

An Investigation of The Listening Strategies (Cognitive and Meta-cognitive) Utilized by Iraqi EFL College Students According to Gender Variable

Noor Hameed Majeed

**Wasit University/College of Education /Department of English
language**

E-Mail: noorhameed@uowasit.edu.iq.

Abstract

The present study investigates (1) the listening strategies used by Iraqi EFL College students (2) the use of listening strategies according the students' gender (male and female). (3) To know the significant statistical differences of the students' listening strategies type (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to the students' gender (male and female) variable and the listening strategy type in E- learning. To achieve these aims the researcher uses an appropriate questionnaire as a data collection means consisting of (40) items covering the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies with four point scale (never, sometime, often and always). The sample of this study consists of (59) first year class students in English department/ college of Education/ University of Wasit during the academic study year 2020/2021. The findings of this study have been analyzed and discussed using appropriate statistical methods. The findings of this study show that the utilize of listening strategies of the students, in general, was good. There were statistical differences of the students' use of listening strategies according to their gender. In addition, the findings revel that there were statistical differences of the students' listening strategies type (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to the students' gender (male and

female) variable and the listening strategy type in E- learning. Female students used listening strategies both cognitive and meta-cognitive more than males. The findings of this study hoped to be beneficial to EFL instructors, teachers, learners, researchers, and curriculum designers.

Key words: gender, listening strategies, cognitive listening strategies and meta-cognitive listening strategies, E-learning.

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى استقصاء (١) استراتيجيات الاستماع التي يستخدمها طلبة الكلية العراقيين المتعلمين اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (٢) استعمال استراتيجيات الاستماع وفقاً لجنس الطلبة (ذكوراً وإناثاً). (٣) معرفة دلالة الفروق الإحصائية لنوع استراتيجيات الاستماع (المعرفية وما وراء المعرفة) حسب متغير جنس الطلاب (ذكوراً وإناثاً) ونوع إستراتيجية الاستماع في التعلم الإلكتروني. لتحقيق هذه الأهداف ، يستخدم الباحث استبياناً مناسباً كأداة لجمع البيانات يتكون من (٤٠) فقرة تغطي الاستراتيجيات المعرفية وما وراء المعرفة بمقياس من أربع نقاط (أبداً ، في وقت ما ، غالباً ودائماً). تكونت عينة هذه الدراسة من (٥٩) طالب وطالبة في المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية / جامعة واسط للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠/٢٠٢١ ، وقد تم تطبيق الوسائل الإحصائية المناسبة على نتائج هذه الدراسة. تكشف نتائج هذه الدراسة أن استخدام استراتيجيات الاستماع لدى الطلاب بشكل عام كان جيداً. بالإضافة إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في استخدام الطلاب لاستراتيجيات الاستماع حسب الجنس (ذكور وإناث). كما أوضحت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في نوع استراتيجيات الاستماع لدى الطلاب (المعرفية وما وراء المعرفة) حسب متغير جنس الطلاب (ذكور وإناث) ونوع إستراتيجية الاستماع في التعلم الإلكتروني. استخدمت الطالبات استراتيجيات الاستماع المعرفية وما وراء المعرفة أكثر من الذكور. تأمل نتائج هذه الدراسة أن تكون مفيدة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية والمتعلمين والباحثين ومصممي المناهج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجنس ، إستراتيجيات الاستماع ، إستراتيجيات الاستماع المعرفية ، إستراتيجيات الاستماع ما وراء المعرفة ، التعلم الإلكتروني.

1. Introduction

Learning English has become one of the students' most essential goals for a variety of reasons: jobs, communication, expanding their knowledge in their field of study, travel, and so on. One of the main keys to learn English is listening skill. In addition, listening is the first skill learners should start with to learn the other language learning skills (speaking, reading, and writing). Moreover, speaking, pronunciation, note-taking, summarizing, learning abilities, and vocabularies are only few of the components and skills of language that can be covered and enhanced while listening. Listening is the most basic language skill, and it is critical in our daily interactions. Howatt & Dakin (1974) state that Listening skill can be defined as the ability to recognize and comprehend what others are claiming, and it entails recognizing a speaker's accent his pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as comprehending his meaning.

