أثر استخدام إستراتيجيات فهم المضمون على تنمية مهارة فهم الاستماع لدى طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة الأقصى

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى البحث في أثر استخدام إستراتيجيات فهم المضمون على تنمية مهارة فهم الاستماع لدى طالبات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة الأقصى. وقامت الباحثة باستخدام ثلاث أدوات لتحقيق هدف الدراسة: اختبار فهم الاستماع، وأوراق عمل تعليمية، واستبيان مفتوح. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من أربع وستين طالبة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة الأقصى، وتم تقسيمهن إلى مجموعتين متكافئتين، بحيث اشتملت كل مجموعة على اثنتين وثلاثين طالبة، وبينما تعلمت طالبات المجموعة التجريبية إستراتيجيات فهم المضمون، لم تخضع طالبات المجموعة الضابطة لأي تعلم، وأشارت النتائج إلى فاعلية استخدام إستراتيجيات فهم المضمون في تطوير فهم الاستماع لدى عينة الدراسة، كما أشارت نتائج تحليل الاستبيان المفتوح الى إيجابية اتجاهات أفراد العينة نحو تلك الإستراتيجيات. وفي ضوء النتائج قدمت الدراسة توصياتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات فهم المضمون، فهم الاستماع، وطلبة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية.

The Effect of Using Top-down strategies on Developing Listening Comprehension of Al-Aqsa University EFL Female Students

Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the effect of using top-down listening processing strategies on developing listening comprehension of Al-Aqsa University EFL (English as a foreign language) female students. To achieve the study aim, the researcher employed three instruments i.e., a listening comprehension test, teaching worksheets, and an open-ended questionnaire. Participants were sixty four Palestinian EFL female students, who were divided into two equivalent groups i.e, experimental group and control group. While top-down listening strategies were taught to the experimental group students, the control group students received no instruction at all. Results showed that using top-down listening strategies improved the participants' EFL listening comprehension. Moreover, the open-ended questionnaire data showed that the participants had positive views on such strategies. In light of the study results, pedagogical implications were introduced.
Keywords: top-down strategies, listening comprehension, EFL students

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1. Introduction:

Top-down processing is essential for effective listening. It refers to the use of background information in comprehending a message, classifying things and placing them into categories, drawing inferences (Richard, 1990), and in making predictions (Brown, 2011). Based on Piaget's (1996/2000) stages of development, which suggest that deductive reasoning and logical analysis tend to appear in the age of 11-15 year olds (Lewis & Dahbany, 2008), it may be argued that Palestinian EFL students above 11 years old are in need for using top-down strategies. Nevertheless, Hammad (2014) showed that English for Palestine 11 &12 focused on no top-down listening strategies other than listening for gist and listening for supporting details due to the problems the teachers experienced when teaching such strategies. Moreover, through her experience as an academic supervisor of EFL pre-service teachers, the researcher had noticed that Gaza EFL teachers placed heavy emphasis on bottom-up strategies at the expense of top-down strategies in English listening classes. Based on that, the study examined the effectiveness of using top-down listening processing strategies in improving listening comprehension of a sample of Palestinian EFL students at Al-Aqsa university.

According to Al-Aqsa University (2014), Al-Aqsa University is one of Palestinian governmental universities. It consists of seven colleges capable of giving B.A.(Bachelor of Arts) degree. Many academic courses are taught to students majoring in English Teaching in the university i.e., TEFL courses (Teaching English as a foreign Language), Linguistics courses, Literature courses, Writing courses, and Listening courses. Through her experience as academic instructor of ELT (English Language Teaching) courses in the university, the researcher had observed that EFL students did not practice top-down listening strategies in spite of its effectiveness in developing listening comprehension (Richard, 1990).Thus, the present study aimed at investigating the effect of using top-down listening processing strategies on developing listening comprehension of EFL students at Al-Aqsa university.

2. Statement of the problem:

Due to her experience **as an academic instructor** of ELT courses at al-Aqsa University, the researcher had observed that EFL students did not

practice top-down listening strategies in English classes. Furthermore, Hammad (2014) reported that English for Palestine 11 & 12 did not center on top-down listening **strategies, though such** strategies can assist in improving listening comprehension (Richard, 1990). So, the present study aimed to examine the effect of using top-down listening strategies on developing Al-Aqsa University EFL students' listening comprehension.

3. Questions of the Study:

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do top-down strategies improve EFL listening comprehension of Al-Aqsa university female students?
2. To what extent do top-down strategies improve EFL listening comprehension of female high achievers at Al-Aqsa university ?
3. To what extent do top-down strategies improve EFL listening comprehension of female middle achievers at Al-Aqsa university ?
4. To what extent do top-down strategies improve EFL listening comprehension of female low achievers at Al-Aqsa university ?
5. How do Al-Aqsa university EFL female students perceive top-down listening strategies?

4. Hypotheses of the Study:

The current study addressed four hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between the students who learned top-down strategies (experimental group) and those who did not learn top-down strategies (control group).
2. There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between high achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group.
3. There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between middle achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group.
4. There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between low achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group.

5. Literature Review:

Literature review consists of theoretical framework and previous studies related to L2/FL (Second Language, Foreign Language) listening including bottom-up and top-down processing strategies.

5.1. **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework **,in this study ,discuses the** definition of listening comprehension, bottom-up and top-down processing strategies, and the stages of a listening class.

