one hand, teachers successfully enacted the three mediational roles theorized in Section 2: cognitive modelling, metacognitive scaffolding, and affective support, demonstrating the applicability of the cognitive-metacognitive-sociocultural framework. On the other hand, contextual constraints limited the sustainability of these practices.

The data reaffirm the theoretical proposition that teacher mediation is both cognitive and sociocultural. Teachers not only guided learners' mental operations but also negotiated institutional expectations and emotional climates. Their discourse functioned as the mediational link between abstract strategy models and situated learner experience, a role consistent with Vygotsky's conception of semiotic mediation. At the same time, the necessity of constant adaptation (simplifying language, managing time, responding to anxiety) reflected the constructivist principle of pedagogical responsiveness, in which meaning is co-constructed under specific contextual conditions.

The findings thus advance three key insights:

1. ELSI requires dialogic pedagogy. Teacher mediation transforms strategy instruction from a top-down delivery model into an interactive process of shared reflection.
2. Teacher agency is constrained yet creative. Within curricular limits, teachers exercised professional judgment to contextualize theory as an expression of adaptive expertise (Hatano & Inagaki, 1995).
3. Sustainable ELSI implementation depends on systemic alignment. Without institutional recognition of reflection and process-based assessment, teachers' mediational efforts remain fragile innovations.

Ultimately, the Moroccan CPGE case illustrates that explicit listening strategy instruction succeeds not merely through learner training but through teacher empowerment founded on the ability of teachers to integrate cognitive, metacognitive, and affective mediation despite systemic constraints. The

dynamic interaction of these mediational dimensions within contextual constraints is illustrated in **Figure 1**, which models teacher mediation in ELSI as an interconnected system linking cognitive, metacognitive, and affective processes.

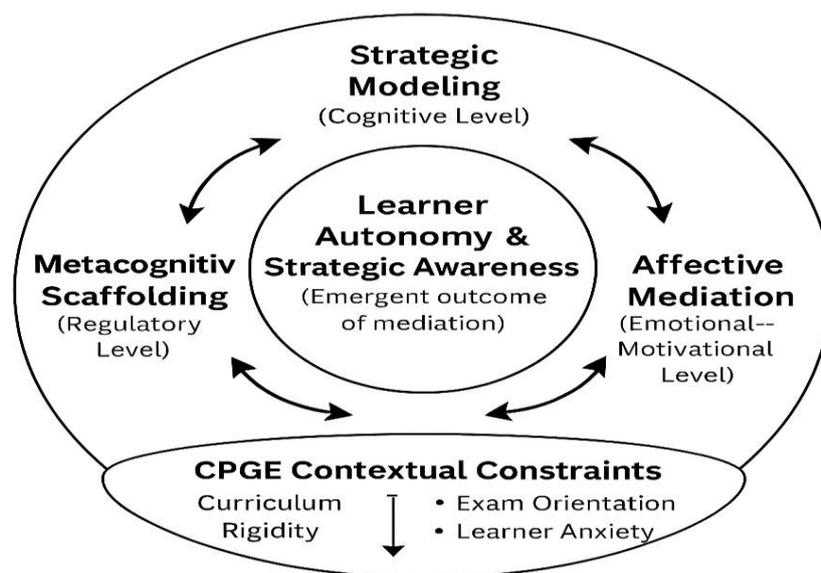


Fig.1: Thematic Model of Teacher Mediation in Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction (ELSI).

Note: The thematic model conceptualizes teacher mediation as a cyclical, triadic system integrating cognitive, metacognitive, and affective dimensions. Strategic modelling initiates cognitive engagement, metacognitive scaffolding supports regulation, and affective mediation sustains motivation. Bidirectional arrows indicate iterative reinforcement among the three roles, while the surrounding contextual layer (curricular, temporal and affective constraints) exerts downward pressure. Learner autonomy and strategic awareness emerge at the centre as the dynamic outcome of this mediation process.

V. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study underscore that the success of Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction (ELSI) depends not only on learners' strategic engagement but, crucially, on the teacher's capacity to mediate cognitive, metacognitive, and affective dimensions of the listening process. Teachers' ability to model, scaffold, and emotionally sustain learner participation transforms theoretical frameworks into actionable pedagogy. Yet the analysis has also

revealed that effective mediation is neither intuitive nor context-neutral: it requires deliberate training, institutional support, and curricular flexibility. The following implications thus target three interdependent domains—teacher education, curriculum development, and pedagogical practice.

5.1 Teacher Education and Professional Development

First, the study highlights an urgent need for systematic professional preparation in strategy-based listening pedagogy. Most teachers enter the classroom with solid linguistic competence but limited training in how to teach listening as a strategic, metacognitively driven skill. ELSI demands pedagogical knowledge that extends beyond task administration to encompass modelling of cognitive processes, questioning techniques for metacognitive prompting, and sensitivity to learner affect.

