

## Applying CSE in Diagnosing EFL Learners' Listening Sub-skills as Learning

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### Abstract

In the purpose of applying CSE in diagnosing EFL learners' listening sub-skills as learning, this study integrates cognitive listening sub-skills with relevant topics and genres of listening materials into a matrix at each level of listening proficiency, and then apply it in diagnosing and assessing EFL learner's weaknesses as a whole. Results show that this matrix can facilitate instructors to make an accurate assessment and instant remedy of EFL learner's weaknesses in listening comprehension. It also confirms that CSE listening scales works well in instructing and enabling EFL learners to get across their weaknesses.

**Key words:** Diagnosis and remedy of EFL Learner's listening sub-skills; Genres and topics; CSE (China's Standards of English Language Ability)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Lei and Wei (2022), even though an increasing number of researches discuss CSE, yet few of them took full advantage of CSE in facilitating English learning, let alone took initiative listening diagnosis, this

paper is in the purpose of bridge the big gap between the theory of CSE and its practical use. It tries to apply CSE in diagnosing and remedying the weakness of EFL learner's listening sub-skills as part of EFL learning by integrating cognitive listening sub-skills, genres and topics into remedial instruction model as learning.

In light of CSE, listening sub-skills can be referred to understanding inter-sentence relations (SR) of logical link and cohesion, acquiring detail information (DI), understanding the main idea(MI) , making an inference of speakers' intention(SI), opinion and attitude (APT), or a general inference (GI) to detect its implied meaning, each of them must undergo a series of Field's (2013) five levels of cognitive listening processes, sometime bottom up, sometime top down, from phonetic decoding of sounds like liaison, weak voices, homophones, similar sounds, etc., to spreading-activation-like lexical searching, grammatical-construction-centred parsing, meaning comprehension and representation, and discourse representation concerning with working memory and restatement. It is also generalized in CSE (P27) as the integrated cognitive ability to recognize, to extract, to generalize, to analyze, to criticize, to evaluate and etc.

As defined in CSE, the genre of listening materials covers oral description, oral narration, oral exposition, oral instruction, oral argumentation and oral interaction. Each type of listening scripts has different levels of listening objectives and standards as learning, while different topics are discussed in different type of listening discourse, for instance, the topics like nature, science, sports are suggested to be included in oral description; news reports and stories can be placed in oral narration; product instructions, academic lecturing, food and customs may be added in oral instruction and exposition; political public speeches and comments might be commonly involved in oral argumentation; daily communications and business negotiations are fit into oral interactions.

As Lei and Wei (2022) reviewed, other than applying

CSE in diagnosing EFL learners' learning, a large part of present articles focused more on how CSE is theoretically produced and formulated and validated in aspects of English writing (Pan, 2017, 2018, 2019), reading (Zeng, 2017, Ma and Du, 2022), listening (Min, et Al. 2018; He and Chen, 2017; Zhang and Zhao, 2017; He, 2017), speaking (Jin & Jie, 2017; Jie & Jin, 2017; Zhang & Jin, 2019), interpreting (Chen, 2019; Fang, 2019; etc.) and translating (Feng, 2019; Bai, et al. 2018).

A small part of scholars attempted to discuss the relationship between CSE and English learning (Liu, 2017), teaching (Liu, 2019) and testing or assessing (Liu, 2018; Yang and Liu, 2019). few studies applied it into diagnostic assessment as learning, let alone fully using feedback to design remedial instruction and learning activities for teaching and learning. Furthermore, limited research efforts have been significantly committed to the formulation and selection of cognitive diagnostic models, less attention has been paid to CSE-based diagnostic feedback development and its application in remedial instruction and learning (He and Zhang, 2021). Particularly, He and Zhang (2021) explored how the individualized diagnostic feedback and remedial instructions facilitate college students' English learning, and how the integration of CSE and to-the-weakness diagnostic feedback and remedy works well to push students' learning ahead.

Up to now, insufficient researches apply CSE in English listening study, in spite of many theoretical researches have tested and proved its validity, feasibility and possible Effects (Lei and Wei, 2022).

This study attempts to integrate cognitive listening sub-skills with genres and topics of listening materials into a CSE-based cognitive diagnostic instruction matrix and then apply it in diagnosing and remedying EFL learners' weak listening skills as learning.

## 2. METHOD

In this study, online cognitive diagnostic test (Udig) is used as the tool to explore the participants' weak listening sub-skills as a whole in listening comprehension.