Definition of listening comprehension

According to Alili (2009), Successful Listening comprehension involves an interaction between the listening text and the listener's existing previous knowledge. Moreover, Rizvi (2005) notes that effective listening comprehension includes understanding both explicit and implicit **meaning of an oral** message, and a listener may have to analyze a message and draw inferences. Based on the above, this study views listening comprehension as the process of using background information for understanding the explicit and implicit meaning of a verbal message.

Top-down and bottom-up

Essential to understanding listening comprehension process is the distinction between two main models of listening process: top-down and bottom-up models. Top-down process involves the use of contextual knowledge and prior information to interpret a message. Listeners can apply the different types of knowledge. i.e., prior knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, cultural knowledge about the target language, and discourse knowledge (types of text and how information is organized in texts). Such types of knowledge are stored in listeners' long memory in the form of schemata (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Schemata has an important role affecting listening comprehension (Alili, 2009).

Examples of the top-down processing in teaching listening include guessing, making predictions (Brown, 2011), classifying places, persons, or things into categories, inferring cause-and-effect relationships, inferring missing details, sequencing events and pictures (Richards, 1990), finding main ideas, and identifying supporting details (Peterson, 2001).

Bottom-up model, on the other hand, involves segmentation of the sound stream into meaningful units to interpret a message. It is a mechanical process in which listeners decode meaning by their knowledge of segmental i.e., phonemes and suprasegmental patterns .i.e., stress, tone , and rhythm of

the target language (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).Thus, listeners try to combine sounds into words which make phrases, clauses, and sentences for building understanding (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).

As for the teaching of bottom-up skills, they ought to be approached through two techniques including focused listening activities directing students' attention on specific features of the audio material and extensive exposure to authentic aural materials (McBride, 2009). Examples of the bottom-up listening strategies are identifying familiar lexical items through scanning the input, segmenting speech into constituents (Richards, 1990), and identifying intonation contours, phonemes, syllables, morphemes, word stress, and words with reduced vowels and dropped syllables (Peterson, 2001).

Here, it may be argued that both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies are effective in L2/FL listening instruction. According to Nation and Newton (2009), top-down processing is best used when the topic and the organization of a text are familiar to students and when the students' attention is entirely focused on the message rather than linguistic details. Moreover, Hammad (2014) notes that while beginners need to improve bottom-up skills, advanced learners should center on top-down skills. Vargas (2009) also advocates that learners should practice bottom-up listening strategies from the beginning level classes. Thus, the researcher views that top-down skills should be emphasized only after getting familiar with both cultural background and linguistic knowledge of a target language.

The stages of a listening class

For some educators (e.g., Davies & Pearse, 2000; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Gordon, 2007; Kan, 2010; Chang, 2016), FL/L2 listening comprehension activities are very effective when they are taught through three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The pre-listening stage prepares students for listening tasks through activating previous background knowledge, discussing the title, pre-teaching unfamiliar vocabulary (Gordon, 2007), discussing pictures, making while-listening activities clear, (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005), predicting content from the title, reading a short passage on a similar topic, and working out an opinion (McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara , 2013).

In the while-listening stage, students use useful strategies and monitor their listening utilizing their predictions and interpretations. In this stage, students try to understand the text through identifying the exact topic, noting two to four pieces of information, answering comprehension questions, and completing sentences and tables(Davies & Pearse, 2000).

The post-listening stage gives the opportunity for students to implement several types of follow-up activities_ thematic, lexical, grammatical, etc. Examples of post-listing activities include using notes written to compose a summary, doing role-play, studying new grammatical structures, practicing pronunciation (McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara, 2013), giving opinion, relating similar experiences, writing a similar text, debating the topic (Davies & Pearse, 2000), assessing the process of while listening stage, reviewing the audio-material by reading during listening or reading alone, and discussing the difficulties students encountered while reading .i.e., fast speech, unfamiliar accent (Chang, 2016).

With reference to the above literature on the stages of teaching English listening, top-down processing strategies, and bottom-up processing strategies, it appears that it is through the three stages of English listening class, learners may utilize both bottom-up strategies (i.e., recognizing language items and pronunciation) and top-down strategies (i.e., predicting, inferencing, and a detailed understanding of the text). It may be argued that while primary school pupils may use bottom-up skills, secondary school and university students may utilize top-down strategies in their English listening classes.

5.2. Previous Studies

In fact, limited empirical research including experimental and descriptive studies has been conducted on L2/FL listening top-down strategies. An example of the studies conducted in this field is Al-Qaraghooly and Al-Bermani (2010) that examined the effect of both top-down and bottom-up processing on Iraqi EFL university students' listening comprehension level. **Using an achievement** test, the study showed that both top-down strategies and bottom-up strategies were equally effective in developing listening comprehension. Likewise, Siegel and Siegel (2013) examined the impacts of top-down and bottom-up strategies on Japanese ESL university students' listening comprehension level. The study employed case study technique, and concluded that such strategies enhanced the subjects' phoneme processing and sentence phrasing abilities. Villegas (2013) also investigated

the effect of incorporating bottom-up and top-down strategies in listening comprehension tasks of pre-intermediate EFL students, and the study reported that such effect was positive. In addition, Orii-Akita (2014) investigated the effectiveness of bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models in developing Japanese EFL college students' listening comprehension. Based on the results of a pre-test and a post-test, the study reported that interactive model was more effective than top-down and bottom-up models in improving the participants' listening comprehension. Moreover, Wachid (2014) analyzed EFL university students' listening comprehension level after utilizing top-down strategies. Using pre-test, post-tests, and observation techniques, results showed that there was an improvement in the participants' listening comprehension.

