

# Metacognitive Awareness Level and Achievement in Arabic Listening Skills among Secondary School Students

Nur Farahhuda Abdul Rahman<sup>1</sup> & Harun Baharudin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM), Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education, National University  
of Malaysia, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: harunbaharudin@ukm.edu.my

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## Abstract

Metacognitive awareness in listening skills emphasizes two main elements: metacognitive knowledge and strategies. Metacognitive awareness emphasizes students' perceptions and actions towards learning listening skills comprehensively. Therefore, this survey study aims to identify students' metacognitive awareness levels and achievement levels in Arabic listening skills. As many as 300 out of 1280 Johor state secondary school Arabic students have been randomly selected as respondents. The study found that the level of metacognitive awareness of Arabic listening skills of secondary school students was at a moderate level (Min: 3.41, SD: 0.66). The level of achievement of listening skills also showed the same result, which was at a moderate level (Min: 3.36, SD: 0.73). These findings suggest that students' level of metacognitive awareness and level of listening skills achievement need to be strengthened, and studies to see the relationship and influence between these two aspects need to be carried out to empower the learning of Arabic listening skills. Two types of study instruments, namely questionnaires adapted from MALQ and Arabic listening skills test questions, are suitable as self-study aids and guides for students in planning and implementing listening skills activities to improve their mastery of Arabic listening skills.

**Keywords:** Arabic, Listening Skills, Metacognitive Awareness, Foreign Language, MALQ.

## Introduction

Arabic is widely studied as a foreign language due to its significance as the language of the Quran and its role in acquiring knowledge (Noor et al., 2021). The primary objective of teaching foreign languages is to enhance students' value in terms of knowledge and skills. It also prepares them for the professional world and facilitates global connections. Proficiency in Arabic is determined by the mastery of four essential skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Pisal & Teh, 2021). However, mastering listening skills can be challenging (Smith, 2020).

Listening skills play a crucial role in language proficiency as they involve receiving information through language learning activities (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Wolf et al., 2019; Polat & Eristi, 2019; Öztürk, 2018). These skills are adaptable and can be integrated with other language skills. Unfortunately, listening skills are often undervalued in the pursuit of foreign language mastery (Djabbárova, 2020). This is primarily due to students' lack of metacognitive awareness, which refers to their ability to plan, control, and evaluate their learning of listening skills (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Altiok et al., 2019). Traditional language classes are less effective in teaching listening skills because instructors use strategies that do not positively impact students' learning (Öztürk, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to assess the levels of metacognitive awareness and achievement in Arabic listening skills among secondary school students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Listening Skills**

The International Listening Association (1996) defines listening skills as receptive skills that provide information input about something. In the context of learning Arabic, language input is obtained through listening activities that are sent to the brain for processing and the feedback given by the input can be translated in various forms either verbally or in action (Rahman & Baharudin, 2022). The process of understanding language input is acquired through voice discrimination, intonation, language structure and the listener's existing knowledge (Mustapha, 2022). Khalilullah (2011) divides the act of listening into two categories, namely passive listening, and active listening. Arabic word (سمع) which means listen and (استماع) that is, listening leads to the translation of a different definition even though the two words are from the same root word, which is (سمع) (Mustapha, 2019). Listening (سمع) is the act of passive listening where the listener only listens to an input such as sound without any concentration, while (استماع) is known as the act of active listening because the listener performs a specific process to give feedback to what is heard either in terms of speech or action (Makrifah, 2020).

Behaviorism theory is a traditional theory that shows the primary process of language acquisition obtained through listening activities (Mahmudi, 2016; Maulana, 2020). Skinner and followers of the Behaviorism Theory believe that an individual will master language acquisition through words often heard from their environment. The analogy is that a baby can say and utter the first word according to the language often spoken by his family members without formally learning the language (Shabana et al., 2020). Rost (2016) then describes four methodologies listeners use in acquiring language through the discipline of modern theory, namely cognitive theory and transformation generative.

Language learning theories focus on listening skills in the language acquisition process (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021; Rost, 2016). Mastering listening skills can lead to students' achievement and mastery of a foreign language (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Babaei & Izadpanah, 2019). The lack of awareness about the importance of listening skills in language learning is a factor that contributes to students' weakness and lack of mastery of foreign languages (Ahmadi et al., 2018; Al-Malki, 2018; Nahar & Rosly, 2022). Landry (2018) and Djabbárova (2020), in their studies, explain that the neglect of learning foreign language listening skills occurs because the assumption is that students will learn these skills naturally as they learn to walk. The fact is that this situation is different because the mastery of listening skills is formed through an effective learning module (Asadi, 2020 & Nurhidayati et al., 2021). Analysis of the needs of

the listening skills learning module conducted by Nurhidayati et al (2021) on Arabic language program students at the university level found that there is a need for methodology and strategies to overcome the problems faced by students when participating in listening activities.