Despite the fact that many previous studies have found that EFL students utilize diverse strategies in learning listening, both in terms of kind and frequency, other key dimension-effects of variables, such as gender, motivation, proficiency and achievement, on learners' listening strategy use, still the focus of many researchers. Dörnyei, 2005 & Macaro (2006) found that certain of many variables had a more dynamic impact on skill-based language acquisition methodologies. In this regard, there are a number of factors that influence the selection and implementation of language learning strategies. Gender has been identified as one of the main variables that may influence how students employ language learning strategies. Gender's impact on strategy utilization has been studied in combination with other variables but not separately (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Therefore, the current study is an attempt to investigate the effect of this variable on listening strategy use.

The present study aims at investigating investigates (1) the listening strategies used by Iraqi EFL College students (2) the use of listening strategies according the students' gender (male and female). (3) To know the significant statistical differences of the students' listening strategies type (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to the students' gender (male and female) variable and the listening strategies types in E- learning.

The current study is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of EFL students' use of listening strategies (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to their gender (male and female).

The current study is limited to Iraqi EFL first year students, department of English Language/morning studies / College of Education at the University of Wasit during the academic year 2020-2021. In addition, this study is limited to the use of cognitive and meta-cognitive listening strategies.

The findings of the current study hoped to be beneficial to EFL teachers to focus on teaching listening strategies (cognitive and meta-cognitive) and use effective teaching strategies to motivate students (male and female) to practice listening exercises outside of class. Furthermore, the findings hoped to be beneficial to curriculum designers in determining appropriate techniques and practices to include in Iraqi EFL textbooks to increase students' awareness (male and female) of the main listening skills they should use to improve their proficiency. Finally, the findings hoped to be beneficial to other researchers to expand the scope of this study to investigate the relationship between the use of listening strategies and other variables e.g. students' awareness, age, performance, proficiency level and achievement.

2-Listening Strategies

Rivers (1981, p. 160) states that "listening is not a passive skill and it is creative skill. In order to comprehend the sounds falling on our ears, we take the raw material of words, arrangement of words, and the rise and fall of voice, and from this material we create significance." Richards & Schmidt (2010) define comprehension as "the process involved in understanding the meaning of written or spoken language" p.315. Listening comprehension is an active process that needs focus, linguistic understanding, and listening strategies in order to collect or analyze information from aural information. Mianmahaleh (2015) states that "an emphasis on listening comprehension and application of listening strategies will help students for promoting English ability on the language input they receive, and they can achieve greater success in language learning." P. 258. One of the essential factors that influence the process of listening

comprehension is listening strategy. Vandergrift (1999) clarifies that, strategy development is important for listening training because strategies are conscious means by which learners can guide and evaluate their own comprehension and responses" p 31. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990 define Learning strategies as "the specific thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information". While Nunan (1999) defines learning strategies as the mental and communicative strategies learners utilize in order to learn and use language.

These strategies are divided into three main categories. In this respect, Tandoc & Tandoc (2014) state that there are three main types of listening strategies that can be taught to the students, such as; meta-cognitive, cognitive, social/affective strategies. All of the strategies have their own particular function on listening activities (p. 436).O'Malley and Chamot (1987) have classified these strategies as follows:

- 1- Meta-cognitive strategies: this type of listening strategies involve management processes in planning for language learning, Monitoring the comprehension and production of the learners, and evaluating how well they have achieved learning aims.
- 2- Cognitive strategies: in this type, the listeners interact with the materials to be learned by "operating it mentally or physically".
- 3-Social-affective strategies: the listeners either interacts with other listeners so as to support learning, as in "cooperation" or "asking questions" for clarification, or employs some types of affective manage to support learning. (pp. 241-242)

Richards & Schmidt (2010) define cognitive strategies as "learning strategies that operate directly on incoming information in ways that enhance learning" p 93. Listening comprehension requires cognitive techniques because they support learners in monitoring and controlling their mental processing, identifying understanding breakdowns, and connecting world knowledge to listening content (Bao&Guan, 2019, p. 1).