Regarding the descriptive studies conducted on L2/FL listening comprehension, a study of Yahya (2007) investigated the obstacles Iraqi EFL university learners encountered while listening. Questionnaire results showed that the participants were unable to use prior information and background knowledge to guess the new words and expressions. Moreover, Abdalhamid (2012) looked at listening comprehension strategies of Arab-speaking ESL learners. Based on the analyses of a listening comprehension test and a questionnaire, results indicated that advanced listeners used more top-down skills than intermediate listeners. Additionally, Li and Renandya (2012) investigated the strategies considered effective by Chinese EFL university teachers in solving their students' listening problems. The study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews, and showed that the subjects shared a preference for bottom up approach, assuring the importance of coping with fast speech. Moreover, Furthermore, Ghoneim (2013) examined the problems Egyptian university students encountered while listening to English language. Using a listening comprehension test and a think aloud technique, the study showed that unlike less proficient learners, advanced learners used top-down processing while listening. Finally, Hammad (2014) investigated top-down listening processing skills included in English for Palestine11 &12 and used by Gaza high school EFL teachers. Utilizing two evaluation checklists, a closed-ended questionnaire, an open-ended questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview, the study concluded that English for Palestine 11 &12 focused on no top-down listening skills other than listening for a gist and listening for supporting details.

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It is obvious that the only study conducted on EFL listening top-down processing in the Palestinian EFL context is Hammad (2014) that looked at top-down listening processing strategies included in English for Palestine11 &12 and used by Gaza high school EFL teachers. None of the previous studies examined the effect of top-down listening processing strategies on listening comprehension of Palestinian EFL students. Thus, the study attempted to fill in this gap through investigating the impact of top-down listening processing strategies on listening comprehension of a sample of EFL students at Al- Aqsa university.

6. Method:

6.1.Research Design

The study employed the quasi-experimental approach for investigating the effect of using top-down listening processing strategies on developing listening comprehension of EFL students at Al- Aqsa university. In this context, Verma and Mallick (2005) note that while the experimental group in the experimental research receives special treatment, the control group receives a different treatment or no treatment at all.

6.2.Participants

The participants were sixty four Palestinian female students selected purposively from English department students at Al-Aqsa University. Participants were all second-year since emphasis was placed by English department programs at the university on listening in the first two year. They were between nineteen and twenty years old. The researcher divided the participants into two equivalent groups with thirty two students in each. The experimental group learned top-down strategies in listening **classes, whereas, the** control group did not learn such strategies. Considering the students' GPA (grade point averages) in their university, each group consisted of eight high achievers, eighteen middle achievers, and eight low achievers. Participants in both groups had been studying English as a foreign language for ten years.

6.3.Instruments

The study employed a listening comprehension test, an open-question questionnaire, and suggested teaching material worksheets. It is noteworthy that the researcher checked the face validity and content validity of all instruments.

6.3.1.A listening Comprehension Test

For Brown (2016), a standardized test is usually administered to millions of learners. Moreover, Gullo (2005) views that students with different nationalities receive the same instructions when administering standardized tests, since such tests are valid and reliable. The researcher used A standardized listening comprehension test (Educational Testing Service, 2014).)- as a pre-test and a post-test- in this study so as to determine the participants' achievement level in English listening comprehension . The test consists of a recorded passage followed by multiple-choice questions. All questions focused on top-down listening skills (i.e., listening for details, summarizing, inferring, etc.), (Appendix A).

6.3.2. An open-ended questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire is usually employed when the participants' answers are not suggested where subjects are allowed to express themselves freely (Bruce, 2004; Foddy, 1993). For determining the participants' views on top-down listening strategies, the researcher designed an open ended-questionnaire (Appendix B).

6.3.3.Suggested Teaching Worksheets (Top-down Listening Strategies)

Using the exercises included in (Duncan & Paker, 2007) and adding some relevant ones, the researcher prepared teaching worksheets. All exercises in the worksheets were relevant to top-down listening strategies. Moreover, the worksheets included various topics related to business, stories, geography, and psychology (Appendix C).

6.4.Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

First, a listening comprehension test was administered to sixty four students who were divided into two equivalent groups i.e., experimental group and control group. While top-down listening strategies were taught to the experimental group students within 8 weeks (October and November, 2016), the control group students received no instruction at all. After the tutorial, the listening comprehension test was administered to the two groups. Additionally, an open-ended questionnaire was administered to the experimental group participants so as to identify their views on the strategies learned. The researcher informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and participating in the research might improve their listening comprehension skills. In fact, all participants were willing to take part in the research.

In order to assess the participants' listening comprehension, the researcher scored the participants test papers. The researcher used t-test, employing SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Studies) to identify the differences between the scores of the experimental group participants and the scores of the control group participants. According to Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987), the t-test is used to determine the statistical significant differences between the mean scores of two groups: the experimental group and the control group. **Second, in** analyzing the open-ended questionnaire, the researcher utilized the rubrics included in Gilham (2000). Participants' responses to the questionnaire were reviewed, coded, and organized into two main categories including minor ones. Such categories included 'factors contributing to the effectiveness of top-down strategies in improving EFL listening comprehension' (i.e., relevance of topics to students' interests and needs, adequacy of time devoted to teaching top-down strategies, and students' familiarity with native speakers' accents) and 'advantages of using top-down listening strategies' (i.e., developing students' high thinking abilities and helping students find interest in listening classes). It is noteworthy that another researcher reviewed and coded the data, and both researchers agreed upon 90% of the coded material.

