An Assessment of Iraqi EFL Students' Metacognitive Listening Skill at University Level

تقيم مهارة الأصغاء الإدراكية لدى الطلبة العراقيون عند مستوى الجامعة

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كيفية اقتباس البحث

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المستخلص

تحاول هذه الدراسة تقيم مهارة الاصغاء الادراكي للطلبة العراقيين عند مستوى الجامعة. انها تتقصى مدى ادراك طلبة المرحلة الأولى في الجامعة الى استراتيجيات الاصغاء الادراكي. تتألف عينة هذه الدراسة من مائة وعشرون طالب من قسم اللغة الإنكليزية– كلية الآداب– جامعة البصرة. تشمل هذه العينة الطلبة الذكور والاناث في الدراسات الصباحية– الفصل الدراسي الأول– للسنة الدراسية 2223–2024. ولهذا الغرض تم استخدام نموذج فاندركرفت وتافكودتري (2006). يتضمن هذا النموذج استبانة مهارة الاصغاء الادراكي. لذلك فهي دراسة كمية. لقد تم اختيار الكتاب المنهجي للمرحلة الأولى كمادة بحثية لما يحتويه من نصوص مطلوبة. بعد جمع البينات وتحليلها فقد اشرت معظم النتائج الى معرفة الطالبة باستراتيجيات الاصغاء الادراكي بطريقة مباشرة وغير مباشرة. وان هؤلاء الطالبة يستخدمون بعض من هذه الاستراتيجيات أكثر من غيرها. اشارت الدراسة أيضا الى بعض التوصيات التربوية التي تخدم الطالب والأستاذ في مضمار محتوى هذه الدراسة.

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Abstract

This study attempts to assess the metacognitive listening skill of Iraqi EFL students at university level. It investigates the awareness of First Year students at university level of metacognitive listening strategies. The sample of the study is 120 students from Dept. of English/ College of Arts/ University of Basrah. They are mixed males and females in the day studies/ First Semester/ Academic Year 2013-2024. For this end, Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2006) model of questionnaire is adapted. This model presents the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). Therefore, it is a qualitative study. The textbook under analysis is Pearson to Pearson: communicative speaking and listening skills by Jack Richards, David Bycina, and Ingrid Wisniewska (2005). It is the textbook of communication skills course of the first year students. After collecting and analyzing the data, the main results of this study show that Iraqi EFL students are not so familiar with the metacognitive listening strategies and they lack, to some extent, the awareness of such strategies. In addition, the results show that the participants of the current study use certain metacognitive strategies more than others. The pedagogical implementation of this study presents the high values of teaching these strategies for the students to be effective and positive language listeners. So EFL university professors are recommended to give direct and explicit instructions of the use of the metacognitive listening strategies in EFL context.

1.Introduction

Metacognitive theory is widely used in various disciplines in recent years. It is manipulated in the main language skills to shed the light of the importance of such concept for English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners to develop their own performance. Getting linguistic use of the metacognitive theory in English language teaching (ELT) setting, support the idea of interdisciplinary nature of this theory. Hence, the role of Metacognitive listening strategies is an essential role in the improvement of EFL linguistic proficiency, especially in complicated contexts where learners are involved in less common linguistic environments. EFL learners are required to consider and reconsider their cognitive processes during listening activities. This by the end can lead learners to enhance their comprehension skills and effectively overcome linguistic weak points. Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2006) state that metacognitive strategies include a various cognitive activities such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension. These strategies are essential for effective listening comprehension. Goh (2000) explains that learners who have strong metacognitive listening skills could have effective

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spoken linguistic input. In addition , metacognitive strategies give EFL learners flexible ability to approach and comprehend spoken discourse by all its genres that are suit for developing listening techniques (Vandergrift, 2005).

It is a critical task for EFL learners to manage the authentic spoken discourse to be the principle method for their language input. As highlighted by Oxford (2011) shows that metacognition allows learners to control their cognitive activities, enabling them to be good receivers for language input. Goh and Taib (2006) state that EFL university professors can provide learners by different cognitive strategies to enrich their metacognitive awareness. Moreover, Goh (2008) suggests that direct instruction on metacognitive listening strategies can lead to considerable improvements in EFL learners' listening comprehension abilities in EFL classes. Overall, the interaction between metacognitive listening strategies and teaching materials is of high value in EFL curriculum which consequently leads to more developments in learners' communicative competence.

