Enhancing Independent Study Program through Development of Listening Learning Pathways

FRANCISCA MARIA IVONE*
NUR HAYATI
Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Negeri Malang
Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The paper describes a study conducted to design independent listening learning pathways for first semester English Department students at a state university in Malang, Indonesia. The pathways were designed based on the analysis of the students' common problems in listening comprehension. The research data were collected from two sources, that is, the students' answer sheets in the listening pre-test and independent study listening materials available in the English Self-Access Centre of the English Department at the university. The data were coded by three researchers and triangulated to resolve any inconsistencies and contradictions in the coding and analysis. The coding was based on Lund's (1990) taxonomy of learner function and response matrix, resulting in the identification of the students' strengths and weaknesses in the listening tasks in the pre-test and the mapping of task types provided in the listening materials in the English Self-Access Centre. Listening learning pathways were designed based on the results of the data analysis to guide the students in their independent listening to improve their ability in performing the specific tasks they found difficult. The results of the study are useful for improving the students' listening comprehension skills, and more importantly, to improve the quality of the Independent Study program.

KEYWORDS: EFL teacher education, reader-response, aesthetic, independent learning

*Corresponding author

Introduction

The Intensive Course offered by the English Department, Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang, to its first semester first year students has been conducted for over 20 years. According to the department's 2012 catalogue (Fakultas Sastra Universitas Negeri Malang, 2012), the prerequisite course is a 12-credit, 18 hours per week course designed to provide students with receptive and productive skills in using English in communication. The course puts emphasis on the correct use of basic English structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, stress and intonation patterns in oral communication through intensive classroom practice, such as dialogues and role playing, as well as pair, group, and class activities. This is an integrated English course that all first year students have to take in their first semester.

Introduced for the first time in 1993, the course has undergone several changes of learning materials, lecturers, and programs. One of the program changes made was the inclusion of Independent Study sessions into the Intensive Course program. Before 2003, lecturers had to bring the independent study materials to class for students to use and then collect them at the end of each session. Since 2003, the Independent Study sessions have been conducted in the English Self-Access Centre (ESAC) where all independent study materials are stored.

The present independent study activities are divided into two, namely scheduled and un-scheduled or usually called enjoyment activities. The scheduled session is compulsory and conducted during the regular class hours, while the unscheduled enjoyment session is carried out outside the class hours or in a less formal learning situation at the students' own convenience. The materials for the scheduled activities are aimed to improve the students' language skills and components, while those for the unscheduled activities provide more opportunities to the students to enjoy watching movies, playing language games, browsing the Internet, reading short stories, novels and magazines, and other enjoyment activities. For the purpose of evaluating the students' performance, after finishing each session, the students are expected to fill in report booklets for scheduled and unscheduled Independent Study sessions. Individual feedback is given regularly by the instructor who is responsible in assisting the students during the scheduled Independent Study sessions. Feedback is given in the students' report booklets as well as in a more personal way to fit the students' needs.

One of the main objectives of the independent study activities is to improve first year students' listening skills. However, data on the results of the post-tests during the 2010 to 2012 academic years show that students were on average able to correctly do 18 to 19 out of the 25 post-listening test items compared to 15 to 16 correct items in the pre-tests. This means that on average the students can do three more listening test items at the end of the semester compared to the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, analysis of the report booklets for the scheduled Independent Study sessions of the same years revealed that students did not do their independent study activities to address their weaknesses. The unsatisfactory results of the listening tests may be caused by the fact that the students have not been able to effectively use the listening materials provided to address their listening comprehension problems. This phenomenon needs to be addressed promptly. One of the many ways of addressing this problem is by providing a more focused Independent Study program that can attend to learners' weaknesses and needs by providing suitable independent listening materials.

