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Investigating the Micro Skill Clusters in Listening Comprehension for EFL University Students

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A B S T R A C T

Micro-Skill Clusters are different components of listening skill used by students to perceive what the speaker is saying and to interpret what they intend to mean. When students can use Micro-Skill Clusters, they can develop their learning in general and Listening Comprehension in particular. This study aims to identify and compare EFL university students' use of the listening micro skill clusters types at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities, Colleges of Education- Department of English. The use of the listening micro skill clusters types are formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and interpreting (possible) speaker intentions at the two universities, EFL university students' using of the listening micro skill clusters types at the recognition and production levels in the two universities. The differences between males and females use of listening micro skill clusters at the two universities .A descriptive quantitative research design is adapted, and the sample of the present study is 227 in the third year of the Department of English, Colleges of Education at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities, who were selected randomly. The study is conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2023 / 2024. The data was gathered using a diagnostic test that scored based on predefined scoring schemes to assess students' performance in listening comprehension. The current study's findings reveal that students at English departments and colleges of education at the universities of Tikrit and Kirkuk use MSC at a high level. Some conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies are presented in light of the results.

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استقصاء مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة لطلبة الجامعة دارسي اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية في الفهم السماعي

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الخلاصة:

تعتبر مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة مكونات مختلفة من مهارة الاستماع يستخدمها الطلاب لاستيعاب ما

يقوله المتحدث وتفسير ما يقصده. عندما يستخدم الطلاب مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة، يمكنهم تطوير تعلمهم بشكل عام والفهم السماعي بشكل خاص. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد ومقارنة استخدام طلاب الجامعات متعلمي الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لأنواع مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة في الاستماع في كليات التربية – قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعتي تكريت وكركوك، استخدام أنواع مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة في الاستماع: تكوين معنى المحتوى للكلام، وتكوين إطار مفاهيمي يربط الكلام ، وتفسير (المحتمل) نوايا المتحدث في الجامعتين, استخدام طلاب الجامعات متعلمي الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لأنواع مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة في الاستماع على مستويي ى الفهم والأداء في الجامعتين, الاختلافات بين الذكور والإناث في استخدام مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة في الاستماع في الجامعتين. تتبع الدراسة الحالية تصميم بحث الوصفي الكمي، وعينة الدراسة الحالية هي 227 طالبًا في السنة الثالثة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كليات التربية في جامعتي تكريت وكركوك، تم اختيارهم عشوائيًا. تم إجراء الدراسة خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني من العام الأكاديمي 2024/2023. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام اختبار تشخيصي يتم تسجيله استنادًا إلى معايير محددة مسبقًا لتقييم أداء الطلاب في الفهم الاستماعي. توصلت نتائج الدراسة الحالية إلى أن الطلاب في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في كليات التربية في جامعتي تكريت وكركوك يستخدمون مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة على مستوى عالٍ. تم تقديم بعض الاستنتاجات والتوصيات والاقتراحات للدراسات المستقبلية استنادًا إلى النتائج.

كلمات مفتاحية: مجموعات المهارات الصغيرة، الفهم السماعي، استقصاء، الاستماع، دارسِّي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبيه.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, English language plays an important role worldwide given that it is the most commonly used language in commercial, scientific, technological and communication fields. So, developing English language skills is considered as an important factor for keeping the generations connected with the outside world. Thus, students and learners should be able to master reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills (Mubarokah, 2016, p. 35).

Listening is one of the language skills that English learners should master, but this skill makes it difficult for many learners to understand what they are listening to. (Al-nafisah, 2019) This means that this skill must be mastered in addition to other skills such as speaking, reading, and writing.

Listening plays a crucial role in everyday communication and education (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Listening is essential for understanding communicated information. Listeners will pay attention and make an effort to comprehend the information when someone speaks. Listening comprehension is crucial in language learning since it is considered one of the four main abilities in acquiring a new language (Sharaf, 2018).

