

Schema Theory & Developing Listening Comprehension

I

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The Effectiveness of Using Schema Theory in Developing EFL Secondary-Stage  
Students' Listening Comprehension

By

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## Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of using schema theory on listening comprehension of EFL secondary-stage female students in the Fourth Secondary school in Almajma'ah through answering these four questions: 1-Do students' schemata (their background knowledge) affect their listening comprehension? 2- Do schema-based strategies such as brainstorming, graphic organizers, and KWL facilitate students' listening comprehension? 3- What are the students' attitudes towards these strategies? and 4- To what degree do EFL female teachers – based on schema theory – in Almajma'ah Administration of Education, prepare their listening lessons? Four instruments were used to answer the research questions. These are pre- and post- listening comprehension tests for the experimental and control groups (65 students), a questionnaire for students in the experimental group, an interview with the teacher who taught both groups, and finally a questionnaire for teachers (34 teachers participated).

The findings of the research proved that schema-based strategies facilitated the students' listening comprehension and that their schemata affected their listening comprehension. Also, the students in the experimental group showed strong positive attitudes towards these strategies. In addition, the research showed that teachers need to learn more about pedagogy of teaching listening comprehension as well as schema-based strategies. Therefore, the researcher recommends training sessions for teachers on these strategies due to their great impacts on teaching listening comprehension.

## المخلص

يدرس هذا البحث أثر نظرية البنية المعرفية على مهارة الاستماع والاستيعاب في مادة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طالبات المرحلة الثانوية في المدرسة الثانوية الرابعة بالمجمعة من خلال الإجابة على الأسئلة التالية: 1- هل ما تمتلكه الطالبات من خلفية معرفية ومعلومات يؤثر في استيعاب ما يتم سماعه من مواد مسجلة؟ 2- هل الاستراتيجيات المبنية على هذه النظرية كالعصف الذهني، و خرائط المفاهيم تساعد في استيعاب ما يتم سماعه؟ 3- ما هو اتجاه الطالبات حيال هذه الاستراتيجيات؟ و 4- إلى أي مدى تتبع معلمات اللغة الانجليزية في إدارة التربية والتعليم بالمجمعة هذه النظرية في التحضير لدروس الاستماع؟ للإجابة على هذه الأسئلة قامت الباحثة باستعمال أربع أدوات بحثية: اختبارات لقياس الاستيعاب في مهارة الاستماع بين مجموعتين ضابطة و تجريبية (65 طالبة)، استبيان خاص بالطالبات، مقابلة مع المعلمة المتعانة في التجربة، وأخيرا استبانة للمعلمات (34 معلمة).

أظهرت نتائج البحث أن هذه الاستراتيجيات تساعد الطالبات بالفعل على الاستيعاب لما يتم سماعه وأنا ما لديهن من خلفيه معرفية تؤثر في مدى استيعابهن، أيضاً أظهرت الطالبات في المجموعة التجريبية اتجاهات ايجابية قوية حيال هذه الاستراتيجيات. كما كشف البحث حاجة معلمات اللغة الانجليزية في المحافظة لمعرفة المزيد عن أصول تدريس مهارة الاستماع وكذلك الاستراتيجيات المبنية على نظرية البنية المعرفية، لذلك توصي الباحثة بأهمية إقامة برامج تدريبية للمعلمات في هذين المجالين وذلك لأثرها الكبير في تدريس مهارة الاستماع والاستيعاب لما يتم سماعه.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Due to the importance of listening comprehension in language acquisition, it is vital for a second or foreign language teaching curriculum or programme to have in its core listening activities. "Research suggests that listening is prerequisite to other language skills", Cheung (2010). Acquiring good listening skills in second language facilitates the developments of the other three skills: speaking, reading and writing since comprehension should precede reproduction. In addition, listening is a highly integrative skill which can integrate easily with other skills. For example, it can integrate with speaking when making role play, or with writing, when writing a paragraph or an opinion about the listening topic.

Besides its importance, listening comprehension is challenging for both teachers and learners. Most learners face troubles in listening to a foreign language and often complain to their teachers that they could not understand, and plead them to speak in their native language. On the other hand, some teachers try to help their students to become effective listeners but they report that they don't know what goes inside learners' heads during listening. In fact, listening is a complex skill that involves many processes. According to Rubin (1995), "for second/foreign language learners, listening is the skill that makes the heaviest processing demands because learners must store information in short term memory at the same time as they are working to understand information". When listening, learners try to recall their background knowledge (schemata) along with their linguistic knowledge in order to comprehend what is being said. This is the field of schema theory.

Schema theory is one of the important theories of learning that affects perception and learners' memory. "According to schema-theorists,.... we comprehend

something only when we can relate it to something we already know", Carrell (1983). However, throughout the researcher's nine years experience as an English supervisor, she has noticed that many teachers ignore the impact of their learners' background and its role in comprehension. They have their students begin listening immediately to recordings or listening materials without preparing them with suitable pre-listening activities. Others do the worst by changing listening activity to reading one, complaining that listening wastes the class time. In this paper, the researcher investigates the effectiveness of using schema theory in developing listening comprehension for Saudi female students in a secondary public school, and presents a group of listening strategies useful to activate learners' background knowledge and build schemata necessary for their listening comprehension.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem:

As mentioned in the introduction, comprehension has a vital role in acquiring a second or a foreign language. Listening to materials that contain lots of new vocabulary, or those which speak about unfamiliar topics to the learners, has a great effect on learners' comprehension and therefore their acquisition of the language being taught. Consequently, learners lose interest and feel disappointed because they are unable to comprehend what is being heard, this of course affects negatively their perception of the listening materials. Here comes the role of teachers, which is indeed a very critical role. Successful teachers can help their students to become effective listeners by preparing them well before listening to the segment of discourse. This study sheds light on the implications of schema theory in teaching listening comprehension, and investigates their effects experimentally.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study:

The researcher hopes that the results of her study contribute to the field of teaching English as a foreign language, since it tackles one of the basic skills, which is listening comprehension. The study investigates the effects of the schema theory on teaching listening comprehension and how this theory can help EFL teachers teach listening effectively.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study:

This research is significant for teachers and learners of English as a foreign language. It guides them how to prepare their listening lessons in a way that enhances their students' listening comprehension through helping them build schemata or background knowledge useful to their understanding. Also, this research presents beneficial activities and procedures which are implications of schema theory on teaching listening comprehension, and considered valuable in the three phases of listening: before, during and after listening.

## 1.4 Questions of the Study:

In this study, the researcher tries to answer these questions:

1. Do students' schemata or their background knowledge affect their listening comprehension?
2. Do schema-based strategies (e.g. brainstorming, graphic organizers, KWL) facilitate students' listening comprehension?
3. What are the students' attitudes towards these strategies?
4. To what degree according to schema theory do EFL female teachers in Almajma'ah Administration of Education, prepare their listening lessons?

Four instruments were used to answer the research questions. These are pre- and post- listening comprehension tests for the experimental and control groups (65 students), a questionnaire for students in the experimental group, an interview with the teacher who taught both groups, and finally a questionnaire for teachers (34 teachers participated).

### 1.5 Limitations of the Study:

The experiment was carried out in a public school for female students, named the Fourth Secondary School in Almajma'ah. The listening materials used in the experiment are found in recording 5 which is part of the curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia for third year secondary. The experiment lasted for six weeks in the first term of the year 1432 AH. It covered units 4, 5 and 6 (half of the curriculum).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Listening Processes for comprehension:

Listening is an active process for constructing meaning in which two kinds of processes are involved simultaneously: bottom-up and top-down processing (Koichi, 2002). Peterson (2001) defines top-down processing as "the higher level process driven by listeners' expectations and understandings of the context, the topic, the nature of the world", while bottom-up processing is defined by him as "the lower level process triggered by the sounds, words, and phrases which the listener hears as he or she attempts to decode speech and assign meaning".

In listening comprehension, both kinds of processes are necessary. They are correlated in a very complex relationship and both are used to comprehend meaning from the listening material. Buck (1994) explains, to arrive at an understanding of the

message, listeners must understand the phonetic input, vocabulary, and syntax (bottom-up processing), and, at the same time, use the context of situation, general knowledge, and past experiences (top-down processing).

"During the 1970s, listening pedagogy largely emphasized bottom-up linguistic processing..... In the 1980s and 1990s the status of listening began to change since applied linguists began to benefit from the findings of cognitive psychology. They borrowed the two concepts bottom-up and top-down processing from the fields of cognitive psychology and applied them to language learning, (Selcuk, 2011). Thus both language schema and knowledge schema are crucial to listening comprehension. Schemata or background information is closely related to top-down processing.

## 2.2 Schema Theory and its Implication in Teaching Listening Comprehension:

Schema theory is one of the important theories of learning that is applied to language learning and teaching. Rea and Mercuri (2006) explain that, "A schema is the mental framework by which we organize concepts... Teachers encourage schema building... by helping students build background knowledge,... access the background knowledge,... and use it as a bridge to new learning (p.47). According to schema theory, text does not carry meaning by itself but rather provides hints to allow readers and listeners to construct meaning from prior knowledge; the text triggers and builds on existing schemata (Pearson-Casanave, 1984). Also, Carrell (1984) states that schema theory is an interactive process between text and background knowledge.