Autonomous language learning

For the purpose of promoting independent learning habits to English Department students of the State University of Malang, the Intensive Course program has been integrating Independent Study sessions into its curriculum so that freshmen can learn to take greater responsibility for their own learning and thus prepare themselves to be more autonomous language learners. Autonomous learners are those who "initiate the planning and implementation of their own learning program" (Gardner & Miller, 1996, p.vii). In an earlier publication, Holec (1981, p.3) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". One aspect that the definitions of learning autonomy and autonomous learners share is the importance of learner control in learning. Yet, according to Benson, "greater learner control over the learning process, resources, and language cannot be achieved by each individual acting alone according to his or her preferences" (1996, p.33). This is because the degree of autonomy depends on many factors such as personality, goal, motivation, training, and institutional support, to name a few. Although learners can develop control over their own learning, learners' autonomy in language learning needs to be introduced and cultivated collectively. This argument is supported in more recent research on autonomous and self-directed learning. In their study on university learners' autonomy in learning languages online, Murday, Ushida, and Chenoweth (2008) highlight that no matter what their level of proficiency is, language learners do not perform autonomous learning unless they are taught how to. There are different approaches that might be used to encourage autonomy and self-directed learning in language learning. One popular approach taken by higher educational institutions is the promotion of independent study or self-directed learning programs which are held in the Self-Access Center (SAC) or Self-Access Language Learning Center (SALLC).

The urge to drive university students towards the pathways of autonomous language learners is supported by several arguments. Firstly, university students to some degree need to possess the capability to take charge of their own learning because there are too many things to learn within the constraints of classroom meetings. Secondly, different learning styles require different methods of learning which cannot fully be addressed in regular classroom sessions.

Thirdly, students' levels of autonomy in learning vary from one person to another and from one area of learning to another; therefore, to become successful language learners, students need to be aware of what they are capable of doing independently and in what aspects they have to find assistance. These are the reasons why the English Department hopes to be able to encourage its students to be autonomous learners by introducing Independent Study sessions to its freshmen in their first semester through the Intensive Course program.

A fully autonomous learner is, according to Nunan (1997), only an ideal than a reality and that learners' degree of autonomy and their potentials of achieving different degrees of autonomy depend on factors like their personality, goals, institutional philosophy, and cultural context. Complementary to Nunan's proposal of autonomy, Benson (2001, p.47) proposes that "autonomy is a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times". To address the issue of individual differences, the present study proposes an Independent Study program which is designed to fit learners and address their specific language learning problems. By analyzing learners' weak areas and designing learning pathways that learners can take to work on their weaknesses, the Independent Study program will be able to address learners' individual needs better. Learning pathways will limit learner control; however, previous studies suggest that limited learner control provides more educational experience that "less experienced" learners will benefit more than if they are given high level of control (Shin & Wastell, 2001). Limiting learner

control is unavoidable in the context of first semester, first year university students in Indonesia because of the different learning styles required in secondary and tertiary education levels. Consequently, learners need clear guidance in helping them to go through the transition from prior learning to tertiary education learning styles (Bankowski, 1999). In the independent study context, this guidance can be given in the form of learning pathways that learners should take to address their specific language learning problems. Learning pathways are study plans that learners need to follow to be able to concentrate on their weak points in language learning.

The teaching and learning of listening skills

In language learning contexts, the selection of a listening task is the central aspect in the teaching and learning of listening that influences the outcome or success of listening. According to Rost (1990), during L2 listening comprehension classes, learners are usually engaged in three different types of listening: 1) "interactional listening" (learners act as listeners as well as speakers), 2) "transactional listening" (learners listen to non-conversational spoken texts), and 3) "interactional-transactional listening" (learners listen to conversational spoken texts). The second and third types of listening are usually followed by language learning exercises in which learners perform learning tasks that require them not only to understand the gist of the text, but also the details. Moreover, the teaching of L2 listening requires designing listening tasks that do not simply expose learners to the listening texts but also to the different types of listening, and the listening skills and strategies that will help them develop their L2 listening proficiency and skills. Teachers' perspectives of the listening process will determine the language learning experience they design for their students. For this reason, teachers are advised to focus on the authenticity of the language of the listening materials, the learners' interactions with the materials (Rost, 2002), and the learning goals or purpose of listening (Gilmore, 2007; Mendelsohn, 2001). Without considering the purpose of listening, listeners may be led to listen "in the wrong or an unproductive way" (Mendelsohn, 2001, p.34). Lund (1990) categorizes the purpose of listening into psychological ("Why is the listener listening?") and pedagogical motivations ("What is the listener listening for?" or "How is the listener approaching the text?"). According to Lund (1990), the psychological motivations of listening that include discriminative listening, comprehensive listening, therapeutic or empathetic listening, critical listening, as well as appreciative listening, are more applicable to L1 than L2 listening. Therefore, he proposes that the purposes for listening in L2 be identified on the basis of listening functions and learner response as this taxonomy can show the available options of listening tasks that can be generated from listening texts.