The second type of listening strategies is Meta-cognitive strategies which are considered essential because they are the self-awareness of listeners or

learners to their own learning process. This type of strategies requires learners to think about the learning process; this includes the following:

- 1- Learners must plan their learning,
- 2- Monitor their own comprehension,
- 3- Evaluate their own learning outcomes, pay attention, and
- 4- Identify the purpose of the language task (Vandergrift, 1999).

In this respect, Wenden (1998) also emphasizes the significance of meta-cognition role in learning self-regulation of learning as language learners plan, monitor, and assess their progress. Oxford (2006) mentions “three main key sets of meta-cognitive listening strategy”:

- (1) Listeners need to concentrate their listening,
- (2) Organize their listening, and
- (3) Plan and assess their listening.

Meta-cognition is essential in different skills of learning language. Such as: Oral, reading, writing, and language acquisition are all parts of language learning. From the other hand, cognitive strategies include taking note, summarizing, highlighting the main information, translating, and repeating. Goh (1998) mentions that “cognitive strategies are inference, elaboration and prediction, which are included in top down processing, contextualization, fixation and finally reconstruction”. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) state that the cognitive strategy indicates to mental processes functioning specifically on incoming letters and exploiting the language to enhance language learning.

3-Methodology

The researcher selects a suitable descriptive design. The tool of this study is a questionnaire for gathering data necessary to accomplish the aims of the current study. The sample of the current study is chosen from EFL college students (male and female) / first stage / department of English at the academic year 2020-2021. The total number of the first year students is 245. Finally, the findings are analyzed, that are collected, to check the objectives of the study and to put conclusions and recommendations. The findings of the study will statistically be computed using appropriate

statistical methods based on the mean scores of EFL students' responses. Finally, the researcher puts appropriate conclusions and recommendations.

3-1The Sample

This study's sample is the first year students /Wasit University / morning studies/ College of education/ department of English during the academic year 2020-2021/ morning study. It was randomly selected and consists of (24) male and (35) female students. Thus, the total number of is (59).

3-2The Instrument

The researcher utilized an appropriate questionnaire as a data gathering instrument consists of (40) items, which seeks to find out the students' listening strategies which they used in the E-learning. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.438) state that questionnaire is a "set of questions on atopic or group of topics designed to be answered by a respondents.... Questionnaire are used in many branches of applied linguistics, such as LANGUAGE SURVEYS, the study of attitudes and motivation...". The items of the questionnaire have been scored on four-point scale with (never, often, sometime, and always). These point-scales were given the following grades (1,2,3,4). The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part is the students' personal information (gender, age and class). The second part consists of (40) items focus on the cognitive and meta-cognitive listening strategies.

Since that the essential qualities of a good questionnaire are validity and reliability. The study's instrument was given to a jury of experts to provide their suggestions about the adequacy of the instruments' items, whether they are appropriate to meet the goals of the study or not, and to determine its face validity. Face validity is defined as a "judgment by the scientific community that the indicator really measures the construct. In other words, it addresses the question: on the face of it, do people believe that the definition and method of measurement fit?..." Riazi (1999, p. 96).

Depending on the suggestions and the judgment of the experts, the questionnaire is valid with some simple changes on the form of some items.

Richards & Schmidt (2002, P. 454) define reliability as "a measure of the degree to which a test gives consistent results. A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or it is used by different people".

The Test-Retest method is used to verify whether or not the current study's questionnaire is reliable. The questionnaire was administered to 40 college students (male and female) and the instrument was tested again two weeks later to determine its reliability. After that, the Pearson formula is used to determine the instrument's reliability. The questionnaire's reliability is found out to be (0.89), which is regarded a reasonable coefficient. Van, et al (1984) states that “the instrument's reliability is regarded good if its reliability is more than (0.70)” (p.317).

