Abstract

This study investigates the effect of EFL/ESL culture-based topic familiarity on the learners' listening comprehension ability when they listen to it. A quasi-experimental design study was conducted at the school of English Language/Base Training Wing on Riyadh Air Force Base in Riyadh City/Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in order to see if familiarity with culture-based topic helps learners comprehend better after exposing them to such material. Four English language instructors (2 native- speakers of English taught the experimental group; the other 2 were Saudi instructors who taught the control group) and 47 officers participated in the study. The American Language Course Placement test (ALCPT) was administered as pre-and-posttests to probe the learners' performance on listening comprehension before and after the treatment applied to the experimental group. The pretest revealed no statistical difference between the two groups' performance. The treatment started and continued for 6 weeks. The experimental group learners were exposed to some aspects of the target culture topics selected from the American Language Course (ALC) textbooks(1 lesson per day) in addition to the in-house textbooks (3 lessons) per day. The control group learners were taught from the in-house (textbooks (4 lessons) per day. Both groups took the fifth lesson in the computer lab. The findings show that the experimental group learners' general and culture-based listening comprehension improved significantly. The control group learners' general listening comprehension improved. However, this improvement is statistically lower than the experimental group's improvement. The control group learners' culture-based listening comprehension did not statistically improve. The experimental group learners' significant improvement might be attributed to exposing them to culture-related topics which were unfamiliar in advance. It is concluded that familiarity with the target language culture has a pivotal role in facilitating comprehension of aural input.
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List of Abbreviations

ALC  American Language Course
ALCPT  American Language Course Placement Test
CIPOST  Culture-related items listening comprehension posttest
CIPRET  Culture-related items listening comprehension pretest
DLI  Defense Language Institute
EFL/ESL  English as a Foreign/Second Language
ELCT  English Language Comprehension Test
GPOST  General listening comprehension posttest
GPRET  General listening comprehension pretest
RSAF  Royal Saudi Air Force
ELS  School of English Language
TSI  Technical Studies Institute
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The Effect of Culture-Based Topic Familiarity on EFL Listening Comprehension

MA thesis by Saleh Al-Qahtani dedicated

to my father

Jarallah bin Falah Al-Qahtani

to my mother

to my brothers

to my sisters

to my children

and a special dedication to my wife for her patience and loyalty
1.1 Introduction

Listening comprehension is an important skill in language learning. It is the first step in learning or acquiring a new language. It is argued that the listening skill must be given more emphasis as a receptive skill over other skills because it is the starting point where the listener would respond to given inquiries, orders, instructions…etc. There have been some common arguments which suggest that the natural order for first and second language learning is listening, speaking, reading and writing. El-Koumy (2000) claims that comprehending an uttered piece of information means understanding of it. He states that understanding a language is a prerequisite to speaking, reading, and writing that language. Describing the listening processes, Schwartz (1998) states:

Listening is not just hearing and decoding words and phrases; listening is a very active process of constructing from the text and from the listener’s background knowledge and knowledge of the language. Listening comprehension involves hearing, paying attention,
understanding and remembering. These processes are not linear; they operate interactively (p.27).

Since listening is an important factor in the second or foreign language learning process, listening comprehension barriers and difficulties must be pinpointed and surmounted. Every non-native speaker has encountered the problem of not being able to respond to English speakers when they talk at a natural speed as a sore point in their learning experience. In other words, the listener does not totally or partially comprehend the received message.

One of the major existing problems which the learners of English as a Foreign/Second Language EFL/ESL experience is the unfamiliarity with cultural differences between the native and the target language which they encounter while learning EFL/ESL. They lack background knowledge and the experience of the target language culture. Better language learning can take place if the learners have experience of the target language cultural knowledge.

The role of the teacher is to facilitate such learning. Therefore, prior to teaching learners the foreign language cultural elements, teachers should familiarize their learners with favorable cultural aspects of the language they
teach. By doing so, the gap which may result in learning difficulties could be bridged.

Regarding the role of cultural background information and prior knowledge and their effects on listening comprehension, Rost (1990) contends that a text can be interpretable by the listener if there is a base meaning for that text which is the cultural and experiential frame reference (qtd. in Barbara, 1994). In other words, if the listener has an experience of the cultural knowledge embedded in a given text, s/he can respond to it effectively by employing prior knowledge or what is called the culture 'schemata'. Processing and recall of information is strongly related to the activation and use of schemata (Dochy & Bouwens, 1990).

This study is conducted to find out whether unfamiliarity with a topic based on foreign/second language culture disrupts English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) learners' listening comprehension performance or not? If yes, will instruction including the orientation of unfamiliar cultural topics in a timed duration result in good or better listening comprehension?
1.2 Significance of the Study

This study attempts to find out (a) if the unfamiliarity with the EFL culture topics disrupts learners’ listening comprehension ability and (b) if yes, will instruction which gives the learners exposure to those topics in a timed duration help them comprehend better? It is hoped that the findings of this study will

1. encourage teachers of the English language to focus on the embedded cultural points prior to giving any listening comprehension lesson and familiarize their learners with them to avoid any listening comprehension disruptions based on cultural unfamiliarity.

2. urge EFL learners to familiarize themselves with the target language culture to improve their listening comprehension performance which will result in better language proficiency.

3. convince EFL learners that learning EFL and its culture are integrated processes.

4. encourage the designers of textbooks or syllabuses to pay attention to cultural content.

5. contribute to the general field of foreign language instruction and applied linguistics.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

Officers learning English at the School of English Language (ELS) on Riyadh Air Force Base are taught from textbooks which are designed by the curriculum development section in the Technical Studies Institute (TSI) in Dhahran city/Saudi Arabia. The contents of these textbooks are built on Saudi culture. The officers are given the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) English Language Comprehension Test (ELCT) which is also designed by TSI at the end of the course. Items of the ELCT are taken from the TSI textbooks.

Military personnel being selected to take technical courses related to their specialties in the United States are given a different test from ELCT. This test is called the American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT). It is designed by the Defense Language Institute (DLI)/ Lackland Air Force Base/ Texas/ United States of America. The items of the test are taken from the American Language Course textbooks which are designed in DLI based on American cultural background. It is noticed that learners who take an ALCPT test achieve low scores whereas they score higher in ELCT tests. Another complaint raised by the learners is the difficulty of the listening comprehension part of ALCPT.
This study is conducted to find out whether listening comprehension ability can be improved when the learners are familiarized with cultural knowledge of the target language before they take an ALCPT test.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to find out whether familiarity with the foreign language cultural knowledge would improve the learners’ listening comprehension ability or not. By contrast, would unfamiliarity with this knowledge disrupt this ability when cultural knowledge is embedded in given oral messages or dialogues? Additionally, if this knowledge does disrupt the ability of learners’ listening comprehension, would the orientation of this cultural knowledge given in a timed duration improve the ability of learners taking a general English course at the School of English language/ Base Training Wing/ Riyadh Air Force Base?
1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The aim of this research is to test the following null hypotheses:

1. Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no significant effect on learners’ overall listening comprehension performance.

2. Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no significant effect on learners’ listening comprehension performance of culture-specific items.

3. EFL/ESL learners will show no significant change to better listening comprehension after a period of instruction concerning culture-related topics.

4. Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not significantly disrupt learners’ general understanding of received aural materials.

5. Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not significantly disrupt learners’ understanding of received aural materials concerning culture-specific items.

6. There is no significant difference in listening comprehension of culture-related topics between learners who are familiarized with such topics and those who are not.
1.6 Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted on 47 RSAF officers taking an RSAF Elementary English Language Course (21001) at the school of English language/ Base Training Wing/ Riyadh Air Force Base. Four English language instructors took part in teaching the participants of the study. Two teachers were native speakers of English (British) who taught the experimental group and the other two were Saudi teachers who taught the control group. Also, the study was limited to improving learners' listening comprehension ability by means of orienting some aspects of EFL/ESL culture within a six-week period. Another limitation was that the ALCPT test used in this study was not purely designed to test culture but also other components of language. Also, the "culture" in this study is limited to the American English culture.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Acculturation

"A process in which changes in the language, culture, and system of values of a group happen through interaction with another group with a different language, culture, and system of values" (Richards & Platt, 1992, p.3).
1.7.2 Culture

1. "The total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviors, social habits, etc of the members of a particular society to which language is inextricably tied to" (Liao, 1996, p.58).

2. "A dynamic system of symbols and meanings where past experience influences meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on" (Robinson, 1988, qtd. In Michael Lessard-Clouston, 1997, p.5).

1.7.3 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

"The role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but not used as a medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication in government, business, or industry within the country" (Richards et al., 1992, p.216).

1.7.4 English as a Second Language (ESL)

"The role of English for immigrants and other minority groups in English-speaking countries" or "The role of English in countries where it is widely used within the country but it is not the first language of the population"(Richards et al., 1992, p.216).
1.7.5 Listening comprehension

"The process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. It is the perception of information and stimuli received through the ears" (Richards et al., 1992, p.216).

1.7.6 Schemata

"Modifiable information structures that represent the information available in our experience, the interrelationships between objects, situations, events and sequences of events that occur. It contains this prototypical information about frequently experienced situations and observations" (Rumelhart, 1981, qtd. In Dochy & Bouwens, 1990, p.3)
2.1 Introduction

This section is allocated to the review of the literature related to (a) language teaching and culture, (b) listening comprehension empirical studies, and (c) prior knowledge (schemata) and its role in facilitating comprehension of aural receptive input.

2.2 Language teaching and culture

Cultural awareness must be made one of the goals in language teaching. Language and culture are inseparable; as a result, learners of a foreign/second language feel anxious about expressing themselves in the target language. This tendency occurs more frequently among learners who are unfamiliar with the culture; so teachers should not separate culture and language in the teaching process (Kwon & Park, 2004). Language is one aspect of culture and is the medium for understanding, sharing and negotiating meaning for all aspects of culture (Lang, 1998).
Kilickaya (2004) states that learning a language is not only learning its grammatical rules but also its culture. He claims that in order to get the meaning across when communicating, successful language learning requires language users to know the culture underlying that language.