In agreement with this proposal, Frommer stated that "Thinking about the type of listening we want our students to learn to do is important because it will determine the type of tasks that we have them do in listening activities" (2006, p.70). Moreover, when these tasks are developed based on authentic texts, they can enhance a positive learning attitude, improve various language skills and promote learning autonomy (McGarry, 1995).

To assist language teachers in choosing appropriate listening tasks for their students, a listening taxonomy proposed by Lund (1990), which focuses on the functions of the task and the responses required to be performed by learners, is relevant to be used. Lund chooses the two components due to their pedagogical importance. Functions are chosen before listening while responses occur after listening. Based on learner functions, listening tasks can be grouped into six categories: identification, orientation, main idea comprehension, detail comprehension, full comprehension, and replication. Based on learners' responses, Lund proposes nine criteria: doing, choosing, transferring, answering, condensing, extending, duplicating, modeling, and conversing. Lund's taxonomy has an important implication for the teaching of listening because of its text

independence value. This means that there are large possibilities of tasks that can be created based on any given text.

For the purpose of designing learning pathways suitable for Intensive Course students and the ESAC, there were two research questions the study attempts to answer:
1. What listening comprehension problems do Intensive Course students have?
2. What are the learning pathways that Intensive Course students can take to address their listening comprehension problems?

The concern of the research is thus to make independent study at the ESAC more relevant and can cater to the individual needs of all the first semester students by designing learning pathways. No benchmark score is set as the focus is not on certain students that did not achieve a certain score; instead, the learning pathways are expected to help every student to develop their listening skills and address their issues as indicated by the analysis of their work on the pre-test.

Methodology

The study was conducted in four months from September to December 2013 and took place at the English Self-Access Centre (ESAC) of the English Department, State University of Malang, Indonesia, involving three researchers from the department.

Data sources

To answer the first research question, we used the data from the listening pre-test answer sheet of 226 first semester English department freshmen enrolled in the 2013 Intensive Course Program. The pre-test itself is a diagnostic test, which, according to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006, p.128) can be used to "[…] facilitate identification of a student's weak and strong areas." There were 25 items in the test which were divided into four parts. It is shown in Table 1 that the texts presented in the listening pre-test varied from telephoning, personal ID, job/career to education and learning, but the test items only consisted of multiple choice and short answer items. The students' answers to the test items are used to determine their listening comprehension problems.

Table 1
Components of the Intensive Course Listening Pre-Test

	Text Title	**Test items**
Part 1	Telephoning	5 Multiple-Choice
Part 2	Personal ID	6 Short Answer
Part 3	Job/Career	6 Multiple-Choice
Part 4	Education and Learning	8 Short Answer

To answer the second research question, we used the data from the listening independent study materials available at the ESAC. These were the materials used during the scheduled Independent Study sessions. There were overall eight books provided for the listening Independent Study sessions during the semester the study was conducted. The books were Skills in English Listening 1 to 4, Impact Listening 1, and *KangGuru* March, June, and September editions. The Skills in English Listening books were of graded levels, with book 1 for intermediate level, book 2 for upper intermediate level, book 3 for pre-advanced level and book 4 for advanced level. The Impact Listening 1 and *KangGuru* editions are all for beginning level. The books provided for the Independent Study sessions vary in terms of levels because the Intensive Course students were of different levels of proficiency.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted in four stages. The first stage of the data analysis was the mapping of the pre-test items using Lund's (1990) taxonomy of learner function and response matrix. To be able to map Intensive Course listening problems, it was elemental to identify the types of listening tasks which were tested in the Intensive Course listening pre-test. The mapping of the listening pre-test items presented in Table 2 shows that there were five types of tasks tested. There were six Identification-Choosing tasks, six Detail Comprehension-Choosing tasks, nine Detail Comprehension-Transferring tasks, two Full Comprehension-Answering tasks and two Replication-Duplicating tasks. The mapping of the test items shows that the Intensive Course listening pre-test assessed four functions of listening skills: identification, detail comprehension, full comprehension and replication, but did not test students' orientation and main idea comprehension ability. In terms of the types of responses, the students had to perform choosing, transferring, answering, and duplicating responses to complete the tasks.