7. Results:
7.1.Results of the First Hypothesis:

The first research hypothesis was "There are no statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between the students who learned top-down strategies (experimental group) and those who did not learn top-down strategies (control group)". To test this hypothesis, the researcher utilized means, standard deviations, and t-test analysis (see table1).

Table1: Means, Standard deviations, and t-test values of the experimental group and the control group

Group	Mean	STD	T	p-value
Experimental group	7.17	2.69	6.332	0.000
Control group	4.33	1.18		

Table 1 shows that p-value (Paired samples t-test) is below 0.05, which means that there are statistically significant differences in the test score between the experimental group and control group in favor of the

experimental group. In light of this result, the study confirms the first hypothesis.

7.2. Results of the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis was "There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between high achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group." To determine the differences in EFL listening comprehension between high achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group, the researcher used means, standard deviations, and t-test analysis (see table2).

Table2: Means, Standard deviations, and t-test values of the experimental group and the control group

Group	N	Mean	STD	T	p-value
Experimental group	8	10.63	2.13	7.778	0.000
Control group	8	5.13	0.64		

As shown in Table 2, the p-value for the test is below 0.05, and this refers that there are statistically significant differences between the high achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group . Based on that, the study accepts the second hypothesis

7.3. Results of the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis was "There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between middle achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group." Table 3 shows the differences in EFL listening comprehension between the middle achievers of English in the experimental group and their peers in the control group.

Table 3: Means, Standard deviations, and t-test values of the experimental group and the control group

Group	N	Mean	STD	T	p-value
Experimental group	14	6.71	1.14	4.359	0.000
Control group	14	4.36	1.39		

Table 3 indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the middle achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group. Thus, the study affirms the third hypothesis.

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7.4. Results of the Fourth Hypothesis

The fourth research hypothesis was "There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) in listening comprehension between low achievers in the experimental group and their peers in the control group in favor of the experimental group.' Table 4 indicates the differences in EFL listening comprehension between the low achievers of English in the experimental group and their peers in the control group.

Table 4: Means, Standard deviations, and t-test values

Group	N	Mean	STD	T	p-value
Experimental group	8	4.50	0.93	3.055	0.018
Control group	8	3.50	0.53		

As shown in Table 4, there are statistically significant differences between the low achievers of English in the experimental group and their peers in the control one in favor of the experimental group, and ,therefore, the study accepts the fourth hypothesis.

7.5. Results of Fifth Research Question

The fifth research question was 'How do Al-Aqsa university EFL female students perceive top-down listening strategies?' The open-ended questionnaire data indicated that the study participants had positive views on top-down listening strategies. According to them, top-down strategies could help in developing high thinking abilities and finding interest in listening classes.

Participant 1 (a student with middle achievement level):I enjoyed this course so much.. I did not encounter any difficulties while answering the questions of the work sheets.

Participant 24 (a student with high achievement level): What we focused on in our previous listening classes is answering only a few simple questions, identifying key vocabulary, and making conversations and dialogues. In this course, I learned how to infer information, make predictions and suggestions, and this was very interesting.

Participant 10 (a student with high achievement level): I think that learning top-down listening skills improved my thinking abilities, for example inferring information, predicting, etc., In fact I liked Such exercises.

Additionally, most participants reported that the topics and contents of the suggested materials were relevant to their needs and interests; the language

and the accent used were familiar; and the time devoted to teaching such course was adequate. It may be argued, here, that such factors might help participants in grasping the meanings of the texts and learning top-down listening strategies.

Participant 12 (a student with high achievement level): Topics are interesting and the information included in the texts are useful.

Participant 16 (a student with middle achievement level):I liked the topics we learned this course.

Participant 13 (a student with middle achievement level):The recorded material was understandable, I could understand the native speakers' accents, maybe because I got familiar with the native speakers' accents in previous listening courses.

Participant 27 (a student with middle achievement level):Time was also enough. I think we took our time in doing the worksheets exercises.

8. Discussion and Recommendations:

The present study concluded that top-down listening strategies improved the participants' EFL listening comprehension. Congruent with this result, Al-Qaraghooly and Al-Bermani (2010) showed that top-down listening processing had a positive impact on Iraqi EFL university students listening comprehension level. Additionally, Siegel and Siegel (2013) concluded that top-down listening strategies enhanced Japanese ESL university students' listening comprehension level. Villegas (2013) also reported the positive effect of top-down strategies on listening comprehension tasks of pre-intermediate EFL students. Likewise, Wachid (2014) showed that there was an improvement in EFL university students' listening comprehension.

In fact, a number of factors might have contributed to the effectiveness of top-down listening strategies in improving the participants' listening comprehension. One factor might be that the topics of the suggested teaching materials were relevant to participants' needs and interests. According to the open-ended questionnaire analysis, most participants reported that they enjoyed the course due to its relevance to their interests, and they did not encounter any difficulties while learning top-down strategies. In this context, Hassan (2000) notes that listening materials should be relevant to students' interests and needs, so that students could easily practice listening sub-skills. Thus, Palestinian EFL teachers are

advised to select materials relevant to students' interests and needs when teaching top-down listening strategies.

A second factor may be that the participants were familiar with native speakers' accents, the thing which might help in grasping the meanings of the texts. According to the open-ended questionnaire data, the language and the accent used in the course were familiar to most participants. Related to this point, Richard and Lockhart (1996) view that listening to native speakers can help in acquiring language effectively. So, Palestinian EFL teachers should get students familiar with native speakers' accents through using native speakers' recording voices rather than their speech.