2.Statement of the Problem

Language listening skills can be considered as one of the main language skills, especially in EFL contexts. However, EFL learners lack effective understanding of metacognitive listening strategies skills among Iraqi EFL students at the university level. The problem that this study is addressed is insufficient awareness and manipulation of metacognitive listening strategies among First Year students enrolled in the Department of English at the College of Arts University of Basrah during the academic year 2013-2024. This study attempts to examine the extent to which these students are familiar with metacognitive listening strategies according to Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's (2006) model. Moreover, it tries to determine students' level of awareness of such strategies as part of the study of their Textbook "Pearson-to-Pearson: communicative speaking and listening skills" by Jack Richards, David Bycina, and Ingrid Wisniewska (2005). This current study comes to fill the gap in the related studies of such concept, particularly in Iraqi EFL contexts.

3.Research Questions

This study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1.Are Iraqi EFL students at the University level aware of using Metacognitive Listening Strategies (MLS) in EFL context?

2.Which strategies among Metacognitive Listening Strategies do Iraqi EFL students in EFL contexts frequently use?

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4.Theoretical Framework
4.1Metacognitive Theory

The concept of Metacognition defined as human beings' awareness and understanding of their own cognitive processes . It reflects the capability of individuals to monitor, control, and regulate their own cognitive processes. This concept covers a wide range of thinking skills, including self-awareness, self-reflection, planning, problem solving, and evaluation. The main strategies of Metacognitive theory allow persons to involve in deliberate and strategic thinking, which completely enhances learning, problem-solving, and decision-making outcomes. The backbone principle of this theory is to let the individuals regulate their own cognitive process in effective ways (Flavell, 1976).

In addition, Schraw and Moshman (1995) explain that metacognition concept include both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation. In order to support their linguistic performance, individuals have to comprehend their cognitive process that include their strengths or weaknesses and the strategies the individuals can manipulate in different learning situations. This type of knowledge is divided into two main kinds of sub knowledge: declarative knowledge (individuals own cognitive tasks) and procedural knowledge (how individuals apply these cognitive strategies) (Brown, 1987).

On the other hand, Metacognitive regulation depends upon how individuals monitor and control the cognitive processes during task performance. The main phases of this regulation may include planning, monitoring ongoing progress, evaluating performance, and making reasonable and successful decisions where necessary (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). However, recognizable metacognitive regulation makes individuals able to adapt cognitive strategies depending on task requirements, distribute their cognitive resources efficiently, and improving their learning experiences (Flavell, 1976).

Furthermore, Dunlosky and Metcalfe (2009) emphasize the role of metacognitive strategies in improving learning performance, paying attention to the need for EFL instructors to apply metacognitive instruction into their teaching classroom activities. Also, Efklides et al. (2011) examine the role of metacognition in different fields, such as emotion regulation and social cognition, expanding our understanding of its uses beyond classical educational environments. In this sense, educators and EFL learners are required to be involved in meaningful and successful use of language supported by various applications of metacognitive strategies.

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4.2 Metacognitive Listening Strategies Questionnaire (MLSQ)

The Metacognitive Listening Strategies Questionnaire (MLSQ) is a mean formed to determine an individual's awareness and control of their cognitive processes during listening comprehension practices. It measures the listener's capability to control, regulate, and evaluate his or her own listening comprehension skills. First, it develops by Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010). Hence, it aims to give insights into the metacognitive strategies employed by individuals when engaged in listening comprehension practices.

However, the MLSQ contains of a number of statements according to their frequency use and effectiveness.. These items represent various aspects of metacognitive listening strategies, such as planning, monitoring, problem solving, evaluation, and self-awareness. Participants often indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a Likert scale, with options: Agree, Strongly Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The following are the principle components of the MLSQ:

A. Planning Strategies: These planning strategies reflect actions taken before listening process starts for example determine goals, trigger background knowledge, and anticipating content.

B. Monitoring Strategies: These strategies emphasize ongoing assessment of understanding and comprehending during listening process, reflecting strategies to examine understanding, identify difficulties, and adapt listening strategies as required.

C. Problem-Solving Strategies: These strategies express the readiness of the listeners to overcome the challenges that would appear during the listening activities. They can involve seeking clarification, rephrasing, or using contextual linguistic keys to interpret meaning.

D. Evaluation Strategies: Learners would assess his or her listening process when the listening task is finished throughout the evaluating his or her performance.