To help students learn new information, teachers should know what background knowledge their learners have. This demands specific and careful preparation on the behalf of EFL teachers for listening lessons. In the tent of schema theory, here are some procedures and activities that help teachers in preparing for the three phases of listening: before, during and after listening to the assigned materials:

#### A. Pre- listening activities:

These activities usually aim at preparing learners for the listening task by helping them identify the purpose of listening beforehand, build and activate whatever background knowledge learners might need to actively engage in the listening task and successfully make meaning of the spoken text (Rixon, 1986; Underwood, 1990; McDonough & Shaw, 1994 and Schwartz, 1998:15). Pre- listening activities can include any of the following activities or a combination of them depending on the nature of the listening task, learners' linguistic proficiency level and the time available for the pre- listening phase:

1. **Brainstorming:** This is the activity of helping learners to either work individually or together in small groups or the whole class to generate whatever ideas and information they know on the listening topic without commenting on these ideas and information at first, then discussing, and finally evaluating them (Wolff, 1996). It proved to be effective in enhancing students' SL listening comprehension as indicated in Vandergrift's study (2003).

It is effective schema- activation and building technique that allows students to make use of their prior knowledge or experiences as a stepping block to new knowledge (Zaid, 1995). Whether used alone or as an initial phase of other activity, brainstorming gives the teachers insights into their students' schemata, thus revealing interests, gaps and misconceptions and fostering English language listening comprehension skills among students (Oxford, 1993 and Olaofe, 1994). Furthermore, typically in brainstorming, ideas from one student will trigger ideas from other students *"in a chain reaction thought process"* (Heimlich & Pittelman, 1986: 34).

2. The use of advance organizers: Ausubel, a pioneer schema theorist, (1968:148) defines advance organizers as “appropriately relevant and inclusive introductory materials...introduced in advance of learning... and presented at a higher level of abstraction, generality, and inclusiveness.” In this sense, advance organizers help direct students' attention to the meaningful elements of the text and provide the background knowledge that some students may lack to successfully interpret it (Stepp-Greany, 2003: 4).

Examples of advance organizers include vocabulary pre- teaching and listening comprehension questions previewing to build and activate learners' prior knowledge necessary for SL/ FL comprehension (Oxford, 1993; Teichert, 1996; Numrich, 1997; Schwartz, 1998; Espeseth, 1999; Teng, 1999; Nihei, 2002 and Chung, 2002). Pre-teaching vocabulary (to increase learning from text materials) probably requires (a) that the words to be taught must be key words in the target passages (Beck, et al, 1982; Kameenui et al, 1982), (b) that words be taught in semantically and topically related sets so that word meaning and background knowledge improve concurrently (Beck et al., 1982; Stevens, 1982), and (c) that only a few words be taught per lesson and per week (Beck et al., 1982; Kameenui et al., 1982; Stevens, 1982). As for Christen, & Murphy (1991), they maintain that in order to enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary pre- teaching as a schema- building strategy, an extensive and long-term vocabulary strand accompanying a parallel schematic or background-knowledge-development strand is probably called for.

3. Graphic organizers: These are visual representations of concepts, knowledge, or information that can incorporate both text and pictures (Tranquin & Walker, 1997 and Kingen, 2000). They allow learners to activate their prior knowledge in the pre- listening stage and link it to new information acquired during listening (Carndall, 1992 and Dye, 2000). Examples of graphic organizers include

Venn diagrams, flow charts, T charts used to compare negative and positive qualities of a given character or an idea, semantic/ story maps, KWL charts, frameworks for webbing, main idea/supporting details frameworks, cause and effect frameworks, classification frameworks, sunburst outlines, matrices, tree structures, and fact/opinion frameworks (Tranquin & Walker, 1997 and Kingen, 2000).

Hawk (1986) favours using graphic organizers because they provide (a) an overview of the material to be learned, (b) a reference point for putting new vocabulary and main ideas into orderly patterns, (c) a cue for important information, (d) a visual stimulus for written and verbal information, and (e) a concise review tool. On their part, Culbert et al (1998) state that the use of graphic organizers increases student comprehension of text, be it oral or written. They, also, refer to the fact that students become more engaged in learning when they participate in the completion of graphic organizers. When used in classrooms, graphic organizers provide students with tools to make thought and organizational processes visible, and they serve as organizational frameworks to promote thinking and language development (Tranquin & Walker, 1997). The effectiveness of graphic organizers in enhancing SL/ FL listening comprehension was highlighted by Ruhe (1996), Katayama (1997), Schwartz (1998) and Espeseth (1999).

Due to the effectiveness of graphic organizers as efficient teaching tools, Merkley & Jefferies (2000) suggest the following teacher steps for creating graphic organizers:

- Analyze the learning task for words and concepts important for the student to understand;
- Arrange them to illustrate the interrelationships and pattern(s) of organization;
- Evaluate the clarity of relationships as well as the simplicity and effectiveness of the graphic organizer; and

- Substitute empty slots for certain words in order to promote students' active learning.

In addition, based on Schema Theory research, Merkley & Jefferies (2000) offer the following implementation guidelines when presenting graphic organizers to students. They maintain that teachers should:

- verbalize relationships (links) among concepts expressed by the visual,
- provide opportunity for student input,
- connect new information to past learning,
- make reference to the upcoming text, and
- seize opportunities to reinforce decoding and structural analysis.

One of the effective pre-listening activities is KWL chart especially the first two columns. It can be effectively used as a schema- activation technique (English Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 2002). It is worth mentioning that this KWL technique was originally used for developing ESL/ EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. This technique- developed by Ogle (1986) - includes the following steps:

- Distributing worksheets to the students, with three columns entitled: 'K' stands for what I know, 'W' stands for what I want to know, and 'L' stands for what I learned.
- In the first column, students are asked to write what they know about the topic of the spoken text. In the second column, they write questions about the topic.
- Then, during listening to the text, students try to find answers to their questions and write these answers after listening in the third column headed "what I learned".

The following is an example of an initial form of a KWL chart on the solar system unit 5:

What I Know (K)	What I Want to Know (W)	What I Learned (L)
The solar system consists of the sun and 9 planets.	What are the names of these planets in English?	
Life exists on Earth.	Does life exist on the other planets?	
The Earth has one satellite (moon)	How about other planets?	

Modified versions of KWL technique include KWWL and KWLQ. KWWL developed by Bryan (1998) extends the KWL technique by adding a fourth column: the *where* column. According to the KWWL technique, teachers encourage students- through brainstorming sessions- to search for more information sources for their questions. Hence, answers to the where questions can include dictionaries, encyclopedias, the internet, field trips or experts specialized in specific scientific domains. As for the KWLQ, described by Schmidt (1999), learners develop more questions in the fourth questions column for further study, thus highlighting the continuous questioning nature of the learning process and encouraging students' active processing of information.

Underwood (1990) and McDonough & Shaw (1994: 141) suggest the following pre- listening activities that build and activate listeners' existing schemata:

- Whole classroom or group discussion of the listening topic (Numrich, 1997).
- Predicting the content of a spoken text from its title or from accompanying pictures or photographs (Grant, 1997; Numrich, 1997; Schwartz, 1998; Espeseth, 1999; Saricoban, 1999; Robbins, 2000; Hasan, 2000; Nihei, 2002)

and Lingzhu, 2003). This technique goes as follows: Students are asked to look at both the title and the pictures related to the text and predict the topic of the text. The teacher writes the students' predictions on the blackboard and asks them to listen to the text to see if their predictions are confirmed or not.

- Reading a passage on a similar topic before listening to the spoken text (Schwartz, 1998; Espeseth, 1999; Jun, 2000 and Nihei, 2002).
- Previewing the language items which will be heard in the listening text to build necessary background knowledge for making meaning of the spoken texts.
- Previewing some features of spoken language that would facilitate the comprehension of certain spoken texts such as specific minimal pairs and certain intonation or stress patterns that will be heard later on in the spoken text.

#### B. During- listening activities:

Ur (1984), Rixon (1986), Underwood (1990), McDonough & Shaw (1994), Schwartz (1998) and Nunan (1999) maintain that during- listening activities aim at helping learners actively make meaning of the spoken language by relating the new knowledge to the existing schemata, using their guessing abilities, whatever contextual, phonological, syntactic, semantic and/ or paralinguistic clues within the spoken discourse in addition to their use of listening strategies including selective listening and monitoring strategies. They, then, provide the following examples of during- listening activities that encourage learners to use and actively process information and knowledge included in the spoken texts:

*Note- taking:* This refers to writing down the important ideas in a given spoken text in learners' own words (Nunan, 1999: 183). Chao (1996) and Wilberschied (1998)

emphasize the positive role of note-taking in improving learners' listening comprehension skills. Notes made should be brief, clear, to the point, arranged in a logical sequence, divided and subdivided, using figures, letters, and dashes including only relevant facts with the help of facilitative abbreviations and symbols (Khan, 1999: 18 and Espeseth, 1999: 26). Dye (2000) recommends the use of graphic organizers in the note-taking process for students with disabilities. He maintains that assisting students with graphic organizers during note-taking can significantly help students link the new information to their existing schemata and foster their recall of new information. In addition, note-taking helps learners reach the highest level of comprehension (Khan, 1999: 19).