### Arabic Listening Skills

Understanding auditory information is driven by the simultaneous involvement of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. The linguistic knowledge of Arabic listening skills includes knowledge of phonetic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and discourse structure. In contrast, the non-linguistic knowledge of Arabic listening skills includes knowledge about the title, context of the text, and the form in which auditory information is presented. Learning Arabic listening skills focuses on mastering understanding in these two fields of knowledge so that the process of language acquisition through auditory input can be achieved. Additionally, Yusof et al. (2008) have listed the listening sub-skills that students need to master, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Arabic Listening Sub-Skills*

Skills	Sub-Skills
The skills of listening to the meaning of the words	Understanding word sound recognition
	Understanding the lexical meaning of heard words
	Understanding the contextual meaning of heard words
The skills of listening to the meaning of the text	Understanding the literal meaning of heard text
	Understanding the inferential meaning of heard text

Table 1 shows the Arabic listening sub-skills. These listening sub-skills are parallel to the reading sub-skills except for the first sub-skill of listening, which is the understanding of sound recognition. This is because these two skills, namely listening and reading, are receptive skills that provide input in language acquisition.

### Metacognitive Awareness in Listening Skills

Metacognitive theory, founded by Flavell (1979), is the basis for developing metacognitive science (Wallace, 2021). This knowledge's development is inspired by the development of cognitivism (Hayashi, 1999). The metacognitive term popularized by Flavell describes a person's ability to think about his thinking skills (Eva & Anam, 2018). Understanding this term in the context of metacognitive learning discusses the need for an individual to know and learn how to learn effectively in understanding a discipline. The development of this metacognitive-related study occurs widely but leads to the division of different dimensions (Rosli et al., 2021).

According to Goh (2017), Flavell details this theory into two main elements, which are cognitive knowledge and cognitive control. However, the details of these two aspects are translated by scholars into different scopes. Schraw and Moshman (1995), for example, detail the aspect of cognitive knowledge as the awareness of the skills, strategies and resources needed to complete the task and the aspect of cognitive control as the ability to identify how, when, and what needs to be done to complete the task successfully.

In their study, Vandergrift et al (2006) also analyze and detail that metacognitive concepts have a direct relationship with listening skills. They divide it into two components, namely metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. Therefore, the context of metacognitive awareness of this study is to comprehensively assess students' awareness from the aspects of perception (metacognitive knowledge) and actions (metacognitive strategies) of their Arabic listening skills, as detailed by (Vandergrift et al., 2006). According to Vandergrift et al (2006), metacognitive awareness, which translated into the MALQ, measures five aspects of metacognitive awareness, namely metacognitive knowledge and four types of student metacognitive strategies, as shown in Figure 1.

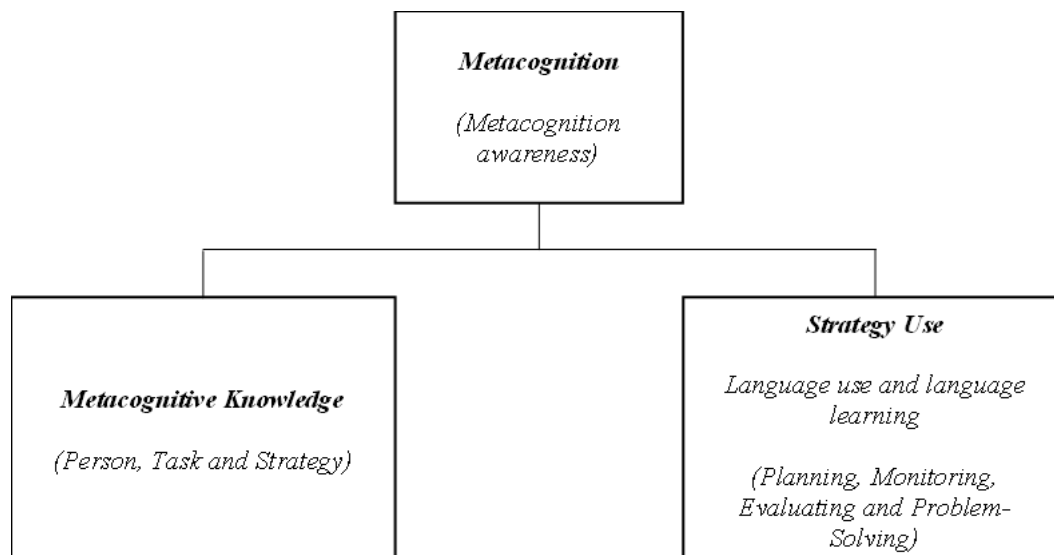


Figure 1: *The metacognitive awareness components of listening skills by Vandergrift et al (2006)*

