Iraqi EFL University students' attitudes towards Self-Regulated Learning on improving Listening skill

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Abstract

The study aim at investigating the Iraqi EFL University students' attitudes towards Self-Regulated Learning on improving Listening skill. Participants of the current study were 80 female and male fourth-year university student in the Department of English Language at the College of Education for Humanities/University of Tikrit. The instrument is a questionnaire the Self-Regulated Learning in Listening Questionnaire. Furthermore, the study's results revealed that the incorporation of training in self-regulation activities yielded a beneficial effect on students' listening abilities. The study proposes that given the substantial impact of self-regulatory strategies, it appears pertinent to conduct a comprehensive examination of the role of self-regulation in the acquisition of a foreign language. This investigation aims to enhance our comprehension of the progression of self-regulation in foreign language learning, as well as explore how language instructors can effectively assist learners in employing self-regulatory strategies to foster positive beliefs regarding their language learning capabilities.

1- Introduction

The act of listening holds significant importance in the process of acquiring language skills and serves as a vital component in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL). The significance of listening in the realm of communication has been extensively demonstrated in scholarly literature (Wolvin, 2010). Nevertheless, it is commonly recognised among scholars that the significance of hearing in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is sometimes undervalued. This is due to the emphasis placed on the enhancement of skills that are more easily observable, such as speaking, writing, and reading. Reading, in particular, is considered a crucial means of acquiring knowledge in academic settings (Nation & Newton, 2008). The talent of listening is often overlooked and tactics for listening are often considered less important compared to strategies for reading, writing, and speaking (Vandergrift, 1997). Despite the acknowledgement of the significance of listening skills in the college English curriculum in Iraq, there remains a need for additional measures to effectively support language learners in the development of their listening abilities.

In Iraq, the inclusion of a listening comprehension module is mandatory for undergraduate students who are not majoring in English. Based on the research conducted by Goh and Zeng (2014), it has been determined that the assessment of listening abilities within the College English test Band 4 (CET4) contributes to 35% of the total score allocated for the examination. In addition to language acquisition and evaluation, listening is highly regarded as a significant language communicative competence within the contemporary economic context. However, it has been observed that Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners exhibit a relatively weaker proficiency in the skill of listening (Jiang, 1994). According to Liu (2005), Iraqi students pursuing education in English-speaking nations perceive listening as their most formidable obstacle. Given the limited amount of time allocated to classroom instruction, which usually amounts to around two hours per week for listening instruction over a period of 30-32 several weeks in an academic year, alongside an instructional approach that primarily focuses on exam preparation, it is crucial to investigate alternative methods for improving the listening abilities of college-level English learners through self-directed learning outside of the classroom. For several decades, Iraqi students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) have engaged in extensive independent listening. Nevertheless, it is imperative to equip educators with the essential resources to support self-regulated learning (SRL) and guarantee that the implementation of extended listening, aimed at enhancing listening abilities, remains intentional and not contingent upon external variables. By incorporating insights from the field of educational psychology and the broader domain of second language learning (Pintrich, 2004), a teacher-supported self-regulated learning (SRL) approach to fostering independent listening skills would encompass guidelines for designing and executing learner-centered SRL tasks within autonomous learning environments. The aforementioned statement emphasises the considerable significance of cognitive processing in the learning process and provides learners with essential metacognitive tools for self-regulated learning beyond the confines of classroom listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

2. EFL listening strategies

Learner strategies are intentional methods used to improve language comprehension, acquisition, as well as retention (Chamot, 1995; Cohen, 1998). In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening, learners employ suitable techniques in order to attain their understanding objectives, especially when faced with constraints in their capacity to comprehend oral texts (Gu, Hu, & Zhang, 2009). According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), the implementation of strategies can effectively enhance learners' understanding, retention, and recall of material. Additionally, these strategies play a crucial role in facilitating learners' overall listening development as an integral component of their language learning endeavour. According to recent studies, effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening comprehension requires the strategic coordination and grouping of metacognitive and cognitive techniques (Graham & Macaro, 2008). Furthermore, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) argue that