Table 2
Mapping of Intensive Course Listening Pre-test Items

Function / Response	Identification	Orientation	Main Idea Comprehension	Detail Comprehension	Full Comprehension	Replication
Doing						
Choosing	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 8			12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17		
Transferring				9; 10; 11; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23		
Answering					24; 25	
Condensing						
Extending						
Duplicating						6; 7
Modeling						
Conversing						

The next stage was analyzing the students' listening pre-test answers to identify their specific listening comprehension problems. To do this, the data from the answer sheets were coded and put into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The codes used were '0' for the test items that the students answered incorrectly and '1' for those they answered correctly. The data were then calculated so that the percentages of students who answered correctly and incorrectly can be obtained. The results of the calculation were displayed in a bar chart form. The percentages were used to explain the students' strengths and weaknesses in performing the listening comprehension tasks.

Next, the listening independent study materials for Intensive Course students were also mapped using Lund's taxonomy of learner function and response matrix (1990). The mapping showed the areas of listening comprehension that each task addressed. The results of the mapping were used to design learning pathways that Intensive Course students could follow when they were conducting scheduled Independent Study sessions in the English Self-Access Centre. The mapping of listening tasks produced from the matrix provided information on the tasks provided in the materials that could be used to address Intensive Course learners' listening skills weaknesses as well as other tasks types not specifically addressing these weaknesses. Finally,

learning pathways were designed to address the specific listening comprehension problems of Intensive Course students based on the materials available in the ESAC.

Triangulation

In the present study, the mapping of the test items and listening independent study materials was conducted by the researchers for triangulation purpose. The test items and materials were mapped by individual researcher and then compared so that inconsistencies and contradictions in the mapping can be resolved. The triangulation was performed to maintain the reliability of the coding and analysis.

Findings and discussion

Listening comprehension problems of Intensive Course students

Learners' ability to perform each of the listening tasks varies greatly. For example, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8 are considered easy items because more than 90% of the Intensive Course students got the answers correctly. Items 6 and 9, on the other hand, are the most difficult ones because less than 15% of the students gave correct answers to the items.

When students' abilities in performing listening tasks are grouped based on Lund's task classifications, the results show that the easiest tasks for learners to perform are those of the Identification-Choosing type. It is shown in Figure 1 that learners consistently provide correct answers to the six test items in this category. Although with far less accuracy level, learners also give consistent results to the Detail Comprehension-Choosing task type.