- Listening and completing grids/ forms or charts.
- Listening and putting pictures in order.
- Listening and carrying out actions.
- Listening and following a route on a road map.
- Listening and labeling pictures or diagrams.
- Listening and answering true/ false or multiple choice questions.
- Listening and following instructions to draw pictures or diagrams or complete outlines of pictures.
- Listening and spotting mistakes or inconsistencies in speakers' talk using monitoring strategies and prior knowledge.
- Listening and completing texts (or gap-filling) based on information mentioned in the spoken text.

- Listening and predicting next incidents or speakers' attitudes in a given spoken discourse based on prior knowledge and information mentioned in the spoken text.
- Listening and marking/ checking items in pictures.
- Listening and identifying storyline picture sets.
- Listening and seeking specific items of information.

#### C. Post- listening activities:

These activities usually aim at making sure that learners have fully comprehended the spoken texts, reinforcing the newly acquired knowledge and assimilating it into learners' existing schemata as well as reflecting on why some students have failed to understand or missed parts of the spoken texts. They should also give students the opportunity to consider the attitude and manner of the speakers and, more importantly, expand on the topic or language of the listening text, thus transferring newly acquired knowledge to another context (Ur, 1984; Rixon, 1986; Underwood, 1990; McDonough & Shaw, 1994 and Schwartz, 1998).

Post- listening activities include extending graphic organizers (including semantic/ story maps, KWL charts, Theme Comparison charts and T- charts) initially drawn in the pre- listening phase based on the knowledge and information acquired during listening, thus allowing learners to 'see' implicit relationships among parts of the spoken discourse (Schwartz, 1998: 16- 17). It should be highlighted that completion of the third column of KWL charts allows students to include answers to the questions posed before listening (English Language Arts Curriculum Guide, 2002).

On their part, Rixon (1986), Underwood (1990) and McDonough & Shaw (1994) suggest the following post- listening activities:

- Doing a role- play based on the listening material (Lund, 1990)
- Jigsaws listening in which students are divided into several groups and each group listens to an incomplete version of the same listening material but in different ways. Hence, all groups of students need to co-operate together to fully comprehend the spoken text.
- Identifying relationships between the speakers.
- Establishing attitude/ mood of the speakers.
- Writing summaries of the spoken texts.
- Sequencing or ordering pictures or sentences representing the incidents of a given story or event after listening to a spoken text dealing with that story or incident.
- Grading items or ideas based on the speakers' point of view.
- Using information from the listening text for problem- solving and decision-making activities.
- Reading a related text and comparing between both the spoken and written one.
- Practising new vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation rules presented in the spoken text.

### 2.3 Characteristics of effective teaching of listening comprehension according to Schema Theory:

Based on Schema Theory, effective teaching of listening comprehension is characterized by the following as indicated by Brown (1990), Scarcella & Oxford (1992: 149), Nunan (1999: 221- 222), and Mendelsohn (2000):

- Listening goals should be explicit: Learners should know what they are listening for and why. In other words, listening activities should have real communicative purposes that are clear to students in advance (Schwartz, 1998; Robbins, 2000 and Mendelsohn, 2001);
- Schema- activation and building techniques such as prediction, brainstorming, discussion and reading should precede the listening tasks (Dunkel, 1986; Mendelsohn, 1994; Grant, 1997:14; Schwartz, 1998; Robbins, 2000; Hasan, 2000 and Nihei, 2002).
- Listening comprehension is primarily taught as a process of making meaning that proceeds from whole to parts (Schwartz, 1998; Robbins, 2000; Nihei, 2002 and Stepp-Greany, 2003). This view is just the opposite of the basic skills hierarchy which begins at the supposed smaller units and lower levels (Wallace, 1992: 146).
- Unlike explicit instruction, attention is focused on teaching listening comprehension skills in context when they become relevant or when they occur naturally in the texts to which learners listen. This is done using varied during and post listening activities that integrate the four language skills. The selection of these sub-skills depends on the nature of the spoken text and the purpose of the listening task (White, 1998:9). It should be highlighted that some of these during and post listening activities can develop two listening comprehension sub-skills simultaneously. For example, story and semantic maps usually develop students' ability to identify specific stated information and to identify organizational patterns within the spoken text (including cause-effect relationships and the chronological order of events);

- The listening materials should be based on a wide range of authentic texts, including monologues, dialogues, broadcasts, advertisements, films, stories, descriptive talks, news and plays (Rixon, 1986; Underwood, 1990; Abdel-Kareim, 1995; Goh, 1997 and Hasan, 2000);
- The content of the listening activities should be of personal interest to the listeners and relevant to students' content and cultural schemata (Herron & Seay, 1991 and Hasan, 2000);
- The information presented in the listening texts should follow common organizational patterns relevant to students' textual schemata (i.e., main ideas first, details and examples second). Moreover, narrative spoken texts should be presented in natural chronological order (Schwartz, 1998);
- The listening texts should have informative titles and sufficient visual support should be incorporated in the listening task including pictures, illustrations, graphic organizers, graphs, semantic maps, or diagrams to facilitate learners' prediction and processing of the listening text content (Rixon, 1986:82-87; Sheerin, 1987:127; Long, 1991; McDonough & Shaw, 1994; Schwartz, 1998; Espeseth, 1999; Saricoban, 1999; Hasan, 2000; Nihei, 2002 and Lingzhu, 2003);
- Learners should play an active role using different strategies to listen effectively and critically using their prior knowledge, enriching their existing schemata, making inferences and spotting sometimes inconsistencies in a given speech or talk (Schwartz, 1998; Doff & Becket, 1999 and Hasan, 2000);
- Learners are encouraged to make use of all the possible phonological, syntactic, semantic, contextual and non linguistic clues to actively make meaning of the spoken texts (O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper, 1989: 434;

Scarcella & Oxford, 1992:142; Rubin, 1994; Nunan, 1997: 6 and Chung, 2002: 231);

- Listeners are required to respond meaningfully (for example, saying something, following a command or a request, asking a question, or taking notes);
- Listening texts are 'normal' for their own particular speech types; that is, conversations should have short, redundant, rapid chunks, while lectures might be more formalized and orderly;
- Artificial listening drills and materials produced originally for ESL/ EFL learners, which tend to be slower and clearer than actual native English speakers' talk, are avoided (Brown, 1990; Morley 1991; Nunan, 1997; White, 1998 and Nunan, 1999). Instead, all the listening materials are recorded at the normal speed of native English speakers' talk; and
- Students are increasingly aware of the features of spoken language that affect their listening comprehension such as the distinctive sound system of the English language, the varying use of stress and intonation patterns, repetition and sometimes redundancy of ideas, the use of pauses and fillers, the use of incomplete sentences and syntactically much simpler structures than the written language, the much less specific use of vocabulary in natural speech than that of written discourse and the clear distinction between formal and informal spoken language (Underwood, 1990: 9- 14 and Hasan, 2000).

Here appears the role of an effective ESL/ EFL teacher who can- according to Rixon (1986:74- 80), Underwood (1990:21 – 28) and Kingen (2000: 269- 275) - help learners enhance their listening comprehension skills by:

- Making listening purposeful, enjoyable and realistic for students;

- Using a mixture of listening material to increase learners' involvement in the listening process and enhance their listening comprehension skills in context including: (a) intensive, (b) extensive, (c) audio/ video taped, (d) live, (e) interactional listening- where the spoken language is used to establish and maintain social contact, and (f) transactional listening- where the exchange of information or the use of spoken language aims at 'getting things done' (Rixon, 1986:6- 15, Anderson & Lynch, 1988:4 and Rost, 1990:233);
- Carefully planning listening lessons in advance incorporating a wide range of pre-, during, and post- listening activities that enable learners to practise listening comprehension sub-skills as a byproduct of the listening process and that meaningfully integrate all language skills. (Ur, 1984; Rixon, 1986; Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Underwood, 1990; Schwartz, 1998; Hasan, 2000 and Mendelsohn, 2000);
- Encouraging students to help each other in various listening activities that entail lots of pair- and group work (Chamot & Kupper, 1989: 16 and Radwan, 1999; Saricoban, 1999 and Beare, 2005:1, 2);
- Encouraging students to take notes and jot down odd words and ideas during listening (Chamot & Kupper, 1989: 16; Chao 1996 and Nunan, 1999: 183);
- Acting as a guide and as a facilitator who offers students help when needed but who does not inflict help on those who do not need it;
- Reducing the effects of listening comprehension inhibitors whether (a) environmental- attention distracting elements-, (b) attitudinal- negative attitudes towards listening activities or (c) mental- deficiency in paying appropriate attention to spoken material, recalling important information and making meaning;

- Allowing students enough time to progressively check their understanding by listening to the spoken text several times, and by working through varied listening tasks (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Lund, 1991; Cervantes & Gainer, 1992 and Berne 1995);
- Suggesting that students use visual aids and dictionaries when necessary to enhance their listening skills;
- Using effective teaching strategies such as minimizing teacher-dominated talk, using cooperative groups, varying the speaker(s), and giving clear directions, (Geiss & Mayer, 1998);
- Preventing students' panic and alleviating their anxiety in several ways including (a) emphasizing the concept that listening lessons are *training* not *testing* sessions among students (Field, 1997:25), (b) using recorded materials that offer students a sense of security as they can listen to the spoken parts that bother or interest them as often as necessary, and (c) pointing out facilitative features of spoken texts such as the fact that speakers often repeat themselves, say the same thing in different ways, or explain terms they think will be unfamiliar to their audience; and
- Giving students immediate assuring feedback after finishing the listening task that makes them feel that a wrong answer is not a 'disaster', but something whose causes can be analyzed with a sympathetic teacher (Sheerin, 1987:129; Schwartz, 1998 and Vogley, 1998).