Eva and Anam's (2018) study on 80 university students learning English as a foreign language revealed that metacognitive awareness is the basis of strengthening listening strategies among students. Findings from Chen (2019); Bordeaud'hui et al (2021); Chon and Shin (2019) also support this by reporting that metacognitive awareness plays a role in improving student's understanding and achievement of listening skills. Nevertheless, studies in the Malaysian context related to metacognitive awareness are still lacking in the scope of listening skills (Hanafiah, 2021). Most studies related to metacognitive awareness are conducted within the scope of KBAT, such as the studies conducted by (Rosli et al., 2021; Mohammad, 2018; Sanip, 2015).

### **Research Methodology**

This study uses a cross-sectional survey research design. Specifically, the study focuses on the levels of metacognitive awareness and achievement of listening skills in learning Arabic. A questionnaire was used to effectively obtain data information Cohen et al (2018) and minimize the time needed for data collection. The population of this study involved a total of 1280 Form Four Arabic language students in the state of Johor from three different categories of schools, namely Integrated Boarding Schools (SBPI), National Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA), and National Secondary with Religious Stream Class (SMK-KAA).

Sample selection was conducted after identifying the study population. The aim of sample selection was to represent the population and provide an overview of the phenomenon being studied (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The required sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970), which indicated a sample size of 300 people. Proportional stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents for this study. This method was chosen because the population breakdown between subgroups was not balanced and equal (Bailey, 1994). Therefore, the percentage of the number of samples for each school category was obtained by dividing the total sample of each school category by the total population. The sample size for each school category was then determined by multiplying the percentage of the sample by the desired number of samples. The data acquisition process began after receiving approval from the Education Policy Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia on November 11, 2022 (reference: KPM.600-3/2/3-eras (14158)), Johor State Education Department (reference: JPNJ.PS.600-1/1/12 Vol.16 (56)), and school administrators.

The largest number of respondents came from SMKA, with a total of 162 students, representing 54% of the study sample size. This was followed by SMK -KAA with a study sample of 123 students, which accounted for 41% of the study sample size. Meanwhile, the smallest number of respondents came from SBPI, with only 15 students, representing 5% of the study sample size. The data from this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 software. The data were analyzed descriptively to answer the research questions and explain the mean value and standard deviation in order to determine the levels of metacognitive awareness and achievement of Arabic listening skills.

### Research Instruments

Two types of instruments were used during the study, namely questionnaires and test questions. A questionnaire was used to identify the respondent's level of metacognitive awareness of listening skills that was adapted and modified from the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) by Vandergrift et al. (2006). A five-point Likert scale with an extreme scale at the end of both sides, namely Scale 1 (strongly disagree) and Scale 5 (strongly agree), was used as a measurement scale for this instrument. A five-point agreement Likert scale was used to assess the frequency score and percentage of respondents' agreement with the statement of the items found in the questionnaire, which were classified into three categories because they are clearer and more meaningful (Oxford & Burry-Stock 1995), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Five-point Likert scale classification of agreement*

Likert Scale	Category
Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Low
Somewhat Agree	Moderate
Agree and Strongly Agree	High

*Source: Adapted from Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995)*

This questionnaire can review and obtain data information effectively and minimize the use of time during the data collection process (Kerlinger 1973). The mean score interpretation in determining the level of metacognitive awareness of students' Arabic listening skills is adapted from Pallant (2007), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Mean score interpretation of the level of metacognitive awareness of Arabic listening skills*

Scale Range	Mean Score Interpretation
1.00 - 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.67	Moderate
3.68 - 5.00	High

*Source: Pallant (2007)*

The second instrument of the study is listening skill test questions which were built based on the question format of the Goethe-Zertifikat A2: Fit in Deutsch and based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to assess the level of German language achievement of students aged 12 to 16 years. The purpose of this instrument was to identify the achievement level of Arabic listening skills. A total of 20 question items were prepared to test the students' level of literal and inferential understanding of auditory input delivered through audio in the form of conversation and text reading. A time allocation of 30 minutes was given to students to solve the test questions. The interpretation of the percentage level of the test score to assess the level of achievement of speaking skills in Arabic was according to the guidelines set by the Malaysian Examinations Board (2020), as found in Table 4.