E. Self-Awareness: Learners, in this phase, could determine his or her own strengths or weakness after the listening process.

In the respect of language learning, MLSQ can be used to be effective tools to gather data on EFL learners' metacognitive listening behaviors. Several researchers employ such technique to gain clear insights on the learners' both communicative competence and performance.

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4.3 The Textbook

The textbook under investigation is <u>Pearson to Pearson: communicative speaking and listening skills</u> by Jack Richards, David Bycina, and Ingrid Wisniewska (2005). It is devoted to First Year students at university level. The main aim of this book is to enrich learners' communicative competence. Therefore, it adapts the communicative approach for English language teaching. It argues the EFL students to listen and speak in various social context. Hereby, it attempt to improve students' ability to use everyday language. It covers twelve units ranging from <u>nice to meet you</u> to <u>what are you going to do</u>. Each unit consists of two conversations. For each conversation, there is a CD that the students have to listen to before engaging in discussing the issues related to the topic of the same conversation. In fact, the authors try, throughout each conversation, to learn the students different linguistic and sociolinguistic matters such as new fixed expressions, new vocabulary, and new grammatical constructions. To sum up, the four main language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing are involved by one way or another in this textbook. First Year students could go through these for skills in this book and improve their own communicative competence.

5. Review of Related Studies

Actually, the current study attempt to make comprehensive survey of the related studies concerning the using of MLSQ in the domain of ELT. Moreover, Abbas (2017) examines the use of metacognitive strategies awareness by Iraqi EFL students in developing listening comprehension skills. The study evaluates the effectiveness of metacognitive awareness strategies in English language learning processes and gives some of the pedagogical implications.

Al-Momani and AbuSeileek (2019) investigate the interrelationship between metacognitive strategies awareness and Iraqi EFL students' listening performance at the university level. It is not directed to EFL learners but it shows valuable remarks into the general cognitive processes related to listening comprehension in Iraqi EFL context. The main results of this study indicate that there is positive relationship between cognitive awareness and Iraqi listening skills performance.

Al-Shammari (2020) studies the effect of process-based listening strategy instruction on Iraqi EFL students' listening comprehension skills and the role of metacognitive awareness on listening strategies. Besides, the study examines the differences in using the five phases of MALQ offered by Vandergrift et al. (2006). It is an experimental study with

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pretest and posttest research method. The Results show that there is a positive relationship between listening strategy instruction and metacognitive awareness of strategy use.

On the other hand, Jameel (2022) examines postgraduate students' metacognitive strategies with relation to their listening comprehension skills. He compare two universities in this respect: Anbar and Jadara universities. The main findings of the study explain that there is no statistical differences between the postgraduate students in these two universities concerning the using of the metacognitive strategies in comprehension skills. Also, there is no statistical differences related to the gender variable in this study.

The most distinguishable factor that distinguish the current study from the above-related studies is that it tackles inner factor rather than outsider factor. In the sense that the present study examines out is there in the undergraduate students' textbook and how the students can get benefits from following successful techniques in adapting the metacognitive awareness strategies in EFL context.

6.Research Methodology

6.1Sample

The participants of this study are 120 male and female undergraduate students. The participants are from Basrah University-Iraq/ College of Arts/ Dept. of English/ Morning Studies/2023-2024 academic Year/ First Semester. They are almost from the same social and educational background. However, their age is ranging from 19 to 22 years old. They are First Year students.

6.2The Instrument

The present study adapts the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) by Vandergrift etal. (2006) as the main research tool for conducting this study. Actually, the questionnaire includes 21 statements. In order to get valid results, the questionnaire was given to certain jury members from the same department who are specialized in English language teaching. Such process can also support the validity and reliability of the items of the questionnaire.

6.3Procedures

In order to answer the research questions that are earlier stated, the current study conducted the following procedures:

▪Select 120 students from nearly 250 students in the First Year depending upon their attendance, daily activities, and willingness.

▪All the participants are volunteers and they are not obligated to participate in this study.

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▪Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire by Vandergrift (2006) is adapted.

▪The google forms is used to form the questionnaire and distributed it.

▪Gathering the data and starts to analyses them statistically.