### 2.1 CSE-Based Cognitive Listening Test

Udig (college edition) is an online testing system developed by foreign language teaching and research press, it uses adaptive algorithm to automatically distribute question items and adapt them to EFL test takers' English proficiency. It provides to-the-weakness diagnostic feedback and remedial instructions to test takers, thus facilitate EFL learners' listening acquisition.

By means of the diagnostic testing system (Udig), As introduced by Lei and Wei (2022), EFL test takers will be allocated different levels of listening test based on CSE, according to their own language proficiency involved in pilot testing and their English scores in

college entrance examination. The test is self-adaptive and time-limited. Its testing items cover four basic types of listening materials: news (N), talk (T), monologue (M) and dialogue (D). They are concerned with six listening sub-skills on CSE-based three levels (level 4, 5, 6) such as understanding inter-sentence relations (SR), inferring speakers' intention (SI), acquiring detail information (DI), inferring speakers' opinion and attitude (APT), understanding the main idea (MI) and making a general inference (GI). When exploring the question of how can we apply CSE listening scales in diagnosing and remedying EFL learner's weak listening sub-skills at each level of topics and genres as a whole, above six listening sub-skills, as illustrated in Table 1, can be updated and grouped into four factors: understanding inter-sentence relations, abstract or abstract the framework or structure of the listening material, and understand the coherence and cohesion (SR); acquiring detail or specific information (DI); understanding the main idea or summarizing the key points and main idea, the thesis and evidence. (MI); making an inference of speakers' intention, opinion and attitude to make a general inference, detecting its implied meanings, and summarizing the key points and main idea, the thesis and its evidence (GI).

**Table 1**  
**The Abbreviation and Connotation of Listening Sub-skills and Genres**

| UDIG: Abbreviation of Listening sub-skills   | C S E Scales | Genres           |
|--|--------------|------------------|
| SR: Understanding inter-sentence logic: abstract the framework, structure or organizational logic and understand the coherence | 4            |                  |
| DI: Acquire the key details, specific information or relevant information  | 5            | WG: whole genres |
| MI: Summarize the key points and main idea; the thesis and evidence.   | 6            | N: News          |
| GI: Making a general inference   |              | T: Talk          |
| analyze and compare the difference   |              | M: Monologue     |
| infer and detect the implied meaning or speaker's intention and true voice   | 7            | D: Dialogue      |
| identify facts and opinion, logic relations; judge and decide the appropriateness  | 8            |                  |
| comment on speaker's view  |              |                  |

Table 1 show all of the abbreviation of each type of listening materials and sub-skills, and clarifies their connotations. For Instance, GI is the abbreviation of general inference, an important listening sub-skill, it includes different levels of meanings: to analyze and compare the different views from reports of the same issue; to infer and detect the implied meaning or speaker's intention and true voice; to identify facts and opinion, logic relations and judge or decide the appropriateness; to comment on speaker's view. SR is the abbreviation of understanding inter-sentence logic by abstracting the framework, structure or organizational logic and understanding the coherence. DI is the abbreviation of acquiring the key details, specific information or relevant information. MI is the abbreviation of summarizing the

key points and main idea or the thesis and evidence of listening material on the tape. In light of CSE listening sub-scales, there are five levels of listening sub-skills required in different genres and topics of listening practice, ranging from the fourth level to eighth level, but in this study we just focus on discussing three levels, ranging from level 4 to level 6, which really matches the requirements for the second-year English majors' listening proficiency.

### 2.2 Participants: Test Takers as EFL Learners

Same as the prior research (Lei and Wei, 2022), six natural classes of English majors (BE5191, EE5191, EE5192, EE5193, EE5194, EM5191) has also been enlisted as the study participants as EFL learners. During the experimental school terms, all of them need to take part in Udig listening plus testing (including listening, grammar, writing, reading and vocabulary test) first and the post-test three months later. Six classes of study participants as EFL learners are second year of college English majors, their English proficiency generally at CSE-4 level.

### 2.3 Data Collection

In this study, Udig-test is also conducted twice, the pretest is taken to have a preliminary test of participants' listening comprehension as a whole, then the follow-up remedial instructions based on the pre-test diagnostic report will be implemented in listening construction thereafter, three months later, the post-test will be enacted to check if participants have some progress in terms of their weak listening sub-skills that they had in pre-test.