Lange (1998) adopted a social sciences perspective on culture. This social sciences perspective not only allows us to broaden our view of culture but also provides insights into the learning and use of language. Lange continues claiming that these insights help us understand how

a) language varies in form and use within its social and cultural contexts,

b) society and its composition affect language development and behavior,

c) culturally determined attitudes and individually experienced motivations can help or hinder the learning and use of the language,

d) differences in culturally determined world views can cause culture shock,

e) which in turn may have a telling impact on the learning of the language and

Supporting the notion that culture must be taught intimately with language, Papademetre (2000) points out that learners can understand and use the communicative references and influences found in the appropriate sociocultural context with the help of a 'language-and-culture teacher'. Such a teacher can facilitate the perception of the linguistic and cultural system. Smith et al. (1998) argue that learning a second language requires learners to learn its culture as well; therefore, educators should familiarize their learners with the cultural background and emphasize its importance as well as language learning because a language is part of its culture. Tedick and Walker (1994) asserts that culture must not only be an integral part of second language pedagogy, but must also be an integral part of teacher education programs, including attention to school culture and classroom environment (qtd. In Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 2000). Likewise, Saville-Troike (1978) states that culture is neither an optional component of bilingual education nor of the programmes which train bilingual teachers; culture must be considered as a central force in all education. Sellami (2000) indicates that teaching the culture of a certain language is a must because the latter is part and parcel of the former. Sellami argues that studying
language without knowing the culture of its native speakers is a lifeless objective.

Cullen (2000) advises language teachers to learn their learners' language and culture and have a full understanding of their own cultural baggage. Cullen states:

One of the oddest things in the world must be a language teacher who only speaks one language or a culture teacher who only knows one culture. We are so immersed in our own culture that we can only understand it by trying to see it from the outside. Imposing our own values without making an attempt to understand our learners' values is imperialistic and arrogant. We must remember that intercultural understanding runs both ways (2000, p.6).

Likewise, Feng (1994) urges teachers who teach Asian-American children to address problems that relate to their unfamiliarity with Asian-American cultures by familiarizing themselves with the values, traditions, and customs of various cultures. He also advises teachers to learn at least a few words of their Asian learners' native languages and avoid assumptions about what the children don't know such as a birthday party since not all children have experienced such
matters. Bowman (1989) argues that in order to understand learners' learning processes, the learners' culture must be considered since learning and culture are inextricably linked. He states that the interrelationship of culture, language and development is a vital concern for educators (qtd. In Robisheaux, 1993). He believes that culture influences people's perception of the world, so teachers and learners who come from different cultures may be unaware of the effect that learners' culture has on their perceptions of the school and vice versa. Bowman states that one aspect of culture which can affect teaching and learning is the way the language is used during instruction. For example, if the learners' home culture values strict authority of adults over children, then learners may be reluctant to volunteer contributions in class.

Robisheaux (1993) contends that the use of traditional methods of instruction and teachers' unawareness of their roles in the reproduction of the target culture limit the language minority learners' ability to acquire a second culture and exhibit their academic capabilities. He states that if the teachers become aware of the social formats of learning, the language minority learners may have greater access to learning if their teachers create a suitable strategy which corresponds to learners' culture. Bigenho (1992) echoes the importance of the individual and culture differences in interpreting received knowledge. He
contends that these differences play an important part in the way in which one encodes information.

Unfamiliarity with foreign language culture may result in misunderstanding, communication obstacles or limited language learning. Liao (1996) argues that we should act and speak according to the culture because language is part of culture and this culture governs the appropriate use of language. Liao counts cultural mistakes as more misleading than linguistic mistakes. Liao gives the plural "s" as an example when it is missing from plural nouns; yet, a speaker can be understood whereas a sentence which touches one's privacy could lead to misunderstanding and ends with communication breakdown. Wederspahn (1991) advises interpreters who work for international business people to be aware of linguistic and cultural barriers during any translation process to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding. He insists on interpreters to assure that the listener is familiar with metaphors, analogies, or literary allusions being used. These items must be commonly understood within the local cultural context. Dinh et al (1996) report that the Asian-American immigrants acculturate at different levels. Parents tend to maintain traditional Asian values and language whereas children may acquire the English language quickly and follow an Americanized way of thinking and behavior.
Although acculturation helps children acquire the target language early, it results in child-parent conflicts.

The cultural differences may create problems in language teaching. Li (1999) found out that Chinese learners change their perceptions of expatriate teachers' teaching styles from positive to negative. One of the negative views is the inappropriate cultural topics discussed in classrooms which upset Chinese learners such as Chinese birth control policies and human rights, the Chinese Communist Party and the current Chinese leader. He recommends the establishment of shared cultural topics of common interest as a resolution to the problem. He continues stating that Chinese learners who culturally respect the teachers for being both an authority and a role model often felt uncomfortable with the informal and casual behaviors of the expatriate teachers. Learners reported that expatriate teachers behave so lightly and so casually in their teaching. Chinese learners describe their expatriate teachers' teaching style as a matter of "taking a stroll in a bazaar" suggesting that such classroom behavior was not aligned with Chinese cultural traditions. Holes (1972) points out that the English language problems experienced by overseas learners were caused by their lack of culture-bound knowledge, their inability to perceive the native speaker's stress or intonation, and the ignorance of colloquial expressions and
changes of language style used in different particular situations (qtd In Fahmy & Bilton, 1990).

Addressing the problem which may result from culture differences in multicultural society, Trim (1997) declares that the European Council's project for European language teaching was established in order to (a) build up mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity in a multilingual and multicultural Europe and (b) promote the personal development of the individual with a positive attitude towards other people and their cultures, free from prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia (qtd In Ingram & O'Neill, 1999). Likewise, Ferris and Tagg (1996b) found that the majority of ESL learners who are first-generation immigrants in USA have difficulties with asking and responding to questions, general listening comprehension, and class participation. These difficulties result from lack of linguistic competency and differences between learners' home culture and US educational culture (qtd In Teng, 2000).

Kwon and Park (2004) criticize the limitation of the EFL learners' exposure to the target language culture. They are exposed to the target culture only in the classroom in a limited time. For this reason, Kwon and Park recommend lessons which address cultural topics and necessitate the balanced instruction when teaching EFL learners. This can be accomplished by providing
learners with information about culture topics which they may encounter through carefully planned material and lessons concerning this culture. Kwon and Park suggest that the problem solving atmosphere in the classroom allows learners to gain a closer understanding of the target culture.

Finally, Majdzadeh (2002) discovered that the disconnection between English language and its culture in Iranian English textbooks used in public schools and Iran Language Institute limits the Iranian learners from learning the English language naturally and efficiently. This limitation is caused by the textbooks which were written with great respect for the Iranian national character and no inclination to teach the culture of the English language is found.

2.3 Listening Comprehension Empirical Studies

Vanasco (1994) claims that the importance of listening comprehension increases rapidly as an agent in language learning among ESL teachers. It is the pivotal point in the acquisition of a second language. Therefore, listening skills ought to be taught. He continues claiming that listening includes two poles in the communication process. The first pole is the receiver who listens in order to decode and understand the original message. The second pole is the sender who in turn becomes the listener in order to decode and understand the feedback.
Listening comprehension is subjected to different factors which can aid or hinder it. Boyle (1984) lists some of the most important factors which were identified by teachers and learners such as general intelligence, age, sex motivation, speaker's voice and clarity, language ability, speed of delivery, difficulty of contents … etc. Boyle found that the topic familiarity is one of the nonlinguistic factors which affect listening comprehension. He also lists practice opportunities, speaker's clarity, knowledge of the target language, motivation and the listener's attitude to the speaker as the effective factors for listening comprehension.

Schwartz (1998) suggests that in pre-listening activities for a listening task, the teacher can probe learners' background knowledge of the topic, provide the necessary background knowledge to facilitate comprehension and clarify any cultural information which may hinder passage comprehension. Schwartz asserts that misplacing of cultural knowledge may create major comprehension difficulties. Brown (1998) conducted a study on experienced and inexperienced ESL teachers' lesson planning for the listening skills. He found out that the experienced teachers tended to focus on linguistic elements in the text whereas some inexperienced teachers went beyond the text to include general issues in the world. He advises teachers when they plan their listening lessons to consider what they would tell the learners to aid their comprehension
of the task in terms of cultural background, and learners should be alerted if there are any difficulties or problems in the task. Kilickaya (2004) indicates that Intercultural Language Learning is a new trend in language teaching. It raises learners' awareness of their own culture and helps them to interpret, understand other cultures and enable them to use the target language authentically.

Bowman (1990) advises teachers to deal with differences that exist between cultural patterns related to the home and community on one hand, and those of the school on the other hand when educating language-minority children.

Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) conducted a study in order to investigate whether topic familiarity had an effect on listening comprehension or not. The subjects of the study listened to two passages, one about a familiar topic, one about a novel topic. Results indicated that topic familiarity affects the scores of a recall measurement positively regardless of the subject and course levels. Schmidt-Rinehart recommends teachers to recognize that learners' existing knowledge contributes significantly to their comprehension. Results also indicated that helping learners link previous knowledge to the new information can facilitate comprehension. Utilization of context, inference and background knowledge have a significant role in facilitating listeners' comprehension.

Kangli (1995) suggests that the listener is required to utilize context, inference and background knowledge in the course of comprehension by constructing
meaning through a series of events and finding logical coherence among the facts to understand what is happening. In other words, the listener needs to set up relations among sentences.