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) discovered that students encounter substantial challenges in listening comprehension due to universities prioritising writing, reading, and vocabulary. It demonstrates that hearing is not given precedence in language acquisition. Cited in Bingol et al. (2014, p.2). University students frequently receive explanations from their professors during classroom lectures. They will prioritise listening over other activities including speaking, writing, and reading as instructed by their teacher in the target language. Listening comprehension is a highly intricate process. Prior to measuring it, we must comprehend the functioning of this mechanism (Buck, 2001). However, a learner's listening ability is one of the challenges many English learners face, especially for English Foreign Language (henceforth: EFL) learners, as it is affected by several factors; including limited exposure to listening activities. (Hadijah, 2018).

Many researchers such as Hamouda (2013) indicate that EFL students face many difficulties and problems in listening comprehension because teachers emphasize vocabulary, reading, grammar, and writing skills. They do not consider this skill in their foreign classes, so it is still the most neglected skill of language learning and teaching. These problems are related to the quality of audio CDs and DVDs, accents, unfamiliar vocabularies, listening pace and speed, and cultural differences. Al-Azzawii(2000)

Listening comprehension (henceforth: LC) at Iraqi EFL colleges is given little attention and practice, and the lack of time allocated to listening in classrooms makes studying listening skill a pressing need (Krebt & Al-Rifai, 2013, p. 1) . The current study attempts to investigate EFL university students' listening micro skill clusters (henceforth: MSC) in listening comprehension in the light of interpreting cluster: Formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions.

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims to identify and compare:

1- EFL university students' using of the listening MSC types at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities Colleges of Education- Dept of English.

2- The use of the listening MSC types: Formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions at the two universities.

3- EFL university students' using of the listening MSC types at the recognition and production levels in the two universities.

4- The differences between males and females use of listening MSC at the two universities.

1. 3 Questions of the Study

To achieve the aims, the following questions are suggested:

1- Are there statistically significant differences among EFL university students' using of the listening MSC types at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities Colleges of Education- Dept of English?

2. Are there statistically significant differences among EFL university students' use of the listening MSC types: Formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions at the two universities?

3. Are there statistically significant differences among EFL university students' using of the listening MSC types at the recognition and production levels in the two universities?

4. Are there statistically significant differences between males and females use of listening MSC at the two universities?

1.4 Limits of the Study

The current study is limited to :

1. Third - year EFL university students/ Departments of English/ Colleges of Education at Tikrit and Kirkuk universities during the second course of the academic year 2023-2024.

2. A diagnostic test is used to measure students' listening MSC and a productive written test is used to measure students' performance in listening comprehension.

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.5.1 Investigating

Investigating is a thorough search for facts, especially those hidden or need to be sorted out in a complex situation. An investigation usually aims to determine how or why something happened (Leonard & More, 1978, p.142).

The operational definition of investigating is the observation by close examination and systematic inquiry.

1.5.2 Micro-skill clusters

Rost (1990), identifies ‘clusters’ of listening micro-skills Which consist of ‘enabling skills’ those used to perceive what the speaker is saying and to interpret what they intend to mean, and ‘enacting skills’ – those used to respond appropriately to the message. Rost further divided listening into perception, interpretation, and response.

The operational definition of micro listening skill clusters is a set of related subskills that are involved in the process of listening comprehension.

1.5.3 Listening comprehension

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) listening comprehension is regarded theoretically as an active process where individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge.

The operational definition is an active process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge while relying upon numerous strategic resources to perform the task requirement.

1.6 Plan of the Study

To meet the aims of the study, the steps are followed:

1. Presenting a general theoretical survey about listening micro skill clusters and some previous studies related to the current study.

2. Selecting a convenient sample which consists of third-year EFL students at the Colleges of Education, Universities of Tikrit, and Kirkuk.

3. Constructing a diagnostic test to collect the required data and. obtaining its validity, reliability, and discrimination power.