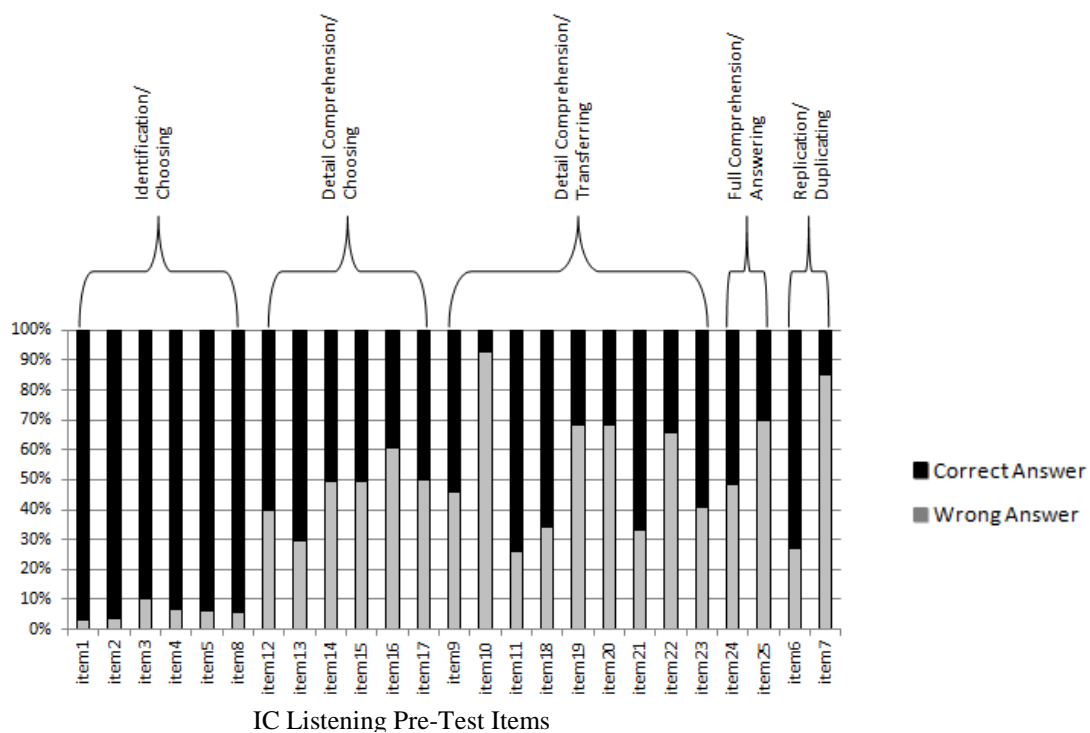Figure 1: Percentages of correct/incorrect answers of each task type

The Intensive Course students' ability in performing the other four task types was not as good as that of the Identification-Choosing tasks. The percentages of students who were unable to complete these tasks types were much higher. There were 30% to 60% students who missed the Detail Comprehension-Choosing tasks and 50% to 70% students who missed the Full

Comprehension-Answering tasks. Students' performance in completing the two task types (Detail Comprehension-Choosing and Full Comprehension-Answering) was quite consistent. In performing the Detail Comprehension-Transferring and Replication-Duplicating tasks, however, the students showed inconsistent performance. In performing the Detail Comprehension-Transferring tasks, for instance, students' accuracy ranged from 25% to 90%. Similar trend was shown in regards to students' accuracy in performing the Replication-Duplicating tasks with 27% to 85% students who got the answers wrong. In general, the results showed that Intensive Course students needed further assistance in performing four of the five task types tested in the listening pre-test.

The exclusion of items that require the students to identify main ideas of spoken texts and the much greater emphasis on questions of detail comprehension in the Intensive Course listening pre-test need to be reevaluated as it seems to indicate that the results of the test do not really give a comprehensive picture of the students' listening ability. The purpose of the test will then need to be clearly defined in the future as Buck (2001, p.1) points out that, "an understanding of what we are trying to measure is the starting point for test construction." The findings regarding the greater difficulties that the students have with Full Comprehension-Answering tasks than Identification-Choosing tasks indicate that they encounter problems with higher-level questions, which might be due to some of the following factors, identified by Goh (1999) as the most common factors that influence the students' listening comprehension, that is, vocabulary, prior knowledge, speech rate, type of input, and speaker's accent.

Materials that address Intensive Course sudents' listening comprehension problems
It is shown in Table 3 that all the types of tasks that can be used to address the students' comprehension problems can be found in at least four of the eight books, that is the Skills in English Listening 1, 2, 3 and 4. These were the listening comprehension books for low intermediate to advanced learners of English. Yet, not all the beginning level books - Impact Listening 1 and *KangGuru* editions - contained all of the five task types. Consequently, more beginning level listening books containing Detail Comprehension-Transferring and Full Comprehension-Answering tasks should be added into the list of books for listening Independent study.