Learners' need for a listening course and the factors which affect their listening comprehension are addressed by some authors. Yao (1995) distributed questionnaires to learners in order to verify learners' need for listening syllabuses and factors affecting comprehension. She found that learners' listening comprehension is affected by a number of factors such as speaker's speed, accent, vocabulary, background knowledge and learners' interest in the subject given (qtd In Teng, 2000). McGeehan and Han (1994) contend that the instructions including orientation of several terms from the Korean culture affect children's attitudes toward this culture. Their study indicates a significant difference between pre and post-test scores for two classes. Learners showed better attitudes after the orientation to the Korean culture. The study shows that multicultural education has a positive effect on the learners' attitudes. Erwin (1993) claims that one of the reasons which causes minority children to lag behind their classmates from the majority culture is the instructional material which is not matched specifically to their knowledge of the target culture. He advises teachers to allow learners to gain knowledge of the culture they live in which may facilitate comprehension.
Nihei (2002) argues that schemata-building activities should precede the listening activity. Dividing schemata-building activities into four steps, Nihei advises teachers to: (a) ask some questions about the topic to determine how much background knowledge learners have, (b) give learners a chance to discuss the topic in pairs or group work, (c) encourage learners to guess and predict the content of the listening materials before listening to them, and (d) let learners have the chance to adjust the difference between their first thoughts about the topic and the actual content of the listening materials. Cook (1999) contends that learners need to know the full range of co-occurring linguistic forms and their pragmatic functions which constitute different speech styles as well as their specific cultural norms of interpretation. By doing so, learners can understand the pragmatic meaning of those speech styles.

Sehnell (1992) points out that the different cultural backgrounds of people interacting have an effect on their interactions. Therefore, the presentation of ideas by the speaker and the perception of ideas by the listener differ from culture to culture. As a result, cross-culture communication takes place when people with different cultural backgrounds interact.

Markham and Latham (1987) conducted a study to verify whether or not religious backgrounds have an effect on listening comprehension of three groups with different religions (Muslims, Christians and Neutral). The subjects
of the study listened to two passages describing prayer activities of Islam and Christianity. Results indicated that religious background knowledge does significantly influence subjects' listening comprehension. Muslims and Christians recalled more information related to their religions respectively whereas the neutral subjects' result was inconclusive.

Saricoban (1999) urges teachers to pinpoint the difficulties in advance when teaching listening comprehension. He claims that lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can present obstacles to listening comprehension. He states that teachers should help their learners overcome such problems and to acquire this skill which provides the foundation for learning and functioning in a language.

2.4 Background Knowledge (schemata)

Prior knowledge contributes remarkably to aiding listening comprehension ability. Ji (2003) confirms that listeners make use of background knowledge, therefore, this type of knowledge should be taught in second language programs. He suggests that learners should be given a pretest to measure their background knowledge at the beginning of any listening comprehension course, and listening passages should be presented in graded order to ensure that the learners have some prior knowledge.
Bigenho (1992) declares the function of the schema theory. He states that schema theory has been employed to explain the construction of comprehension and the importance of background knowledge. Hyon (1997) states that the effective listening comprehension of any delivered lecture depends not only on sentence-level linguistic proficiency but also on knowledge of more global elements. This type of knowledge is referred to as formal schemata applied during the listening process in which the listener uses background knowledge to predict and interpret the meaning of the incoming speech.

Kangli (1995) states that Schema theory establishes the relationship between the listener's already acquired knowledge and the new knowledge s/he is exposed to. If the two types of knowledge correspond to each other, it is easy for the listener to gain access to comprehension. If the two types of knowledge do not correspond to each other, the listener will fail to comprehend. Schema is a system which includes background knowledge and cultural expectations which provide memory with a structure to categorize, store and retrieve new information. A reader may understand a text at the lexical and syntactic levels but still not understand what the text is about (Lewin, 1992). It is advisable for teachers to use warm-up exercises during listening classes to stimulate learners' prior knowledge by asking them some questions in order to give some ideas about the topic before listening to it (Jun, 2000).
Cabrera (2002) also advises teachers to encourage their pupils to anticipate what they are going to hear. By doing so, oral messages can be decoded with the help of the situation, the speaker, and the visual clues. He suggests presenting the listening activities within the context of the topic which is to be taught.

Barnett (1988) claims that reviewing familiar stories or topics related to the presented text in the pre-reading stage is one of the activities which help learners elicit or provide necessary schemata which in turn facilitate text comprehension. Gross and Varonis (1984) found that listeners' familiarity with the speaker, with the non-native speech in general, with a given topic, and familiarity with a foreign accent are all contributing factors in comprehension (qtd. In Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta, and Balasubramanian, 2002).

Van Duzer (1997) suggests some factors that affect the listening process. In addition to the complexity of this process, he lists factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, and the content of the message. The listener's attitude towards the speaker and his/her interest in the topic increase comprehension. He continues by stating that comprehension of familiar content is higher than that of unfamiliar. Saricoban (1999) states that the basic processes involved in listening to or understanding speech depend on linguistic factors such as
competence, and non-linguistic ones such as previous knowledge in a particular task situation.

Major et al. (2002) administered a TOEFL-like test to check listeners' performance on listening comprehension when the speaker shared the testees' native language. Results show no clear significant differences among the three groups (Japanese, Chinese and English). But the Spanish participants showed a higher level of comprehension when the test was read by the Spanish speaker. The uncertainty of the study may be attributed to the difficulty or familiarity with the lectures' topics and the difficulty of the questions rather than the speaker accent.

Kiany (2002) conducted a study to find out whether frequent dictation affects listening comprehension ability or not. He checked listening comprehension of two groups of learners using dictation of the same topic for one group but not for the other. The topic was dictated only to the experimental group. He found a significant effect among the experimental group participants because they were made aware of the topic of the passage or conversation during dictation which resulted in activation of background knowledge and better comprehension.

In spite of strong beliefs in schemata knowledge as an important factor in aiding comprehension, lack of this type of knowledge may not be the only
factor which affects listening comprehension. Golen (1990) states that the complexity of the given subject or topic and the time required to listen effectively may result in listening avoidance among learners which will end up with poor listening comprehension.

Finally, Cullen (1996) concludes that schemata have an important role in the learning process. Schemata help learners store new and previously acquired knowledge and do not only facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge but also structure information for greater retention and recall.

2.5 Conclusion

A language is part and parcel of its culture. Therefore, teaching the skills of the language without reasonable cultural content included is an inconclusive objective. Authenticity of the language use may not take place without learners' interactions with the target culture. Despite the present studies which support the notion of teaching a foreign or second language accompanied by its basic cultural elements, teachers are still unaware of the role of culture in language proficiency. We come upon situations where we listen to native speakers talking in films or on TV news and we can not interpret what has been said. Because of misunderstanding of some aural input elements, our comprehension is disrupted.
Our learners can perform well in classrooms depending only on the materials given in their textbooks. They work hard to memorize more vocabulary items and learn more grammatical rules. However, when coming to the real language use or any situation which requires language proficiency, they find themselves unable to understand or communicate with others. It is not a watertight claim that learners' poor listening comprehension is attributed only to unfamiliarity with the target culture but this issue must be given more attention. Studies which discuss culture-based topics specifically seem to be limited in number and the extension of experimental studies on this issue is required.

Purposely, the projected outcomes of this study aim to provide reasonable justification for teaching EFL Saudi learners crucial subjects concerning target culture in a controllable fashion in order to bridge the gap in listening comprehension caused by listener's unfamiliarity with the culture aspects.
3.1 Introduction

Listening comprehension skills are affected by a number of factors. These factors can aid or hinder the listeners' understanding of received aural input. One of the major factors which can aid listening comprehension or hinder it is the cultural factor. On one hand, the cultural factor can aid listening comprehension if it is pinpointed and overcome; on the other hand, it can be a big distracter to this pivotal skill in language learning if not facilitated. For this reason, a quasi-experimental design research included in this study was conducted. The data collected and results of this study were used to test the study null hypotheses:

1. Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no significant effect on learners’ overall listening comprehension performance.

2. Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no significant effect on learners’ listening comprehension performance of culture-specific items.

3. EFL/ESL learners will show no significant change to better listening comprehension after a period of instruction concerning culture-related topics.
4. Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not significantly disrupt learners’ general understanding of received aural materials.

5. Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not significantly disrupt learners’ understanding of received aural materials concerning culture-specific items.

6. There is no significant difference in listening comprehension of culture-related topics between learners who are familiarized with such topics and those who are not.

This chapter is allocated to: (1) identifying the participants of the study, (2) describing the materials used in the study, (3) describing the design of the study, (4) describing the instruments used in data collection, (5) describing the treatment in the study, and (6) giving insights into the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Learners

Forty-seven officers ranking from second lieutenant (one-star officer) to captain (three-star officer) participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 23 to 28 years. Those officers were taking an RSAF Elementary English
Course (given the RSAF number 21001) at the school of English language /Base Training Wing/Riyadh Air Force Base. The aforementioned course is a mandatory prerequisite for assigning officers to different RSAF Air Force Bases. They were all university graduates with different specialties and recruited to fulfill the RSAF needs.

Training policies in RSAF permit the instructor-learner ratio of 1:12 as a maximum limit in each classroom unless there is a waiver by the Training Wing Commander to exceed the limit justified by shortage in teaching staff or school facilities. For this reason, four classes of 12 were selected randomly to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. Two classes consisting of 25 learners comprised the experimental group and the other two classes consisting of 22 learners comprised the control group.

### 3.2.2 Instructors

Four qualified instructors participated in the study. Two native-English instructors taught the experimental group. They have been teaching English language to RSAF personnel on different Air Force Bases more than ten years. The other two instructors were Saudis and they taught the control group. They have been teaching English language to RSAF personnel on Riyadh Air Force Base for five years.
3.3 Materials

The RSAF elementary English course books (Book 1 to Book 5) and selected culture-related materials from ALC books (Book 1 to Book 20) were used in this study. These RSAF books are developed by the curriculum development section in TSI/Dhahran city/Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The contents of the course books are a mixture of general English and technical terminology to meet the requirements of RSAF personnel needs. The set-up of these books is based on Saudi culture. In other words, manifestation of cultural values, beliefs, religion and social customs were taken into consideration in designing these materials. The ALC books are developed by the English Language Center/DLI/Lackland Air Force Base/ Texas/USA.