3-3 Data Analysis and Results Discussion

The researcher calculated the mean scores of the EFL students' responses in the questionnaire in order to achieve the first aim of the current study which is found to be (120.360) with standard deviation which is (5.840). Then, it is compare with the value of the Hypothetical mean score of the questionnaire, which is found to be (100). Then, the researcher applied the T-test formula for one dependent sample, which reveals that the value of the calculated t-test is (3.009) and value of the tabulated t-test is (2.0105) at the level of significance of (0.05) and degree of freedom (58), as shown in table (3.1) .

Table (3.1)
The results of the T-Test for one Dependent Sample (mean of the sample, hypothetical mean of instrument)

No.of Sampl e	Mean score	S.D	Hypothetical Mean	D.F	Level of Significanc e	T-Value	
						Calculated	Tabulate d
59	120.360	5.840	100*	58*	0.05	3.009	2,0105

*the value of the hypothetical mean is (100):
The sum of weight of the items’’ point scale
_____×the number of the questionnaire’s
items
The number of weight of the point-scale
4+3+2+1 10
_____× 40 = _____× 40 = 100 (the value of the hypothetical mean)
4 4
*degree of freedom in the first aim is

The number of the sample -1

Thus $59-1=58$

That there are statistically significant differences in favor of the mean score of the students' responses in the questionnaire which is found to be (120.360), because of the tabulated t-test value is less than the calculated t-test value. This shows that the students' listening strategies use is good. This may relate to the fact the learning process in the E-learning depends on the students' listening skills and attention. In addition to the procedures and techniques used by teachers which may pave the way for the student how to use their listening strategies to comprehend what they hear in their e-lectures especially (listening and speaking) subject such as: videos, listening exercises, oral tests and CD. Moreover, the using of interactive learning platforms like Google meet, Zoom and FCC provides good opportunities for the students to interact with instructors, ask questions for clarification, replay to questions, take-notes, and watching videos while listening etc. Such a setting may encourage students to pay more attention in class and to participate during the lectures. In addition, these techniques may help the students to focus on listening strategies to comprehend what they watch and listen.

To accomplish the second aim of the study (to investigate the listening comprehension strategies use according the students' gender (male and female)), the researcher used (T-Test) for two independents samples (male and female) to find out if there are statistical differences between the mean scores of students' listening strategies use according to gender variable (male and female), as shown in table (3.2) below.

Table (3.2)
The results of the T-Test for Two Independent Samples according to Gender Variable

Gender of sample	No.of Sample	Mean score	S.D	D. F	Level of Significance	T-Value	
						Calculated	Tabulated
Male	24	56.182	3.432	57*	0.05	3.070	2.010
Female	35	64.178	2.418				

*degree of freedom in the second aim is

The number of the sample -2

Thus 59-2=57

Since that, the calculated t-test value (3.070) is more than the tabulated t-test value (2.010) at the level of significance of (0.05) and (57) degree of freedom as shown in table (3.2). This means that there is a statistically difference between the female and male students' strategy use. Female students used listening strategies more than males. This assured that female are more active than male and have good listening strategies. Based on these findings, many essential justifications concerning the differences between male and females listening strategy utilization can be made. This may relate to the fact that females are more active than male during the lectures and this may help them to recognize the main listening strategies they need to comprehend the instructions and explanations of the instructor.

To accomplish the third aim of the current study, the researcher used analysis of variance two way (gender variance and the type of the listening strategy (cognitive and meta-cognitive)). The calculated t-test values are more the tabulated t-test values at (the level of significance of 0.05) and (55.2 degree of freedom), as shown in table (3.3). This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in favor of the gender variable and the listening strategies type variable, as shown in table (3-3, 3-4).