Table 4

*Interpretation of the score percentage for the Arabic language listening skill achievement test*

Mark	Grade	Achievement Level
70-100	A+, A, A	High
50-69	B+, B, C+, C	Moderate
40-49	D & E	Weak
0-39	G	Very Weak

*Source: Malaysian Examinations Board (2020)*

The instruments were tested for their validity and reliability before they were used in the pilot study and the actual study. The aspect of validity deals with the content validity of items involving four Arabic language education experts, consisting of IPTA senior lecturers, Head Trainers of Arabic subjects, Arabic Excellence Teachers, and Arabic Oral Test Assessors. The result of the Cronbach's Alpha test, which was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire instrument, was 0.91, showing a high reliability value. The reliability of the test question instrument was assessed through data analysis for the difficulty index (IK) and discrimination index (ID). After obtaining all the data, it was entered into SPSS software Version 23 and coded based on the study variables.

## Findings and Discussion

### Level of Metacognitive Awareness of Arabic Listening Skills

The findings of the descriptive analysis of the level of metacognitive awareness of Arabic listening skills can be found in Tables 5 and 6, which describe the data using mean values and standard deviations. Metacognitive awareness includes two constructs, namely metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategy, while metacognitive strategy covers

four dimensions of strategy, namely evaluating planning, problem solving, mental translation, and direct observation.

Table 5

*The level of metacognitive awareness of Arabic listening skills (N=300)*

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level Interpretation
Metacognitive Knowledge	3.36	0.73	Moderate
Metacognitive Strategies	3.46	0.67	Moderate
Overall Metacognitive Awareness	3.41	0.66	Moderate

Overall, the study's findings show that the level of metacognitive awareness of students' Arabic listening skills was moderate (mean = 3.41, SD = 0.66). The metacognitive strategy construct (mean = 3.46, SD = 0.67) recorded a higher mean value than the metacognitive knowledge construct (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.73). This shows that the students' perception of Arabic listening skills, level of readiness, commitment, and ability to plan, control, and evaluate the learning of Arabic listening skills were still not at their maximum level. Students were still unclear about their self-knowledge, such as their strengths and weaknesses when learning listening skills. Their knowledge related to listening skills assignments was also not comprehensive because they did not use appropriate learning strategies when performing listening activities.

Vandergrift et al (2006) stated that metacognitive awareness of listening skills is formed through metacognitive knowledge and strategies that pay attention to two main processes, namely the self-evaluation process and the self-direction planning process (Vandergrift et al., 2006; Ehrich & Henderson, 2019). These two processes complement each other because they occur during and after the listening skill learning activity. Self-assessment occurs during the process of learning listening skills, where it requires the ability of students to think of effective actions that need to be taken to ensure that the learning task can be mastered and completed well, while self-direction planning begins after the end of the learning session and before starting learning again. Self-directed planning requires students to think about the use of more effective and appropriate ways and behaviors to be used in listening skills learning activities at other times (Ehrich & Henderson, 2019). Self-directed planning occurs after the process of evaluating the learning of listening skills that have been implemented. This action helps improve students' preparation to carry out listening skill learning activities in the future effectively, build perception, understand listening needs, and set cognitive goals about Arabic listening skills.

Table 6

*The level of use of metacognitive strategies according to the construct*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Level Interpretation</b>
Planning-Evaluating	3.36	0.84	Moderate
Problem solving	3.68	0.55	Moderate
Mental Translation	3.44	0.76	Moderate
Direct Observation	3.36	0.89	Moderate

Referring to Table 6, which details the mean values of the four dimensions for the metacognitive strategy of Arabic speaking skills, it shows that the problem-solving dimension was at the highest level (mean = 3.68, SD = 0.55), while the planning-evaluating strategy (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.84) and direct observation (mean = 3.36, SD = 0.89) showed low mean values compared to other metacognitive strategies. This finding indicates that students tried to ensure that the problems they faced during the listening activity could be solved. Additionally, the mental translation strategy also shows a moderate mean value (mean = 3.44, SD = 0.76). In conclusion, the level of use of all the strategy dimensions found in the metacognitive strategy construct of Arabic listening skills was moderate.

Metacognitive strategies manage the use of learning strategies that will be implemented in learning listening skills through planning, evaluation, and implementation control. This statement aligns with the understanding of Flavell's Metacognitive Theory (1979) that metacognitive strategies are for students to plan, control, and evaluate their learning. Without metacognitive strategies, students have no direction and cannot monitor their learning progress (Panggabean & Triassanti, 2020). The difference between good and weak students in mastering metacognitive strategies can be evaluated from the point of view of the ability to analyze the needs of the listening task, the ability to make predictions and activate the appropriate listening process according to the needs, and the ability to monitor understanding and evaluate the success of their approach (Vandergrift, 2006).