It is also worth mentioning that a majority of the participants reported that the time devoted to teaching listening strategies in this study was adequate. According to Hammad (2014), devoting adequate time for teaching EFL listening is crucial for developing learners' listening proficiency levels. Based on that, it would be desirable for Palestinian EFL teachers to allocate enough class periods for teaching listening strategies including top-down strategies.

9. Summary of the Recommendations:

Study recommendations can be summarized as follows:

1. EFL university instructors are advised to place emphasis on top-down listening strategies, and to devote adequate time for teaching such strategies.
2. Palestinian EFL teachers are advised to select materials relevant to students' needs and interests when teaching listening in general and top-down listening strategies in particular.
3. The Ministry of Education in Palestine should provide EFL teachers with technical facilities needed for delivering listening materials i.e., taped recorders, language laboratories, so that students could get familiar with native speakers' accents.

10. Suggestions for Further Research:

Further research is recommended on the following:

10.1. Investigating the effectiveness of top down listening strategies in improving listening comprehension of Palestinian high school students.
10.2. Examining the effectiveness of top down listening strategies in improving listening comprehension of Palestinian preparatory school students.

10.3. Examining the top-down listening strategies used by EFL students in Gaza universities.

10.4. Examining the top-down listening strategies included in the English textbooks employed in Gaza preparatory schools.

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Appendixes:

Appendix A: The Listening Comprehension Test
Listen to the lecture about the poet Sylvia Plath. Take notes while you listen. Then answer the questions .
The script:

Today we're gonna look at the life and some of the works of one of America's finest modern female poets, Sylvia Plath.

At the time of her **death in 1963, Sylvia** Plath was on the verge of the critical success and recognition that she had sought for most of her **life. Her first novel, 'The** Bell Jar' had just been published and the publication of her collection of poems 'Ariel' had just been agreed.

These poems, which were mostly written during the last year of her life, chronicle the traumatic developments taking place in her personal life and were to make for her a reputation as a first rate poet. But it wasn't until 1982, almost twenty years after her death, that her posthumously published 'Collected poems' won the Pulitzer Prize for literature. **Since this time ,the fascination and intrigue with her work** has continued to grow. Very few modern poets have captured the popular imagination as much as Plath, even to the extent that in 2003 a movie was made about her life and her intense relationship with husband and fellow poet Ted Huges.

To understand the continued growth in interest in her work, we have to look at the issues which her life and work address. As Susan Bassnett writes in her book on women writers.

'Dying as she did in 1963, Sylvia Plath never knew that so soon afterwards the problems of what and how women write was to become such a crucial matter and was to be debated by so many other women'

So, Sylvia Plath was a woman writing about women's issues before they were recognized as being of any importance.

Sylvia Plath was born at Robinson memorial Hospital in Boston on 27th October 1932. She was the first born child of Otto and Aurelia Plath, both highly educated academic people. Her father Otto was a professor of biology at Boston University, but her mother had been subjugated into a domestic role as housewife despite her level of education. Her father was

not too pleased with the birth of his daughter and demanded that his wife have a son within the next two years. Amazingly enough his wife obliged by giving birth to a son almost exactly two years later.

This domineering father figure became a common theme that recurred throughout Plath's writing. With the birth of her brother, Sylvia had to work much harder to win her father's attention and approval. When in 1936 Plath's father became ill, access to him became even more restricted, and Plath's main means of getting attention from her father was by achieving academic success. This meant that **from an early age, she began to equate love with success.**

In 1940 Plath's father died and this left the family in a very difficult financial situation. They were forced to move away from the seaside home that Plath had enjoyed so much and into a suburb of Boston and her mother had to take a part time job to support the family.

In 1950 Plath graduated from Bradford High school and won a scholarship to Smith College. In the same year she published a short story entitled 'And summer will not come again' and a poem called 'Bitter strawberries'.

Plath's time at Smith was difficult as she had very high expectations of herself. She wanted to achieve immaculate grades, but she also wanted to be accepted by her peers and an important part of being accepted was being popular and dating lots of boys. This was difficult because as a scholarship girl she had only a very small allowance to spend on clothes and going out, and each year's continued scholarship was dependent on the level of her grades.

In 1953 Plath won a fiction contest sponsored by Madamouselle magazine and was offered the opportunity to go to New York as a guest editor. She relished this opportunity to spend a month working in a professional publishing environment, but Plath returned from New York feeling exhausted and after hearing news that her application to a creative writing course had been rejected, she fell into what was to become one of many depressions.

Read all the questions before you start listening. You should listen to the audio twice

1. The Bell Jar was:
 a. about her father
 b. her first novel

   c. a very successful collection of poems

  d. her last poem

2. Sylvia Plath's 'Collected poems':

  a. won the Pulitzer Prize twenty years after it was published

 b. were written during the last year of her life

  c. won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982

  d. were never published

3. Sylvia's husband:

  a. made movies

  b. died in 2003

  c. was also a poet

  d. had a movie made about him

4. Susan Bassnett thought Sylvia's work:

  a. was about her husband

  b. wasn't very good

 c. was about work life

  d. was of great interest to women

5. Sylvia's brother:

  a. was two years older than her

  b. was born two years after her

 c. was a professor at Boston University

  d. was a highly educated academic

6. Sylvia Plath's time at college was difficult because:

  a. she got bad grades

  b. she won a scholarship

  c. boys didn't like her

  d. she was short of money

7. In 1953 Sylvia:

  a. left New York to get a job as an editor

  b. rejected an offer to teach creative writing

  c. worked as a guest editor in New York

  d. returned to new York because she was depressed.