3.4 Design of the experiment

The researcher assigned two classes as an experimental group and two classes as a control group. The assignment of the four classes was accomplished randomly amongst nine classes. However, it was difficult to assign individual learners randomly because of the division of classes and limitation of the learners' number in each class. For this reason, it was difficult to classify this experiment as a true-experimental design. The researcher used a quasi-experimental design. Campbell and Stanley (1963) introduced four
types of quasi-experimental designs. According to Campbell and Stanley, the following Nonequivalent-Control-Group design was used in this experiment:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
01 & \text{pretest} & 01 & X \\
02 & \text{posttest} & 01 & 02 \\
\end{array}
\]

$X$ represents the experimental variables

The group exposed to the experimental variable $X$ is compared to a similar group not exposed to $X$. The differences between 01 and 02 in the two groups are compared to verify whether $X$ has affected the performance of the experimental group or not (Mason & Bramble, 1978).

Mainly, learners were taught the RSAF Elementary English language course. For that reason, a previous agreement from the learners in both groups was confirmed especially from the learners enrolled in the experimental group since a part (one lesson per day) of their instruction time for the main course was allocated for non-related course material. Learners were informed in advance that their participation in this research project was strictly voluntary and that their performance in the tests was totally unrelated to their course grades.
To ensure the unity of the materials presented to the experimental group learners, the researcher designed a daily listening lesson taking its contents from the ALC books and gave it to the group's instructors one day ahead.

### 3.5 Data collection instruments

The following research instruments were used in data collection. These data were used to give insights into the hypotheses of the study.

#### 3.5.1 Pretest

Among 35 different forms of the ALCPT tests, ALCPT form 24R was randomly selected and administered as pretest to collect data from both groups (the experimental and the control). These kinds of tests were designed and published by the DLI/English Language Center on Lackland Air Force Base/Texas USA. Each ALCPT test consists of 100 multiple-choice type items divided into two portions. The aural portion, consisting of 60 questions, is designed to determine the learner's listening comprehension ability. The reading portion, consisting of 40 questions, is designed to test the reading ability of the learners and correct grammatical usage (ALCPT administration manual, 1979). The ALCPT test reliability was assessed by the testing department in DLI. The ALCPT test form 24R, which was administered as a
pretest in this study, revealed reliability of .95. The assessment sample size consisted of 222 testees (ALCPT administration manual, 1979). ALCPT tests are considered as standardized tests since they are used by US Air Force Mission representatives in all American-ally countries to screen overseas candidate learners to complete their military training in the United States.

The listening comprehension test items were classified as culture items (29 items) and non-culture items (31 items). The classification of these items was based on the type of aural question recorded on a magnetic tape and the multi-distracters (four distracters including the correct answer) written in the test booklet. Questions which intended to test general English vocabulary and grammatical usage are classified as non-culture items. Because of test security and institutional restrictions, the test can not be appended.

Culture-related questions are oriented as culture items in accordance with Saville-Troike's (1978) classification. She allocated a chapter to the subject, titling it "Questions to ask about culture" (see Appendix A). She grouped the questions into twenty categories as listed below:

1. General
2. Family
3. The life Cycle
4. Roles
5. Interpersonal relationship
6. Communication
7. Decorum and discipline
8. Religion
9. Health and hygiene
10. Food
11. Dress and personal appearance
12. History and traditions
13. Holidays and celebrations
14. Education
15. Work and play
16. Time and space
17. Natural phenomena
18. Pets and other animals
19. Art and music
20. Expectations and aspirations

Since the aim of this study is to investigate the effect of culture on listening comprehension, only the listening comprehension portion of the test was administered to the learners in the language lab one week prior to initiating the experiment. The learners in both group were kindly instructed to
open their test booklets, listen to the test tape, then mark their answer sheets a, b, c or d. The estimated time for the test is 21 minutes. They listened to the tape only once.

The researcher graded the learners' answer sheets using a transparent answer key. The test was graded out of 60 and categorized into two categories (culture items were given 29 points and non-culture items were given 31 points) as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Division of the pre/posttest items and given points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item type</th>
<th>Number of questions</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General items</td>
<td>31 items given 31 points</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture-related items</td>
<td>29 items given 29 points</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60 items given 60 points</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.2 Posttest

The same test, ALCPT test form 24R, was administered to both groups seven weeks later, right after the completion of the experimental group treatment. The objective of administering the posttest was to measure the effect of familiarizing the experimental group learners with some cultural aspects of the foreign language using ALC material. As mentioned earlier, the contents of these books were designed on American cultural bases. Also, the
experimental group learners' performance was compared to the control group learners' performance in this test. Groups' teachers unfamiliarity with the test content and the time spent between the pre and posttests (six weeks) minimized the backwash effect of the test.

3.6 The treatment

One week after administering the pretest, the treatment procedures were initiated and continued for six weeks based on one listening lesson instruction per day including the orientation of selected culture-related material from the ALC books. This treatment was only applied to the experimental group. By the end of the instruction period, the posttest was administered to both groups using the same form used in the pretest.

3.6.1 Experimental group

Two native English instructors and 25 learners comprised the experimental group. Learners attended five lessons a day. Four lessons were actual teaching and the fifth lesson was either computer lab or language lab. Learners in this group received different treatment from their colleagues in the control group. One lesson of the four actual teaching lessons was allocated to teach ALC material to the learners in the experimental group given in a
listening format. They were taught selected culture-related material from the ALC books in addition to the RSAF course material. Because it is impossible to teach the learners the complete package of the ALC books (35 books) in six weeks, culture-related material was selected and given to the instructors in a format of listening lessons. For the remaining time of the day (three lessons), learners were taught from the RSAF course books (Book1-Book5) since the main objective of the RSAF elementary English course (21001) is to teach the learners using the RSAF course books and the graduation marks are based on the level of the achievement by the end of the course period.

Through the experiment period, the researcher designed a daily listening lesson taking its contents from the ALC books and gave it to the experimental group's instructors one day ahead. Each daily lesson consisted of three activities:

1) pre-listening activity: introduction and orientation of anticipated unknown cultural items and their usage.

2) while-listening activity: learners listen to the instructor and select the correct answer among four distracters. The instructors could repeat more than one time.

3) post-listening activity: the instructor discussed the learners' answers and corrected their mistakes if there were any.
The same procedures mentioned above continued for six weeks on a daily basis except for the weekends. The treatment implementation steps which were used through the treatment period are illustrated on Table 2.

3.6.2 Control Group

Two Saudi teachers and 22 learners comprised the control group. Learners were taught the RSAF course books only. They did not receive any special treatment. They attended four actual teaching lessons and one lesson either computer lab or language lab on daily bases. The purpose of including the control group in the treatment was to compare the learners' performance in the pre/posttests enrolled in this group to the performance of the learners enrolled in the experimental group complying with Campbell and Stanley's (1963) quasi-experimental design. There must be two similar groups in order to verify the effectiveness of any applied treatment. The execution of the treatment (familiarizing the learners with some culture aspects taken from ALC books) was only applied to the experimental group.
### Table 2

**Treatment Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>pretest</th>
<th>treatment</th>
<th>posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>week1</td>
<td>week2</td>
<td>week3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex.1* ALCPT</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co.1**ALCPT</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex.2* ALCPT</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
<td>ST+ACB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co.2**ALCPT</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACB: Culture-related materials from ALC books (were taught)  
ST: Saudi (RSAF) textbooks (were taught)  
Ex.1 & Ex.2 are the experimental group classes.  
Co.1 & Co2 are the control group classes.  
* One lesson per day allocated to expose experimental groups to culture materials (five lessons per week); the rest of the lessons (3 lessons + one lab lesson) allocated for the main course materials  
** All 4 lessons + one lab lesson allocated for the main course materials (applied to Co. Group).

#### 3.6.3 Posttest

By the end of the treatment period, the test described in section 3.5.2 was administered as a posttest to both groups.
3.7 Statistical Analysis

Two different types of t-tests (independent and paired-sample) were computed to analyze the data which were collected by the pre/posttests. The independent-sample t-test is used when examining the difference between two independent groups prior and after an applied treatment and the paired-sample t-test is used when comparing the difference between the same group at two different times such as the pre/posttests (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). In this study, the independent-sample t-test was computed using the pretest data to compare the mean difference of the two groups (experimental and control) prior to starting the experimental group treatment. It was also computed to compare the mean difference of the two groups after the treatment period to show the effect of the treatment on the experimental group if there was any. The results of the paired-sample t-tests for the pre/posttests and the independent-sample t-test of the posttest were used to test the hypotheses of the study.

The statistical tools used in interpreting results were: the mean, t-value, standard deviation and p-value (Sig.2-tailed) which represents the probability of error involved in the variables.

The paired-sample t-tests were used to compute the pretest and posttest of each group separately (experimental and control). The learners'
performances (represented by set of scores) on the listening comprehension pretest and posttest were used as the variables. There were two variables. The first variable was the general listening comprehension test achievement scores in both tests. The second variable was the specific culture items achievement scores in both tests. The second variable was basically subdivision of the general test. The culture-related items in the test formed 48.3% of the general test as illustrated in Table 1.

The output data viewed by the paired-sample t-test when computing the general listening comprehension pre/posttests of the experimental group were used to answer the first hypothesis of the research.

The output data viewed by the paired-sample t-test when computing the specific culture-related items in pre/posttests of the experimental group were used to answer the second third hypotheses of the research.

The output data viewed by the paired-sample t-test when computing the general listening comprehension pre/posttests of the control group were used to answer the fourth hypothesis of the research.

The output data viewed by the paired-sample t-test when computing the specific culture-related items in pre/posttests of the control group were used to answer the fifth hypothesis of the research.
The output data viewed by the paired-sample t-test when computing the general and specific culture-related items in pre/posttests of the control group were used to answer the sixth hypothesis of the research.