4. Applying the diagnostic test to the selected sample of students.

5. Analyzing the selected data statistically through using suitable statistical means and obtaining the necessary results.

6. Discussing the results, giving conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

2.0. Theoretical Background

2.1. Definition of Listening skill

One of the main problems that face researchers in the field of listening research is the absence of harmony in the definition of listening since Joiner (1984, p.335) states that "one of the reasons listening comprehension has been so difficult to describe listening is a covert activity". While Rost (2011, p. 204) mentions that the difficulty of defining listening comes from describing listening as a complex ability with receptive, constructive, interactive, and transformative aspects. Despite all these difficulties in defining listening, some researchers have defined listening from various perspectives as in the following:

Howatt and Dakin (1974) define listening as spotting and comprehending what other people say. It involved comprehending a speaker's pronunciation, ideas, concepts, grammar, vocabulary, and understanding meaning.

2.2 Listening Micro-skill clusters

Richards (1983) posits 33 micro-skills for conversational listening and a further 18 micro-skills for academic listening especially listening to lectures. His arguments has generated lots of questions, first, what is the relationship between conversational and academic micro-skills? The answer he proffered is simply incremental, all conversational listening micro-skills are required for academic listening, but there are certain more specialized academic listening micro-skills such as 'copying with different styles of lecturing' are required in the lecture hall – making a possible academic listening total of 51 micro-skills. Some of these skills

include: ‘identifying and reconstructing topic’, which means identifying the lecture topic, and following its development. Secondly, how do we internally order micro-skills? Richards response by offering such terms as taxonomies of listening skills, which implied that the relationship within each set was hierarchical. This means the successful use of one micro-skill depends on prior success in using others.

Richards's (1983) listening micro-skills for conversational listening:

1. ability to retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods

2. ability to discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language

3. ability to recognize the stress patterns of words

4. ability to recognize the rhythmic structure of English

5. ability to recognize the functions of stress and intonation to signal the information structure of utterances

6. ability to identify words in stressed and unstressed positions

7. ability to recognize reduced forms of words

8. ability to distinguish word boundaries

9. ability to recognize typical word order patterns in the target language

10. ability to recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics (high frequency)

11. ability to detect key words (i.e., those which identify topics and propositions)

12. ability to guess the meanings of words from the contexts in which they occur

13. ability to recognize grammatical word classes (parts of speech)

14. ability to recognize major syntactic patterns and devices

15. ability to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse

16. ability to recognize elliptical forms of grammatical units and sentences

17. ability to detect sentence constituents

18. ability to distinguish between major and minor constituents

19. ability to detect meanings expressed in differing grammatical forms/sentence types (i.e., that a particular meaning may be expressed in different ways)

20. ability to recognize the communicative functions of utterances (speech acts), according to situations, participants, goals (pragmatic competence)

21. ability to reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants, procedures

22. ability to use real world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings, procedures

23. ability to predict outcomes from events described

24. ability to infer links and connections between events

25. ability to deduce causes and effects from events

26. ability to distinguish between literal and implied meanings

27. ability to identify and reconstruct topics and coherent structure from ongoing discourse involving two or more speakers

28. ability to recognize markers of coherence in discourse, and to detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, given information, new information, generalization, exemplification

29. ability to process speech at different rates

30. ability to process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections

31. ability to make use of facial, paralinguistic, and other clues to work out meanings 32. ability to adjust listening strategies to different kinds of listener purposes and goals

33. ability to signal comprehension or lack of comprehension, verbally and non-verbally.

Richards's micro-skill taxonomies has been reshaped and further developed by Rost (1990), who identifies 'clusters' of listening micro-skills. He also distinguished between 'enabling skills' – those used in order to perceive what the speaker is saying and to interpret what they intend to mean. This is followed by 'enacting skills' – those used to respond appropriately to the message. Rost further divided listening into perception, interpretation, and response. Rost's micro-skills

clusters are reproduced here to help us categorize areas of success and failure in an individual L2 learner's understanding of a listening text.