## Method

This chapter presents the experimental part of the study. It provides description of the design, subjects, tools and duration of the study. It also includes description of the proposed program employed for instructing the study subjects.

### 3.1 Design of the study:

The present study is mainly experimental. The quasi-experimental design called the non-equivalent group design was employed. This design is identical to the pretest- posttest control group/ experimental group design in all aspects except that intact groups rather than randomly assigned ones are used, creating a control problem in terms of selection bias. This makes the use of a pre-test necessary for this particular design.

In this study, two intact classes were randomly selected to represent the experimental and the control groups. The experimental group students received schema-based instruction for developing their listening comprehension skills. On the other hand, the students in the control group received regular instruction. A pre-/ post-listening comprehension test was given to the two groups before and after the treatment.

### 3.2 Sample of the Study:

The number of students participated in the study was 37 female students which represented the experimental group, and the control group included 28 female students as well. Both groups had the same educational level that they were in their third year of secondary stage. In addition, the two groups were taught by the same

teacher , Ms. Eida Almutairi, a ten-year experienced teacher. The teacher and the students were from the Fourth Secondary School in Almajma'ah.

Also, 34 teachers, out of 48 teachers in Almajma'ah governorate, participated in answering a closed questionnaire about the way they prepared their listening lessons.

### 3.3 Instruments of the Study:

There were four different instruments used in this study illustrated as follows:

#### *3.3.1 Listening Comprehension Tests:*

The students in both groups were given 6 comprehension tests after listening to the assigned materials. These tests included: wh-questions, completion questions, multiple choice and true/false questions. An example of these tests is given in appendix B.

#### *3.3.2 The Students' Questionnaire:*

Twenty eight students from the experimental group participated in answering a closed questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of ten statements to which students respond by putting (√) in the square of the appropriate response from their points of view. The statements were designed to know about the students' attitudes towards the schema-based activities presented to them as well as their feelings towards the listening process. A copy of this questionnaire (an English version) is in appendix C, and appendix D is the Arabic version of the questionnaire .

### *3.3.3 The Teachers' Questionnaire:*

This questionnaire consisted of 13 statements. The teachers chose the appropriate response that they adopted or advocated in teaching listening comprehension materials. They answered using the following response categories: 5= always or almost true of me, 4= usually true of me, 3= somewhat true of me, 2= usually not true of me, 1= never or almost never true of me. The statements of the questionnaire reflected the most important procedures and activities used in teaching listening lessons according to schema theory. This questionnaire is in appendix A.

### *3.3.4 An Interview with the Participant Teacher:*

An interview was carried out with the participant teacher to listen to her opinion and feedback concerning the experiment. She was asked about her observations of the experimental group students' level and the participation and the effects of using schema-based activities on their listening comprehension.

## 3.4 Procedures of the study:

1. The researcher held a session with the participant teacher, Ms. Eidah Almutairi, and took her permission to conduct the study with her students. Teacher Eidah was chosen to be the participant teacher because she is a cooperative and experienced teacher and has a high sense of sincerity and honesty whatever the situation is. In the session, the researcher explained to her the schema theory and its implications in teaching listening comprehension.

2. Schema-based activities that the participant teacher adopted were :  
brainstorming, discussing the pictures and the topic with students in group or individually, presenting the key words, using graphic organizers and the first two

columns of KWL, all these as pre-listening activities. During listening, the activities are note-taking and completing the third column of KWL. For post listening, the students were asked to write a similar paragraph. All these explained to the teacher who already knew most of them.

3. The participant teacher applied these activities with the students in the experimental group only; and with the control group, she taught them listening in a traditional way.

4. The listening materials were taken from the ministry curriculum for third-year secondary which included six units with eight lessons in each, lesson one and seven from each unit contain listening materials. The last three units: unit four, five and six are used in the study. That means six listening comprehension materials.

5. For unit four, the experimental group students took pre and post tests for each lesson. For units five and six, they took only post tests. The control group took 6 comprehension tests, a test for each lesson. The tests were given to the students after their listening to the listening comprehension materials.

6. After finishing the experiment, a closed questionnaire was given to the experimental group students. It was planned to have all the thirty seven students answer the questionnaires; however 28 students completed this task. In addition, an interview was held with the teacher to listen to her feedback and comments concerning the experiment.

Results and Discussion

4.1. Data from comprehension tests:

As mentioned earlier, both groups were given 6 comprehension tests after listening to recorded materials. SPSS was used to analyze the results of the tests:

4.1.1 Pre-tests and Post-tests of the Experimental Group:

The experimental group students were given a pre-test and a post-test for the listening material in Unit four Lesson one, and another pre-test and post-test for the listening material in Unit four Lesson seven. The results of these pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed by one-sample T-test to get the information shown in Table1 and Table 2.

Table 1

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test one	37	5.6486	2.71791	.44682
Posttest one	37	7.8919	2.31881	.38121
Pre-test two	37	5.8581	2.69100	.44240
Posttest two	37	6.9865	2.96153	.48687

Table 2

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pre-test one	12.642	36	.000	5.64865	4.7425	6.5548
Posttest one	20.702	36	.000	7.89189	7.1188	8.6650
Pretest two	13.242	36	.000	5.85811	4.9609	6.7553
Posttest two	14.350	36	.000	6.98649	5.9991	7.9739

It is clear from the two tables that the means of the post-tests are higher than the pre-tests. However, there are no significant differences on the students' listening comprehension after the post-tests. In spite of that, this can be interpreted in favour of schema theory because the topic of unit 4 is about Ramadan, which is familiar and known very well to Saudi people, it is something important in their religion. This reflects the effectiveness of background knowledge on listening comprehension. Although the students had good background knowledge about the topic, schema-based activities resulted in improving their comprehension of the listening materials which was reflected in the means of the post-tests. In addition, the following tables 3, 4,5 and 6, show the frequencies and percentages of the scores of the students. The tests were corrected out of ten. The percentage of those who got the final score in the pre-test one is 5.4%, and 32.4% in the post-test one. Also, the number of students who got the full score in the pre-test two represents 5.4% , and 18.9 % in the post-test two.

Table 3

*Pre-test One*

Score	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
.00	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
1.00	2	5.4	5.4	8.1
2.00	3	8.1	8.1	16.2
3.00	2	5.4	5.4	21.6
4.00	6	16.2	16.2	37.8
5.00	2	5.4	5.4	43.2
6.00	5	13.5	13.5	56.8
7.00	4	10.8	10.8	67.6
7.50	2	5.4	5.4	73.0
8.00	4	10.8	10.8	83.8
9.00	4	10.8	10.8	94.6
10.00	2	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 4  
*post-test one*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
3.00	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
4.00	2	5.4	5.4	10.8
5.00	2	5.4	5.4	16.2
6.00	3	8.1	8.1	24.3
7.00	3	8.1	8.1	32.4
8.00	6	16.2	16.2	48.6
9.00	7	18.9	18.9	67.6
10.00	12	32.4	32.4	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 5  
*pre-test two*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
.00	1	2.7	2.7	2.7
.50	1	2.7	2.7	5.4
1.50	1	2.7	2.7	8.1
2.00	1	2.7	2.7	10.8
2.50	1	2.7	2.7	13.5
2.75	1	2.7	2.7	16.2
3.00	1	2.7	2.7	18.9
3.25	1	2.7	2.7	21.6
4.00	1	2.7	2.7	24.3
4.25	1	2.7	2.7	27.0
4.50	1	2.7	2.7	29.7
5.00	1	2.7	2.7	32.4
5.50	5	13.5	13.5	45.9
5.75	1	2.7	2.7	48.6
6.00	4	10.8	10.8	59.5
6.25	1	2.7	2.7	62.2
6.50	1	2.7	2.7	64.9
7.50	3	8.1	8.1	73.0
8.00	2	5.4	5.4	78.4
8.75	2	5.4	5.4	83.8
9.00	1	2.7	2.7	86.5
9.50	3	8.1	8.1	94.6
10.00	2	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