8. What does the lecturer imply when she says "Very few modern poets have captured the popular imagination as much as Plath"

  a. Plath was able to understand the hopes of ordinary people.

  b. Plath has become very popular

  c. It is unusual for a modern poet to become popular with ordinary people.

d. Plath's writing was about modern people and their imagination.

9. What does the lecturer imply when she says "This domineering father figure became a common theme that recurred throughout Plath's writing."

  a. The image of her father appears in many of her poems.

  b. Plath often wrote of her love for her father.

  c. Plath writings were dominated by the image of her father.

  d. Plath's father often told her what to write about.

10. Which THREE sentences best summarize the passage?

 a. A What's remarkable about Plath's work is that it addresses many women's issues that were ahead of her time.

 b. Plath's father was one of her guiding influences and he supported and mentored her until he died in 1940.

 c. Plath's early life was spent living happily by the sea with her mother who had a part time job to support the family.

 d. The real significance and the greatness of work was never recognised within in her lifetime.

 e. Plath's academic path to success was secured by winning an early scholarship. After this she never looked back.

 f. Plath's work reflects the many of the personal difficulties that she had whilst growing up and later as a wife and mother.

Appendix B: The Open-ended Questionnaire:

What do you think about top-down listening strategies? i.e., were they difficult to learn? Did they improve your high thinking abilities?

How did you feel towards this course? Did you enjoy it? Why?

Did you encounter problems while having this course e.i., topics, language, recording vioce, time, etc.)? Could you answer the questions easily? If no, why?

Appendix C: The Teaching Worksheets (Scripts are included in Duncan and Paker, 2007).

Worksheet, Chapter 1

  1. **Activating Background Information**

Before you listen, think about the following questions.

Why would someone paint a forgery of a famous painting?

Is it legal to make a copy of a famous painting?

Why do you think someone pay so much money for artwork?

2. **Listening for Main Ideas**

Read questions 1 and 2. Listen to the program. Then choose the correct answer for each question.

What is the movie 'The Forger' based on?

   a. A real event

   b. A book

   c. A painting

Which of these people is the artist who painted the forgeries?

   a..John Drewe

   b. John Myatt

   c. Albert Gleizes

3. **Listening for Supporting Details**

Read questions 3- 10. Listen to the program again and choose the correct answer for each question**.**

At the beginning of the movie, what is John Myatt's job?

   a. professional artist

   b. auctioneer.

   c. teacher

What does Myatt decide to do after his wife leaves him?

   a. move to London and get a new job.

   b. sell forgeries of famous paintings at auctions

   c. make genuine copies of famous paintings and sell them in his name.

Who was John Drewe?

a. an art collector

b. a forger

c. a friend of Myatt's wife.

What does Drewe do?

  a. He paints forged art and sells it.

  b. He sells Myatt's paintings as forgeries and keeps the money.

  c. He sells Myatt's paintings as forgeries and splits the money with Myatt.

Why does Drewe trick his way into art museusms?

   a. He wants to steal paintings and sell them.

   b. He wants to photograph the painting for Myatt to copy.

   c. He wants to leave false documentation of Myatt's forgeries.

What happened before Drewe's first trial?
   a. He faked a heart attack.
   b. He had a heart attack.
   c. He was sent to prison.

Which of the following is NOT a reason that Myatt received a shorter prison sentence than Drewe?
   a. He cooperated with the police.
   b. He had two children.
   c. He did not trick people into buying the paintings.

What did Myatt do after he left prison?
   a. He continued teaching.
   b. He made more forgeries.
   c. He sold genuine fakes again.

   4. **Inferring Cause-effect Relationship**

Why do you think did Myatt cooperate with the police?

   5. **Sequencing Information**

Re-order the following events
   a. Myatt copied paintings for famous 20th century artists
   b. Myatt's wife left her husband and her children.
   c. Myatt became a forger.
   d. Myatt was imprisoned for four months.
   e. Myatt met Drewe and became friends.
   f. After leaving prison, Myatt sold genuine fakes.

   6. **Making Suggestions**

If you are a judge, would you decide to get Myatt for more than six months?

Worksheet, Chapter 2

   1. **Activating Background Information**

Before you listen, think about the following questions.

What are the causes of global warming?

How can we change our lifestyle to be more "green"?

   2. **Listening for Main Ideas**

Read questions 1 and 2. Listen to the report. Then choose the correct answer for each question.

1. Why is Samsø famous?
   a. It is home to a major university.

    b. It is an important tourist destination.

    c.It's the most environmentally-friendly place on earth.

2. Which of the following describes Samsø carbon dioxide production?

    a.Samsø is carbon positive.

    b. Samsø is carbon neutral

    c.Samsø is carbon negative.

3. Listening for Supporting Details

Read statements 3- 11. Listen to the report again and write T for true or F for False for each statement.

….. 3. The major source of power on Samsø is oil.

….. 4. Samsø produces more electricity than it needs.

….. 5. Americans on average produce more carbon dioxide than Dutch citizens

….. 6. There are no carbon costs on Samsø

….. 7. The furnace is used for both heating and making fertilizer.

….. 8. Farmers on Samsø have lost money by changing to environmentally-friendly practices.

….. 9. Biodiesel is produced from soy beans on the island.

….. 10. Cows can eat the by-product of biodiesel production.

….. 11. Self - sufficiency means you can afford to import the products you need.

4. **Guessing**

Mention other advantages for being Samsø 'the greenest place on Earth'.