"Micro-skill clusters in listening comprehension "

A. ENABLING SKILLS

Perception

1. Recognizing prominence within utterances, including

- Discriminating sounds in words, especially phonemic contrasts
- Discriminating strong and weak forms, phonetic change at word boundaries
- Identifying use of stress and pitch (information units, emphasis, etc.)

Interpretation

2. Formulating content sense of an utterance, including

- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words
- Inferring implicit information
- Inferring links between propositions

3. Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, including

- Recognizing discourse markers (clarifying, contrasting)
- Constructing a theme over a stretch of discourse
- Predicting content
- Identifying elements that help you to form an overall schema
- Maintaining and updating the context

4. Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions, including

- Identifying an 'interpersonal frame' speaker-to-hearer
- Monitoring changes in prosody and establishing (in) consistencies
- Noting contradictions, inadequate information, ambiguities

• Differentiating between fact and opinion

B. ENACTING SKILLS

5. Making an appropriate response (based on 1 – 4 above), including

• Selecting key points for the current task

• Transcoding information into written form (for example, notes)

• Integrating information with that from other sources

• Identifying which points need clarification.

• Providing appropriate feedback to the speaker

adapted from Rost (1990, p. 152–153)

2.3 Definition of listening comprehension

Different authors have defined the term "listening comprehension" (henceforth LC). According to Brown and Yule (1983), LC means that a person understands what he/she has heard. If he/she learns the text through hearing it, he/she will understand it.

Rost (2002) defines LC as an interactive process in which listeners are involved in constructing meaning. Listeners comprehend the oral input through sound discrimination, previous knowledge, grammatical structures, stress and intonation, and other linguistic or non-linguistic clues. According to Nadig (2013), LC is the various processes of understanding and making sense of spoken language. These involve knowing speech sounds, comprehending the meaning of individual words, and understanding the syntax of sentences. Vandergrift (1999, p. 168) defines LC as a process in which the listeners try to differentiate and distinguish between the sounds of the spoken text and be able to recognize the grammatical structure of the text. It also involves identifying the vocabulary and understanding the intonation and stress.

Mendelsohn (1994) defines LC as the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers. To sum up, it is widely admitted that LC is not merely the process of unidirectional receiving of audible symbols, but an interactive process (Brown, 2001).

2.4 Components of Listening Comprehension

According to Chastain (1988), LC is divided into four components, and reaching comprehension cannot be done except by reaching these four components. The first is the ability to differentiate all sounds, intonation patterns and voice qualities in the second language, and to distinguish between them and the same sounds in the native language.

The second is the understanding of the whole message uttered by a speaker. Rivers (1981) said that the understanding of spoken messages depends on comprehension of semantic meaning, moving from what one comprehends in the sound sequence with respect to the knowledge of syntax only when the meaning is not understandable.

The third is the ability to hold that message in one's auditory memory until it can be processed. To develop the learners' auditory memory, teachers should know that they hear as much language as possible. This means that most of the class time should be carried out in the language being taught, and the speed of presentation and difficulty level of the content must be adjusted to the learners. Furthermore, language activities that are comprehensible increase auditory memory; the significant point here is the idea of improvement from the simpler to the more intricate sentences should be slow and continuous. (Chastain, 1988)

The last item is comprehension. As suggested by Ahmadi (2016, p.8), "comprehension is the speech reception at the syntactic, lexical, pragmatic, and discourse levels [of listening in language teaching and learning". He handles the situation by stressing the pragmatic and discourse level. Considering the aim of listening activities, the message will be heard decently; the meaning will be obtained by following an auditory memory process and finally it will reach up to discourse level, namely, the input turns into target output successfully.