*Post-test two*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
.50	2	5.4	5.4	5.4
1.00	2	5.4	5.4	10.8
2.00	1	2.7	2.7	13.5
3.00	1	2.7	2.7	16.2
4.50	2	5.4	5.4	21.6
6.00	4	10.8	10.8	32.4
6.50	1	2.7	2.7	35.1
Valid 7.00	1	2.7	2.7	37.8
7.50	4	10.8	10.8	48.6
8.00	4	10.8	10.8	59.5
8.50	3	8.1	8.1	67.6
9.00	2	5.4	5.4	73.0
9.50	3	8.1	8.1	81.1
10.00	7	18.9	18.9	100.0
Total	37	100.0	100.0	

*4.1.2 Comprehension tests of Both Groups:*

The listening comprehension tests, as mentioned above, two tests for each of the three units (4,5,6), were analyzed by SPSS using independent samples t-test. Table 7 and 8 show the means of scores of the students in both groups for unit 4 and their standard deviation. From table 8,  $t = 1.030 > 0.05$  which means that there is no statistical significance between the two groups. However, the mean of the scores of the experimental group is higher than that of control group. The data in tables 9 and

10 is for unit 5 and that in tables 11 and 12 is for unit 6. Also, the ( t ) value for both groups in these units is higher than 0.05 which again reflects that there are no significant differences between the two groups. However, the means score of the control group are higher than that of experimental group. What should be clarified here is that the topic of unit 5 is about solar system, and that of unit 6 is about Arab aid and investment, and both topics have a scientific side, and also what is worth mentioning here is that the control group is a scientific section and the experimental group is a literary section, which again reflects the effectiveness of the background and schemata of the learners on their perception and listening comprehension.

Table 7

*Group Statistics*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Unit 4 Tests	Experimental	37	7.3986	2.47940	.40761
	Control	26	6.8269	1.91933	.37641

Table 8

*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Unit4 tests	Equal variances assumed	2.139	.149	.986	61	.328	.57173	.58006	-.58817-	1.73162
	Equal variances not assumed			1.030	60.365	.307	.57173	.55483	-.53796-	1.68141

Table 9

*Group Statistics*

	kind of group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Unit 5 tests	experiment	36	6.8889	2.64065	.44011
	control	27	7.8333	2.54574	.48993

Table 10

*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
									Unit5 tests	Equal variances assumed
Equal variances not assumed			-1.43	57.2	.157	-.94444-	.65858	-2.263		.37423

Table 11

*Group Statistics*

	kind of group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Unit 6 tests	experiment	35	6.5286	2.49394	.42155
	Control	28	7.2500	1.90273	.35958

Table 12

*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
tests unit 6	Equal variances assumed	2.812	.099	-1.264	61	.211	-.72143	.57086	-1.86293	.42007
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.302	60.886	.198	-.72143	.55408	-1.82942	.38657

*4.2. Data from Students' Questionnaires:*

To answer the questionnaires, the students responded to each statement (the statements are shown in columns 2-11 in table 13) by ticking the appropriate response according to their belief: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. These five responses were categorized by numbers from 1 to 5, in which strongly agree takes 5, agree 4, undecided 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1. This is if the response is positive but the categorization is the other way round if the response is negative. Here only statements numbered 1 and 4 are negative. Table 13 shows the students' attitudes towards each statement in the questionnaire. The last three rows of the table show the percentages of the students' responses. For example, statement no.2, activating my prior knowledge helps me, 25% of the students agree ,

75% strongly agree. Figures from 1 to 10 show the students' responses for each statement.

Table 13

Statistics

		I find difficulty in comprehension	activating my prior knowledge helps me	feeling upset when I don't understand and	I try to understand every word	I need to know the purpose of listening	presenting difficult words helps me understand	knowledge I have helps me in guessing	KWL is helpful	graphic organizers help me in understanding the listening materials	I feel self-confident when answering activity
N	Valid	27	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
	Missing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.074	4.571	3.642	2.535	4.250	4.642	4.678	4.39	4.357	4.571
Median		3.000	5.000	4.000	2.000	4.000	5.000	5.000	5.00	4.500	5.000
Mode		2.00 <sup>a</sup>	5.00	4.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Std. Deviation		1.141	.5727	1.193	1.231	.9276	.7800	.4755	.831	.8261	.5727
Percentiles	25	2.000	4.000	2.250	2.000	4.000	5.000	4.000	4.00	4.000	4.000
	50	3.000	5.000	4.000	2.000	4.000	5.000	5.000	5.00	4.500	5.000
	75	4.000	5.000	4.750	4.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.00	5.000	5.000

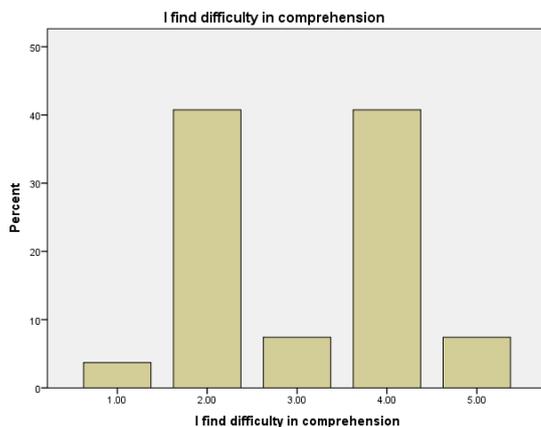


Figure 1

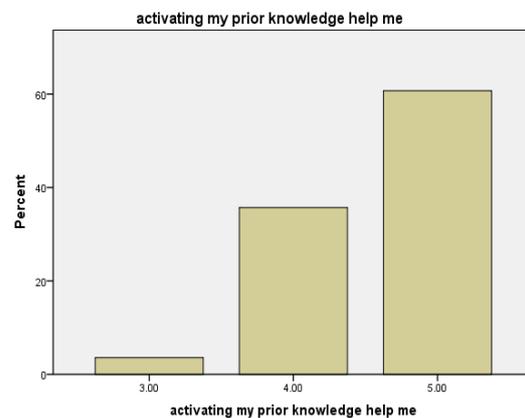


Figure 2

In response to the first statement “I find difficulty in comprehension when listening”, 3.6% of the students strongly disagree, 39.3 % disagree, 7.1 % undecided, 39.3 % agree, and 7.1 strongly agree. That means that around 46% of the students did not find difficulty in comprehension after schema-based activities (figure 1).

For the second statement “activating my prior knowledge helps me in listening comprehension”, 3.6 % of the students answered “undecided”, 35.7 % “agree”, and 60.7% “strongly agree”. So, 96.4 % of the students found activating their prior knowledge helpful (figure 2).

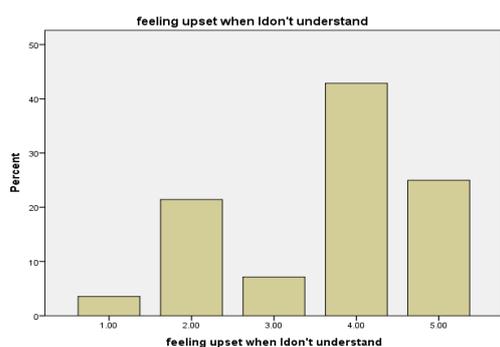


Figure 3

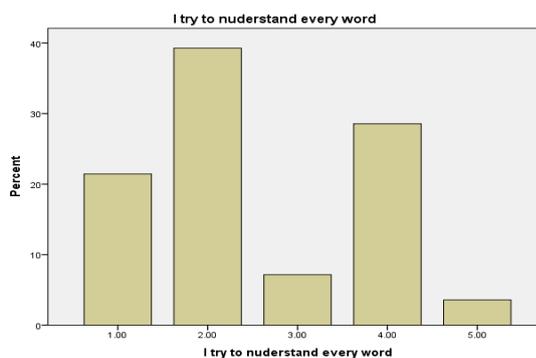


Figure 4

For statement three “feeling upset when they don't understand”, 3.6 % of the students answered “strongly disagree” 21.4 % “disagree”, 7.1 % “undecided”, 42.9 % “agree”, and 25 % “strongly agree”. 67.9 % of the students feel upset when they don't understand and this of course affects their acquisition of the foreign language. So, teachers should pay attention to their students' feelings and encourage them to relax and to be patient and that they have chances to listen many times (figure 3).

For statement 4 “I try to understand every word in the listening material”, 21.4 % of the students answered “strongly disagree”, 39.3 % disagree, 7.1% “undecided”, 28.6 % “agree”, and 3.6 % “strongly agree”. So, 60.7 % of the students don't try to understand every word in the listening materials which is something good and reflects

the students' consciousness towards listening comprehension and that it depends on the overall meaning of the message ( figure 4).