Table 3
Mapping of the Listening Independent Study Materials

Function / Response	Identification	Orientation	Main Idea Comp.	Detail Comp.	Full Comp.	Replication
Doing	SiEL1; SiEL4		SiEL1	SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3	SiEL3	
Choosing	IL1; SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4		SiEL2; SiEL3	KM; KS SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4;	IL1; SiEL2; SiEL3;	IL1; KM; KJ; KS; SiEL3; SiEL4;
Transferring	SiEL1; SiEL2		SiEL2; SiEL4	SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4	SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3	IL1; SiEL1; SiEL3;
Answering	IL1; SiEL1; SiEL3; SiEL4		KJ; SiEL2; SiEL4;	KM; KJ; KS SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4;	SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4	KM; KJ; KS
Condensing			SiEL2; SiEL4	SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3	SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4	SiEL3
Extending	IL1	IL1	IL1; SiEL4;	IL1; SiEL3	IL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4	SiEL3
Duplicating	SiEL4		SiEL2	SiEL3; SiEL4	SiEL2	IL1; KM; KJ; KS; SiEL1; SiEL2; SiEL3; SiEL4;
Modelling			IL1		IL1	IL1; SiEL3
Conversing			SiEL3	SiEL2; SiEL3	SiEL2; SiEL3	

Note.   SiEL = Skills in English Listening, IL = Impact Listening, KM = *KangGuru* March, KJ = *KangGuru* June, KS = *KangGuru* September.

The suggested learning pathways are presented in Figure 2. Students who were weak in the Identification-Choosing tasks could use the materials in Impact Listening 1 and Skills in English Listening 1, 2, 3, 4. The learning pathways presented in the figure specified the listening tasks learners could practice to improve their ability in performing the specific tasks. The literature suggests that because learners are expected to work on their own, clear learning pathways that provide them information which will enable them to work by themselves are essential (Carvalho, 1993). Pathways which may be based on subject areas, skills or a mix of both will provide learners with alternative routes to start their independent study with or without guidance from the instructors.

Listening Comprehension Problem   Suggested Learning Pathways

Identification/Choosing Tasks
- **IL1**: IL1U1LA9; IL1U4SSRWL75; IL1U5LA17; IL1U8LA23 ; IL1U9LA25; IL1U11LA29
- **SiEL1**: T1L2E; T1L3A; T1L3BCDE; T2L1C; T2L2FG; T2L3BC; T3L1B; T3L2C; T3L2F; T3L3B; T4L2C1; T4L2D; T4L3D2; T5L1C; T5L2D2; T5L3D; T8L1BCD; T8L3D; T8L2D2; T8L3CD
- **SiEL2**: 2T1L1B; 2T1L2D2; 2T1L3DEF; 2T1L4C; 2T2L1B; 2T2L2F; 2T2L3D; 2T2L4A; 2T3L1C; 2T3L3DE; 2T3L4A; 2T4L1C; 2T5L1B; 2T6L1BC; 2T6L2B12; 2T7L1C; 2T7L3A; 2T7L4A; 2T8L1BCD; 2T9L1BC
- **SiEL3**: 3T1L1BD; 3T2L1B; 3T2L3B; 3T2L4A; 3T3L1A; 3T3L1D; 3T4L4A; 3T5L1B; 3T5L4A; 3T6L1BD; 3T8L1A; 3T8L3B3; 3T9L1AB; 3L9L4A; 3T10L4C
- **SiEL4**: 4T9L2D; 4T9L3C; 4T9L3D; 4T10L3C

Detail Comprehension/ Choosing Tasks
- **KM**: P14A1
- **KS**: P20A1, P22A1, P25A1
- **SiEL1**: T1L4CD; T2L2C; T2L4C; T8L2C; T8L2F
- **SiEL2**: 2T2L2C; 2T2L4F; 2T3L2D; 2T4L3B2; 2T9L3D
- **SiEL3**: 3T1L4E; 3T4L1A; 3T6L2E3; 3T6L4C2; 3T7L1C; 3T7L2B1; 3T7L2C; 3T7L4C; 3T8L4B3; 3T9L3C; 3T10L2B; 3T10L2D
- **SiEL4**: 4T10L2D; 4T10L2E4

Detail Comprehension/ Transferring Tasks
- **SiEL1**: T1L2C; T2L2E; T2L4D; T4L2E; T5L2B3; T6L2C; T6L4C2; T7L2B4; T7L2C; T7L3B; T7L4E; T8L2D; T8L4B; T9L2B1345; T8L4D
- **SiEL2**: 2T3L4E; 2T4L2B; 2T4L4C; 2T5L4C; 2T6L2DE; 2T7L4E13; 2T7L4F; 2T10L1B; 2T10L2H
- **SiEL3**: 3T1L2CD; 3T2L2F2; 3T2L4E; 3T9L2F3; 3T10L4B
- **SiEL4**: 4T8L4B