Before listening test, all of study participants have been instructed how to use Udig for diagnostic listening test, including the whole procedures of testing, such as examination of necessary computer conditions, register, login-in, filling-up individual information, taking pilot test, taking formal test, read and download diagnostic report.

After testing, the class-diagnostic report will be analyzed first as an overview diagnosis of participant's listening weaknesses in terms of the parameter of mean, standard deviation and the gap between the mean and the 60% of the mean of class total scores, by which test takers'

**Table 4**  
**Udigtest Results of Participants' Weakness in Terms of Topics**

| L-Topic-Udigtest     | Science & Technology L5 | Interpersonal Communication L4 | Interpersonal Communication L5 | Sports L6 | Academic Report L5 | Social Science L6 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Median               | 29.0                    | 52                             | 41                             | 44        | 31                 | 50                |
| Mean                 | 33                      | 50                             | 50                             | 33        | 33                 | 50                |
| SD                   | 30                      | 22                             | 28                             | 19        | 28                 | 6                 |
| Mean-60%*Total Score | -31                     | -8                             | -19                            | -16       | -29                | -10               |

As reported in Table 4, we can also find learner's weak points at understanding particular topics in specific levels of particular listening sub-skills. For instance, we can find that learners are still weak in understanding the materials concerned with topics like science and technology, academic report, interpersonal communication and so on.

prominent weaknesses will find out for follow-up remedial instruction in the failure's listening comprehension. And then those data is categorized and dealt with respectively from aspects of each genre and topic.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Weakness Based on Genre and Topics

As reported in Table 2 & 3, the results from pretest and posttest of participants' strengths and weaknesses in terms of Genres and topics, learners are strongly weak in listening comprehension of news report, monologue and talk with relevant topics such as science and technology, interpersonal communication, sports, academic reports and social science, as detailed in Table 4.

**Table 2**  
**Pretest Results of Participants' Weaknesses in terms of Genres**

| L-Genre-pretest      | N5*    | N6*    | T4*   | T5*   | T6    |
|----------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| BE5191               | 40     |        | 54    | 37.5  |       |
| EE5191               | 30     | 37.5   | 51.9  | 50    | 71.4  |
| EE5192               | 36.7   | 37.5   | 55.8  | 43.8  | 57.1  |
| EE5193               | 16.7   |        | 42.7  | 62.5  |       |
| EE5194               | 40     | 37.5   | 48.6  | 62.5  | 42.9  |
| EM5191               | 28     |        | 59.6  | 43.8  |       |
| Median               | 33.35  | 37.5   | 52.95 | 46.9  | 57.1  |
| Mean                 | 31.90  | 37.50  | 52.10 | 50.02 | 57.13 |
| SD                   | 8.21   | 0.00   | 5.39  | 9.54  | 11.64 |
| Mean-60%*Total Score | -28.10 | -22.50 | -7.90 | -9.98 | -2.87 |

**Table 3**  
**Posttest Results of Participants' Weaknesses in terms of Genres**

| L-Genre-Posttest     | N5*  | M6*  | T5*  | T6 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|----|
| Median               | 45   | 52.5 | 55   | 54 |
| Mean                 | 42.9 | 65   | 62.5 | 56 |
| SD                   | 21   | 36   | 22   | 10 |
| Mean-60%*Total Score | -15  | -7.5 | -5.3 | -6 |

But how can they relate to the corresponding listening sub-skills, and how are genres, topics and listening sub-skills are interacted with each other become the questions to deal with learner's listening weakness as a whole in Table 5. for instance, we can locate learner's trouble in understanding the topics concerned science

and technology, to the fifth level of getting the main idea of the common documentaries (MI), so does learner's confusion on an academic report at the fifth level of getting the organization logic (SR).

#### 4. FINDINGS

The six sub-scales of listening comprehension developed by NEEA (2018) are fully used and applied to diagnose and remedy learner's weakness as showed in table 2,3&4, after a deep qualitative analysis and exploration, two bit findings are initiated to diagnose and remedy participants' weak listening sub-skills as a whole. One is the CSE-based Cognitive Diagnostic Listening Matrix for determining learner's weak points, the other is the countermeasure and to-the-weakness remedies for news listening suffers.