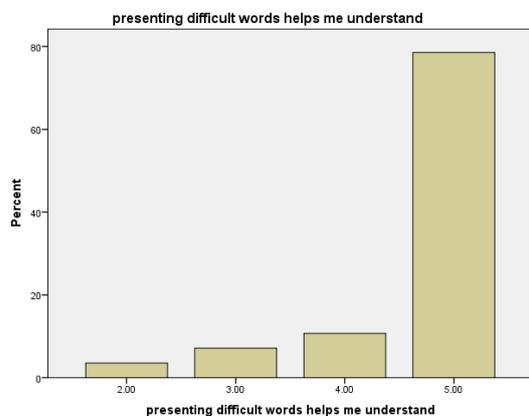


Figure 5

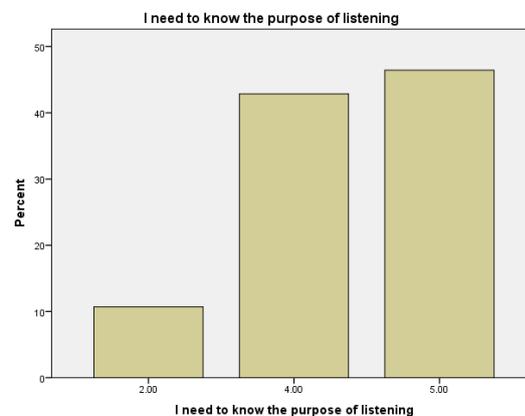


Figure 6

Figure 5 shows the responses of the students towards the statement: presenting difficult words helps me understand. 88 % of the students agree with this statement which reveals the importance of presenting difficult words before listening to facilitate students' comprehension.

In figure 6, 89.3% of the students need to know the purpose of listening in advance. Also, in figure 7, 85.7% of the students believe that KWL is helpful, and 100% believe that the knowledge they have helps them in guessing the contents of the listening materials as shown in figure 8. Therefore, teachers should activate their students' background knowledge about the topic as well as planning to build suitable schemata to help students comprehend the listening materials.

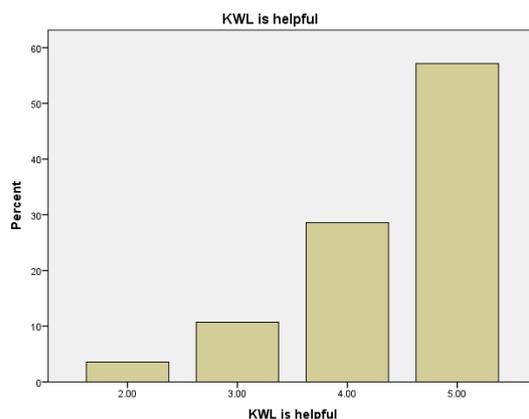


Figure 7

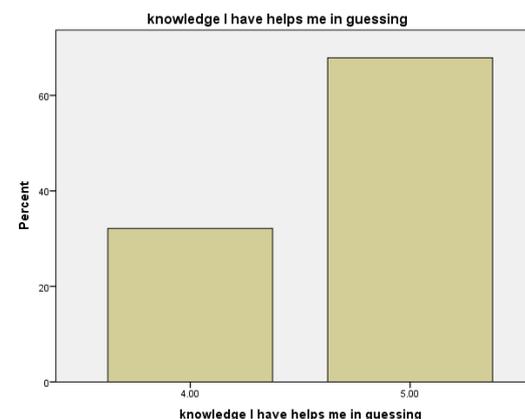


Figure 8

Figure 9 shows that 92.9 % of the students consider graphic organizers helpful in understanding the listening materials. So teachers should pay attention to that and try to prepare graphic organizers for the contents of the listening materials and try to present the relations clearly to help students understand these relations and build schemata that facilitate listening comprehension. In addition, in figure 10, 96.4% feel self-confident when answering activities. This again assures that teachers should pay attention to students' feelings and encourage them. In addition, teachers should not insist on having the correct answer, but instead try to accept errors and lead students in a pedagogical way of self-correction. This reflects positively on their acquisition of the target language.

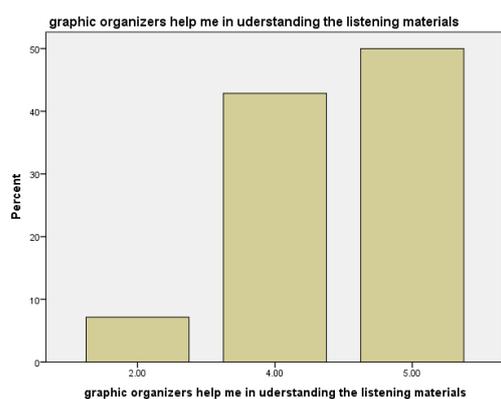


Figure 9

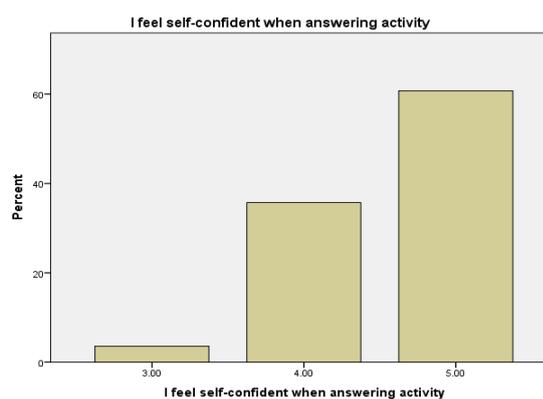


Figure 10

#### 4.3 Data from the Participant Teacher's Interview:

An interview was made with the participant teacher to listen to her comments and feedback concerning the experiment. She reported that the linguistic knowledge students already have from their previous study stages had a great impact on their listening comprehension. For example, those girls who were weak in their linguistic knowledge had difficulty in answering questions that depended on understanding a full statement and extracted the answer from it. However, she commented that a lot of girls have improved when answering the listening tests especially in the last tests. She added that a lot of girls became more comfortable when listening and that their worry

and fear became less as reported by the students themselves. Also, she observed that the students' ability to remember the new words became better and stronger when she discussed or revised with them.

4.4 Data from Teachers' Questionnaires:

Thirty-four teachers' questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS to identify their ways in preparing listening lessons, whether they applied most important schema-based activities and to what degree. Figures 1-13 reflects how teachers practice each procedure stated in the questionnaire. The responses as mentioned earlier are: 5= always or almost always true of me, 4= usually true of me, 3= sometimes true of me, 2= usually not true of me, 1= never or almost never true of me.

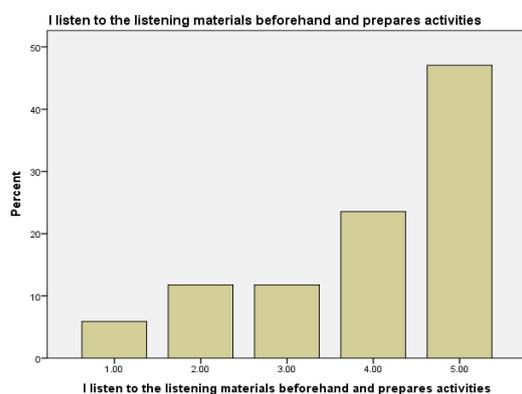


Figure 1

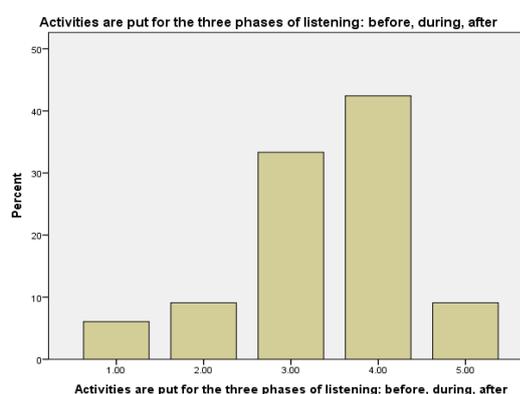


Figure 2

As shown in figure 1, 47% of the teachers always listen to the listening materials and prepare activities. In figure 2, 8% of the teachers always put activities for the three phases of listening, and 41% of them usually do. In figure 3, 55% of the teachers use suitable introduction before listening, and 70% of them discuss the title and the pictures before listening as shown in figure 4.