Full Comprehension/ Answering Tasks
- **SiEL1**: T7L4F; T8L4C; T8L4E
- **SiEL2**: 2T2L2E; 2T6L4E; 2T7L3D; 2T8L2EF; 2T9L2C2; 2T9L2F; 2T9L4FH
- **SiEL3**: 3T2L1C; 3T2L2E23; 3T3L2E; 3T3L3D; 3T3L4EF; 3 T4L2D; 3T5L2BC; 3T5L4E4; 3T6L3B; 3T7L2B3; 3T9L2B; 3T9L2E2; 3T9L2F4; 3T9L4B; 3T10L4E2
- **SiEL4**: 4T10L4F

Replication/ Duplication Tasks
- **IL1**: IL1U2LA11; IL1U6LA19; IL1U8LA23; IL1U9SSRWL80; IL1U10LA27; IL1U13SSRWL84; IL1U17SSRWL88
- **KM**: P1A1, P2A1, P3A2, P4A1, P4A2, P8A1, P9A1, P10A1, P12A1, P16A1
- **KJ**: P2A1, P5A1, P7A1, P8A1, P18A1, P19A1
- **KS**: P5A1, P5A2, P8A1, P9A1, P10A1, P11A1, P12A1, P14A1, P14A2
- **SiEL1**: T5L3C; T6L2F; T8L2G
- **SiEL2**: 2T1L1C; 2T4L4A; 2T6L3B
- **SiEL3**: 3T1L3E; 3T3L3A; 3T5L4D; 3T7L3A; 3T7L4A; 3T8L1D; 3T8L3A
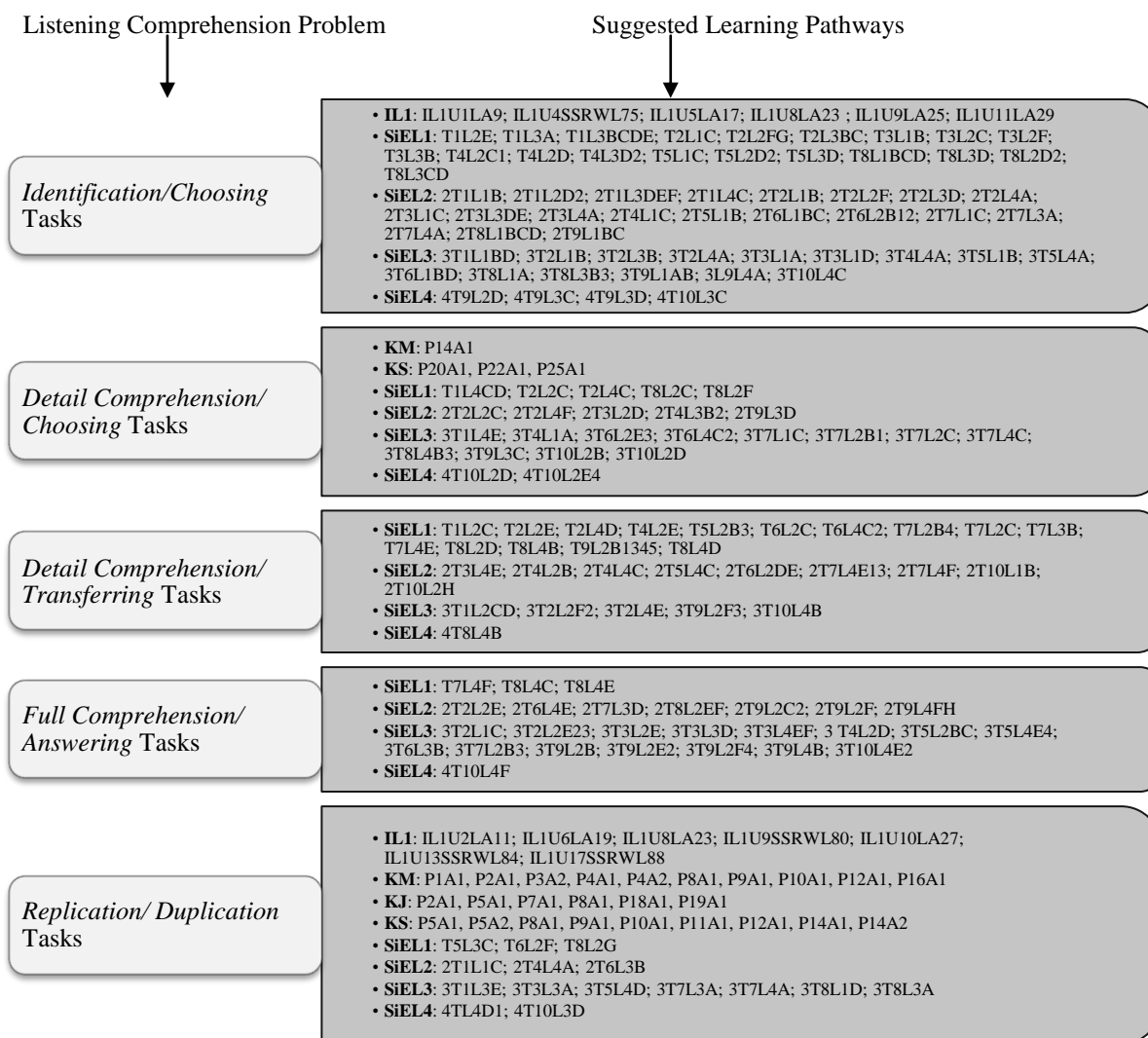- **SiEL4**: 4TL4D1; 4T10L3D