individuals who possess an elevated level of metacognitive awareness have the capacity to effectively coordinate the implementation of several strategies based on the specific task at hand and the characteristics of the learner. The examination of general listening strategies can also involve the analysis of tactics or individual procedures that are used to implement each strategy (Goh, 2002). This approach can provide a clearer understanding of the hierarchical linkages that exist among these strategies (Oxford & Cohen, 1992). In spite of initial debates surrounding the effectiveness of strategy instruction for enhancing listening skills, potential resistance from learners (Huang, 2006), and various challenges, scholars have argued that learners can benefit from acquiring listening strategies to overcome difficulties in learning, neglected linguistic or schematic input, misunderstanding cues, and other limitations associated with listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The utilisation of metacognitive methods, specifically, is a characteristic observed in EFL listeners who achieve high levels of performance, and it has the potential to enhance the listening comprehension skills of EFL learners (Vandergrift, 2004). One approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening skills involves incorporating listening tasks with the guidance and instruction of teachers in the usage of strategies by learners (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

The metacognitive cycle developed by Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari (2010) aims to facilitate the integration of listening methods and assist learners in acquiring implicit knowledge about listening processes. In addition to cultivating metacognitive awareness regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening, this instructional cycle also enhances EFL perception abilities and word recognition capabilities, as advocated by Graham (2006). According to Vandergrift (2007), the metacognitive listening cycle is supported by strong theoretical foundations, since it closely aligns with research findings that demonstrate implicit learning through task performance. Further concrete proof can be noticed in several studies that have implemented the metacognitive cycle within the framework of listening lessons (Cross, 2011). The metacognitive listening cycle is a pedagogical approach mostly employed within classroom settings, aimed at cultivating strategic processes during the process of listening comprehension. In addition to classroom instruction, learners require assistance in employing tactics to enhance their listening skills. Specifically, they should be encouraged to increase their metacognitive awareness, enabling them to independently direct and regulate their learning efforts (Goh, 2008). This necessitates the implementation of a strategy to assist English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in their extended listening activities, allowing them to independently manage their learning process under the supervision and guidance of the teacher. Consequently, learners will assume a more active role in their listening growth, making informed decisions regarding their learning trajectory.

3. Self-regulated learning

Self-regulated instruction is a complex process in which individuals independently employ and sustain cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strategies that are intentionally aimed at attaining educational goals (Efklides, 2009). The current investigation employs Pintrich's (2000) conceptualization of self-

regulated learning (SRL), which describes it as an active and constructive procedure in which learners set learning goals and then make efforts to monitor, regulate, and control their cognitive processes, motivation, and actions. The endeavours are directed and constrained by their objectives and the contextual elements prevailing in the educational setting (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453). The S2R paradigm, introduced by Oxford (2011, 2017), initially proposed the implementation of self-regulated techniques for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This framework critically analyses the theoretical foundations of self-regulation in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. It further explores the application of self-regulation in comprehending the development of several EFL skill domains, such as listening. The study participants were tasked with assuming responsibility for their own comprehensive listening development and beginning extended listening activities in autonomous environments. The present study adopts the conceptualization of self-regulated learners put out by Winne and Hadwin (1998), which defines these learners as individuals who engage in active and effective management of their own learning through the processes of monitoring and strategic utilisation. The SRL model they employ places significant emphasis on the role of metacognition, a crucial concept in the development of listening skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). According to Efklides (2009), empirical studies have demonstrated that metacognition is closely intertwined with motivation and affect, and these interconnections bear significant consequences for self-regulated learning (SRL). Winne and Hadwin (1998) "conceptualises self-regulated learning (SRL) as a comprehensive notion that encompasses metacognitive knowledge and strategy utilisation" (Winne & Hadwin, 2008). The book provides an overview of the cognitive processes associated with a learner's self-regulation. These processes are comprised of four primary stages that are considered to be recursive in nature: task description, goal setting and planning, strategy enactment, and metacognitive adaptation (Greene & Azevedo, 2007).