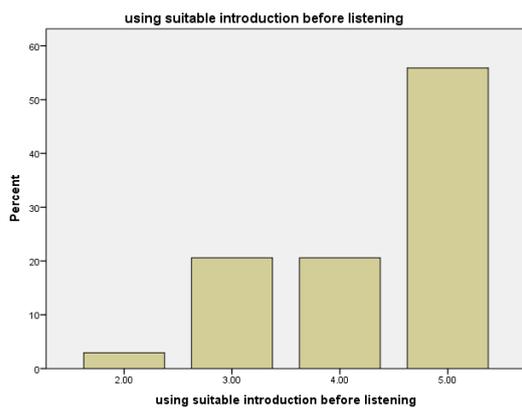


Figure 3

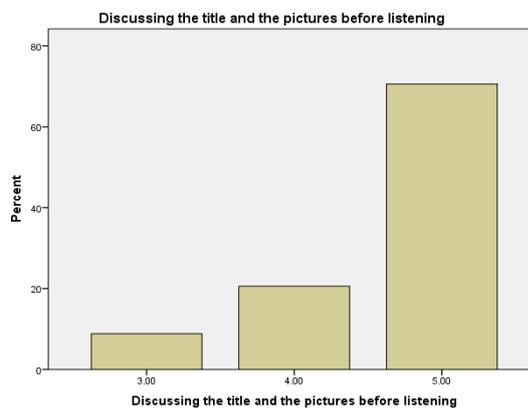


Figure 4

In figure 5, 32 % of the teachers always activate their students' background knowledge through pre-listening activities. Concerning using brainstorming, figure 6 shows that 35 % of the teachers always use brainstorming to activate students' ideas before listening.

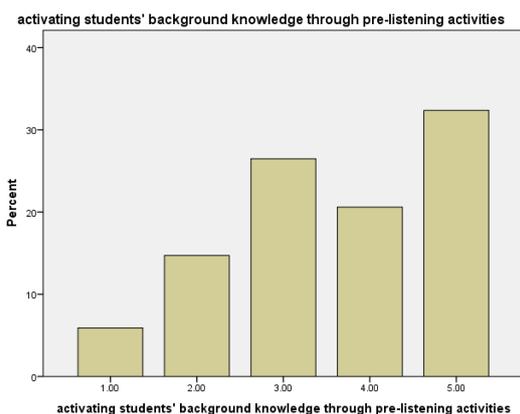


Figure 5

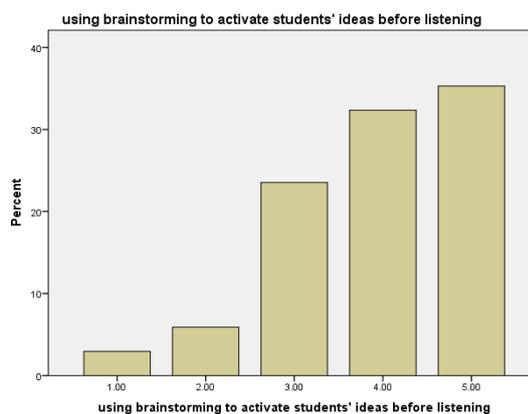


Figure 6

In figure 7, 14 % of the teachers always present key words before listening although knowing key words has a critical role in facilitating comprehension. Figure 8 shows that about 8 % of the teachers always use KWL in teaching listening and about 14 % of them never use it.

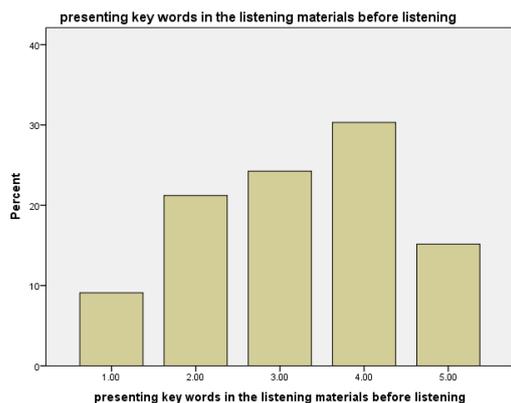


Figure 7

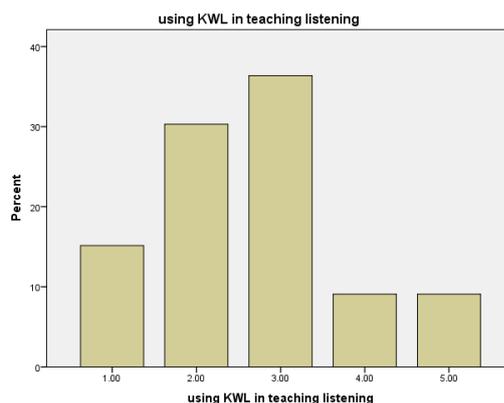


Figure 8

In figure 7, about 29 % of the teachers always insist on that students should understand every word in the listening materials, and 23.5 % of the teachers usually do that. In fact, this reflects that the teachers are somewhat ignorant of listening pedagogy. As mentioned earlier, the overall meaning of the message is essential to listening comprehension, and insisting that every word should be understood hinders comprehension and imposes extra burdens over students' minds, so this procedure should be avoided by teachers.

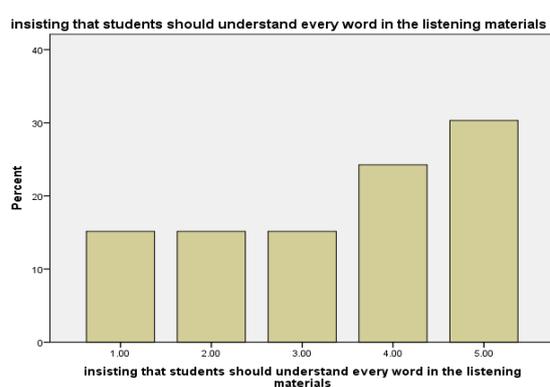


Figure 9

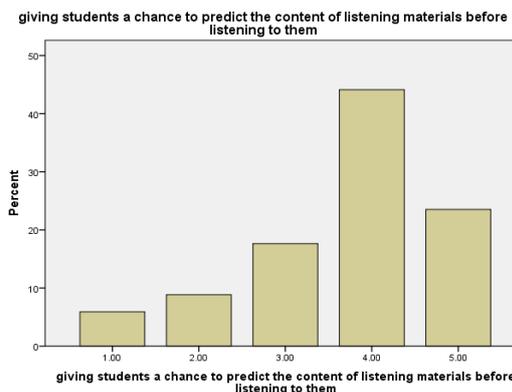


Figure 10

Figure 10 shows that 67.6 % of the teachers either always or usually give their students a chance to predict the contents of the listening materials before listening to them. This procedure is actually very helpful for the students to be effective listeners and creates motivation for listening.

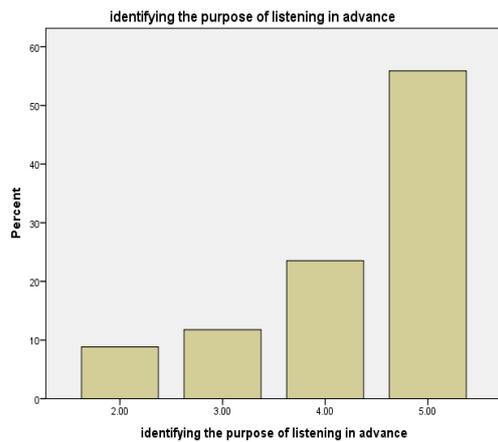


Figure 11

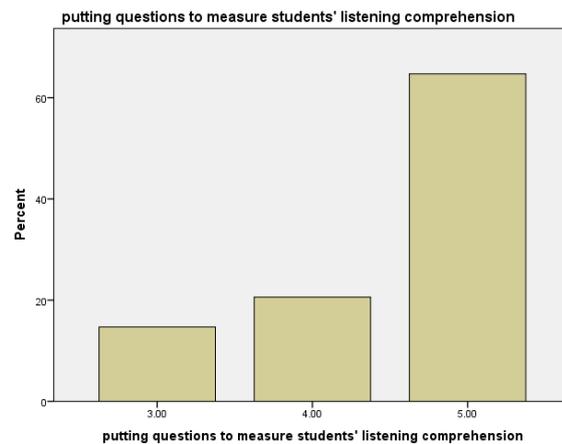


Figure 12

About 60% of the teachers identify the purpose of listening in advance as shown in figure 11. This procedure is helpful in facilitating listening process on the behalf of the students to know what they are going to do when listening. In figure 12, about 65 % of the teachers always put questions to measure their students' comprehension, and figure 13 shows that about 18 % of the teachers always use activities that integrate listening with other skills: speaking, reading and writing, such as writing a paragraph or role play on the topic of the listening materials.

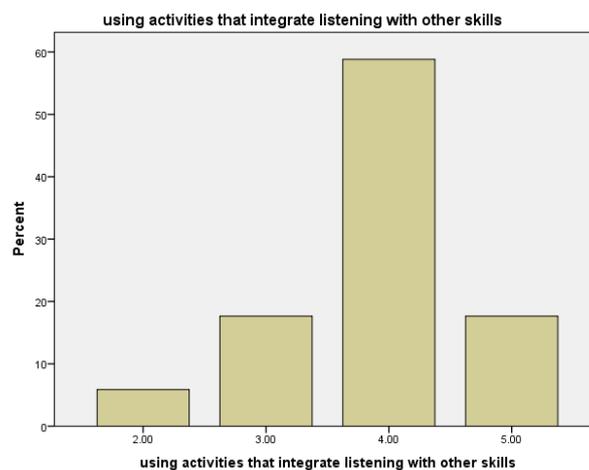


Figure 13

## Discussion, Conclusions, and Suggestions for Further Research

### 5.1 Discussion:

From the data shown in section 4, the research questions can be answered:

1. Do students' schemata or their background knowledge affect their listening comprehension?

Actually, comprehension tests reveal that students' schemata affect their listening comprehension, as the number of the students in the experimental group who got the full mark in the first test, increased from 5.4% in the pre-test to 32.4% in the post-test, when they had more information about the topic. Also, when the topic was common for both groups 5/25/2016, unit 4 (Ramadan), the experimental group performed better than the control group students. So, teachers should pay attention to their students' background knowledge, and try to activate them as well as helping them build new schemata through schema-based activities or strategies.