Figure 2: Suggested listening independent study learning pathways

The results of the study showed that the listening independent study materials available in the ESAC were suitable for addressing Intensive Course students' listening comprehension problems. Learners should be encouraged to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses and thus able to focus on the materials that would help them deal with their weaknesses. Consequently, learners should be informed of the results of their listening pre-test and encouraged to design a self-study contract that would help them set their goals and reach them. The lecturers who assisted students in the Independent Study sessions should be informed of their profile so that they could help direct learners to do appropriate listening tasks. Davis (2013, pp. 92-93) suggests that it is necessary that teachers provide the students with "framework and learning skills…to complete a task in any learning environment but let the students…[use] their autonomy as the guiding factor so as to tailor their own learning…to make it more personally meaningful." Designing the learning pathways is one important strategy that teachers can do to give the necessary guidance to support the students' autonomous learning.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the analysis of the results of the listening pre-test of 226 first semester freshmen enrolled in the 2013 Intensive Course Program showed that the students encountered difficulties and needed further assistance in performing four of the five task types tested in the listening pre-test. The four task types included Detail Comprehension/Choosing, Detail Comprehension /Transferring, Full Comprehension/Answering, and Replication/Duplication tasks. Another task type tested in the listening pre-test, Identification/Choosing tasks, appeared to be very much manageable for the students, with 90% of them answering the questions of the type correctly. Secondly, in order to help the students address their specific problems in listening comprehension, the researchers developed learning pathways that the students could follow when they attended the scheduled Independent Study in the ESAC. The learning pathways specified the listening tasks the students could practice to improve their ability in performing the specific tasks. The listening tasks were taken from the eight books provided for the Intensive Course in the ESAC. The mapping of the tasks in the books showed that the listening independent study materials available in the ESAC were suitable for addressing Intensive Course students' listening comprehension problems.

In accordance with the conclusions made, some recommendations for the improvement of the independent study in the ESAC are given to better facilitate the development of the students' autonomous learning skills and help the students address their learning problems, particularly, in listening, more effectively. First, it is necessary that the pre-test given in the beginning of the first semester cover more task types so that it will be able to map the students' listening comprehension problems more comprehensively. Secondly, to cater to the various learning needs and problems of the students, the listening materials provided for independent study need to be regularly updated and adjusted in terms of the quantity and contents. Finally, the students and the lecturers of independent study need to be well-informed of the students' test results, so that the lecturers can help the students in identifying their problems and in understanding and following the learning pathways that suit the problems. In the long run, the students are expected to set their own learning pathways based on their needs.

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