3.0 Methodology and Procedures

Research design can be considered as the structure of research. It is the "Glue" that holds all of the elements in a research project together; in short, it is a plan for the proposed research work (Akhtar, 2016, p.68). The design of this research is descriptive quantitative research. The reason for choosing this research design is to investigate the types of micro-skill clusters used by students at Kirkuk

and Tikrit Universities. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) describe quantitative research methods as the explaining of an issue or phenomenon through gathering data in numerical form and analyzing with the aid of mathematical methods, in particular statistics.

3.1 Population and Sampling

Population can be defined as an entire group of people or a set of objects, including those not in the study (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p. 262). In addition, Shukla (2020, p. 76) defines Population as a set or group of all the units on which the research findings are to be applied. While Sample According to Ary et al. (2018, p. 148), a sample is several individuals, objects, or events selected for a study from a population, usually in such a way that they represent the large group from which they are selected. A sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a large population for measurement. So, to get accurate results, sampling is done (Bhardwaj, 2019, p. 5).

For the current study, the sample has been randomly selected to represent population characteristics without any bias and to obtain valid and reliable results. The total number of the sample is 227 students, and it has been chosen intentionally and randomly. The intentional choice is represented through choosing a college and random choice is achieved by selecting a representative number of students from third-year college students in the morning studies, Department of English at the Colleges of Education/ Tikrit, and Kirkuk Universities in the academic year 2023-2024. The current study sample represents 69% of the population as indicated in this table. See (3.1)

Table (3.1)

The Population and Sample of the Study

University	College	No. of Population	No. of Pilot study	No. of the Sample		Total	Percentage
Tikrit	The College of Education for Humanities	150	15	M.	F.	105	70%
				51	54		
	The College of			M.	F.		

Kirkuk	Education for Humanities	**177**	**15**	**57**	**65**	**122**	**68%**
Total		**327**	**30**	**227**			**69%**

3. 2 Test Construction

Al Juboury (2014, p. 7) defines a test as a tool that is best used for gathering information about students' performance and achievement in a given course of study. It is a method or procedure for measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a particular aspect of life. The construction of the test involves planning for the test, preparing the items and instructions, putting them together, and reproducing the test (Brown, 2004, p. 47). The research instrument in the current study is a diagnostic test. The test constructed by the researcher is compiled from Cambridge English, the Key English Test for Schools Listening,2020; SIMCE English test,2014; and the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination,2018. The three tests are modified to suit the purpose of measuring the Micro skill clusters, The test depends on the Rost (1990) model of the components of the listening micro skill cluster on both recognition and production levels and it consists of five questions. The test includes both objective and subjective levels, and it consists of five questions. The first three questions test students' objective level, each question contains six items. The first question involves a multiple-choice type that tests the student's ability to select the most appropriate choice that goes best with the context, while the second question demands to state whether a sentence is true or false. The third question involves a matching type that tests the student's ability to match between lists.

The last two questions test the students' subjective level, and the fourth and fifth questions contain six items. The fourth question involves the completion type that tests the student's ability to fill the blank with the most appropriate word that fits with the context, while the fifth question demands students to write short answers after listening to the material given.

3.3 Face Validity

According to Mousavi (2009: 247), face validity is "the degree to which a test looks right and appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of the testees who take it, the administrative staff

who decide on its use, and other psychometrically simple observers". To ensure the face validity of the test, it has been submitted to a jury of instructors and specialists in English language teaching and Linguistics. The jurors have reviewed the instrument and stated that it is appropriate and valid. Their modifications have been taken into consideration.

3.4 Content Validity

Hardré et al. (2007, p. 247) define construct validity as the property of a test that the measurement actually measures the constructs they are designed to measure. Weir (2005, p. 17) illustrates construct validity as a matter of posterior statistical validation of whether a test measured a construct in individuals.