This paradigm facilitates the establishment of connections between learners' metacognitive knowledge system and their self-regulatory behaviours in the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening skills. To the best of our understanding, this study on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) employs a theoretical framework of self-regulatory learning to examine the effectiveness of learning strategies. Notably, this study is the first of its type to focus on prolonged listening in the EFL context.

4. EFL listening skill

The ability to listen is often regarded as the least developed skill among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who have lower or intermediate levels of proficiency (Wang, 2002). Despite this, a significant number of Iraqi students are provided with a restricted quantity of in-class listening training on a weekly basis, wherein the courses mostly revolve upon verifying the accuracy of predetermined comprehension questions. The act of facilitating students' hearing acquisition has frequently been neglected in comparable listening courses (Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995). Many students have traditionally relied on classroom listening teaching without recognising the need to actively take

responsibility for their own listening development (Goh & Taib, 2006). According to Goh (2000), it was not uncommon for certain students to abandon their listening efforts due to their perception of comprehending only a minimal amount of the spoken content. Given the accessibility of technology-driven resources, it is imperative for educators to contemplate strategies for assisting learners in their endeavours to engage in extensive listening. This will enable individuals to develop the requisite skills for effectively regulating their learning process and leveraging the benefits offered by the authentic resources available through their mobile devices. Given this purpose, it is worth contemplating the implementation of a self-regulated learning (SRL) approach. This approach is advantageous as it not only provides learners with increased exposure to genuine spoken texts but also enhances their metacognitive awareness and self-regulatory skills, hence promoting success in listening comprehension (Mendelsohn, 2006). This study adopts a Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) method that places emphasis on the significance of metacognition and learning techniques. The aim is to assist Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in effectively planning and executing lengthy listening activities that extend beyond the confines of their classes. The objective of the study was to examine the potential benefits of implementing a self-regulated learning (SRL) approach to prolonged listening practise for language learners. Additionally, the study sought to investigate if the effectiveness of an SRL programme may be influenced by the amount of involvement exhibited by learners during the programme. This study exemplifies the adherence to Hu's (2016) proposition for strategy researchers to engage in emancipatory strategy research, wherein learners' active involvement facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge and the cultivation of heightened self-awareness. Consequently, these newfound understandings serve as guiding principles for their learning endeavours.

5. Objectives

The objective of paper is to find out the attitudes of Iraqi university students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) regarding the use of self-regulated learning strategies to enhance their listening skills. The study investigated the alterations in students' metacognition, "self-efficacy," "Knowledge of Cognition," "Awareness of Metacognition and Regulation of Cognition," and "Strategic Behaviour". The study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. Does Self-Regulated Learning improve students' listening skill?

2. How does Self-Regulated Learning influence students', "self-efficacy," "self-efficacy," "Knowledge of Cognition," "Awareness of Metacognition" and "Regulation of Cognition," and "Strategic Behavior"?

3. Method

3.1. Design

This investigation employed a quantitative descriptive method. The research methodology can be defined as the comprehensive set of procedures and techniques that a researcher uses when undertaking a research project (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Williams, 2011, p. 14). Therefore, a quantitative research

approach entails the systematic measurement and analysis of variables with the aim of obtaining empirical findings. The process involves the use and analysis of quantitative data using specific statistical methods to investigate queries related to persons, amounts, characteristics, places, timeframes, quantities, and approaches. Expanding upon this concept, Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) provide a comprehensive description of quantitative research methods as the systematic investigation of a specific subject or phenomena through the collection of numerical data, which is subsequently analysed using mathematical techniques, particularly statistics.

3.1. Participants

The study population consists of fourth-year college students enrolled in the Department of English Language, namely those attending morning classes at the College of Education for Humanities within the University of Tikrit. The total number of populations is (105), while the randomly selected participants are (80).

3.2 Instrument

The data for this study was acquired by utilising closed-ended questions that were picked and afterwards adapted from the questionnaire developed by Kobayashi (2018), which measures the level of attitude. The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert scale that spans from 1 "(Strongly Disagree)" to 5 "(Strongly Agree)" for each topic. The participants utilised a scale to assess the level of agreement for each statement. This portion of the survey assessed what respondents thought regarding the four essential components of Self-Regulated Learning, namely: (1) self-efficacy, (2) cognition knowledge, (3) metacognition awareness and cognitive regulation, and (4) strategic behaviour. In this particular component of the questionnaire, a total of eighteen items were modified in order to align with the specific criteria of the research study, which aimed to assess the "self-efficacy" of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, their understanding of cognition, awareness of metacognition, control of cognition, and strategic behaviour.