##### 4.1 Initiating CSE-based Cognitive Diagnostic Listening Matrix

On the basis of the test results reported in Table 2, 3 & 4, Table 5 is initiated to actually locate learner's difficult understanding of specific genres with specific

topics at particular level of fixed listening sub-skills as a whole. For instance, we can trace learners' difficult understanding of TV news reports at the sixth level of listening proficiency to the particular listening sub-skill of getting the main idea (MI) and acquiring specific information from news broadcast in public situation (DI). When it comes to the fifth level of short News report and News comment, learners' weaknesses mostly focus on the listening sub-skill of how to get key facts and points(DI) and the main idea (MI). The fourth level of weak points at understanding the news report stem in from making a judgement and an inference of the cause-effect relation between different events.

Referring to Table 5, we can also clear up the triangle interaction of topic, genre and CSE level by starting with the fixed weak topic. For instance, learners' difficulty in understanding academic report can be interacted with getting the organization logic of an academic report at the fifth CSE level (SR); so does tracing trouble in the comprehension of science and technology concerned to the fifth CSE level of getting the main idea (MI).

**Table 5**  
**CSE-based Cognitive Diagnostic Listening Matrix**

|          | M                                 | M/N  | M  | M  | D/T  | D   |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
|          | Oral Description                  | Oral Narration   | Oral Exposition  | Oral Instruction   | Oral Argumentation   | Oral Interaction  |
| CSE 6 MI | describing a place                | TV news reports  | the international opening class                                      |  | a lecture or video report with full information, and some political speeches |   |
| CSE 6 DI |                                   |  | the scenic spots introduction  | news broadcast in public situation                         | a conference speech  |   |
| CSE 6 GI | mental description                | a complex story telling  | reports  |  |  | daily communication, professional discussion and business negotiation |
| CSE5 MI  |                                   | the English song   | the common documentaries and topics concerned science and technology | the instruction to use daily necessities                   | a news comment and TV interview  | a dialogue on social focus  |
| CSE 5 DI | big festival and competition      | short News Reports;complex story telling                                     | English professional courses   | instruction on learning and working                        | a general topic of video report  |   |
| CSE5 GI  | the social state quo              | a humorous story telling   |  |  | a speech and discussion on social problems;                                  | face to face communication  |
| CSE5 SR  |                                   |  |  |  | an academic report   |   |
| CSE4 MI  |                                   | an anecdotal or travel story   |  | the notice and announcement                                | debate or discussion   |   |
| CSE4 DI  | a scenic spot and historical site | general topics of TV programs  | explanation of a country or region; a weather forecast.              | instruction of directing the way and other operation steps |  |   |
| CSE4 GI  |                                   | events of the news reports; a fable story;a simple movie and television play |  |  | a general topic of speech and literary comments                              | daily talk and oral interview   |

Serving as a CSE-based cognitive diagnostic listening matrix, Table 5 accurately traces out the distinctive interrelations between each level of listening sub-skills and genres and topics. Their triangular relationships can help explain what EFL learner's weak listening sub-skills

lie in specific genres with particular topics at different proficiency levels. For instance, we can easily find out the triangular relationship between listening sub-skills, genres and topics as a whole in table 5, after we get the test results showed in table 2,3&4 respectively. In other words, Table

5 saves learners' efforts in exploring and deciding what weaknesses they have as a whole, and then facilitate them and instructors to find out to-the-weakness remedies as learning. For instance, as marked in table 5, we can trace learners' weak listening sub-skills of making an inference to particular monologues with specific topics at the sixth level of listening proficiency, including making a comment on the character psychology in detail mental description, catching on the speaker's intention and attitudes from TV News reports at normal speed, analyzing and comparing the difference between reports of the same issue, and detecting the implied meaning in daily communication, professional discussion and business negotiation. When it comes to the fifth level of making an inference, learners' weaknesses focus on how to compare the social state quo with the described one, how to detect the humor in a humorous story telling, how to identify facts and opinions of a speech and discussion on social problems and how to judge the appropriateness of speaker's words in face to face communication. The fourth level of listening weakness as a whole stem in from their difficulty in judging and inferring the cause-effect relation between events of the news reports, detecting the implied meaning in a fable story and inferring the relations between characters and events in a simple movie and television play, inferring the speaker's attitude in a general topic of speech and literary comments and predicting speaker's intention, attitude and implied meaning in daily talk and oral interview.