3.8 Conclusion

Briefly, this chapter discussed the participants, the procedures followed, and the tools used in collecting and analyzing data of the study. Four English language instructors (two English native speakers, two Saudis) and 47 learners comprised the study sampling groups. The two native speaker teachers and 25 learners comprised the experimental group while the two Saudi teachers and 22 learners comprised the control group. A quasi-experimental design was used in applying the study treatment which continued for six consecutive weeks. ALC textbooks and RSAF textbooks were taught as planned. The ALCPT form 24 was administered at two different times. The pretest preceded the treatment and the posttest followed it. The statistical tools used were two different kinds of t-test a) independent-sample t-test and b) paired-sample t-test.
CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the analyses and the results of the data collected and their interpretations. The output data provided by the independent-sample t-tests and paired-sample t-tests were collected by administering the pre/posttests. The pre/posttests' scores achieved by the learners enrolled in the experimental and control groups were computed in order to test the hypotheses of the study.

The sequence of discussing the results of the output data of the t-tests is as follows:

- The independent-sample t-test output results of both groups' general listening comprehension pretest (GPRET).
- The independent-sample t-test output results of both groups' culture-related items listening comprehension pretest (CIPRET).
- The paired-sample t-test output results for the experimental group general listening comprehension pre/posttests (GPRET/GPOST).
• The paired-sample t-test output results for the experimental group culture-related items listening comprehension pre/posttests (CIPRET/CIPOST).
• The paired-sample t-test output results for the control group general listening comprehension pre/posttests (GPRET/GPOST).
• The paired-sample t-test for the control group culture-related items listening comprehension pre/posttests (CIPRET/CIPOST).
• The independent-sample t-test output results of both groups' general listening comprehension posttest (GPOST).
• The independent-sample t-test output results of both groups' culture-related items listening comprehension posttest (CIPOST).

4.2 Comparison of the pretest results between the two groups

The t-test is used to compare the means of two groups. This kind of statistical tool helps determine the difference between two groups (experimental and control). However, this difference is a result of an applied treatment and not due to chance (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).
4.2.1 General listening comprehension pretest (GPRET)

Data obtained from the GPRET test were used to show if there was any significant difference between the two groups' level in general listening comprehension ability prior to applying the treatment to the experimental group. This test was administered for two reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to judge the learners' general listening comprehension ability in the English language by testing them only on the culture-related items. Secondly, the researcher wanted to find out if the unfamiliarity with culture related items would affect the learners' general listening comprehension once the second test was a subtest of the first mentioned one. Also, the mean for each group was used as a reference line to be compared to its correspondent posttest for the same group when computing the paired-sample t-test.

Table 3 and Figure 1 showed that both groups had weaknesses in listening comprehension ability. The experimental group's mean score in the general listening pretest was 29.56, (SD=14.20) and the control group's mean score in the same test was 26.73, (SD=12.68). The test was graded out of 60. (See appendixes B & C)
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.56</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Difference is NOT significant at p < .05 level.

The output data revealed a difference between the two groups' mean scores; the experimental group scored higher than the control group. However, based on the data obtained (t=0.71, df=45) this difference was not statistically significant at p < .05 level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>29.56</td>
<td>26.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>12.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.* Mean scores and SD of the GPRET test for both groups measured by independent-sample t-test.

*Note:* There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the general pretest at $p < .05$. 
4.2.2 Culture-related listening comprehension pretest (CIPRET)

This test is a subcategory of the GPRET test. It was nominated to test the learners' familiarity with culture-related material in both groups prior to initiating the treatment procedures on the experimental group. 29 items out of 60 items of the GPRET were classified as culture-related items according to Saville-Troike's (1978) classification. The given full mark was 29 points. The experimental group's mean scores in this test were 12.68 (SD=6.43) and the control group's were 12.77, (SD=5.89) as illustrated in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Difference is NOT significant at p <.05 level.*

Looking at Table 4 and Figure 2, we can see that there was a slight difference between the two groups' performance in the CIPRET test. The experimental group scored lower than the control group. The experimental group's mean score was 12.68, (SD=6.43) whereas the control group mean score was 12.77, (SD=5.89). However, the data obtained (t=0.51, df=45)
revealed no statistically significant difference at \( p < .05 \) level. Accordingly, it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the GPRET and CIPRET pretests. This lack of statistically significant difference gave clear indications that the study sampling groups were relatively homogenous in their performance in the pretest.
Figure 2. Mean scores and SD of the CIPRET test for both groups measured by independent-sample t-test.

Note: There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in culture related item pretest at p < .05.
4.3 Comparison of the pre/posttests results for the experimental group.

The independent-sample t-test was used to measure the mean difference between two independent groups (experimental and control) on the same test. Another type of t-test called paired-sample t-test was used to measure the mean difference between two tests (pre/posttests) for the same group administered at two different times in order to test the effectiveness of a certain treatment applied to this group (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).

4.3.1 General listening comprehension pre/posttests (GPRET/GPOST)

The same test was administered at two different times (pretest and posttest). The administration of the pretest preceded the application of the treatment to the experimental group. As stated earlier, the treatment was a kind of orientation of some aspects of cultural knowledge to the learners enrolled in the experimental group. Six weeks later, the posttest was administered right after the treatment period.

The learners' achieved scores in both tests (GPRET/GPOST) were computed using the paired-sample t-test. The viewed output results were used
to test the first null hypothesis "Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no effect on learners' overall listening comprehension performance".

It is clear from Table 5 and Figure 3 that the experimental group learners' general listening comprehension performance in the pretest differed from their performance in the posttest. They scored higher in the posttest. There was a remarkable difference between the average mean scores of both tests.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.56</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>-6.75</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37.64</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Difference is significant at p < .01 level*

The mean scores of the pretest and posttest were 29.56, (SD=14.20) and 37.64 (SD=14.24) respectively. Data obtained (t=-6.75, df=24) showed a statistically significant difference at p <.01 level. The noticeable improvement in learners' listening performance is a likely effect of the treatment application. It can be stated that the learners' familiarity with cultural knowledge of EFL/ESL might have improved their general listening comprehension performance if this kind of knowledge has already been
oriented to the learners. In addition to mastering of grammatical rules, general vocabulary, and sound system, the topic familiarity plays a major role in facilitating listening comprehension. This finding is relatively supported by Kilickaya (2004). He indicates that learning a language is not only learning its grammatical rules but also its culture. He claims that in order to get the meaning across when communicating, successful language learning requires language users to know the culture underlying that language. The null hypothesis is retained if $p > .05$ level and rejected if $p < .05$ level (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). According to the level of significance, the first null hypothesis "Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no effect on learners’ overall listening comprehension performance" was rejected because data obtained ($t = -6.75$, df = 24) indicated a statistically significant difference at $p < .01$ level. It is probable that the cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL is likely contributed to improvement of learners' overall listening comprehension performance.
Figure 3. Mean scores and SD of the GPRET/GPOST tests for the experimental group measured by paired-sample t-test.

Note: Difference between the general pre and posttests for the experimental group is significant at $p < .01$. 
This result is supported by Markham and Latham's (1987) findings. They conducted a study to verify whether religious backgrounds have an effect on listening comprehension of three groups with different religions (Muslims, Christians and Neutral) or not. The subjects participated in their study listened to two passages describing prayer activities of Islam and Christianity. Results indicated that religious background knowledge did significantly influence subjects' listening comprehension. Muslims and Christians recalled more information related to their religions than the neutral subjects' did. Similarly, Boyle (1984) found that topic familiarity is one of the nonlinguistic factors which affect listening comprehension. It can be stated that topic familiarity helps learners comprehend better.

4.3.2 Culture-related listening comprehension pre/posttests (CIPRET/CIPOST)

The effect of culture familiarity on learners' overall general listening comprehension was discussed in section 4.3.1. It was summed up that the experimental group learners' exposure to culture-related subjects contributed to improving their performance in general listening comprehension along with other components (grammar, general vocabulary).
The effect of culture familiarity on learners' listening comprehension of culture-related items is discussed in this section. The learners' scores in both tests (CIPRET/CIPOST) were computed using the paired-sample t-test. T-test results were obtained to test the second and third null hypotheses which are respectively "Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no effect on learners’ listening comprehension performance of culture-specific items" and "EFL/ESL learners will show no significant change to better listening comprehension after a period of instruction concerning culture-related topics". Six weeks later, the ALCPT test form 24 administered as a pretest was administered again as a posttest. 29 points out of 60 points of the general test were used to test the culture related items specifically. The paired-sample t-test is used to analyze the data which were collected by the same tool (test) for the same group but at two intervaled times (pre-posttest).

Results displayed on Table 6 and Figure 4 show that the experimental group learners' culture-related listening comprehension performance in the posttest differed from their performance in the pretest. In other words, they significantly performed better in the posttest.
Table 6

Mean scores and SD of the CIPRET/CIPOST tests for the experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>-7.04</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Difference is significant at p < .01.

The difference between the average mean scores of both tests is significant. The mean scores of the pretest was 12.68, (SD=6.43) and the posttest was 18.20, (SD=6.40). This difference is statistically significant according to the data obtained (t=-7.04, df=24) at the p < .01 level. The noticeable improvement in learners' culture-related listening comprehension performance might result from the instruction which included an orientation of some cultural aspects of ESL/EFL during the treatment application. The obtained results are relatively supported by Schmidt-Rinehart (1994). He conducted a study in order to investigate whether topic familiarity affects listening comprehension or not. The subjects of the study listened to two passages, one about a familiar topic, one about a novel topic. Results indicated that topic familiarity affected the scores of a recall measurement positively.
Figure 4. Mean scores and SD of the CIPRET/CIPOST tests for the experimental group measured by paired-sample t-test.  
Note: Difference between the culture-related item pre and posttests for the experimental group is significant at p < .01.
Similarly, McGeehan and Han (1994) found that the instruction including orientation of several terms from the Korean culture affected children's attitudes toward this culture. Their study indicated a significant difference between pre/posttest scores for two classes. Learners showed better attitudes after the orientation to the Korean culture. The study showed that multicultural education has a positive effect on the learners' attitudes.