Table (3-3) Two Way Analysis of Variance
Gender, Listening strategy type (cognitive and meta-cognitive), and
Gender*Listening strategy type

Source Of Variance	Sum of squares	D.F	Mean squares	T-Value		Level of Significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Gender Male/female	276.502	1*	2420.040	3.660	2.8805	0.05
Listening strategy types	9680.160	1*	2761.502	3.870	2.8805	
Gender *listening strategy type	891.010	2*	222.753			
Error	38372.825	55*	98.392			
Total	51705.497	59*				

*degree of freedom / gender variable (male, female)(2-1)=1

*degree of freedom/listening strategy type (cognitive, meta-cognitive)

*degree of freedom /gender (2)*listening strategy type (2)=4-2=2 degree of freedom(horizontal)

*degree of freedom (vertical)=sample (4) which is the results of gender (2)*listening strategy type(2).

Thus, 59-4=55 degree of freedom (vertical).

The researcher uses (Scheff Test) to find out the differences between the mean scores of EFL students' listening strategies according to gender variable (male and female) multiplied by the cognitive listening strategies variable, as shown in table (4.4) below.

Table (3-4):**Mean and Standard Deviation for Males and Females in Listening Strategy Use (cognitive strategy)**

Gender	No.	Mean	S.D	Scheff –value		Level of significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Male	24	93.745	8.603	5.255	1.943	0.05
Female	35	99.215	13.112			

As shown in table (3-4), the calculated scheff- test value (5.255) is more the tabulated scheff-test value (1.943) at the level of significance of 0.05 and 58 degree of freedom. This indicates that the females' cognitive listening strategies level is better than the males. This may relate to that fact that female is more active and willing to use and improve their cognitive skills than males.

Table (3-5):**mean and standard deviation for males and females in listening strategy use (meta-cognitive strategy)**

Gender	No.	Mean	S.D	Scheff –value		Level of significance
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Male	24	92.286	5.860	4.968	1.943	0.05
Female	35	96.416	6.476			

As shown in table (3-5) the calculated scheff- test value (4.968) is more the tabulated scheff-test value (1.943) at the level of significance of 0.05 and 58 degree of freedom. This indicates that the females' use of meta-cognitive listening strategies and level are better than the males. This may relate to the fact that female is more active and willing to use meta-cognitive skills than males to improve their listening comprehension. In addition, the findings may relate to the fact that psychological nature of females represented by the high desire and eagerness to acquire information and skills and to get high marks can be considered another reason to reach to such findings.

Depending on the data are shown in tables above, the null hypothesis , which indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of EFL students' use of listening strategies (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to their gender (male and female) is rejected. Since that there were statistical differences of the students' listening strategies type (cognitive and meta-cognitive) according to the students' gender (male and female) variable and the listening strategy type in E- learning. This means that Female students used listening strategies both cognitive and meta-cognitive more than males.

The findings of this study are disagreement with the findings of (Hidayanti & Umamah, 2019) study which finds out that there was no relationship or link between listening strategy and two factors of gender and the students' listening achievement. In additions, the first finding finds out that female students did not use the strategies significantly different from the male counterparts. In addition, the findings of this study also are disagreement with the findings of Sobhani (2015) which find out that there are no statistically significant differences were observed in the correlation between the students' gender (male and female) and their use of the cognitive listening strategies.

From the other hand, the findings of the current study are in agreement with the findings of Mianmahaleh (2015) which reveal that there were significant differences in the utilization of listening comprehension strategies of the students according to their gender (males and females). This rejected the null hypothesis and suggested that there were significant differences between male and female EFL students in using listening comprehension strategies.