#### 4.2 Remediating Topic-genre-based Cognitive Listening Sub-skills

With the help of Table 5 serving as a mirror and facilitator,

**Table 6**  
**To-the-Weakness Remedies for News Listening**

|                            | L4 News   | L5 News*   | L6 News!   |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| MI L6*                     | 1.build genre literacy: discourse construction, logic cohesion and coherence, language features                             | 2.drilling to generalize the main idea             | 3.restate or have a dictation of the lead sentence of the news   |
| DI L4/5/6!                 | 4.Notes taking practice: effect-cause   | 5.diagram the core facts and then retell the story | 6.enlarge Language bank:gather expressions related to the sports event,practice mind-mapping and retelling |
| GI:attitude L4/5*/6*       | 7.practice "cross"pattern of quicknotes of different reports for the same event   |  |  |
| GI:intention L4/5*/6!      |   |  | 8.practice to analyze and judge by the logic relation between words  |
| GI:comparison L5*/6 *      |   |  | 9.analyze and compare the difference between reports of the same issue                                     |
| Science & Technology L4/5! | 10.do more task-based listening practice on the topic of Science and technology in forms of documentaries and video reports |  |  |
| Social Interaction L4*/5   | 11.do more task-based listening and speaking practice of interview discussion and negotiation                               |  |  |
| Sports L4/5                | 12.do more listening to News program  |  | 13.listen to Sports Event Report and take notes  |
| Social Science L4/6*       | 14.do more reading and listening to articles or reports related to people and society                                       | 15.listen to take note of the key information      | 16.do more practice to judge the true from the false and make a comment                                    |

On top of helping learners get out of particular genre-based listening weakness as a whole, it can also facilitate learners to overcome some topic-based listening weakness. For instance, it can be beneficial to go beyond specific

a series of countermeasures have been worked out to remedy typical topic-genre-based cognitive listening weaknesses as a whole in Table 6 where to-the-weakness remedies for News listening weaknesses are initiated to overcome some distinctive listening weakness as a whole.

As Table 6 suggests, three instructions can be used to remedy learners' weakness in getting the main idea of each level of news reports: at the fourth level of news listening, it is proposed to build genre literacy of discourse construction, logic cohesion, coherence, and language features; while at the fifth level, the suggestion is to do more drilling of generalizing the main idea, when listening to the news reports; when it comes to the sixth level, it is necessary to do more practice of restating or having a dictation of the lead sentence of the news.

As for how to go across the barrier of getting the detail information of each level of news listening, three countermeasures are proposed to give the instant remedy: taking notes practice of effect-cause relations is the first dose; the second dose is to diagram the core facts and then retell the story while listening; the last recipe is to enlarge Language bank through gathering expressions related to the sports event, and taking more practice of mind-mapping, note-taking and retelling of the key details of news reports.

In order to crack the hard nut of making an actual inference of speakers' attitude and intention, and making a correct decision and judgement by comparison, It is helpful to practice "cross" pattern of quick notes of different reports for the same event, to do more analysis and judgement of the logic relation between words, and do more task-based listening practice related to analyze and compare the difference between reports of the same issue.

topic-centered weakness by doing more task-based listening practice on the corresponding weak topics like science and technology, social interaction, sports and social science. During each topic of listening practice, trying to

take notes and focus on practicing the corresponding weak listening sub-skills like making an inference will contribute to give instant help and remedy to the learners who are really troubled in listening comprehension.

As the post-test results reported in Table 2, 3 & 4, after three months of remedial instructions for learners who are weak in understanding fixed level of genres and topics have got a big progress. For instance, in terms of news listening comprehension, we can find that the difference between the mean of class scores and the 60% of the total score decreased from 28.1 to 15, which confirms that the to-the-weakness remedies for news listening works to promote learners' listening comprehension of news topic at each level of listening sub-skills acquisition.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Answering to the question of how can we apply CSE listening scales in diagnosing EFL learner's weak listening sub-skills at each level of relevant topics and genres, the CSE-based cognitive diagnostic listening matrix, as illustrated in table 5, serves better in diagnosing and remedying EFL learners' listening weaknesses as a whole, tale 6 is the successful use of this mode in providing an instant and an effective remedy to the corresponding listening weaknesses. Even though tale 6 becomes a successful use in providing an instant and an effective remedy to news-based listening weaknesses, there's still a big room for further researches on its practical use in more broaden fields, for instance, we can do further study on how to remedy dialogue-based or talk-based listening weakness as a whole.

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