2. Do schema-based strategies (e.g. brainstorming, graphic organizers and KWL) facilitate students' listening comprehension?

In post-tests 1 and 2, the mean scores of the students are higher than theirs in the pre-tests. Also, the participant teacher commented that a lot of girls especially the weak ones, improved in comprehension tests of the last units than before the experiment took place. She added that the students' ability to remember words became stronger. All these reflect the impact of these strategies on facilitating students' listening comprehension. Therefore teachers of English as a foreign language should use these strategies for their great effects on listening comprehension.

3. What are the students' attitudes towards these strategies?

From the students' questionnaires, it is clear that most students do believe that these strategies are helpful and facilitate their comprehension. In addition, the participant teacher reported that the students became more relaxed and no longer worried when listening, and this of course has a positive effect on their acquisition of the language.

4. To what degree according to schema theory do female teachers of English language in Almajm'ah Administration of Education prepare their listening lessons?

From the teachers' questionnaires, the teachers apply the most important strategies of schema theory but not to that desired degree. The teachers need to learn more about listening comprehension pedagogy and the schema theory and its implications and strategies to help their learners to be effective listeners. Therefore, training sessions or programs should be designed for this purpose.

## 5.2 Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions can be made:

1. The present study provided evidence for the effectiveness of Schema Theory in developing Saudi third-year secondary school students' listening comprehension skills. This is consistent with the results of other studies which proved the effective role of building and activating students' background knowledge in developing their listening comprehension skills such as the studies of Nunan (1997), Teng (1999), Chung (1999) and Chung (2002).
2. There is also evidence that encouraging students' prediction of the content of the spoken texts in the pre-listening phase fosters their listening comprehension performance. This is consistent with Spada (1990). Furthermore, findings of the current study further emphasize the role of prediction as an influential schema-

activation pre-listening technique highlighted by several scholars such as Grant (1997), Schwartz (1998), Espeseth, (1999), Saricoban (1999), Robbins (2000), Nihei (2002), and Lingzhu (2003).

3. There is an indication that using varied graphic organizers positively affects learners' listening comprehension skills. This is consistent with the results of other studies such as Katayama's study (1997). In addition, findings of the present study provide a sound rationale for scholars' recommendations to incorporate graphic organizers as effective visual representations of spoken discourses. These scholars include Schwartz (1998) and Espeseth (1999).
4. The change in the teacher's role into a facilitator and a guide – who provides informative supportive feedback and who does not inflect help on those who do not need it- proves to promote EFL learners' active participation in the listening process and consequently fosters their listening comprehension skills. Moreover, ensuring a supportive, anxiety-free teaching/ learning environment enhances learners' involvement in the listening process.

### 5.3 Recommendations:

In the light of the present study significant results, the following recommendations are made:

1. Listening comprehension instruction should be given more attention in our EFL classes. More time and efforts should be exerted to develop this main skill and its sub- skills.
2. English language teachers should be aware of students' schemata while teaching listening comprehension skills to their students. Thus, factors like topic familiarity and suitability to students' cultural background should be taken into

consideration while teaching listening comprehension to Saudi EFL secondary stage students.

3. Teachers are recommended to make use of varied schema activation and building techniques including prediction, brainstorming, and graphic organizers to foster EFL learners' listening comprehension skills.
4. Listening materials should be varied, motivating, interesting and suitable to students' linguistic proficiency levels.
5. The present teaching strategy can be adopted for teaching listening comprehension skills to students at the secondary stage and other stages taking into consideration students' age, needs, interests and linguistic proficiency levels.
6. Teachers' role as a guide, a facilitator and a scaffolder should be further emphasized in listening comprehension instruction contexts, thus allowing learners sufficient opportunities to actively make meaning of spoken texts.
7. Supportive feedback should be offered throughout the learning process, not only to help students identify their weaknesses in listening and ways of overcoming them but also to encourage their strengths and consequently increase their motivation and involvement in listening.

### 5.3 Suggestions for further studies:

1. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of other teaching techniques and activities based on Schema Theory in developing students' reading, speaking, and writing skills.
2. While the present study provided support to the effectiveness of schema-based instruction in developing third-year secondary school students' listening comprehension, further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of

similar schema-based techniques and activities in developing students' performance in vocabulary and grammar.

3. Further research is needed to compare the impact of using audio and video taped listening materials on developing learners' listening comprehension skills.
4. More studies are needed with different student populations in other areas with the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of similar schema-based activities in developing their listening comprehension skills.
5. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of other schema-based activities in the preparatory and university stages.

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Appendices

Appendix A : A Questionnaire for teachers:

Please read the following statements and choose the response that you do or believe when teaching listening materials.

Please answer all items using the following response categories:

- 5 = Always or almost always true of me
- 4 = Usually true of me
- 3 = Somewhat true of me
- 2 = Usually not true of me
- 1 = Never or almost never true of me

Statement	Response
1. I listen myself to the listening material beforehand and prepare activities for it.	
2. I put activities for the three phases of listening: before, during and after .	
3. I use suitable introduction before listening .	
4. I discuss the title and the accompanied pictures before listening.	
5. I use brainstorming to activate students' ideas before listening.	
6. I activate my students' background knowledge through pre-listening activities.	
7. I present the key words in the listening materials before getting students listen to them.	
8. I use <u>KWL*</u> in teaching listening.	
9. I insist that my students should understand every word in the listening segment.	
10. I give my students a chance to predict the actual content of the listening materials before listening to them.	
11. I make sure students identify the purpose of listening in advance.	
12. I put questions that measure students' listening comprehension.	
13. I use activities that integrate listening with other skills: speaking, reading and writing such as role play, taking notes to write a paragraph.	

KWL is a learning strategy to activate students' pervious knowledge and interest about a certain topic. It is a three-column chart: K stands for know. Students write or say what they know about the topic. W stands for want. Students say or write what they want to know about this topic. L stands for learn. Students say or write what they have learnt after covering or finishing the unit or topic.

Appendix B: Sample of a Listening Comprehension Test

3<sup>rd</sup> Secondary.            Unit ( 4 )    Lesson ( 1 )

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Answer these questions after listening to the conversation:

1. Complete the following:

- a. .... look a bit sleepy.
- b. Ramadan is..... month in the Islamic year.
- c. .... is a big celebration.

2. Choose:

- a. All Muslims { eat – drink – fast } during the day for the whole month.
- b. Ramadan helps us remember our { calendar – obedience – month } to Allah.
- c. Fasting Ramadan sounds { difficult – different – easy }.

3. Put ( True ) or ( False )

- a. Nourah didn't fast the whole of Ramadan last year (    ).
- b. Nothing special happens at the end of Ramadan (    ).

Appendix C:

Student Questionnaire ( English version)

Please put a tick ( √ ) for the most appropriate choice for the following statements:

No.	statement	Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I find difficulty in understanding the listening material.					
2.	Activating my prior knowledge help me understand better.					
3.	I feel upset when I cannot understand the listening material.					
4.	I try to understand every word in the listening material.					
5.	I need to know the purpose for listening before I listen to the material.					
6.	Presenting difficult vocabulary in advance make listening comprehension easier.					
7.	The information I already know help me in guessing the ones I do not know.					
8.	I find KWL useful in comprehending the listening material.					
9.	Using graphic organizers before listening material increase my understanding of it.					
10.	I feel self-confident when answering the activities after listening.					

## Appendix D

## Student Questionnaire (Arabic version)

عزيزتي الطالبة

أمل وضع علامة ( √ ) في خانة الاختيار المناسب من وجهة نظرك:

م	العبارة	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	لا أعلم	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1	أجد صعوبة في فهم المادة المسجلة.					
2	تنشيط معلوماتي السابقة يساعدي في الفهم بصورة أفضل.					
3	اشعر بالانزعاج عندما لا أفهم المادة المسجلة.					
4	أحاول فهم كل كلمة في المادة المسجلة.					
5	أحتاج لمعرفة الغرض من الاستماع قبل استماعي للمادة المسجلة.					
6	تقديم المفردات الصعبة مسبقاً يسهل علي استيعاب المادة المسجلة.					
7	المعلومات التي امتلكها تساعدي في تخمين تلك التي لا اعرفها.					
8	أجد أن إستراتيجي KWL مفيدة في فهم المادة المسجلة.					
9	استخدام الخرائط المفهومية قبل الاستماع للمادة المسجلة يزيد من استيعابي لها.					
10	أشعر بالثقة في النفس عند الإجابة على التدريبات بعد الاستماع.					