It can be stated that the learners' familiarity with cultural knowledge of EFL/ESL might have improved their listening comprehension performance in general and their listening comprehension of culture related items in specific. The familiarity with EFL/ESL culture has a vital role in facilitating listening comprehension. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis "Cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL has no effect on learners’ listening comprehension performance concerning culture related subjects" and the third null hypothesis "EFL/ESL learners will show no significant change to better listening comprehension after a period of instruction concerning culture-related topics" were rejected because the obtained data (t=−7.04 df=24) indicated a statistically significant difference. It is clear that the cultural familiarity with EFL/ESL might have affected learners' performance on culture-related item listening comprehension. In the posttest, learners enrolled in the experimental group performed better than they did in the pretest. This
improvement could be attributed as a consequence of having previously familiarized them with subjects related to culture.

4.4 Comparison of the pre/posttests results for the control group.

The same pretest administered to the experimental group was administered to the control group at the same time. The same test was used as a posttest and administered to both groups right after the treatment application to the experimental group which continued for six weeks. The viewed output data of the paired-sample t-test when analyzing the control group performance were used to measure the mean scores difference between the (GPRET) pre/posttests and (CIPOST) pre/posttests.

4.4.1 General listening comprehension pre/posttests (GPRET/GPOST)

The above-mentioned test was administered at two different times (pretest and posttest) to the control group. The administration of the pretest preceded the application of the treatment. As stated earlier, the treatment was applied to the learners enrolled in the experimental group but not to the learners in the control group. The posttest was conducted right after the
treatment period. The control group took the posttest at the same time as the experimental group.

It is clear from Table 7 and Figure 5 that the control group learners' general listening comprehension performance in the pretest differed from their performance in the posttest.

They scored higher in the posttest. There was a difference between the average mean scores of both tests. The mean scores of the pretest was 26.73 (SD=12.68) and the posttest was 29.56 (SD=12.41). This difference was statistically significant according to the data obtained ($t=-6.76$, df=21) at $p < .01$ level.

Table 7

*Mean scores and SD of the GPRET/GPOST tests for the control group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
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<td>26.73</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>-6.76</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.32</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Difference is significant at $p < .05$. 
Figure 5. Mean scores and SD of the GPRET/GPOST tests for the control group measured by paired-sample t-test.  
Note: Difference between the general pre and posttests for the control group is significant at p < .05.
The noticeable improvement in learners' general listening performance might result from the general subjects which the learners were taught from the RSAF textbooks. Basically, general language components (syntax, sound system and general terminology) are covered in both texts (ALC textbooks and Saudi textbooks). It was clarified in chapter three that the 31 question items of the ALCPT test deal with the learners’ general language ability and 29 question items deal with culture-related subjects. This improvement did not result from culture familiarity because the learners in the control group did not receive any instruction regarding the culture-related subjects.

4.4.2 Culture-related listening comprehension pre/posttests (CIPRET/CIPOST)

The test administered to the experimental group in the CIPRET/CIPOST tests was administered at the same time to the control group. The paired-sample t-test was computed to view the mean difference of the control group performance in the culture-related listening comprehension pre/posttests. Although the control group learners did not receive any instruction concerning cultural topics, there is a statistical need for running the paired-sample t-test.
The results are expected to help in making the decision whether to include culture teaching in a controllable fashion when teaching EFL/ESL or to teach the language apart from its culture. Furthermore, the design of this research requires results of two different groups for the purpose of parallel comparison.

Table 8 and Figure 6 show that the control group learners' culture-related listening comprehension performance in the posttest differed from their performance in the pretest. They scored higher in the posttest. The difference between the average mean scores of both tests was noticed. The mean scores of the pretest were 12.77 (SD=5.89) and the posttest 14.14, (SD=6.27).

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.14</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Difference is NOT significant at p < .05.*

Statistically, this difference was not significant. The data obtained (t=-1.8, df=21) were not found to be significant at p <.05 level. The slight improvement noticed in learners' culture related listening comprehension performance could result from the random selection of the correct answer among four distracters of the ALCPT multiple-choice test or the impact of
general instruction. Lack of instruction which includes teaching of some cultural aspects of ESL/EFL in the classroom put obstacles in the way of learners which prevent them from improving their listening comprehension ability. It is worth recalling Saricoban's (1999) recommendation when he asks teachers to pinpoint the difficulties in advance when teaching listening comprehension. He claims that lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can present obstacles to listening comprehension.
Figure 6. Mean scores and SD of the CIPRET/CIPOST tests for the control group measured by paired-sample t-test.

Note: Difference between the culture-related item pre and posttests for the control group is not significant at p < .05.
Likewise, Bigenho (1992) asserted the importance of the individual and culture differences in interpreting received knowledge. He contends that these differences play an important part in the way in which one encodes information. Also, Major et al. (2002) administered a TOEFL-like test to check listeners' performance on listening comprehension when the speakers shared the testees' native accent. They found that the different accent had no clear effect on the three groups (Japanese, Chinese and English) listening comprehension ability but only on the Spanish participants. They attributed the lack of significance in their performance as due to the difficulty or familiarity with the lectures' topics and the difficulty of the questions rather than speaker accent. Schwartz (1998) recommends that in pre-listening activities, teachers should provide the necessary background knowledge to facilitate comprehension and clarify any cultural information which may hinder passage comprehension for a listening task. In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations, Erwin (1993) claims that one of the reasons which causes minority children to lag behind their classmates from the majority culture is the instructional material which is not specifically matched to their knowledge of the target culture.

To sum up, it might be considered that the learners' unfamiliarity with cultural knowledge of EFL/ESL might disrupt the control group learners'
listening comprehension performance when receiving aural input containing culture related items. The familiarity with EFL/ESL culture seems to have a leading role in facilitating listening comprehension.

4.5 Comparison of the posttest results between the two groups

The independent-sample t-test was used to analyze the learners' scores achieved by both groups in the posttests (GPOST/CIPOST). It compares the mean scores of two different groups (experimental and control) after the application of certain treatment to the experimental group in a limited time.

4.5.1 General listening comprehension posttest (GPOST)

Data obtained from the GPOST test were used to show if there was any significant difference between the two groups' level in general listening comprehension ability after applying the treatment to the experimental group. The results of the GPOST test test the fourth hypothesis of the study "Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not disrupt learners’ general understanding of received aural materials".
Data displayed on Table 9 and Figure 7 revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the GPOST test. The experimental group learners scored significantly higher than the control group learners did. The experimental group's mean score was 37.64, (SD=14.24) and the control group's was 29.32, (SD=12.41). The difference between the two group mean scores was statically significant according to the data obtained (t=2.12, df=45) at p < .05 level.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37.64</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.32</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Difference is significant at p < .05.
Figure 7. Mean scores and SD of the GPOST test for both groups measured by independent-sample t-test.  
Note: Difference between the general posttest for both groups is significant at $p < .05$. 
According to the statistically obtained data, the fourth null hypothesis that "Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not disrupt learners’ general understanding of received aural materials" was rejected. Analyzing the GPOST test, the results obtained with the independent-sample t-test indicated that familiarity with culture-related materials facilitated learners' listening comprehension when they listened to such materials. These results which proved that familiarity with received aural input facilitates listening comprehension were supported by Van Duzer (1997). He stated that comprehension of a familiar content is higher than the unfamiliar one. This is obvious when comparing the experimental group learners' achievement in the GPRET and GPOST tests. The mean scores of the general pre/posttests were 29.56 (SD=14.20) and 37.64 (SD=14.24), respectively. In other words, teaching the experimental group learners some aspects of EFL/ESL culture during the experiment resulted in better listening comprehension. There was a statically significant difference in the control group learners' performance from GPRET to GPOST. They scored higher in the posttest. The probable reason behind this improvement has been fully addressed in section 4.4.1.
4.5.1 Culture-related listening comprehension posttest (CIPOST)

Results provided by the independent-sample t-test after computing the CIPOST test scores were used to show if there was any significant difference between the two groups' performance level in culture-related listening comprehension ability after applying the treatment to the experimental group. Data presented in Table 10 and Figure 8 were to test the fifth and sixth hypotheses of the study that "Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not disrupt learners’ understanding of received aural materials concerning culture-specific items" and "There is no significant difference in listening comprehension of culture-related topics between learners who are familiarized with such topics and those who are not".

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.14</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Difference is significant p < .05.*
Figure 8. Mean scores and SD of the CIPOST test for both groups measured by independent-sample t-test.

Note: Difference between the culture-related posttest for both groups is significant at p < .05.
Accordingly, the fifth null hypothesis that "Unfamiliarity with EFL/ESL cultural topics will not disrupt learners’ understanding of received aural materials concerning culture-specific items" was rejected. The results obtained with the independent-sample t-test when analyzing the CIPOST test showed that experimental group learners' listening comprehension of culture-related materials improved remarkably. It is clear that the learners who were exposed to culture-related topics scored significantly higher in the posttest than they did in the pretest. The mean scores of the CIPRET/CIPOST tests were 12.68, (SD=6.43) and 18.20, (SD=6.40) respectively. It might be considered that the improvement was a result of orienting the learners enrolled in the experimental group on culture-related subjects. The control group learners showed no statistical difference in their performance when they took the two tests (CIPRET/ CIPOST). The mean scores were 12.77 (SD=5.89) and 14.14 (SD=6.27) respectively. When comparing the experimental group learners' achievement and the control group learners' achievement in the CIPOST test, it is clear that the learners in the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group learners did. The mean score of the experimental group was 18.20 (SD=6.43) whereas the control group's was 14.14 (SD=6.40). Data obtained (t=2.196, df=44.47) showed a statically significant difference at the p <.05 level. The control group learners showed
no significant improvement which may be because of lack of exposure to the culture oriented topics. This result is closely supported by Kwon and Park (2004) who criticized the limitation of the EFL learners' exposure to the target language culture. They are exposed to the target culture only in the classroom in a limited time. For this reason, Kwon and Park recommend lessons which address culture topics and necessitate the balanced learning of the EFL learners.