4-Conclusions

The researcher has arrived at a conclusion based on the findings of the investigation that the use of listening strategies of the students, in general, was good and acceptable. Moreover, the sample's use of listening strategies, in general, is affected by the gender variable (male and female), since that the findings reveal that females' use of listening strategies is better than males. In addition, the findings revel that there were statistical differences of the students' listening strategies type (cognitive and meta-

cognitive) according to the students' gender (male and female) variable and the listening strategy type in E- learning. The researcher also concludes that when EFL teachers getting more information about the relationship between the use of listening strategies and the variables i.e. gender and the individual differences will help EFL teachers know how to choose the right teaching method and how to make it more effective. From the other hand, teaching these strategies (cognitive and meta-cognitive) pave the way for EFL teachers to make their students know how to use these strategies to plan, monitor or control, evaluate, and enhance their comprehension while listening. In addition, this will assists the students to improve the listening skills they adopt to improve their proficiency. Understanding students' interactions with online learning will help teachers make decisions to teach effective listening strategies. In today's environment where communication technology has changed significantly in recent years, multimedia learning environments can assists EFL students in the oral comprehension as well as cognitive processes skills can be used to listen.

5-Recommendations

1. EFL teachers should focus on the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies because they are fundamental to success in listening comprehension for students. Since that focusing on the students' utilize of the listening comprehension strategies can help them to achieve better listening comprehension
2. EFL teachers should encourage the students to practice listening activities outside the class to be successful independent learners.
3. EFL teachers must develop and increase students' cognitive and meta-cognitive awareness to help them to be better listeners.
4. It is important to increase the number of the teaching hours of listening and speaking subject, since that listening is the key to develop the other language learning skills in the department of English language.
5. It is important to encourage EFL teachers of different level (first, second, third, and fourth year classes) to use technology in teaching listening and speaking subject to provide an interactive and motivated learning environment to practice listening skills and strategies.

6. Building a training program to improve and reinforce the students' listening strategies and skills in the department of English.

References

- [1] Bao, D& Guan, C. (2019) Listening Strategies. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330399548_Listening_Strategies .<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0588>.
- [2] Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- [3] Ehrman, M.L., & Oxford, R.L. (1989). Effects of sex differences, career choice, and psychological type on adult language learning strategies. *Modern Language Journal*, 73(1), 1-13.
- [4] Goh, C. Strategic Processing and Metacognition in Second Language Listening[A]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK, 1998.
- [5] Hidayanti, Ika & Umamah, Atik (2019) *listening strategy: a link between gender and student's achievement*. Abjadia: International Journal of Education, 04 (01): 12-17.
- [6] Howatt, A. & Dakin, J. (1974). Language laboratory materials, ed. J. P. B. Allen, S. P. B. Allen, and S. P. Corder.
- [7] Mianmahaleh, Aliakbari, Samira (2015). An Investigation of the Listening Comprehension Strategies Used by Iranian EFL Learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* ISSN 2200-3592 (Print), ISSN 2200-3452 (Online) Vol. 4 No. 1; January 2015. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.1p.255>.
- [8] Nunan, D. (1999). Second language teaching and learning. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- [9] O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1987). The cognitive academic language learning approach: A bridge to the mainstream. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 227-249.

- [10] O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Oxford, R. L. (2006). Language learning strategies. USA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- [12] Raizi, A, Mahdi (1999). A dictionary of Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative. National Lib of Iran.
- [13] Richard ,Jack, C. & Schmidt Richard (2010). Longman Dictionary of language teaching & Applied linguistics (4th Edition). Pearson Education.
- [14] Richard, Jack, C. & Schmidt Richard (2002) Longman Dictionary of language teaching & Applied linguistics (3rd Edition). Pearson Education
- [15] Sobhani , Zahra (2015) An Investigation into the Relationship between Gender and Cognitive Listening Comprehension Strategies.
http://www.psp-globe.com/JIEB_20_3_2015.
- [16] Vandergrift , L. (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: acquiring successful strategies. ELT Journal, 53(3), 168-176.
- [17] Van Els, Theo, Bongataerts, The and Extra, GUUS, (1984). Applied Linguistics
and the learning and Teaching of Foreign Language London: Longman Press.
- [18] Wenden, A. L. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. Applied Linguistics, 19(4), 515-537.
- [19] Rivers, Wilga, M. (1981) Teaching Foreign Language Skills (2nd edition). Chicago press.