5. Summarizing

Which three sentences best summarize the passage:

    a. Samsø is a green place on Earth, and it is cold and windy.

    b. Samsø is a self-sufficient place.

    c. Burning straw in Samsø at a very high temperature can heat houses.

    d. temperature can heat houses.

    e. Samsø is a small place

Worksheet, Chapter 3

1. Activating Background Information

Before listen, think about the following questions.

Do you know the past winners of Noble Prize in literature?

Have you ever read 'Beloved' or another **book by Toni Morrison?**

What you know about the history of slavery in the United States?

2. Listening for Main Ideas

Read questions 1 and 2. Listen to the discussion. Then choose the correct answer for each question.

Which Nobel Prize did Toni Morrison win?

    a. Peace

    b. Economics

    c. Literature

Which of the following sentences is the best summary of the plot of 'Beloved'?

    a. Beloved is a story about the fighting in the American Civil War.

    b. Beloved is the story of an escaped slave and what happened to her dead daughter.

    c. Beloved is the story of how a slave family escaped from the South.

3. Listening for Supporting Details

Read statements 3 -12. Listen to the discussion again and write T for true or F for false for each statement.

………. 3. Morrison won the Nobel Prize in 1983.

……… 4. There have not been many African American winners of this prize.

……… 5. All of Morrison's books are about slavery.

……… 6. Sethe escapes from Kentucky to the North by herself.

……… 7. Sethe has three children when she lives in Ohio.

……… 8. Sethe's owner killed her oldest daughter.

……… 9. The baby did not have a name when she died.

……… 10. The novel clearly states that Beloved is the ghost of Sethe's dead daughter.

……… 11. Morrison believes that it is impossible to fully describe slavery in a novel.

……… 12. The book focuses on the emotions of the character, not the history of slavery.

4. Inferring Missed Details

What does the clause 'Sethe is literally haunted by her history' imply?

5. Summarizing

Write a summarizing sentence for the conversation

Worksheet, Chapter 4

1. Activating Background Information

Before you listen, think about the following questions.

Have you shared or watched video on the Internet?

Do you think that Internet video is replacing television and movies?

2. Listening for Main Ideas

Read questions 1 and 2. Listen to the discussion. Then choose the correct answer for each question.

What does the term "viral video" mean?

    a. Videos that spread computer viruses

    b. Online videos that computer users sent to each other.

    c. Online videos that are bad for computer **user's health.**

With which sector of the population is viral video most popular?

    a. Teenagers and young adults

    b. Children

    c. Older adults

3. Listening for Supporting Details

Read questions 3-10. Listen to the discussion again and choose the correct answer for each question.

Who does not like online videos?

    a. Student 1

    b. Student 2

    c. Professor

Why does Deb use MTV (Mus Television) as an example of a TV channel that is popular than online video?

    a. Because MTV has always been popular with young people.

    b. Because MTV is a **cable television channel**

    c. Because there are a lot of ads on MTV

Which of these sites is an example of "web 2.0"

    a. A newspaper website that allows you to read today's news

    b. A commercial website selling books and CDs

    c. An interactive website on which users post movie reviews.

According to the article that the students read, why are young people turning away from traditional media?

    a. They don't trust people in authority.

    b. They don't have time to read the newspaper or watch television.

    c. They don't trust their parents.

What problem with viral video is discussed?

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a. The necessary equipment is expensive
b. The quality is often poor.
c. You need a fast internet connection to make online videos.

Why does one student quote the example of the invention of phonograph records?

a. To argue that viral video will lose its popularity quickly.
b. To show the difference between phonograph records and online video.
c. To say that phonograph records were more entertaining than online video.

Why are viral website important sociology class?

a. There are many journal article
b. They are more interesting of sociology
c. Large communities discussing them.

4. Inferring Missed Details
What does 'There's so much bad television nowadays' imply?

5. Summarizing
Summarize the conversation within three lines.

Worksheet, Chapter 5
1. Activating Background Information
Do you or does someone you know, wear eyeglasses? Why?

2. Listening for Main Ideas
Read question 1. Listen to the lecture. Then check all the correct answers.
Which of these people and places are mentioned in the lecture as important in the history of eyeglasses?

………. a. Ancient Rome
………. b. Medieval France
………. C. Venice
………. D. China
………. E. Benjamin Frahklin

3. listening for Supporting Details
Read statement 2- 11 . listen to the lecture again and write T for True or F for False for each statement.

……….. 2. You would see an ophthalmogoist if you had a problem with your eyes.

……….. 3. Ancient Romans wore eyeglasses.

……….. 4. Beryl is a gem that can act like a simple lens.

……….. 5. Refract has the same meaning as "reflect"

……….. 6. A convex lens is shaped like the inside of a bowl.

……….. 7. Modern glasses are usually made from glass

……….. 8. Venice was a center of glass making.

……….. 9. Reverend Cross disliked glasses because they change the way you see the world.

……….. 10. Bifocal lenses change color in direct sunlight.

……….. 11. Bifocals give clear vision across a wide area of the lens.

4. Predicting

Based on the development of eye glasses, what type of eye glasses do you expect to use in the future?

5. Sequencing Information

Re-order the following events

    a. The biggest development in eyeglasses id probably the bifocal invented by Franklin

    b. The earliest record of any experimentation with lenses goes back to ancient Rome.

    c. The first eyeglasses looked remarkably to modern spectacles in Venice.

Worksheet, Chapter 6

1. Activating Background Information

Before you listen, think about the following question.

Do you think your personality is more influenced by your genes or by your experiences, family and environment ?

2. Listening for Main Ideas

Read questions 1 and 2. Listen to the debate. Then choose the correct answer for each question.