According to the data obtained from both tests mean scores (GPOST/CIPOST) which were respectively (t=2.12, df=45) and (t=2.196, df=45), the sixth hypothesis that "There is no significant difference in listening comprehension of culture-related topics between learners who are familiarized with such topics and those who are not" was rejected. These findings are closely supported by McGeehan and Han (1994) when they found that the instruction including orientation of several terms from the Korean culture affected children's (from different culture) attitudes toward this culture. Their study indicated a significant difference between pre/posttest scores for two classes. Learners showed better attitudes after the orientation to the Korean culture. It can be summed up that there is a significant difference between the two groups' performance in favor of the experimental group. This
significant difference was regarded as a result of teaching the experimental group learners some aspects of EFL/ESL culture during the experiment which in turn facilitated their general and culture-related listening comprehension.

4.6 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provided insights to the data analysis and results of the study. The results of the independent-sample t-test when computing pretests were as follow:

a) The obtained output data \( t=0.723, df=45 \) of both groups' GPRET test revealed no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both groups at \( p < .05 \) level.

b) The obtained output data \( t=0.52, df=45 \) of both groups' CIPRET test revealed no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both groups at \( p < .05 \) level.

Results illustrated in a and b showed that the two groups (experimental and control) were relatively homogeneous.

The output data of the paired-sample t-test when computing the experimental group pre/posttests were as follow:
a) The GPRET/GPOST obtained data ($t=-6.75, df=24$) showed a statistically significant difference to better general listening comprehension at $p < .05$ level.

b) The CIPRET/CIPOST obtained data ($t=-7.04, df=24$) showed a statistically significant difference to better culture-related listening comprehension at $p < .01$ level.

The output data of the paired-samples t-test when computing the control group pre/posttests were as follow:

a) The GPRET/GPOST obtained data ($t=-6.76, df=21$) showed a statistically significant difference to better general listening comprehension at $p < .01$ level. The noticed improvement was discussed earlier.

b) The CIPRET/CIPOST obtained data ($t=-1.8, df=21$) showed no statistically significant difference to better culture-related listening comprehension at $p < .05$ level.

The output data of the independent-sample t-test when computing posttests were as follow:

a) The obtained output data ($t=2.14, df=45$) of both groups' GPOST test revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both groups at $p < .05$ level. The experimental group showed better general listening comprehension than the control group.
b) The obtained output data ($t=2.20$, $df=44.5$) of both groups' CIPRET test revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both groups at $p < .05$ level. The experimental group showed better culture-related listening comprehension but the control group did not.
CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusion, Implications, Recommendations, and Suggestions

5.1 Summary

This study investigates the effect of EFL/ESL culture-related topic familiarity on the learners' listening comprehension ability. A quasi-experimental design study was conducted at the school of English language/Base Training Wing/ Riyadh Air Force Base in Riyadh city/KSA. Four English language instructors were involved; 2 native-speakers of English taught the experimental group and 2 Saudi instructors taught the control group. 47 officers participated in the study. The American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) was administered as pre-and-posttests to probe the learners' performance on general and culture-related listening comprehension before and after the treatment was applied to the experimental group. The test was categorized into two types of items (general items and culture-related items. The pretest revealed no statistical difference between the two groups' performance on both items. The treatment was initiated and continued for 6 weeks. The experimental group learners were oriented to some aspects of the
target culture topics selected from the ALC textbooks (1 lesson per day) in addition to the in house course (RSAF) textbooks (3 lessons) per day. The control group learners were taught from the in house course textbooks (4 lessons) per day. In addition to the four instructional hours in the classroom, both groups took the fifth lesson in the computer lab on daily bases. The findings show that the experimental group learners' general and culture-based listening comprehension improved significantly at p <.05 level. This is clear from the obtained output data ($t=-6.75, df=24$ $t=-7.04, df=24$) in general and culture-related posttests respectively. According to the obtained output data ($t=-6.76, df=21$ $t=-6.76, df=21$), the control group learners' general listening comprehension improved but culture-based listening comprehension did not ($t=-1.8, df=21$).

However, the noticed improvement in the control group learners' general listening comprehension is statistically lower than the experimental group's improvement in accordance with the output data ($t=2.14, df=45$) at p <.05 level. The experimental group learners' significant improvement might be due to orientation of culture-related topics which were unfamiliar to them in advance. It is concluded that familiarity with the target language culture has a pivotal role in facilitating comprehension of aural input.
5.2 Conclusion

Based on the results obtained when comparing the learners' performance prior and after the application of the treatment, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The study proved that the learners' level of listening comprehension is affected by ESL culture familiarity.

2. Background knowledge of the target culture can help learners comprehend aural input more effectively. Orienting the experimental group learners to the target culture resulted in better listening comprehension.

3. Unfamiliarity with the target culture can easily disrupt learners' general and culture-related comprehension of received aural input. The control group learners' showed no significant improvement on listening comprehension ability. Their performance on the posttest did not statistically differ from the pretest for the culture-related items.

4. The effectiveness of given instruction in culture-related topics is clearly displayed by the experimental group learners' performance on the posttest.
5.3 Pedagogical implications

Listening comprehension skill is not given sufficient attention among the other language skills. Some educators claim that weaknesses in this skill can be overcome as learners progress in second language learning. This skill is not given the adequate instruction in the normal classroom setting. It is believed that instruction concerning listening comprehension which is given in the auditory language lab is enough for the learners. However, listening comprehension should not be treated in such a way because of its crucial role in learning EFL/ESL. This skill warrants more care from the teachers. The study implies the following:

1. When planning listening comprehension lessons, it is desirable to have what is called a "pre-listening stage" which includes orientation of non familiar vocabulary and stimulation of background knowledge which facilitates comprehension.

2. Non familiar cultural aspects which may exist and lead to disruption of learners' comprehension should be pinpointed and overcome.

3. Educators should include some authentic culture-related items in their lessons in order to help their learners comprehend better.
4. It should be borne in mind that culture and language are inseparable processes since a language is part and parcel of its culture.

5.4 Recommendations

It can be concluded from the results of the study that topic familiarity has a remarkably positive effect on learners' listening comprehension ability especially those topics related to culture. Based on these results, the following points are recommended:

1. Learners' listening comprehension ability can be improved by giving them a general orientation in the subject they will listen to.

2. When designing listening-based material, culture aspect should be taken into consideration. Syllabus designers should include such material in a controllable fashion. However, those materials which could present conflicts with the learners' culture or violate it must be avoided.

3. Plans prepared for listening comprehension lessons should include three stages:
   a. pre-listening (orientation of unfamiliar vocabulary and warm up)
   b. while-listening (active listening)
c. post-listening (checking and feedback)

4. The time allocated for listening instruction should be considered by increasing the number of listening classes in the classroom.

5. Special tests in a format of listening comprehension which deal with culture aspects only rather than general listening comprehension tests should be designed.

### 5.5 Suggestions for further studies

1. The results of this study indicate that culture-based topic familiarity enhances learners' improvement in listening comprehension ability. However, an extension of this study is required to investigate the effect of other factors which may hinder learners' comprehension of aural input.

2. Further studies may be conducted to investigate the effect of non-native speaker accent on listening comprehension on an EFL setting.

3. A further study might be conducted to investigate whether teacher/culture training concerning listening comprehension skill teaching strategies is a vital need in learning process or not.
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Appendixes

Appendix A

Questions to ask about culture


1. General

a. What are the major stereotypes which you and others have about each cultural group? To what extent are these accepted by the group being typed?

b. To what extent and in what areas has the traditional culture of each minority group changed in contact with the dominant American culture? In what areas has it been maintained?

c. To what extent do individuals possess knowledge of or exhibit characteristics of traditional groups?

2. Family

a. Who is in a 'family'? Who among these (or others) live in one house?
b. What is the hierarchy of authority in the family?

c. What are the rights and responsibilities of each family member? Do children have an obligation to work to help the family?

d. What are the functions and obligations of the family in the larger social unit? To the school? To its individual members?

e. What is the relative importance of an individual family member vs. the family as a whole? What is the degree of solidarity or cohesiveness in the family?

3. The Life Cycle

a. What are criteria for the definition of stages, periods, or transitions in life?

b. What are attitudes, expectations, and behaviors toward individuals at different stages in the life cycle? What stage of life is most valued? What stage of life is most 'difficult'?

c. What behaviors are appropriate or unacceptable for children of various ages? How might these conflict with behaviors taught or encouraged in the school?

d. How is language related to the life cycle?
e. How is the age of children computed? What commemoration is made of the child's birth (if any) and when?

4. Roles

a. What roles within the group are available to whom, and how are they acquired? Is education relevant to this acquisition?

b. What is the knowledge of and perception by the child, the parents, and the community toward these roles, their availability, and possible or appropriate means of access to them?

c. Is language use important in the definition or social marking of roles?

d. Are there class differences in the expectations about child role attainment? Are these realistic?

e. Do particular roles have positive or malevolent characteristics?

5. Interpersonal Relationships

a. Is language competence a requirement or qualification for group membership?

b. How do people greet each other? What forms of address are used between people in various roles?

c. Do girls work and interact with boys? Is it proper?
d. How is deference shown?

e. How are insults expressed?

f. Who may disagree with whom? Under what circumstances?

g. Are mitigating forms used?