Teacher-education programs—both pre-service and in-service—should therefore incorporate modules on metacognitive scaffolding and sociocultural mediation. These modules could include

micro-teaching sessions in which instructors practice think-aloud modelling, guided reflection design, and adaptive scaffolding strategies. As Richards and Farrell (2011) and Borg (2006) note, teacher cognition evolves through reflective engagement rather than prescriptive training; thus, professional development initiatives should foster communities of practice where teachers collaboratively analyse listening tasks, share challenges, and develop context-appropriate mediation techniques.

Moreover, sustained mentorship is essential. Teachers in the present study expressed the need for ongoing dialogue and feedback to refine their mediation strategies. Establishing professional learning circles within CPGE institutions would allow continuous reflection and adaptation, aligning with Schön's (1983) model of the reflective practitioner.

5.2 Curriculum and Assessment Reform

Second, the findings call for curricular realignment that acknowledges listening as a teachable skill rather than a testing instrument. The current CPGE syllabus privileges text-based comprehension and written production, offering minimal space for explicit strategy training. Without curricular recognition, ELSI remains an isolated innovation sustained by individual teacher initiative rather than institutional policy.

Curriculum designers should therefore integrate strategy awareness outcomes into official syllabi and examination frameworks. Assessment tasks could include brief reflective components – such as learner justifications of their listening approach or strategy self-reports – that reward process awareness alongside accuracy. Such integration would signal to both teachers and learners that metacognitive engagement constitutes legitimate learning.

Additionally, time allocation within English courses should be reconsidered. As teachers in this study demonstrated, effective mediation requires pacing, reflection, and iterative practice – elements incompatible with overcrowded lesson plans. Allocating regular micro-sessions for listening reflection or peer discussion would enhance sustainability and learner transfer.

5.3 Classroom Pedagogy and Learner Autonomy

Third, classroom practice should evolve toward a dialogic and reflective model of listening instruction. Teachers should view themselves not merely as information providers but as co-participants in learners' meaning construction. Embedding short metacognitive dialogues – before and after listening tasks – can transform listening from a passive activity into a site of strategic inquiry.

To address proficiency and anxiety constraints, teachers can adopt tiered scaffolding: providing simplified strategy language, using bilingual explanations when necessary, and progressively reducing support as learners gain autonomy. Collaborative reflection through pair- or group-based debriefings can further normalize strategy talk, reducing the cognitive load of individual introspection.

Crucially, teachers must cultivate an emotionally safe classroom environment. As Oxford's (2017) Strategic Self-Regulation model posits, emotional regulation underpins all other forms of learning regulation. Encouraging risk-taking, validating partial understanding, and reframing error as learning opportunity can counteract the performance anxiety endemic to CPGE settings.

5.4 Towards Systemic Sustainability

Finally, for ELSI to become sustainable, it must be institutionalized as a whole-system initiative rather than a classroom experiment. Policymakers and inspectorates should provide explicit guidelines, exemplar materials, and training opportunities that operationalize strategy instruction principles within the national curriculum. Encouraging teacher-led action research on listening pedagogy would further bridge the gap between theory and practice, positioning teachers as agents of innovation rather than passive implementers.

In essence, ELSI thrives where teachers are empowered to act as reflective mediators supported by enabling curricula and responsive institutions. The Moroccan CPGE context demonstrates both the promise and the fragility of innovation when such alignment is absent. Building on these findings, future reforms should envision the listening classroom as a collaborative laboratory of strategic awareness – where teacher mediation, learner reflection, and

institutional vision converge to redefine what it means to “teach” listening in EFL education.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the complex pedagogical reality of implementing Explicit Listening Strategy Instruction (ELSI) in Morocco’s Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles (CPGE), focusing specifically on the teacher’s mediating role. The analysis has shown that teacher mediation constitutes the pivotal mechanism through which ELSI principles are translated into classroom practice. Three interrelated mediational functions—strategic modelling, metacognitive scaffolding, and affective regulation—emerged as essential for fostering learners’ strategic awareness and engagement. These findings affirm that listening strategy instruction succeeds not through theoretical clarity alone but through teachers’ dialogic and adaptive orchestration of cognitive, metacognitive, and emotional dimensions of learning.

At the same time, the study revealed enduring systemic and contextual constraints that limit sustained implementation, including time scarcity, exam-oriented curricula, and students’ initial resistance to reflective learning. Such challenges highlight the need for pedagogical reform that empowers teachers as reflective practitioners rather than procedural implementers. The Moroccan CPGE context thereby serves as a microcosm of broader tensions in EFL education, where innovation must continually negotiate institutional rigidity and affective pressures.

Theoretically, this paper extends existing models of ELSI by positioning teacher mediation as an integrative construct linking cognitive, sociocultural, and affective dimensions of instruction. Pedagogically, it advocates for teacher training programs that foreground metacognitive scaffolding and emotional support as complementary components of listening pedagogy. Future research should investigate teacher cognition longitudinally—how beliefs, practices, and contexts co-evolve as teachers gain expertise in strategy-based instruction.

Ultimately, promoting sustainable ELSI requires a systemic alignment of teacher agency, learner autonomy, and curricular vision—a triadic

foundation for reimagining listening not merely as comprehension, but as a consciously regulated act of meaning-making.

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