6.4 Data Analysis

This section attempts to analyses the findings of the research instrument employed in the present study. Hence, the results of the students' questionnaire are analyzed in order to answer the research questions. The first question is Are Iraqi EFL students at the University level aware of using Metacognitive Listening Strategies (MLS) in EFL context. Table (1) below shows the main distribution of the data related to the awareness of EFL students' cognitive knowledge.

Table (1)

EFL Students' Metacognitive Listening Strategies Awareness

Type of Perception	Percentages
Aware	60%
Unaware	30%
Uncertain	10%

It is clear from Table (1) above that more than half of the EFL students are aware of the perception of metacognitive listening strategies (60%). Meanwhile, less than half of EFL students are unaware of the perception of metacognitive listening strategies (30%). While only (10%) of the students are uncertain whether they have knowledge and applications of these metacognitive strategies or not.

Table (2) below comes to answer the second research question of the present study: Which strategies among Metacognitive Listening Strategies do Iraqi EFL students in EFL contexts frequently use?

Table (2)

Distribution of Metacognitive Listening Strategies among EFL Students

Type of Strategy	Percentages
Mental Translation	70%
Problem-Solving	50%
Planning-Evaluation	40%
Person Knowledge	30%
Direct Attention	20%

Apparently, EFL students frequently used mental translation strategy more than other cognitive strategies during the process of listening to the authentic spoken discourses that are existed in their textbook. Actually, this strategy includes various activities such as what

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is heard is translated in individuals' minds, find and translate the keywords of the text, and the technique of translating each word from the target language into source one. It seems that EFL students urge their minds to find the equal equivalence in their mother language to facilitate the process of understanding and comprehending the authentic text. Accordingly, the mental strategy presents (70%). Problem- Solving strategy present (50%). In fact, this type of strategy includes cognitive activities such as guessing the meaning of unknown word from the meaning of known words, getting benefits from the background knowledge related to the topic under discussion, understanding the whole idea or the gist of the text, and try to distinguish the correct interpretation from the incorrect one. It seems that First Year students in the Dept. of English attempt to make use of their own background knowledge, which is relevant to the listening text. They concentrate on the general idea of the text rather than the details.

On the other hand, planning-evaluation strategy covers (50%). This strategy consists of different cognitive practices such as having plan in mind before start to listen, evaluating the process of listening before, during, and after listening, and assess whether the process of listening is acceptable or not. In this phase, EFL students do their best to make self-evaluation, pin point the weak points, and try to overcome them in the next task. Person-knowledge strategy presents (30%). It covers certain personal knowledge such as finding the task of listening is more difficult than other language skills, finding the listening task in English language is more challenging task, and listening to English text makes ones nervous. Finally, direct-attention strategy presents (20%) the least one. It is the strategy of concentration. It requires that students have to pay more attention and concentration to what they read. Frankly speaking, students in the present time lack the concentration in their study so they find it difficult to follow such strategy.

6.5 Discussion

It is notable that the majority of EFL students who participate in this study are aware of using the metacognitive listening strategies. While minority of them are unaware of using such strategies. Small group of the first years students are uncertain of using or not these cognitive strategies. As far as the knowledge and experiences of the researcher are concerned in the field of teaching communication skills course for the first year students, the students do not have direct instructions to learn the metacognitive listening strategies. In other words, the students do not attend a course of teaching these methods in integrating cognitive domain