6. Communication

a. What languages, and varieties of each language, are used in the community? By whom? When? Where? For what purposes?

b. Which varieties are written and how widespread is knowledge of written forms?

c. What are the characteristics of 'speaking well', and how do these relate to age, sex, context, or other social factors? What are the criteria for 'correctness'?

d. What roles, attitudes, or personality traits are associated with particular ways of speaking?

e. What range is considered 'normal' speech behavior? What is considered a speech defect?

f. Is learning language a source of pride? Is developing bilingual competence considered an advantage or a handicap?
g. What is the functionality of the native language in the workplace or larger environment?

h. What gestures or postures have special significance or may be considered objectionable? What meaning is attached to direct eye contact? To eye avoidance?

i. Who may talk to whom? When? Where? About what?

7. Decorum and Discipline

a. What is decorum? How important is it for the individual and for the group?

b. What is discipline? What counts as discipline in terms of the culture, and what doesn't? What is its importance and value?

c. What behaviors are considered socially unacceptable for learners of different age and sex?

d. Who or what is considered responsible if a child misbehaves? The child? Parents? Older siblings? School? Society? The environment? Or is no blame ascribed?

e. Who has authority over whom? To what extent can one person's be imposed on another? By what means?
f. How is the behavior of children traditionally controlled, to what extent, and in what domains?

g. Do means of social control vary with recognized states in the life cycle, membership in various social categories, or according to setting or offense?

h. What is the role of language in social control? What is the significance of using the first vs. the second language?

8. Religion

a. What is considered sacred and what secular?

b. What religious roles and authority are recognized in the community?

c. What is the role of children in religious practices? What are they supposed to know or not to know about the religion?

d. What should an outsider not know, or not acknowledge knowing?

e. What taboos are there? What should not be discussed in school; what questions should not be asked; what learner behaviors should not be required?

f. Are there any external signs of participation in religious rituals (e.g., ashes, dress, marking)?
g. Are dietary restrictions to be observed, including fasting, on particular occasions?

h. Are there any prescribed religious procedures or forms of participation if there is a death in the family? What taboos are associated with death and the dead?

9. Health and Hygiene

a. Who or what is believed to cause illness or death (e.g., the 'germ theory' vs. supernatural or other causes)?

b. Who or what is responsible for curing?

c. How are specific illnesses treated? To what extent do individuals utilize or accept 'modern' medical practices by doctors and other health professionals?

d. What beliefs, taboos, and practices are associated with menstruation and the onset of puberty?

e. What are beliefs regarding conception and childbirth?

f. What beliefs or practices are there with regard to bodily hygiene (e.g., bathing frequency and purpose)?

g. If a learner were involved in an accident at school, would any of the common first aid practices be unacceptable?
10. Food
   a. What is eaten? In what order? How often?
   b. What foods are favorites? What taboo? What 'typical'?
   c. What rules are observed during meals regarding age and sex roles within the family, the order of serving, seating, utensils used, and appropriate verbal formulas (e.g., how, and if, one may request, refuse, or thank)?
   d. What social obligations are there with regard to food giving, preparation, reciprocity, and honoring people? e. What relation does food have to health? What medicinal uses are made of food, or categories of food?
   e. What are the taboos or prescriptions associated with the handling, offering, or discarding of food?

11. Dress and Personal Appearance
   a. What clothing is 'typical'? What is worn for special occasions? What seasonal differences are considered appropriate?
   b. What significance does dress have for group identity?
   c. How does dress differ for age, sex, and social class?
d. What restrictions are imposed for 'modesty' (e.g., can girls wear shorts, or shower in the gym)?

e. What is the concept of beauty, or attractiveness? How important is physical appearance in the culture? What characteristics are most valued?

f. What constitutes a 'compliment', and what form should it take (e.g., in traditional Latin American culture, telling a woman she is getting fat is a compliment)?

g. Does the color of dress have symbolic significance (e.g., black vs. white for mourning)?

12. History and Traditions

a. What individuals and events in history are a source of pride for the group?

b. To what extent is knowledge of the group's history preserved?

c. In what forms and in what ways is it passed on?

d. To what extent is there a literate tradition of the history of the group (i.e., written history, and knowledge of written history within the group itself)?
e. To what extent are traditions and historical events reflected in aphorisms and proverbs?

f. Do any ceremonies or festive occasions re-enact historical events?

g. How and to what extent does the group's knowledge of history coincide with or depart from 'scientific' theories of creation, evolution, and historical development?

h. To what extent does the group in the United States identify with the history and traditions of their country of origin?

i. What changes have taken place in the country of origin since the group or individuals emigrated?

j. For what reasons and under what circumstances did the group or individuals come to the United States (or did the United States come to them)?

13. Holidays and Celebrations

a. What holidays and celebrations are observed by the group and individuals?

b. What is their purpose (e.g., political, seasonal, religious, didactic)?

c. Which are especially important for children and why?

d. What cultural values do they intend to inculcate?
e. What aspects of socialization/enculturation do they further?

f. Do parents and learners know and understand school holidays and behavior appropriate for them (including appropriate non-attendance)?

**14. Education**

a. What is the purpose of education?

b. What kinds of learning are favored (e.g., rote, inductive)?

c. What methods for teaching and learning are used at home (e.g., modeling and imitation, didactic stories and proverbs, direct verbal instruction)?

d. Do methods of teaching and learning vary with recognized stages in the life cycle? With the setting? According to what is being taught or learned?

e. What is the role of language in learning and teaching?

f. Is it appropriate for learners to ask questions or volunteer information? If so, what behaviors signal this? If not, what negative attitudes does it engender?

g. What constitutes a 'positive response' by a teacher to a learner? By a learner to a teacher?
h. How many years is it considered 'normal' for children to go to school?

i. Are there different expectations by parents, teachers, and learners with respect to different groups? In different subjects? For boys vs. girls?

15. Work and Play

a. What range of behaviors is considered 'work' and what 'play'?

b. What kinds of work are prestigious and why?

c. Why is work valued (e.g., financial gain, group welfare, individual satisfaction, promotion of group cohesiveness, fulfillment or creation of obligations to/from others, position in the community)?

d. Are there stereotypes about what a particular group will do?

e. What is the purpose of play (e.g., to practice social roles, skills training, muscle development and coordination)?

16. Time and Space

a. What beliefs or values are associated with concepts of time? How important is 'punctuality'? Speed of performance when taking a test?
b. Is control or prescriptive organization of children's time required (e.g., must homework be done before watching TV, is 'bedtime' a scheduled event)?

c. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with the seasons (e.g., not singing certain songs in the summertime or a snake will bite, not eating oysters when there is an R in the month)?

d. Is there a seasonal organization of work or other activities?

e. What is acceptable presence or grouping of individuals (e.g., do children stay with adults and listen or go outside)?

f. How do individuals organize themselves spatially in groups (e.g., in rows, circles, around Tables, on the floor, in the middle of the room, around its circumference)?

g. What is the spatial organization of the home (e.g., areas allotted to children or open to children, appropriate activities in various areas of the home)?

h. What geo-spatial concepts, understandings, and beliefs exist in the group or are known to individuals?

i. What is the knowledge and significance of cardinal directions (North, South, East, West)? At what age are these concepts acquired?
j. What significance is associated with different directions or places (e.g., heaven is up, people are buried facing West)?

17. Natural Phenomena

a. What beliefs and practices are associated with the sun and moon (including eclipses and phases of the moon), comets, and stars?

b. Who or what is responsible for rain, lightning, thunder, earthquakes, droughts, floods, and hurricanes?

c. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with natural phenomena? What sanctions are there against individuals violating restrictions or prescriptions?

d. What means are there for obviating the negative effects of natural phenomena?

e. How and to what extent does the group's beliefs about these phenomena coincide with or depart from 'scientific' theories?

f. To what extent are traditional group beliefs still held by individuals within the community?
18. Pets and Other Animals

a. Which animals are valued, and for what reasons?
b. Which animals are considered appropriate as pets; which are inappropriate, and why?
c. Are particular behavioral prescriptions or taboos associated with particular animals?
d. Are any animals of religious significance? Of historical importance?
e. Are there seasonal restrictions on talking about or depicting certain animals (e.g., except when hibernating, during hunting season)?
f. What attitudes are held toward other individuals or groups which have different beliefs and behaviors with respect to animals?
g. Which animals may be kept in the classroom? Which may not, and why?

19. Art and Music

a. What forms of art and music are most highly valued?
b. What media and instruments are traditionally used?
c. What conventions are of particular significance? How do artistic conventions differ from those used or taught in school (e.g., the musical scale, two-dimensional representation of distance or depth)?
d. Is the creation of art and music limited to specialists, or within the competence of a wide range of individuals in the community?

e. What forms of art and music are considered appropriate for children to perform or appreciate?

f. Are there any behavioral prescriptions or taboos related to art and music (e.g., can both men and women sing, does cutting faces in pumpkins or other fruits and vegetables violate religious concepts)?

g. How and to what extent may approval or disapproval be expressed?

20. Expectations and Aspirations

a. What defines the concepts of 'disadvantaged' and 'successful'?

b. To what extent is it possible or proper for an individual to express future goals (e.g., is it appropriate to ask, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?')?

c. What beliefs are held regarding 'luck' and 'fate'?

d. What significance does adherence to the traditional culture of the group have for the individual's potential achievement (from both the viewpoint of the minority and dominant cultures)?
e. What significance does the acquisition of the majority culture and the English language have (from both minority and dominant cultural perceptions)?

f. What potential roles are available within the native community which can provide individual fulfillment and satisfaction?

g. Do parents expect and desire assimilation of children to the dominant culture as a result of education and the acquisition of English?

h. Are the attitudes of community members and individuals the same as or different from those of community spokesmen?
## Appendix B

### Table 11

*General listening comprehension pretest and posttest row scores for both groups graded out of 60.*

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| Mean score | 29.56 | 37.64 | 26.73 | 29.32 |
### Appendix C

#### Table 12

*Culture-related listening comprehension pretest and posttest row scores for both groups graded out of 29.*

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Mean score | 12.68 | 18.20 | 12.77 | 14.14