3.5 Reliability of the Test

Reliability is an important characteristic of a good test. A test is said to be reliable if its degree of accuracy stays stable and consistent each time is conducted with the same condition for the same sample of students (Veram and Beard, 1981, p. 860). Alpha- Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the test. The coefficient is found to be 0.89 which is considered acceptable. To ensure the inter-rater reliability, the scoring committee scored the test. It includes: assist instructor Enaam Zuhair Hamed (PhD), assist instructor Hawar Sardar Ali, and the researcher.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small feasibility study designed to test various aspects of the methods planned for a larger, more rigorous, or confirmatory investigation (Arain, et al., 2010, p. 6). The primary purpose of a pilot study is not to answer specific research questions but to prevent researchers from launching a large-scale study without adequate knowledge of the methods proposed; in essence, a pilot study is conducted to prevent the occurrence of a fatal flaw in a study that is costly in time and money (Fraser, et al., 2018, p. 262). In order to know if there is any difficulty in the items of the test, a random sample consisting of (30) male and female students in the third year/ Colleges of Education/ English Department/Universitis of Tikrit and Kirkuk are involved in the pilot study. The test was administrated on the 2nd and 11th of December in the first semester of the

academic year 2023-2024. The time required for the student to answer all of the questions ranges between 50 and 55 minutes. See table (3.2)

Table (3.2)

Sample of the Pilot Study

University	Males	Females	Total
University of Tikrit	7	8	15
University of Kirkuk	8	7	15
Total	15	15	30

3.7 Item Analysis

According to Cervantes (1989),Examining test items for difficulty and discriminating power is the process of item analysis. Item analysis is a tool that helps the test writer locate test content and assess the difficulty or ease of an item. The test items are required to be analyzed in order to determine two important features: difficulty level and discrimination power, as follows:

3.7.1 Difficulty Level

Item difficulty refers to the extent to which an item appears complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. It just reflects the percentage of learners who respond correctly to the object. The most suitable test item will have difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown, 2010, pp. 70-1). The items of this test are considered acceptable if they range from 0.30 to 0.72, indicating their suitability.

3.7.2 Discrimination Power

Discrimination Power means " calculating the degree to which a particular item's results correspond with the results of the entire test' (Alderson, 1995,p.80). This means that an object is deemed to have weak power of discrimination if it is correctly scored by high-skilled students as well as low-skilled students. Item discrimination refers to the degree to which an object makes a difference between good and poor testers. An object has good power of discrimination if it collects the right answers from the good students and the wrong answers from the bad students. It is worth noting that the high power of discrimination will be close to 1.0, and no

power of discrimination will be nil at all (Brown, 2010,p. 71). The test item DP is found to have a range of 0.33 -0.73.

4.0 Analysis of Data and Discussion of Result

4.1 Comparison Between the Mean Scores of Kirkuk and Tikrit universities at micro-skill clusters Test

To answer the question "Are There any statistically significant differences among the EFL university students' micro-skill clusters at the two universities; Kirkuk and Tikrit "? all mean scores are obtained and compared. Statistics show that the mean scores of Kirkuk University are 52.08 and that of Tikrit University is 55.01 with a standard deviation of 10.02, 10.02 respectively. By using the t-test formula for two independent, the calculated t-value is found to be 2.201, while the tabulated t-value is found to be 1.972 at the degree of freedom 225 and level of significance 0.05. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the two universities in the micro-skill clusters test. Thus, the comparison, which states that "Are There statistically significant differences among the EFL university students' in the micro-skill clusters test at the two universities, Kirkuk and Tikrit," in favour of Tikrit University in the term of comparison, is accepted, as shown in Table (4.1)

Table (4.1)

Comparison Between the Mean Scores of Kirkuk and Tikrit

Groups	No. of students	Mean	SD.	T-Value		DF	Level of Significance
Kirkuk	122	52.08	10.02	Calculated	Tabulated	225	0.05
Tikrit	105	55.01	10.02	2.201	1.972		

4.2 Comparison of the Kirkuk University Students' Use of the Listening Micro Skill Clusters Types.

To achieve the second aim of this study which is the micro skill cluster types; Formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions at the two universities by investigating the second question, the one-way analysis of variance was used, as shown in the following table(4.2)

Table (4.2)

Comparisons of Means Between Three Types (Scheffe[a])

Types	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions,	122	14.6393		
Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances	122		16.7705	
Formulating content sense of an utterance	122			20.6885
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 122.000.				