In the context of learning listening skills, Vandergrift (2006) suggests some suitable ways to solve problems if students do not know the meaning of each word in the audio heard through cognitive strategies. Analysis of the information heard to make comparisons with existing knowledge, searching for keywords, and understanding the general idea of the text are actions that can be used to guess the overall understanding of the text or conversation heard. The students' focus and ability to complete the listening task also need to be trained so that they can put it into practice. This is in line with the understanding of one of the theoretical concepts of behaviorism, which makes training a process to strengthen desired practices (Mustapha, 2019). The variety of learning aids, such as using interesting audio during listening activities, is thought to be logical to help increase student motivation while listening. For example, students are exposed to audio in the form of songs and conversations that use various voice intonations and listen to text-related audio in the form of news reading or narration during listening activities. In addition, a variety of listening activities, such as watching movies that use the target language without watching subtitles, also help increase student motivation (Chamidah & Istiqomah, 2021).



**Arabic Listening Skills Achievement Level**

The findings of the descriptive analysis of the level of achievement of Arabic listening skills are as displayed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Level of Arabic listening skill achievement (N=300)*

Score Percentage Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
70-100	10	3%			
50-69	116	39%			
40-49	115	38%	46.32	10.443	Weak
0-39	59	20%			
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>			

Table 7 shows that overall, the mean value for the achievement of students' Arabic listening skills is weak. The highest frequency and percentage of students' listening skill achievement level is at a moderate level, which involves 116 people (39%). The achievement of listening skills of students who are at a weak level also shows a high frequency and percentage, which is a total of 115 people (38%), only 1 percent different from the average level. The findings of the study also found that only ten students (3%) obtained the best level of achievement, which is at the high level (70–100 marks), while the lowest level, which is the weak level (0–39 marks), has a total frequency of 59 students (20%).

The assessment of the level of students' understanding of the text they hear literally and inferentially in this study aligns with the concept of listening skills training found in the Standard Secondary School Curriculum (KSSM) textbook. The concept of Arabic listening skills training in the KSSM textbook is based on the subconstruct of listening skills (Mustapha, 2019). According to Yusoff et al (2008), there are four sub-constructs of listening skills: understanding the meaning of words heard lexically, understanding the meaning of words heard contextually, and understanding the meaning of texts heard literally and inferentially. The number of students who obtained moderate and low marks, over fifty percent of the overall percentage, shows that they have not yet mastered the skill of listening to Arabic but have basic knowledge of it. The acquisition and mastery of vocabulary are important in learning listening skills (Asadi, 2020). The difference in the mastery of lexical size (vocabulary) is the main factor differentiating the high and low-ability students' language achievement levels (Baharudin et al., 2023; Wallace, 2021). Learning Arabic listening skills in Malaysia emphasizes vocabulary mastery among students. This can be seen through the content of the KSSM curriculum, where students are provided with appropriate vocabulary according to their learning theme. For example, for the family theme, the vocabulary that students need to master is related to family members, such as الأب (father), الأم (mother), الجد (grandfather), and الأخ (brother).

In conclusion, students' existing knowledge and linguistic knowledge of Arabic listening skills are weak. The factors of the learning environment and the frequency of training are seen as worthy of attention to improve the level of achievement of Arabic listening skills. Vocabulary

mastery is a factor that leads to differences in the level of achievement of listening skills in learning Arabic individually.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to identify the levels of metacognitive awareness and achievement in students' Arabic listening skills. It comprehensively examined secondary students' perceptions and actions regarding learning Arabic listening skills. The findings revealed that metacognitive awareness and achievement in listening skills are important factors in determining students' mastery of Arabic listening skills in secondary school. The study also introduced a new perspective and intervention to enhance students' understanding and mastery of Arabic listening skills through the application of metacognitive awareness, which involves metacognitive knowledge and strategies during listening activities. Additionally, the study evaluated the level of achievement in Arabic language listening skills, both in literal and inferential comprehension. The findings indicated that students' metacognitive awareness level was moderate, while their achievement in Arabic listening skills was weak. Furthermore, the study supported the use of Flavell's metacognitive theory (1979); Vandergrift et al.'s model (2008) to promote metacognitive awareness. It emphasized the importance of developing awareness and knowledge related to students' perceptions and actions through metacognitive awareness in order to improve their mastery of listening skills. Therefore, future studies should focus on examining the relationship between the level of metacognitive awareness and achievement in Arabic listening skills, as well as their contribution to enhancing students' overall Arabic language proficiency, particularly in listening skills.

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