with teaching and learning the foreign language. Despite this fact, students resort to their mother language, background knowledge, and personal mentality to deal successfully with the listening task of the authentic text. The following pie chart display the distribution of using metacognitive listening strategies among students.
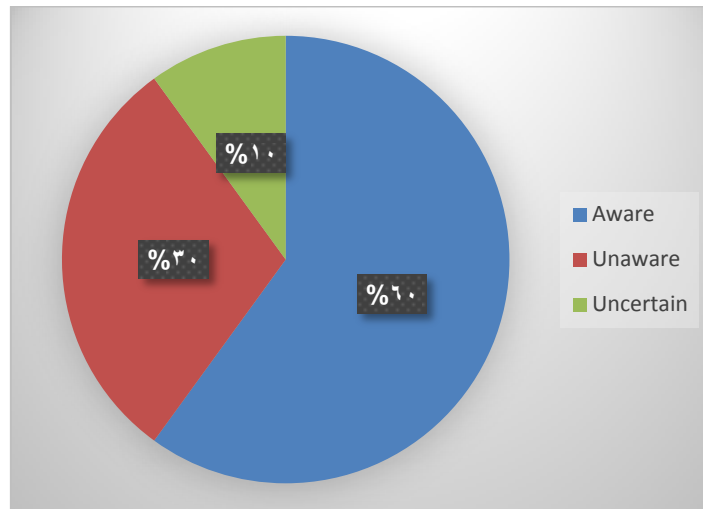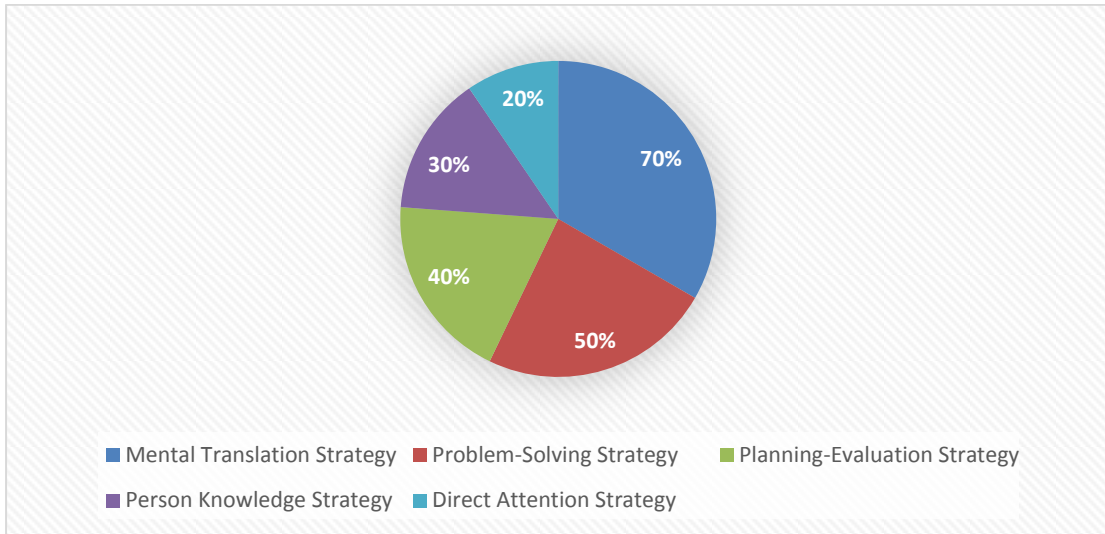

Pie Chart (1)
EFL Students' Metacognitive Listening Strategies Awareness

As far as the second question of the present study is concerned, Iraqi EFL students at the university level manage to deal with the listening comprehension process in acceptable and meaningful ways. They try to get benefits from the interaction between metacognitive knowledge and EFL learning. In this regard, they heavily rely upon their own linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge in understanding and comprehending the authentic texts. Although they have no direct instructions and materials related to the metacognitive listening strategies, they adapt several of these strategies in dealing with the listening complex task. The following Pie Chart explains the distribution of using the metacognitive strategies by First Year students.

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Pie Chart (2)
Distribution of Metacognitive Listening Strategies among EFL Students

7.Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of metacognitive theory in English language teaching. This means that metacognitive theory facilitates the process of learning foreign language. By one way or another, it supports the learners 'ability in handling up the foreign language in the communication activities. Many scholars, throughout their researches, prove that such theory can develop the linguistic performance of EFL learners. However, metacognitive theory has been applied to other skills of English language as reading, writing, and speaking. Still the gap is existed between the EFL learners and the metacognitive strategies. In the sense that punch of the students do not learn and hear such strategies. Accordingly, this study presents some of valuable insights upon the principle role of this theory in English language teaching. The main findings of the present study introduce some the pedagogical implementation for EFL learners, instructors, and materials.

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Appendix
Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)

Strategy Category	Statements
Planning/evaluation	1. Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen. 10. Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to. 14. After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time. 20. As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension. 21. I have a goal in mind as I listen.
Directed attention	2. I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding. 6. When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away. 12. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration. 16. When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.
Person knowledge	3. I find that listening in French is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in French. 8. I feel that listening comprehension in French is a challenge for me. 15. I do not feel nervous when I listen to French.
Mental translation	4. I translate in my head as I listen. 11. I translate key words as I listen. 18. I translate word by word, as I listen.
Problem-solving	5. I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I do not understand. 7. As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic. 9. I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand. 13. As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct. 17. I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of the words that I do not understand. 19. When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense.

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