According to Table 4,1 above, the comparisons of means showed that the mean scores in the term of micro skill clusters types of Kirkuk University in the three types, Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions is 14.6393, Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances is 16.7705, and Formulating content sense of an utterance is 20.6885, with harmonic mean sample size = 122. This indicates that there is a significant difference between EFL university students' at the three types in favour for formulating content sense of an utterance.

4.3 Comparison of the Tikrit University Students' Use of the Listening Micro Skill Clusters Types

To achieve the second aim of this study which is the micro skill clusters types; Formulating content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, and Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions at the two universities by investigating the second question, the one-way analysis of variance was used, as shown in the following table:

Table (4.3)

Comparisons Of Means Between Three Types (Scheffe[a])

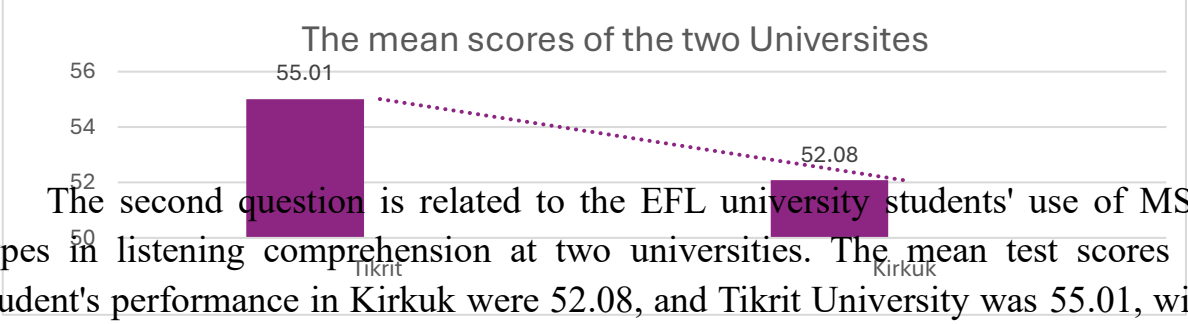
Types	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2

Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions,	**105**	**15.9048**	
Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances	**105**		**19.2286**
Formulating content sense of an utterance	**105**		**19.8857**
Sig.		**1.000**	**0.574**
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 105.000.			

The comparisons of means showed that the mean scores in the term of micro skill clusters types of Tikrit university in the three types, Interpreting (possible) speaker intentions is 15.9048, Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances is 19.2286, and Formulating content sense of an utterance is 19.8857, with harmonic mean sample size = 105. This indicates that there is a significant difference between EFL university students' at the three types and in favour for Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances and formulating content sense of an utterance.

4.4 Discussion of the Results

The current study attempts to test the micro skill clusters of EFL university students and their Performance in listening comprehension at Tikrit and Kirkuk Universities. The result of the current study illustrates the EFL university students' use of MSC in their studying of listening comprehension. The results of the first question show that the EFL university students at the College of Education Kirkuk University most students are poor in their use of the micro-skill clusters, but higher average test scores at the University of Tikrit, as explained in the following Figure1