3.5. Face validity

Validity refers to the degree to which a measurement instrument accurately evaluates the particular characteristic or attribute it was designed to examine. Additionally, it serves as an indicator of the instrument's efficacy in fulfilling its intended function (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The jury members, as indicated (see Appendix B), administered the questionnaire in order to assess its face validity. The jury members concur that the entirety of the questionnaire component possesses validity.

3.6 Reliability

According to Blumberg et al. (2005), a measurement is considered reliable when it consistently yields findings that possess equivalent values. The evaluation of several components of a study, including its consistency, correctness, reproducibility, and reliability, is conducted (Chakrabartty, 2013). The

dependability coefficient of the four scales was assessed using the Alpha-Cronbach formula, and the results are presented in Table 2, indicating satisfactory levels of reliability.

Table (2) Reliability of four factors

Factor	Alpha-Cronbach
Self-efficacy	0.87
Knowledge of Cognition	0.79
Awareness of Metacognition and Regulation of Cognition	0.80
Strategic Behavior	0.76

3.7 Statistical tools

The SPSS software is utilised to calculate the reliability coefficient, conduct a t-test for one independent sample, and compute the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient.

4. Results, Discussion of Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

4.1 Results

In order to assess the statistical significance of the disparity between the average score and the hypothetical mean of the self-efficacy scale (which is 9), a one-sample t-test is used. The analysis indicates that the calculated t-value (21.496) exceeds the critical t-value (1.990) for a significance level of 0.05 and 79 degrees of freedom. Therefore, these findings suggest that there are notable variations in attitudes towards the self-efficacy scale, and the sample demonstrates a sufficient level of self-efficacy.

The t-test for one independent sample is utilised to assess the significance of the difference between the mean score and the theoretical mean (9) of knowledge of cognition in the second half. The analysis demonstrates that the calculated t value (12.140) exceeds the critical value (1.990) at a significance level of 0.05, given the degrees of freedom (79). Therefore, these findings suggest that there are notable variations in attitudes towards the understanding of cognition scale, and the sample exhibits a reasonable level of knowledge in the field of cognition.

The third section of the study focuses on the awareness of metacognition and regulation of cognition (AMRC). In this section, the researchers assess the importance of the difference between the average score and the theoretical average of AMRC, which is 18. This is done by employing a one independent sample t-test. The obtained t-value of 15.087 exceeds the critical t-value of 1.990 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 79 degrees of freedom. This suggests that there are notable attitudes towards the (AMRC) scale, and that the sample possesses a satisfactory level of (AMRC) on the scale.

The fourth part of the survey focuses on the strategic behavior scale. In this part, the inquirers assess the importance of the variation between the mean score and the theoretical average of strategic behavior, which is 18. This significance is established using a one independent sample t-test. The obtained t-value (8.871) exceeds the critical t-value (1.990) at a significance level of 0.05 and with 79 degrees of freedom. This suggests that there are notable attitudes towards the strategic behavior scale, and that the sample possesses a satisfactory level of strategic behavior scale, as shown in Table (3).

Table (3) The Mean Score, Standard Deviation and t-Value of the Self-efficacy Scale, Knowledge of Cognition, Awareness of Metacognition and Regulation of Cognition, and Strategic Behavior

Variables	Sample Size	M	S.D	Theoretical Mean	T- Value		DF	0.05
					Calculated	Tabulated		
Self-efficacy	80	12.5250	1.46672	9	21.496	1.990	79	sig.
Knowledge of Cognition		11.5000	1.84185	9	12.140			
Awareness of Metacognition and Regulation of Cognition		23.2000	3.08282	18	15.087			
Strategic Behavior		21.1750	3.20117	18	8.871			