Which of the following statements is the best summary of the "nature" side of the debate?

    a. Our personality is influenced by both genes and environment.

    b. Our personality is defined and limited by our DNA.

    c. Personality changes and develops over our lifetime.

3. Listening for Supporting Details

Read questions 3- 11. Listen to the debate again and choose the correct answer for each question.

Why does the students who argues in favor of "nature" use the example of the star basketball player?

    a. To show that genes control ability in sports.

    b. To explain the meaning of DNA

    c. To show that genes limit the individual's potential.

What happened to the Romanian orphans after they were adopted?

    a. They recovered physically and emotionally.

    b. They recovered physically but not emotionally.

    c. They did not recover at all from their experience.

Why does the students who argues in favor of "nurture" use the example of the Romanian orphans?

    a. to show how bad can experiences have long – term effects on personality.

    b. to show that there is no gene for love and affection

    c. to criticize the conditions in Romanian orphanages.

What is the student's reason for using music as an example?

    a. to prove that there is a music gene

    b. to say that good musicians don't need to practice.

    c. to show that some people don't reach their genetic potential.

What example does the student on the nature side of the debate give to show how genes can influence the environment?

    a. when a parent gets angry with a child, it is because they have a bad parenting gene.

    b. when a child has a naughty gene, parents respond to their bad behavior.

    c. when a parent is strict with their child, they change the child's personality.

When child is hungry, what do developmental psychologists recommend that parents do?

    a. They should feed the child quickly in order to develop a feeling of trust.

    b. they should wait to give food in order to teach the child patience.

    c. they should not give the child food unless it is a mealtime.

when a child has the "crime gene" and is a bused, they are likely to commit crimes as an adult. What does this prove for a geneticist?

    a. that the crime gene always produces criminals

b. that early experiences have no affect on personality.

c. that genetics are more important than early experience.

What does the nurture theory of development suggest?

   a. that our personality is fixed in the early years of life.

   b. that our personality develops in stages during our lives.

   c. that childhood is not important in the development of personality.

What does the professor conclude about nature and nurture?

   a. That nature is more important than nurture.

   b. That nurture is more important than nature.

   c. That both nature and nurture are important.

4. **Predicting**

Do you expect that scientists will answer the question "Which is more important for formimg a child's personality"? nature or nurture?

5.Summarizing

Write two summarizing sentences for the whole conversation.

Worksheet, Chapter 7

1. Activating Background Information

Before you listen, think about the following questions.

What is stress? Where does it come from?

Do you think people in some countries have more stress than others?

2. Listening for Main Ideas

 Read question 1. Listen to the program. Then ,**choose the correct** answers.

Which **of the countries** are mentioned in the report?

……… a. Britain.

……… b. France

……… c. Switzerland

……… d. Canada

……… e. Mexico

……… f. **Argentina**

……… g. United States

……… h. Germany

3. Listening for Supporting Details

Read Statements 2- 12 listen to the program again and write T for True or F for False for each statement.

……… 2. Canadians have less stress than Americans.

……… 3. The most common sources of stress are jobs and money.

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………4. The results of the survey revealed large differences between countries.

……… 5. Technology reduces the stress in our lives.

……… 6. Only the richest members of society experience stress.

……… 7. Mexico had the lowest rate of stress in the survey.

……… 8. France is a stress – free country to live in.

……… 9. Britain has the highest number of people who feel their lives are out of control.

……… 10. Germans are good at managing their stress.

……… 11. Canadians feel safe **from terrorist** attacks aimed at the United States.

……… 12. One way to reduce stress is to do exercise.

4. Summarizing

Summarize the sources of stress mentioned in the passage.

5. Guessing

Can you guess sources of stress other than those mentioned in the passage?

6. Making Suggestions

Can you suggest other techniques for reducing stress.

Worksheet, Chapter 8

1. Activating Background Information

Before you listen, think about the following questions.

If you could start up a small business, what would it be?

Why do you think some small business fail?

Listen for Main Ideas Read question 1. Listen to the conversation. Then, put the topics discussed in the correct order from 1 -10

5. What are the top ten reasons why small business fail?

…….. a. employees

…….. b. competition

…….. c. location

…….. d. flexibility

…….. e. customer service

…….. f. paperwork

…….. g. cash flow

…….. h. unrealistic goals

…….. i. poor marketing

…….. j. closed – minded owners

2. listening for Supporting Details

Read questions 2-9. Listen to the program again and choose the correct answer for each question.

How can business avoid losing customers to the competition?
a. Don't open a business near another similar business.
b. Charge lower prices than the competition.
c. Find new ideas in order to become better than the competition.

How can **Libby help with** advertising?
a. she's a marketing professional.
b. she was an advertising major in college.
c. she has friends in the advertising industry

Why is their business plan to combine a bookstore with a coffee shop?
a. The coffee shop brings in customers who will eventually buy books.
b. the coffee shop and bookstore will bring in different types of customers.
c. There are already many coffee shops in Glen Ridge.

Why is Glen Ridge a good location for this business?
a. It has a large population.
b. There is a major university in the town.
c. Two major roads pass through it.

Where are the partners getting the money to start their business?
a. business loans and their own investments.
b. borrowing money from friends.
c. their own savings.

Why do the partners believe they have a good business plan?
a. They are going to be millionaires by New Year's Day.
b. They have read many business websites.
c. The local business support group liked their plan.

4. **Summarizing**
Summarize the ten main reasons helping in avoiding being in the 50% of business that fail.

5.**Making Suggestions**
Suggest other factors that can help in avoiding failure in business.