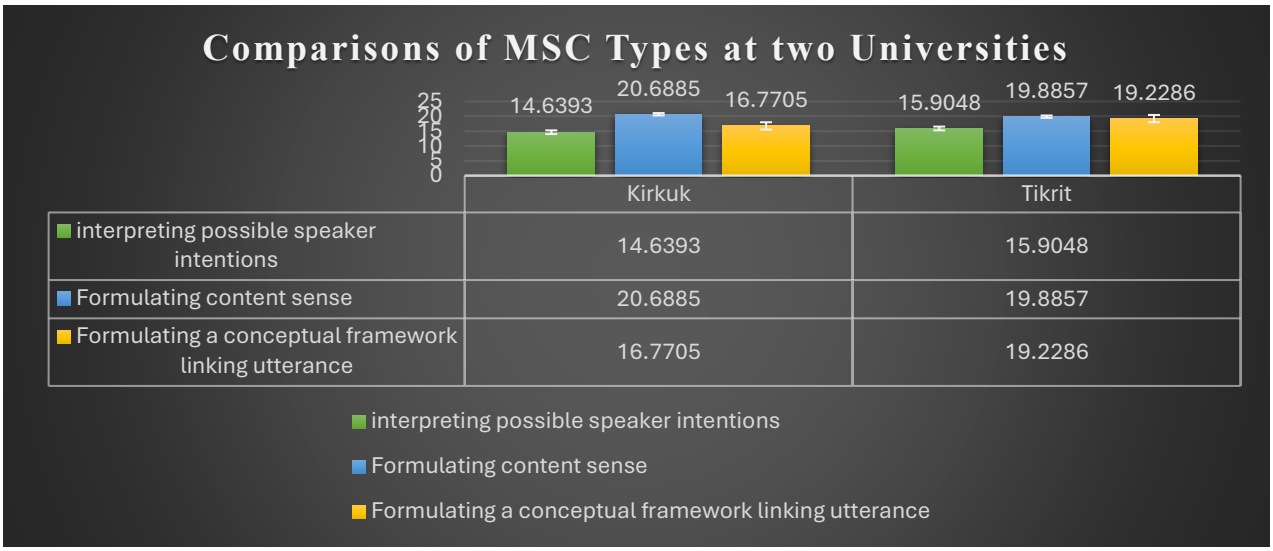


The second question is related to the EFL university students' use of MSC types in listening comprehension at two universities. The mean test scores of student's performance in Kirkuk were 52.08, and Tikrit University was 55.01, with harmonic mean sample size = 122.000. This suggests that there are statistically

significant disparities between students in the first kind (Interpreting possible speaker intentions) at Kirkuk University with 14.6393 and Tikrit University gaining the upper hand with 15.9048. the comparisons of means for the second type (Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances) revealed that the mean test scores of Kirkuk were 16.7705 and Tikrit University were 19.2286 with harmonic mean sample size for Kirkuk = 122.000. and for Tikrit = 105.000. This indicates that there are statistically significant disparities in favor of Tikrit University.

The comparisons of means for the third type (Formulating content sense of an utterance) revealed that the mean test scores of Kirkuk (20.6885), Tikrit University 19.8857, with a harmonic mean sample size for Kirkuk 122.000, and Tikrit = 105.000 were as follows: This indicates that there are statistically significant variations in favour of Kirkuk university

Figure (2) The Comparison of MSC types at the Universities of Tikrit, Kirkuk



5.1 Conclusions

The current study has come up with some conclusions, which are:

1. Micro skills cluster increased students' confidence in learning and encouraged them to use their Background knowledge.

2. Most of the students can use the Micro skill clusters.

3. In comparing the three types of micro-skills we found that Students are weakening in interpreting possible speaker intentions and this weakness is due to the level of the students themselves and most of the teachers did not focus on the aspects that enhance students abilities by using MSC.

4. The level of students can be improved better for using these Micro skill clusters by teaching them how to use these strategies by the teacher, and this will develop their knowledge in comprehending the events in the material given.

5. It is important to emphasize this study's contribution in the methodology field since there is limited research on investigating listening micro skill clusters of EFL learners.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that:

1. EFL Teachers should teach their students how to use the Micro skills cluster such as Formulating the content sense of an utterance, formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, etc.

2. It is beneficial to consider the purposes behind students' studying listening, Instructors can successfully choose the proper activities to be used at the proper time and for the proper Caliber of students.

3. EFL teachers should teach their students how to use MSC in developing their listening skills.

4. Teaching listening comprehension to small groups of students helps to reduce the noise, save time while performing a specific activity and allow teachers to concentrate on small numbers of groups instead of focusing on many individuals.

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