4.2 Discussions of Results

This paper investigates the Iraqi EFL university students' attitudes towards self-regulated learning on improving listening skill. The t-test conducted on the questionnaire has provided evidence to support the presence of a statistically significant difference between the theoretical mean and the mean scores for each of the four criteria. Nevertheless, the student's reaction exhibited significant improvements in various aspects, including self-efficacy, cognitive knowledge, metacognition awareness, cognition control, and strategic behaviour scales. Upon doing an analysis of the data utilising descriptive statistics, it was seen that the t-test for a single independent sample indicated that the self-efficacy factor exhibited a higher t-test value of 21.496. While Awareness of Metacognition and Regulation of Cognition factor has (15.087). Whereas, Knowledge of Cognition factor has (12.140). Finally, the Strategic Behavior has (8.871) t-test value. The comparison between the two descriptive statistics of the four factors noted

that there is a difference between the attitudes of the EFL students of the highest and the lowest once, as illustrated in figure below:
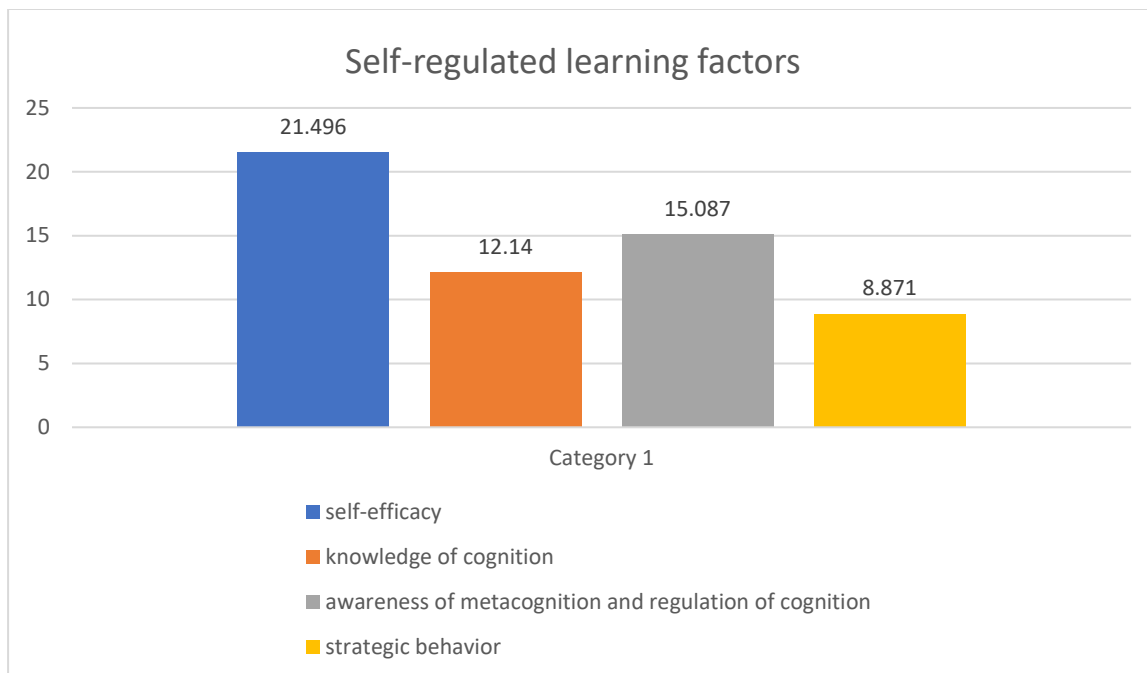

Figure 1| Comparison between self-regulated learning factors

4.3 Conclusions

The paper demonstrates the Iraqi EFL university students' attitudes towards self-regulated learning on improving listening skill. The students attitudes showed greater gains, particularly for self-efficacy. Metacognitive instruction also increased learners' metacognition and motivation, enabling them to become more autonomous learners outside the classroom. This supports previous findings on metacognitive instruction's benefits.

4.4 Recommendations

1. In teacher education programmes, there is a focus on instructional strategies that aim to enhance students' attitudes towards self-regulated learning and responsible development.
2. Educational programmes should prioritise the importance of metacognitive instruction in student learning.

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